

Putting on the Whole Armor of God—Truth and Righteousness

Daniel 10:13; Ephesians 6:14

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Greg L. Price

We have begun discussing the importance of being armed for battle against that great enemy of our soul—Satan and his demonic forces. Our great Warrior-King, Jesus Christ, has already conquered this enemy so that the outcome of this battle is not in doubt.

Every child of God will through faith in Christ overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil (1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:4,18). By faith we look back to Christ's victory (Colossians 2:15). By hope we look forward to our victory. In this battle against the wiles (cunning temptations) of the devil, we will lose hope if we do not daily remember these certain truths.

I dare say that being spiritually armed for battle is even more important than being physically armed for battle against enemies we can see with our natural eyes (2 Chronicles 20:22-23). God grants us the right to defend ourselves against a physical attack; but how much more we must be ready to defend ourselves against the spiritual attacks of the enemy.

As we consider the spiritual armor and spiritual weapons already purchased for us by Christ as a part of our inheritance in Him, let us focus our attention today on the following two pieces of spiritual armor: (1) The Belt of Truth; (2) The Breastplate of Righteousness.

I. The Belt of Truth.

A. Review from Ephesians 6:10-13 (points to remember).

1. Stand and resist the enemy (Ephesians 6:11,13). Don't be indifferent. Take this battle seriously (James 4:7). We resist/oppose the devil by clinging to our inheritance in Christ and putting on the whole armor of God.
2. This enemy is spiritual—not flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12). We need to be spiritually ready, not lazy (watch and pray).
3. Put on the whole armor of God—not a little here and there (Ephesians 6:11,13). Male and female, old and young, black and white, rich and poor, minister and member—all alike are to put on the whole armor of God. These are the orders of our glorious King.
4. This battle must be fought in Christ's power (Ephesians 6:10). It is not our mere effort—it is the victory and power of Christ. We could fight with all our might till the day we die and accomplish nothing if we are not strong in the power of His might.

B. Paul was imprisoned in a Roman prison as he wrote this letter, and he likely had an armed Roman soldier just inside or outside his prison cell as he considered the spiritual armor we must use in this battle against the wiles (cunning temptations) of the devil. Paul likened one part of the Roman soldier's armor to a piece of the spiritual armor we must employ in our battle against the devil. Let me note two observations.

1. First, most of the armor that Paul identifies is defensive in nature (Ephesians 6:14-17). The only offensive weapon clearly identified is the sword (Ephesians 6:17). Why is this the case? I submit that once again Paul emphasizes the amazing truth that Jesus has already won the victory and we are called to defend the territory/inheritance of Christian liberty that He has already purchased for us.
2. Second, as Paul focuses on the soldier's armor, why does he first mention the belt? That seems far less important than other pieces of the soldier's armor (the helmet, breastplate, or sword). What's so important about the belt? The belt held everything together. It held down and secured in place the breastplate that covered the chest so that it did not shift around or fall off. It also held in place any protection below the belt and held the scabbard for ready use of the sword when it was needed. To lose the belt was to

render everything else unstable.

- a. Why does Paul most likely compare the belt of the Roman soldier to the truth? Because it is truth that holds all of the armor in place. Without the truth nothing else will really matter. Without the truth, we have no basis to fight against the enemy.
- b. We know the enemy is a liar (as Jesus said), and without the truth we simply fight against the enemy and his lies with our own lies.

C. There are two aspects of truth that we should briefly address: (1) Objective truth; and (2) Subjective application of the truth.

1. Objective truth (i.e. truth that is outside ourselves and is found in the God of truth who cannot lie and in what He has revealed in nature and Scripture).

a. God is the source of all truth. He has never learned a truth. He is truth (John 14:6). He is absolute truth, and He has revealed His truth in what He has created and in what He has revealed to His prophets—especially in Scripture (Psalm 19:1-9). God’s truth is not relative, changeable, or founded upon mere personal/societal opinion or upon some theory.

b. We live in an age in which people claim to have their “own truth” (as if truth is merely subjective and personal). This idea of truth is Satan-inspired. It is to live in a land of contradictions—my truth contradicts your truth.

