

As far as preachers go – I may be the world’s biggest fan of New Year’s Resolution sermons. A reset calendar with a whole year laid out before me – that feels like an amazing chance to do great things! The fact that this year January 1st is a Sunday, well I can hardly contain my excitement ☺.

There are some who say: “*why do we talk about plans and programs and resolutions at the New Year? Why does it have to coincide with the calendar?*” Well, in truth we are resolving to do things spiritually all year round. But in addition to the opportunity to use the calendar as a checklist - i.e. Bible reading programs, two hospitality events per month, etc. It has more to do with the past.

For most of us, the last six weeks have been quite wild. All the schedules, routines, spiritual diets, life balance we establish for 10 ½ months, out the window. We are traveling or having people over. There is cooking, serving and cleaning. There is buying of stuff, giving of stuff, receiving of stuff, and cleanup. School schedules, work schedules, all of it altered for this time.

And, our spiritual diets can suffer just like our normal diets do! Our routines of spiritual focus and growth often are put on the sidelines because of family related business. Well, a New Year, whether you are thinking spiritually or not, represents a return to routine, to normalcy.

So, let’s use today to resolve an onward and upward push, a routine, a returned focus to the Spiritual. To help us today, I want to talk us to be resolved concerning **The Armor of God – Ephesians 6**. I’ve been here 18 months and this is not a text we have specifically examined. I think I end up determining its well worn territory so I divert elsewhere. But it is rich and urgent and inspirational. And if we don’t study it often we can flatten it to a one dimensional – Read Your Bible app. There’s much more!

In sprawling fashion, I want to extend the New Year’s Resolution idea as far as possible. So this text will be our focus for the next three Sundays – 6 Sermons! I’m hopeful everyone here will make an effort to be at every service for that stretch, and if you cannot make it – listen online to stay up.

Each sermon will cover just one of these pieces and will end with 1 specific resolution for the year. This morning we will look at “Girding your loins with Truth,” tonight “Breastplate of Righteousness” and so forth for three Sundays. I tried to do 2 or 3 per sermon, but the richness of each of these phrases demands our undivided attention.

Each Study we will begin by reading **Ephesians 6:10-13**.

- We are on a mission – “*Be Strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might*” – The Ephesian letter has two halves. The first boasts of the amazing blessings and strength of Jesus, while the second challenges us to “*walk in a manner worthy...*” (**Eph. 4:1**). That means strength & resolve.
- Satan is unseen but active - “not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers...” This “not, but” construction notes that there will be flesh and blood decisions, but the real issue is the deceitful worker of death behind it, seeking to derail our faith and devour our souls.
- We need armor to survive – “*Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.*” We cannot defeat Satan and keep our souls from his grip without this armor, ALL of it, every piece, as each is in itself unique.

So, where do we begin our mission, our defense, standing firm? “**Girded Your Loins with Truth**” Before we delve in, a word on how we will do these studied. They are not contextual studies, in the sense of looking all through Ephesians to figure out the meaning of the phrase. These are harmony studies and word studies.

Harmony, in that we will go check out other places where these ideas are found: especially if it is connected directly to an Old Testament passage, like this one. And word study in that we want to see this word’s usage across the New Testament: not the English translation word, as that will differ across this auditorium, but the Greek word used here. Every supporting passage we read will use the same exact original word as you see here – TRUTH in this instance – regardless of English translation.

In this case, let's begin with the most obvious observation of this text:

I. This is about the Word of God

- a. This word "Truth" is used of the Gospel in Scripture: **Ephesians 1:13; II Thess. 2:10,12**
 - i. *Read* – "love of the Truth" requires regular, daily wear in order to be defended.
 - ii. *Study* – **II Tim. 2:15; 3:7;4:4** – Real Mental Energy and Focus to Understand.
 - iii. *Obey* – **Ro. 2:4-8; I Jn 1:5-7; III Jn 3-4** – If we don't walk in it, we ain't wearing it!
- b. When we apply ourselves with daily attention to these three things, in this order, we will find ourselves in better states of mind and with more courage and spiritual success.

II. This is about Fact over Fiction

- a. I do think the word "truth" here is used purposefully, as opposed to "the Word." This word is used 100 times in the New Testament, and about half directly attaches to revelation, but the other half just attaches to verifiable FACT as opposed to FICTION
 - i. **Eph. 4:25** – Truth as an objectified, agreed reality, as opposed to lying.
 - ii. **Ac. 26:24-26** – "truth and rationality" **Rom. 9:1** – "I am telling the truth"
- b. The Point: You cannot wear Fiction and Defeat a Factual Foe. Let me reword this – no matter how much you believe your ideas to be true, you cannot use something that's not real to defeat someone who is. Examples: *"My Ideology" "My Heritage" "My Religion" "My Spirituality"* – If those things are your creation, and not TRUE, not verifying, not real – they are utterly useless in defeating the foe. *Gird yourself with things that are right, that you can prove to be sound, not just things that feel right or you assume are sound.*
- c. So, let's not just Read, Study, & Obey the Word – Let's USE it to make sure we are RIGHT!
 - i. *Your Ideology on the value and importance of Worship*
 - ii. *Your Heritage on how to treat people who Treat Your Poorly*
 - iii. *Your Religion on how someone comes in Contact with the blood of Jesus.*
 - iv. *Your Spirituality on how you live the Christian Life in Daily Choices.*
- d. Not: does it feel right when I wear it, but IS IT TRUTH? Which circles to Bible Study.

III. This is about Putting on Christ

- a. **Rom. 13:13-14** – We fight the devil by putting on Christ – the mind of Christ, the character of Christ, the purpose of Christ, the life of Christ. That's our text as well.
- b. **John 1:14, 17** – Same word. Wearing Truth is wearing Jesus. He is Truth Realized.
- c. **Isaiah 11:1-5** – Jesus is amazing isn't He? "Knowledge" and "Fear" and "Delight" and "Righteousness" and "Judgment" and "Faithfulness" – He wears them, as our King, with the Spirit's approval, with such grace and dignity – in Life, Death, and Eternity.
 - i. "Righteousness" is used in the Old Testament passage, while New Testament translators went with "Truth." But it's simple – He did what was right.
 - ii. And wearing the belt of Truth will ALWAYS consider Him – what He did, what He would do right here and now – what His kingship expects of me. "Christ-ian."
 - iii. Yes, we'll be in the book learning that. But learning and living HIM!