

Christian Warfare

Put On Truth

Ephesians 6:13-17

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. 14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:13-17 (NASB))

Sometimes, as we engage in conversation, we might ask or say some of the most important words that will ever come out from our mouths, but never really know that we have done it. Such was the case in a conversation about 2000 years ago between Pontius Pilate, the Roman Consul, and the Lord Jesus.

It was on an occasion just moments before Pilate would deliver Jesus over to His soldiers to be crucified, and the question that Pilate asked Jesus was a relatively simple one. He asked, "What is truth?" Unfortunately for Pilate, his question was not sincere. He was not searching for real truth. It seems rather that he simply wanted to find a way out from a chore that he found discomfiting. What a wonderful thing it would have been had Pilate been truly sincere in his quest for "truth"! But sadly, He was not. Those words in John 18,

37 . . . Pilate said to (Jesus) him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." 38 Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him."
(John 18:37-38 (ESV))

This same question, "What is Truth" is also before you and me today, and it is ever and always before us, standing as a beacon to guide us in all that we do. Unfortunately though, for so many of us, our view of truth and our understanding of it is very little different from that of Pilate. Like him, we often view truth as being inherently elusive in its meaning, sometimes one thing and sometimes another depending on the circumstance at hand.

And yes, “truth” can take on many different faces. It does not always look exactly the same in every circumstance. And that can keep the meager minds of men wondering and confused, especially when we are caught up in the “pitched battle” of “spiritual warfare”. And that is the reason why we are being instructed here in these words to “put on truth”. Listen!

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. 14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH. (Ephesians 6:13-14)

May I pause and remind us of the circumstance that we, as believers, find ourselves caught up within every moment of every day. Whether we are able to clearly comprehend it or not, we are ever and always fully engaged within a “furious spiritual battle”, a battle that if lost will render our souls broken and on the verge of being completely lost.

Again, do we know that we are engaged in that furious battle? Unfortunately for the most of us Christians, the answer is a simple “no”. Most Christians go about their day as if nothing more was taking place beyond their incessant, busy agenda of things to do, people to see, places to go. And though that busy agenda is sometimes a “nightmare” of rush and struggle, it is usually only considered to be part of the ordinary occurrences of this visible reality that we exist in each day.

But unfortunately for our naïve minds, there is so much, much more taking place all around us. Unseen to the natural eye, on the other side of this visible reality there is another reality, an invisible one where there is an “actual war” taking place, a war that reaches from that other reality over into ours, bringing a “pitched battle” to us, hurting and corrupting us and disrupting all that is taking place in our day. And the battle is widespread. It not only affects us and the things we do, but is doing the very same damage with every other person on the earth, members of our family, our co-workers, and every other person and activity we encounter.

And I have great fears for all of us. We live confused lives, believing that these placid Spring days that we are enjoying, with so little visible activity taking place in them is the real reality, but it isn't. It isn't!

The real reality is this battle, this “spiritual warfare”, demons reaching across the boundaries from their spiritual realms over into our natural realms seeking to do what they do best, to steal, to kill and to destroy.

And yes, I know that the words I am saying leave us with a bleak outlook, but this is real “truth”. How do I know that all that I am saying is “real truth”? It is because we are reading it here in our only real source of truth, these scriptures. And that is the subject of our instructions for today.

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. 14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH. (Ephesians 6:13-14)

A reminder that while the garments within the “full armor of God” are all “garments of war”, and are essential to our protection against the spiritual warfare that rages all around us, the garments are also an essential provision for all the many other, more ordinary matters of daily life.

Our circumstance reminds me of the safeguards that the returning Israelites had to employ as they were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem after their return from exile in Babylon. As they worked, they held construction tools in one hand and a sword in the other, continuing with their daily work, but ever at the ready position for battle. And so must we. These are treacherous and evil days and we must get serious with our response to the evil days. Listen to these words from Romans 13!

13 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. (Romans 13:11-14)

Folks, you and I might not be caught up in these kinds of lifestyles, of revelry and drunkenness, of lewdness and lust, of strife and envy, but if not these, then others like them. And if we aren't right now, we very well may be tomorrow.

Why do I say that? Well it has to do with this first garment of the “full armor of God”, that of “Truth”.

14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH. (Ephesians 6:14)

As we said a moment ago, “truth” can be an elusive thing to pursue as we live out the ordinary days of our lives. How and why is that so? It is because most of us, even the most devout of believing Christians, do not fully comprehend “truth” and do not follow

after the ways of “real truth”. Why is that so? It is because we often go to the wrong sources to find our “standards of truth.”

What are the wrong sources that stand ready to provide us with their ideas and philosophies of truth? The easiest “wrong sources” to recognize will be those that are obviously from the “world”, those spoken about in 1 Corinthians 1. Listen!

20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. (1 Corinthians 1:20-21)

And in verse 25 . . .

