

Group Resource

Sermon Notes – Sunday, November 24, 2013

Series: Be Strong in the Lord!
Message: Living the Righteous Life!
Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-14

- I. In Ephesians 6, the Apostle Paul describes six pieces of armor that the believer must wear. The second piece of armor is the breastplate of righteousness.
 - a. ¹⁴ **Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place.**
- II. To understand the importance of the breastplate of righteousness, we need to understand the concept of God's righteous character..
 - a. *Proverbs 15:9 The LORD detests the way of the wicked but he loves those who pursue righteousness.*
 - b. The Hebrew word for "righteous" is tsedek, which is defined as: "Rightness, straightness, rectitude; justice of a judge, of a king."
 - c. God is a Righteous God because He acts at all times in complete conformity with His Holy Nature and will.
 - i. *Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.*
 - ii. *In Genesis 18:25, Abraham makes this affirmation – "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"*
 - d. In its simplest form: to be righteous means to attain a state approved of God.
 - e. Gaining God's approval requires us to understand what pleases Him. As a righteous God, He lays down just laws to govern the dealings of men. The first four commandments have to do with the worship and service of God, but the last six pertain to the people's treatment one toward another.
 - i. The Old Testament saints were considered righteous when their personal and interpersonal behavior conformed to the moral and ethical norms established by God.
 - ii. God requires perfect righteousness from man, but fallen man always falls short of perfection.
 - f. Measured against the divine standard of perfection, "there is no one who does good, not even one" (Psalm 14:3). As Paul puts it, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
 - g. Is all hope lost? How can man ever be in a state approved by God if no one can measure up to God's divine standard of perfection?
 - i. In theological terms, we call it imputed righteousness. Knowing that no human being could live up to the standard that God's own righteous character demands, love moved God to accept those who have flaws and failures when then put their trust in Him.
 - ii. Imputed righteousness comes by faith.
 - iii. Yet, there are still people who refuse to accept God's righteousness and try to be accepted by God based on their own standard of righteousness.
 1. *Romans 10:3 Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

- III. If Christ has MADE us righteous, does it matter how we live?
- a. Jesus died to rescue us “from the dominion of darkness” and to bring us “into the kingdom of the Son he [God the Father] loves” (Colossians 1: 13). This rescue calls for a revolution in our lifestyles. We are no longer to gratify “the cravings of our sinful nature” or to “follow its desires and thoughts” (Ephesians 2: 3). To make a godly Kingdom lifestyle possible, God gave us His Spirit. Through the promptings and the power provided by the Holy Spirit, we are now able to offer ourselves to God “as instruments of righteousness.” (Romans 6: 13– 14).
 - b. Realized righteousness is a life lived in harmony with God’s will. We choose to live a righteous life not to gain acceptance by God but **in recognition of** our acceptance through Christ’s sacrificial life.
 - c. Realized righteousness keeps us from being ineffective in our faith
 - i. *2 Peter 1:5-7 “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.”*
 - ii. Some of us never reach the potential that God has placed in us because we don’t carefully choose how we live.
 - iii. *Ephesians 5:8-10 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord.*
- IV. What does it mean to put on the breastplate of righteousness?
- a. **It means to walk in full assurance that God has accepted us on the basis of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross AND to choose each day to live our lives worthy of that sacrifice**
- V. Putting on the breastplate acknowledges our need for God’s protection
- a. *1 John 1:8-9 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*
 - b. We all need our vital organs to be protected from the attacks of the enemy. Wearing the breastplate affirms our acceptance of our vulnerabilities.
- VI. Putting on the breastplate acknowledges our faith in God’s protection
- a. We must trust that the breastplate of righteousness is able to protect us from the schemes of the enemy. When we put on the breastplate, we keep it on because we trust its resilience.
- VII. Putting on the breastplate protects us from the destructive ways of sin
- a. A breastplate covers two vital areas, the heart and the bowel/stomach area. Satan wants to attack a believer in his heart (thinking) and in his stomach (emotions).
 - b. Why do we have to protect our heart?
 - i. Proverbs 23:7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:
 - ii. Proverbs 4:23 - Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.
 - iii. When the heart is corrupt, our life will be corrupt.
 - c. Why do we have to protect our bowels/stomach
 - i. Our emotions give us feelings in our stomach?
 - ii. A big area of Satan’s attack is to get us to feel in our emotions that God is distant from us or that God doesn’t accept us. We have to remember that Satan is referred to as “the accuser of our brethren,” (Revelation 12:10) but his schemes are futile.

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- 1) How do you feel when you are accepted/not accepted by others?
- 2) As you reflect back on last weekend's sermon, what one principle or insight stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful or difficult to grasp? Were you challenged in any area of your personal walk with God?
- 3) What does it mean that God is a righteous God? What differentiates a righteous God from an unrighteous God? Have you ever felt that God was unrighteous? How did you deal with that emotion?
- 4) Why does God have the right to determine the standard for righteousness? How would you address those who believe that their own standard of righteousness should be good enough for God?
- 5) **READ EPHESIANS 5:1-20.** What are some of the ways that sin can destroy our heart (thinking) or stomach (emotions)?
- 6) We all have different things that motivate us. What should be the Godly motive for living a righteous life? **READ 1 THESSALONIANS 2:4; 4:1; COLOSSIANS 1:10;** How does God get honor when we live a righteous life?