

The Christian Soldier Girt About with Truth - 2

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The Christian's Armour

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Our text for this afternoon you can find in Ephesians 6:14a. Ephesians 6, the first part of verse 14.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,

You recall last time I had the privilege of addressing you on Sunday afternoon, we began a series on the Christian soldier. We looked at verses 10 through 13 on that occasion and now we want to begin looking piece by piece at the armor the Christian soldier is called upon to put on and to use. So our theme this afternoon is "The Christian Soldier Girt About with Truth." We will see that theme in three thoughts. First, the foundational importance of truth. The foundational importance of truth. Second, the final authority for truth. The final authority for truth. The third, the experiential characteristics of truth. The Christian soldier girt about with truth: the foundational importance of truth; the final authority for truth; and the experiential characteristics of truth.

So we saw some weeks ago, dear congregation, that Paul called the Ephesian brethren and sisters in the faith to warfare, to a battle. He identified the enemy, Satan and his demons. He said to them, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." And because we have no ability or strength in ourselves to withstand this enemy, Paul has admonished the Ephesian believers to stand in the strength of the Lord, to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Then Paul has proceeded, we saw, to explain to the Ephesian believers how you are to do that. You are to do that, he says, by putting on the whole armor of God.

Now Paul says by implication that we need every piece of this armor. We need to be outfitted from the helmet of salvation to our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace with the breastplate to the loins girt with truth, we need head to toe coverage. Now it's interesting, isn't it, that Paul doesn't make any provision for anything to be worn on the back of the Christian soldier because the Christian soldier is never to turn his back upon this battle but he's to go forward in the strength of the Lord. It's also interesting, isn't it, that Paul insists that on the one hand all these pieces of armor, all six of them that we hope to look at in six messages, the Lord sparing us, all six of them are of divine

provision. God gives them all but at the same time the believer must put them on and must use them. God doesn't put them on for us, we have to put them on. We have to use the means and we have to exercise these various pieces of Christian armor.

Well, now the first one of these then is what Paul calls truth. Now we don't know exactly how Paul came to this beautiful picture but scholars have surmised and they're probably correct, that as a prisoner in various places, you know Paul was in prison on several occasions, Paul was well-acquainted with soldiers and with their weapons. He probably sat for days and observed these Roman guards, these Roman soldiers that were outfitted. The one thing we do know is that all the pieces of armor that Paul refers to here fit with the Roman soldiering at that particular time. So you can imagine as Paul is sitting there, he's watching these Roman soldiers guard him and go about their duties, he begins to meditate and he's thinking, he begins to say to himself, "You know, that's just like what it means to be a Christian. They're outfitted from head to toe." He sees, he's got plenty of time for meditation in prison and he begins to draft a picture and the Holy Spirit inspires him to write this down, and so we have these wonderful famous words in front of us of the Christian soldier fighting the powers that be.

Now it's interesting that when Paul begins to delineate these pieces of armor, the actual outfitting of the soldier, that he begins with truth. He says, "Stand therefore," how, "having your loins girt about with truth." Now the word "girt" there comes from "girdle" and that's, of course, an old-fashioned word. We must not think of a woman's girdle here and we must think of a belt, in fact, more modern translations do translate this word here as a belt, a wide belt like the Roman soldiers wore. It was a very thick belt and they would gird up their loins into that belt when they were ready to fight. You see, when a man was sitting down and he was relaxed he would take off his belt and his long outer garment would flow onto the floor or onto the dirt. That was a normal way to sit around and converse with one another. But the moment a man, and particularly a soldier, wanted to do something and go somewhere, what he would do is he would put on that big belt, he would stand up and he would take those outer garments, you have to think of it as an outer robe or like an evening gown, that's how they dressed, long outer garments, foot-dragging garments and he would lift them up and he would pull out his belt a little bit and he'd stuff them in inside of his belt, and so then he would have both hands free. You see, he could run, he could walk, he could have a shield in one hand and a sword in the other. If he didn't gird up his loins, he'd have to have one hand be busy holding up the skirts of his garment and he wouldn't be able to fight. So Paul says what's foundational to everything is this girding or this buckling around the waist with truth and Jesus also has the same kind of picture in mind, doesn't he, when he says, warning his disciples, "Be ye watchful and ready, let your loins be girded about and your lights burning." In other words, be ready for action. Be ready to play the soldier, to play the man's part, to fight the battle, the battle against sin, the world, Satan and your own old nature.

