

Heart Healthy

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. And as always, we want to invite you to check out our website, FCCGreensburg.com, or you can go to the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. Our heart is to simply get into the Word of God, but most of all, let this Word get into these hearts and transform us more and more into the image of Christ.

Now, there was an elderly lady who loved Jesus with all her heart. You would never know by her grateful and sweet demeanor that she didn't have much. Her only problem was the old man who lived next door.

He was cantankerous, and he was always trying to prove to her that there was no God. Well, one day as he was walking by her house, he looked over and noticed her window open, and she was kneeling in prayer.

So he thought that he would kind of sneak close by, and as he did, he heard her say, Lord, you've always provided for me everything I've needed.

[1 : 03] You know I don't have any more money. I'm completely out of groceries, and my Social Security check won't come in for four more days. Lord, in your mighty power, will you please bring me groceries?

At that point, the man had heard all that he needed, so he ran down to the grocery store. He bought her some milk, some bread, some lunch meat. He drove back. He put the groceries on her porch. He rang the doorbell, and he quickly hid next to the house. Now, you can imagine how the woman reacted seeing the bag of groceries. She threw her hands over her head, and she began to praise the Lord.

Thank you, Jesus, she said. I was out without food, and you brought groceries for me. About that time, the old man jumped out, and he said, I've got you now, old woman.

I told you there was no God. It wasn't Jesus who gave you these groceries. It was me. But the woman very boldly said, Oh, no. Oh, no. Jesus got me these groceries, and the best part is he made the devil pay for them.

[2 : 07] Well, guys, speaking of the devil, welcome back here to week number four of this series all about spiritual warfare called Stand.

Feel free to turn to the book of Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 6 is where very intentionally getting into the word, training our hearts, training our minds, how to stand firm against the enemy's attacks. Now, one thing most lead pastors do is try to pray through a preaching calendar for the year. For instance, as November rolls around this year, maybe even October, I will be focused on laying out what we're going to study and preach through on Sunday mornings for 2025.

Of course, we always try to stay flexible to the Holy Spirit's leading, and that's exactly what happened with this series. This was not in the 2024 plans. But as early summer hit, the Holy Spirit just started to work on my heart and convict me about this.

See, this is an area where believers are often either uninformed or misinformed. We either give the enemy too much power, or we just pretend like there's no spiritual battle going on at all.

[3 : 19] And as that plays itself out, it means we can so easily walk in defeat. So finally, after the Lord got this through my thick skull, we made the switch.

And I'm so thankful because I've heard so many good comments from our church family already about how necessary these conversations are for the church of Jesus Christ. Now, the first two weeks of this series, we talked about standing firm in the power of Christ as we learned about the three enemies that we face.

The world, that's the system around us that will always stand opposed to God's word. We talked about the flesh, those selfish and pride-filled desires that war within us, and even Satan and his demonic army that seek to steal, kill, and destroy anything connected to God's glory. And that includes us. Now, last week, we began putting on the armor. And just like Pastor Mitch taught us, the belt is what held it all together. And for us, that truth, it's Christ. That's who holds everything in place in our lives. He is the truth. And it starts by making sure that we are walking in Him. Today, we're going to look at this next piece of armor, the breastplate of righteousness.

[4 : 49] Now, this picture doesn't show us, and by the way, when I say picture, on Sunday morning here, we are showing this on the screen in church.

But this picture doesn't even show us a complete view of the breastplate. But it basically went, this piece of armor went from the neck all the way down to the thighs, even wrapping around to cover a lot of the back because Satan fights dirty.

Basically, its purpose was to protect your vital organs. And while the whole armor weighed up to about 70 pounds, a large part of that was this piece of metal that protected your organs.

And while no one wants any organ attacked with a sword, what do you think the main organ was to be protected? Yeah, the heart. Now, what do people wear today that basically does the same thing?

A bulletproof vest. And I'll tell you, the importance of that vest took on even more significance to me about a year ago. One of my family members is in the military, and without going into any detail, he was stationed overseas close to a combat zone.

[5 : 57] And on one of their missions, he was shot in the chest. Now, I have no idea what damage that could have done. I don't know any details. But the good news was that his vest potentially saved his life, and he walked away just bruised up and sore.

That was it. Could you imagine going into a first century battle with swords, and not just the big long ones, but even the up-close ones? Could you imagine doing that and having no breastplate of righteousness on?

I mean, you may be William Wallace, but eventually something's going to get through, and you're going down. But this breastplate guarded the organs, and most importantly, guarded the heart. You may get bruised up from the impact, but any sword that goes across this area isn't going to touch your skin. It's going to glance off. And so today, as we look at what this means spiritually, we're going to talk about the heart.

