

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

C0523 -- June 8, 2005 – Ephesians 6:14-16 – The Armor of God-Part 1

Now, whether you are naturally cognizant of spiritual warfare is not really the issue. The issue is whether you are spiritually cognizant of spiritual warfare. The Bible is like a sixth sense in this connection because it reveals things beyond the human senses. In philosophy we call this “metaphysics”. The Bible is a metaphysical book that reveals things beyond our natural perceptive ability. Christianity is a “metaphysical” worldview because the Bible originated with God, not man, and gives us insight into things beyond natural human perception. When we say the Bible is true we are making a metaphysical statement because the Bible gives us a picture of all of reality, not just the things perceivable by mankind, but everything, including things beyond our natural perception. Therefore, metaphysics answers the question of “what is reality?” And the “reality” of the matter is that there is a spiritual battle going on in the universe with actual persons involved. In this battle there are only two sides or armies. God’s side and Satan’s side. God is the creator and Satan is a creature. Thus, the battle boils down to a battle between the Creator God and a creature. Every angel and human is on one side or the other, no one is neutral. All elect angels and humans who have aligned themselves with Christ by trusting in Him for salvation are on God’s side and all non-elect angels and humans who have not trusted Christ for salvation are on Satan’s side. Satan wants to destroy elect angels and saved humans. To destroy you he wants to destroy you personally, your marriage, your family, he wants to split your church, he wants to divide your country, etc...and he wants to do all this so he can destroy your witness for Christ. See, if he can wreck the divine institutions then he can wreck an entire country’s propagation of the gospel of Christ. See, he hates Christ and since you are connected with Christ he hates you too. And because these divine institutions are the bedrock of society he wants to break them down. So, Christians are commanded to be filled by the Spirit in these areas and to **stand** by putting on the armor of God.

Ephesians 6:10-13 ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against

the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Greek Text 6:14 sth/te ou=n perizwsa,menoi th.n ovsfu.n u`mw/n evn avlhqei,a| kai. evndusa,menoi to.n qw,raka th/j dikaios,nhj

Translation 6:14 Stand therefore, having girded your waists with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

Concordance: Isa 11:5; 59:17; 1 Thess 5:8; Rom 13:12

This is the eighth and final long sentence in the Greek text of Ephesians (1:3-14; 1:15-23; 2:1-7; 3:2-13; 3:14-19; 4:1-6; 4:11-16; 6:14-20). This sentence is 113 words long and begins in verse 14 and ends in v 20. The entire sentence is a description of the armor and how it is to be used. The description of the Christian armor may have been stimulated by Paul's house imprisonment which was guarded by a Roman soldier (Eph 3:1) but the picture is similar to the Divine Warrior in the OT (Isa 59:17). Let's turn to **Isaiah 59:16c-18**. This passage describes the armor of the King of Kings at His 2nd Coming to claim what is rightfully His (the whole creation) due to His substitutionary atonement and victory at the cross.

Then His own arm brought salvation to Him, And His righteousness upheld Him.
¹⁷ He put on righteousness like a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head;
And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing And wrapped Himself with zeal
as a mantle. ¹⁸ According to *their* deeds, so He will repay, Wrath to His adversaries,
recompense to His enemies; To the coastlands He will make recompense.

We have similar armor because we have been united with Christ in death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and session. However, we do not have "garments of vengeance". We will share in the victory but Christ judges those outside the Church (1 Cor 5:13; Rev 19:13-21).

In the present evil age Paul says **Stand therefore**. When we see the word **therefore** we have to ask what it is there for. It is there to give the result of v. 13. In light of the spiritual forces of wickedness, that are presently prowling about seeking to devour us we should **stand**. The command to **stand** was also given in vv 11 and 13. Thus, three times Paul commands us to **stand**, not to advance or retreat. The word **stand** is an aorist tense. The

aorist tense here signifies urgency. **Standing** should be a matter of great urgency for the Christian since our enemies are wicked cosmic powers who fill the universe.