Now it's no coincidence that this is the first part of the armor that Paul mentions because, really, truth is foundational to everything else. You can't have faith without truth. You can't have a helmet without truth. Your feet cannot go anywhere without knowing where they're going and this metaphor that Paul's painting here, this allegory, as it were, it is

truth that guides us. So the question we have to raise, of course, is what is this girdle of truth? What does Paul mean here by truth? Well, I would like to suggest to you that he means three things. First and most basic out of which the other two flow, he means to gird up as the other Scriptures say, the parallel Scriptures, the loins of your mind, your mind with truth. In other words, the objective truth of Scripture. The truths of the Bible. These are foundational for true and spiritual Christian warfare. But out of those truths we are not just to gird up the loins of our mind, we also are to gird up the loins of our soul, aren't we? Our heart. Our innermost being so that we may have a subjective experience of truth. And then thirdly, we are to practice the truth. We are to go out and do it. What has filled our minds that is true from the Bible and that's penetrated our souls, we are to go out and do. We are to engage in warfare. I think all three of these things are implied by Paul. These three things belong, in my mind, to stand or to fall together. If you just have truth in your mind, you won't be a good soldier, you won't have a heart for the battle. If you just have it in your heart but you don't really what to believe, you just have some feeling, you won't know which direction to go, you won't know what you're defending. So if you don't practice it, what does it avail you?

Now if you look up in most commentaries today, it seems that almost every commentary will struggle. I looked at many of them because I struggled with this, but it struggles with whether it's the objective truth Paul has in mind or the subjective truth, and many of them come down on the objective truth side. Paul just used here the truths in the mind that you grasp, that you understand the Christian faith. And there are others that say, "No, it's the Christian character, if you're a true man, an upright man. That's what Paul's talking about." Well, I finally came to the conclusion and I believe I'm correct on this, that there's no need to divide these. These are all one piece and these all belong together and in our mind we separate them. But to be a true Christian soldier, you need them all. You need truth in the mind, you need truth in the soul, you need truth in the practice. So you need to be girded, girded up, be ready for battle by truth.

Well, truth in the mind is then, of course, foundational to truth in the heart and truth in practice. We must know the truth intellectually. We must get a reasonable amount of head knowledge if we're going to know what we are to defend. We have to master the truth so that the truth can master us. And so we must be bound to the truth, the truth must bind us to itself, as it were, and therefore bring you to listen in church, you need to read the Scriptures in private, we need to do some studying and we need to search the Scriptures, we need to read the books that give us insight into the Scriptures, we need to discuss with one another various truths, we need to gain an appreciation for truth, we need to understand truth is foundational to being a Christian.

You see, unless we have a settled conviction as to what truth is and a settled conviction that the Bible is true and to understand its major doctrines, we are going to be tossed to and fro as the Bible puts it with all kinds of doctrines. Isn't that exactly what's happening today in the church? I'm speaking of the church at large. Truth isn't expounded clearly and when it's not expounded clearly people in the pew become confused in their mind. They don't know what to believe anymore and even when they ask with Pilate and ask in

a better way than Pilate, "What is truth," they don't understand it. They get only vague answers and therefore they only give vague answers.

