

A Battle for the Heart

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[0 : 00] Music All right, y'all were kind of getting into that last song.

It's like a hoedown on Saturday night, huh? I don't know how many times I've sung that hymn, Victory in Jesus, throughout my life. That was a song we used to sing a lot in church growing up, and it fits so well of the series that we're in.

So if you've got a Bible, turn to Ephesians chapter 6 as we continue in our study through the armor of God. That's our summer series we kicked off a few weeks ago. I'm telling you, the feedback from this series has already been off the chart, and I cannot thank you enough for that.

I've been receiving emails and text messages from people out of state who are kind of going along with us online through this study and really sensing that the Lord is encouraging us and speaking to us through that.

I'm loving teaching this. And I was even asked this week, why do you think this series has kind of had the feedback and the traction that it's had? I think there's a lot of reasons.

[1 : 49] First of all, everybody's in a battle. I mean, every single day you're fighting things, amen? And to have our eyes open to see that this isn't just a physical war, that we're in a battle every day against powers and principalities.

A second reason is because, at least in my view, this hasn't been a topic that's been fully and biblically understood. Oftentimes, it's one-sided.

That is, like, we only talk about Satan rather than understanding there are powers and principalities that Paul talks about. We worked through that week one. This is a big issue, and we need to have a full, comprehensive, biblical understanding.

Amen? And then thirdly, I think we often, at least a lot of times, take Ephesians 6 out of context of the rest of the book of Ephesians. It's like Ephesians 6 gets taught as this isolated section of Scripture when it's a part of a letter and it fits within the point that Paul is making.

So I really do hope that there are things already that's encouraged you, things that you've learned for your everyday battle. And tonight, we continue in this. Three people of you are excited.

[3 : 03] I'm so thankful for that. And I pay them every week to clap at a particular time. So Ephesians 6, if you've got your Bible, we'll start back at verse 10 and we'll look at the second piece of armor this evening and ask you, if you would, to please stand as we honor the reading of God's Word.

Paul writes at the very end of this letter, beginning in verse 10, And finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might, and put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against rulers, plural, authorities, plural, cosmic powers over this present darkness, against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

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. Stand, therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth.

We looked at that two weeks ago. And now this evening, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness. Let's pray. Father, thank You for this time to be in Your Word.

[4 : 16] Come and talk to us, as You have so many times already, and help us understand what this means, what this war is really about, and how You have equipped us by giving us Christ for this battle, and this victory truly is in Jesus.

May we see that tonight as clear as we ever have. In His name we pray, and God's people said, Amen. Amen. You can be seated. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. He looked to his right, and from the wreckage, he saw an arm sticking out.

It was the arm of four-year-old Cecilia Crocker. Cecilia would be the only survivor that day. What was amazing about her story was not just that she survived that crash.

[6 : 39] It was how she survived that crash. Cecilia's survival was due to her mother, Paula. When it became clear that the plane was going to crash, Paula got down on her knees and wrapped her arms and body around her little girl to protect her from the force of the impact.

Listen to me. Listen to these words I'm about to say. Cecilia survived because she was protected by the life of her mother.

Now listen, that story is both tragic and it's also touching. And it's not surprising either because if you're a parent, my guess is you resonate deeply with that desire that you would do anything at all to protect your children.

Amen? Any parents say, I would do anything to protect my kids. The reason that's the case, the reason why you understand that is this. We protect what's precious.

If something is precious to us, we do anything we can to protect it. And we do this in lots of ways. It's why you put your money in a bank to protect it against theft.

[7 : 57] It's why you may have passwords on your computer to protect important information. You may even have a home security at your house to protect your valuables at home.

You may have medication that you take to protect your body from sickness. Parents, you may put parental controls on your kids' devices to protect their minds from inappropriate content.

In other words, we all know that this is true. That is, we protect what is precious. Amen? Everybody agree with that? Or let me say it a different way.