Now, how many of you have heard the phrase, heart healthy? Let me ask you this. How many of you are annoyed by that phrase? Usually, it's those of us who are asking if bacon fits into this category.

[7 : 06] And in the words of Michelle Tanner, how rude that every physician just stares at me and won't even answer the bacon question. But we live in a society that is obsessed with foods that are heart healthy, and for good reason.

You see it on packages. You hear about diets that are heart healthy. And that's okay, because it's important to take care of the temple that God has given us. But today, I want to talk about one of the main spiritual foods to be in heart healthy in Christ.

Because Proverbs 4.23 says, Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. So grab your Bibles, And let's look at Ephesians chapter 6 today.

We're going to focus here on the second part of verse 14. But let's go ahead and start back in verse 10, just so you can get kind of a fuller picture of this passage here.

So here's what it says. Ephesians 6 verse 10. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. We've said this from the beginning. You can't do this in your own strength. It's only by Christ and His power that you can defeat the enemy's attacks.

[8 : 18] Verse 11. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against flesh and blood. So you can take your stand against, excuse me, the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Therefore, put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground. And after you've done everything to stand, stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, listen to this, with the breastplate of righteousness in place.

Now, do you see that key word breastplate of what? Of righteousness. In our culture, this word has almost been given a negative connotation, especially when we say that someone is self-righteous. That means they're a snooty toot who walks around like they're all that in a bag of chips, giving off this holier-than-thou persona, when in fact it doesn't resemble biblical righteousness at all. But today I hope we can kind of grasp this godly attribute, this design to protect our hearts.

And there are two sides to righteousness. The first is God's righteousness. If you're a note-taker, and you can go ahead and fill this in if you have our outline, but if you're a note-taker, first thing I want you to see is righteousness is embraced, not earned.

[9 : 47] Righteousness is embraced, not earned. Now, this is hard for people like me, people maybe like you, who have been raised with this mentality that nothing is free in life, so go earn it.

Pick yourself up by your own bootstraps. Work for everything you have. And listen, I was raised this way. I'm all for people with drive and determination, not letting anything hold them back.

Because listen, we're becoming more and more a culture of excuses rather than people who could overcome adversity. So I'm not saying that this bootstrap mentality is wrong across the board, and it can't be helpful in your life because it can, but when it comes to your walk with Jesus, it just doesn't work this way.

You can't earn it as much as we want to. The Bible is clear that one sin separates us from a holy and righteous God. The perfection it would take to earn our way to heaven is long gone because we've sinned.

We've missed that mark, that perfect standard of righteousness. You remember walking through the Ten Commandments with us maybe a few months back here and realizing that we've broken about every one when you consider Jesus' words too?

[11 : 03] But the greatest news that you'll ever hear is that God loved us so much that he made a way for us to be made righteous. Here's what 2 Corinthians 5.21 says.

God made him, Jesus, who had no sin, to be sin for us or to be a sin offering for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

See, God in the flesh came to this earth in the most unexpected of ways, born as a fragile baby to ordinary blue-collar people, grew in wisdom and stature, never sinned, not even once, began his ministry teaching about the kingdom of God, and because he interrupted the religious agenda and power hierarchy, the Pharisees and Sadducees came after him.

Although he had performed miracles and signs and wonders, they lied about him, they mistreated him, conspired against and arrested, endured false witnesses, a mocking, a crown of thorns, 40 lashes minus one, and he was forced to carry his own cross to Golgotha.

There they put nails in his hands and feet, attaching him to a cross, hoisted him up, and dropped the base into the hole, causing agonizing pain.

[12 : 24] He suffered, saved a thief, asked the Father to forgive those crucifying him, and breathed his last breath, taking your sin and mine upon his shoulders.

And then some of his secret followers became public. They placed his body in a tomb, and then for the rest of Friday, all day Saturday, and into Sunday morning, what the Jewish culture would call three days, his body lay lifeless.

Until. Until. Ha ha. Until. Until. Until. The grave could hold him no longer. Death is strong, but life is stronger. And he came busting out of that tomb, appearing to roughly 500 people, showing that death has been defeated.

There is life everlasting in Christ Jesus. And if that doesn't uplift your heart, then there needs to be some real spiritual CPR going on, because you have flatlined.

Now, if I can get all theological on you for a moment, this is called imputed righteousness. Another big theological word we use is justification. If you, if you, by faith, have repented of your sins, confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior, surrendering all of you to all of him, according to all of his word, you have been made right, and the righteousness of Christ now covers you as a child of God.