And part of the problem, of course, today is that we live in a society and a world which revolves around feeling. People want to feel good about themselves. People go to church to feel good. They don't go to church to hear truth and so what happens is that we're in a day in which truth has fallen on hard times. Lots of people don't even like the word doctrine. That may sound strange in our church, we still have an appreciation for it, thanks be to God, but the day may be coming when that may not be the case. There are lots and lots of churches today in which doctrine is considered boring and irrelevant and it's even crept into the English language, hasn't it? Dogma. Core truths. It used to be, dogma used to be a wonderful word. People used to have a deep appreciation for dogma. Today we've got negative connotation that's even crept into the language. People say, "Don't be so dogmatic." That means you're a hard-nosed person who doesn't compromise at all and you're just a mean person. You're not a cool person. You're unflexible. It's a negative thing. But when it comes to truth, you see, the Bible says we are to be dogmatic in the good sense of the word. We say, of course, in the Reformed sense of the word, hence we speak of Reformed dogmatics and, of course, in our church we believe this is so important that we devote a full service every single Sunday through the heart of our Catechism to one of the great truths of Scripture. We approach that truth topically through the Catechism. We say, of course, in the free sermons there are expository sermons and series we approach in truth as well, but there we're particularly in the Catechism are dealing with one doctrine after another and we believe that it's important so that people can gird up the loins of their mind and know the truth and know what to believe and know what direction to go in when they fight the Christian fight against heresy and against sin.

We believe this is very important. I can't tell you the number of ministers that have spoken to me personally over the years and said something like this to me, one man in particular said these exact words to me, he said, "Don't ever give up Catechism preaching in your church." I said, "Well, why do you say that?" He said, "Well, the next generation won't have a grasp of truth because he won't understand the doctrines, one by one." It's not just by chance that our forefathers said this is a good way to teach and to preach but yet there can be people that don't like the Catechism very much. They say, "Oh, the Catechism again." Right? We need these truths, congregation, to gird up the loins of our minds and know what we believe to know how to defend ourselves not only defensively but how to go out and fight the battle offensively and to dialog with people about truth. And if you've made much effort in your life to dialog with people even other Christians about truth, you understand what I mean. You find out soon enough how incompetent we still are with all our Catechism teaching, how difficult it is to relate to people and sometimes we're groping our way for proof texts of what we're saying. We say, "Now where was that again in the Bible?" Ah, says Paul, if you want to be a good Christian soldier, gird up your loins of your mind with truth. Study the Scriptures. Study the truths of the forefathers that they have laid out for us that the Scriptures teach. Know these things, spend time with these things.

So that's the first thing. You can't be a good Christian soldier if you don't know what you're believing for or what you believe or where you're going. It's like can you picture a soldier in the army, boys and girls, can you picture a soldier in the army and he's got his gun ready to go but he doesn't know which direction he's going. He doesn't know who his enemy is and who his friend is. He's a dangerous soldier. So you've got to know, you've got to know the truth.

Now why do I make so much of this? Well, for this reason, not only is it important to know and is it foundational for Christian fighting but also because we today, particularly today we live in a society, in a Christian, a post-Christian society, I put it in quotes, in which heresy and error is running rampant everywhere and Satan is using that to confuse the minds of many, to come as he did to Eve with that age old question, "Hath God said?" And then to doubt what God has said. Sometimes it's frightening. I often, as you know, have different places, I check out a bookstore. Go into a bookstore, you look at some books and if you look at the old books and it's pre-1850, 9 chances out of 10 that book is solid. If it's post-1850, 9 chances out of 10 it's not solid. Do you understand the difference of the society in which we live compared to the society which our forefathers lived just 200 years ago? And how earnest they were, Jude 1:3, to contend earnestly for the faith? Today people don't think it's so important to contend for the faith and you've got all this confusing teaching, all this Arminianism and various errors of dispensationalism and Pentecostalism and people believing that which is right in their own eyes, people believing whatever they want to believe so that it feels good. We have every bit reason, even more than our forefathers, to preach on texts like this today and to say, "Know the truth and gird up your loins with that truth."

Well, today Satan has many effective lies and he will rave against us, he will fight against us in every way trying to deceive us but if we know the truth and if our feet are standing on the rock of truth, Jesus Christ, and our minds are girt with truth and by the grace of God we want to practice truth, we will have the first important piece of Christian armor in place to battle Satan. And so we must understand that foundational to Christian warfare is that you and I believe with all our hearts that this holy book is our final authority. That's my second point this afternoon, our final authority for everything that we believe. We need to be able to say of truth, "Thus saith the Lord." If you can't find it in this book, my friend, it's not true. Truth is in the word of God. Yes, certain theological doctrines aren't spelled out word for word in the Bible but they are gleaned from the Bible as we work with the truths presented in the Bible.

