

**Ephesians 6:10-14**

**SI:** We’re looking in depth at a few verses at the end of Ephesians, chapter 6. Paul says the context of the Christian life is spiritual warfare.

In all the areas and relationships where you are trying to live as a Christian, the Devil and the forces of darkness are shooting at you.

But you aren’t defenseless. You have armor. The armor of God.

The armor as a whole is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the benefits of Christ. The pieces of armor in particular are different facets of the Gospel, or different individual benefits of the work of Christ and our union with him.

**INTRO:** Roman soldiers in Paul’s day wore a breastplate that protected the chest and abdomen—all most sensitive and vital organs.

I don’t know if you realize this or not, but different cultures and different languages have different associations when it come to internal organs.

We associate the heart with emotions.

If we have sympathy for someone in pain or if we have a romantic attraction we’ll talk about our hearts being moved.

But in the Bible the heart is not seen as the seat of the emotions.

It’s a symbol your personhood, your soul.

For Jews the heart was more like what we could call the mind.

Jesus says: Love God with all heart, soul, strength, and mind—those aren’t four different things, four ways of describing the same thing. Your full person.

Human emotions in the Bible are associated with the digestive organs—the intestines, the bowels.

So when Paul says in Phil 1: I long for you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

He misses them so much he’s emotionally overwhelmed

It is literally: I long for you with the bowels of Christ Jesus.

Or when John says, how can you see your brother in need and have no pity on him,

He says literally: Shut up your bowels from him.

Paul’s point is that just as the breastplate of the Roman soldier protected his most delicate and sensitive organs—

You need something to protect the most delicate and sensitive parts of your being, your sense of personhood, your deepest feelings and emotions.

You need something to protect your heart and your gut in a spiritual sense.

When Satan attacks Christians he can’t rob them of their salvation.

He can't rob them of God's grace.

But he can rob you of your experience of God's grace.

He can rob you of your joy, and fill your days with sighing and complaining.

If he can wound your heart, wound your sense of personhood,

of if he can wound your gut, your feelings and emotions then he'll do it.

And if those deepest and most sensitive parts are being manipulated by the Devil then you will have a hard time living the Christian life.

You might become ineffective and unproductive as a Christian.

The only armor that will protect your vital spiritual organs is the breastplate of righteousness.

You need to know

1. What it is
2. Why you need it
3. When you put it on

## **MP#1 What righteousness is**

In ordinary speech, nobody uses the word righteous or righteousness.

But this is very relevant concept.

Everybody is concerned about righteousness every day.

Righteousness means being judged and found presentable.

Righteousness means receiving a positive verdict from the judges who matter.

It is the most powerful force for shaping our sense of self.

Suppose a young man asks the woman of his dreams if she will marry him and she says yes. He experiences a rush. But that rush is not all hormones.

It's righteousness. He's been found acceptable by her.

Or suppose you've been working hard to lose weight and you see some old friends who you haven't seen for years and they say: You look great.

That good feeling is not just ego, it's righteousness.

It's a positive verdict from judges who matter.

Imagine a woman going on a first date that is super important to her.

So she starts getting ready for the date. What does getting ready mean?

It means making herself presentable. Hiding her flaws.

Using makeup and hair and clothes to draw attention away from certain parts and draw attention to other parts.

Not just physical parts, inward parts. She tells herself: I'm not going to talk too much. I'm going to ask him some questions about himself. Sound sophisticated.

When she gets back from the date she's dying to know: Did he like me, good time?

If he did, the thrill more than romantic. She's been judged and found acceptable.

If he didn't. It's more than disappointment. An edge of shame. Unaccepted.

Every person has a deep longing to be presentable, judged and found acceptable

Why are we like that? The Bible gives the most profound explanation in Genesis.

When God created Adam and Eve we are told they were "naked and unashamed."

That means they were completely presentable and they knew it.

Sometimes when church members need to make an announcement on Sunday they tell me: I don't want to get up in front of the church. Somebody else do it.

All those eyes make them feel queasy and exposed.

I understand that. Many Sundays I get a stomach ache from nerves.

But Adam and Eve could stand naked before all creation and each other and their Creator unashamed. They knew with complete confidence they were presentable.

They knew that in the eyes of God they were righteous.

Then they sinned. Believed serpent's lie. Tried to be their own god.

Immediately they felt shame.

They were ashamed of their naked bodies, but that was indicative of a deeper sense of inadequacy and failure because they felt the eyes of God upon them, penetrating them and judging them.

So do you remember what they did in response?

They made fig leaf aprons to cover private parts.

