

In Ephesians 6:10-11 Paul writes, “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*”

The word “wiles” is the Greek word, *methodeia*, meth-od-i'-ah. We get our English word, “method” from this Greek word. Paul is talking about fortifying ourselves so that we might be able to stand firm against the methods or the schemes of the devil.

The Christian’s fight is not against flesh and blood. The enemy is spiritual and the warfare is spiritual. Paul says we “wrestle” against spiritual forces.

In high school I was a member of the wrestling team. In many sports, as physically demanding as they are, sometimes you can get away with not giving your all. But in wrestling, it’s just you and your opponent in the center of a circle and all eyes are focused on you.

The word “wrestle” is the Greek (*pale* {pal'-ay}) that carries the idea of a contest between two men standing face to face in which each endeavors to throw the other. In the original first century Greco-Roman wrestling, the contest was decided when the victor is able to press and hold his opponent down with his hand upon his neck.

When I wrestled, I had to focus on staying one step ahead of my opponent. One slip up, one mistake, one miscalculation and he can take the advantage over me and win the match. My opponent can put his arm within my reach, tempting me to reach for it and when I do it changes my center of gravity and weakens my balance so that he can work for a reversal and pin.

Paul is speaking of a similar, personal and close-up encounter with the spiritual forces of wickedness where the devil and his demons try to tempt us and weaken us so that we might sin.

Spiritual warfare is an encounter with the spiritual forces of wickedness and the Christian must put on the whole armor of God and be on constant alert.

At our Men’s Retreat this past weekend we had some fun playing paintball wars. We were divided up into two teams and the first “battlefield” we played on was an area in the woods. There were wooden barricades and walls all over the place where we could run behind and shot our opponent.

With rifles in hand and helmets on our heads, we were give the go ahead to begin the war. Guns were firing, “Pop-Pop-Pop!” and paint balls were flying through the air and banging into trees and the wooden barricades.

My strategy was to hold my ground—I was afraid to move and be seen and get shot by someone from the other team. But I had a problem—my helmet was pushing my glasses hard against the bridge of my nose causing a lot of pain. I tried loosening up the strap but to no avail. Each time I used by finger to relieve the pressure and lesson the pain I made myself vulnerable to attack.

I was tempted to surrender, to give up, to call the referee and raise up my hand but I knew that I would

never hear the end of it from the brethren.

All I had to do is say, “Surrender!” and I would be able to leave the field, remove my helmet and the pain would be gone! Not so with spiritual warfare.

When it comes to our encounters with the spiritual forces of wickedness, there are no draft dodgers, no compassionate reassignments and no conscientious objectors. In spiritual warfare there is no surrender—the battle is to the finish.

The Apostle Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 6:12 that we wrestle against “*principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*”

Here Paul is letting us know that our foe has a well-ordered hierarchy. This isn't some motley band of disorganized raiders we face, it is a well-ordered and highly organized opponent. It seems that according to Paul's use of words that in the demonic realm there are varying levels of authority and power.

- these beings have positions and rank
- they have assignments,
- they go about their role in a effective and efficient manner

The late Dr. J. Vernon McGee writes in his commentary that these powers are organized. He says that

- *Principalities* are the demons who have the oversight of nations. They would correspond to the rank of generals.
- *Powers* are the privates who are the demons wanting to possess human beings.
- The *rulers of the darkness of this world* are those demons who have charge of Satan's worldly business.
- *Spiritual wickedness in high places* are the demons in the heavenlies who have charge of religion.

In Ephesians 6:13 Paul writes, “*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.*”

He is in essence saying,

“Since we have this enemy who is not a flesh and blood enemy and is not normally detected with the physical senses and because this enemy is well organized and has positions and rank and assignments and they go about their role in a effective and efficient manner, I have to tell you again in order that you might see the necessity of taking up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand!”

In the battles that took place in the Roman Coliseum, it was easy to determine who won. Unlike many of our boxing matches where everyone has to wait for the judges to give their score and the ring announcer to declare the winner, the Romans on many occasion, fought to the death or at least until there was only one left standing.

This is what Paul is referring to when he writes, “*Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you*

may be able to withstand the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Paul is saying, “When all is said and done - when the battle is finally over, make sure YOU are the one who is standing victorious, and the enemy has either fled the field or lies dead at your feet.”

But there's only one way we can stand like that - there is only one way to resist the devil and his well ordered ranks of evil assistants - And that's by taking advantage of the strength the Lord gives us in the spiritual equipment Paul calls the armor of God.

There are six pieces of armor; we are going to look at the first two.