None of us leave our most valuable things unprotected. If that is true for our money, and if that is true for our health and our kids, lean in here, faith family, what are you?

I'm talking about every single one of you in this room. What are you doing to spiritually protect your heart? What are you doing to spiritually protect your heart?

[9 : 05] Because that is precisely what Paul deals with here in the very next armor of God. Read it again in verse 14. Paul says, Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on, everybody say this with me, the breastplate of righteousness.

Now let's talk about the significance of this piece of armor. It does not take a PhD, which is way overrated by the way, it doesn't take a PhD to know that the breastplate is a very important piece of armor for the soldier.

We all understand that. We get that this is an important piece. And there are several important features about the breastplate, certainly as Paul understood it, that we need to understand tonight. Number one, the breastplate is defensive. The breastplate is defensive. What I mean by that is, you don't fight with a breastplate. Right? Nobody takes the breastplate off and goes, ah, you know, and hits somebody over the head with it.

It's not a piece of armor that you use offensively. It's defensive. Right? When arrows are flying at you, when somebody is trying to stab you, the breastplate is what protects.

[10 : 21] It's what defends you. Secondly, the breastplate is life and death. Oh, you need to hear this tonight. The breastplate is life and death.

What I mean by that is, it protects a vital organ, namely the heart. You passed. Good job. It protects the heart.

Like, it's one thing if you take an arrow to the arm. I mean, you know, but a flesh wound. It's one thing if you take a sword to the leg. I mean, that could be a gruesome injury.

But listen, if you leave your heart exposed, you're in serious danger. You're in very serious danger. This is why police officers or military will wear a bulletproof vest.

Because it's protecting, listen, the most vital and vulnerable part of you. The breastplate is defensive. It is life and death.

[11 : 22] And here's a third thing if you're taking notes, is that the breastplate in the Roman soldier armor was connected to the belt. Now, I'll discuss the theological significance of this a little bit later on, but man will this preach.

For practical purposes, listen, in order to keep the breastplate from falling off, it was connected to or attached to the belt.

Now again, this will preach. And some of you can already go there in your minds in terms of what this means, is that if the belt is not tight, the breastplate's going to be loose, which exposes your heart.

Oh man, that'll preach. Can I say it again? Guess what? I'm going to say it again. If the belt's not tight, then the breastplate's going to be loose. And if the breastplate's loose, that's going to expose your heart, the most vital and vulnerable part of you.

And we'll understand the spiritual and theological significance of that in just a moment. Let's first ask, what's the significance of this breastplate in terms of its protecting the heart?

[12 : 38] Because listen, when I say the word heart, some of you think human organ, some of you think the place of emotion, right? Because isn't that, that's how we typically think about it in American culture, right?

I mean, what do you give away on Valentine's Day? Hearts, right? Boxes of chocolate, right? We tend to think of the heart as this place of love or emotion.

If I say he has a broken heart, what do you conclude? He's sad. If I say her heart is so full, well, you conclude she's happy.

If I say guard your heart, you might conclude, okay, I need to protect my heart from people that I might trust. Like, we tend to think of the heart in that way, but listen, that's not how the Bible, or it's not what the Bible means when it uses the word heart.

Biblically, the word heart is to refer to the essence of the person. The kind of the totality of the self, if you will. Think about it this way.

[13 : 47] Proverbs 23, 7 says, as a man thinks in his heart, so is he. Here's another proverb you'll see on the screen.

Proverbs 4, 23. Keep your, say it, heart with all vigilance. Why should you do that? For from it flows the springs of life.

In other words, the heart is a lot more holistic in the way the Bible uses that word. In fact, this is why the Bible places so much emphasis, not just on behavior, but on the heart.

You remember when Jesus was summarizing the whole law, like what's the greatest command? Well, what did Jesus say? How did he summarize that? Look at Matthew 22, 37.

And Jesus said to him, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. Those are intended to go together.

