



Think and Fight

November 30, 2014

Ephesians 6:14-18

Clint Pressley

*<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.*

*(Pastor prays)*

John Owen was a theological giant that lived in 17th century England. He had a scholar's mind, a pastor's heart, a love for truth, and a hatred for sin. If the Puritans make up a forest of theology, then John Owen is a giant Redwood in that forest. He rode with Oliver Cromwell and led the dissenting church through the darkest hours of persecution. He had a keen understanding of the war we are in as believers. His little book, titled "The Mortification of Sin," is still in print. I highly recommend it. In that little book, Owen warns us, "You better be killing sin, or sin will be killing you." It's what God told Cain. Sin is crouching at your door, and his desire is for you. Each of us is being stalked. The Bible says that Satan prowls like a roaring lion, seeking and stalking. You know what it's like to be stalked, to be looked at. Have you ever been sitting and reading or talking to someone and feel like you are being watched? You

can almost feel it, but you look, and nobody is there. Or maybe someone is there, and you can't see them. You used to believe he was there; you lived carefully, watching, discerningly. But over time, you slowly let your guard down. Look, it's intense work to stay battle-ready all the time.

Paul is using this armor (panoplia) metaphor, and it's a lot of stuff. There's the belt of truth tied around your waist and that makes it hard to relax. There's the breastplate of righteousness. It's uncomfortable, wrinkles your style, and makes you inconvenient at parties. It is shoes made of the gospel of peace. They pinch your feet and make it hard to walk the wide road that all your friends are on. There's the shield of faith. It's heavy to carry and doesn't fit in your car. It gets between you and your girlfriend. Besides, when's the last time you saw any flaming arrows, so you just put it down. That helmet you're wearing, the helmet of salvation, it's bronze and makes your head sweat and your neck break and is terribly inconvenient, especially on summer days, so you just slide it off. Then there's that sword of the spirit; the word of God is one offensive weapon. Who doesn't like the sword, but it does get cumbersome. And so, you put the Bible down. How long has it been? You're in the battle of your life, and you're standing there naked, defenseless, and easy prey. You've been lulled to sleep. Ask any great man whose life was ruined by an unguarded moment. Any of them that are repentant will tell you, I wished I had paid attention and put on the whole armor of God. Life is a war, and a war means fighting. But we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the spiritual forces of evil. So, what do we do? Verse 10 says that we resist with all our might and to be strong in the Lord. We rely on his strength, and verse 11 says put on the whole armor of God so that you can stand. We remember our weapons. Paul says stand firm. So, what do we do?

### We Stand Guard Through the Gospel of Jesus

Let's take the metaphor that Paul uses and look at each piece of armor. Let's look at what that piece represents and how to apply this truth. They all guard something. How are we going to win the battle?

## **You guard your mind with truth**

Truth. That means not compromising or cushioning or bending or shading or excusing. The plain truth is about who you are and who God is and where you stand. Truth. Don't be afraid of the truth. All truth is God's truth.

In John 8:44, Jesus tells us that Satan is like a liar, and liars succeed when they can make something that is genuinely false sound like it's really true. Once you get over the initial shock of guilt, lying is easy. It comes naturally and gets addicting because lying holds off consequences, clears up feelings, and puts a nice coat of paint on a rotten bridge. In fact, you will end up lying so much that you don't even know the truth or who you are anymore. And once a lie gets into the life of a believer, other things start to fall apart. Paul says, put on the belt of truth. Everything hangs off of that belt. Let's do that today. The truth is you have strayed, gone cold, and abandoned your first love. The truth is you are in sin before God, and you want out. The truth about sin is that it's an addictive trick. The blood of Jesus breaks the spell, and there is forgiveness, restoration, love, life, freedom, and joy in Christ. A man of integrity with a clear conscience can face anything without fear. That integrity is found in the only one who never lied: Jesus Christ. Set your mind on things above where Christ is. This shows up in what we see, what we hear, what we say, and who we are with. There's more here, but we've got to keep moving. Guard your mind with truth.

## **Guard your heart with righteousness**

I say your heart because a breastplate would go all the way around, protecting your vital organs, especially your heart. You have to be careful whom or what you give your heart to. The Lord says in Jeremiah 17:9, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*

So instead of following your heart, do what the Psalmist says in Psalm 37:4. *Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.* Do you know why? Because your joy and meaning is in Christ. You can't trust

what you want, but you can trust the Lord of your heart. Here's how we guide our hearts. We guard it through righteousness. More specifically, we guard it through the righteousness of Christ. We surrender our lives to a loving God through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus didn't just die on the cross to pay for our sins, he lived a perfectly righteous life so that he takes our sin, and we receive his righteousness. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *<sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* That is the breastplate, it covers front and back. Guard your mind with truth. Guard your heart with righteousness.

### **Guard your lifestyle with the gospel**

In verse 15, Paul talks about your shoes for battle. They would be sandals with cleats on them. These were specifically made for battle. And verse 15 says, *<sup>15</sup>and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.* The gospel of Christ you claim as a Christian, puts you on a different path than your friends or maybe even your family. Jesus said this about the Christian life in Matthew 7:13-14. *<sup>13</sup>“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy<sup>[a]</sup> that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. <sup>14</sup>For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.* Jesus seems to indicate that the overwhelming majority of people that will ever live will walk the wide path to destruction. The gospel puts you in the minority, a small group of people living for Christ, walking a road, living a life for the glory of God, and nothing else. Guard your lifestyle. The gospel takes you off the wide path of destruction and places you on the narrow path of life. Guard your mind with the truth. Guard your heart with righteousness. Guard your lifestyle with the gospel.

### **Guard your worship with faith**

Here is what I mean. To worship God you have to believe in God and believing in God requires faith. And in verse 16, faith is the shield that you should stand behind as Satan shoots arrows of fire at you. Worship is so important. Worship strengthens your faith, and faith saves your life. And when Satan

shoots fiery darts of anger, doubt, depression, discouragement, jealousy, loneliness, and despair, it's the shield of faith that says God is good, and loves you and this weeping lasts but for a night, and joy comes in the morning. It says that what you're enduring will lead to God's glory and eventually will lead you to God. Stand behind the shield of faith. We stand guard through the gospel of Jesus. I know there are two other pieces. The helmet equals salvation, and the sword is the Bible. But instead of the individual pieces, I want you to see the whole.

Warren Wiersbe says the whole armor of God is a picture of Jesus Christ. The belt of truth means Christ is the truth. The breastplate of righteousness means Christ is righteousness. These shoes are the gospel of peace, and Christ is our peace. The shield is faith, and Christ gives us faith. The helmet is salvation, and Christ is our salvation. And the sword of the spirit is the word of God, and Christ is the word. When you take on Christ, when you are in Christ, you have the *Panoplia*, the armor of God. This morning, stop relying on armor that's no good, come to Christ who is able to save.

*(Pastor prays)*