

Saturday, October 22, 2022—West Michigan Grace Bible Conference—The Belt of Truth & The Breastplate of Righteous

## **Introduction**

- II Corinthians 10:4—discusses “the weapons of our warfare” and the fact that they are not “carnal” i.e., fleshly.
- A “weapon” can be and instrument of offense or defense.
- Ephesians 6:11—the verb “put on” is an imperative commend.
- Ephesians 6:13—the verb rendered “take unto you” is an imperative commend.
- Ephesians 6:14—the verb “stand” is an imperative commend.
  - What does this mean? It means that believers are going to have to make the conscience decision to do these things. In other words, they are not automatic.
  - Romans 8:5—we need to give mental attention to these things.
- Ephesians 6:14-17—in these verses Paul identifies six pieces of armor that believers are to “put on.” Believers are instructed to make a conscious decision to put the armor on or else we will not be able to “stand against the wiles of the devil.” The armor includes the following:
  - Belt of truth—verse 14
  - Breastplate of righteousness—verse 14
  - Sandals of peace—verse 15
  - Shield of faith—verse 16
  - Helmet of salvation—verse 17
  - Sword of the Spirit—verse 17
- Last night David pointed out that the “armor” is not so much its physical qualities in terms of offering protection to the vital organs of the body as it is about the spiritual realities and choosing to “walk after the spirit.”
  - Show David’s PowerPoint
- Ephesians 5:9

- That said, I do think that Paul chose the illustration of Roman armor to help us understand what the Holy Spirit provides for us spiritually. Each piece of armor is associated with a spiritual truth or reality. Paul is using physical armor to illustrate spiritual realities. This is doctrinal armor that fortifies the soul and spirit of the believer and provides protection against the “wiles of the devil.”

### The Belt of Truth

- Ephesians 6:14—Paul instructs us to “stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” This first question regarding this piece of armor is what are the loins? Noah Webster defines the English word “loins” as following in his *American Dictionary of the English Language*:
  - “the loins are the space on each side of the vertebrae, between the lowest of the false ribs and the upper portion of the *os ilium* or haunch bone, or the lateral portions of the lumbar region; called also the reins.”
- In modern times we might call this your mid-section, trunk, or core. Anatomically speaking this region of the body is comprised of layers of muscles that allow the body to move from side to side as well as up and down. In other words, they are foundational for all body movement.
- Ephesians 4:14—if someone is going to come and move you off a fixed position you are going to have to engage your core muscles to resist the tension and pressure. Metaphorically speaking, when the winds of doctrine begin to blow you are going to need to engage the core muscles to withstand.
- Why do people wear belts? To keep their garments in place. Weightlifters wear belts to keep everything tightly compressed while they are lifting heavy weights. H.A. Ironside in his commentary on *Ephesians* comments the typical dress of people in the Mediterranean world in the 1<sup>st</sup> century,
  - “long flowing garments in which he is perfectly comfortable when just moving about at leisure; but if going on a journey or engaged in any kind of conflict, he must draw them up about his waist holding them in by a girdle, so as not to impede his efforts of hinder progress.” (Ironside, 317)
- Therefore, athletes typically wear tight/form fitting clothing, because they don’t want their movement(s) impeded by loose fitting clothing.
- Ephesians 6:14—much more important than the physical aspects of the belt of truth are the spiritual realities. We are instructed to stand having our loins girt about with truth.
- I Peter 1:13—Peter tells his readers to gird of the loins of their mind. Likewise, Paul is not primarily speaking about a physical belt that goes about one mid-section. Since the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, Paul also wants us to girt up the loins of our minds, to fortify our minds with the truth of God.

