

The Breastplate of Righteousness

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help, if we could turn to Paul's letter to the Ephesians and chapter 6.

Ephesians chapter 6. And reading in verse 10. Ephesians chapter 6 verse 10.

Finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes or the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

And particularly the words at the end of verse 14. Put on the breastplate of righteousness. Put on the breastplate of righteousness.

[1 : 29] Now as you know this evening we're continuing our study of Paul's conclusion in his letter to the Ephesians. Since the beginning of this year, I was looking back, we've actually been working our way through Paul's letter to the church at this seaport city of Ephesus.

But due to one providence or another, it's taken us about nine months to get here. And yet Paul's concluding remarks, they just continue the theme and the thrust of his whole letter.

Because as you know, Paul wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus, not to deal with division, or to highlight heresy, or even to flag up some false teaching. No, Paul doesn't address any of these issues.

Because as a church, the Ephesians, they were just faithfully ploughing away in their furrow. But as a seasoned pastor and as a seasoned preacher of the gospel, Paul knew that when things are going well, there's always the temptation to lose focus and let your guard down.

Which is why Paul writes this letter to encourage and even exhort the Ephesian Christians. And as you know by now, Paul, he split, he separated this letter into six chapters.

[2 : 49] It's two sections of six chapters. Chapters one to three, they're full of encouragements. And then chapters four to six, they're full of these exhortations. And Paul's concluding remarks here at the end of chapter six, they just continue the theme of the second half of his letter.

Because throughout chapters four to six, Paul is exhorting us. He's exhorting us to walk worthy of our Christian calling. He's exhorting us to be imitators of God as his beloved children.

And we're to do that both at home and in the workplace. But now as Paul comes to the conclusion of his letter, he exhorts us there, verse 10, to be strong in the Lord.

Be strong in the Lord. Be strong in who you are in Christ. Because Paul, he has encouraged us, as we've seen in chapters one to three, he's encouraged us by reminding us that we are redeemed by precious blood.

We're adopted into God's family. We're saved by grace. We're loved for all eternity. And we're being sanctified for glory. And so Paul says there, at the end of his letter, he says, be strong in the Lord.

[3 : 58] Be strong in who you are in Christ. And be strong in what you have in Christ. Because you have, as Paul has explained, you have God as your father. You have Jesus as your elder brother.

And you have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you as your guarantee. Your guarantee of your inheritance. And more than that, Paul has told us, right from the beginning of his letter, we have received every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.

So be strong in the Lord. Be strong in who you are in Christ. And be strong in what you have in Christ. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, he says, put on the whole armor of God.

That you may be able to stand against the wiles or the schemes of the devil. And it's with this exhortation there in verses 10 and 11, Paul reminds us that we have an enemy.

There is an enemy of our soul. We have an adversary. He is the devil. He goes around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. And Paul exhorts us.

[5 : 03] Right at the end of his letter, he doesn't want us to forget this. Actually, he wants us to take this to heart. And he exhorts us to fight the good fight of faith and stand firm against the wiles of the devil.

Why? Verse 12. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood. No. We wrestle against the rulers and against the authorities and against the cosmic powers of this present darkness.

Against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood. This is a spiritual warfare.

But what Paul makes clear in his conclusion is that we are not fighting the good fight of faith for victory. We're fighting the good fight of faith from victory. The victory has already been won.

It's already been accomplished and achieved at the cross of Calvary. And it was at the cross, as you know, our commander-in-chief. He was victorious. He put all his enemies under his feet because sin was dealt with.

[6 : 10] Death was destroyed. The grave was dismantled. And the devil was ultimately defeated. Which means that tonight we are not fighting the good fight of faith for victory.

We are fighting the good fight of faith from victory. And this is why Paul is concluding exhortation to engage with the enemy. It comes with this great encouragement.

An encouragement to pick up and to put on your necessary equipment. So Christian soldier, did you put on your armor today?