Those fig leaves were their attempt to hide their flaws to get a positive verdict. In other words, those fig leaves were their righteousness.

And ever since then, all the descendants of Adam and Eve have done the same. We feel the eyes of God upon us, we sense an impossibly perfect standard of integrity and beauty and moral virtue and excellence—it's the holiness of God. And that makes us queasy and exposed

So we deal with it by choosing other eyes, lesser eyes, and trying to make ourselves presentable to them, and to gain an acceptable judgment from them.

For one person it's the eyes of his parents (living or dead).

His sense of self and his deepest emotions rise or fall on their verdict.

For it could be your children, friends, peers, colleagues, people of the opposite sex.

Even people who say: I don't care what anyone thinks. That's usually a cover-up.

They care greatly but trying hard not to.

And even if there is the odd person who cares about his own self-judgment, even that person's own standards are shaped by outside influences.

And sometimes when people suffer a negative verdict from one set of eyes, they try to defend themselves with a positive verdict from another set of eyes.

I may not be pretty or popular, but I make good grades.

I may not have a good marriage, but I'm a good mother.

I may not have a successful ministry and big church like my seminary buddies, but I've been faithful.

I may have failed morally, but I'd give you the shirt off my back.

We live our lives covering ourselves with these sort of fig leaves.

And in terms of spiritual warfare, Satan can use these things against you to cast you down into despair and unhappiness.

So that brings us to the next point . . .

## **MP#2 Why you need the breastplate of righteousness**

You need something impenetrable that will cover and protect all your flaws.

Fig leaves won't do. You need armor.  
That armor is not your righteousness or your integrity.  
It is the righteousness of God covering and protecting you.  
Two Bible verses. If you're taking notes, write these down.

### Romans 1:17

In the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, as it is written, the righteous man will live by faith."

In the Gospel. What does the word Gospel mean? It means Good News.

What's the Good News?

There is a righteousness from God that is by faith.

You can receive a positive verdict from God by trusting in him.

God will give you acceptability, he will give you righteousness.

And more specifically, God gives you that righteousness in Christ.

### 2 Corinthians 5:21

God made Him (Jesus Christ) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus Christ had no sin. He was perfect in thought, word, and deed.

But God made him to be sin for us. What does that mean?

It means that morally he was still perfect, but legally he was guilty.

Legally he became liable for your record and suffered death for it on the cross.

By faith in Christ you are pardoned from all your sin.

But a man could be pardoned by a judge and still hang his head in public.

He would still feel the eyes of people in town who knew what he did.

So God gives believers more than pardon for sin, he gives us righteousness.

"So that in him, in Christ, we might become the righteousness of God.

Not only is Jesus liable for your record, you are now liable for his.

I know liable is usually refers to guilt and blame, but the point is that Jesus record becomes your record in God's eyes.

When Jesus Christ walked the earth, the holy, all-seeing eyes of God saw every action, every word of Christ, and every motive of his heart and what was God's verdict? This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

That's your verdict.

Put your name there: Andrew is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

No matter what negative judgments you get from the people or Satan or self,

God's judgment of you is based on Christ's righteousness received by faith.

That's not a fig leaf, that's a breastplate of steel. Christ's righteousness is yours.

Theologians call this transfer of Christ's record to you by faith  
"the imputation of Christ's righteousness."

We believe in the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

There are some branches of the church that strongly object to this doctrine.

If we teach this, that by simply trusting Jesus Christ and believing in him you get his righteousness and God's positive verdict, then there will be no incentive to live a good life. People will just say: God accepts me, I'll live like I want. So what to they say the breastplate of righteousness is?

They say it's not Christ's righteousness protecting your heart, it's your integrity. You resist the Devil by being a person of integrity and you use your good record to answer his accusations.

To which we would say: Of course we believe in the importance of striving for faithfulness and integrity, but if that's your breastplate, Satan will have you for lunch. His name means Prosecutor.

He's an expert using our moral failures to make us question God's grace.

No matter how faithful you are, your life is riddled with sins.

When we have done our duty, we are still unworthy servants.

Here's the bigger answer to objections to imputed righteousness.

We also believe in imparted righteousness.

When you believe in Christ, His Holy Spirit comes in imparts, implants a new seed of spiritual life, might think of a blood transfusion. You begin to grow in love, self-control, courage, joy. We grow in grace. It's an inevitable result of true, saving faith.

But when it comes to righteousness and God's verdict, we always go back to Christ's righteousness imputed to us. Especially when under spiritual attack.

Never say: Because I'm being a good person, I am acceptable to God.