Now Paul embarks on describing the individual pieces of armor necessary to **stand** against the wicked cosmic powers. Remember, the wicked cosmic powers use three basic strategies;

- “lies”
- “confusion”
- “counterfeit”

When we put on the “armor of God” we are able to **stand** against these strategies. If not we get tossed about by every wind of doctrine. Let’s look at the defensive armor piece by piece. Verses 15-16 are composed of three aorist participle phrases describing the first three pieces of armor.

- **having girded your waists with truth**
- **having put on the breastplate of righteousness**
- **having shod the feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace**

These three pieces of armor are all defensive. The fourth piece of armor is also defensive and is mentioned in v 16 as

- **the shield of faith with which you are able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one**

These pieces of armor are essential for the warrior to **stand** against cosmic strategies. Note that the first three pieces are attached to the body and the fourth, the shield, is detached from the body but protects it and the attached armor. First, let’s look at the piece of armor that girds the waist.

Paul says **Stand therefore, having girded your waists with truth**. The word **having girded** is an aorist middle participle which means that it is to be done with *urgency* and *you are responsible* to gird yourself. In Paul’s day this piece of armor was tied around the soldier’s waste and hung like a breech or apron underneath the outer armor. It was made of leather strips laced together and its function was to protect the thighs. You could also attach other pieces of clothing to it to increase mobility on the battlefield. The location of the military breech of truth is important. The waist is a soldier’s center of gravity. Our center of gravity gives us stability. Truth is a Christian’s center of gravity. It is what gives

him stability. A Christian who doesn't know truth and isn't growing in truth is off balance, unstable, tossed about by every wind of doctrine. Always interested in flashy new doctrines but never interested in studying in order to settle down and enjoy a stable Christian life. The thighs are the major source of strength and movement. Damage to the thighs means you can't move anymore. A Christian who doesn't know truth is unable to move freely within the Christian life. He is always captured by a set of do's and don'ts. He can't live by faith but lives by works. He is not free to live and enjoy life. The Christian is to **gird** his **waist with truth**. **truth** gives stability but what is **truth**? **truth** is that which corresponds with reality. Since God is the creator of reality then the true interpretation of reality is sourced in God. Creation came pre-interpreted from the hand of God. Creation is not open to interpretation. God has already revealed the true interpretation of reality in His word. Therefore, for us to **gird** ourselves **with truth** means that we must gather into our minds God's interpretation of reality. That boils down to thinking through all of reality in terms of God's word. You can do this by personal Bible study or listening to Bible teaching in person or by tape/CD. I would never want you to totally limit your study to one teacher, such as myself, but the advantage you get by listening to one teacher is the cohesiveness of the worldview. I am not just presenting loose pieces of a puzzle to you each week. I am giving you an entire worldview. These pieces fit together into a unified whole; a way of looking at all of reality. It's a logically consistent system that prayerfully reflects God's interpretation of reality. That's the advantage of listening to one teacher (who has logically worked through the text). Very few teachers try to develop a unified system. But that is what the human heart seeks (Eccl 3:11).

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.

See, God gave us the Bible that explains all that God has done from the beginning to the end. While God set a desire to know this unified system no one can find it out apart from God. So, we need the word of God to find out the work which God has done from the beginning to the end. One thing God did not do is systematize the Bible for us. The closest book we have to a systematic treatment of Scripture is Romans. But, the Bible can be systematized and God left that for us to do. I try very hard to give you more than a few tidbits of information. I want to give you an entire worldview; an entire way of looking at reality that reflects God's interpretation of reality. That's what you need to be stable in the Christian life and that's what you need to increase your freedom as a Christian and live by faith.