So our standard of authority and our standard for fighting the Christian warfare is not men's opinions or men's feelings as much as we all love our feelings, but it is God's truth and so we need to go back to where we were nearly 500 years ago with Martin Luther and the beginning of the Reformation and we need to be able to say from our heart when we meet other people, and from our mind, "I can stand nowhere else. Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me, because it is the truth of the word of God." That's why we had a Reformation. The true great principles of the Reformation are justification by faith alone, and the authority of the Holy Scriptures. So you and I must know these Scriptures

and we must see them as authoritative and we must use them to ward off Satan and his powerful demons.

You see, the truth of the matter is that apart from the Bible our minds are far too puny and too weak to ward off Satan. Satan can get us every time. He's clever. He's a lot smarter than we are and he's got a better knowledge of the Bible than we have. So the only way we can ward off Satan is by using the word of God and even Jesus himself did that, even Jesus himself gave us that example. You remember that, don't you, in the temptations of the wilderness Satan came in three special intense rounds of temptation and each time Satan reached the climax of that particular series of temptations, the Bible records for us what it is and Jesus comes back at Satan with, "It is written." Fascinatingly, all three times Jesus quotes the book of Deuteronomy, the book that the Reverend is now doing a series of sermons on, very important Bible book, foundational Bible book. But the point is this, you see, Jesus patterns for us how we are to resist temptation in the midst of Christian warfare. We are to do that by using the word of God. The word of God is our authority. It is the word of God that makes Satan tremble. Satan is not afraid of you and me apart from the Bible, but Satan cannot withstand the powerful word of God.

Now the importance of using this authority not just in our mind but being convicted of this authoritative character of the Bible in our souls cannot be overestimated either. You see, if you only are convinced of something in your mind and you get involved in the midst of a temptation, you don't purpose in your heart to resist that temptation, you're going to fall quite easily. And so what Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1 is so important, he says that the preaching of the cross or the preaching of the truth is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved, it is the power of God. And then what Paul goes on to say is that a natural man even if he believes with his mind that the Bible is the word of God, cannot understand spiritual things. So if you really want to be a strong Christian soldier, what you need is you need the truth in your mind combined with the truth in your soul meaning the heart for the truth that you believe.

Remember Daniel in Daniel 1? He wouldn't eat of the king's meat and the king's drink, the wine because his people were back in Jerusalem suffering. He didn't want to get tempted, he didn't want to get worldly and forget them and be caught up in the pleasures of Babylon even though it was really nothing you'd say sinful in itself, that piece of meat and a glass of wine, but the Bible says something interesting, it says Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. In his heart. You see, that made the difference. It was in his mind, yes, that was good, but it has to be in our heart as well.

Let's look at it this way. If you want to appreciate music, you have to have an ear for music. I grew up in a home where there wasn't much music. I didn't appreciate music very much. Never developed much of an ear for music. Actually under the influence of my wife playing some of these wonderful choir music things like that, I'm gradually catching up a little bit. I'm gradually getting a deeper appreciation for music but I would still far rather read a good book than hear a wonderful music program. I just don't have the heart for it the way many other people, I can see that they have. I can feel that they have it. I'm jealous of it a bit. I'd like to have more of a heart for it but maybe it's coming.

But you see, when it comes to the Christian faith, you don't have an option. You've got to have a heart for it or you're going to perish. In this battle Satan is going to get you and destroy you and you're going to turn around and run from him and he's going to get you in the back as you're running from battle, as you go AWOL on the Lord. And so truth in the mind is never enough. It's important as we know. You've got to have it in your heart. You've got to have God reveal it to you through the word by his Holy Spirit and by the grace of God he does reveal it in the Bible. You need to know that. You need to know that by experience and you need to love it, you need to have a heart for it. You need to be among those of whom Jesus said, "I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes." That's pretty clear language. God reveals it from the self-wise, the self-proud and he reveals it to those who are like little children. We've heard a lot about that lately in church, haven't we? Becoming like a little child and submitting everything to God and to his word. And you see, that's what a good Christian soldier does. He submits everything to the authority of the Bible.