Instead say: Reason I'm able to be a good person, because already accepted by God

Never say: I have to repent or God will reject me and I'll fall from grace.

Instead say: I have to repent because God won't reject me and I can't fall from grace. How can I grieve the person who at infinite cost saved me from my sins?

### **MP#3 When you need to put it on**

If you are a follower Jesus Christ, you have this righteousness, put it on

Use it to defend yourself.

1. Put on the breastplate of righteousness when you are bitter.

Bitterness can ruin your Christian experience.

Sometimes the cause of bitterness is a problem with righteousness.

Tim Keller told a story about a minister he knew whose son rejected the faith and moved in with his girlfriend. This pastor became bitter at both of them.

Keller talking to him, counseling him, and asked: Why are you bitter?

He said: What kind of minister am I? I'm a failure. Can't win son to faith.

It was a light bulb moment for him when he verbalized it.

The reason he was bitter was that he had based his righteousness on his success as a minister, and the eyes of his congregation and their judgments and verdict.

It seemed to him his failure with his own son ripped that fig leaf away.

Keller's counsel was: You need to repent, not of your bitterness but of making your ministry your righteousness, making son's salvation way to win God's favorable verdict.

If you are bitter at someone explore the possibility that it is because they have taken away something that was your righteousness.

Something you wanted to get a positive verdict from eyes that matter to you.

Maybe this person spoiled your chance at business success or happy marriage—but those things aren't your righteousness. Jesus is. Repent and turn to him.

And related to bitterness, we could add other problem emotions like discouragement and despondency.

You might be discouraged and despondent because something in your life besides Jesus Christ is serving as your righteousness.

You're thinking of someone else's eyes besides God's.

Maybe it's the world's standard of beauty, success, failure.

That's especially hard if you know your situation is not going to change.

Trace the source of your discouragement.

Repent of making those other eyes your source of righteousness

and then preach to yourself that in Christ you are accepted in God's sight.

2. Put on the breastplate when you are guilty.

Maybe there's a sin you have done many times, doubt you are a Christian.

Devil revs up your conscience, you've done it again, no Christian

God has rejected you because of what you have done.

If you feel too unworthy to come to God when you have sinned—

you are trusting in your righteousness, not Christ's

At the same time, if you feel accepted by God because you resisted a temptation trusting in your righteousness, not Christ's

Say, yes, I have committed these sins, and much worse, completely true  
But when you say that God will have nothing to do with me,  
I refuse to listen, that is blasphemy of God's grace, Christ's righteousness  
"Arise my soul, arise, Shake off your guilty fears,  
The bleeding sacrifice On thy behalf appears."

3. Put on the breastplate of righteousness when you are discouraged, despondent.

4. Put on the breastplate of righteousness when you are too self-conscious.

Can be paralyzed, too fearful to say or do what need to say or do

Remember the Apostle Paul I Cor. 4

"I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed,

I do not even judge myself . . . It is the Lord who judges me.

I don't care what others think of me or what I think of me.

don't even entirely trust my conscience—Lord who judges, already declared right.

Stir you up to boldness. Righteousness not what others think, or what you think.

5. Put on the breastplate of righteousness when you are making life too hectic.

You continue to add demand after demand, event after event, programs, activities,

kids, work, sports, exercise, vacations—why?

Could these things be your righteousness?

This is what have to do for the favorable judgments.

This proves I'm a worthy person, worthy parent, whatever.

Often there are hard things that have to be done and life is often necessarily busy.

But if you find yourself on a treadmill, then take some quiet time to explore this.

Ask deep questions: Now what's my motive? Who am I trying to please?

What would happen to my sense of worth if I dropped these things?

Maybe you'll be surprised to find it's righteousness motivating you—

and if you put on the breastplate of Christ's righteousness you'll get a little

rest and probably enjoy life more.

**CONC:** What is your righteousness?

What are you depending on to cover your most delicate, sensitive parts of being?

What are you depending on to make you acceptable, presentable?

This is not a light matter.

Some of the most frightening words in the Bible are the descriptions of



the Day of the Lord. Christ coming in judgment with all his holy angels. On that day there will be people who say to the mountains “fall on us” and to the hills, “cover us.” anything to hide us from the eyes of the one who sees all things

On that day, the pitiful fig leaves of human righteousness will be worthless. Before that day, today, put your trust in Jesus Christ alone.

Trust him and your sins imputed to him and his righteous life imputed to you. Not only will that give you a calmness and confidence and humility now— on that great day when he comes, you’ll bask in his eyes and you’ll hear his verdict—

Well done, good and faithful servant.