c. If a male thinks he is a female, well that’s his truth. Truth is what we think it is no matter how foolish or rebellious it may be (parents have no rights over their children; babies in the womb are not persons, but are just an appendix/kidney). Relativism (truth is what you want it to be) will lead to skepticism (no one can know the truth). This is also a problem in the church when it comes to doctrine, worship, and church government (where we say or imply that someone’s position may be right for them, but not right for us). That is relativism, and it leads to skepticism that no one can know for sure what is God’s truth. This denies the God of truth and the revelation of truth (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

c. We must be firmly grounded in the truth of Scripture (as summarized in faithful Confessions, Catechisms, Covenants, etc.). We will not be firmly grounded in the truth by occasionally picking up our Bibles, but must be students of the Word (2 Timothy 2:15). Otherwise we will be fighting the lie of Satan with our own lies—we will lose every time (as did Eve with the serpent in Genesis 3). We will be deceived and misled by the enemy to the degree we are not firmly grounded in the truth of God revealed in Scripture—none of the armor will hold its place. In times of great sorrow, it is the truth and promises of Christ that sustains us.

2. Subjective application of the truth.

a. We must know it, but we must also practice it and stand for it as we speak the truth in love. To know the truth and not to stand for it out of love for God and our neighbor is to use it as a mere ornament on our mantle, rather than as a tool to be used daily in our fight against the enemy. Holding on to the truth by faith is especially important when the devil would tempt you to trust your feelings.

b. Let us always remember in our use of the truth to be patient with the ignorant and weak person, but to be direct with the obstinate and rebellious person; and in all cases to be uncompromising in the truth of Christ. The truth when genuinely learned will humble us, not make us proud/arrogant. When we have learned the truth, we should want to defend it, but we should not want to pick fights with family, friends, and co-workers. Love does not replace the truth, but we are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

c. When the truth is lived out in our lives (in our marriages, church, and work), it becomes the belt to hold everything together in our battle against the enemy. Know it and live it out by God’s grace. It’s those inconsistencies in what we profess to be true and what we practice that the enemy attacks.

II. The Breastplate of Righteousness.

A. This part of the armor covers the chest and at times covered the back as well. It covered the vital parts and organs of the soldier. To be without this piece of armor left the soldier ever so vulnerable to injury. This piece of armor was usually made of metal so as to protect against arrows, spears, or swords of the enemy. Smaller pieces of metal were bound together with leather straps or wire of some kind so that it did not fall apart, but allowed the soldier some freedom of movement from side to side or from back to front.

B. As with truth so with righteousness, there is an objective side and subjective side to it. Both are so very important in our battle against the temptations of the devil.

1. Objective righteousness (a righteousness outside of us).

a. This is the righteousness of Jesus Christ which He lived and practiced in perfect obedience to all of God's Law. He never failed in His life upon the earth to keep any commandment of God in thought, word, or deed from infancy to His ascension (Hebrews 4:15).

b. The perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed or credited to us by faith alone so that God then declares that we are accounted as righteous as Jesus Himself. Jesus took to His account all of the sins of His people, and paid for them all—that's the basis for our forgiveness). And God imputes the perfect righteousness of Christ to the account of all who trust in Him and declares them righteous now and for all eternity—that's the basis for our justification (2 Corinthians 5:21).

c. When the enemy would cast his spear or thrust his sword at us in condemning us, in accusing us, in discouraging us when we fail, falter, and sin, how important it is to our resisting this enemy that we have this breastplate of righteousness in place upheld by belt of truth (Romans 8:33-34).

2. Subjective righteousness.

a. This is living out in our daily lives God's righteousness that is found in His commandments—not for our justification, but for our sanctification and growth in Christ. This righteousness is rooted in our love for God and our neighbor. This righteousness is not a begrudging duty to keep His commandments, but rather a loving duty (John 14:15). We even are keeping God's commandments, when we arise by God's grace and seek His mercy and His forgiveness, turning in repentance from our sin to the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. It is not an indication of true repentance to remain under the guilt and burden of sin that we have committed. That may be a works-righteousness or unbelief to lay hold by faith of God's mercy. We should mourn over our sin, but we should also be comforted (Matthew 5:4).

b. We neither excuse our sin because we have the fruit of righteousness within us, nor do we wallow in sin for the same reason. With the breastplate of righteousness which Jesus has purchased for us, we seek by our loving obedience to God's commandments to maintain a clear conscience before God and man, which is mighty in resisting the attacks of the enemy (Matthew 5:6). Do you (Do I) hunger and thirst after righteousness to be conformed to the image of Christ? Jesus promises we will be filled.

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