

The Christian in Complete Armour - Part 7

by William Gurnall

The Christian's spiritual girdle is the truth that is girt about their loins, which represents their mind and spirit, and is necessary to defend against Satan's designs to rob Christians of truth.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 33:11, Job 40:16, Psalm 69:23, Romans 13:14, Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 6:14, 1 Peter 1:13, 1 Peter 5:9

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Christian Armor"

Description

William Gurnall preaches on the importance of the Christian's spiritual girdle, focusing on having our loins girt with truth as the first piece of the whole armor of God. He explains that truth encompasses both the truth of doctrine and truth of heart, emphasizing the need for sincerity and knowledge of God's word to make the girdle complete. Gurnall highlights that our minds and spirits, likened to the loins, must be strengthened by truth to be strong Christians, with clear understanding and resolute will to pursue what is holy and good.

Transcript

Direction Fifth.

The Several Pieces of the Whole Armour of God

First Piece--The Christian's Spiritual Girdle.

'Having your loins girt about with truth' (Eph. 6:14).

The apostle having ordered the Ephesians, and in them every Christian, the posture which they are to observe in fight with their enemy; he comes now to instance in the several pieces of that armour, which before he had commended to them only in the general. The first of which is the girdle of truth--'having your loins girt about with truth.' A twofold inquiry is here requisite. First, What he means by truth. Second, What by loins, and their being girt with truth.

a brief explanation of the words.

First Inquiry. What is truth here? Some by truth understand Christ, who indeed elsewhere is called 'the truth.' Yet in this place I conceive it is not properly so understood, because the apostle instanceth in here several pieces and parts of armour, one distinct from another, and Christ cannot so well be said to be a

single piece to defend this or that part, as the whole in whom we are complete, compared therefore, Rom. 13:14, to the whole suit of armour, 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus;' that is, be clothed and harnessed with Christ as a soldier with his armour cap-à-pie. Some by truth mean truth of doctrine; others will have it truth of heart, sincerity. Those I think right that comprise both; and so I shall handle it. Both indeed are required to make the girdle complete. One will not do without the other. It is possible to find good meanings and a kind of sincerity without, yea against the truth. Many follow an error as they Absalom in the simplicity of their hearts. Such do ill while they mean well. Good intentions do not more make a good action, than a fair mark makes a good shot by an unskilful archer. God did not like Saul's zeal when he persecuted the Christian church, though he thought, no question, he did him good service therein. Neither is it enough to have the truth on our side, if we have not truth in our hearts. Jehu was a great stickler against idolatry, but kicked down all again by his hypocrisy. Both then are necessary; sincerity to propound a right end, and knowledge of the word of truth to direct us in the right way to that end.

Second Inquiry. What is meant here by loins that are to be girt with this girdle of truth? The loins must be like the girdle. This is spiritual, and therefore they must be so. Peter will help to interpret Paul; 'Gird up the loins of your mind,' I Peter 1:13. They are our spirits and minds which must wear this girdle, and very fitly may our spirits and minds be compared to the loins. The loins are the chief seat of bodily strength. Of behemoth it is said, 'His strength is in his loins,' Job 40:16. The loins are to the body as carina navi--the keel to the ship. The whole ship is knit to that, and sustained by it. And the body is knit to the loins; if the loins fail, the whole body sinks, hence to 'smite through the loins' is a phrase to express destruction and ruin, Deut. 33:11; weak loins and a weak man. If we be but a little weary, nature directs us to lay our hands on our loins to sustain them, as our chief strength. Thus as the actings of our minds and spirits are in their faculties and powers, so we are weak or strong Christians. If the understanding be clear in its apprehensions of truth, and the will sincere, vigorous, and fixed in its purposes for that which is holy and good, then he is a strong Christian; but if the understanding be dark or uncertain in its notions, as a distempered eye that cannot well discern its object--not able to bring its thoughts to an issue, which to close with, and the will be wavering and unsteady, like a needle that trembles between two lodestones--here the man is weak, and all he doth will be so. Feeble spirits cause an intermitting false pulse; so want of strength in the mind to know truth and want of resolution in the will to pursue that which he knows to be holy and good, causeth a man to falter in his course.

The use therefore of these two, FIRST. Truth of doctrine for the mind, and SECOND. Truth of heart or sincerity for the will, is to unite and establish both these facilities. This they do when they are clasped and girt about the soul, as the girdle about the loins of the body. Though the loins be the strength of the body, yet they need an auxiliary to their strength from the girdle to keep those parts close, and unite their force; without which, men, when they would strain themselves, and put forth their strength in any work, find a trembling and looseness in their loins. Hence the 'shaking of the loins,' is a phrase to express weakness, Ps. 69:23. Thus our minds and spirits need this girdle to strengthen them in every work we do, or else we shall act nothing vigorously.

DIRECTION V.--FIRST GENERAL PART.

[Truth of Doctrine as a Girdle for the Mind.]

We shall begin with truth of doctrine, or truth of the word, called 'the word of truth,' Eph. 1:13, because it is the word of God, who is God of truth. It behoves every Christian to be well girt with this truth. 'Resist the devil,' saith Peter, 'steadfast in the faith,' I Peter 5:9; that is, in the truth--faith being there put for the object

of our faith, which is the truth of God, declared in the doctrine of the gospel. This is 'the faith which was once delivered to the saints,' Jude 3; that is, the truth delivered to them to be believed and held fast. And of what importance it is to be thus steadfast in the faith, the apostle Peter, in the following verse of the fore-mentioned place, shows, by his vehement and earnest praying for them, that God would 'stablish, strengthen, and settle them.' The heaping of words to the same purpose, implies the great danger they were in of being unsettled by Satan and his instruments, and the necessity of their standing firm and unshaken in the faith. Nothing is more frequently inculcated than this in the Epistles; and the more, because in those blustering times it was impossible to have kept the faith from being blown from them, without this girdle to hold it fast. Now, as there is a double design Satan hath to rob Christians of truth, so there is a twofold girding about with this truth necessary. first, Satan comes as a serpent in the persons of false teachers, and by them labours to put a cheat on us, and cozen[1] us with error for truth. To defend us against this design, it is necessary we be girt with truth in our understanding--that we have an established judgement in the truths of Christ. second, Satan comes sometimes as a lion in the persons of bloody persecutors, and labours to scare Christians from the truth with fire and faggot. Now to defend us against this, we need to have truth girt about us, so that with a holy resolution we may maintain our profession in the face of death and danger. to begin with the first.

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