

Ephesians 6:10-14

Introduction

If you were here last week, or if you've read the notes from last week, you've learned that this last section of Ephesians isn't just the last section – it's the whole book of Ephesians wrapped up in one closing exhortation.

Remember the mystery of God's will to unite all things in Christ? That's big picture. Then remember the mighty power that God exercised in Christ in order to accomplish His will? What did God do? He went forth to battle against the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places so that He might reconcile us *to Himself* in Christ. Now we're seated with Christ in the heavenly places. What else did God do? He went forth to battle against the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places so that He might reconcile us *to each other* in Christ. Now by our very existence as the body of Christ, we're a constant reminder to the rulers and authorities of their defeat. God has truly blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. And now, in the full knowledge of this mystery unveiled before us, Paul concludes:

- ✓ Ephesians 6:10-13 — From now on, be empowered in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the complete armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil, because our intense struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the evil spiritual beings in the heavenly places. Because of this, take up the complete armor of God in order that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand.

Satan has already been defeated and the ground has already been won. But Satan hasn't yet been utterly vanquished. He still "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). He hates us because we're the ones in whom God is working out His plan for the uniting of all things in Christ. And so Satan's constant goal is our *alienation from God* through sin and unbelief, and our *alienation from one another* through pride, and selfishness, and bitterness, and anger. Revelation captures the tension between the victory already accomplished by Christ and the continuing intense struggle that faces every Christian.

- ✓ Revelation 12:7-10, 12, 17 — Now war arose in heaven [upon Christ's resurrection and ascension], Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God... Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them [that's us]! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" ... Then the dragon became furious... and went off to make war on... those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Satan has been defeated! – And yet he is still a dangerous and deadly enemy! That’s why Paul warns us about false teaching (“human *cunning*” and “*craftiness* in the service of the *scheme of error*”). That’s why Paul warns us not to give “place to the *Devil*” by our anger. That’s why Paul warns us against all the “unfruitful works of *darkness*.” That’s why Paul warns us that the days are still “*evil*.” Satan has already been defeated and the ground has already been won. But now that it’s been won, our calling is to *stand*. And the *only* way we can stand is by “putting on” and “taking up” the complete armor of God.

I. “Put on the complete armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil... take up the complete armor of God in order that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand.”

Most translations say, “put on the *whole armor*.” The New Living Translation paraphrases, “put on *all* of God’s *armor*.” In other words, make sure that you put it *all* on, and not just some of it! That’s true! We do need to take up every last piece of armor in order to stand against the spiritual assaults of the enemy. Notice that Paul says, “Take up the complete armor of God in order that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, *and having done everything*, to stand.” Sixteen hundred years ago, Jerome put it this way:

“Just as wise leaders of armies are accustomed to assault especially those places of a city which are least protected so that, when they have broken in through those places, the protected areas may be easily captured, so also the devil seeks to break in and reach the very citadel of our heart and soul through those places which he sees lying open or perhaps not shut up firmly.” (Jerome; quoted in Thielman)

The point is that in light of who our enemy is, we can’t afford to be casual or half-hearted in the putting on of our armor. We must approach every day as the full out, all out battle that it is. We must go out every day fully *equipped* for the intense struggle – for the battle being waged for our souls. But how many times are we not even aware of the battle? How many times do we simply take for granted that “we’re good”? Listen to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians:

- ✓ 1 Corinthians 10:6–12 — Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

One of the marks of those who occupy the ground already won by Christ is that they feel the pressing need to stand their ground – lest they fall. Take heed, then, and put on the whole armor of God in order that you may stand, “and *having done everything*, to stand.” Be careful and diligent to put on every day the *whole* armor of God.