[14 : 50] This heart, soul, mind. It's the essence of who you are. In fact, do you want to actually know what the biblical, the biblical word really isn't heart.

The biblical word is bowels. That's how the ancients would have understood this. Because the bowels were seen as the inner self, the inner part.

The problem is, it's tricky to translate it that way. Love the Lord your God with all your bowels. Like, that's just kind of gross and weird. It doesn't translate well.

Again, in the ancient world, they would have understood that as the essence of who you are. But because we, our English word for bowels doesn't really communicate that idea, they translate it heart.

The whole point here is this. The heart is the inner self. It's the essence of who you are. Or notice it on the screen. The breastplate protects the essence of who you are.

[15 : 53] That's really important. Amen? This is not just protect your emotions. This is protect your identity. The essence of you.

Which asks questions like, how do you think about yourself? How do you see yourself? What do you believe your identity to be?

Those are very important questions. Amen? They get to the, pardon the pun, heart of who you are. Who am I? How do I see myself?

What is my identity? Now look at verse 12. Paul says that we wrestle not. This battle is not against flesh and blood. It's against who?

It's against rulers and authorities and cosmic powers over the present darkness. The spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. So here's the question I want to ask. Why?

[16 : 53] Somebody say preach, preacher. Thank you. There was enough of you that I'll keep going. As if that were in doubt. Why are the spiritual forces so interested in your heart?

If the point of the breastplate is to protect the heart and this war is with evil spiritual forces, why are they concerned about your heart?

Why do they care what you think about when you think about who you are? I want to get at this by asking two questions which I'll unpack over the next few moments.

These two questions are this. How do evil spiritual forces attack the heart? And then the question why do these spiritual forces, these evil fallen beings, why do they come after your heart?

So how do they come after your heart? And why do they come after your heart? Let's look at the first one. How do they come after the heart? First is, these evil spiritual forces like to attack our hearts negatively.

[18:03] Attack our hearts negatively. Now, I hope that you trust me by now to know that everything I'm trying to say here is based on the Bible, right? I'm not just up here making stuff up.

And so it's appropriate for you to be asking, like, what's the biblical basis for this? Where I get the idea that these spiritual forces attack our hearts negatively is one of the ways that Satan, who is clearly one of the primary spiritual beings, right?

One of the ones mentioned most in Scripture. One of the things that's said specifically about him and what he does. Look at Revelation 12, verse 10. Y'all having fun? I'm having fun.

Revelation 12, 10. I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come. For the accuser, say accuser, the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down who accuses, say accuses, accuses them day and night before God.

That is, we clearly see that one of the things that Satan does, who I think represents what the evil spiritual powers do, is they like to accuse.

[19:27] They like to make accusation. A great example of this, by the way, would be the life of Job. Do you remember when Satan goes to God and says, well, no wonder the guy loves you like you've given him the good life.

Who wouldn't love you when you give them so many good things? In other words, his faith is really fake. It's an accusation.

And then Job, of course, gets tested. And so we clearly see this process, notice on the screen, that evil spiritual beings attack the heart in one way by accusation.

And my guess is there are very many people here tonight who understand this well. Amen? How can you call yourself a Christian? After what you've done?

After the things that go through your mind? How could God possibly love you? You're going to come to church on Saturday night after what you did on Friday night?

[20:35] You know what I'm talking about, don't you? And on and on and on and on they constantly remind you of your failures. Accusation, accusation, accusation.

And it usually takes the form of guilt and shame, maybe even self-hatred to some degree, but it is all coming after your heart.

You see, we tend to think of demons and evil spiritual powers as like, you know, these beasts with glowing red eyes. No, it tends to form most in our life, though they are real beings, it forms in our life in things like guilt and shame.

These are the attacks of accusation. And it will sound like it's coming from you. It'll sound like it's coming from you when the source is pure evil.

