

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

## Our Great Armor

### Ephesians 6:14

**Intro:** When informing believers about the specifics of spiritual warfare they will naturally and inevitably be engaged in, the Apostle Paul begins by first telling us to strengthen ourselves in the Lord and then, having acquired sufficient strength to carry it, we are to put on the whole armor of God. Paul then goes on to explain the nature of the evil forces arrayed against us, which prompts him to reiterate the critical need for believer to take up the totality of God's armor so that we will be able to effectively stand against these spiritual hosts of wickedness that's coming against us.

Judging from the imagery Paul uses to describe spiritual warfare (wrestle), it would be accurate to refer to the Christian walk as hand-to-hand combat. The Christian life is no genteel engagement. It's not a spectator sport, it's a contact sport! It's warfare, and because of this it's necessary for the Christian soldier to wear armor adequate to resist the spiritual (and sometimes physical) onslaughts of Satan. Satan intends the destruction of every human soul and, if that's not possible (as it is for believers) then he will attempt to destroy our Christian walk and/or testimony. So, we must fight him and we will only be able to do this successfully if we avail ourselves of God's armor.

Having sufficiently prepared us for the importance of donning the full armor of God, Paul now begins to describe individual pieces of that armor. Since we're fighting against enemies in the spiritual world, we need special spiritual equipment both for offense and defense. Paul mentions six pieces of armor in this passage: a belt, a breastplate, shoes, a shield, a helmet, and a sword. They stand for truth, righteousness, readiness of the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the Bible. The first five are defensive in nature; the last is our only offensive weapon. God has provided a complete set of armor for each believer and we dare not omit any part of it. Satan looks for the unguarded area in every believer's life where he can establish a beachhead, a scenario Paul's already warned against in [4:27](#). We'll take each piece of armor 1 at a time and look at the significance and spiritual benefit each brings to the fight.

**14a** – Stand – Again, we can only stand when we are equipped with the armor God has provided for us in Jesus Christ. Each aspect of this armor accommodates a specific dynamic within the Christian life that enables us to stand against spiritual attack. Where did Paul get his thoughts about this armor? I’ve never heard a sermon about this armor that didn’t point out that Paul probably began to think along these lines while being chained to a Roman guard during his imprisonment. It’s definitely plausible. We can imagine him looking at the guard’s armor, thinking of the Christian’s spiritual warfare, and wondering what spiritual truths the various parts of the armor would illustrate.

It’s entirely possible that Paul came by his ideas about the Christian’s armor in this way, but I would venture to say that in this case, as in most others, Paul got his ideas from the Word of God. Paul had filled his mind with the doctrines, words, and images of the OT and he would have known that in **Isa 59** there’s a picture of God putting on His own armor. **V17** says, He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head. Since these are the exact phrases we find in **ch6**, it’s more likely Paul got his idea here. This is important. It means that when Paul speaks of the “armor of God,” he’s not thinking of it only as the armor which God supplies—His in the sense that He gives it—but rather that it’s actually God’s own armor, the armor which He wears into battle Himself. As Paul describes these pieces, he is careful to list them in the order a soldier would put them on.

First, is the belt (or girdle) of truth. Roman soldiers wore a wide, belt-like leather apron, worn under the armor; that covered their abdominal and groin areas. It was a foundational part of their battle gear that helped them not to buckle but to remain upright under the force of close-quarter combat. Technically, the belt is not part of the armor but before the armor can be put on, the garments underneath must be gathered together and secured. The soldier might have every other part of his equipment but without this belt, he would not be fully prepared or properly armed. His belt was an essential part of his war equipment in that it assured the other parts stayed in place, it provided him with complete freedom of movement and, most importantly, it held his sword. The belt gave the soldier a sense of inner fortitude and strength when it was tightened, it gave him the confidence to stand and face the enemy.

According to Paul’s teaching, the spiritual equivalent is for the believer to

have truth like a belt around their waist. It's to be our inner strength, what gives us confidence. In this way, truth is regarded as the quality that will protect the most vulnerable part of the body and will keep believers upright and enable them to stand. Or, to put it the other way around, without truth believers will be vulnerable to the schemes of the devil (the father of lies). Falsehood is a glaring gap in the believer's armor that, if exposed, will enable the enemy to penetrate the most vital regions of the spiritual anatomy (their Christian walk and testimony).

Commentators have looked at "truth" in 2 ways since it can have 2 basic meanings. 1<sup>st</sup>) it can mean "the truth of God." That is, it can refer to Christian doctrine or the specific content of God's revelation in the Bible. 2<sup>nd</sup>) since the article "the" is not present, truth can refer to truthfulness or sincerity of heart. In all actuality, it's not necessary to choose between these 2 alternatives." The Bible teaches that personal, inner truth or truthfulness begins with a knowledge of God (who is truth) and a knowledge of the truth of God (if it is really known) inevitably leads to a life change consistent with God's character. We must be truthful men and women, of course. But we will become that only as we feast on the revealed truths of God.