But I wonder if in this translation we actually miss another emphasis, and even a main emphasis of these words. It's so easy for us, when we see a list, to view it "mechanically" – almost like a magic formula. So "*the list*" (in this case the list of the pieces of armor) becomes our "key" to success. But when Paul mentions the various pieces of armor, he doesn't necessarily "list" them all. Paul is using the armor of a Roman soldier just to illustrate spiritual truth. So in Ephesians, we have the breastplate of righteousness, but in Thessalonians we have the "breastplate of faith and love" (1 Thess. 5:8). In Ephesians we have the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, but in Corinthians we have "the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left" (2 Cor. 6:7). In Ephesians, many of these pieces of armor are going to be very similar, just with a different name and a slightly different emphasis. So this isn't some magical list where we "check off" each item one after the other in some sort of mechanical way and then we're "covered." Even when we're diligently "taking up" and "putting on" the armor, so that "having done everything" we might stand, we can't lose the constant, underlying foundation of God's *grace*. So instead of, "put on the whole armor of God," we translate, "put on the complete armor of God." This is actually only one Greek word, and it's the word "panoplia," from which we get our word "panoply." What's a panoply? The dictionary says it's a "complete or impressive collection of things" (web). In the time of Paul, it was specifically a complete set of armor (Luke 11:22; ESV; NET; NRSV; NIV; YLT). So when Paul says, "put on the complete armor of God," we can't miss the emphasis on the *completeness* and the *full sufficiency* of what *God* has provided. It's the complete armor *of God* – which means that even the armor is all of God's grace. God has provided us with a very impressive, and fully sufficient, *complete* set of armor. *He* has left *nothing* out. *He* has provided us with *everything* that we need in order to stand fast against *any* and *every* attack of the enemy.

- ✓ 2 Peter 1:3 — His divine power has granted to us *all things* that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.

When we think that we might not be able to stand, we can. When we think that things are impossible, they're not. They never are. Paul said: "Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." But then the next thing he says is this:

- ✓ 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB) — *No temptation* has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted *beyond what you are able*, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, *so that you will be able to endure it*.

The *ground* on which we stand has been won for us by God's grace. But that's not all. The *armor* that enables us to stand fast on that ground has also been provided for us by God's free grace. And so it's in this all pervasive context of God's free grace, that we hear now the urgent exhortation to "take up" the complete armor of God, and "*put it on*," and "having done *everything*, to stand." So what is the armor of God?

II. "Put on the complete armor of God"

In Ephesians chapter four, Paul exhorted us to:

- ✓ Ephesians 4:22, 24 — *Put off* according to your former manner of life the old man, the one being corrupted according to the cravings of deceit... and... *put on* the new man.

So here in Ephesians six, Paul is just picturing the *putting on* of the *new man* as the *putting on* of *armor*. What is the armor of God? It's the new man that we are, and that we are to constantly be putting on. Paul said that the new man is "created *according to God* in *righteousness* and holiness of the *truth*" (Eph. 4:24). In a minute, we'll see that the Christian's armor is the armor *of God* – armor which includes the breastplate of *righteousness*, and the girding of our waists with *truth*.

So the armor of God isn't some secret formula that we find for the first time in Ephesians 6! What we're going to see is that the whole book of Ephesians has been full of the armor of God. What's new here is not the armor, but just *calling* it "armor." In other words, Paul wants us to see that this new man he's been describing and calling us to put on isn't just the "evidence" that we're truly Christians, it's actually God's gracious provision for battle – so that we might stand and not fall. The "new person" that we are to put on isn't just evidence of past salvation, it's actually the key to our survival and final salvation on the future day of the Lord. The new man that God has created and called us to put on *is* the complete armor of God which enables us to stand fast against all the schemes of the Devil. So now Paul begins to describe for us this wonderful, powerful armor that God has provided. This morning, we'll look just at the first piece.

III. "Stand, therefore, having girded your waist with truth"

Everyone seems to agree that Paul probably has in mind here a "leather apron [that was] worn under the armor like breeches." (Lincoln) But that's not the important thing.

Over and over again in Ephesians, Paul has spoken about the *truth*. In our world today, Satan has successfully replaced even the *idea* of truth with a lie. "There is no truth," is the lie the world believes and teaches. But we should be careful, because Satan's lies are not always so blatant as this.

