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## **Armor**

### **Part 3 – The Breastplate of Righteousness**

Adam Donyes

My name is Adam Donyes. I am a part of the teaching team here at Woodland Hills. I love this church. I love the family. I love the leadership and everything we get to do. If you just walked in for the first time in three weeks, we started a new series called *Armor*. That video gets me out of breath just watching it. We have made it all the way up to *The Breastplate of Righteousness*.

If you look at Ephesians 6, where we take this whole armor of God from, in Chapter 6: 11, it says, “Put on the whole armor of God.” And then it doesn’t say “put on” again until 6:14, when it actually talks about putting on the breastplate of righteousness.

I don’t want to give you an overview because Ted did a phenomenal job of doing that two weeks ago. I just wanted to talk to you a little bit about the type of armor that Paul was really talking about. These were Roman guards, so when he was using the illustration of armor, he was talking about like Roman guards. No, I’m not going to put this on; you can imagine what I look like with it. It’s the helmet of salvation.

Ted and Travis did a masterful job last week talking about this belt of truth. So, what’s interesting about the belt of truth that they talked about is they didn’t wear britches back then; they didn’t have pants. So, the belts weren’t to keep their pants up; they didn’t have pants; they wore man skirts. So, there’s this belt of truth, but what the belt of truth did is if you look at these side lashes on the breastplate, it kept everything else together. It kept the breastplate together, it kept the helmet together because they were all connected as part of this armor. So, without the belt of truth, everything else fell apart. That’s why Paul kicks off with it and that’s why Ted and Travis connected it last week.

As you see, it even connects with all these as well – the sword of the spirit, which you guys are going to hear about. Then what we’re talking today is out of all this armor of God, it’s the only one where the Bible says to *put on* the breastplate of righteousness. But there is something you guys really gotta catch here if you’ve never seen this in Ephesians 6: 11-17. Everything you’ve seen is forward facing. It’s protecting you on the front. So, what in the world do you do about the backside? That’s why we believe at Woodland Hills that community and Starting Point and all those things are so important because if I’m going to battle... If you know any one in the military, they say, “I’ve got your six.” If 12:00 is here, who’s got my 6:00 behind me. You get in community so people have your back against this enemy the devil who is trying to take you out.

We're going to talk about putting on. Some of you here grew up in the fifties, some of you grew up in the sixties, some of you grew up in the seventies... At one point, some of you in here put on something that looked a little bit like this. Do I have any poodle skirt wearers? Come on momma. I love it. Yes, you had a poodle skirt. I knew it. How about here. A little nanny. The crazy wizard lady. You lived in the sixties, a little more hippy. Any people in here willing to admit they were hippies. I'm in a room with a bunch of liars. You act as if I asked if you smoked weed. I just asked if you were a hippy; that's all I asked. I didn't ask if you smoked weed; I just asked if you were a hippy.

Any eighties babies? Come on eighties babies. I legitimately had pants that color and looked just like that, no joke. I have pictures to prove it. Any nineties babies. Yeah, a couple of nineties babies. I little twist in fashion and everything else. And then everything has gotten slimmer and tighter in the 2000s.

I'm going to show you a picture. Don't judge me. It's what I put on when it was my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. I was 18 years old. I got into a fight with hydrogen peroxide with my hair. I had my ears pierced. I said don't judge me. That's what I put on.

Some of you hippies still want to move to Colorado because you enjoyed the seventies so much, so you stop. So, I had bleached hair. The best part about this is when your hair grew out, you had frosted tips. It was amazing. I obviously had a fad with Eminem. Yes, that's a hemp necklace. Jesus saved me. I no longer wear hemp necklaces.

But you woke up this morning and you put on clothes, thankfully, or I wouldn't be able stand up here with a straight face. But when you woke up, you all decided to put something on. You picked your outfit, you put on your shoes, you put on your clothes. You put everything on, right? So, it's crazy because you too have an opportunity when you wake up to put on, as scripture says. It says to put on the breastplate of righteousness.

We need to talk about what this breastplate of righteousness is. Just so you know, my abs don't really look like this; so, you don't have to worry. But to put on the breastplate of righteousness.

