

Eph 6:10–14 (ESV) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ⁽¹¹⁾ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ⁽¹²⁾ For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ⁽¹³⁾ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ⁽¹⁴⁾ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

1. In Ephesians 6 we have an outline of the believer's warfare

- A. We've seen to stand in the fight requires two things
 - 1). We must depend upon the strength of the Lord
 - 2). We must put on the whole armor of God

2. Last week we began to put on the armor by buckling on the "Belt of truth"

- A. The Spirit put this first in the list because the rest of the armor is built upon this truth
 - 1). So we need a well-rounded knowledge of the Bible to put on the other pieces

3. Outline

- A. Righteousness defined
- B. What attacks the breastplate defends us from
- C. How the breastplate protects us
- D. How to apply this truth when we are under attack

I. RIGHTEOUSNESS DEFINED

Eph 6:14 (ESV) Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, *and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*

1. There are three kinds of righteousness this could be speaking of

- A. **Self-righteousness** – a righteousness that comes from our own efforts
- B. **Christ-righteousness** – a righteousness that is given to me as a gift – imputed righteousness
- C. **Practical righteousness** or sanctification – Work of the Spirit in me after salvation – imparted righteousness

Question: What is the difference in imputed and imparted righteousness?

- A. We always want to be adding to our theological vocabulary – words have power
- B. **Imputed righteousness** is that righteousness of Jesus Christ credited to the Christian
 - 1). We become righteous because his righteous standing is transferred into our account

Ro 4:3 (ESV) For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

- C. **Imparted righteousness** is that practical righteousness that happens after we are saved
 - 1). Through the Spirit's power we are enabled to grow in Christlikeness

Transition: Let's begin by looking at self-righteousness – see why it can't be that

2. Self-righteousness

- A. Scripture is clear that nobody will get into heaven who is not righteous

1 Cor 6:9 (ESV) "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?"

 - 1). That creates a huge problem because nobody is righteous on their own

Ro 3:10 (ESV) as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one..."
- B. What is this righteousness that nobody has? **100% compliance to God's law**
 - 1). One failure and you're unrighteous – you've broken God's law
 - a). AND everybody falls into that category

Ro 3:23 (ESV) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
 - 2). So I have to be righteous to get into heaven? But I'm not – I'm a lawbreaker

Thought: For those who are questioning that – let’s dig in a bit

- A. Jesus summed up the law – here is righteousness – here is how to get into heaven on your own
Mt 22:34–40 (ESV) But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ⁽³⁵⁾ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ⁽³⁶⁾ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ⁽³⁷⁾ And he said to him, **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ⁽³⁸⁾ This is the great and first commandment. ⁽³⁹⁾ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁽⁴⁰⁾ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”**
- 1). There it is – if you want to merit heaven on your own
 If you want to try to be righteous – this is all you have to do
 - a). Love God perfectly – with all your heart, soul and mind – every second of your life
 And love your neighbor with the same love you have for yourself
 - 2). That is righteousness AND that will get you into heaven
- B. Let’s apply this – Many think they’ll be fine when they stand before God
- 1). Because you’re a nice person – sincere -good spouse or parent
 - 2). Here is the problem – you may be nice – kind – helpful – even extremely religious
 But are you righteous? Have you kept God’s law?
 - a). Have you loved God with all that you are every minute of every day
 Have you loved your neighbor as yourself
 - b). If you’re honest you must admit that you’ve fallen short of this
 None of us has ever done that – not once

Transition: So this breastplate can’t be fabricated from our own righteousness – there is none

- A. Praise God there is another righteousness – that righteousness God gives us as a gift
 B. That brings us to the righteousness this breastplate is comprised of

3. Imputed righteousness – the righteousness of Christ given to us

- A. This gift is given to us the moment we embrace Christ by faith
Ro 3:21–22 (ESV) But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ⁽²²⁾ ***the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.***
- 1). There is a great exchange that takes place
 - a). Our sins are transferred into his account and he pays for them
 - b). His righteousness is transferred into our account and we are blessed because of it

Thought: How is that righteousness given to us?

- A. The theological term for this would be the “Doctrine of substitution”
 This is something we need to understand for our own comfort

The Doctrine of Substitution

2 Co 5:21 (ESV) For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- A. **“He made him to be sin who knew no sin” = Jesus Christ**
- 1). This doesn’t mean that Jesus Christ became a sinner – he never sinned once
 - a). On that cross he was still that lamb without spot or blemish
 - 2). It means this - God transferred our sin into his account
 Then treated him as if he lived our life and sinned our sin
- B. **“So that in him we might become the righteousness of God”**
- 1). God puts our sin into Christ’s account and treats him as if he lived our life

