

THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

(LESSON ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEEN)

“THE BELT OF TRUTH”

EPHESIANS 6:10-14

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.

The **New English Translation** renders verse **14** in the following way:
“Stand firm therefore, by fastening the belt of truth around your waist, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness.”

This is the third time in the passage that Paul calls on believers to **“Stand.”** This is his way of emphasizing the need for them to be steadfast in the face of a relentless, ruthless foe. The Greek word translated *“stand,”* or *“stand firm,”* is **histémi**: (**his’-tay-mee**) which, as we have noted in previous Lessons, was a military term for holding

one's position and therefore not yielding an inch of territory to the enemy. The word conveys the idea of standing one's ground, as opposed to taking flight. Paul, like a military general addressing his troops prior to a battle, gives a command to the believers in Ephesus to stand firm in their battle with Satan and his hosts.

In verses **11** and **13**, Paul urges the believers to put on, or take unto themselves, "*the whole armour of God*," so that they will be enabled to stand. The phrase, "*the whole armour of God*," is a translation of the Greek word **panoplia**: (**pan-op-lee'-ah**), which refers to the complete set of instruments used in offensive and defensive warfare. In verses **14-17**, Paul itemizes the offensive and defensive instruments that believers are to employ in spiritual warfare. The items of armour appear in the order in which a soldier would put them on before engaging in physical warfare, and together make up the full armour (**panoplia**).

The first piece of equipment listed is the "***Belt of Truth***." Paul says, "*Having your loins girt about with truth*," or, "*Fastening the belt of truth around your waist*."

Expositor's Greek Testament says, "First in the list of these articles of equipment is mentioned the girdle. Appropriately so; for the soldier might be furnished with every other part of his equipment, and yet, wanting the girdle, would be neither fully accoutered [equipped] nor securely armed. His belt was no mere adornment of the soldier, but an essential part of his equipment. Passing round the loins and by the end of the breastplate (in later times supporting the sword), it was of especial use in keeping other parts in place, and in securing the proper soldierly attitude and freedom of movement."



The Roman Soldier's belt was not the most noticeable piece of his armour but it was his "badge of office" (an object which shows that you have an official position). It was worn with the tunic at all times and formed the central piece of his armour holding all the rest securely in place. The belt was broad and composed of sturdy leather. From it hung an overlapping skirt of leather straps almost like an apron on which were decorative rivets. Also from the belt hung specialized hooks and holders on which to secure the scabbard that contained the dagger, the quiver which held lances, and an apparatus on which to rest the large battle shield. Also, on the belt were clips with which to hold the breastplate in its proper place. Supplies of bread, oil and water were also on the belt.

The phrase, "*Having girt about,*" or "*fastening around,*" is the translation of a Greek word which means, "to gird around; to fasten garments with a girdle; to gird oneself." Figuratively, the word speaks of readiness for activity. The belt tied tightly around the waist indicated that a soldier was ready for combat. Conversely, to slacken the belt equated with the soldier going off duty, something that is never to be the case with a Christian soldier. We are always on duty, because the devil and his emissaries are never at rest.

The officers in the Roman army wore short skirts very much like Scottish kilts. Over them they wore a cloak or tunic that was secured at the waist with a belt. When they were about to enter battle, they would tuck the tunic up under the belt so as to leave their legs free and unimpeded for the fight. This action was known as, "belting one's waist," or, "girding up the loins" and was always a symbol of readiness to fight. The word is in a construction in the Greek which indicates that it is the believer who has the responsibility of girding himself or herself, or fastening on the belt. No one else can accomplish this task. The believer must gird his or her own loins, or waist, about with truth.

The Greek word translated "*loins,*" or "*waist*" is **osphus: (os-foos')** and refers literally to the general area of the body between the ribs and the

thighs, the midsection between the upper and lower body that includes the hips, the small of the back, the waist, and the reproductive organs.

Girded loins signified that a man was ready for service or battle (**2 Samuel 20:8, 2 Kings 4:29, Luke 12:35,**). The phrase “girded loins” was also used figuratively to describe a state of alertness or readiness (**Exodus 12:11, Job 38:3, 1 Peter 1:13**).