- II Corinthians 10:4-5—the battle is in the mind and thought life of the believer. Our minds need to be girted, cinched, and reinforced with the truth.
- Ephesians 2:14—the truth is the most important part of this piece of armor. This of course implies that truth does exist and that it is knowable.
  - John 17:17—thy word is truth.
  - John 14:6—Jesus Christ is the truth. Truth is not relative, subjective, or individually determined truth is absolute.
- The great battle of our time is what is truth and who gets to decide.
  - The Bible calls disinformation ... lies.
  - The Bible calls misinformation ... ignorance.
  - The Bible calls facts ... truth.
    - The Bible says God is the highest authority on facts: “Let God be true” (Rom 3:4). What anyone else says is potential misinformation (“but every man a liar”) due to “being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them” (Eph 4:18).
    - “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ... Who changed the truth of God into a lie” (Rom 1:22; Rom 1: 25).
    - The ruler of this present world is the father of disinformation (“father of lies”).
    - His disinformation campaign is the biggest conspiracy in the past two thousand years. Jesus was cancelled over it. So was Paul. You might be, too.
    - Make no mistake, the battle over information is a battle for who decides truth. Beware those professing to be wise who deny what the Bible says.
- In the context of Ephesians 6 it is safe to say that Paul’s general use of the word truth refers to those truths revealed to him for the church the body of Christ during the dispensation of Grace. Paul uses the word truth 50 times in 48 verses, so there are many aspects or categories of the truth we could talk about from the Pauline perspective in the time we have left I would like to talk about three:
  - Paul’s gospel

- the believer's security,
- the believer's hope.

### *Paul's Gospel*

- II Corinthians 11:3—remember that the winds of doctrine are designed to corrupt our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ. The winds of doctrine seek to accomplish two primary things: 1) complicate matters, 2) cause you to think that Christ is not enough.
- Galatians 2:1-5—the Judaizers were seeking to complicate matters by teaching that the Gentiles that need to be circumcised in order to be justified. In verse five Paul says that he did not give place to that teaching “that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” What was the truth of Paul's gospel:
  - Acts 13:38-39—we don't need to keep the law to be justified
  - Ephesians 2:8-9—we are saved by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ.
- Galatians 2:14—by removing himself from the gentiles when the men came from James Peter was not walking uprightly according to the truth of Paul's gospel because he had caused those watching him to think that Christ was not enough, but they needed to be religious.

### *The Believers Security*

- Ephesians 1:13, 4:30—the moment you heard and trusted the word of truth you were sealed with the Holy Spirit into Christ.
- I Corinthians 12:13
- I Corinthians 6:11—we already are sanctified in Christ.
- Colossians 2:10—the winds of doctrine will blow and try to get you think that what Christ did for you was not enough. What do you do when that happens? Engage the core muscles. Remind yourself that is not who I am. I am complete in Jesus Christ.

### *The Believers Hope*

- Colossians 1:5-6—the believers hope is in heaven according to the “truth” of the gospel.
- Colossians 3:1-5—our affections are to be set upon things above.

- I Thessalonians 1:10—our attention and gaze is to fixed heaven word as we wait for his from heaven.
- Titus 2:13—Satan would like nothing more than to rob us of our hope by causing to think and function as though we are nation of Israel.

### *Final Thoughts on the Belt of Truth*

- “For the loins of our mind to be “girt about with truth” means that first of all our minds are to be occupied with the truth. Just as the belt or cinch would encircle the soldier’s loins surrounding them on all side and firmly gripping them, so also should the word, “the word of truth, be doing with our minds. Our minds should be encompassed by the word of God. . . Therefore, serious, diligent, and on-going study of “the word of truth” needs to be taking place in our lives.” (Blades, 303)

### **The Breastplate of Righteousness**

- Ephesians 6:14—the next piece of armor that Paul address is the breastplate of righteousness. Paul Sadler in his commentary on Ephesians states the following regarding the breastplate, “The breastplate is to be put on and never removed, as implied by the phrase “having on.”
  - I Thessalonians 5:8—“breastplate of faith”
- The breastplate was designed to protect a soldier’s vital organs namely the heart and lungs. If damage was done to these organs, it most often would have proved fatal to the soldier.
- Just as a Roman soldier would wear a breastplate to protect his vital organs, Paul tells us that righteousness serves as the believer’s breastplate to protect our vital organs against the wiles of the devil.
- When it comes to defining what kind or type of righteousness Paul has in mind here the commentators cannot agree. While they all agree it is not self-righteousness, some see it as imputed righteousness while others see it as practical rightness.
- Regarding the imputed righteousness view Sadler states, “Some have suggested it is the “imputed righteousness of God” that is received upon conversion (II Cor. 5:21). This righteousness, however, is never said to be put on, suggesting that it could be taken off.” (Sadler, 346-347)
- Meanwhile, Ernest Campbell seems to disagree with Sadler when he argues based upon the Greek tense translated “having on” “that believers are to be those who have put on the breastplate of righteousness.” (Campbell, 244-245) This implies that Paul does have imputed righteousness in mind not practical righteousness.