**What is the breastplate of righteousness?** The breastplate of righteousness refers to the righteousness purchased for us by Jesus at the cross.

So, there is something really important to understand here. Righteousness is to be viewed as morally just or justifiable. So, how are we justified? You and I both know we can't produce righteousness on our own. When we try it is a mindless trap. So, this idea that Jesus gives us this righteousness through the cross is a powerful thing. None of us in here can earn or put this righteousness on us. It's imputed to us. What does that word *imputed* mean? It means it was attributed to us through Christ, which is really good news, Woodland Hills, because what that means is regardless of all the junk in everything we've ever done, when a holy and righteous God looks at us, for those who are in Christ, that trust him as their Lord and Savior, he doesn't see your junk. He sees the imputed righteousness of Christ and we get an opportunity to put that righteousness on every day by reminding ourselves of the gospel.

Scripture puts it this way. 2 Corinthians 5 - **21 For our sake he made him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** So, we're talking about this breastplate of righteousness in the armor of God.

It's one of our key verses in our church and Ted uses it a lot. Proverbs 4: 23 – **Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.** What does a breastplate guard for a soldier? All the vital organs; my lungs are in here, my kidneys are in here, my heart is in here. It protects all of my vital organs, this breastplate does. Most specifically, it protects the thing that God wants the most. God doesn't want your works, he doesn't want your efforts, he doesn't want you just to give your money to feel better about yourself. He doesn't want any of these things; he want your heart. And this breastplate protects one of the most vital organs in your body which is your heart. It's important to know that our own righteousness is no match for Satan's attacks. So, we have to be careful, ladies and gentlemen. We have to be careful to think that we can produce righteousness on our own.

You know that's what separates Christianity from every other worldview, religion, and cult. What a liberating thought. Every other worldview, religion, and cult thinks you have to go knock on more doors, do more works, fly planes into towers, or whatever the case may be. You have to produce more, you have to do more, you have to earn your way into heaven. What a cumbersome task for anybody.

Jesus says, "No, no, no, I did it. I died on the cross for your sins. I did the work on Calvary so that you don't have to work for your salvation." As a matter of fact, it's a free gift. You either believe it or you don't. You don't have to earn it. You don't have to try harder. You don't have to do more. You don't have to check more boxes. You don't have to get into more Bible studies. You don't have to study more scripture. Now those things will produce themselves in you no matter what when you choose to put on the breastplate of righteousness, but they are not contingent for your salvation. Jesus did it. Jesus paid the price. Jesus did the work... period.

Isaiah 64: 6 says this, **We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds...** Whatever works we try to attain to God, achieve to God... **...are like a polluted garment.** To give you an illustration, that's from a commentary referring to a woman on her menstrual cycle. That's what God sees in our righteous deeds that we are trying to earn favor or salvation with him. He says all your righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. **We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.**

David said it another way in Psalm 51 after he blew it with Bathsheba. He messed up. He had an affair. He killed someone to try to cover it up. It was horrible, horrific. David says in Psalm 51: 16-17, his repentant psalm, after he blew it and realized he's not righteous. He says, **16 For you will not delight in sacrifice...** To put it another way, you don't delight in me trying to earn my righteousness. **...or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.** How did you come in here today? Does he have your heart? He wants you heart far above your efforts in your works and you trying to attain something that's impossible to attain.

Satan wants us to believe you can earn and produce righteousness apart from Christ. Are you producing good works or acts because you're trying to feel better about yourself? Or are you producing healthy fruit because you're abiding in the true vine who produces that fruit within you? There's a big difference. And you can run in the little hamster ball, in the rat race, in the wheel, and you can keep your whole life trying to earn this righteousness, and trying to get this righteousness, and attain this righteousness, and you will never wake up feeling like you're completely satisfied or secured. That's because only the breastplate of righteousness that you can put on through Jesus Christ is ever going to make you feel protected, safe, and guarded. And take care of your most vital organ which is your heart.

