

WEEK 3

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS*(EPHESIANS 6:10-14)*

* Info in this message is adapted from: "Spiritual Warfare" by Tim Keller & "This is War" by JD Greear

Do you remember the classic story of the hero named Achilles – the greatest of all Greek warriors? He seemed to be invincible. The legend says, when he was a baby, his mother dipped him into a magical potion that coated his entire body with an invincible shield. But when she dipped him into the potion, she held him by the tip of his heel, leaving one small part of his body unprotected. And in one of the great battles of the Trojan War, Achilles was struck in the heel by an arrow, which ultimately brought his death.¹

And this is why the tendon on the back of your heel is called the "Achilles Tendon," and we refer to someone's weakness as their "Achilles Heel."

There was only *one* part of Achilles' body that didn't have armor, and that's where the enemy brought him down! And you and I are vulnerable as well if ANY area of our life is unprotected by the armor of God.

So, let's look at the next piece of the armor that Paul mentions...

Ephesians 6:10–14 "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness."

A Roman soldier's breastplate would cover all his vital organs, from his neck down to the belt (which we studied last week). You see, a soldier could be badly injured on his arms or legs and still live. But his vital organs HAD to be protected by his body armor – the breastplate. It was

¹ Sproul, R. C. (1994). *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (pp. 148–149). Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.

crucial to his survival. And whether you know it or not, the breastplate of righteousness is ALREADY affecting your life in dramatic ways. Let me show you what I mean...

1. We all have a constant desire for a breastplate of righteousness.

The word “righteous” in the Bible carries the idea of being examined and found *presentable*, *unashamed*, and *well-pleasing*. And you have no idea just how much our daily lives are driven by this need/desire to be presentable and unashamed when we are examined.

Illustration: Imagine you’re going on a date with a person that you REALLY like. You’re going to do EVERYTHING you possibly can to cover your flaws – to fashion for yourself some type of “righteousness” so you’ll feel *presentable*, *unashamed*, and *well-pleasing*. For example, you’ll try to cover...

- **The flaw of talking *too much*** – If you talk a lot, you’ll try to prepare yourself to not say as much so your date won’t think, “Wow, they talk a lot!” Why cover this flaw? Because you want to be presentable, unashamed, and well-pleasing.
- **The flaw of talking *too little*** – If you’re shy and awkward, you’ll rehearse what you’re going to say. You’ll have a cheat-sheet – a secret list of conversation starters on your phone. Why? Because you want to be presentable, unashamed, and well-pleasing.
- **Physical flaws** – You’ll wear clothing or makeup that covers, hides, or draws their attention away from your flaws.

By the way, this is why people often have bad dreams about being caught naked in public, or showing up at school and there’s a test that you’re not prepared for, etc.

Why do we do these things? Because there’s a deep need within us all to cover our “nakedness” – and NOT just physical nakedness. It’s a deep desire to be *presentable*, *unashamed*, and *well-pleasing* in the eyes of someone.

In the eyes of who? All sorts of people...

- Your parents
- Your peers

- Your friends
- Your co-workers
- Your teammates
- The person you're dating
- Coaches
- Teachers/professors
- Boss

There's an infinite number of eyes that we're constantly trying to please – an insatiable desire to be *presentable*, *unashamed*, and *well-pleasing*.

And some of you are thinking, "No I'm not! The only person I have to please is *me* – and I'm pretty pleased with myself." Well, if you're that pleased with yourself, then you must have some pretty low standards. 😊 And eventually, you'll become insecure about how low your standards are.

But this leads us to...

2. We all attempt to create our own breastplate of righteousness.

Since there's a deep/constant desire within us to cover our spiritual, emotional, and physical flaws, we're ALL wearing some sort of "breastplate of righteousness" that we have fashioned for ourselves.

And if you know your Bible, you already know where this started. In Genesis 1, we see two perfect humans, living on a perfect earth, walking each day with a perfect Creator.

And the Bible says those two perfect humans were naked and unashamed. They were naked in EVERY way – spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically and they felt perfectly *presentable*, *unashamed*, and *well-pleasing* to God and to each other.

But, when they sinned, they suddenly felt *exposed*, *ashamed*, and *unpresentable*. And what did they immediately do? They tried to cover up by making their own "breastplate" out of fig leaves. And it wasn't just their physical nakedness they were trying to cover, which is why they went and hid from God.