And their goal is to do this. Oh, I've taught this for many years and I won't shut up talking about it because it is so important. Their goal is to do this, convince you that what you do is who you are.

[21:55] The essence of your identity is based on what you do. And look at the things you've done. So how could you possibly have a heart that has any encouragement whatsoever?

That's attack through accusation. Some of you may remember, because I know you keep track of all my sermons and you take great notes and you're just, you're a great church. You remember Easter, Easter of 2023 I share, this was actually the opening story.

Do you remember the state law in Tennessee for first time drunk driving offenders? that in addition to jail time and loss of license and fines, do you remember what they were made to do?

They were made to do roadside cleanup and do you remember what they were made to wear?

They were made to wear a vest that says I am a drunk driver.

In other words, their failures were on full display. I retell that illustration because it's so, I think, an important one for us to think about how, listen, evil spiritual powers are always trying to dress you in your biggest mistakes.

[23 : 07] Amen? They want you to wear that the rest of your life. They want you to be clothed in, somebody say, preach preacher, they want you to be clothed in unrighteousness.

This is all you are. It's all you'll ever be. It's how everybody in town, in fact, it's even how God thinks of you.

And at any point in the day, you're driving down the road and it's attack, attack, attack, attack. Amen? Am I talking real or am I talking real?

One of the ways they attack is negatively, that is through accusation. Here's another way they attack. And we don't tend to talk about this one as much. They attack positively. They not only attack negatively, they attack positively.

And again, I would expect a faith family trained person to be asking what's your biblical basis for this? Because you're giving me a lot that's not here in this phrase, so where are you getting it biblically?

[24 : 20] Right? Well, I'll show you. You remember the verse. You probably already knew it before this series and I've quoted it I think every week in this series. 1 Peter 5, verse 8. It says, Be sober-minded and be watchful.

You have an adversary, the devil, who prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. You know that, right? That's all about spiritual warfare. It's all about what the powers and principalities are trying to do.

They're after you. They want to devour you. The question is, how? What's the context of 1 Peter 5, 8? And if there is anything I've taught you, I hope I've taught you, context matters.

You're never going to understand the meaning if you don't understand the context. Amen? So what are the verses that come right before this one? I just happen to have them on the screen. Here they are.

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

[25 : 25] Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that the proper time He may exalt you and even the casting your anxieties on Him is an act of humility.

In other words, you ready? Here it is. Notice it on the screen. If spiritual powers can't destroy your heart through accusation, they'll do it through exaltation.

In other words, it goes like this. If they can't convince you you're the worst, they'll convince you you're the best. I mean, look how beautiful you are.

Look how many Facebook followers you have. Look how impressive your resume is. I mean, do you realize how much money you've made? Your family could do nothing without you.

You are God's gift to the world. You see? If they can't come at your heart by accusation, they'll come at your heart through exaltation.

[26 : 28] Why? Because they know this. Pride comes before the fall. And as I thought on this and reflected on this, I thought something clicked with me and it's like, sometimes they do both.

Listen to this cycle and tell me it's not true. They exalt you. You're the best. No one's better than you. You're a snowflake. I mean, everybody ought to fall down on their knees and sing, how great thou art when you walk in the room.

You're that special. Why? Because pride comes before the fall and after the fall, they'll come accuse you of your failure.

And the cycle just keeps going and they get your heart on both sides. Listen to me. Listen to me. Listen to me, faith family.

Accusation Accusation and exaltation are both fatal to your heart because both are based on the lie that what you do is who you are and nothing will destroy your heart more than law-based living.

[27 : 44] I'm going to say that again. Accusation and exaltation, negatively or positively, are both fatal to your heart because both are based on the lie that what you do determines who you are and nothing will destroy your heart more than law-based living.

For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Spiritual powers, notice it on the screen, spiritual powers don't care if you see yourself as a failure or if you see yourself as a Pharisee as long as you never really know your true identity.

It's how they do it! They don't care if negative, if positive, if accusation, if exaltation, if failure or Pharisee.