Armor

Military Breach

Truth

Location	hanging under armor objective	word of God
Functions	create stability subjective	create stability
	fasten things to subjective	link doctrines to one another
	increase mobility subjective	increase movement in Christian life

“As believers internalize God’s truth they live and move in it.”ⁱ

Next we have the second piece of armor. Paul says, “**Stand therefore... having put on the breastplate of righteousness.** Again, this is an orist middle participle. The aorist tense signifies *urgency* of putting it on and the middle voice means *you are responsible to put on the breastplate of righteousness*. This piece of armor was a metal plate that was worn over a leather jerkin or coat of mail. It was designed to protect the chest and back. Common soldiers in Paul’s day had a breastplate of brass and the wealthier soldiers had a coat of chain mail. Again, this is a defensive piece of armor. The **breastplate** for the Christian soldier is **righteousness**. Because you are **righteous** in Christ; His righteousness has been imputed to your account at salvation (Rom 5:1), then you can commit righteous acts by being filled by the Spirit. Whenever you are walking by the Spirit, yielding your will to the Lord’s will, then you are walking righteously, producing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). Christ said, “he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Such **righteous** living guards believer’s hearts from the vile assaults of the cosmic powers. When the Lord Jesus was tempted three times by Satan the devil left him until an opportune time (Luke 4:13). Jesus demonstrated that righteous living fends off Satan. Jesus fended off Satan by using Scripture under the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). When you use Scripture under the power of the Spirit you fend off Satan. He will not be able to catch you from the front or the back because your **righteous** deeds guard against the devils assaults. If you don’t know Scripture then I’m sorry, but you aren’t going to be able to protect your heart from Satan’s deceptions. The belt of truth is central to the armor.

Armor	Breastplate of Mail or Brass	Righteousness
Location	chest and back of torso	a righteous walk (lifestyle)
Functions	protect physical heart	guards against Satan’s assaults

In verse 15 we have the third piece of armor...

Greek Text 6:15 kai. u`podhsa,menoi tou.j po,daj evn e`toimasi,a| tou/ euvaggeli,ou th/j eivrh,nhj(

Translation 6:15 and having shod the feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, Concordance: Isa 52:7; Rom 10:15

Now, we have protection for the thighs, protection for the chest and heart, now we move to the soldier's feet. **Therefore stand...having shod the feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.** Since this is also aorist middle it means to *urgently shod your feet*. Since it is a middle voice it means *you have the responsibility to shod your feet*. The Roman soldiers wore heavy sandals with soles made of several layers of leather about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch thick. On the bottom these sandals were studded a lot like modern day cleats that would be used in soccer, football, baseball or golf. The sandals were tied by way of leather thongs that wrapped halfway up the shin. In the winter they would stuff wool or fur underneath the leather straps to keep warm. However, this was not a running sandal but a sandal designed to help the soldier dig in and hold ground against an attacking enemy. The function of the feet is important. The feet are that which move around or keep us firmly planted on the ground. If a believer is not shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace he will not have the confidence to dig in and hold territory. What are believers to be **shod** with? The text says **with the preparation of the gospel of peace**. This is a quotation from Isa 52:7, one of the first occurrences of the word "gospel" in the Bible.

Isaiah 52:7 How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, *And* says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Again, this is a defensive piece of armor. Christians are to be prepared with the gospel of peace. What does this mean? Well, number one I hope you know the three indispensable elements of the gospel:

- Sin
- Substitutionary Atonement
- Faith

The gospel is a message carried to sinners, the message is the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ and faith is the individual's responsibility. The result of believing this gospel is **peace**. **peace** in Ephesians is used in two ways.

- Christ is our peace (Eph 2:14). This is vertical peace. Peace between Christ and believers
- Peace between Jewish and Gentile believers (Eph 2:15). This is horizontal peace. Peace between two groups united into one new man, the Church.

The word **peace** means “to bind together”. Therefore, the gospel is that which “binds us together” with Christ and “binds” Jewish and Gentile believers into one new man, the Church. That believer’s are to **shod their feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace** means that believers should be absolutely certain in their heart and mind that they have salvation (assurance of eternal security). How can one stand firm if he is not sure he is saved? Knowing that you are saved because you have believed the true **gospel** gives you the confidence to resist and stand against the wicked cosmic powers. We might call assurance of salvation, “surefootedness” in battle. Our feet are shod with the **gospel of peace**. We can dig our heels in and resist because we know whom we have believed and that He is able to keep His own. When we operate in the Lord’s strength and with confidence in His security we are “surefooted” soldiers.