1.) *We are to “gird our waist with truth.”*

In Ephesians 6:14 Paul writes, “*Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth...*”

The New English Bible says in verse 14, “*buckle on the belt of truth.*” The belt that came with the Roman soldier's uniform was not for decoration; it had an important purpose. It was to hold the long flowing garment so that the soldier would not trip over it. If the belt was lost, you lost everything.

I can tell you from personal experience that I don't often leave my house without the security of my belt.

Many of us have seen on television the slapstick antics of comedians whose belts were compromised and found their pants to fall down. They try to run or to fight with their pants down and this is funny on television but it is not funny in a battle.

It's obvious that many of our young men aren't ready for battle so much so that an American Idol contestant put together a jingle communicating his disdain for the way they dress:

*Pants on the ground...Pants on the ground
Lookin' like a fool with your pants on the ground
With the gold in your mouth
Hat turned sideways
Pants hit the ground
Call yourself a cool cat; Lookin' like a fool
Walkin' downtown with your pants on the ground*

Paul commands us to “*gird our waist with truth*” because the belt of *truth* holds all the other components of our spiritual armor in place.

If Satan is going to be successful at causing us to trip and fall, he is going to attack us with his most potent weapon—*the lie*. If he can disable you in the area of truth, you become a sitting duck for his other attacks. This is why we must “gird ourselves with truth.”

This is why Jesus prays to God the Father in John 17:17, “*Sanctify them by Your truth...*” and then He goes on to say, “*Your word is truth.*”

“Truth” is exactly what our Lord Jesus used in the wilderness. Every deceptive thought, every treacherous idea that Satan tried to fill Jesus' mind with was lead captive by Jesus with the Word of

Truth. Every argument, every theory and every satanic reasoning that was hurled toward our Lord by the Prince of Darkness was refuted as Jesus used the truth of God's Word.

Satanic reason sets itself up against the true knowledge of God and unless you know what that true knowledge is, you will be deceived and a stronghold will ultimately be set up in your life. This is why you and I need to gird ourselves with truth.

If you are a new believer, or if you have been a believer for a while but have never been challenged in your Christian life from the Word of God, the first thing you need to do is put on the "belt of truth."

- "Putting on the belt of truth" means learning the truth and making it so much a part of who you are that you can't live without it.
- "Putting on the belt of truth" means making yourself available when the teaching of the Word of God is going on at your local church.
- "Putting on the belt of truth" means spending some measured, quantifiable time; an appointed time, in the Word of God each day.
- "Putting on the belt of truth" means hiding the Word of God in your heart so that when temptation comes, you won't fall apart or be crushed because you are wearing this Belt—this is the essence of what Paul is saying in verse 14—"*stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth.*"

Don't go looking for your belt when the devil is attacking—it is too late then; you should have had it on!

I am told that a great battle in the past was won by a general who cleverly told his men to cut the belts of their enemy while they were sleeping. The next morning the enemy troops were so busy trying to hold up their pants they weren't able to fire their weapons and lost the battle.

2.) *The Breastplate of Righteousness*

The second item of defense in the Christian's Armor is the *Breastplate of Righteousness*.

(Eph 6:14 NKJV) Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

Remember that the Apostle Paul spent a significant amount of time in a Roman prison chained to a Roman soldier. He used the armor of the soldier as an analogy of our weapons of warfare.

So we see this picture along with Paul and ask the question, "Why would the Roman soldier wear a breastplate?" "Why was this piece of armor so important to him?" Why are soldiers concerned with protecting their chest area?

The chest area contains some of our most vital organs, one being the heart. Even today, our soldiers and police officers wear **KEVLAR®** and other bullet-resistant materials to protect their vital organs, like the heart.

Now moving from the physical illustration to the spiritual application we find that one reason we need to protect our *spiritual* heart is that our actions and attitudes are determined by the condition of our heart.

Proverbs 4:23 (NKJV) says, “*Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.*”

The NASB translates this, “*Watch over your heart*” The NIV has, “*Guard your heart...*”

In Proverbs 4:23, Solomon is saying that our moral actions (what we do) and our attitudes of life (how we feel) are determined by the condition of our heart.

Remember, the first *world-wide* judgment on mankind? It was the Flood. Why did God judge the world with a flood?

Gen 6:5-6a, “*Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth...*”

The wickedness of man was great on the earth. Why? Because “*every intent of the thoughts of his **heart** was only evil continually.*”

Why didn't Pharaoh let the children of Israel go after having been warned by Moses? Because of his “hard heart.” (Exodus 7:13)

1 Kings 11:4 tells us why Solomon, who started out so good as a king, ended up so bad. The verse says, “*For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his **heart** after other gods; and his **heart** was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the **heart** of his father David.*”

The heart is the wellspring of life. Our moral actions and attitudes are formed by the condition of our heart. This is why shortly after God reviewed His commandments with Moses and the children of Israel in Deuteronomy chapter five, He would have these words to say in chapter six:

Deu 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!

