

## THE ARMOR OF GOD (part #2)

### Eph. 6:10-14

Ever since the first week of creation, mankind has been immersed in war. The seeds of war first sprouted when the serpent tempted Eve. She was in a war for her soul and didn't even know it. But after the serpent won the war and corrupted and condemned her to eternal death, wars began to multiply upon the earth. As soon as she and Adam fell from their innocence they went to war with each other. God told Eve in Genesis 3:16 that her desire would be for her husband but that he would rule over her, meaning that forever there would be a struggle over authority in the home. And then after Adam and Eve, Cain went to war with his brother Abel and murdered him, and war took off from there.

Well, except for the marital struggles of Noah's sons, human conflict ceased for a brief time after the Flood. But as soon as Shem, Ham, and Japheth began to repopulate the earth wars resumed, and they've only multiplied since, so much so that way back in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC a Chinese general named Sun Tzu wrote a book on warfare entitled The Art of War that has become a true classic. Its principles are so timeless that it was a source of strategy and inspiration for General Douglas MacArthur during WWII, and you can still buy it today. Listen to one of Sun Tzu's quotes: "All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near."

I'd say that Sun Tzu learned his lessons well, didn't he? Learned from who? He learned from the one who deceived Eve, and the one who deceives you and me, the devil. Revelation 12:9 tells us that Satan deceives the whole world. He deceives the unsaved to their eternal doom. And he deceives Christians to their earthly ruin and the ruin of their testimony. Peter says that the devil is as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). And Peter tells us to resist him, and in Ephesians Paul tells us how. He tells us to put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Last week we began to look at that armor. We saw that the very first piece of the armor we are to put on is the belt of truth, the truth of the Word of God. Satan is a liar, and there is nothing that will ever overcome a lie but the truth. Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). And in order to win our war with Satan we must, we must begin by continually receiving the truth of God's Word into our hearts day by day. Beloved, if you don't, I don't care

how much biblical knowledge you have stored up from years gone by. If you mind is not being renewed day by day by reading or hearing and then meditating on God's Word, you will be tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine that you hear. When you are struggling with the issues of life you'll begin going to your friends or listening to the pop psychologists on TV talk shows for the answers that only God can give you and your life will continue to unravel day by day. And with everything I have within me I urge you, put on the belt of truth! And if you have questions that you can't find answers for, then go to your Sunday School teacher or come to me, but go to someone who can help you find out what God's Word says on the matter.

Today we are going to look at the second piece of armor that God says we must put on as we prepare for daily spiritual warfare. Turn with me, please, to Ephesians 6 and let's read about it.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;” Ephesians 6:10-14 (KJV)

The breastplate of righteousness. This was another indispensable piece of armor for the Roman soldier. Let's talk about it for just a little while. The breastplate was obviously vital to a soldier's protection. All the major organs were shielded by it. Without the breast plate a soldier was vulnerable to deadly piercings of arrows and swords. And likewise, for the Christian soldier the breastplate of righteousness is essential.

You know, righteousness is a good Bible word. It is found 291 times in Scripture. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness...”(Matthew 5:6). We need righteousness in our lives! But just what is this breastplate of righteousness of which Paul speaks? Well, first of all it is not a righteousness that you are capable of producing on your own. For Jesus also said, “except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). And beloved, the scribes and Pharisees lived lives that were squeaky clean. They'd put us all to shame with their church attendance and Bible knowledge and morality. But it was all works of their own flesh. They reached down from the well of their own grit and

determination and drew up bucket after bucket of good works that drew raves from the synagogue top brass. But God said through Isaiah that all of our own righteousness is as filthy rags in His sight (Isaiah 64:6), and Jesus said that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees would do nothing but land them all in hell. So the righteousness that comprises the breastplate of righteousness must be something better than we can manufacture. It must come from God alone as a free gift. But it is not the imputed righteousness of God that we received when we were saved.

Now, the word “impute” is another good Bible word that means to reckon to someone’s account. The moment you were saved God stamped His perfect righteousness on your account – you – who had no righteousness of your own. Paul describes God’s righteousness unto salvation in Romans 3:21-22. But this righteousness unto salvation is totally a free gift. We read in Isaiah 54:17, “...This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their **righteousness is from Me**,” says the LORD”. “Your righteousness is 100% from Me”, God says, and God gave you His righteousness because Jesus became all of your sin when He died on the cross. 2 Corinthians 5:21 – “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”. Beloved, there is no more profound, glorious truth in all the Word of God! Jesus took upon Himself my sin, and in exchange God gave to me His perfect righteousness when I place my faith in Jesus. But don’t miss this! The righteousness that God gives me when Jesus comes into my life is not some pretty package that Jesus brings with Him. Paul says that Jesus was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God **in Him**. We become the righteousness of God in Jesus! He is our righteousness. And from the second Jesus enters our lives God considers us to be just as righteous as He is! Praise be unto His holy name!