Did you put on your armor today because we're in a warfare? That's what Paul is telling us. And we need armor. And we need it every day. Like Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress, we need to go into our armory every day and prayerfully pick up and put on the whole armor of God.

And as you know, there's a lot of equipment. There's a lot of equipment to prayerfully pick up and put on. I count eight pieces of armor in the whole armor of God.

[7 : 16] And then he says, So eight pieces of armor in the whole armor of God.

And as we mentioned last time, each item of equipment, it emphasizes the character of the Christian soldier. And they also explain to us the character of Jesus. Because he is our champion. He's our commander in chief. He's the head of the army. He's the one who's leading us. Which means that as Christians, as followers of Christ in his great army, as soldiers following the commands of a commander in chief, we must possess and we must practice a Christian character that emulates and emanates truth from the belt of truth.

Righteousness from the breastplate of righteousness. Peace from the shoes of peace. And so on. The faith and salvation and the spirit and prayer and perseverance.

As Christians, we are to possess and practice a character that emulates and emanates the character of Jesus. And as we saw last time, Paul, he exhorted us, first of all, to pick up and to put on the breastplate of truth.

[8 : 51] He said, Gird up your loins. Buckle up, he said. Fasten on the belt of truth. Because the belt of truth, we might not think much of it, but it's the key component to the whole armour of God.

For a Roman foot soldier, like the man on our screen, his military belt was worn as a status symbol, representing rank and representing the rewards he received as a soldier.

And it was only Roman soldiers who were allowed to, by Roman law, they were the only ones who were allowed to wear the military belt. It had to be worn at all times, whether you're on duty or off duty.

But the military belt, it was the key component to the whole armour, because the belt supported the shield and sheathed the sword. The belt supported the shield and sheathed the sword.

Therefore, the belt is needed. It's necessary for the soldier's protection. And that's the message Paul wanted to get across to us right from the outset, that the belt of truth is needed. It's necessary to support the shield of faith and sheath the sword of the Spirit.

[10 : 01] Therefore, without the belt of truth, without that belt, we are not dressed. We're not ready. We're not ready for the day ahead. We're not dressed and ready for battle against the father of lies.

More than that, as a Christian soldier, our Christian character, we're to emanate Jesus as the truth. We're to be trustworthy and true.

We're to be people of integrity, honesty, reliability. We're to delight in truth and rejoice in truth and love the truth and speak the truth and walk in truth and worship in spirit and in truth.

Gird your loins, says Paul. Buckle up, fasten on, first of all, the belt of truth. But then as Paul moves on, the second half of verse 14, he moves on to the next item in the Christian armour and he exhorts us to put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Put on the breastplate of righteousness. And as we said, each item of equipment in the armour of God, it explains the character of Jesus.

[11 : 06] The character of Jesus as our champion, as our commander-in-chief. But it also emphasises that as Christian soldiers who follow our commander-in-chief into battle, our Christian character is to emulate and emanate the character of Jesus.

So as Christian soldiers, we're to possess and practice a Christian character that emulates Jesus and emanates the character of Jesus. So we are to emanate the righteousness of Jesus and emulate the righteousness of Jesus.

As Christian soldiers, our Christian character is to emulate and emanate the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Because as both God and man, our Bible reveals to us that he is righteous.

He is righteous. He is Melchizedek, the King of righteousness. He is Jehovah Sikkenu, the Lord of righteousness.

He is the judge of all the earth, the judge of all righteousness. And you know, when you read through the Psalms, the Psalms repeatedly remind us that the Lord is righteous.

[12 : 25] And he loves righteousness because his way is righteous and his will is righteous and his word is righteous. In fact, the righteousness of the Lord is revealed in the law of the Lord.

The righteousness of the Lord is revealed in the law of the Lord because his law is righteous, because it's the perfect law of righteousness.