Deu 6:5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Deu 6:6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

Our moral actions (what we do) and attitudes (what we think and how we feel) are formed by the condition of our heart.

In the book of Acts we find Satan influencing the heart of a Christian. While the devil cannot take possession of a child of God who is indwelt by the Spirit of God, he can certainly influence our hearts.

In Acts chapter five we find a Christian couple selling a piece of land and deceiving the church into thinking they offered the entire proceeds of the sale to the Lord. They actually sold the land for a higher price and pocketed the difference.

Peter and the other apostles confront the husband and asks the following, “Ananias, *why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?*”

This is why we must do as we are instructed in Proverbs 4:23: “*Keep your heart with all diligence... Watch over your heart... Guard your heart!*”

Why? “*For out of it spring the issues of life.*”

From out of the heart spring the issues of life. When we don’t guard our hearts, we will allow sin to take root there.

- **Pride** – In 2 Chron 26, it is written of King Uzziah, “*So his fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped till he became strong. But when he became strong, his **heart** was so proud that he acted corruptly...*”
- **Doubt** – Jesus says in Mark 11:23, “*For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not **doubt in his heart**, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.*”
- **Greed** – Speaking of false teachers Peter writes in 2 Pet 2:14, “*having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a **heart trained in greed**, accursed children...*”
- **Bitterness** - Prov 14:10 - “*The heart knows its own bitterness, And a stranger does not share its joy.*”
- **Lust** - Mat 5:28 “*But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*”

In Proverbs 4, we are instructed to guard our own heart. One way we guard our heart is to put on the *breastplate of righteousness*.

KEVLAR will not protect your spiritual heart. Remember, “*We wrestle not against flesh and blood*” and “*The weapons of our warfare are not carnal...*”

This is not a physical contest. Ours is a spiritual battle and we need spiritual weapons in order to fight.

In Ephesians 6:14 Paul tells us to, “*Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness...*”

The breastplate used by the Roman soldier guarded his vulnerable heart. For the same reason in a spiritual sense, the Christian needs a breastplate to protect his or her heart. We have already learned that our actions and attitudes are determined by the condition of our heart.

If Satan can get to your heart, he can affect how you feel and what you do.

How does the “breastplate of righteousness” work?

The breastplate worn by the Roman soldier was made of metal and leather and it protected the vital organs. Pliable strips of metal protected the soldier from under his armpits down to his waist.

A plate covered both the front and his back for protection against spears and arrows from the enemy. One of the most vital organs that the breastplate covered was the soldier's heart.

The Christian is to put on the breastplate of righteousness to protect his heart from the devil and his demons.

The Christian needs to put on the breastplate of righteousness because the devil seeks to sway his or her heart toward unrighteousness. The word “unrighteousness” means sinful, wicked or evil.

In other words,

- The devil wants you to sin.
- He wants you to speak evil from your mouth.
- He wants you to think evil with your mind.
- He wants you to do evil with your body.
- He wants the “righteous ones” who claim the Name of Christ, to behave as if they were unrighteous.

If Satan can succeed in this mission he will have used your *unrighteousness* to bring reproach to the Name of Christ. This is why we must put on the breastplate of righteousness.

In the life of the believer there are two kinds of righteousness: There is an imputed righteousness and there is a *practical* righteousness.

When we believe in Jesus Christ and accept Him as our Savior and Lord, God credits Christ's righteousness to our account. What is *imputed* is God's provision of righteousness. We didn't have any righteousness of our own so God had to give it to us.

In Romans 3:10-18, 23. Paul says, "*As it is written: 'There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one.' ...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*"

Since we didn't have any righteousness of our own, for those who become followers of Jesus Christ, God credits their accounts with the righteousness of His Son.

Please do think that this is an *infused* righteousness. To *infuse* implies a pouring in of something that gives new life or significance—this would mean that we become intrinsically or innately righteous. Not!

What we have been talking about is an *imputed* righteousness. To impute is to reckon, or to credit to the account of someone by transfer.

An example of this can be found in Genesis 41 where we find Joseph being given the authority of Egypt's Pharaoh. Pharaoh removes his signet ring from his hand and gives it to Joseph thus crediting to Joseph's account his own authority. Without that signet ring, Joseph was nothing to Egypt.

Before one turns from their sins and follows Christ, they are bankrupt. They have a spiritual bank account but it is in the negative.

Isa 64:6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

Phil 3:7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

Phil 3:8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

Phil 3:9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

An amazing thing happens when you give your life over to the ownership of Jesus...a spiritual transaction takes place. Jesus makes a deposit into your spiritual bank account—He gives you His righteousness in exchange for your sin.

