

**“Our Weapons: The Belt Of Truth”**  
**Ephesians 6:10-18**

**February 25, 2018**

**SI:** We’re spending 12 weeks or so looking in depth at a few verses at the end of Ephesians, chapter 6

Paul ends his letter with this passage to make the point that everything he has said about living the Christian life has a context. The context is warfare.

The Devil and demonic forces are shooting at you and trying to bring you down in all the areas and relationships where you are trying to live as a Christian.

We first looked at the Devil’s schemes, now we’re looking at the weapons we’ve been given to defend ourselves and to fight back.

**INTRO:** One helpful tool for Bible study is to read different translations.

I’ve got a computer program that has dozens of English translations and also

Hebrew and Greek—so I can have one verse on the screen in all these versions.

If I hover the cursor over the Hebrew and Greek words it jumps to a dictionary and lists other places in the Bible where that word or phrase is used.

It’s amazing. I use it every week.

I say that to point out that for Ephesians 6:14, comparing different Bible versions pays off.

Because if you just read one of the modern or popular translations like we did this morning, they almost all say something like “having put on the belt of truth.”

The NIV says: With the belt of truth buckled around your waist.

So when you read that you picture having this belt called truth—and you put it around your waist.

But if you read some of the more literal translations or even a famous old translation like the King James Version, they don’t say anything about a belt.

Instead they say: Having girt your loins with truth.

When you explore that, you realize more complicated than just putting on a belt.

There was an expression in the ancient world: Gird up your loins.

The Hebrews used it and the Greeks and Romans used it.

What did that mean? Gird up your loins?

Loins can mean different parts of the body depending on how the word is used.

It’s a poetic word.

But in this expression, gird up your loins, it basically means your waist.

In those cultures people wore robes and tunics.

So if you had to move fast, or if you were about to do something strenuous, you would reach between your legs, grab the hem of your robe, pull it up. So now you've basically got these funny looking shorts so your legs are free. But what do you do with this fabric in your hand?

You can't run holding on to the hem.

So you would tuck it into the girdle around your loins.

We would say, tuck it into the belt around your waist.

Of course you were always wearing a belt around your waist because robes didn't have pockets. So you would also use the belt to hang your money bag or purse.

If you needed to carry a sword or a tool, you could hang it on your belt.

What I want you to see is that the image is a more vivid than just putting on a belt.

The belt is already on, but what you're doing is tucking everything loose into the belt. You're using the belt to cinch it all up so you feel ready and prepared.

If there's one expression in English that best approximates "gird up your loins" it would be: Roll up your sleeves.

You're getting stuff tucked in and out of the way so you can get down to business.

Roll up your sleeves with the truth.

It's actually, having your sleeves rolled up with the truth.

Having put on the belt of truth, having your loins girt with the truth.

Paul envisions the Christian soldier with his robe already tucked up into his belt, his sleeves already rolled up with the truth and ready to get down to business.

So, that helps us get a better picture of the figure of speech Paul is using.

But what exactly does it mean?

And how do you actually do it?

We'll spend our time answering those two questions.

## **MP#1 What does it mean to gird up your loins with the truth?**

This is a little trickier to figure out than it seems.

Because when you first read it, your impulse is to say:

Paul's talking about the Bible, the Word of God, the truth of the Scriptures. So this must have something to do with being ready with particular Bible verses or passages of Scripture for whatever comes your way.

But the problem with that explanation is as you keep reading about the armor you come to verse 17 which says to take up the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.

That's clearly about using the Bible in particular, specific ways to fight the Devil. When Jesus Christ was tempted by the Devil in the wilderness, he answered every temptation by saying: As it is written, and then he quoted a passage of Scripture.

As it is written: Man shall not live by bread alone.

As it is written: You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.

That's using the word of God as the sword of the Spirit.

It not only blocks and parries the Devil's sword and then it stabs him right back.

Paul's probably not repeating himself.

Probably not saying twice with two different images use the Bible, use the Bible.

Here's the distinction.

The sword of the Spirit is using particular truths of Scripture in spiritual warfare.

Girding up your loins with the truth is using the whole truth of Scripture.

The whole truth of God and Christ and sin and salvation and grace and heaven.

The whole truth of the Gospel. The whole truth of redemptive history.

The whole truth of the Christian faith.

This comes into sharper focus when you see how often the Bible speaks this way.

In John 8:31, Jesus is talking to the Jews who have believed in him and says:

If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Notice the terms the Lord uses. He's speaking about it as a whole.

The whole of his teaching, full summation of his message of the Kingdom of God.

The truth as a whole, will set you free—free from guilt and power of sin, and in the context of spiritual warfare, free from the Devil.

In John 17:17, Jesus' high priestly prayer, praying for his disciples he says:

“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” Once again, the truth as a whole.

And of course that truth is summarized and appropriated through the Word.