It's the standard, his standard, and his standard is a standard of righteousness. And as you know, the more we consider the commandments of the Lord, the more we look at the law of righteousness, the more we realize how unrighteous we really are before a righteous judge.

Because we're the opposite of righteousness. We're unrighteous. In fact, Isaiah tells us that we're unclean. That's our starting position.

We're unclean because all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of a righteous judge.

All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of a righteous judge.

[13 : 39] We're unclean. We're unrighteous. We are as an unclean thing because of our sin, our transgression, and our iniquity. In our sin, we have fallen short.

That's the word, sin. Fallen short of the righteous standard of the Lord's law of righteousness. In our transgression, we have crossed the boundary line, the line that is set in the Lord's law of righteousness.

And in our iniquity, we have twisted, we have made crooked what was straight and perfect and right in the Lord's law of righteousness. So we're unclean.

We're unrighteous because of our sin, our iniquity, and our transgression. Our righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of a righteous judge.

Therefore, as you know, the only way to be made righteous in God's sight and put on this breastplate of righteousness is by the righteous judge of righteousness taking upon himself our righteousness to be judged under the law of the Lord's righteousness.

[14 : 49] And as you know, that's the message of the gospel.

It was prophesied in the Old Testament that from the seed of David there would come the branch of righteousness. A king who shall reign in righteousness, he will execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

And his name shall be called, as Jeremiah says, his name will be called Jehovah Sikkenu, the Lord of righteousness. More than that, Malachi's message was that when the great day of the Lord comes, when the Messiah finally appears, the son of righteousness will come.

He will arise with healing in his wings. And just before Jesus is born, you have there old Zechariah the priest, he receives this promise that holiness and righteousness would go before the Savior all the days of his life.

Because his kingdom would be a kingdom of righteousness in which unclean and unrighteous sinners are called and commanded to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

[16:20] It's a wonderful, wonderful message. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And that's the glory of the gospel. Because in order to enable unclean and unrighteous sinners to become righteous in God's sight and put on the breastplate of righteousness, our Jehovah Sidkenu, our, the Lord, our righteousness, he had to first of all put on the breastplate of righteousness.

He had to put on the breastplate of righteousness. That's what we were reading about earlier in Isaiah 59. Isaiah reminded us there of how crooked we are, how sinful we are, how twisted we are, how much iniquity is in our heart.

He reminded us there of how much we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And yet, in that act of salvation, in saving unclean and unrighteous and lost and hell-deserving sinners from the condemnation of the Lord's law of righteousness and from the judgment of the righteous judge, Isaiah says, and I love the way he puts it, the Saviour was a soldier who put on righteousness as a breastplate.

That's how he describes Jesus. Describes the Saviour as a soldier who put on righteousness as a breastplate. And then you think of Psalm 45. How does the psalmist describe the Lord in Psalm 45? He describes him as a soldier going out to battle, leading the way. And this is the same picture. The Saviour was a soldier who put on righteousness as a breastplate because becoming unrighteous and bearing our unrighteousness, as you know, that wasn't a walk in the park of Calvary for the Saviour.

[18:18] It was an all-out war at Calvary. Where our Jehovah, said Kenu, he wore his breastplate of righteousness as he who knew no sin experienced the weight of sin and the darkness of the devil as he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.

But as you know, it was through the triumph of Calvary that there was the transaction of Calvary. Through the triumph of Calvary, there was the transaction of Calvary, where we can say tonight, the worst about me, and there's a lot, the worst about me at Calvary was laid upon him.

The best about him was laid upon me. My disobedience reckoned to him. His obedience reckoned to me. My sin and shame all transferred over to Christ.

His salvation, his security, all transferred to me. my ruin credited to him. His riches credited to me. My rags of righteousness taken off and removed.