- Sadler argues for the practical righteousness view when he writes, “We believe the breastplate is a practical righteousness which emanates from the new nature that is said to be “created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:24).” (Sadler, 347) The breastplate has to do with our morality, that is, performing that which is right by living a life of good works. . . The breastplate of righteousness is a safeguard against the enemy’s attempts to discredit us and the message we proclaim.
- For the record, Keith R. Blades and H.A. Ironside seem to agree with Sadler that Paul has practical righteousness in mind when speaking about the breastplate.
- In order to try and understand what is going on here I would like to focus on the word breastplate. The word breastplate occurs 28 times in 24 verses in the King James Bible. Twenty-five of those times are in reference to the breastplate of Israel’s high priest and they don’t have anything to do with righteousness.
- Exodus 25:7—the first time the word breastplate occurs in your Bible it is used in connection with Israel’s tabernacle and religious system of the law.
- Exodus 28:1-4—the breastplate was one of the holy garments that those who ministered in the priest’s office would wear.
- Exodus 28:15—the breastplate of the high priest is specially called the breast plate of judgment.
- Exodus 28:16-21—twelve stones were to be set into the breastplate of judgment one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Exodus 28:29-30—when Aaron the high priest entered into the holy of holies he bore the sins of the nation and the breastplate of judgment protected his heart from the judgment of God upon the sins of the nation.
- Ephesians 6:14—we are to have on the breastplate of righteousness because our sin issue has been settled and judgment and justice have been satisfied by the work of Christ. The word righteousness occurs 64 times in 57 verses in Paul’s Epistles.
- II Corinthians 11:3—remember that the winds of doctrine are designed to corrupt our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ. The winds of doctrine are going to seek to accomplish two primary things: 1) complicate matters, 2) cause you to think that Christ is not enough.
- I Corinthians 1:30—Christ is our righteousness. Just as Christ was the truth in the first half of this message, Christ is our righteousness in the second half.
  - Galatians 3:27

- Romans 13:14
- II Corinthians 5:21—we have already been made the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.
- Romans 3:21-25—God is now in the righteousness business. He is declaring his righteousness and that sin has been dealt with and paid by the sacrifice of his son Jesus Christ.
  - Hebrews 9:26—Christ “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”
- The breastplate of rightness is our defense against the following three questions.
  - Romans 8:33—who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?
  - Romans 8:34—who is he that condemneth?
  - Romans 8:35—who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
    - Remember that the breastplate of judgment stood between, separated, and protected the heart of the high priest as he entered into the holy of holy to offer sacrifice for the sins of the nation. When did the breastplate of judgment become the breastplate of righteousness?
- Isaiah 59:1-2—Israel’s iniquities separated them from God. Just as the breastplate of judgment protected the heart of the high priest. Israel needed to have the judgment and justice of God against their sin satisfied. Notice the contrast here between Israel’s condition and Paul’s third questions in Romans 8:35.
- Isaiah 59:12-16—when the Lord looks at Israel’s condition it displeased him because there was no intercessor there was no way for judgment to be satisfied. Therefore, in verse 16 the Lord himself is going to have to take up for Israel and for her what she could not do for herself.
- Isaiah 59:17—the Lord Jesus Christ put on righteousness as a breastplate and contended for Israel. Upon the cross Christ suffered the judgment of God against sin and satisfied the offended justice of God. It is here the breastplate of judgment became the breastplate of righteousness.
- Ephesians 6:14—the breast plate of righteousness is the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. In Christ no one can lay anything to our charge, condemn us, or separate us from the love of Christ. It is righteousness of God manifest at Calvary that once and for all time defeated the adversary. Therefore, I know it will allow me to stand against the wiles of devil now as we withstand in the evil day.

### Works Cited

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