Armor	Studded Sandal	Prepared with Gospel of Peace
Location	feet	daily walk
Functions	dig in and hold territory	dig in and hold territory assurance of salvation surefootedness in standing

Greek Text 6:16 evn pa/sin avnalabo,ntej to.n qureo.n th/j pi,stewj(evn w-| dunh,sesqe pa,nta ta. be,lh tou/ ponhrou/ Îta.Ð pepurwme,na sbe,sai\

Translation 6:16 in addition to all these things having taken up the shield of faith, with which you are able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Concordance: 1 Thess 5:8

So far we have had the military breach of truth that each individual soldier is responsible to put on. This piece of armor is basically the word of God because that is where truth is found. With the knowledge of objective truth you can link doctrines together in a systematic way. This creates stability in the Christian life and increases the area over which you can live by faith. This piece of armor is fundamental to the others because the others hook onto this piece of armor. Second, we have the breastplate which is righteousness. Righteous living takes place when you abide in Christ, when you are filled by the Spirit, when you walk by the Spirit. Righteous living guards your heart against the vile attacks of the devil. Righteous living causes him to leave and seek for a more opportune time. Third,

we had the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. This refers to a Christian who is surefooted against the vile attacks of the devil because he knows he has believed the gospel. He is certain he has eternal life and this gives him the confidence to dig in and hold territory (1 John 5:13). These three pieces of armor are to be **put on** by the Christian. The fourth weapon, **the shield of faith** is not put on but **taken up**.

The **shield of faith** is also defensive and was designed to protect the entire body as well as the armor. The Roman shield was 2 ½ feet wide and 4 feet tall. It was made of wood and had a convex surface. The outer surface was covered by canvas and then with calf skin and in the center it had an iron boss that caused stones and arrows to bounce off. The top and bottom edge were covered with metal to protect the shield when it hit the ground. Its function was **to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the enemy**. The word for **arrows** (*belos*) could refer to any pointed missile like weapon, such as a javelin, sword, spear, arrow, or dart. All such weapons were used *by* the Romans and *against* the Romans. Often a spear would be thrown at the enemy. The spear would stick in the shield and the soft shaft would bend making the shield very difficult to maneuver. Because of this many shields were left behind on battlefields. This opened the soldier up to much greater danger. In this context the *belos* probably refers to arrows. Arrows were shot from bows and engines. They could also be wrapped with tow and ignited making them flaming arrows. Before battle the Romans would dip their shields in water so that the calf skin and canvas were saturated and would help **extinguish** the flaming arrows, preventing them from catching the wood shield on fire causing it to become useless.

For the Christian, the **shield** is **faith**. Christians must learn to walk by faith and not by sight. Pragmatic reasoning is usually the way Christians walk rather than by faith. A walk of faith means trusting God's word. *"Trust in the Lord with all thy heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge me and I will make your paths straight"* (Prov 3:5-6). *"Whatsoever is not from faith is sin"* (Rom 14:23). God's word describes how things work. Sometimes your worldly understanding tries to get in the way of following God's word. Oh, this sounds practical, let's do this. An example in point is Abraham and Sarah. When they went to Abimelech, Abraham resorted to lying. "I'll just tell Abimelech that Sarah is my sister and that will keep us out of trouble." That may have seemed practical (pragmatic) but God says I want you to live by faith; I want you to trust My word rather than your finite rational peanut brain. For example, I know there are thousands of public school teacher's who are Christians and are afraid to teach creation, even though it's completely legal, but they are afraid of getting fired and so they don't teach it. If they do teach it and they do get fired, which they probably will, then they won't

have a paycheck. God says; don't worry about that, you leave that to me because I'm the one who supplies all your needs.