1 Corinthians 16:13. Paul says: “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith.”

He doesn't mean stand firm in your personal faith in Jesus.  
The faith means the faith as a whole, the whole story of Jesus and his love.  
The whole of the Christian faith.  
It's synonymous with the truth. The truth and the faith are one.

Peter says something remarkably similar to Paul in 1 Peter 5:9.  
He writes about the Devil, calls him your Adversary, a roaring lion, prowling about,  
seeking whom he may devour.  
Then Peter says: "Resist him, steadfast in the faith."  
There's the idea again. It's not just your personal faith or belief—  
it's the whole of the Christian faith, it's the whole truth.

So girding up your loins with the truth means developing a comprehensive  
view of life and the world that is based upon the whole truth of God's revelation.  
Of course you don't know all the answers.  
You might not know why God allows certain things or brings certain events to  
pass. There will certainly be particular theological issues or doctrines, or perhaps  
even moral dilemmas that perplex you.

But you know the truth as a whole. You know the faith as a whole.  
You know God's grand, sovereign, gracious redemptive plan.  
You know Christ's magnificent fulfillment of that plan and you know that  
Jesus Christ is risen, he is risen indeed.  
So you can pull yourself together with the truth.  
You can tuck all the loose ends of your life into the truth.

As I was writing this sermon I got an email. It was addressed to Allison and me.  
It started out with the line: This is a voice from your past.  
It was a long letter from a woman we haven't spoken to in 25 years.  
She and her husband were in seminary with us and right after graduation, after  
we had all gone our separate ways, we heard they had gotten divorced.  
We were in different parts of the country. We called them. But she put up a wall.  
Wouldn't talk to us. And we never tried to contact her again.

She said she had always wanted to call us back.  
When we had called her way back then, her ex-husband was putting  
pressure on her to stay quiet.  
Other people had reached out to her and she didn't talk to them either.  
She had come to realize how detrimental that was.  
It contributed to her getting into another bad marriage.

And then she outlined her life for the past two and a half decades and there were some major blows and sorrows.

She said: My journey has been completely different from what I ever expected. I never dreamed my life would have such drama.

She didn't quote a single Bible verse in her long email, but permeating her story and gathering together all the loose ends and tucking in all the loose, flapping, confusing and painful things that would trip most people up was the truth.

The truth of the fall and sin and shame and forgiveness and grace and redemption, the truth of a Father in heaven and a suffering and risen Savior.

The truth of blessings—she saw her life as one blessing after another. That's girding up your loins with the truth.

You could say it's seeing the big picture or you could say it's knowing the end of the story and keeping that in view.

There's a stanza in the hymn *For All The Saints* that goes like this:

And when the fight is fierce, the warfare long,  
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,  
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!

It pictures is soldiers in the heat of a battle—

the fighting is fierce and unrelenting. They are getting weary.

But they hear something in the distance.

They hear singing. They recognize the tune. It's the victory song of their army. So they know that if their army has triumphed, then it's just going to be a matter of time before they get relief and their battle will be over and won.

And even though their immediate circumstances are unchanged, what happens?

Their hearts are brave again and their arms are strong because they are looking at the big picture, because they know the end of the story.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. That's the whole truth. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. That's the whole truth. I am not my own, but belong body and soul, in life and in death to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. That's the whole truth.

Now gather up all the loose things in your life and tuck them into that.

**MP# So how do you do it?**

That's the next big question.

I've kind of already answered it with these examples.

But let's look at one more example.

Earlier in the service Jonathan read Psalm 3 which is a Psalm of David.

I think this is a good example of a believer girding up his loins with the truth.

There are some practical lessons in the Psalm about how to do it.

This Psalm also has some parallels with Ephesians 6 because the setting is warfare.

You don't have to open your Bibles again to Psalm 3, but you can if you want to.

It starts with David lamenting to the Lord about his situation.

“O Lord, how many are my foes! How many rise against me!”

Who were these foes? This Psalm has a historical introduction.

It says: “A psalm of David when he fled from his son Absalom.”

Do you remember that sad story? Absalom, his most handsome, charismatic son.

He and David were estranged because of David's inept handling of sexual abuse in the family. Absalom's half-brother Amnon assaulted Absalom's sister Tamar.

David heard, but did nothing. So Absalom avenged his sister by killing Amnon.

Absalom then ran. He took refuge in a nearby kingdom for three years.

David asked him to return, promised no punishment, but when he got back

David refused to talk to him, said, I don't want to see his face.

Father and son became so estranged that Absalom stirred up a rebellion.

It had so much initial support in Jerusalem that David had to flee for his life.

And for a while, the control of the kingdom hung in the balance.

In verse 6 he refers to “the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side.”

That's not poetic exaggeration. There were thousands who wanted David dead.