[13 : 49] When God the Father looks at you, it's as if you never sinned. Now listen, we know we've sinned, but because of Christ and what he did on the cross, and that blood covering us, it's as if you never sinned, because Christ's righteousness is now yours.

You've done nothing to deserve it, just like me. We can't serve enough in ministry. We can't give enough to the church. Christ's righteousness is placed on us.

My friends, that's called grace. And yes, it's amazing. See, Philippians 3, 8 and 9 puts it like this. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.

I consider them garbage or rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him. Listen to this. Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

So when we talk about putting on the breastplate of righteousness, listen, you can't do this if you're not covered by the blood of Jesus that washes away our sins, that makes us as white as snow before our God.

[15:09] If you've never made that decision to surrender your life to Jesus, to do what the word teaches, and be baptized into him, that amazing picture of going down and dying to your sin and rising to new life in Jesus Christ, as much as it goes against our grain, we embrace this righteousness that covers us as followers of Jesus.

See, Randy Alcorn put it this way. He said, Church, if you want to be spiritually heart healthy, it starts by coming all in to Jesus, being clothed in his righteousness, forgiven of every sin, walking in freedom.

And then second, Christ's righteousness transforms us from the inside out. That righteousness is what makes us want to live lives that are right, that are righteous.

Listen, I know that we will never be perfect on this side of eternity, but when your sins are forgiven, you've been filled with the Holy Spirit and you've been given this kingdom purpose, man, it changes everything.

And if it doesn't, then you better reevaluate whether you're really all in with Jesus. I'll never forget the first church I went to as a new believer. They would hold up their Bible every week before the preaching time and they would say, this is God's word.

[16:46] Every word of it is true. Every promise I can claim as my own. I will never be the same. Amen. The same thing is true when I've been clothed in Christ's righteousness, righteousness, transformation, growth, maturity, whatever you want to call it, that is always going to happen.

We call that godly fruit is always a byproduct of salvation. Now the word righteous in this context simply means right living according to the word.

Instead of imputed, like we talked about a few minutes ago, this is imparted righteousness. This is the process of walking in the assurance of your salvation while also working out your salvation at the same time, which is both are possible.

This is the big theological word, sanctification. The process of me or you growing in righteousness and holiness, looking more like Jesus every day.

See, Proverbs 13.6 teaches us that righteousness guards the person of integrity. But wickedness overthrows the sinner. So it's safe to say that wrong living invites the enemy in.

[18:01] But right living is that breastplate of righteousness that protects or guards your heart. Now I noticed the other day I was looking online at some stuff and I saw this thing called a catchy.

K-A-T-C-H-Y. A catchy. Now I have a feeling that not very many people have probably heard of this. But let me ask you a different question. You will understand this part.

How many of you have ever let a potato or a banana or some other fruit or vegetable go bad on your counter, in your pantry, whatever, and then you have those little gnat flies all around, those fruit flies, whatever they're called?

This drives me crazy. I don't want my house to feel like it's nasty. And yet my wife loves to make banana bread. And so you know what you do with banana bread? You let the bananas get rotten and then you cook them, right?

And then it's amazing when it comes out. But I can't stand this feeling like my house is dirty because of these flies. So if you took this catchy and you plugged it in, the UV light would attract those bugs and they would come into this machine and then they'd stick to the little pads that are on the inside.

[19:15] And let's say that you've already decided you're going to make banana muffins when you get home from work today. Before you leave, you plug in your catchy. Do you think your kitchen would be fruit fly free when you got home because you plugged it in?

Absolutely not. Now listen, the catchy works. The sticky pad would be full, but it doesn't matter if it's on all the time or not because this pesky little enemy is going to keep coming in until you get rid of

the rotten fruit.

Church, as disciples of Jesus who stand spotless before the throne, because of Christ's righteousness, we are called to pursue right living by the power of the Holy Spirit.

See James 4 verses 7 and 8 says, Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.

And then this is kind of strong, but it's okay. Wash your hands, you sinners, it says. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. It's this call to listen. You died to sin.

[20 : 24] Why would you want to live in it any longer? You died to Satan's ways and the shackles he puts on you. Why do you want to dwell there? I was listening to a message by a great preacher named Aaron Burke.

And he gave this fantastic illustration. Apparently he lives in a house that's got, I think he said two floors, maybe more. But the main floor is kind of the common area with the living room, the kitchen, the bathroom, sitting area, master bedroom, etc.

And that's the part of the house he said that, well, we just always make sure this is kept clean, it's kept picked up. The second floor is where the kids' bedrooms are. And Aaron said when people come over, they will compliment just how nice and clean the house is.

He said it's because they don't go to the second floor and we don't let them. He said they haven't looked under the bed or in the closet. We tell the kids to clean up their room completely, but what do they do sometimes?