It's significant that Paul puts truth first. This suggests that successful spiritual warfare begins with fixing Christianity's great doctrines firmly in our minds. Or to put it another way: It's dangerous to rush into battle without having the great doctrines of the faith fixed firmly in our understanding. Americans especially should hear this, for we have a tendency to think that activity is the important thing and that convictions or truth do not matter or are at least of secondary importance. That's a questionable approach in any discipline, and it's certainly not a good approach in Christianity. In Christianity truth comes first, then action follows. Without truth, without the doctrines, without the knowledge of who God is, who we are, what we have become in Christ, and what we have been called to do (exactly the things Paul's been teaching in Ephesians)—without this we really don't know what kind of activity in which to engage, and we will be vulnerable to Satan's onslaughts and wiles.

Case in point: I've recently read that there's a new "model" of prayer being taught by some false teachers who claim to be continuing the office of Apostle and Prophet. They say the church is to decree and make power proclamations against the principalities and powers in the heavenlies. They

insist that through prayer, believers are now to confront territorial spirits; to bind them and to command them to surrender their territory. This may sound really dramatic but it is literally nonsense! Nowhere does the Bible instruct believers to do this and there is no biblical precedent of this being done by Jesus or any of the original 1<sup>st</sup> Century Apostles – the real Apostles.

In Scripture, believers are never told to go around *rebuking* Satan or *binding* Satan; we're told simply to resist him. We're never commanded to seek out demons, to try and pull them down, curse them, bind them and supposedly throw them into the pit of hell. Thus, this whole movement is nothing but a major distraction from the devil himself to prohibit the spread of the gospel. These false teachers insist that this warfare prayer must be done first to cleanse the heavenlies before you can evangelize an area effectively. I'd bet this would come as a shock to Paul! We are to preach the gospel no matter where or what because it's the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation!

Do you know the great truths of Christianity? Do you study the Bible to apprehend them more deeply? Do you know God's Word well enough to counteract the influence of the ridiculous nonsense that's constantly offered by certain sections of the Church? When you get to heaven and happen to meet Malachi the prophet and he asks you how you liked his book; what are you going to say? It's a sad commentary on the modern Church that more Christians have a better grasp of modern culture and social media than they do of Scripture. They know more about the batting avg. of baseball players than they do the 4 Gospels. They can fill out their basketball brackets but can't explain salvation coherently. They know the football playoff better than they know the Sermon on the Mount.

These things shouldn't be. Certainly we're free to learn all we can about everything we can, but lesser things should not keep us from mastering the truths that will make us strong for battle. There's one more thing to consider. I said earlier that the belt also held the sword. For the believer, the sword is the Word of God and it is our only offensive weapon. So, unless we know the truth and unless we practice the truth in thought, word and deed; how can we ever hope to use the Word of truth effectively in battle? If I haven't allowed the truth to make a difference in my life, how do I expect to use it to make a difference in someone else's life? We must first of all gird ourselves with truth!

**14b** – The second piece of the Roman soldier's equipment is his breastplate, which Paul compares to righteousness.

Roman soldiers wore a strong piece of metal armor that covered their chest which was designed to protect the torso, heart and lungs. The spiritual equivalent views righteousness as similarly protective, especially of the heart. Like truth, righteousness can be taken in 2 ways. It can refer to what theologians call imputed righteousness, the righteousness of Jesus Christ reckoned to a Christian's account that enables him to stand before God. Or it can refer to specific acts of righteousness—personal holiness, as we might say.

In **Zech 3:1-5** there's a scene in which Joshua the high priest is standing before the Angel of the Lord in the temple, and Satan is also standing there to accuse him. Since we're told that Joshua is dressed in filthy clothes, representing his and the people's sin, Satan must have been pointing to these and declaring forcefully that Joshua was not fit to stand before the Lord in this office. It's a clear case of spiritual warfare. But the angel of God intervenes.

"Take off his filthy clothes," says the angel. Then, in place of the filthy clothes he had been wearing, the angel gives him new rich garments and a clean turban for his head. Clearly this symbolizes the righteousness of Christ imputed to him—the clothes were not something Joshua acquired for himself but rather were something given to him—and it is in this righteousness alone that he is enabled to resist Satan's vile accusations. But that's not the end of the story!

