

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Ephesians 6:10-18 (KJV)

- ¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.
¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
¹² 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*.
¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
¹⁴ Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;
¹⁵ And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
¹⁶ Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:
¹⁸ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Just to brush you up as to where we are on the subject of spiritual warfare, I will touch base on a few quick things from this passage.

- **WE ARE AT WAR** - it isn't a war of natural means or happening in this realm to take things or people from you, this war is about your faith and is going on for the purpose of you to give up on God
- **WE HAVE AN ENEMY** - the bible calls him the devil and the enemy of our soul. He hates us and desires to steal, kill, and destroy your faith with whatever means he can.
- **HE HAS A STRUCTURE** - found in this passage, it is a structure comprised of fallen angels and demon spirits and they do whatever they can to bring discouragement and stand in the way of the plan and will of God.
- **WE ARE EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE** - we are to engage our enemy but the fight is the part that must be done correctly. We show up, God will show off.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 (KJV)

- ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:
⁴ (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)
⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;
⁶ And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

This passage gives us orders, if you will, on military terms:

- We have a war
- Our weapons aren't natural
- Be obedient in fighting your individual battles
- Revenge disobedience in the lives of others

So, what have we been given to fight with? This brings us back to the passage that we are using for a text in Ephesians 6:

- We are given armor
- We are given two weapons
- We are told to stand, by faith
- We are told the power of God will move

So, what is our part of spiritual warfare in the succession of how we fight?

I put these in the order of how they impact our lives. We began with the mind, particularly, the helmet of salvation. Once we learn how to fight the mind battle and win our thought life, we have the first part of our ability to stand.

The next in the order is THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

If naturally, the head is the most susceptible to injury and if damaged it is critical to survive, then the torso, which houses all vital organs, would be next.

But in the spiritual, there is no difference. **Get to the thought life, if that's protected and operating properly, then go for the vital organs. But more than just a vital organ, go for THE vital organ in this area, THE HEART.**

The soldier that donned the breastplate protected front and back of his torso in the effort to protect his vital organs from damage. And in the days when Rome was the power or through medieval times, when knights were the power, they all knew that all organs could take an injury and heal, except for the heart. I believe this is what the Apostle Paul is doing.

He is giving a stern warning about the heart of man. Not the physical organ, but what the bible calls the heart of man. **It is the innermost being of us all. It is the soul. It is what God did when He breathed into us the breath of life and we became a living soul.**

And where the mind is the spirit of man, which is the knowing part of man, the heart is the soul of man, and is the feeling part of man.

The heart is the source of desire, emotion, feeling, will, and get this, it is from our hearts, that our actions come from.

In fact, this whole redemption plan is about God turning the heart of man back towards Him.

In the beginning, when man fell in the garden, their desire shifted. It went from pleasing God to pleasing self. God entered in and decided from the very beginning that He would put into motion a means of grace to forgive man for the wicked turn of the heart and with that He would find a way to live in us all to steer our hearts back to Him.

So, let's take a look real quickly at what scripture says about the heart.

Genesis 6:5 (KJV)

⁵ And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

This was the condition that God saw man in during the days of Noah. Man was driven by the evil in his heart. It is still this way today.

Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV)

⁹ The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

You see, the heart of man, the desire of man is to live for himself. Until he come into contact with God, and then something starts to change. But it is God that moves upon a heart. Even here the prophet asks, who can know the heart of man? The answer:

Jeremiah 17:10 (KJV)

¹⁰ I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings.

It is the Lord that does this. He knows the heart of man better than anyone and tests it and tries it to bring it to a place of submission to Him. And we can have a new heart. Even the O.T., a change of heart was possible:

1 Samuel 10:9 (KJV)

⁹ And it was *so*, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

God gave him a new heart. **He had a change of desire, a shift of passion, a will to live for something else.** But he still had the old man in there as well. And it would come back to take over and Saul, the first King of Israel would die lost and bound by the old man instead of led by the new heart that God gave him.

This is why once we do receive a new heart at conversion, but this breastplate is necessary to protect it. But it isn't a breastplate of our choosing, but of God's, and His protection of the heart is RIGHTEOUSNESS.