Doesn't matter which one works as long as you don't know who you really are. And that's how they go after the heart. So if that's how they go after the heart, the next question I want to ask is why? Why is that such a big deal to them? Why is the breastplate covering the most vital and vulnerable part of who we are? Why is the heart such a big deal?

[29 : 13] And this is where most people in my estimation would completely take this out of context of Ephesians 6. I've said this every week, I'll probably say it every week, is listen, most of what I hear taught when it comes to your identity is entirely personal.

It's about your own identity as it relates to you and God. And of course that's important, but Paul's focus in Ephesians is not your individual life.

Paul's focus in Ephesians, as I've shown you every week, is the unity of the new humanity.

Remember? That in Jesus, Jew, Gentile, male, female, slave, free, we've all been brought into this one body.

We're in this one new humanity in Jesus Christ. And we are to protect that unity with everything we have. It matters.

Why would they then go after the heart? Notice it on the screen. Because if evil powers, this is the simplest way I know how to communicate it, if evil powers can keep you focused on you, you won't be focused on others.

[30 : 27] This is so incredibly insightful. I really hope that you are awake. Like, get this. What's the best way to unravel a team?

Get all the players focused on self. The best way to unravel a team is get everybody focused on themselves. So evil powers go after your heart negatively, accusation, or positively, exaltation, because regardless of which scheme works, the focus will be on you and not the unity of the new humanity.

You won't do things like Paul's been, because I think Paul screams like I scream, and he probably has a southern accent, just like me. These are the things that Paul has been teaching the Ephesians all throughout the book before you ever get to chapter 6.

Like chapter 4, verse 1. I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling which you've been called with all humility and gentleness and patience, bearing with one another in love.

Do you see how that's not, it's not individual. It's collective. It's congregational. Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. Ephesians 4.32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you.

[32 : 00] Ephesians 5.19-21 Addressing one another in Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Seeking and making melody to the Lord in your heart.

Giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. And do you know what happens after these verses in chapter 5?

It's what? Husbands love wives. Wives submit to husbands. Parents or children obey your parents. Slaves your master. In other words, every single one of these verses, every single one of these examples is about the other.

It isn't a focus on you. It's a focus on the body. It's a focus on the unity. And listen to me. Listen, listen. Some of you have been around a long time. Some of you, I won't even tell how long you've been around.

Right? You've heard a lot of sermons on your identity in Christ. But listen to me. When is the last time you ever stopped to consider how your identity preserves the unity of this new humanity?

[33 : 15] And I'm pausing to let you think on that. How your identity can help preserve the unity of the new humanity. You've probably never heard a sermon on that.

Probably every sermon you've heard is about your identity in Christ and how it makes you feel better. Which I'm all for, by the way. But it's not what Paul's doing here. He's putting this in the context of one another.

Listen. Guilt and shame will make you leave the church. Pride will divide the church.

Are you listening? Say yes. Assurance in who you are frees you to love the church. Guilt and shame will make you leave the church.

Pride will divide the church. I want my way. We should have painted this room a different color.

Fight, fight, fight, fight, fight, fight, fight, fight. It's all selfishness. But when you're confident, when you've

got a breastplate that's protecting your identity and you're confident and assured in who you are, then you're not consumed in you and therefore free to one another.

[34 : 41] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. So listen to me. You need a breastplate. You need a breastplate not just for your own identity.

I'm not denying that, by the way. I'm just saying that's all we focus on. You need a breastplate for your identity, but you also need a breastplate for the unity of this body.

So what's the breastplate? Verse 14. Stand therefore having fastened on the belt of truth and having put on the breastplate of, say it, righteousness.

So this breastplate that I've just spent all this time trying to unpack, this breastplate is the breastplate of righteousness and the question that we should ask is who's righteousness?

