Loins (3751) (osphus) (see additional note) or "hip" (as used in classic Greek according to the TDNT) refers literally to the general area of the body between the ribs and the thighs, the midsection between the upper and lower body that includes the hips, the small of the back, the waist, and the reproductive organs. Osphus refers to the lower region of the back, which is the region of the 5 lower vertebrae of lumbar region, the part of body where the girdle was worn. It is the region of the hips as opposed to shoulders and thighs.

Jews considered osphus as the place of the reproductive organs and so we find the phrases "to go forth from someone’s loins" equated with "to be descendant". Finally, in the NT girded loins signified that a man was ready for service or heavy battle. Osphus was used figuratively to describe a state of alertness or readiness.

Girding the loins was a symbolic way of saying that one was standing firm or exercising self-control. The picture derived from the fact that Orientals would often tuck their long flowing robes in their belt around their loins, with a view to greater mobility for work, travel, for battle etc. Thus girded one would thus be enabled to move unimpeded and be less likely to be hindered or tripped.

The expression "to gird up one's loins" means to belt the garment which is worn ungirdled in the house or in times of relaxation, with a view to greater mobility for work, travel, for battle etc.

The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament notes that in the Septuagint (LXX = Greek translation of the Hebrew OT) osphus...

"is a common figure of speech for 'the power, the strength' Deut 33:11 ("LORD...shatter the loins of those who rise up against" Israel); Daniel 5:6 ("Then the king's face grew pale, and his thoughts alarmed him; and his hip joints went slack, and his knees began knocking together")

One of the most famous illustrations of this custom is found in Exodus where Moses records God's instructions to Israel on the night of the Passover...

"Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins (LXX = osphus) girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste-- it is the LORD'S Passover." (Exodus 12:11)

In a description of the Messiah's readiness for conflict (which Paul quotes in his exhortation to the Christian "soldier" in Ephesians 6:14), Isaiah records that righteousness and faithfulness are His preparation, declaring that...

"righteousness will be the belt about His loins (LXX = osphus), and faithfulness the belt about His waist." (Isaiah 11:5) (Here is the LXX translation - And he shall have his loins girt with righteousness, and his sides clothed with truth.)

In Ephesians 6:14 believers are to gird their loins with God's truth including His manifold promises which reminds one of C H Spurgeon's comment regarding the physical (and spiritual) warfare Joshua was about to encounter in the promised land. Spurgeon quipped that Joshua...

"was not to use (God's) promise as a couch upon which his indolence might luxuriate, but as a girdle wherewith to gird up his loins for future activity."

As Warren Wiersbe put it "God's promises are prods, not pillows!"

Marvin Vincent - The loins (osphus) encircled by the girdle form the central point of the physical system. Hence, in Scripture, the loins are described as the seat of power. "to smite through the loins" is to strike a fatal blow. "lay affliction upon the loins" is to afflict heavily. Here was the point of junction for the main pieces of the body-armor, so that the girdle formed the common bond of the whole. Truth gives unity to the different virtues, and determinateness and consistency to character. All the virtues are exercised within the sphere of truth." (Vincent, M. R. Word Studies in the New Testament. Vol. 3, Page 1-408)

Vine writes that osphus in Ephesians 6:14 is used metaphorically and that the girding of one's loins with truth refers to...

bracing up oneself so as to maintain perfect sincerity and reality as the counteractive in Christian character against hypocrisy and falsehood. (Vine, W., Vine's Expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words)

Wiersbe - "The loins are the place of action, mobility, and direction. A soldier with a broken hip would not be worth very much! Unless we are motivated and directed by truth, we will be defeated by the enemy. If we permit
any deception to enter our lives, we have weakened our position and cannot fight the battle victoriously." (The Strategy of Satan: How to Detect and Defeat Him)