But then David expresses the thing that really troubled him.

Many are saying of me, “God will not deliver him.”

David was running for his life from his son Absalom and the rebellion.

And people were saying—God's not going to help him this time.

2 Samuel tells us about a man named Shimei who followed David out of Jerusalem shouting at him: “Get out, get out you man of blood, you scoundrel. The Lord is

repaying you for all the evil you did to Saul's family. You are getting what deserve, because you are man of blood.” It shook David to the core.

His bodyguard said, Let us kill him. David said, No—He might be right.

David had faced many enemies before, but the reason this one got to him is because there was nothing he could fall back on to feel good about himself.

David couldn't say. Things are bad, at least I'm a good father. Raised good kids.

Nope. One a rapist, the other a murderer.

He couldn't say, things are bad, but at least I'm an honest, loyal man.

Nope. Remember Uriah? He had that trusted soldier killed to cover up adultery. Things are bad, but at least people trust me. Not any more, hearts with Absalom. Things are bad, but at least I've got a good record. Calling you a man of blood.

There was nothing David could fall back on to assure himself.

Remember how we looked at the three major strategies of the Devil?

Three big categories of lie: deception, temptation, accusation.

In terms of spiritual warfare, David was facing accusation.

Many are saying of him: God will not deliver him.

But instead of listening to voices outside or even the voices in own head,

David started to gird up his loins with the truth. Three things he did.

Look at verse 3.

“But you are a shield around me, O Lord, you bestow glory on me and lift up my head.”

He goes to the big picture theology: God's glory. God's grace. God's protection.

Then David goes even bigger:

To the Lord I cry aloud, and he answers me from his holy hill.

What was on the holy hill? The tabernacle. What was at the tabernacle?

The altar. What was on the altar? The sacrificial lamb.

How do you know that your help and glory is in God,

and that even if you've blown everything—like David—the foes you face are not God's revenge? The cross. Jesus dying for you on the holy hill.

You can tuck lots of loose ends and confusing things into that.

So the big truths: God's grace. Christ's sacrifice.

But David doesn't stop with that.

A key part of the girding up and tucking in is acting in faith.

Look at the way David did it. Verse 5. I love this verse.

I lie down and sleep. I wake again because the Lord sustains me.

I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side.

He said, I'm going to go to bed now. And I'm going to sleep.

And I'm going to wake up. And I'm not going to be afraid.

That's an aspect of girding up your loins with the truth.

Take the truth and act on it.

That might literally be something as simple as going to bed.

Or saying something that needs to be said, doing something God wants you to do.

Back to our friend's email, one think both of us noticed was a remarkable

willingness to see and comment on God's work in people who had hurt her.

Hand in hand with that, a plainness of speech about evil she had lacked before. Is there some specific way Lord want me to act on the truth?

Then the third thing David does to gird up loins with truth in last two verses.

Prays the Lord will strike all his enemies on the jaw and break their teeth.

It's one of those violent Psalms that have always been perplexing to believers.

How do we reconcile the requests that God crush and destroy our enemies with Jesus command that we love our enemies and pray for our salvation?

There are several different ways to answer that question—

You have to look at all the answers to get the full picture.

Let me just give you one piece of the puzzle from this Psalm.

The reason it is right and good for David to pray this way, and ask God to strike his enemies and break their teeth is that he is not praying for himself.

He's not thinking about himself. He's thinking about God's people.

He's thinking about the good of the kingdom of God.

He realizes that if Absalom's rebellion succeeds, the real disaster will be the harm that comes to the nation of Israel as the people of God.

They will be led by a violent, angry young man, who hates God and cares nothing for their spiritual welfare. That concern overwhelms him.

So David's last words in the Psalm are not: Help me. Get me out of this.

But: May your blessing be on your people.

David has realized—This is not about me. It's about God's people.

It's about the Messiah's kingdom. As he prayed for those big concerns—

he's is victorious in spiritual warfare. His fear shrank to manageable proportions.

So the third practical aspect of girding up your loins is to care about and be invested in Messiah's Kingdom. To care about and be invested in God's people.

That means the church.

And more specifically, exactly what all of you are doing this morning, investing your time, self, resources into a particular church body where God has called you.

Because the kingdom of God is a big picture truth you can tuck robe into.

Letter in bulletin this morning from Caleb and Miyoung Cheon.

Notice they mention a visitor coming from Christ Covenant in Alabama! Church he has planted. Solid Rock.

Churches in Taiwan look like a vulnerable small seed.

Therefore, I cannot help but to trust that the Lord will care for His church which is like a small seed, protect her from the evil spirit, and let it grow to become like a big tree in order that many people will come and hear the gospel to accept Christ as their Savior.

I think that's girding up your loins with the truth.

What Lord want you to do in whatever area of your life, whatever relationship in which you are trying to live as a Christian and facing attack.