Let me ask you and let me ask myself a question: when is the last time that you wanted to do something or you felt a certain way about something and the authority of the printed page of the Bible changed your mind and made you go to reform to become more biblical? I want you to think about this question. I think that's a very important question because I think we could easily have been in a rut, even God's people can get in the rut of believing what we want to believe. When we don't stay close to the Scriptures [unintelligible] Read one chapter or two before you go to bed, but we aren't studying it, we're not immersing them, we're not saying what is the Lord saying to me in this passage, we're not really listening to the authority of the word of God. [unintelligible] of our erroneous ideas, our erroneous feelings. We don't want to change. Even when we come to church to hear sermons, we really want to hear what we already know and what we feel good about. We don't want the [unintelligible] edge. We don't want to be subject to the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit coming through the word, changing us, conforming us and more and more to Jesus Christ, to be like him.

But you see what Paul is saying, he is saying if you are going to stand and fight the Christian warfare, you've got to be willing to be girt about with truth. We've got to be willing to change because of truth. We've got to be willing to hold the word of God as your prime authority, as that which molds your opinions and molds your theories and molds your convictions.

But what a God. [unintelligible] inspired. Every word and every letter of every word and every little piece of every little letter of every word. That's what Jesus said when he said every jot and tittle. A Hebrew letter has a little flair at the end of it of parts of the letter, that's a jot or a tittle. It's a little piece of a little letter. You see, Paul wrote to Timothy, "All Scripture," 2 Timothy 3:16, [unintelligible], every single Scripture, every single verse of the Bible is inspired by God, breathed by God, breathed out by God. That's what it means and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. Every verse of the Bible is designed to change you, to change me, to make us more

biblical, to make us more girt up with truth, to make us more Christian and have core convictions, to make us better soldiers.

Some of you don't believe in partial inspiration but we believe in what's called organic, verbal, primary inspiration. [unintelligible] in the very core of the minds of these men who wrote the Bible. They were moved by the Spirit, as Peter says. The Spirit moved, 2 Peter 1:21, these holy men of God to write the word of God. And verbal means every word, primary means full. That's why we read books on inspiration, you'll find those three words: authentic verbal primary. The whole Bible is inspired and words inspired and God used men and molded these men to record exactly what he wanted them to say and now this Bible is authoritative. When the Bible says something, that should be the end of all discussion about that subject because [unintelligible]. Of course that are difficult in interpreting, more minor doctrines aren't exactly what the Bible says and one God-fearing man has this view, one God-fearing man has that view, that's understandable, but I'm speaking personally in our own lives. Are you willing to bow under the authority of the word of God? Can you say that the mind and soul, I have girt with the loins of truth because the Bible's my compass in life? The Bible's my guide?

So [unintelligible] discussion in all these churches about women in office, it's all a bunch of nonsense because the Bible says no women in office. It's all trying to escape the claim [unintelligible] Scripture. [unintelligible] also in our church, in your heart, in my heart. [unintelligible] Absolutely. What about feelings? You want to go your own way so I have to ask myself, you have to ask yourself, are we willing to leave ourselves in by the authority of the word of God? Down to the detail of our lives, not just the small things.

Alright, the road says 35 miles an hour but it's a nice, clear, broad road. I can't understand why it's really 35 miles an hour, I'll go 50 miles an hour. Wrong. What does the Bible say? It says we should obey the laws of the land. So we don't go 50 miles an hour because you feel like you want to go 50 miles an hour, you go the speed limit because the Bible says it. "Yeah, but if [unintelligible]." No, no, no buts. You subject yourself to the authority because the Bible says there's a speed limit sign there. There's a biblical principle behind that speed limit sign if order in society and God is a God of order. You see, I'm just giving you a really small example but these examples pop up a thousand times every week. Our whole life must come under the authority of the word of God. You want to be a good Christian soldier? Paul says gird your loins about with truth.