This video puts it another way. Check it out. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGlx11BxF24>

There's a song some of you have sung in this church and know and it's from Matt Maher. It's *Lord, I Need You*. There is a line in there that is so powerful. It says, "My one defense, my righteousness..." It's referring to Jesus. He's my one defense and the only place I will ever, ever be declared righteous.

Christ imputes his breastplate of righteousness to us because your breastplate will not protect you in time of battle. It will not protect you no matter how hard you try, no matter how good you try to look, no matter how much money you give, no matter how many things you do, your breastplate will not protect you. Only with Christ as my defense, my only righteousness, will my heart be protected, will my soul be protected, will my life be protected from the enemy. Because the enemy hates you.

By the way, Woodland Hills, there is one person in this world you're allowed to hate. No, it's not your boss. There is one person in this world you are allowed to hate. No, it's not your ex. There is one person in this world that you and I are allowed to hate, and he hates you and you can hate him back and that is the devil. He hates you. He hates your family, and he hates your kids, and he hates everybody. You are allowed to hate him back. He wants you to think that you have to earn this, that you have to do something to get it, that you have to do something different. And he wants you to think somehow, your own breastplate will protect you, that your smarts, your money, somehow will protect you, that somehow, you will overcome addiction on your own, that somehow, you'll pull yourself out of the mud and mire on your own. That somehow, by yourself, you'll be able to stand stronger. He wants you to believe that because he hates you. And nothing, apart from Christ, will be able to do that. Nothing, apart from Christ.

Pastor Matt Nelson says it this way, "*Without truth...*" There's the belt of truth that Travis and Ted talked about last week "*...our righteousness will be based upon our own attempts to impress God. This leads to legalism or self-condemnation.*" So, one of the two. So, either you'll realize that you can't attain to this ability to earn God's righteousness so you're condemning yourself. Because of that, you wake up and your sad and you feel this weight and this burden. Or, you think you've been doing such an awesome job following Jesus for so long that I need to come polish your halo and you think somehow, you forget what it was like before you, too, came to know Jesus. And quite frankly, that turns a lot of people off from this amazing Lord and Savior known as Jesus. That somehow, you think you have it all together, that you've earned your own righteousness, that you're better than someone because you do more Bible studies or you've memorized more scripture. That is not an aroma of Christ that we hope to give off.

Ladies and gentlemen, he didn't save you on the day you understood the gospel, he *is* saving you. You and I need to remind ourselves of the gospel every single day. And here is the gospel. What does every single one of us in here deserve? Say it like you believe it. What does everyone in here deserve? Death. Also known as hell. When you wake up in the morning... Sweet Bob was one of our greeters last service. He said, "Adam, you talk way too fast. You've got way too much energy." I said, "Bob, you know why? I know what he saved me from. I remind myself of the gospel every morning." That's where this energy comes from. I try to slow it down for you guys every week and I can't.

Jeremiah 29 says, "The Word of God is like a fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary of holding it in. Indeed, I cannot."

When I remind myself of the gospel, what I really believe... I truly believe, standing here before you, telling you, I deserve death. There is nothing I have done that does the opposite of deserving death. But, by Jesus' grace alone, and him imputing his breastplate of righteousness to me, I don't have to taste the sting of death. And when I remind myself of that truth, that biblical truth, every single morning, it eliminates a whole lot of legalism in my life. Does it eliminate me thinking I'm better than anyone?

Oh man does it draw people in to want to know because I'm not saying, "Hey, man, I'm not better than you. You might smell like a little more smoke than I did twenty years ago now, but I'm not better than you." "You might be struggling with drinking right now, but I'm not better than you, man." I need to remind myself of this gospel every day that Jesus lived the life I should have lived, died the death I deserve to die, defeated the tomb, tasted death, so you and I don't have to. Amen? That's what gets in the way with legalism, the self-condemnation part. He doesn't condemn you. As a matter of fact, scripture says, "As far as the east is from the west, so has he removed your transgressions from you." He doesn't condemn you.