It's significant that immediately after Joshua had been invested with rich robes and a clean turban symbolizing God's righteousness, the angel gave Joshua a charge to be holy (**Zech 3:6-7**). So, imputed righteousness is not to be separated or segregated from actual righteousness. It's because he had been made righteous that Joshua was then to live righteously.

Which meaning is Paul suggesting here? Many scholars seem to be aghast at the idea that we can stand against Satan in our own righteousness, but I believe that argument misses the point. If I had to choose between the 2 possible meanings of righteousness in this passage, I'd actually pick the second, for this reason: In this context Paul is urging those who are already

Christians to “put on” God’s armor. If they’re Christians, they’ve already been clothed with God’s righteousness in the first sense. Therefore the only thing further they can put on is this practical holiness expressed in righteous thoughts and deeds. Being a righteous person protects the believer from corruption of the heart. After all, if the heart goes bad, then all is lost! The enemy must not be allowed to corrupt a believer’s sense of right and wrong, or to mislead them into unrighteous conduct. That is a certain path to ultimate spiritual destruction, so the believer must protect their own heart at all costs.

Jesus gives us the sense of this when He said in reference to Satan, “The ruler of this world is coming and he has nothing in Me (or he has no hold on Me)” (Jn 14:30). It’s been said that although Satan couldn’t find any sin in Christ to take hold of, he can latch onto plenty in us. That may be true. We are sinful. But what Paul is saying here is that this shouldn’t be. The main part of Greco-Roman wrestling is breaking any hold your opponent may have on you. We shouldn’t give Satan handles to grasp easily. Instead, we must live righteously, as Job did, so Satan and everyone else can see that we are God’s true children and His faithful servants.

There’s another aspect of this armor that is revealed in the original Greek grammar and is implied in our English translation by the word having. The grammatical aspect conveys actions that are required to take place before the main verb can be accomplished – which is to stand. In other words, believers are to fasten on their belt of truth and put on their breastplate of righteousness before they make their stand against the forces of evil. Such preparations would be natural, even expected, in a literal, physical battle. Spiritual warfare is no different.

I have personally seen the damage inflicted on individual believers and churches because of a failure to do just this thing. I’ve had more than 1 individual approach me, worried over the fact that they had missed church and were unable to give their tithes. One actually told me, “I don’t want to go to Hell!” What? Those boxes by the door are for gift freely and graciously offered to the Lord; they’re not for collecting fire insurance premiums! On the other extreme, I’ve heard of churches that teach that since you’ve been born again and can never lose your salvation – you can live however you want, you won’t be judged! Completely opposite viewpoints, both completely wrong, both completely heartbreaking because the Word of God



is so very clear on both concepts. Neither party knows the truth and thus both are headed for spiritual disaster, if not complete destruction.

There's a double entendre here for both of these pieces of armor. Despite Paul's familiarity with Roman armor, as I mentioned earlier, he most likely gleaned this idea of spiritual armor from the OT. As such, the belt of truth recalls Isaiah's description of the promised Messiah ([11:5b](#)) who will wear faithfulness as the belt of His waist. The word translated faithfulness in the Greek version of [Isa 11:5](#) is the same word that's translated truth in our text.

By the same token, the imagery for the breastplate of righteousness comes directly from [Isa 59:17](#), where the Lord Himself put on righteousness as a breastplate in order to battle against His enemies for the sake of justice and salvation ([15-18](#)). This is a clear example of the armor of God, which He Himself wears for the purpose of battle. Thus, a believer who wears the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness shares in the armor of God as an expression of their union with Jesus Christ. This is what it means to be strong in the Lord ([6:10](#)).

What do we need if we are to fight against Satan? Is it truth? Yes, we need truth, but not just any truth. We need God's own truth: the truth of God, which we find in Scripture. Do we need righteousness? Yes, but not just human righteousness. We first need the righteousness of God as accounted to us through the work of Jesus Christ. Do we need the gospel? It is God's gospel, God's good news. Do we need peace? It is God's peace. Faith? It is faith from God, a fruit of the Holy Spirit ([Gal 5:22](#)). Is it salvation? God is salvation. We must be armed with Him.

You might be thinking about just waving the white flag and skulking off of the battlefield because you don't feel that you quite measure up. Well, you're not wrong and you're certainly not alone. None of us measure up to the challenge but if we think we need to then we've missed Paul's point altogether. The wonderful reality is this: no matter how weak our faith may be, how meager our discipleship may be, how much we shame the name of Christ and have so often to repent and turn home again—no matter how much we fail; because we're united to Christ with a love which will never let us go, Satan with all his craft and power cannot stand against us and we can conquer him. . . . Even in our best condition we cannot meet Satan; but in our weakened and debilitated state, sinning far more than we live

virtuously, we are able to conquer him because Christ has given us the victory. 😊