And I know some of you, Jesus, right, stop. Don't get ahead of me, right? There's actually a big debate. I mean, there's a lot of people, a lot of biblical interpreters. You can, like, read a bunch of commentaries if you want.

[35 : 42] And there's actually a pretty big debate on whose righteousness it is that Paul's talking about. And there are lots of people, lots of people that will argue that this is the righteousness of the soldier, that this is your righteousness.

And if you think, well, that's crazy, well, I agree with you. But the argument they're trying to make is this. The way in which you go out into the world and fight this spiritual war is by living a righteous life.

Now, that would seem to make sense, right? I mean, you're going out there and you're living as righteous as you can and that's defeating of these spiritual powers.

Well, again, there's maybe some truth in that. I don't think that's at all what Paul has in mind. And here's why I deny that view completely. There's a few reasons.

First is, this battle, Paul makes clear, is not against flesh and blood, right? So, let me get this straight. My confidence going up against spiritual powers is my righteousness?

[36 : 49] No thank you. No chance. Like, that's, I don't know, like a recipe for dead meat. I'm not putting my righteousness up against the evil spiritual powers, thank you very much.

Second, the command over and over and over again is to stand, not go fight. So, I'm defending against something.

I'm not going out and conquering something. You with me? Which goes along with my third reason. The breastplate is defensive, not offensive.

This is not what I'm going out and doing. This is what has been done and I'm defended by it.

Fourthly, as I've said every week, is this armor is not new to Paul.

All he's doing is referencing Isaiah. Notice, for example, I've read this a few times, Isaiah 59, 14. We'll keep coming back to this. Truth is lacking.

[37 : 55] The Lord saw it and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no one to intercede. Then his own arm brought him salvation and his righteousness upheld him.

He put on, this Messiah figure, he put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head.

We'll get to that later. In other words, I think it's very clear that the righteousness Paul has in mind, thank you Lord, is not my righteousness.

It's the righteousness that Christ provides which I put on by faith and therefore am able to stand firm.

Come at me with accusation. Bouncing off. Come at me with exaltation. Bouncing off. My heart's protected.

[39 : 01] Not by my righteousness but by His. My heart's guarded. It's almost as though God looks at you and says, your righteousness that is the armor that you bring is insufficient to protect you.

So wear mine. put on mine. It will protect your heart.

And do you remember earlier, I know you do because you're all A plus students. Do you remember earlier when I said that the breastplate is attached to the belt? You remember that?

How that if the belt is not tight, the breastplate gets loose and you're vulnerable? What's the belt of truth? Do you remember from two weeks ago?

The belt of truth, I did in the same fashion I did tonight. I tried to prove to you that the belt of truth is the gospel of your salvation. I can't go back through that tonight. I don't have time.

[40 : 02] Go back and watch that. The belt of truth is the gospel. Meaning, meaning, come on, preach, preacher, meaning that the breastplate of righteousness and the belt of truth are connected.

That is, the gospel and my righteousness in Christ go together. And if I'm loose on the gospel, I'll be vulnerable in my heart.

But if I've tightened up the gospel and I'm aware of the gospel, I won't doubt who I am. I'll know that my heart has the very righteousness of Christ given to me.

That is, the heart, pun intended, of the gospel. Amen? 2 Corinthians 5, 21. For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 Corinthians 1, 31. And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

[41 : 19] We should read verse 31, so that as it is written, let the one who boasts boast in the Lord. Right? You don't look, look how awesome my breastplate is.

No. Look how awesome the righteousness of Jesus is that I have put on. No boasting here. So when they come at you through exaltation, you're like, get behind me, Satan.

I don't have anything to boast in myself. I boast in Christ. He's my righteousness. And then, if you remember that Easter sermon, it was actually on this passage, Romans 4, 22.

That is why His faith was counted to Him as righteousness, referring to Abraham. But the words that was counted to Him were not just for Abraham's sake alone, but for ours also.