- On the cross he receives the wrath we deserved
- 2). Then God turns around and treats us as if we lived his life
 - a). That life of perfect obedience
We receive his righteousness as a gift and the blessings that righteousness earned
 - 1a). Acceptance by God and entrance into heaven
- C. You must see this to put on the Breastplate of righteousness in place
- 1). God now views the believer YOU as having kept his law perfectly = righteousness
Ro 5:19 (ESV) For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, *so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*
 - a). I am no longer viewed as a law breaker but "In Christ" God looks upon me as a law keeper
Christ kept the law for me and his righteousness is given to me
That righteousness I need to get into heaven
 - b). This is why we say it takes both Christ's life and death to get us into heaven
 - 1a). Christ came and lived the life we were required to live to get into heaven
 - 2a). And died the death we deserved to die because we couldn't live that life
 - c). He lived the life that would get us into heaven
and paid for the sins that would keep us out
 - 2). Because his perfect obedience is put into our account Romans 1 can say
Ro 8:1 (ESV) There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
 - a). That is a verse that speaks of standing before the law of God
 - 1a). That law can scan the entirety of my life and find nothing to condemn me over
 - 2a). Why? Because I am seen through the perfection of Christ – His law keeping
 - b). Why God had Isaiah write
Is 1:18 (ESV) "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.
 - 1a). My books in heaven has no sin in it – it is stamped "righteous"

4. Summary:

- A. The breastplate of righteousness is constructed with this truth of imputed righteousness
- 1). The righteousness of Christ given to the believing sinner at the point of salvation

Transition: Let's move to what attack this breastplate defends us from

II. THE ATTACK THE BREASTPLATE DEFENDS US FROM

1. It defends us against the Satanic attack on our assurance of salvation

- A. The devil wants you to question your salvation – why? Three reasons
- 1). Because it weakens you in this fight – it takes the sword of scripture out of your hands
 - a). How can you stand on the promises if you're not sure they're for you?
 - b). These incredible promises of power – provision – preservation
Those truths that lift our head when were under attack
 - 1a). If you lack assurance of salvation you'll question if the promises are for you
"I know they're for every child of God. Just not sure I'm one of his children"
 - 2a). Lack of assurance of salvation takes the sword of Scripture out of your hands
 - 2). It will fill you with fear – steal the joy Christianity is to be characterized by
 - a). A miserable Christian is ineffective – it is our joy that sets us apart isn't it

- 1a). It shows the watching world that we are different
Especially when hard times hit BUT because of Christ we still have a joy
Php 4:4 (ESV) Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.
- 2a). Written while chained in prison – think that set him apart – why he was effective
- 3). It will put us on that performance treadmill – trying to merit God’s love and acceptance
 - a). We try to earn what we’ve already been given by grace
And we just wear ourselves out – because we fail – we never feel good enough
Bjork: I think religion is a mistake - I'm exhausted by its self-righteousness.
 - 1a). I hear ya – me too! Mere religion is exhausting
 - 2a). Christianity is obedience compelled by love – Religion is obedience driven by fear

Transition: Let’s see how the breastplate protects us from this attack

III. HOW THE BREASTPLATE PROTECTS US

1. The breastplate protects us by giving us assurance after we fail

- A. The devil is called the accuser of the brethren in Revelation 12:10
Re 12:10 (ESV) “... the accuser of our brothers (**Satan**) has been thrown down, *who accuses them day and night before our God.*”

Question: What does he use to accuse us with? Our failures!

- A. He uses them to produce discouragement and depression
- B. He uses them to cause doubt about our relationship with God
He hisses “How can you be a child of God and do what you just did?”
“And didn’t you just fail in the same area a few days earlier?”
“How many times do you think God will forgive you for the same thing?”
“You are just fooling yourself if you think you’ll escape hell”

2. One of his schemes in accomplishing this is distorting truth

- A. He twists the truth about how we are accepted by God in the first place
Already hinted at this but let’s go a bit deeper
- B. ***He wants us to focus on our work for God rather than resting in his work for us***
 - 1). If he can get us to fix our eyes on us we are through - Why?
 - a). Because we’ll see every inconsistency – every failure – every incorrect thought
 - 2). Rather than rejoicing in the finished work of Christ – his perfection given to you – resting in that
 - a). You will be miserable as every one of your mistakes is magnified

Thought: You’ll end up like Martin Luther – before his conversion

- A. He knew God required righteousness to get into heaven – understood that was perfection
 - 1). But he thought it was his perfection that was demanded
 - 2). He tried and tried – wore himself and others out – hours in the confessional
 - a). Every errant thought – every incorrect attitude
- B. The result – and what Satan wants – He became bitter at this God who was impossible to please
Was asked “Brother Martin do you love God?” ***“Love him. I hate him”***
 - 1). He was angry at this God who demanded a standard he couldn’t reach
 - 2). Tired of never feeling good enough – always feeling that God was angry
- C. The Spirit eventually opened up the truth of the Gospel to Luther
 - 1). He saw the beauty in the message – how gracious and loving it was
 - 2). He saw his acceptance with God wasn’t based on what he was doing for him

It was based only on what Christ had done for him

- a). He stopped trying to earn salvation through his own righteousness
And started to rest in the righteousness God had given to him as a gift
- b). He started to see himself in the same way God saw him
Clothed in the righteousness of Christ
- c). He said when he saw that “I walked into paradise”

