

Put on the Breastplate of Righteousness

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Series: Ephesians

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Introduction: Open your Bible to the book of **Ephesians 6:10-17**. We are learning about spiritual warfare. Our battle is not against prisoners of war but against the enemy of our souls. In other words, your battle is not against your co-worker, bad government, or a difficult neighbor. The lost are captive to Satan. As we are going to read, we are fighting against an unseen enemy with much greater power than ourselves. That is why we need to rest in the Lord's strength. **1 John 4:4**, "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world".

That's why we need to use spiritual armor. Last week we looked at the "belt of truth". We learned that the Roman soldier wore a tunic that he need to roll up and put under his belt when he was on duty. In the same way, Peter says in **1 Peter 1:13**, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind". We learned that we must we must rigidly bring our thoughts into captivity by the Word of God.

Paul says it this way in **2 Corinthians 10:5**—we are to be "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ".

Today we are studying about the "breastplate of righteousness". We are going to see that we are robed in the righteousness of Christ, and we are now acceptable to God because of Christ's sacrifice. He has totally satisfied the wrath of God.

Let's stand and read **Ephesians 6:10-17**, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For 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. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God".

[Prayer for Guidance]

I. The **Purpose** of the Breastplate of Righteousness.

What is the "breastplate of righteousness"? Paul is using the armor of a Roman soldier as an example. Remember Paul for years at a time was chained to a Roman soldier on both sides of him. He knew the armor well. A Roman soldier would never go to battle without his breastplate. He would be too vulnerable. It would be like a soldier today on

the front lines without a bullet proof vest. So the breastplate covers the most important part of the body. It guards our heart!! Even though Satan is a defeated foe, we need to watch our heart. **Proverbs 4:23** urges us to "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life". So what is it that protects our heart?

A. It is not our own righteousness. Notice the armor is not our own, but God's. Paul said he did not have his "own righteousness, but the righteousness of God which is by faith" (**Philippians 3:9**). So what is this righteousness? Since it is not our own righteousness, which is filthy rags, then it is an infinitely perfect righteousness. It is "the righteousness of God which is by faith". To be justified is to have this righteousness. To be justified means to be "declared righteous" not based on my works, but based on the work of Christ in my place.

B. The breastplate is the assurance that I am righteous in Christ. This breastplate is really the assurance of salvation, that I am totally righteous in Christ before God. What Paul is getting at is the internal battle that we face. There is a battle in the inner man, the inner most being! The frontal attack of the enemy is going to come always on whether you truly are saved or not. The devil will insinuate that you must work for your salvation. He accuses the brethren.

II. The **Protection** of the Breastplate of Righteousness. By putting on Christ, we become "the righteousness of God in Him".

A. This means that our **position** in heaven is changed. Christ through **imputation** is our righteousness. That is, there is an exchange.

Martyn Lloyd Jones said, "Because we can never attain to God's standard of righteousness, God sent His only Son into this world, in order that He might be able to give us *His* righteousness. He came, the spotless, sinless Son of God, and He rendered a perfect obedience to God's law, obeyed Him in every jot and tittle of the law. He lived a perfectly righteous life. But more than that; He made Himself responsible for our sins, He bore them in His own body and was crucified for them. 'God laid on him the iniquity of us all.' And at the Cross God smote His dear Son as our sinbearer. And in raising Christ again on the resurrection day God has proclaimed to us that Christ's death was more than sufficient to satisfy His righteous demands."¹

1. First, there is our sin imputed to Christ.

- We see it clearly in the **New Testament**. "For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (**2 Corinthians 5:21**).
- We see it in the **Old Testament** too. **Isaiah 53:5-6**, "But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

2. Then there is Christ's righteousness imputed to us.

¹Lloyd-Jones, D. M. (1977). *The Christian Soldier : An Exposition of Ephesians 6:10 to 20* (228). Edinburgh; Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth Trust.

- “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Look at **Romans 3:20-22**, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the **righteousness of God without the law is manifested**, being witnessed by the law and the prophets: 22 Even **the righteousness of God which is by faith** of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe”.

Therefore because our sin has been imputed to Christ, and His righteousness has been accounted for our righteousness, we are “accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6).

B. This also means that our **practice** on earth is changed. How is that? When Christ becomes our righteousness, He takes up his residence in our soul. He inhabits our conscience. He lives in me now!

We are not judged on our works if we are in Christ. An objection comes, “Does that mean we can do what we want?” The answer is YES. But because Christ is in you, you will want His ways!

We are 100% totally righteous in Christ. Our salvation cannot be hindered in any way! But does that mean we can do whatever we want? Yes and no! Yes you can do whatever you want because when God saves you, He gives you a new heart with new desires (**Ezekiel 36:27**). God will give us a tender heart. This is what God promises to all believers way back in **Deuteronomy 30:6**, “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”

This righteousness is both imputed and imparted. It is imputed to us, so that in God’s sight we are completely declared righteous in God’s sight. But it is also imparted to us, that is we are given a new nature to love God.

This all occurs by faith. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved! Trust in Him. Bank your eternity on Him. You are saved through believing. Come to Jesus Christ if you are not saved today. Come to Him with your sin and self-righteousness.

