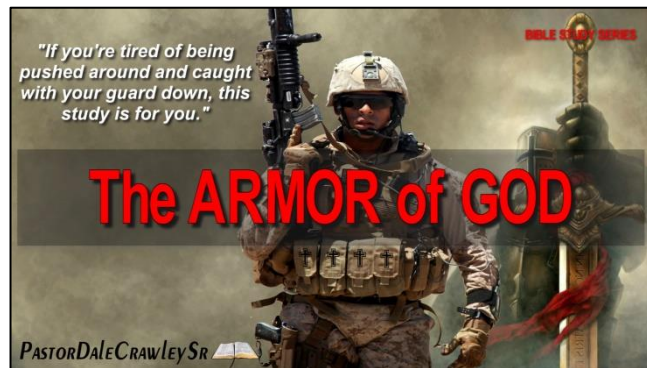


5 - THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

“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, **having on the breastplate of righteousness** ...”

Ephesians 6:13-14 (ESV)



(Context: READ Ephesians 6:10-20)

“THE HEART OF THE MATTER” ...

The heart is arguably the most vital organ in your whole body. Right now as you and I are studying, your heart is beating in your chest, dispersing blood through your vein and arteries, picking up oxygen and other nutrients and supplying them to places where they can be turned into raw energy. That’s why a feeble or malfunctioning heart creates such a noticeable ripple effect throughout a person’s entire system. Without the heart’s continuous pumping action, the body feels the diminishing effects, until ultimately, it ceases to function altogether.

So your heart is the seat of your life ... the source. And what the physical heart is to your physical life ... **the spiritual heart of “righteousness”** is to your spiritual life. (Cp. Proverbs 4:23)

Righteousness literally means **justice** – the quality of being upright, fulfilling the expectations set in a relationship. In our case as believers, this relationship is with God Himself. Righteousness, then, is upright living that aligns with God’s expectations.

This definition of righteousness is similar to what we studied last week when looking at **truth**, but there’s a unique nuance that makes righteousness the more practical of the two. While the lifestyle of a person girded in **the belt of truth** affirms God’s standards ... a person who puts on **the breastplate of righteousness** aligns their life to it!

Truth provides the grid; righteousness paints the picture. **Righteousness is right living** – walking “in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.” (Eph. 4:1)

Once a Roman soldier was fitted with his belt / girdle, he would put on his breastplate. The breastplate was a metal shield (usually bronze), worn over the midsection from the neck to the thighs. The purpose of these layers was to guard the vital organs, particularly the heart.



The Greek word for breastplate is *thoraka*, since it was designed to guard the thorax – a term meaning the trunk or chest.

In case of a direct hit to the soldier's upper body, wearing the breastplate could mean the difference between life and death ... one swift strike from the enemy sword could stop a person's heart cold!

PLEASE NOTE: It is not a coincidence that Paul called the second piece of armor equipment "the breastplate of righteous" ... because he recognizes the important need to have ***our spiritual vitals covered and protected by in righteousness.***

This righteousness, God's holiness and perfection, comes to us through Jesus' death and resurrection on the cross. Because Jesus takes our place by living the life we should have lived and dying the death we deserved to die, He offers a covering of righteousness to block out the devil's attacks on our hearts and souls. Although issued at the time a sinner repents, the passage in Ephesians intends to encourage us to put on the armor regularly, not as just a one-time deal.

THE ATTACK OF THE ENEMY

If we do not protect ourselves with righteousness, we open ourselves up to attack from the enemy and can fall into sin.

The enemy takes every opportunity to push his way into our experience. And unrighteousness is all the invitation he needs to send his demons on assignment. It not only leaves the door open, but rolls out a welcome mat on the doorstep of your soul! It actually attracts enemy intrusions in our lives, allowing him to make himself at home. The **"one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it sins"** (James 4:17); **and sin exposes you to Satan's jabs ... and the heart is one of his primary and lethal targets!**

Rotten Fruit



"An Invitation for Attack"

- In your own life, or in the life of someone you love, when have you seen wrong choices and behavior become a "welcome mat" for demonic activity to infiltrate?

To be righteous means to obey God's commandments and live in a way that is honorable to Him. Psalm 106:3 says, **"How blessed are those who keep justice, who practice righteousness at all times!"**

Unfortunately, our sinful nature often gets in the way of living an upright life. When we decide to live based on our own desires rather than God's, we make decisions that are harmful to ourselves and others. Romans 8:6 says, **"So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace."**

How can we put on the breastplate of righteousness? We can start by being knowledgeable of God's Word ... which will allow us to understand how to live a righteous life. When trials and temptation come our way, we can base our decisions in His Word.

In addition, through prayer, we can ask God to empower us to resist living in sin and to do what is right according to Him. 1 John 3:22 says, ***“And we will receive from Him whatever we ask because we obey and do the things that please Him.”***

As Christians, we can put on the breastplate of righteousness in our daily lives. In becoming aware of the decisions we make, we can determine whether or not they are based in God's Word. In addition, we can ask Him to give us the strength to live righteously. Ultimately, this will allow us to withstand attacks from the enemy and live in ways that glorify Christ.

Wearing the belt of truth, putting on the shoes and helmet, using the shield or sword – they'll do you no good ... if you leave your heart open to a full frontal attack by the devil. You must intentionally protect the organ that pumps vibrancy into your spiritual life. So pray fervently, seek God fully. Ask Him to reveal anything “spoiled” in your life that's attracting the pesky fruit flies of demonic activity. Then confess it and repent of it, defusing the accusations of the enemy!

HOW DO WE USE THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS?

We use this breastplate of righteousness by:

1. Turning to God when we Face Temptation

James 4:7 calls us to submit ourselves to God. If we resist the devil, he will flee from us. Whenever we encounter temptation, we need to turn to God.

2. Guarding our Hearts against the Devil's Schemes

The breastplate protects our heart, our most vital organ. In a Christian understanding, it's the wellspring of life (Proverbs 4:23). Satan is the wellspring of death. If we put on the breastplate of righteousness, we avoid the blows that will lead to spiritual death, that come from sin.

3. Avoiding What May Ensnare Us (Matthew 5:30)

We know what can trigger the sins we personally deal with. Maybe it's a certain place, a certain group of people, a certain activity. No matter what the case, we need to avoid, if possible, anything that can entice us to sin.

Sometimes this may make us the odd person out, killjoy, or loser ... but we have our spiritual walk at stake. Better to avoid something that can pull us away from God than to compromise our spiritual safety!