They just shove all their junk in the closet or under the bed when they're supposed to clean the whole thing. And then he brought the heat, and I could relate to this. Aaron Burke said, don't just act like a Christian, be one.

[21 : 32] Don't just try to appear good, be righteous. Jesus didn't come to help us manage sin and move it around to different places to look clean.

He came to give victory over sin. So how often, just like that illustration about the bedroom or the house that looks clean, but you know, it's really not completely, how often do we just manage our sin and push it around to different closets in the house of our hearts to appear a certain way to certain people at a certain time.

And listen, the same Jesus who saves us by his mighty power and grace is the same Jesus who wants to sanctify us. Because the more we pursue the heart of God, the righteousness of Christ, the more we will discover that the things of this world will never satisfy.

There's nothing like an intimate walk with Jesus where the things of this world fade and the fruits of the Spirit take over and you get to walk in the purpose that you were created for.

See Ephesians 4, starting in verse 22, says, Church, I don't stand before you trying to act like I'm perfect, like I have it all together, because listen, I don't.

[23 : 08] Just ask my wife. But if you want to find fault in me, you'll be able to find it, because I'm human just like you. I battle the enemy every day. Sometimes I lose that battle.

I have my own struggles, my own insecurities, just like you do. I have a past just like you, but I do stand before you as someone who is sincere in wanting my life to look more like my Savior every day.

I stand before you as someone who God has done a great work in my life over the last 23 years, although he's still got a lot of work to do. And I've been deeply convicted lately that the church looks too much like the world.

See, we can't talk like the world. We can't dress like the world. We can't date and do relationships like the world.

We can't treat our spouse like the world treats their spouse. We can't seek revenge like the world. We can't handle our money or chase after all this materialism like the world.

[24 : 15] We can't pursue fame and popularity and power like the world. We can't run our businesses or perform our jobs like the worldly ethics.

We can't treat those around us like the world. Listen, we as children of God have been called out of this darkness into the glorious light of Christ. And it's this pursuit to live like Jesus that guards my heart and protects me from the enemy's attacks, even since him fleeing from me.

See, Romans 6, 1 through 4 says, what shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace can increase? Now, apparently there were Christians just like we have today in America back then as well, who are like, oh, grace, great, I'll do whatever I want as long as I go to church and give my

confession and blah, blah, blah on Sunday.

It's all good. But what does Paul say here? Verse 2, By no means. We are those who have died to sin. How can we live it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who are baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

He says we were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

[25 : 32] Church, the best way to get spiritually heart healthy, the best spiritual food that we can feed our hearts to make the enemy flee is first realizing what Jesus did on the cross and then by faith, walking in Christ's righteousness.

While it's hard to fathom that we as believers can stand before our Heavenly Father faultless, apart from our own merit, we can praise our Savior that his righteousness covers us like a blanket.

And then out of worship and eternal thankfulness, we choose to walk in a right living type of life according to the word in that righteousness as we are daily being transformed more and more into his image.

I'll leave you today with Jesus' simple words from Matthew 5, 6. He says, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.

Pray with me. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for just opening up your word to us today. for showing us some pretty big theological concepts talking about this imputed and imparted righteousness, this justification and sanctification, or for people really simple like me, this idea that Christ, not an idea, this truth that Christ, his righteousness can be placed on us when we by faith belong to him.

[27 : 10] And then because of that grace, we will walk in his righteousness and live for him, becoming more like him every single day. So thank you so much for just opening up this passage to us, showing us what it means to put on the breastplate of righteousness.

And Lord, I just pray that we will be people who will stop trying to earn our salvation, who will realize that as followers of Jesus, that we are saved, even though we're working out our salvation, but that salvation is ours in Christ.

And because of that, we now walk in freedom. We now walk in the fruits of those spirit. So Lord, drive these words into our hearts and may we grow deeper and deeper in love with you.

We pray all this in the precious name of Jesus. And God's people said, right where you are, amen and amen. Hey, I want to give you a quick invitation. Once again, my name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana.

And I just want to reach out to you and show you how we can help you if you're wrestling with all this. Maybe you just have some faith questions. Maybe you want to talk about, hey, I want to give my life to Jesus.

[28 : 27] I can see that he is the answer that I've been searching for all my life. And yet I've been searching in all the wrong places. So here's a couple ways we can begin this conversation.

You can call us at the church office, First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana, 812-663-8488. Let me say that again, 812-663-8488.

Or you can call us, or I'm sorry, or you can email us at ray at fccgreensburg.com. Hey, God bless you and thank you for listening today.