The truth is something objective. It's a standard and a rule of measurement outside of us that we believe and confess. So Paul has written:

- ✓ Ephesians 1:13 — In whom also you, having heard the word of *truth* – the gospel of your salvation...
- ✓ Ephesians 4:20-21 — But you did not learn Christ in this way—assuming that you have heard Him and were taught in Him as the *truth* is in Jesus...

Jesus said: "I am the way, *the truth*, and the life..." (John 14:6). The truth isn't a crutch, as the world wants to say. But once it's wholly *surrendered* to, it is a wonderful comfort, and anchor for our minds and our hearts. The truth is the whole will of God throughout all of Scripture that's fully and finally revealed to us in Jesus.

Paul exhorts those who've learned the truth, and know the truth, to *speak* truth to each other.

- ✓ Ephesians 4:25 (cf. 4:15) — Therefore, having put off the lie, speak **truth**—each of you—with his neighbor...
- ✓ Ephesians 4:15 — Speaking the **truth** in love we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head—Christ...

Not only are we to speak truth to each other, Paul says the truth is something that we **live**.

- ✓ Ephesians 5:9 — The *fruit* of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and **truth**...
- ✓ Ephesians 4:24 — Put on the new man, the one created according to God in *righteousness and holiness* of the **truth**.

So the truth is that objective, unshakable, solid foundation for all of our thinking, and speaking, and living. That's why our increasing knowledge and constant grounding of ourselves **in** the truth is such a vital part of putting on the armor that God has provided. It's the truth that guards us against being double-minded and unstable in all our ways (cf. James 1:8). It's the truth that guards us against the "cravings of deceit" (Eph. 4:22). It's the truth that guards us against "human cunning" and "craftiness in the service of the scheme of error." In other words, the truth protects us from false ideas about Jesus and salvation, false ideas about living, false ideas about the world around us, and every other kind of false idea with which the "father of lies" would seek to deceive us (John 8:44). His lies are subtle. They're often designed to look for all the world *like* the truth. Paul writes in Corinthians:

- ✓ 2 Corinthians 11:13–14 — For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

So the more, and more, and more that we know the truth, and speak the truth, and live the truth, the more equipped we'll be to oppose, and resist, and expose, and stand firm against all the devil's lies – in our own thinking and living, and in the world around us. The world tells us there is no objective, absolute standard of truth that speaks to literally every part of our lives. But we are those who have "heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation." We are those who have been "taught in Jesus, as the truth is in Him." And so as we face our enemy and stand our ground, it's absolutely essential that we gird our waists with truth. And we do this very practically by constantly renewing our minds in the Scriptures – by **reading** them ourselves, and also being fervently **devoted** to the teaching that we are receiving every Sunday (4:11-14).

Lies are everywhere around us – the lies the world tells us, the lies we tell ourselves, the lies that are told to us ultimately by the father of lies – who first lied to Adam and Eve in the garden.

- ✓ Genesis 3:1–6 — Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you

will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Ever since the garden, lies and deceits have been one of Satan’s *most* successful weapons against even the most mature and seasoned Christians. Paul’s point here isn’t what all of these lies and deceits are (they’re myriad), but the life and death importance of having our waists girded with *truth*. We can’t ever be lazy about this or take it for granted. In light of the seductiveness and deadliness of Satan’s lies, we must always have our minds and hearts steeped in the truth as it’s revealed in Jesus who is revealed in all the pages of Scripture.

Remember what Paul said: “Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.” But here’s the good news of God’s grace. When we’ve girded our waists with truth, when we put on this piece of armor that God freely provides, we can’t possibly fail to stand. In fact, Paul wants us to know that this armor God provides for *us* is in some sense the very same armor that *He* wore when He went to battle in His Messiah.

- ✓ Isaiah 11:4–5 — With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. [And he shall have his *loins girt with righteousness*, and his *sides clothed with truth*; LXX].

“Stand, therefore,” brothers and sisters, “having girded your waist with *truth*...”