Osphus is used 58 times in the Septuagint (LXX) (Gen. 35:11; 37:34; Exod. 12:11; 28:42; Lev. 3:9; 7:3; 8:25; 9:19; Deut. 33:11; 2 Sam. 20:8; 1 KI. 2:5; 12:10, 24; 18:46; 20:31f; 2 Ki. 1:8; 4:29; 9:1; 2 Chr. 6:9; 10:10; Neh. 4:18; Job 12:18; 38:3; 40:7, 16; Prov. 31:17; Isa. 5:27; 11:5; 15:4; 20:2; 21:3; 32:11; Jer. 1:17; 13:1f, 4, 11; 30:6; 48:37; Ezek. 1:27; 8:2; 9:2f, 11; 21:6, 23:15; 24:17; 29:7; 44:18; 47:4; Dan. 5:6; 10:5; Amos 8:10; Nah. 2:1, 10)

Nahum 2:1 The one who scatters has come up against you. Man the fortress, watch the road; Strengthen your back, (LXX = osphus) summon all your strength.

Osphus is used 8 times in the NT (note the NAS and NIV do not always translate osphus separately thus some of the verses below are in the KJV)... Matthew 3:4 Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt about his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

Mark 1:6 And John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.

Luke 12:35 "(Literally - Let your loins be girded) Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight. (Comment: both metaphors picture a disciple as one living in constant expectancy of the Lord's return)

Acts 2:30 "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne" (KJV)

Ephesians 6:14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

Hebrews 7:5 And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended (come out of the loins) from Abraham...10 for he (Levi) was still in the loins (osphus) of his father when Melchizedek met him.

1 Peter 1:13 (note) Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope ( or "fix your hope" = aorist imperative) to the end for the grace that is to be brought (the tense is the vivid present â€˜â€œis being brought unto youâ€œâ€”as if to make the future event immediately real) unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (KJV) (Comment: Literally is "having girded up the loins [osphus] of your mind" = Pull your mind together and have the right mental attitude in view of our Lordâ€™s return for when you center your thoughts on His return and live accordingly, you escape the many worldly things that would encumber your mind and hinder your spiritual progress)

Kenneth Wuest commenting on "girding one's mind for action" in 1Pe 1:13 (note) has an excellent practical comment...

It is not physical exertion that Peter has in mind here, but mental. If the purpose of girding up the clothing was to put out of the way that which would impede the physical progress of an individual, the girding up of the loins of the outward mind would be the putting out of the mind all that would impede the free action of the mind in connection with the inward progress of the Christian experience, things such as worry, fear, jealousy, hate, unforgiveness, impurity. (Ed note: add thanklessness)

These thoughts harbored in the mind prevent the Holy Spirit from using the mental faculties of the Christian in the most efficient manner, and thus from causing that believer to grow in the Christian life and make progress in his salvation. The word â€œto gird upâ€œ (1Pe 1:13-note) is in the aorist tense which refers to a past once-for-all act.

Bringing this oriental expression over to the occidental manner of thinking, enables us to translate, â€œWherefore, having put out of the way, once for all, everything that would impede the free action of your mind.â€œ

Peter treats this as a God-expected obligation on the part of the believer. In 1Pe 1:3 (see note) we learned that
as the believer definitely subjected himself to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, He (the Spirit) would produce in his (the yielded believer’s) life through the Word, that Christian optimism that always looks for the best and not for the worst, that always sees the silver lining on every cloud.

By the power of the same Holy Spirit, he is able to exert his will in putting out of his mind those things that would impede its free action. Thus, the Christian has the privilege of enjoying the wholesome mental atmosphere called Christian optimism and a care-free mind, not a mind devoid of an appreciation of the seriousness of life and its responsibilities, but a mind not crippled and frozen by worry, fear, and their related mental attitudes. Living in this blessed mental state, the believer is ready and able to obey the exhortations to which the apostle now addresses himself.” (Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament)

Expositor’s Greek Testament comments that truth “is simplest and most accordant with usage to take it so here (in the sense of candor, sincerity, truthfulness). And this plain grace of openness, truthfulness, reality, the mind that will practice no deceits and attempt no disguises in our intercourse with God, is indeed vital to Christian safety and essential to the due operation of all the other qualities of character. As the soldier covers his breast with the breastplate to make it secure against the disabling wound, so the Christian is to endue himself with righteousness so as to make his heart and will proof against the fatal thrust of his spiritual assailants.” (Ephesians 6 Commentary)