His robe of righteousness gladly received. Through the triumph of Calvary, there was this transaction of Calvary, which emphasizes and explains to us that we can only be righteous because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

[19:42] We can only be righteous because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Paul tells us, Paul teaches us in 2 Corinthians 5.21, God the Father made his Son to be sin for us, even though he knew no sin, but it was all so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

It's what our catechism teaches us. It summarizes for us that our justification, our being made righteous, it's an act of God's free grace wherein he pardons all our sins.

He accepts us as righteous in his sight only, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

And you know, this is what's remarkable because through the triumph of Calvary and the transaction of Calvary, we not only receive Christ's robe of righteousness, we often talk about the robe of righteousness, but through the triumph of Calvary and the transaction of Calvary, we also receive Christ's breastplate of righteousness.

We receive his breastplate. Remember reading, I couldn't find it this week, I couldn't remember who wrote it, but I do remember reading about Christ's breastplate of righteousness before, that when we receive it, it's not a nice shiny piece of armour.

[21:09] No, this is an armour that has been through the worst war possible and yet it comes to us, it's handed down to us to put on. We receive Christ's breastplate of righteousness, righteousness, which makes us as righteous as Christ himself.

As righteous as Christ himself. And you know, this makes sense as to why Paul is exhorting us and encouraging us to emulate and emanate the righteousness of the character of Jesus Christ because we have received his robe.

We've received his robe of righteousness. We have received his breastplate of righteousness, which he went to Calvary in. and we are as righteous as Christ himself.

We're as righteous as Christ himself. So put on the breastplate of righteousness, he says. But you know, if you're anything like me and you come to think about this righteousness that you have received by faith alone, if you're anything like me, you'll allow the devil to help you disregard it. and distrust it and doubt it and disbelieve it. If you're anything like me, you'll allow your doubts and the devil to convince you. How can I be as righteous as Jesus Christ?

[22 : 37] How can I be as righteous as Jesus Christ? And yet, this is what Scripture teaches us and tells us that what they would call positional righteousness righteousness.

Our position before a holy God is that we have received Christ's righteousness. We're as righteous today as Christ is in heaven.

We're as righteous today as we will be in heaven when we get there. We're as righteous today as Christ is in heaven.

That's our positional righteousness. That's our position tonight. We have received the robe of righteousness. We are wearing Christ's breastplate of righteousness.

That's positional righteousness. But Paul also reminds us that we need practical righteousness. We need practical righteousness in order to protect our heart from the wickedness of sin and the wiles of the devil.

[23 : 41] We also need practical righteousness to protect our heart from the wickedness of sin and the wiles of the devil. We have positional righteousness. We're righteous. We're wearing the robe of righteousness.

We're wearing the breastplate of righteousness but we also need practical righteousness. Because as you know for a Roman soldier the practical purpose of the breastplate is to protect the vital organs particularly the heart.

And in our battle against the wickedness of sin and the wiles of the devil our heart needs protection. Our heart needs protection.

Because as you know through faith in Jesus Christ our heart has been changed from a dead heart of stone to a living heart of flesh. And our unclean and our unrighteous heart has been transformed. Transformed because the Lord has as we were singing in Psalm 51 the Lord has created within us a clean heart. He has renewed a right spirit within us.

[24 : 47] He has made our heart alive in Christ and as Peter says we have died to sin all so that we might live unto righteousness. Therefore we need to protect our heart from the wickedness of sin and the wiles of the devil.

We need to protect our heart from the wickedness of sin and the wiles of the devil. people. Because as you know and as our teachers at Christianity Explored have been reminded the heart of the problem is always the problem of the heart.

The heart of the problem is always the problem of the heart. Jeremiah reminds us about the reality of our heart. The heart of man is deceitful above all things desperately wicked.

And you know that's why Jesus warns us. He warns us about our treasure. What does he say about our treasure? Where your treasure is there will your heart be also.

He warns us not only about our treasure he warns us about our tongue. And he says from out of the heart the mouth speaks. Out of the heart the mouth speaks.

[26 : 03] So Jesus warns us about our treasure where your treasure is there your heart will be also. Warns us about our tongue. Out of the heart the mouth speaks. Then he warns us also about our temperament. Our treasure our tongue and our temperament.

Because out of the heart says Jesus come evil thoughts. Sexual immorality. Theft. Murder. Adultery. Coveting.

Wickedness. Deceit. Sensuality. Envy. Slander. Pride. Foolishness. All these he says all these come from within. And they defile a person.

That's why we need to remember that we've received not only Christ's robe of righteousness and his breastplate of righteousness but we have to remember that we even though there will be many attacks from the accuser of the brethren and he will cause us to doubt and distrust and disbelieve and disregard and maybe even despair about our righteousness but we need to remember that our practical righteousness we need it to protect our heart from the wickedness of sin and the wiles of the devil.

We need to protect our heart from the wickedness of sin and the wiles of the devil. So our positional righteousness assures us that we are as righteous today as Jehovah Sikkenu in heaven and our

practical righteousness affirms to us that we need to protect our heart.

[27 : 44] We need to protect our heart from the wickedness of sin and the wiles of the devil. And that's why Paul's exhortation to us tonight is what it will be all the way through our study.

Christian soldier, have you put on your armour today? Christian soldier, prayerfully pick up and put on every piece of armour.

Put on the breastplate of righteousness and keep putting on the whole armour of God. Put on the whole armour of God.

Well may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we confess that how often we doubt what thy word says and how often we come to it and we see what we are not.

That when we look into the perfect law of righteousness, we see how far short we fall. We see, O Lord, that we have sinned and come short of thy glory and that our righteousness is truly as filthy rags in thy sight.

[29 : 01] But we bless thee and praise thee tonight for that position that we stand in, that we stand clothed not in our own righteousness but in the righteousness of our elder brother, that we are clothed in his breastplate to fight another day, to go on pressing on towards the mark of the high call of God in Christ Jesus.

And Lord, enable us, we pray, to keep putting on this breastplate of righteousness, that we would be able to stand firm against the wickedness of sin and even the wiles of the devil.

Lord, help us, we pray, to protect our heart and, Lord, to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, knowing then that all other things will be added unto us.

Lord, bless us together, we pray. Encourage us, we ask, to keep putting on this armour day by day and to keep fighting the good fight of faith. Go before us, we ask, cleanse us, we plead, and do us good for Jesus' sake.

Amen. We're going to bring our time to a conclusion this evening. We're going to sing the words of Psalm 32.

[30 : 16] Psalm 32 in the Sing Psalms version on page 38. Psalm 32, page 38.

We're singing from verse 7 down to the end of the psalm. Psalm 32, page 38 from verse 7.

You are my hiding place, O Lord, my true security. You keep me safe in troubled days. You circle me with joyful praise when you have set me free.

And we'll sing down to the end of the psalm. The wicked's woes will much increase, but those who trust the Lord, his covenant mercy will surround. You righteous, let your joy abound, and praise the Lord, your God.

So we'll sing these verses of Psalm 32 from verse 7 down to the end of the psalm to God's praise.

Psalm 32, page 38 You are my hiding place, O Lord, my true security.

[31 : 28] You keep me safe in troubled days.

You circle me with joyful grace, when you have set me free.

I will instruct you by my word, and guide you in my way.

My counsel I will give to you.

My eye will keep your path in you, and watch you day by day.

[32 : 44] Do not be like the harsh or mute, which I ought to understand.

They must be heard and kept in check, as fit and bridal turn their name, to go where you are.

God bless you, and watch you, and watch you, and watch you. The wicked's woes will march in peace, but those who trust the Lord, his covenant mercy will sign. His covenant mercy will sign.

your righteous lad, your righteous lad.

will march in peace, but those who trust the Lord, his covenant mercy will sign. Those who trust the Lord, His covenant mercy will set out.

You righteous let your joy abound and praise the Lord your God.

[34 : 25] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.