It will be counted to us who believe in Him who raised Jesus, who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

[42 : 35] right here. If you've zoned out, what do you do? Zone back in. Do you see the connection between the belt of truth that is the gospel and the breastplate of righteousness that is our justification?

That Jesus died for our trespasses. He rose from the dead. And that's the basis of my righteousness in Christ.

Christ. So when I put on by faith, when I put on by faith Christ, His identity is my identity.

His righteousness is my righteousness. And do you want proof of it? An empty grave. That's the receipt of proof of purchase.

So when they come at you through accusation or exaltation and you say, no, I'm not going to give in to a false identity. I know who I am in Jesus. Prove it!

[43 : 47] Resurrection. He was raised for my justification. Through the cross and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled all the righteousness that God requires.

And here it is. Here it is. Here it is. The resurrection of Jesus secures your breastplate of righteousness.

Listen, there's only one way. Only one way. You don't have a breastplate of righteousness. Jesus. Jesus isn't alive.

The good news is, faith family, Jesus is alive and well. So you're protected.

You're protected. And how does this work out practically? I'm done. Almost. Okay? Listen, listen. Where does the rubber meet the road? And we're done.

[44 : 53] Here it is. I'm going to start with accusation. When the evil powers come this week, because they're coming. It may not even be this week. It might be 30 minutes from now.

My guess is after this sermon, they'll come pretty hard. When the evil powers come and accuse you, you put on the breastplate of righteousness and refuse to give in to despair.

And refuse to give in to despair. Here's why. Because knowing the truth about who you are will help you defend against the lies about who you're not.

That's good. That's good. Knowing the truth about who you are will protect you against the lies about who you're not.

Second, exaltation. When the evil powers come and they're going to, to exalt you, you're just the best thing since sliced bread. You're just the most puff, puff, puff, puff, puff you up.

[45 : 55] You put on the breastplate of righteousness and refuse to give in to pride because the righteousness you have isn't yours. You don't have any grounds for boasting.

Amen? Notice it here. Knowing the truth about who Jesus is will defend me against what they tell me I am.

When they try to puff me up, I won't glory in my own self-righteousness when I'm fully aware of His. So, no, I won't exalt in myself.

I will exalt in Jesus. Get behind me, Satan, or whatever spiritual power it may be. And finally, unity. Remember, all of this in Ephesians is about the unity of this new humanity. When the evil powers seek to disrupt and divide the body by getting you to focus on yourself instead of other people, put on the breastplate of righteousness and remain eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit.

[47 : 05] Why? Are you listening? Listen, listen. Because you didn't get the breastplate of righteousness through selfishness. You got the breastplate of righteousness through sacrifice.

sacrifice. The whole reason you have the breastplate in the first place is someone sacrificed himself for another.

So, be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. This is how we put on Christ. Amen? Faith family, every single one of us knows this truth that we protect what's precious. We protect what's precious. It's why Paula was so willing to lay down her life to protect her little girl. And it's why Jesus was willing to lay down His life to protect yours. But listen, the good news of the Gospel is not just that Jesus gave His life for you.

[48 : 18] It's that Jesus gave His life to you. His life is your breastplate of righteousness.

And you are to put it on every day by faith. And trust me, in a world full of evil, destruction, and division, it's the only thing that will protect your heart.

And all God's people said, Amen. Let's pray. So, Lord, thank you. Thank you for this great truth, the breastplate of righteousness. Amazing, amazing truth, Lord.

Help us be equipped in that this evening through accusation or exaltation, through division or disruption, Lord, may we stand firm and put on the full armor of God that you have given us in Jesus Christ.

Lord, we're going to come now to a time of remembrance as we pause to take just a few moments and think about how this righteousness came to us through sacrifice, not through selfishness.

[49 : 35] Jesus laid down his life for us and he gives his life to us. And as we think on the cross, we think on that truth. So I pray tonight, through communion, we tighten the belt of the gospel so that we're firm in the breastplate of righteousness.

It's in Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.