Look what scripture says about it in Romans 8, ***There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*** Now, there is condemnation for those who don't know Jesus; let me be crystal clear. And the enemy doesn't want you to know Jesus. The enemy does not want you to have this breastplate of righteousness that is imputed to you by Jesus. He doesn't want you to know him. Because there is condemnation for those who don't know Jesus. But for those that do know Jesus, there is no condemnation, not any. How much? None. That's amazing news.

John 15: 5 says this, ***I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*** So, this is what happens. It's important to know, right? You abide in the true vine, which is Jesus, and you root yourself in him. Good roots, good fruit. Bad roots, bad fruit. It's Jesus that produces these works in you, these acts of righteousness within you. Jesus does the work. So, if you are in Jesus, you should be producing fruit. Not in order to attain salvation, but of what he is going to do through you. It's a symbol of salvation; you can know that you're saved by the fruit that Jesus is producing in you. One of the most encouraging things for me in my life is guys that I have discipled or mentored, and I see them begin to disciple and mentor and baptize other young men. That is a disciple cycle. That is Jesus producing fruit in my life and then in their life and so and so forth.

People came up to Jesus. This is in the gospel. He said, "Jesus, didn't we perform many miracles and signs in your name?" And Jesus said, "Get away from me. I never knew you." Because they were performing those signs and miracles for their glory, for them to earn something they can't earn, and to prove something they can't prove. Jesus said, "No, you were doing that for yourself, not because I had your heart." Jesus wants your heart. You give him your heart and you will abide in the vine. You spend time at his feet, you come before him humbly reminding yourself of the gospel, and he begins to produce some fruit in you, fruit that will last for eternity.

**How do we put on this breastplate of righteousness?** Just like you woke up this morning and you put on your outfit and you came to church, how do you put on the breastplate of righteousness? Why would Paul use this terminology if we couldn't actively put on this breastplate of righteousness?

There are a couple of ways. **One, we need to seek Him.** We need to diligently seek him. God says, "Anyone that will seek after me, he will find me." "Ask and you will be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened." We need to seek after him. We need to seek him through prayer, we need to seek him through reading scripture, we need to seek him through community for people to protect our six. We need to seek him through things that stir our hearts affections.

**The second one is we need to make Him our dwelling place.** We need to make him the most focal point in our life. We need to be more locked in on him than anything else. He needs to be more important to us than our 401k. He needs to be more important to us than our kids getting a Division 1 scholarship in sports. He needs to be more important to us than our kids getting into an ivy league school. He needs to be more important than getting that vote. He needs to be more important to us than anything in our life. He needs to become our dwelling place.

**The last one is we need to delight in Him.** I'm going to give you scripture now that supports all three of these.

The first one is in Matthew 6 - **33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**

Do what first? Seek him and his righteousness that is imputed to you and all these things will be added to you.

The second one is to dwell with him. Look at this. Psalm 91: 1 - **He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.** I just told you what happens when you abide in the true vine? You produce fruit. You produce good works. Not as an act of trying to get your salvation, but a work that the almighty is doing in your life.

**The last one delight in him.** Psalm 37: 4 - **Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.** The first part of that is more important than the latter part of that because his desires will become your desires when you begin to delight in him.

That is how, ladies and gentlemen, we put on this breastplate of righteousness. It's my seeking him, making him our dwelling place, and delighting in him. As we do those three things, we begin to manifest fruit in our life that we never grasped to be imaginable or possible. So, that's how we do it.

But the more we put on the breastplate, the more we develop a pure heart that produces fruit, it leads us to action. The more we make that a daily habit of praying before we take off for our hectic day... Here's a simple, easy challenge. How many of you in here have a 10 to 15 minute commute in the morning? You have to drive to work. There are quite a few of you. Don't turn the radio on. Just take that 10 – 15 minutes in your drive to work in the morning and just spend time seeking him. Spend time putting on that breastplate of righteousness and making him your dwelling place.

If you don't have a commute, I would encourage you instead of reaching for your phone the first thing in the morning... I tell people all the time those phones will tell you lies, but my friend, Steve Farrar said, "Spend time reading and receiving the truth every morning because the world will only lie to you the rest of the day."