In **1 Peter 1:13** the Apostle writes, “*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind.*” Commenting on these words the Greek New Testament scholar, **Kenneth Wuest**, made the following remarks:

“Peter here uses an oriental expression referring to the act of gathering up around the waist, the long, loose eastern robes which would impede one's progress in running or other exertion. The recipients of this letter are reminded by the apostle in **1:1** that they are strangers, those who have temporarily settled down alongside of a pagan population, and also pilgrims as well (**2:11**). As such they should always be ready to move. The Israelites had orders to eat the Passover with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, their staff in their hand, ready to move on a moment's notice (**Exodus 12:11**).

It is not physical exertion that Peter has in mind here, but mental. If the purpose of girding up the clothing was to put out of the way that which would impede the **physical** progress of an individual, the girding up of the loins of the mind would be the putting out of the mind all that would impede the free action of the mind in connection with the onward progress of the **Christian experience**, things such as worry, fear, jealousy, hate, unforgiveness, impurity. These things harbored in the mind prevent the Holy Spirit from using the mental faculties of the Christian in the most efficient manner, and thus from causing that believer to grow in the Christian life and make progress in his salvation. The word 'to gird up' is in the **orist tense** which refers to a past once-for-all act. Bringing this oriental expression over to the occidental

[western] manner of thinking, enables us to translate, '*Wherefore, having put out of the way, once for all, everything that would impede the free action of your mind.*' Peter treats this as a God-expected obligation on the part of the believer. In **1:3** we learned that as the believer definitely subjected himself to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, He would produce in his life through the Word, that Christian optimism that always looks for the best and not for the worst, that always sees the silver lining on every cloud. By the power of the same Holy Spirit, he is able to exert his will in putting out of his mind those things that would impede its free action. Thus, the Christian has the privilege of enjoying the wholesome mental atmosphere called '*Christian optimism and a care-free mind,*' not a mind devoid of an appreciation of the seriousness of life and its responsibilities, but a mind not crippled and frozen by worry, fear, and their related mental attitudes. Living in this blessed mental state, the believer is ready and able to obey the exhortations to which the apostle now addresses himself."

Brothers and sisters, **truth** is the girdle or belt that must fastened around our waists. The word "*truth*" is a translation of the Greek word **alétheia**: (**al-ay'-thi-a**), which refers to, "what is true in any matter under consideration (opposed to what is feigned, fictitious, false); what is true in things pertaining to God and the duties of man, (moral and religious truth); sincerity of mind and integrity of character, or a mode of life in harmony with divine truth."

The idea is of the unveiled reality lying at the basis of, and agreeing with an appearance; the manifested, the veritable essence of matter. Truth is the correspondence between a reality and a declaration which professes to set it forth. Words are true when they correspond with objective reality. Persons and things are true when they correspond with their profession. Hence a truth is a declaration which has corresponding reality, or a reality which is correctly set forth. Since God is Himself the great reality, that which correctly sets forth His nature is pre-eminently

the Truth. Obviously whatever God says is “**the truth**,” and in fact “**the Truth**” is actually embodied in the Person of Jesus Christ!

We must faithfully hold to the truth of God’s word, but it is also necessary for the truth to hold us. We must apply the truth of God’s Word to our daily lives and test everything by comparing it to that plumbline (**Amos 7:7-8**).

In **Philippians 1:27**, Paul writes the following to the believers in Philippi: “*Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that—whether I come and see you or whether I remain absent—I should hear that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, by contending side by side for the faith of the gospel*” (**New English Translation**).

In the opening clause Paul writes, “*Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.*” The Greek word translated “*in a manner worthy*” is **axiós**: (**ax-ee’-oce**). When it is used in the context that it is in this verse, **axiós** means, “having the weight of, or weighing as much as another thing.” It means, “of like value, worth as much.” The believers in Philippi are to see to it that their conduct, or manner of life weighs as much as the gospel that they profess to believe. If they fail to do so, then their words will not have weight. That which gives weight or value to a Christian’s words, is the fact that his or her manner of life corresponds with the gospel that he or she preaches.