Point: Martin Luther had put on the Breastplate of Righteousness and his life would never be the same

A. The Breastplate of Righteousness is built from the truth of substitution

- 1). It enable us to rest in Christ’s perfection even when we aren’t perfect
- 2). I still fail but he never failed once – God views me through his perfection not my flaws

Is 61:10 (ESV) I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; *he has covered me with the robe of righteousness...*

Example: Let me tell you about Richard – who went to our church in England

A. He was in the hospital dying of lung cancer

- 1). One night right before he died – nurse called me late at night - he wanted to see me
- 2). He’d been having nightmares about hell – being judged over his sins
 - a). I’ve learned Satan is brutal on death beds – here is when you’ll need truth
 - b). He doesn’t want you to die well – with peace – it’s such a powerful witness
- 3). The devil was bringing up all Richard’s past sin – all his failings
Using those to accuse him – “You think you’ll accepted into heaven? YOU!”
“Remember what you’ve done. Here let me help!”

B. I sat with him and said – “Richard right now you must think Biblically”

- 1). We had a mini-theology lesson right there in that hospital room
“Richard why are you accepted? Because of your work or Christ’s?” = Christ’s
“I know you have failed – we all have – but did Christ ever fail?” = No
“If God sees you clothed in Christ’s righteousness – what sin will he judge you for?” = None
“Right! There is no sin left! The books are clean! Isn’t that the promise?” = Yes
- 2). And for those sins you have committed – remember that your trial has already taken place
 - a). Those sins were judged on a blood stained cross 2000 years ago on an Israeli hill
 - b). Christ bore your sin and paid the penalty you owed
The wrath of God you deserved was exhausted on the cross – right? = Yes
- 3). So Richard, if God was to ask you “Why should I let you into my heaven? What would you say?”
 - a). “Because I have trusted in the work of Christ for me”
- 4). Suddenly a look of peace came over his face – and a smile - “You can go now”
 - a). He had put on the breastplate of righteousness
and it protected him from the accusations of the devil

Thought: This is why theology is important – feelings could not withstand this Satanic barrage
Truth gave him the victory – and allowed him to face death with peace

A. Fight this fight with anything else but truth and the devil will rip you apart – he can’t beat truth

“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”

B. So the breastplate of righteousness protects us against the devils accusations

By redirecting our focus from us to Christ – from our flaws to his perfection – we rest in that

Transition: Let’s go a little deeper into how we apply this when under attack?

IV. APPLICATION

1. What do we do when the devil uses our flaws to accuse us?

- A. When we hear that hissing
 “How can you call yourself a Christian when you just had a thought like that?”
 “You think you’re a child of God when you just got so angry?”
 “You sure fail a lot for somebody who says they know God”
- B. You apply the truth that makes up the breastplate of righteousness
- 1). The devil roars “You can’t be saved” because of this or that
 We answer: "Satan your so right when you say my actions fall far short of what they should be. I do fail far too much, my love for God is far too weak, my commitment at times seems to be far to inconsistent. But Satan YOU KNOW as well as I do that my acceptance with God is not based on any of that! And even though my performance may be pitiful at times His never was. And God accepts me on the basis of His perfection alone.
 Case closed, clear off!"
- C. Listen to Charitie Bancroft put on the Breastplate of Righteousness
 In the great hymn "Before the throne of God above"

*What though the accuser roar
 Of ills that I have done?
 I know them well, and thousands more:
 Jehovah findeth none.*

*When Satan tempts me to despair,
 And tells me of the guilt within,
 Upward I look and see HIM there
 Who made an end of all my sin.*

*Because the sinless Savior died,
 My sinful soul is counted free;
 For God the Just is SATISFIED
 To look on Him who pardoned me.*

- 1). Why we choose the songs we sing carefully – no “Jesus is my boyfriend”
- a). We want those songs to be theologically rich – sources of strength
- b). Songs you can sing throughout the week – that speak of Christ’s work for you

CONCLUSION

1. We buckle on the belt of truth – that provides the material for the rest

- A. The Breastplate of righteousness – is knowing the doctrine of substitution
- 1). Knowing how God views you who have believed in Jesus Christ and applying that
- B. The devil is always trying to get us to focus on ourselves – so we see our failures
- 1). The Scripture is always pointing us to Christ – to see his perfection
Again: Ro 5:19 (ESV) For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

2. Let me just add – salvation always leads to a practical righteousness

- A. We will grow in holiness – Christlikeness – that’s a fruit of salvation not a cause
- B. Can I say this – do you want to give sanctification wings? Get it soaring/
- 1). Understand this truth – what God has done for you – how unconditional your salvation is
 Understand the breathtaking grace of salvation
- 2). That will cause you to fall in love with God – it will capture your emotions

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- a). Then for the right reasons you will want to live for him
It will be a response of love
1 John 4:19 (NKJV) We love Him because He first loved us.
 - C. But you'll never be perfect – you will grow in devotion and obedience
 - 1). But you will never get past needing this breastplate of righteousness