But as wonderful as this righteousness unto salvation is, this is not the breastplate of righteousness that is a part of the armor of God. For you receive this righteousness automatically when you receive Jesus. **But the breastplate of righteousness is something that you must put on yourself.** Verse 11 says, “Put on the whole armor of God”. Verse 13 says, “Therefore take up the whole armor of God...” verse 14, “Stand therefore...having put on the breastplate of righteousness”. Paul is writing to Christians here. They already have Christ in them and the righteousness of Christ in them. But now He tells them they must put on the breastplate of righteousness. And what Paul is saying is simple: always think, say, and do the right thing. And the right thing is not what you think is right, but what the Bible says is right.

Beloved, let me tell you briefly why it is so critical that those who name the name of Jesus live righteous lives. **First of all, because of the high price that you must personally pay if you don't.** When you do not live right according to God's Word you sin, right? And God says in Proverbs 13:21, "Evil pursues sinners". And He says in Psalm 32:10, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked". And beloved, deliberately disobeying God's Word is wickedness; if all you do is layout of church every Sunday. Speaking of specific sins, God says concerning the sin of adultery, "He who does so destroys his own soul" (Proverbs. 6:32). And for those who love money, God says that they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:10). But for some reason many, many people think that they can play with fire and not get burned. But God says, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For whoever sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 3:6-7). But many believers, knowing what is right, still choose to do wrong, thinking, "It can't happen to me".

I have a Christian friend who is an old man now. He has been single most of his adult life, but he never thought it would happen to him. When he was young God gave him a beautiful wife and two beautiful children. My friend was not a bad man, but he failed to put on the breastplate of righteousness every day like God said that he should. I don't think that he actually committed adultery against his wife, but she was a weekend widow for several years. He rarely had time for her except when he wanted something from her. And her pleas for his attention did no good, and finally she left and never came back. I do not say that she was right in leaving, for God says that divorce is always a sin except in the case of adultery. No one should live in abuse, but divorce is not the answer.

But this man's wife left him all alone, and he admitted to me one day that it was all his fault. And now he is old and still alone. Now, there are many godly widows and widowers who live alone. But this man lives alone because of his sin. And beloved, if you don't put on the breastplate of righteousness each day, there's no telling what might happen to you. But I will tell you this. Satan will be firing his temptations at you at whatever weak point you may have with the purpose of destroying you, and you are a sitting duck! Your temptation might be pornography, or alcohol, or even your temper. I shared last Wednesday night about one of our Southern Baptist seminary presidents who was fired several years ago because of an uncontrollable temper. Beloved, if you don't put on your breastplate of righteousness every day, there is a personal price to pay.

But there is a second reason we must put on our breastplate of righteousness. **And that is the influence your life has upon others.** Listen to what Paul wrote to

the Jews in the church at Rome: “You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For ‘the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you’ as it is written” (Romans 2:22-23). God said that the heathen mocked the name of God because of the ungodly behavior of some of the professing Christians in the church. And friend, if you are saved this morning, you can be sure that your unsaved friends and neighbors and coworkers are watching you with an eagle eye, just hoping to catch you in some impropriety of conduct or speech. For they are looking for any excuse they can find not to go to church or pursue the things of God. And they will gladly use your unrighteousness if you give them the opportunity.

But in addition to the negative influence you have upon the unsaved if you fail to put on your breastplate of righteousness; you have the same negative influence upon the saved. Paul writes to the Galatians that when he and Peter were in Antioch Peter gladly took his meals with the Gentiles. But when James, the head pastor of the Jerusalem church came for a visit Peter ignored his Gentile brothers. And Paul reprimanded him publically for his prejudice. But Paul goes on to say that because of what Peter did the rest of the Jews played the hypocrite also, even the godly Barnabas (Galatians 2:11-13).

Beloved, you don’t live in a vacuum! And when you fail to put on your breastplate of righteousness every day and you fall, many other people take the fall with you. Oh, but consider the opposite!! Years ago someone said about a Christian man in their small town, “You need only shake his hand to know that he is full of God”. And another said, “That man never crosses my pathway without my being better for it!” What a testimony!! Wouldn’t you like to have that said about you? It comes with the putting on the breastplate or righteousness.