The Christian soldier is girt about with truth. We've seen, first, the foundational importance of truth and, second, the final authority for truth, the Bible, that leads us to say something briefly about the experiential characteristics of truth. You see, if I have truth in my mind and if I'm persuaded of its value in my core being which we call the heart or the soul or the spirit, that is all wonderful and good, but as a Christian soldier I can greatly profit in something else yet [unintelligible] experience. Experience.

Let's look at soldiering just a moment. [unintelligible] Say you were a Captain of an army and you're taking a group of soldiers in Iraq and I were to tell you that all the soldiers [unintelligible] 50 men, that all 50 men were well-trained to battle. They all went through

basic, basic training. They all had special weeks of training about particularly about fighting in Iraq and the terrain and so forth. That would make you feel pretty good. And then I would go on and tell you that all 50 men have a heart for battle so that none of the men are getting ahead [unintelligible] they really want to go back home. They want to be there. Ah, you said, that's better yet. I could do something with these 50 men. But then I were to say to you there's only one drawback about these 50 men, that a single one of them has ever fought in a real war, they had no experience. Well, that would make you feel a little queasy or really worried. I think so. I think so. Experience is a very valuable thing. It's [unintelligible] aspect of life, isn't it? [unintelligible] certain positions to say experience required. Or in the army we actually, this kind of standard joke that these [unintelligible] ROTC or whatever it was but they would come through college and they would get some [unintelligible] in college and they'd come straight from there into the army, they'd come in as an officer like a lieutenant above people who had been in the army for 5-10 years. In fact, the office that I worked at, the people in the office, they took a lieutenant and put him in. In the far corner [unintelligible] so he doesn't know what he's doing anyway. He doesn't have any experience. To know what you're doing you've got to have experience in the army.

Well, that's true of Christian fighting too and so what does God do? Well, when we gird our loins with truth by the grace of God we get experience in the process, and the more experience we have, the better soldiers we become because we don't only have a battle [unintelligible] but we also know about the landmines in the way and the temptations in the way and how to go around them. We've got experience as so we succeed and experience is a big helper. So that's why I want to conclude this message by giving you three quick experiential characteristics about being soldiers of truth.

The first is this. If you are a Christian soldier of truth you will know by experience that truth is convicting. Truth is convicting because truth [unintelligible] by experience to see your sin, to see how darkened your soul is, how unable you are, how unwilling, how wretched, how deeply fallen, it is through conviction of truth that the Holy Spirit shows you your original sin and your whole being is pointing to sin and is sin and that all your actions and thoughts, words and deeds are all manifestations of symptoms of an inner disease of original sin, the sin of Adam.

But why in the world would I say that this is good for a soldier to know this, that truth is convicting and to know himself as a sinner? Why is this experience valuable? [unintelligible] because, you see, you can have truth in the mind and you can even believe it in the heart and have a heart for it but if you don't have much experience, you're going to far overestimate yourself and you're going to underestimate the enemy because you don't know yourself very well. You don't know your limitations very well.

Let me give you an example. When you're a parent of teenaged children, you often worry about them right along these lines because teenagers often don't know their limitations, they don't understand the dangers, they don't see the way you see in your 40's, 50's, 60's with more experience how it can go so easily the wrong way. But you see, I know they have a little bit and I know how I've fallen and stumbled here and stumbled there and I

know how corrupt I am, how prone I am to backsliding and there are so many things I'm going to watch out for as a Christian soldier, so many things I'm going to resist and would otherwise be blind for. And so the fact that truth is convicting, the truth shows me who I am is a great [unintelligible] in my ongoing battles against the enemy.

Secondly, truth is liberating. Truth is liberating. As a poor, needy soldier, God shows me his salvation in Jesus Christ and shows me that he is the Captain of the Host and then all soldiers will go forth clothed in his righteousness and with his outfitting on he will grace with victory and he will bring them through [unintelligible] skirmishes, he will bring them to victory through the war. Oh, what a joy that is. What a liberation to know that I cannot fail because of my Master and my Savior who's Lord of lords and King of kings, and when I see him come, the answer for all my shortcomings, when I see him as Savior [unintelligible] perfectly for me, and his passive obedience perfectly bore the punishment of sin for me and took away the curse of sin and nailed it to his own cross and death and has done everything for me that I need done for me and I am going out to fight in his cause, by his strength, with his Holy Spirit within me, and there is something liberating about this truth from the Prince of Truth that defies human words.