After all, if the fig leaves were covering their physical nakedness, why still hide from God? Because it was more than just physical nakedness that

they were trying to cover. From the moment they disobeyed God, mankind would feel an unshakeable sense of shame and exposure before the all-knowing, everywhere-present Creator...

Hebrews 4:13 "And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

God told Adam and Eve if they ate from the Tree, they would surely die. And part of that terrible death sentence was the death of being "righteous" – *presentable, unashamed, and well-pleasing*. And that sense of exposed guilt/shame has been passed down to us because we've also disobeyed God.

And Romans 1 tells us that the shame we feel is so traumatic that our natural response is to *suppress* it...

Romans 1: 18 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

We ALL feel this sense of shame and unrighteousness. So, our natural response is to fashion a "covering" for ourselves – some type of "breastplate" to cover our shame. For example, we tell ourselves, "You are enough. You are perfect just the way you are." But deep down, we all know that's a lie.

And this is where the TRUE "Breastplate of Righteousness" comes in – the piece of armor that Paul tells us to put on...

3. There's only one sufficient breastplate of righteousness.

You see, when Paul tells us to put on the breastplate of righteousness, he's telling us to first put on Christ who *becomes* our righteousness...

2 Corinthians 5:21 "For our sake [God] made [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

At the moment of salvation, JESUS WHO IS COMPLETELY RIGHTEOUS takes on our sin and WE WHO ARE COMPLETELY SINFUL take on His righteousness! So, even though I'm still not perfect; when the Father

looks at me, He sees the righteousness of Christ that covers me like a "breastplate of righteousness."

Illustration: You've seen Roman breastplates, right? (**show pic**) Notice the RIPPED pecs and abs. Which means that if I put on that breastplate, you're going to see perfect pecs and abs, regardless of the jiggle that's going on behind it! 😊 In the same way, when you're saved, the Father sees ONLY the perfection of Christ that is covering you, NOT your flaws that are behind it!



So, if the Christian is already covered by the righteousness of Christ, why does Paul tell us to daily put on this piece of armor – the breastplate of righteousness?

Because the devil's number one hobby is to accuse us of all the wrong things we've ever thought or done. Let me show you an example...

Zechariah 3:1-4 "Then [God] showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. ² And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" ³ Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. ⁴ And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to [Joshua] he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure [garments]."

The devil was there to accuse Joshua of being unclean, unacceptable, and unworthy of salvation. And the truth is, Satan was exactly right! It clearly says that "Joshua was clothed with filthy garments" (vs.3). Joshua's guilt and shame was completely exposed, which is why he is totally silent throughout the passage. He's guilty and he knows it. And so are we...

Isaiah 64:6 "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment."

But, in that passage, God removed the filthy clothes from Joshua and covered him with "pure" garments. In other words, God was covering Joshua with the Breastplate of Righteousness!

You see, Revelation 12:10 describes Satan as the one "who accuses [Christians] day and night before our God." So, the devil continually points out our flaws and failures to the Father.

And this is why the Christian desperately needs the protection of the breastplate in two areas...

- **To protect (remind us of) our righteous standing before God.** When Satan accuses you of being unworthy to *be* saved or unworthy to *remain* saved, you mentally “put on” the breastplate of righteousness by reminding yourself: “I *AM* saved and will *REMAIN* saved because, when the Father looks at me, He only sees the perfect righteousness of Christ that covers me.” So, my righteous *standing* before God – my eternal security – is based on Christ’s perfect righteousness, not my own.
- **To protect (remind us of) our righteous living before God.** As Christians, we sometimes allow sin into our life, which doesn’t mean we lose our salvation. However, it does cause you to lose your joy and effectiveness for God. In those moments, I need to immediately confess and repent of that sin...

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

In other words, I mentally “put on” the breastplate of righteousness by reminding myself that Christ is faithful and just to forgive my sins and cleanse me from all unrighteousness! So, my righteous *living* is motivated by Christ’s perfect faithfulness, not my own.



Have you ever felt that sense of guilt and shame before your Creator? Did you try to make your own covering with personal achievements, being religious, etc.? Or did you just try to suppress your sense of shame?

There’s only ONE breastplate that can cover you and make you perfectly *presentable, unashamed, and well-pleasing* to your Creator. And that’s the Breastplate of Righteousness that comes from Christ alone!

Small Groups