But there is a third critical reason for putting on the breastplate of righteousness every day, and it is the most important one of all. And that is, **the influence that your life has upon God**. Beloved, not only does our unrighteous living do harm to us, and to others, but it also does harm to God. It is an amazing truth, but God loves us so much that He has allowed Himself to be vulnerable to our behavior! God has chosen to allow His joy and His sorrow to depend upon whether we love and obey Him or whether we disobey Him. I know that sounds almost heretical, that humans have that much sway over Almighty God. And I admit that I don’t understand it. But does not the Bible say that Jesus wept? What did He weep over? He wept over the unbelief of the Jews at Lazarus’ tomb. Concerning adulterous Israel God says in Ezekiel 6:9: “...because I was crushed by their adulterous heart which has departed from Me, and by their eyes which play the harlot after their idols; they will loathe themselves for the evils which they committed in all their abominations.” God says

that He was brokenhearted by Israel's sins. And that when Israel realized what they had done to Him, they would be brokenhearted for how they treated Him as well.

So beloved, I hope you can see the dire consequences of failing to put on the breastplate of righteousness every day, of living godly and righteously. There is a great personal cost, there is the hurt it causes to others, and there is the hurt that it causes God. But let me just sum it up on three words: **a wasted life**. A life that brings no glory to God, which is why we live and breathe as Christians.

But beloved, we are not going to close on a negative note! For God has given you and me a foolproof plan for putting on the breastplate of righteousness and living a righteous, fruitful, joyful life for His glory. And here is what it is. First of all, we must know that **it all starts in the mind**. We must purpose that our minds will be focused on that which is godly. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life". The heart the seat of our thoughts; it is actually our minds. Jesus said that out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, adulteries, murders, and so forth (Matthew 15:18-19). And so our hearts and minds are the same thing. And all sin begins in our minds. And we must continually guard our minds from all thoughts of unrighteousness.

This is what Job did. Job 31:1: "I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?" This is what Daniel did. Daniel 1:8: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank..." Is it any wonder that Job and Daniel were two of the most godly men in all of the Bible? And they were godly because they made up their minds to be godly. It all starts with our thinking. And thus Paul writes to the Philippian church, "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true...honest....just....pure....lovely....of a good report, if there be in virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8). That's why he wrote to the Colossian church and to us, in Colossians 3:2, "Set your mind on things above".

So we begin to put on the breastplate of righteousness by purposing to think only righteous thoughts. That means that for some of us, some of our television programs will have to go. Some of our music will have to go. Some of our websites will have to go. Some of our homeboys may have to go. Because we hear and see things from all of these that are ungodly, and it takes our minds off that which is righteous.

But the second part to putting on a righteous life is to **put on the life of Christ by faith**. Do you remember that we said earlier that God's righteousness unto salvation is a free gift, but that it is not wrapped up in a pretty package that Jesus

brings with Him when He comes into our lives? That we are made the righteousness of God in Christ Himself? Well, the righteous lives that we live come in exactly the same way, by Christ alone through faith alone. We can't make up our minds to think, speak, and act right and then do it. God says through Isaiah that our righteousness is as filthy rags (64:6). The only righteousness that will do for righteous living is the righteousness of Jesus. Paul writes in Romans 13:13-14, "Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy". Paul says here; let us live godly, not ungodly. But how are we going to do that, Paul? Look at verse 14: "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its lusts*". Beloved, we live righteously by putting on the righteous one, Jesus Christ. He is our breastplate of righteousness. And by faith every day get up and say to Jesus, "Jesus, today I focus my mind on godly things. And today I put on You. By faith I claim your righteous life as my own. Live that life through me I pray".

One of the favorite TV programs in my house is "What not to wear". I did not say it is one of my favorites, mind you. I'd much rather be watching ESPN or Bugs Bunny or Mr. Rogers reruns. But when you're in the minority many times you don't get to touch the remote unless you're all by yourself. But "What not to Wear" is a program about transforming frumpy women into super models, at least in their own mind. They take a woman who dresses in T-shirts and sweat pants every day, give her an almost unlimited budget, and then go shopping with her to help her pick out the sharpest clothes for her that money can buy. Then they'll send her to the beauty shop, and maybe even the manicurist and the pedicurist. And when they've done all that she dresses up in her new clothes and walks out from behind the curtains for all of her friends to see, and the sometimes the ooows and aahs and cheers just about makes me lose my lunch. But I will say this, the ole' girl does look a lot better. It's amazing what a new set of clothes on a woman will do.

Oh, beloved, what the church of God needs today is a new set of clothes!! More than anything, we need to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is our breastplate of righteousness. And without Him we have nothing good, nothing attractive to display to the world at all.

I want to ask you, at this moment, are you wearing the righteous life of Christ? It begins by receiving Him as Savior and Lord. Have you ever been saved? And if you have, is His righteous life overcoming the power of Satan's temptations in your life day by day? Let us pray.