When we are saved, it is because we recognize our fallen condition and see that Christ is the only way to God and a righteous life. And know that righteousness is a two-part word.

- **The noun form** - which is what is placed upon us at conversion. We are the righteousness of God, in Christ Jesus
- **The verb form** - which is the way that we live our lives after conversion, based upon what has the most influence on the heart

So, we are given the breastplate as part of our armor to stand, but we do have something to do with seeing to it that our hearts receive the necessary ingredients to produce proper desire toward God.

So, if we are protected by creating new desires, how is that accomplished?

Well, the mind and heart are connected. Thought life impacts desire and desire impacts thought life.

So how is this accomplished?

Psalm 119:9-11 (KJV)

⁹ Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.
¹⁰ With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.
¹¹ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

This tells us that the Word of God is the means of protecting the heart in a defensive means. It is interesting that the mind and the heart are both engaged and changed by the Word of God.

Maybe this is why people don't read as they should.

Maybe this is why many don't get all forms of the Word of God that they can when it is offered.

Maybe this is why the bible is always scrutinized and mocked.

Now I'm not saying that you have to be a bible scholar, but **I am saying that if you want to win the battles that you will engage in during spiritual warfare, then you must learn to navigate the Word, meditate on the Word, memorize the Word, and let the Word be the source of all answers to all things in life.**

Consider this: the heart naturally knows how to be evil, it must be trained in righteousness.

Once the Word becomes a steady part of your life daily, you will find that your desires will change, your feelings will change, your actions will change. It is amazing what will happen. It's not overnight or in a year, this is a lifelong process that will see growth as you continue in the Word.

So, it seems to me that the heart is the determining factor of what you believe about something. That is faith. And what you believe will be carried out by actions in your life. That is why a confession with the mouth of Christ must be backed with the actions that prove it. The heart and the actions go together.

So, the Word gets into the heart, and desires change. When desires change, actions change. When actions change we aren't just standing in the righteousness of Christ, we are now living it out. Now your heart is protected from what the enemy will attempt to do to it.

And how will he do it?

Remember the world and it's system I spoke of earlier in this teaching?

1 John 2:15-16 (KJV)

¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Well these things are exactly what the enemy uses to keep our hearts pleasing ourselves.

In fact, Jesus told a parable about this very subject and it deals with the condition of the heart.

Mark 4:3-8 (KJV)

³ Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:

⁴ And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

⁵ And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

⁶ But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

⁷ And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

⁸ And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

These are the four heart conditions of mankind. **Three of them connect to the three things the world's system is comprised of: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.**

Jesus went on to give the answer to this parable:

Mark 4:14-20 (KJV)

¹⁴ The sower soweth the word.

¹⁵ And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

¹⁶ And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

¹⁷ And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

¹⁸ And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

¹⁹ And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

²⁰ And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive *it*, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

And for time's sake I will not go into the details of these heart conditions but it breaks down simply as follows:

- **CONDITION 1 - hardness of heart.** Whether it is sin, life, choices, something has hardened this heart so much that the Word cannot even impact them. The word was sown into their heart, and then it is taken away.
- **CONDITION 2 - no relationship.** They receive the word with gladness, they get saved, and then something happens in life. Call it trial, testing, tribulation, persecution, whatever you want to call it, but their heart was not grounded in God, so they are offended, or let me say it differently, they get their feelings hurt. And they go away.
- **CONDITION 3 - desires haven't changed.** They receive the word and get saved, but they never change the desires of their heart. This is wanting the best of both worlds. And they never produce fruit.
- **CONDITION 4 - they learn relationship.** Not only do they desire to serve God, they love Him with all their heart, and their words, their actions, everything they do shows the righteousness of God.

So, what it comes down to is that the heart controls the desires of a person and those desires must be hidden behind the protection of Christ and continually changed and shaped. **As they are, you will find actions will change, tempers will change, desires will change, and righteousness will start happening, not just be sought after.**

The heart will either trust in God or in man. It is our place to put what is necessary in our hearts to see this accomplished.

So, to stand with the breastplate of righteousness would be to make sure that the heart is protected from all means that our enemy will use to pull your desires back to pleasing yourself. **So, this is all about keeping your desire living to please God and love Him.**