Seek Him, Dwell with Him, and Delight in Him.

The next question we would come up with is **ways we misuse the breastplate**. So, how are ways that we don't get the full effect and the full power of this breastplate of righteousness?

**Carelessness**, right? If I go into battle and I'm just going to misuse this and be careless with how I'm using it, it's not going to protect my vital organs. If I'm just nonchalant about it, it's going to destroy me.

1 Peter 5: 8 says, ***Be self-controlled and soberminded, for your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*** Think about that. I always crack up when this generation wants to tell me, "Adam, the Bible doesn't say you can't smoke marijuana. It doesn't say anything.... Plus, cannabis is natural, God created it; he grew it. Smoke on!" I'm like, "Dude, you're a knuckle head because with the THC level in marijuana, there's no way you can smoke that and be soberminded. And scripture makes it crystal clear. Mom and dad, here's your verse for marijuana. ***Be self-controlled and soberminded, for your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion...***"

You don't ever want to hear a lion roar in your life because that means it's too late. Lions never roar after they kill their pray. If they did, they would attract hyenas and other predators and they don't want to share their kill. A lion roars after it has caught, ate, and devoured it's prey. So, don't allow the slow fade in your life to get to a point where a lion may roar.

**The second one is unbelief.** You're like, "Well I don't believe this is going to protect me, so I don't need it and I'm going to get rid of that." Well, the young man in Mark 9: 24 prays, "God, I believe. Just help my unbelief. I believe that you died on the cross, just help my unbelief. I believe you created this universe, just help my unbelief."

**The third one is abusing grace.** Romans 6: 1-2 - *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?* Paul answers his own question. **2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?**

You don't just keep sinning and living in sin because you think grace may abound. No, you know what to do, what you ought to do, you walk in obedience, you walk in the scripture. You walk in the truth. And when you do sin, you repent and ask God, "Hey, God, I'm sorry, I blew it. Thank you. I need your righteousness that I can't earn on my own."

The reality is I didn't have to remind any of you in here to sin this morning. You already did that with your argument with your spouse on the way to church. That was easy. I did not need to remind you. None of you need that reminder. We need to remind ourselves of the gospel every morning. That is the reminder we need.

**The last one is disobedience.** They didn't get to experience God's wrath and God's joy and God's salvation and God's sabbath because they walked in disobedience. When we're careless, when we lack belief, when we abuse grace, when we're disobedient, we misuse God's grace... We can't lose it, but there is something about scripture telling us to put this on.

So, you flip all of that. You're careful, you have belief, you appreciate grace, and you walk in obedience. This strengthens the effect that the breastplate of righteousness will have in your life, and it will protect your vital organs, specifically your heart.

Here's another quote that I wanted to share with you guys. *"When we tolerate sin, refuse to forgive, rely on personal righteousness, or allow earthly concerns..."* That could just be work. Work is not an evil thing, but can it crowd out time for an intimate relationship with God. *"...to crowd out time for an intimate relationship with God, we, in effect, take off the breastplate of righteousness, minimizing its power to protect us."*

When we get caught up in the world and politics and everything else and get our eye... The enemy loves what he's doing to our country right now. He absolutely loves it. He has us so fixated on politics and theories and everything else that our eyes are so far off our savior that it's minimizing the power to protect us in our life. The Devil loves it, you guys. He absolutely loves where he's got this country right now.

Jesus is like, "No, no, no, spend time with me. Sit at my feet. Put on the most bowed up, awesome breastplate of righteousness, helmet of salvation, shield of faith, sword of the Spirit, feet of peace, belt of truth." I want to bow you up. I want you to feel like you do after watching that intro video that you're ready to go out to battle and fight this thing. Not only that, you're not fighting alone. Do you know you have angels fighting on your behalf? There are spiritual forces of evil and there are literally angels fighting on your behalf and my behalf. There is a spiritual war out there. If you think this is a war just between Americans and our politics, you're crazy. This is much greater than democrat or republican. There is a spiritual war going on.

And that's why Paul says to put on this armor of God. Who cares what the Romans wore? This armor I'm talking about is way better than any armor the richest colony in the world could have ever produced at the time, period.