Philippians 4:19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

If it's that paycheck that is keeping you from teaching creation in public school then you're not living by faith. The key is to do what is right and not compromise. You have to trust God supplies all your needs. When you don't your simply saying, "God can't supply all my needs. I supply my needs. God is not omnipotent. I am omnipotent." So, I'm calling you to take up the shield of faith which means to live by faith, trusting in God's way not your way. That was just a practical example of a situation where you can do that. But, let me remind you that faith cannot be worked up. You can't force yourself live by faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom 10:17). See, it goes back to the belt of truth. You have to fill yourself with God's interpretation of reality so you can have the faith to follow God's word. So, you have to hear with understanding the word of God if you are going to be able to take up the **shield of faith** and **extinguish the fiery arrows of the evil one**. The evil one is Satan (1 John 5:19) and he wants you to feel stuck in situations. He wants you to operate in your own strength because he knows that you are weaker than him. This is why Christian soldiers are commanded to **stand in the Lord's strength** not their own (6:11). Living by faith means living by the Lord's strength, trusting His words and not living by your own strength, trusting your limited experience. Human experience is a very limited and unreliable tool. Not only are we so limited in our amount of time on earth to develop experience but we also see Bible characters use their personal experience as a basis for their actions time and again and yet time and again it is shown to be such a poor tool. Experience is basically a series of trials and errors. Sometimes we find something that works and then we try that in a new experience and it turns into a giant mess. Trusting God's word never results in failure but always success. It is the nature of the sinful heart to reject God's omniscience and resort to limited human experience. Who is omniscient here anyway? Why do we so often act as if we have the answers? As if we are omniscient? Rejecting God's way in favor of our experience is nothing more than a self-claim of omniscience. Never forget the promise that "*God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God,*". Did you hear that last part? God works all things together for good those who love God! It's not you who makes things turn out good. You'll make a mess of it. To love God you must be obeying God. He who loves Me keeps My commandments. Therefore, when you obey His commandments it will ultimately work out for the good. When you don't, you're on your own.

Refusing to obey, that is, sinning, is the attempt to get something now because of fear that you will not be able to get it later. Faith is trusting that what God has in store for you in the future is better than whatever you may want in the present. Faith and sin are opposites. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom 14:23). Whenever we sin we are saying, "God is a meanie. He doesn't want me to have this good thing. I have to get it now through sinning." And insomuch you forfeit something infinitely better. It is stupid to sin. It is genius to live by faith. But you can't live by faith until you come to know the word of God. You would never come to trust someone you didn't know. You must talk to Him through prayer and you must listen to Him by studying His word and seeing His faithfulness. Then you will be able to trust Him and His promises.

Let's review the first four defensive pieces of armor. The first three pieces of armor are defensive and are to be **put on**. They are attached to the body;

- **having girded your waists with truth**

Truth gives you stability, enables you to link doctrines together into a system of thinking, and increases freedom of movement in the Christian life.

- **having put on the breastplate of righteousness**

The breastplate is righteousness. Righteous deeds guard the heart against the assaults of cosmic powers causing them to leave and return at a more opportune time. Righteous acts therefore cause Satan to retreat.

- **having shod the feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace**

The feet being shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace refers to the cleated shoes which enable you to dig in your heels and stand. This ability only comes when one has assurance of salvation. This occurs at salvation but can be doubted when false teaching comes in. Without assurance of salvation no one can stand firmly.

The fourth piece of armor is also defensive but is to be **taken up**. It is not attached to the body but it protects it and the armor underneath.

- **take up the shield of faith with which you are able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one**

The shield of faith is what we use to live. We don't trust our finite rational peanut brains but we trust God's word. We are weak when we walk in our own strength. We must walk in the Lord's strength which is able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. That means, whatever he throws your direction you can deflect it by living by faith in God's word as the sole, final and sufficient authority.

ⁱ Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 840.

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