C. This finally means that our **prospect** for all of eternity, is Christ being our righteousness—we are righteous in Him. God will have made us into the image of His Son, but we must constantly be reminding ourselves of that coming day when we will be like Jewels in His crown.

Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, as **Ephesians 5:27** says, “That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”.

III. The **Putting on** of the Breastplate of Righteousness. We are to put on the breastplate of righteousness. Paul says in verse 13, “take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to **withstand** in the evil day, and having done all, to **stand**. 14 **Stand** therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness”. How do we take unto us the “breastplate of righteousness”?

- A. **Recognize** the enemy's attack. The waves of doubt and guilt and worry are from the wicked one. Remember he is the "accuser of the brethren". He is the liar and deceiver. His primary attack is going to be against your rest in Christ's righteousness.

I want to illustrate this by the testimony of John Bunyan, the writer of Pilgrim's Progress. He struggled terribly for many months before he came to a settled faith in Christ. He literally almost went insane. He felt so condemned. And then one day God opened his eyes. Here's what he wrote:

*One day as I was passing into the field . . . this sentence fell upon my soul. Thy righteousness is in heaven. And methought, withal, I saw with the eyes of my soul Jesus Christ at God's right hand; there, I say, was my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, he wants [lacks] my righteousness, for that was just before [in front of] him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse, for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, "The same yesterday, today and, and forever" (**Hebrews 13:8**).*

Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed. I was loosed from my afflictions and irons; my temptations also fled away; so that from that time [my thoughts] left off to trouble me; now went I also home rejoicing for the grace and love of God.²

Satan would put you in the chains of doubt and fear. Resist his attacks. How?

James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you". You resist the devil by surrendering your heart and life to God. You say, no matter what Lord, I give my life to you!

- B. **Rest** in Christ's righteousness. By always having the deep assurance that you are totally welcomed into God's presence because of Christ's righteousness.

Rest in the promises of Scripture. This is not a new message. Jeremiah spoke of Jesus. He said He is, "the Lord our righteousness" (**Jeremiah 23:6**). Paul said in **1 Corinthians 1:30** that Christ is made unto us "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption".

Nothing you have done or will ever do will make you acceptable in God's sight. If you are in Christ, then Christ answers all the accusations on your behalf. Have you sinned against God? Yes. Are you worthy of hell? Yes. But Christ steps forward, and we hear, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). In Christ, all our sin is wiped away! It is all forgotten by God. My record is cleansed! My soul is washed clean! My conscience which was filled with guilt is now free and happy!

Ephesians 2:8-10, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For

² John Bunyan. *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (Hertfordshire: Evangelical Press, 1978, orig. 1666), 90-91.

we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them".

C. **Resist** the enemy's accusations. If Satan's fiery arrow come at you with accusations, which are true, what must we do? We must send Satan over to Christ. Christ is our Advocate. We might be unrighteous in ourselves, but Christ has taken our place, and He is "Jesus Christ the Righteous". In Him was no sin or spot! He is holy and perfect, and it was he whom God made sin for us who knew no sin. Our guilt was transferred to Him by God, and He was treated as if He were really the perpetrator of all my sin. He took all the wrath of God upon Him.

- **Galatians 2:21**, "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."
- God "spared Him not, but delivered Him up for us all" (**Romans 8:32**).
- "It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief" (**Isaiah 56:10**).
- All the Old Testament sacrifices point to Him: he is our "sin bearer".
- On the cross He said, "It is finished"! What was He speaking of? What was finished? He was finished paying for our sins.
- And, "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (**Hebrews 1:3**).
- If you doubt whether Christ's death is sufficient to wipe away all your sins, then look at the resurrection. He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"! His sacrifice was accepted, which means YOU and I are accepted!!! We are righteous in Christ!

It is just as Count Zinzendorf (1700-1760), John Wesley's mentor, wrote:

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.*

*Bold shall I stand in Thy great day;
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved through these I am
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.*

He drank the cup of wrath for me, that I might drink the cup of fellowship with Him. He says "I will sup with him and he with me". He says to me "Come and dine".

Illustration: Luther said that when the devil came knocking on the door of his heart, he would send the Lord Jesus to the door. Christ would say, "Martin Luther used to live here, but has moved out...I now live here." "Then," said Luther, "when the devil would see the nail prints on the hands of Christ and his pierced side, he would take flight immediately".

Listen to the promises of God's Word:

Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

Jeremiah 31:34, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Conclusion: Have you put on the "Breastplate of Righteousness"? Consider Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit". Here we have the righteousness of Christ both imputed and imparted.

Is Christ's righteousness more precious and beautiful than all the treasures of this world? It is the righteousness of Christ that saves your soul from hell. Paul said he counted his own righteousness as dung that he might win Christ. All the theology that we need is in the song "Nothing but the Blood of Jesus".. It is not your standard of righteousness that is going to get us into heaven. God has already set the standard: absolute perfection. You meet that absolute standard if you are clinging to Christ right now. You are "accepted in the Beloved" (**Ephesians 1:6**).

Martin Luther said the doctrine on which the church stands of falls is the imputed righteousness of Christ. You cannot earn your standing with God. Rest in Christ's righteousness! Put on the breastplate of Christ's Righteousness! You are spotless before God when you are robed in his perfect righteousness!!