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (1 Corinthians 1:25)

How often it is that we will hear ideas, and philosophies, and the giving of statistics, and the passionate oratory of speeches and we walk away believing all that we have heard from those speakers. And not only do we believe their words for ourselves, we pass them along to others as if they were real truth. And before long, those words actually become a form of truth that men will fight and die for. But sadly, their words are not real truth at all. Not really!

And regrettably, many of those same impassioned ideas and philosophies are being given from the pulpits of our churches by well-meaning preachers. But they too have not sought the best source of truth for their ideas and philosophies, and consequently their truth is not truth at all. And to make matters all the worse, the trusting members of the congregations get filled with the wrong versions of truth.

Even though Pilate did not comprehend what he was saying when he asked, “What is truth”, his question was actually the most important and most appropriate question a person could ever ask. And even more importantly, Pilate was actually asking the exact right person, the Lord Jesus!

Why is Jesus the exact right person to ask that question of? It is because Jesus is “truth”. And may I put the proper emphasis on this by saying that Jesus does not just give us the truth. Jesus Himself is “truth itself”. And outside of Him, there is no real and trustworthy truth. He said in John 14,

6 . . . "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. (John 14:6 (NASB))

May I say that these words, spoken here by Jesus, are not simply a statement being made by a teacher of the scriptures? These words are a proclamation made by God Himself. And these words are part of the very nature of His Name. Jesus is the Great “I AM” who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush and said, “I AM That I AM”. While our meager minds can’t fathom the real meaning of those words, they are still nonetheless real and true and we must by faith accept and embrace them. “JESUS IS! He is all in all! In Him everything that is, is!

And so it is with this word “truth”. Jesus Himself is “truth”. He is the very nature of truth itself. And from out of Him flows our knowledge and understanding of truth, and His truth is given to us in print here in these words of scripture. Jesus is the “Word” of God placed into print so that witless and meager minds such as ours can read and comprehend them.

And may I say ever-so strongly that truth is not what you and I might want to interpret truth to be from these scriptures. Truth remains ever and always separate from what we think about it. Why must that be so? It is because our rational minds, in our efforts to understand the profound ways of God, will always add our thoughts into the meanings of these words, and by doing that, we corrupt them. So then, may I say again, Truth remains ever and always separate from what we think about it. Truth stands alone and is its own standard. And our only option is to accept and to embrace this truth just as it is given, nothing added and nothing taken away, no other options or choices.

And as our scripture text for today admonishes us, we must not just subscribe to the “truth” of Jesus, we must actually and literally “put it on”, just as we would a garment. Verse 14,

14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH.
(Ephesians 6:14)

A question that occurs to me as I consider these six parts of the Armor of God, is why, of all things does God begin here with the “belt of truth”? He could have started with the mighty sword of the Spirit, or the towering shield of faith, or the shining breastplate of righteousness. Why the Belt of Truth?

Well, I confess that I have not found a really good answer to that question. It is not explained here, so we are left with some guessing, which we must always be very careful of.

But in the context provided to us in these words, we can take some guidance from the use of the belt by a Roman soldier clad in his armor. His belt was foundational to all the rest of his garments and played a crucial role in his effectiveness as a soldier. It was his belt that held the scabbard, without which there would be no place to carry a sword. Also, it is said that from the belt "hung strips of leather to protect the lower body, and that belt girded and secured the other pieces of the armor.

And here, God is commanding us to "put on truth" as a belt. How do we do that? How do we "put on truth"? If Christ Himself is "truth", and He is, then we must put Him on as we would a garment. Christ Himself must become the foundational part of who we are, strapped so tightly to us that He becomes part of our very nature. We must seek after and pursue after so intimate a relationship with Christ that when others would look at us and the things we do, they would see only Christ.

Yes, that is a tall, tall order. But it is exactly what Jesus spoke about in John 15, 16 and 17, that we would become "one" with Him, that we would be branches growing out from Him, the Vine, us always securely attached within His Vine receiving our life and power from Him and Him alone, dying to self and being alive to Christ, again, a tall, tall order, but one that must take place.

And yes, all the matters of life are "Spiritual". For the "child of God", there is nothing secular. That is why even the seemingly mundane and ordinary daily practical needs must also always come up under the "Standards of Truth" as given by Jesus here in His "word of truth", the words of scripture. I especially enjoy the thought that as I read these precious words, they somehow "cleanse" my soul from the taints and the stains of sin that I acquire as I go through my day. Listen to these words in John 15, verse 3. Jesus said,

3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.
(John 15:3 (NASB))

His precious words are able to cleanse you and me from our sins and to sanctify us for all that we do. In His prayer for us in John 17, Jesus prayed to his Father,
Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. (John 17:17)

Folks, these scriptures, every word of them are "truth" and they are trustworthy to equip you and me for all that will take place as the "spiritual warfare" rages all about us. Listen to these words from 2 Timothy, as we close . . .

16 All Scripture is (God Breathed)and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB))