Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Armor of God: The Belt of Truthfulness and the Breastplate of Righteousness
Scripture: Ephesians 6:14
Code: 90-365

Let's open the Word of God then to the sixth chapter of Ephesians in our series on the believer's armor. And let me read the text for you so that you have in mind the sweep of thought that Paul gives us in this matter. Starting in verse 10, Ephesians 6:10. "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil, for our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day and having done everything to stand firm. Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to distinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, with all prayer and petition. Pray at all times in the Spirit and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints."

Clearly, a simple reading of that text lets us know that we are engaged in a serious battle. The whole world is a battleground between God and Satan, good angels and fallen angels, holy men and unholy men. For us as Christians, while all is well in an eternal sense, as long as we remain in this world we are engaged in a very serious battle, a warfare. It is in some ways a life and death struggle, a struggle with the unseen hoards of wickedness behind the visible evil in the world and these are demonic forces that control the minds of men and the cultures of the world to activate the purposes of their leader who is none other than Satan himself. We then contend, as Paul says, not with flesh and blood, our enemy is much more formidable than just human. We contend with spiritual beings, demons, who are behind all that is bad and all that is against God in the thinking of our world.

Consequently, every child of God must view himself or herself as a soldier. We have all been called to battle. We have all been drafted by the King of Kings and we cannot dodge the draft and there are no deferments. We battle with enemies we can't see, enemies we can't touch, enemies we can't outwit. We need protection and we need strength and we need wisdom beyond ourselves. You can take all that's ours in Christ, all that is listed for us in chapter 1, all the blessings that are ours in the heavenlies in Christ which are delineated in the first three chapters, we can talk about the wonderful gift of the presence of the Holy Spirit, we have also been given the revelation of God in the Word of God, and still with all the blessings, with the presence of the Holy Spirit, and with the resource that the Word of God is, we still cannot stand in our own strength. In fact, we are reminded in 1

Corinthians 10 that whoever thinks he stands should take heed lest he fall. We have to recognize that as Christians we live in a very dangerous place, namely this world. There is danger all around us. And it is masked with all kinds of deception.

Now we're not saying that we're so vulnerable that we can lose our salvation, we can lose our promised eternal life. But we certainly can lose the battle for usefulness, and the opportunity for joy and blessedness if we don't learn how to fight effectively.

Just a reminder along that line. In John 10:29 Jesus said this, "That anybody who belongs to Him, no one can snatch them out of His hand." Snatch is *harpazane(?)*, we cannot be snatched away from the hand of God, or the hand of Christ. Satan cannot overpower God and yet we can fall into sin that renders us useless, joyless, and brings us under divine discipline. We will not lose the war but we can lose battles along the way and live in the doldrums of defeat. That is why we are told in verse 11 to put on the full armor of God in order that we might be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. We want victory, we want blessing, we want usefulness, we want joy, we want the freedom of the fullness of Christian fellowship and worship that a life armed against Satan will produce.

Now just a little bit more by way of introduction, taking you a little deeper into verse 12 for a moment. We're reminded there that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, simply not against humans, but against...and then notice the rulers, the powers, the world forces of this darkness and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies. These are all statements that identify for us a hierarchy and this hierarchy is frankly not new to us because clearly there is a hierarchy among angels even before the fall of Satan and his demons. The way God organized the angels and the way He created the angels was not like they were all rubber stamped and identical to each other, that is a misconception. All angels are not equal. There are angels and then there are different kinds of angels. There are cherubim and there are seraphim. There are angels and there are archangels and that would be those who are above the regular angels. And then there are superangels, or super archangels who even have names like Michael, and Gabriel and Lucifer. So there is a structure, there is a hierarchy when God creates the angels and God dispatches His will to the archangels who disseminate that will to the angels who carry it out so that when Satan fell and took a third of the angels with him, according to Revelation chapter 12, a third of them, they fell with the same variation of abilities and powers that were in the original creation only now in a fallen condition but still there is order among the demons. There is hierarchy among the demons. And the angel over all of them who is not by nature different than them, but more powerful than them is Satan himself. He too is an angel like all other angels. He is a fallen angel like all other fallen angels. He is a demon like all other demons, only he was not created like them all, he was created to be above them all with superior powers.

So in battling against the demon world, we are not battling, you might say, a sort of random operation by a whole lot of equally empowered and equally gifted angels who were sort of independently doing whatever they do. We are warring against a very sophisticated hierarchy that operates in some

degree from the top down, although because angels are fallen, they are by nature in a fallen condition and a fallen condition would be a condition of pride and rebellion and therefore it must be very difficult for Satan to coordinate all the work. Holy angels in the hierarchy in the structure in which they operate, operate perfectly in a holy manner. Fallen angels operate imperfectly because being imperfect themselves, they are by nature rebellious and wicked and resist the very structure of their own system. But nonetheless it is sophisticated and Satan does get what he wants done as the architect of schemes through the hierarchy of these archangels and angels, sometimes called principalities and powers and rulers.

They are placed in a strategic location. Sometimes Satan places certain of these very powerful demons in positions behind governments, such as Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14, Daniel 9 and 10. You see these hierarchal powers, these elevated kinds of demons with powers above the rest of the demons put in very strategic positions to effect the purposes of Satan through certain nations. Always at the end, to work against the purposes of God.

They are also identified by the word “darkness” which would be parallel to the word “wickedness.” Darkness represents the character of this domain. Remember Colossians 1, “We have been delivered out of the domain of darkness into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son. Darkness describes a couple of things, ignorance and immorality. In the Bible you will find darkness used as a metaphor for ignorance and you will find it for a metaphor for wickedness.

So the kingdom of darkness is both ignorant and wicked. Spiritual wickedness in high places, in heavenly places is how verse 12 ends...high places meaning the spiritual dimension, above and beyond us, outside the dimensions of our world. So we need to be aware of the fact that we are dealing with a very, very powerful spiritual system. Run, or at least attempted to be run by the most powerful of all fallen angels, Lucifer himself who was formerly the son of the morning, the anointed cherub, you might have called him the worship leader of heaven. We should not think we can resist this kind of power in our own flesh.

Pitted against the powers of darkness in high places, in heavenly places, pitted against this hierarchy of wicked demons who ply their trade by crafting a world culture that is anti-God, that is not always blatantly anti-God. It may be religiously anti-God. It may be, if I can coin a word, Christianly anti-God. It may talk about Jesus and it may talk about the Bible in a positive way, but it is still anti-God. Or it may damn Jesus and damns the Bible and it is still the same system. Satan is crafty. The Bible refers to the wiles of the devil. It refers to the schemes of the devil as we have read in verse 11 here in Ephesians 6.

It strikes me as beyond comprehension in one sense that understanding this the church can act as if this does not even exist. There is a certain frivolity in the church. There is a certain superficiality in the church. There’s a certain silliness in the church. Pastors are turned in to standup comics more times

than I would like to think. This must be approached with a great deal of seriousness. This is a grim power. And in order for us to deal with it, verse 13 gets us into the discussion that we're going to look at in the armor, we have to take up the full armor of God. Now we already said that in verse 11, "Put on the full armor of God." Like the soldier who got up every morning and put it on to go to battle, you get up every morning to put it on again. You take it up, you take it up, you take it up, you keep taking it up because it is the only way that you will be able to resist in the evil day.

What is the evil day? The day that evil dominates the world.

What day is that? This day and this day lasts until Christ takes over the world, till the Millennial Kingdom.

We want to be able in this era of dominating satanic evil to be able to resist, is the NAS, in the evil day. And having done everything, to stand firm. The word "resist" is in the NAS, some translations have the word "stand" there. Either way, in fact it is the exact same Greek word as used in, for example, James 4:7, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." It is the exact same verb used in 1 Peter 5:9, "Resist him, firm in your faith." So here's a third time that verse is used, to resist Satan. And the only way that we can resist, that is stop his advances into our lives through the system in which we live, the world system, the ordered evil, wicked *kosmos*, is to have the armor on. And if we have the armor on, we will be able to resist in the evil day and we will be able, everything said and done, to stand firm, to be strong.

This is what we're talking about. Obviously this is serious to the writer. This is serious to the author behind the writer who is none other than the Holy Spirit and it needs to be taken very seriously to us. It is why we are told, for example, in 1 Corinthians, a very simple command is given in chapter 16 of 1 Corinthians verse 13, "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men...." How do men act? "Be strong." Be strong. Do all of it in love, but be strong, be firm, act like men which if you borrow that concept and take it back in the Old Testament, would be translated "be courageous." This is a time to take a stand against a very sophisticated evil system. We have to be strong to be victorious.

We are warned by Peter several times. And Peter is a good one to warn us, isn't he? Because if I remember right, he lost the battle a lot...a lot. On one night, on three separate occasions, and if you totaled them up maybe as many as six times he lost the battle and denied Jesus Christ. Maybe that's why he reminds us so very often that we need to stand firm, that we need to resist the onslaught of Satan.

Listen to his words in 1 Peter 1:13, "Gird your minds for action. Keep sober in spirit. Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves, also in all your behavior."

Chapter 2 he says, “Putting aside all evil, all guile, all hypocrisy, all envy.” He repeats these injunctions even in his second epistle, warning us in what I think is one that we all would take to heart, 2 Peter 3:17, “You therefore, beloved, knowing this before hand, be on your guard, lest being carried away by the error of unprincipled men you fall from your own steadfastness.” Boy, he knew that, he lived that. He lived that.

The real reward eternally is earned by those who stand, who resist. The real testimony to the honor of Christ is given by those who stand, who resist. The real usefulness belongs to those who stand and who resist.

When I was a student many years ago and I was part of a small group of men who went out to preach. There were five of us. At least three of them were better preachers than I was, but the three that were better preachers that I was, that I would far rather have listened to than listened to me, didn’t resist. And in a terrible moral collapse went out of the ministry, many years ago. Are they Christians? Sure. Are they useful? No.

So, Paul is telling us that we have to be on the defense. Okay? That’s the main thrust here. We have to be on the defense. There is, however, a defensive side to it and it is this, the reason we have to be on the defense is because we’re also on the offense. What do I mean by that? I mean, if you’re not doing anything, you’re not going to have a big battle on your hands if you live every day for yourself. But if you are engaged in assaulting the kingdom of darkness, you’re going to have to go on defense because you’re essentially on offense. And the more effective your offense, the more necessary your defense.

Paul understood that he was invading the territory which is the devil’s. He was snatching brans out of the burning, to borrow the words of Jude. He made these incursions every day of his life in the hostile enemy territory which, of course, made his enemy furious and his enemy ramped up the opposition.

Why did he do this? Why did the Apostle Paul go on offense and therefore have to resist? Because he cared about the souls of those who were captive to Satan. He understood when he wrote in 2 Corinthians 10 about storming fortresses to rescue the prisoners, smashing fortresses which he describes as ideologies, any idea raised up against the knowledge of God, any ungodly idea, any untrue idea, any satanic idea whether it’s a religious idea or irreligious idea. Paul is storming the fortresses. The ideological fortresses that hold people prisoner for the sake of freeing them, as he puts it in 2 Corinthians 10 and leading everyone captive to Christ. Paul wanted them for God, yearned for them to be rescued out of the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. So while the armor is defensive so that we can stand and resist, the battle is formidable because we are on the offense.

I would dare say that if you are doing absolutely nothing, you might be scratching your head saying, “What is he talking about?” But if you’re all engaged in the battle, you understand what it means to have to stand against the onslaught that comes as you make the incursions into the darkness.

Well having said that, we get a little bit of an idea of what we’re talking about in general, but let’s go to the specifics and look at the first element in the armor. Verse 14, again begins the way verse 13 ended, reiterating that this is about standing firm and not being left in the dust. To borrow the language, I might add here as a footnote, of 1 Corinthians 9, what was Paul’s great fear? “That in preaching to others...verse 27...I myself might be *adokimos*, my great fear is that in preaching to others I might become disqualified by some sin.” And so, he says, “I beat my body to bring it into subjection so that in preaching to others I’m not disqualified. So stand firm, having girded your loins with truth.”

The devil is a liar from the beginning. His whole system is a system of lies. Everything that comes out of his mouth is a lie or a half-truth. And therefore we would understand that the first line of defense is the truth.

Let me dig a little deeper into this. It’s very likely that Paul was familiar, very familiar with a Roman soldier, they were everywhere. They were everywhere in Israel when he was there. They were everywhere in his hometown when he was there, Tarsus. The Romans dominated the world at that time, that world. They were everywhere that Paul traveled and he would see Roman soldiers all the time. And he would take note of how they were dressed. And the first thing you would notice about a Roman soldier when he prepared for battle is that he put on a belt, or a sash. The idea was this, a Roman soldier wore a tunic, a tunic was a dress for men, basically. It had two holes for arms and a hole for the head. You put it on and it went down around your knees. If you were going to go to battle, you would pull your tunic together with a sash. Typically they wore an undergarment so they would pull up the corners of the tunic, the long hem of the tunic, and tuck it into the sash, pull it as tight as they could.

Now remember, you’re going into hand-to-hand combat. You don’t want your dress blowing around in the breeze, somebody grabs it, pulls it over your head...ya-ha...and it’s over. You can’t get into hand-to-hand mortal combat with your dress blowing around, catching the bushes, getting in the way of...get the sword out of this thing....not going to work. They need to run fast. They need to move with alacrity, dexterity, speed, had to pull in all the loose ends or they would be an easy mark for the enemy. This speaks of preparedness. This speaks of readiness. This speaks of alertness. A soldier needed a sash, might be made of leather on some occasions, or some kind of material to pull everything together, pull up the robe if it was at all long, tuck it in so that he could move with speed and no one would get an advantage with him.
Also, that sash would be a place to which he might attach his weapons, supporting a sword or a bow,

some arrows.

That sash would also have some identification marks on it, maybe indicating what battles he had fought, what battles he had won whether or not he had been awarded a decoration of honor for his heroism. So it became really the emblem of battle. When you put your sash on, you were going to battle. It marked you for battle. It's where your weapons were, it's where tour medals were. More importantly, it's where you declared that you were pulling in all your loose ends because you were headed for mortal combat. It's a fitting combination of things because that's exactly what the Apostle Paul wants us to understand, that you're never going to win the spiritual battle unless you really get ready for it. This is preparedness.

This is what I read you earlier. First Peter 1:13 and 14, "Gird up your loins, pull in all the loose ends of your life."

Now the identification of this is it is the belt of truth, or *aletheia*. You could say that's content and you would be true, you would be right. *Aletheia*can refer to truth and surely that's an important element of it. We need to be committed to the truth.

But it's more than just the content because later on there's another piece of armor called the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. So we're not so much talking about the fact that we go to war wielding the Word of God here, as we are talking about *aletheia*not as truth, content, but as truthfulness, attitude. In other words, it is that we are seriously committed to the battle. Because we believe the truth, because we love the truth, we go to war for the truth. We pull in all the loose ends. This is sincerity, if you will, truthfulness, integrity, true dedication. It is not so much content as it is commitment. Attitude is the real issue here. We have a heart for the battle. We're not out there unprepared. We've got all the loose ends pulled together. We've put on the sash that holds our weapons and marks us as soldiers. We have a heart for battle. We've counted the cost. Like Jesus said, you don't go to war unless you count the cost. The true Christian loves the truth and is ready to fight for the truth. We will earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. We'll go to battle for the truth, but we'll go to battle truly for our own spiritual protection.

We're not talking so much, remember now, about advancing the gospel here as we are about defending ourselves against Satan. And you will never, my friend, you will never win the spiritual battles that come day by day against your formidable enemy unless you are seriously committed to that victory. If you're just going to flop your way through your Christian experience, you will be a consistent loser. If you're content with all the loose ends of your life, all the little sins, if you're content with your infrequent interest in prayer, your infrequent interest in worship, your indifference toward great spiritual truth, if you're content with your small understanding of the greatness of God, if you're content with the sins in your life, you are an encumbered soldier, ill prepared for the battle, get ready to be defeated.

To borrow the language of Hebrews 12, another metaphor all together. If you're going to run the race, you have to lay aside the weights that encumber you. You don't see somebody running the hundred meter sprint with an overcoat. You get rid of what encumbers you.

That's exactly what the Apostle Paul is saying. He's looking for that sincere kind of commitment, *siniscera(?)* is a Latin term, without wax. That's what it means, without wax. Where does that come from? When they made pots in those days they would bake a pot...sometimes when you bake a pot it cracks. A pot cracked couldn't be sold, but unscrupulous people would take wax and they would fill the crack, cover the crack, paint over the wax, sell the pot. The first time somebody put it on the stove, put something in it, the wax melted and everything ran out the crack. But somebody who is sincere has no covered cracks. They don't melt and become useless when the heat is on.

And, of course, Jesus is a perfect model of this. And Paul follows His example and Paul is such a great model of going to battle in a mode of a soldier ready to resist whatever comes his way. He says to the Corinthians this, "My conscience is clear," 2 Corinthians 1:12. "I know that in godly sincerity and spiritual integrity I've lived before you." That's so important. He says, "I have renounced a hidden life of shame." Same book, fourth chapter.

How badly do you want to win? That's the question. I'm convinced actually that most Christians lose the spiritual battles as they go through life because they really don't care that much about winning them. It doesn't matter to them that much. When I think about this, even many, many years ago, and I've rehearsed it a number of times through the years, I remember when I was running at a track meet, when I was a university student I basically was a football player and other things, baseball and anything I could like that I enjoyed. But I had enough speed, they put me on the track team. And one time we were running in what was called The Orange County Invitational Relays, 35 universities were there. And I was set to run the 100 and the 200 in those days, a hundred and Two Twenty, and do a couple of the jump events and then run in the 4x400 relay. And I had one of the great experiences of my life. I ran second man because first man gets the lead, second man can lose it and you have two to make it up. So they put the weakest guy in the second place. I was a baseball player dragged out to the track meet. But I will never forget a teammate, I ran the best leg. The first guy had the lead, we came in, we were running against eight different universities in the finals. Came in with the lead, perfect baton pass, I kept the lead, came back, passed it to my friend. We had a good chance to win that last event of the day. All he had to do was stay close to the front and we had a blur for an anchor and we'd win.

He went half way around the track, running his leg. First two of us had ran or best legs, our anchor was waiting. Half way around the track, he stopped, walked off, sat on the grass. I'll never forget it. In fact, I saw him a few years ago and I just got angry looking at him, you know. I had to ask for forgiveness. I remembered that moment and it was just beyond belief. And I ran across the grass, I

thought he might have spiked himself or pulled a ham string, or something. And I'll never forget, I said to him, "Ted, what happened?" He said, "I don't know, just didn't feel like running."

Really! I had strong impulses at that moment which I...which I greatly resisted. I think there are a lot of people like that. Oh by the way, I found out later that he was in a broad jump event and crow hopped on every jumped. It was a bad day all the way which means he disqualified himself on every jump because he went too far into the bar.

For some people, life is just like that. I just didn't feel like running. If you're indifferent about the spiritual battle, believe me, you're going to lose it and you're going to live in the doldrums and you're going to waste the opportunity for an eternal reward for usefulness for joy and blessedness. When a believer is committed to being a soldier, to borrow the words of Paul, wonderful words, you will remember them, 2 Timothy chapter 2, "Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of every day life so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier." See your whole life as a soldier.

You know, when you go into the military you don't come and say, "Look, we want you to come and be a soldier for the United States Army. Could you work it into your week? You know, if you could we would like you to be here every day for a while." Are you kidding me? "And by the way, when you come we'd like you to wear the uniform we give you, would that be okay?" Are you kidding?

When you go into the military, they own you twenty-four hours a day, for the duration of your involvement. You are a soldier and you are nothing but a soldier. That's all you are and you are nothing more and you are nothing less. And that's how it is in this spiritual struggle. You strap it on, you gird it up, you pull it together. You go to battle because that's who you are. You are a soldier and you are engaged in a war. Committed to obedience, committed to fight the enemy in the power of Christ. Commitment at any cost.

Let me talk about a second piece of armor here and that would be in verse 14, as well. "And having put on the breastplate of righteousness...the breastplate of righteousness." Dedication is important. Dedication is essential, commitment is vital, it is necessary, but it has to be backed up by the breastplate of righteousness. It would be nice if you were a Roman soldier and you got your belt on and you pulled all the corners up and you got your mini-tunic going and there's no loose ends, you're serious, you're committed but you just can't run into battle unless you put one other thing on for sure and that's the breastplate. It's hard to distinguish relative importance of these various pieces of armor, so I don't even want to do that. We may be seeing them simply in the order that a soldier would put them on, but maybe that's not even necessarily true because it would be hard if you already had your breastplate on to put your sandals on. So it would seem to me that probably your sandals went on after you got your tunic organized, or even maybe before. So we're not looking at priorities or sequences. These are all essentially and equally necessary.

But there's something about the breastplate of righteousness that is really, really important because the breastplate covers the most vulnerable part of the soldier's body. Sometimes a Roman soldier had a breastplate made of very heavy linen to which were attached overlapping pieces, sometimes of iron, and sometimes of shell, or horn. But more often it was apparently made of metal, sometimes woven chain metal which would be very, very heavy. Sometimes woven chain metal was linked together with rings of metal and sometimes it was a thin pounded plate of metal. And we've seen that, haven't we? We really don't know what kind of man is behind that big molded metal Roman breastplate. No Roman soldier would have thought of going into battle without his vital organs protected. You can take a shot in the thigh, you can take a shot in the arm, you can take a shot in the shoulder, but you get one here and that's serious, protects your vital organs.

And what is the breastplate? Righteousness. That's what protects us from the arrows and the spears and the swords and the crushing blows of the hammers that were wielded in battle. We're protected by righteousness in our vital areas.

What are we talking about here? What kind of righteousness are we talking about? Well what kind of righteousness is there? There's only one kind of righteousness because righteousness is righteousness. And the only righteousness that will protect us is true righteousness and the only true righteousness belongs to Christ.

So are we talking then about imputed righteousness? Are we talking about that righteousness which is imputed to us by faith in Christ, that Paul talks about, for example, in Philippians 3 when he says he found a righteousness not his own but that righteousness of God which is given to him through faith in Christ? Are we talking about that forensic righteousness statement by God that declares us just and righteous before God? Is that what we're talking about? Are we talking about again imputed righteousness that covers all our righteousness which is filthy rags, Isaiah 64:6?

I don't think so. I don't think so. Otherwise we wouldn't have to put it on, right? Because we'd already have it on. We have imputed righteousness already. We have a righteousness granted us by God that makes us blameless beyond condemnation, that righteousness is Christ's. It becomes our by faith and grace. It is a gift from God. I love that Count Zinzindorf,(??) the Marivian(??) hymn translated by Wesley, by the way, "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." And then he wrote, "The bold shall I stand in Thy great day for who ought to my charge shall lay? Fully through Thee absolved I am from sin and fear, from guilt and shame. O let the dead now hear Thy voice, now bid Thy vanished ones rejoice. Their beauty this, their glorious dress, Jesus Thy blood and righteousness."

Yes, we have that. We have that imputed righteousness credited to our account. That's not what he's talking about. You don't put that on, God put that on you when you were saved. But theologians used

to talk about imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness. Imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness. Yes, we are covered by declaration of God with a righteousness that is not our own but belongs to Christ. But we also are commanded to demonstrate righteous behavior, Philippians 2, verse 12, “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” So now God has given you an imparted righteousness and with that imparted righteousness at salvation He has also given you the Spirit of God, He has given you new life in regeneration, and now you are both capable and responsible to work out the righteousness that has been given to you. Regeneration, new birth, salvation, conversion makes possible, makes real the impartation of a practical righteousness in the matter of day to day living. That’s what he’s talking about.

He’s saying, “If you expect to go into the battle, you have to be ready, you have to be committed, you have to be dedicated and devoted and understanding that you’re a soldier, get the loose ends pulled together, but don’t go there unless you are living in obedience to God.” That’s the bottom line. Holy living is the breastplate of righteousness.

If there’s a weakness in your armor, used to talk about a chink in your armor, sins, acts of disobedience, wrong attitudes, if there are sins unconfessed, unrepented, you’re vulnerable. If you’re courting sins in your life and you get aggressive and you go into the spiritual fray and you go on the offense to rescue souls from the kingdom of darkness and you’ve got some issues in your life that are undealt with, believe me, you are going without a breastplate of righteousness. That’s what happened to my friends.

I had a friend in high school, he was the youth leader in his church. We played football together and we worked together. And his first year at college, I knew him well, his first year in college he collapsed morally because there were issues that I could see in his life as a high school student that weren’t being dealt with.

I went away to college. I had a friend, my Dad had a friend, they were pastor buddies. His son and myself became friends, we ran candem(?) in the same backfield in football. We were in that kind of mortal combat together and you get to know somebody pretty well. He said he wanted to be a pastor. He was a youth pastor in those days and so was I and we used to compare notes and talk about what we were teaching. And I went off to seminary, he went off to university, got a Ph.D., basically fell in to horrendous iniquity, disappeared. I don’t even know where he is. I went to seminary. I was a friend with the son of the dean of the seminary who fell into iniquity and was lost to the advancement of the Kingdom.

You can say I want to go into the ministry, but if you want to invade the kingdom of darkness and get aggressive, you better make sure you are protected or you are really vulnerable. It’s not sufficient just

to be aggressive, it's not sufficient just to be committed. You need to make sure that you are following this very clear and simple instruction. It is not hard to miss what Paul means in 2 Corinthians chapter 7. Listen to his words. Verse 1, "Therefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
It's important for us...in the prior passage, by the way, he talked about not having unholy alliances, not being unequally yoked. When Satan sees sin, he moves in to that crack. You become vulnerable as the world system appeals to that crack in your armor. And the smallest crack can be exploited in a very fatal way.

Put on the armor. It starts with commitment and it demands righteousness. I want to close by reading you Romans 13:11, because here is another way to say what I just said. Romans 13:11, "And this do knowing the time that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed."

He's saying, "Look, we're closer to the end than we've ever been. They were and we are. It's time to wake up, it's time to put your belt on and go to battle. The night is almost gone. The day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness, put on the armor of light. The armor of light, putting aside the deeds of darkness is another way to describe the breastplate of righteousness. What does it mean? Behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. And when I say put on the armor of light, or when I say put on the breastplate of righteousness, what I mean is, verse 14, "Put on whom? The Lord Jesus Christ." Make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. You may have the commitment, you may have the eagerness, you may even say, "Yeah, I want to go to seminary, I want to train, I want to serve the Lord," but the breastplate has to be on. And it's amazing how hard it is to keep it hooked. It falls off so easily. We go through life picking up the breastplate and trying to get it on before the next attack. Put it on, put it on. It is the armor of light against the darkness. Essentially what it means is, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, in that He is the example of perfect righteousness.

Next time we'll talk about how your feet are prepared.

Our Father, we know that the battle is great. We have lived long enough to see casualties everywhere. Some known, some unknown. We know there are lots of people too who never even try to advance into the kingdom of darkness, are asleep in indifference. Awaken them. The night is almost past, the day is near. It's time to awaken from sleep and put on the armor of light, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and get in to the battle for souls. Go on the offense and be prepared to defend yourself against the enemy.

Lord, we thank You for the faithful. We thank You that this church is filled with the faithful who are committed to the battle and to the breastplate of righteousness. Lord, we don't live in fear, we live in obedience and obedience is our joy. We heard it again tonight in the testimonies of Baptism. These

folks who love to obey, who from the heart desire to obey. It’s not an alien desire for us, it’s the most normal thing for a believer with a new nature recreated and regenerated to long to obey. It’s a joyous obedience. It’s a loving obedience that we render. It’s not grievous, but it’s important that we be reminded of the protection that our obedience provides so that we might be useful, so that we might be joyful, so that we might be blessed and be a blessing, so that we might penetrate the kingdom of darkness, assaulting the fortresses where people are captive and leading them out and bringing them as captives to Christ, and that we might enjoy the blessings and the rewards of that in Your presence forever. Help us, Lord, to be faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ. We pray in His name. Amen.

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