Our own armor will never save us in battle. That is why we must put on the armor of God. Your own efforts, your own work will not save you. It can't save you. Only Christ and Christ alone and his work on the cross will ever save you or me. And the beautiful news is it doesn't matter how you walked in here today or it doesn't matter where you're sitting on the couch watching this right now. It doesn't matter where you're at. There's no one who is too far. There is no past, present, or future sin of yours that has more power than the cross of Jesus Christ... none.

I want to close with this illustration. A friend of mine just moved up from Texas. Any Texans in here? You can always hear them; you know they are in the room. You always know. They think they are their own country already. A buddy of mine moved up from Texas, and I was getting his room ready. I was moving furniture; I wanted to surprise him and have everything unpacked for him before he got up here. I unpacked this piece of furniture. Am I the only guy in here that doesn't read directions? Thank you for being honest. You just pull it out, put it together, and you're like, *Sweet, they left me some extras in case I lose any pieces*. I just figure it out. That's what this man does. I won't say all men, but I just don't read directions.

So, I put it together and it was great. I put the whole thing together, all the pieces were used, and everything was together. This piece of furniture was perfectly put together. Then I reach in the box and there is another box within the box. It's taped up and everything. This is the original box. This is the same exact box I am referring to when I unpacked the furniture for my friend. I started shaking it and there was nothing in this box. Why in the world did they put a box within the box. This doesn't make any sense. I started looking at the box and I realized they literally put this box in that box just to fill a void so that the furniture didn't move around when they shipped it.

Well, when you're a preacher, everything becomes an illustration. The only purpose of this box was literally to fill a void that was within the bigger box. That's the only reason it was there.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm here to tell you today, with every passionate fiber of my being, that there is nothing in your life apart from Christ that will fill that void in your heart. You can't drink enough alcohol, you can't pop enough pills, you can't find somebody of the opposite sex... There is nothing in your life that will fill that void, apart from Christ. You can keep trying. And let's be honest with each other because I love to be honest. You'll still wake up the next morning and realize that that void is still there, that it's still unfulfilled.

That's because there is only one thing in this world that can fill that void that is in your life and it's not a box. It's the person and man of Jesus Christ. Within every single one of us there is this God shaped whole in our heart that the only perfect piece that fits in there is Jesus Christ and what he did for us on the cross. And the only way you or I get to go to battle with this breastplate of righteousness thrust upon us is by trusting him as our Lord and Savior. And once you do, you'll wake up realizing that void you had in your life is filled, and you'll have more purpose and joy...

I haven't looked back in 21 years. I finally realized the only thing that could fill that void for me was Jesus. And guess what? He hasn't disappointed. He hasn't let me down. He has fulfilled everything and it's seeping out. There are not only no voids anymore, it's overflowing that void.

So, I don't know how you came in here today. I know we have a phenomenal prayer team and a prayer room. I know you're not going to earn your own righteousness, that you can't walk in the presence of Jesus one day and say, "Hey, I want to come to heaven because I'm righteous." No one is righteous, not even one. Christ and Christ alone fills that void in your life. Christ and Christ alone puts the breastplate of righteousness on you so that you can produce and manage that fruit in your life.

So, if you want to pray, if you don't want to walk out of here and wonder if you get to put on the breastplate of righteousness, please join our prayer team. It is the best decision you will ever make in your life. I mean that with everything I have.

Father God, thank you so much for this team, for this family, for you and your cross that, God, when you look at us, you don't see all my junk, you don't see all our yuckiness, but, God, you see the imputed righteousness of your Son. Holy cow, that's amazing, God. Thank you for that.

I pray for the people in this church, I pray for the people viewing online, I pray for people all over this country, that you would stir a revival in the hearts of men and women, that this country would turn back to you, and turn to you, and repent before you, and give you their hearts.

Thank you that's all you want, and we don't have to try harder or do more, but you just want our hearts, Lord. We thank you for that.

It's in the matchless and mighty name of Jesus we pray. And all God's people said... Amen.