1 Peter 3:18 – “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God...”

2 Cor 5:21 - “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

When God looks at us, He doesn't see our sin; He sees Christ's righteousness that was imputed to us. (See Romans 3:22-24 and 4:2-3.)

This was all done according to the grace of God.

We didn't deserve it but because of God's love, He credits our account with the righteousness of His Son. It is not a result of any of our own works or good deeds. (2 Timothy 1:9 and Ephesians 2:8-10.)

But don't make the mistake of thinking this is an automatic transaction.

Have you ever gotten one of those credit cards in the mail with your name on it all ready to use? The instructions that come with the card say that you have a certain amount of credit and all you had to do is call the 800 number to activate it.

The card is no good if it's not activated. The card is nothing more than a piece of plastic if you don't call the company up and notify them that you want the credit they've offered you.

It is like those gift cards you can purchase at the supermarket—they are nothing but plastic unless you put some money on them.

When it comes to the credit of righteousness that has been imputed to your account, it is not an automatic transaction.

The Bible says in John 3:16 that “...*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...*”

The penalty for sin was paid in full when Jesus died on Calvary’s cross—“*for God so loved the world that He gave...*” He gave! Credit is available!

But the verse doesn’t end there. It continues on to say, “*that whosoever **believes** in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*”

This is how you activate your credit line. This is how righteousness is credited to your account. *You believe!*

Paul says it this way in Romans chapter 10 verse 9-10, “*that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your **heart** that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the **heart** one believes unto **righteousness**, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*”

This is what is called imputed righteousness. It is when righteousness is credited to your account by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me tell you something else about this kind of righteousness; Satan can’t do anything about it—he cannot touch what God has credited to your account.

Rom 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Rom 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Rom 8:33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

The word *justify* means “to declare righteous.” God has declared the believer righteous and there is nothing that Satan can do about that!

Basically, God's gift of salvation in Christ is when God imputes the perfect righteousness of His Son to the believer, and thereby declares him righteous positionally.

But there is another kind of righteousness—it is called *practical* righteousness.

Listen to what the Bible says about your position in Christ. As a Christian you are:

- spiritually alive unto God,
- dead to sin,
- forgiven,
- declared righteous,
- a child of God,
- God's possession,
- an heir of God,
- blessed with all spiritual blessings,
- a citizen of heaven,
- a servant of God,

- free from the Law,
- crucified to the world,
- a light in the world,
- victorious over Satan,
- cleansed from sin,
- declared holy and blameless,
- set free in Christ from the power of sin,
- secure in Christ,
- granted peace and rest,
- and led by the Holy Spirit.

This is the Christian's position in Christ. Practical righteousness is when the Christian lives up to who he or she is positionally.

That's why in the New Testament, for every one of those statements about your position, there is a corresponding practice you're to follow.

- Since you are spiritually alive to God—walk in accordance with that new life.
- Since you are dead to sin—don't give sin any place in your life.
- Since you're forgiven—count on that and don't go through life feeling guilty.
- Since you've been declared righteous—live righteously.
- Since you're a child of God—act like you are one of God's children.
- Since you are God's possession—yield to Him in humble submission to His ownership.

By the way, this is the kind of righteousness that Satan wants to stifle and suppress in the believer's life.

- Satan doesn't want you to live according to the new life you possess.
- He doesn't want you to abstain from sin in your life.
- He doesn't want you to rejoice in the truth that you're forgiven.
- He doesn't want you to live righteously.
- He doesn't want you to act like one of God's children.
- He doesn't want you to humble yourself before God and submit to Him

The breastplate of righteousness protects us when Satan attacks our efforts to live righteously.

The Breastplate of Righteousness is in force when the believer reckons that the righteousness of Christ has been credited to his or her account

The Breastplate of Righteousness is in force when the believer makes righteousness a way of life. You must "put on" righteousness and only as you walk in the righteousness of Christ will you be protected.

The Breastplate of Righteousness is in force when our hearts are kept pure and we are living a righteous lifestyle. As it is in place, Satan won't be able to gain a foothold. Putting on the breastplate of righteousness is practicing righteousness. Practicing righteousness will serve to protect your heart from the enemy.

One day the great French general, Napoleon Bonaparte, ordered a bulletproof coat to be made. When the

workman had completed the coat he delivered it personally to the emperor. Napoleon took the coat from the man and then handed it back, ordering him to put it on and then took a gun and fired 6 shots into the coat, now worn by the workman. When he saw that the coat repelled the shots he congratulated the man and sent him on his way. I suppose that man was sure glad he did such good work.

In one sense, your breastplate of righteousness is only as effective as your works of righteousness. If you are not producing the fruit of righteousness in your life (James 3:18), you open your heart up to the devil's attack because your heart is not protected.