

## SPIRITUAL WARFARE<sup>1</sup> THE BELT OF TRUTH AND THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Texts

### Ephesians 6:10-20

<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong [in the Lord and in the strength of his might]. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against [the schemes of the devil]. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in [the evil day,] and having done all, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; <sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, <sup>18</sup> praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

### Summary of Message

Paul's central concern in penning the letter to the Ephesians is that they realize who they have become and all the spiritual riches they now possess *as a result* of their faith-union with Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ we have received every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms (1,3-14). Thus, he prays that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened so that we would, again, know who we are and all that we now have because of Christ—"what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might" (1,18-19). *In the same way*, even in his discussion on spiritual warfare Paul wants us to realize that we *already* have all that we need to be victorious against the devil and the principalities of darkness because of our faith-union with Christ. Thus, each part of the spiritual armor of God should be thought of less as a virtue and more as a spiritual blessing that we already have in and through Christ. In our discussion, then, of the armor *of God*, we will consider each item as a "function" of our union with Christ.

To put on the belt of truth doesn't pertain primarily to the virtue of being honest: to put on the belt of truth does *not* mean simply that we be more honest in our speech and life. Truth, in Ephesians, is understood as "the gospel of salvation" (1,13) which centers on the person and work of Jesus Christ. To put on the belt of truth, then, means, **to train our minds to habitually rethink all of life in light of who Jesus is and what He has done for us and what He calls us to be now**. It means that we opt to live according to the gospel narrative as opposed to our feelings or circumstances. In other words, Christians ought to be careful thinkers because of the momentous truth about Jesus Christ that has been revealed to them.

To put on the breastplate of righteousness means two things. First, in the face of the Accuser (Satan), who highlights that we are unrighteous on the basis of *our* own works, we

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ought to put on the righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. In Philippians 3 the apostle himself confesses that whereas in the past he looked to his own works for righteousness, now he trusts in the righteousness that comes from God through faith in Jesus Christ. To put on the breastplate of righteousness means that we can echo with Paul, “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has justified” (Rom 8,33). Finally, to put on the breastplate of righteousness is to signal to the devil (and to the world) that our allegiance is now to the Kingdom and King of righteousness (see Rom 6,1-14). Whereas formerly we lived in the ways of Sin and Unrighteousness, now—having received the breastplate of righteousness through faith in Christ Jesus—we live in and for the Kingdom of righteousness.

Let us, indeed, put on the armor of God today so that we may be able to withstand the devil and his schemes on the day of evil!

1. Take a moment to consider *how* you live: do you still live like a “single” or as one who has been united to Christ through faith? Consider a specific issue that you are facing right now. How does your “marriage to Jesus” impact the way you have been processing and responding to the issue? Is it possible that you have gone “beyond the gospel” (i.e., you’re *not* responding to the issue as a child of God)?<sup>2</sup>
2. What concrete suggestions would you make to ensure that our church and families become more and more gospel-centered? What can we do to help one another rethink all of life in light of the person and work of Jesus Christ? What are some specific habits that we ought to foster?
3. Share an instance in your life when the gospel narrative caused you to radically rethink how you live. Perhaps this pertains to your family, reconciliation, purity, honesty, money, or jealousy. How did the gospel—who Jesus is and what He has done and His demand over your life as Savior and Lord—change you?
4. Share a current issue/situation that you believe the Lord is challenging you in light of the gospel. Ask your community group members for accountability.
5. How does the breastplate of righteousness offer you much hope and comfort as you deal with your habitual sins and/or your “skeletons”? How does our own hope and comfort through the gospel provide for us so much incentive for sharing the gospel with a world that is full of people suffering from guilt and shame?
6. Take a moment to consider which Kingdom you’re living for. If you were mute, could those around you discern whose armor you’re wearing? In short, are you living for the Kingdom of righteousness or unrighteousness? Does your life suggest that you serve the Kingdom of Righteousness or still live under the reign of Sin? How does “putting on the breastplate of righteousness” inspire you in your struggle to offer the parts of your body to Righteousness versus Unrighteousness (Rom 6,14)?
7. Read Ephesians 6,10-14 once again. Then take time to pray together that as a community group you would take seriously the apostle’s call to put on the full armor of God so that we may all stand against the devil on the day of evil.

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<sup>2</sup> Here it may be helpful to break up into groups of two (or three) and have each person share what he/she is currently dealing with. Have the other person listen and try to counsel the individual by getting him/her to think about the issue *in light of* his/her faith-union with Jesus Christ.