Paul is saying in effect, “Walk the talk,” or “Live up to who you are.” This is a command in the present tense, meaning that this is a call for continuous activity. His choice of words is very interesting. The Greek word translated “*conduct*” is the word from which we derive our English words “political” or “metropolitan.” The basic idea is one of citizenship. Later in chapter **3** and verse **20**, Paul will say to the believers, “*our citizenship is in heaven.*” Paul is saying that believers are to live with the consciousness that they are being watched! We must bear in mind that people judge heaven by the conduct of its earthly ambassadors. As a colony of heaven, we are to live heavenly lives on

earth, representing our Sovereign by a life which reflects Him. We represent the Gospel of Christ and we must therefore live in a “worthy” way.

Warren Wiersbe stated that “The loins are the place of action, mobility, and direction. A soldier with a broken hip would not be worth very much! Unless we are motivated and directed by truth, we will be defeated by the enemy. If we permit any deception to enter our lives, we have weakened our position and cannot fight the battle victoriously. The girdle of truth is not an offensive weapon; it is for protection. When the believer has what I call “**an attitude of truth**” in his life, this protects him from Satan's attacks. It does not prevent these attacks; it keeps the believer from being harmed by them.”

It is for this reason that Paul mentions the “belt of truth” first. We cannot engage in spiritual warfare until we have surrounded ourselves with truth. We must oppose the hosts of darkness with God’s truth. In Paul’s day belts or girdles were worn to bind up flowing garments and hold everything together. It is God’s truth that must hold everything together in our lives. As believers we must love truth and live truth. In **3 John 3-4**, John writes,

3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Commenting on Paul’s use of the word Greek **alétheia** (truth), in **Ephesians 6:14**, **Marvin Vincent** observed that it is, “The state of the heart answering to God’s truth; inward, practical acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Him: the agreement of our convictions with God’s revelation.”

In **John 8:44** our Lord said, “*You people are from your father the devil, and you want to do what your father desires. He was a murderer from*

the beginning, and does not uphold the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies” (New English Translation).

The devil is a liar and the father of lies. There is no truth in him. His whole system is a system of lies. Since this is so, brothers and sisters, we should understand that our first line of defense must be the truth.

John MacArthur wrote, “If you’re just going to flop your way through your Christian experience, you will be a consistent loser. If you’re content with all the loose ends of your life, all the little sins, if you’re content with your infrequent interest in prayer, your infrequent interest in worship, your indifference toward great spiritual truth, if you’re content with your small understanding of the greatness of God, if you’re content with the sins in your life, you are an encumbered soldier, ill prepared for the battle-get ready to be defeated.”

Brothers and sisters, we must be sincerely committed to truth. In other words, we must be totally sold out to who God is. We must be totally sold out to what God has done. We must be totally sold out to what God has said.

Warren Wiersbe remarks that, “Satan is a liar (**John 8:44**), but the believer whose life is controlled by truth will defeat him. The girdle holds the other parts of the armor together, and truth is the integrating force in the life of the victorious Christian. A man of integrity, with a clear conscience, can face the enemy without fear. The girdle also held the sword. Unless we practice the truth, we cannot use the Word of truth. Once a lie gets into the life of a believer, everything begins to fall apart.”

We will end our Lesson this evening with the words of **Ray Stedman**:

“Remember, all competing and conflicting systems and philosophies must be tested at all points, not at just one. Many philosophies can

provide limited help and insight in this or that area. Even Karl Marx, as misguided as he was, had a few kernels of limited and fragmentary truth embedded in his godless diagnosis of human problems. But the presence of occasional partial insights and scattered nuggets of truth does not validate a system of ideas or beliefs. **Truth is a complete entity. It is all or nothing. A half-truth is frequently no better than an outright lie and is sometimes even more deceptive than a lie.** That is why witnesses in our courts must swear to tell 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth' because fragmentary truth produces deception.

Truth is reality. Truth is the sum total of the way things really are. Therefore, truth is the explanation of all things. **You know you have found the truth when you find something that is wide enough and deep enough and high enough to encompass all things. That is what Jesus Christ does.**

Further, ultimate reality never changes. Another mark of truth is that true truth never requires updating. It never needs to be modernized. If a moral or spiritual principle was true ten thousand years ago, it is still true today. If a principle is true today, it was true a hundred thousand years ago."