Jesus said it this way, that the Son shall set you free. You shall be free indeed. And elsewhere he said that the truth shall set you free. You shall be free indeed. [unintelligible] Christ and truth. What is this Bible about, this book of truth about? It's really about Christ. Ultimately it's about Christ. This is the written word, who is the written Word? The written word and the written Word, Christ. Who is truth? This is truth because it's about him.

And so you see what happens is we are liberated by truth. When truth sets me free, then I am free and energized to go forth in the Lord's battle especially if I am to have a measure of assurance of faith with it. [unintelligible] said, "Run, Christian, with assurance of faith, liberated by truth, stronger than [unintelligible]."

So without experience, you see, the power of truth that sets me free in Christ that I want to give everything to him, I want to be a faithful soldier, I would work for him all my life without pay because I love him and I've experienced his power and his grace and, well, I want to give my hands to him, I want to give my eyes to him, I want to give my future and I want to give everything to him. Gird up your loins with truth.

Well, thirdly, truth is not only convicting and liberating but it's also transforming. It's transforming. Jesus said, "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." And those who know his voice, he says, "follow me." [unintelligible] but it's a conforming following, it's a conquering following.

When I was in Scotland I was standing by a minister's home and there was on the island it was very picturesque and farmerish and there were sheep all around, all around his yard and different colors of sheep, not in color but different colors of [unintelligible]. And I asked him, I said, "Well, those different colors, does that mean they belong to different

shepherds." And he said, "Well, yes." He said, "The blue, the sheep with the blue mark belongs to shepherd So-and-so, he lives about two miles down the road that way. The one with the orange mark, the shepherd lives over there." I said, "Well, [unintelligible]." "Oh," he says, "that's no problem." He said, "When the shepherd wants his sheep he just comes along and calls them." I said, "So it's really true it's just like the Bible says and they all follow?" And he said, "That's right." He said, "If the shepherd with the orange marked sheep comes along, he calls his sheep all the orange marked sheep will follow."

Well, that's what truth does, real true Christian and God says gird up your loins with truth and [unintelligible]. The true Christian says, "I cannot but follow thee." Be transformed like Bartimaeus. Jesus healed him. He was liberated and Jesus said, "Go thy way, Bartimaeus." But the Bible says Bartimaeus followed him in the way, in the suffering way to Jerusalem, all the way to death.

You see, the truth convicts us of our misery and it liberates us out of deliverance but it also transforms us out of gratitude and makes [unintelligible]. William Gurnall said godliness is the child of truth and it must be immersed with more than milk in light of its own mother. Desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby, quoting Peter. So you see what happens is when a believer is immersed in the word and God combines [unintelligible] in his life, word and providence work together to give experience and experience makes the believer grow, it transforms him to be more like God and to want to yearn to be more holy and so the end result is that we are girt about with truth, we make for good Christian soldiers by the grace of God.

That's where I need to close this afternoon by asking you just a few questions. Do you love truth? Do you know it, do you love it, do you practice it? And though you fail and when you fail, do you take it directly to Christ, ask for his forgiveness, and seek to go right back to the path of truth? Jan Hus, you know, who gave his life for truth, sealed it with his blood, great [unintelligible] of the Reformation said this, "Search the truth, fear truth, learn truth, love truth, speak truth, and hold truth until death." [unintelligible] the Bible says and I read to you from Proverbs 3:3, "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart." Don't let truth escape. [unintelligible] Wrestle with it. Pray through it. Remember it. Live it. Practice it. Value it. Treasure it.

Thomas Brooks said that every person of truth is as precious as the findings of gold. You must either live with it or die for it. Oh, may God help us to wear this belt of truth and you will discover as we go on probably in future messages, that other pieces of garment, other pieces of the armor are hooked into this belt but the belt is foundational. Buy the truth, sell it not. Amen.

