

Examining Ourselves: Are You Wearing Righteousness as a Breastplate?

1 Corinthians 11:23-34; Ephesians 6:14

Today is one of those times when the passage of Scripture we are studying, and the communion service to follow exactly match up.

Each time we come to communion we have been instructed to do something: we are to check and see if we are wearing specifically the second piece of our spiritual armor, and indirectly all the other pieces.

So today, before we celebrate communion, do you know that you consciously strapped on the breastplate of righteousness? How do we know? Here is a quick description:

Strapping on the BPOR (breastplate of righteousness) means a conscious decision that I want to live in all day long obedience to God. This is holy living, and holy living is one of the pieces of armor that protects us from the Evil One.

God gives us the power of His Spirit, and the expectations of His Word; but it is us who must be willing to take that power and obey that Word. The justifying death of Christ can be imputed to us; but we alone must strap on this form of practical holiness through the sanctifying life of Christ lived out each day that protects us.

Proclaiming Christ's Work at Communion

Today we are celebrating Christ's death on the Cross for our sins, and shedding His blood to forever forgive and cleanse us. That celebration we call Communion, or the Lord's Supper.

When we come together to celebrate communion, we are offering the highest form of worship, together as a church, that is possible to offer.

At communion we sync with what's going on in Heaven.

At communion we are mirroring the scene in Revelation 4-5 around the Throne.

This celebration of Christ's sacrifice of Himself for our sins is the atmosphere around the Throne.

The Throne of God is the center of the Universe.

Communion joins us with what is central to God in Heaven. So we need to remember:

The First Communion

The explanation we have as a church, of how the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated, comes from Paul's ministry in Corinth, where we find the earliest record of this event written down in 1 Cor. 11:23-34. Please turn there with me.

Most Bible scholars would agree that these words were the inspired record, written down before the church had the Four Gospels, as Paul was writing to the Corinthians.

As we open to 1 Cor. 11:23, we are hearing what Jesus personally taught Paul as he was trained by Jesus to become an Apostle of Christ. Please stand with me as we hear about the celebration of communion.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (NKJV) For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

Pray

A Rebuke & A Severe Warning

As you look down at your Bibles, did you notice that Paul's explanation of the elements of communion are sandwiched between a rebuke and a severe warning (11:17-22 and 11:27-34)? Notice what Paul says:

1 Corinthians 11:17-22, 27-34 (NKJV) Now in giving these instructions I do not praise *you*, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. ¹⁹ For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. ²⁰ Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. ²¹ **For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.** ²² What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you*.

²⁷ Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord **in an unworthy manner** will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man **examine himself**, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an **unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself**, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰ **For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.** ³¹ For if we would **judge ourselves, we would not be judged.** ³² But **when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.** ³³ Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴ But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.

What is Paul concerned about? Paul reminds them that when we come to the Lord's Supper:

At Communion We Each Declare: We Live for Him

Communion is when we pause to remember what Jesus did to make us His brother and sisters.

The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross is the central element of all our lives. His death in our place has given us a new identity. Christ's death opens for me the new birth into His family.

My purpose in life has changed because He died for me, so I can no longer live for myself but unto Him. The focal point of Heaven is the Lamb that was slain; and that becomes our theme for life, to live for Him.

As believers we are declaring the power of the Gospel: that the justifying death of Christ, opens to me the sanctifying life of Christ. But,

Satan's Plan: Discourage, Distract, Desensitize, & Disable Us

Satan wants to: Discourage, Distract, Desensitize, & Disable us from remembering the Cross, our redemption, and the life we are to live for Christ. Listen to what else the Lord asked Paul to remind the church at Corinth about:

2 Cor. 5:14-15 (NKJV) For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live **should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.**

2 Cor. 5:21 (NKJV) For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

Those verses are the declaration of who we are now that we are saved. Those verses declare that we are to be:

Check If You Are Wearing the Breastplate of Righteousness

In 1 Cor. 11:27-34, we can hear a warning today, and we can see how much we need to be careful that we wear each day the breastplate of righteousness. The chief characteristic of God who is "Holy, Holy, Holy" is to be the surrounding, protective wrap of our lives as believers.

First we make sure that everything in our lives is girded by the belt of truth, which completely links us to the True God, the Spirit of Truth, and to Jesus the Truth.

Then we check that everything in us is surrounded by the righteousness of our Holy God. We are protected from Satan's attacks when we are living within the righteousness of God.

What is the relationship between Christ's perfect righteousness imputed to us, and the armor of righteousness we are to put on each day?

"To put on the breastplate of righteousness is to live in daily, moment-by-moment obedience to our heavenly Father. This part of God's armor is holy living, for which God supplies the standard and the power but for which we must supply the willingness.

God Himself puts on our imputed righteousness, but we must put on our practical righteousness.

The church today is often guilty of supplying believers with the paper armor of good advice, programs, activities, techniques, and methods—when what they need is godly armor of holy living.

No program, method, or technique can bring wholeness and happiness to the believer who is unwilling to confront and forsake his sin¹."

So what does this chosen path of daily righteousness look like? We may call it holy living (living like God wants us to in holiness).

The Path of Wearing His Righteousness

Living in fellowship with Christ and in harmony with His perfect righteousness given to us, we are shielded from the Evil One. When Christ's righteousness is implanted in our heart, we bear the fruit of righteousness in our own lives. Christ at work in us produces the armor of righteousness. Holy living shields us, and unholy living endangers us.

Christ's Cross saved us once and for all from the *penalty of sin* (Hell is off limits for us).

Christ's sacrifice assures us the *power of sin* vanquished (Defeat should be off limits for us).

Christ's coming for us removes forever the *presence of sin* (Sin will be off limits forever).

Satan wants to: Discourage, Distract, Desensitize, & Disable us. When we walk in the flesh we have the fruit of the flesh

Our protection against such attacks is the breastplate of righteousness. Righteousness is to be taken and wrapped around our whole being, just as ancient soldiers covered themselves with armor breastplates.

Paul here is obviously not speaking of self-righteousness, which is not righteousness at all but the sin of pride. Nor is he speaking of imputed righteousness--the righteousness God applies to the account of every Christian the moment he believes in Christ (Romans 4:6, 11, 22-24). The breastplate of righteousness is the practical righteousness of moment-by-moment obedience to God's Word.

Our armor must include the breastplate of righteousness--the genuine holiness of him or her whose "every thought [is] captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5) and whose mind is set "on the things above, not on the, things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2)².

The Evidence of Wearing His Righteousness

When We Wear The Breastplate Of Righteousness We Bear Fruit For Him

John 15:1-5: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

(**warning:** lack of righteousness robs us of this fruitfulness!).

When We Wear The Breastplate Of Righteousness We Starve Our Lusts

¹ MacArthur, Jr., John F., *The Believer's Armor: Ephesians 6:10-24*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1997).

² Ibid.

Romans 13:12-14: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."

(**warning:** lack of righteousness feeds our lusts!).

When We Wear The Breastplate Of Righteousness We Are Rewarded For Daily Life Here On Earth

1 Corinthians 3:12-15: "Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

(**warning:** lack of righteousness robs us of these rewards!).

When We Wear The Breastplate Of Righteousness Our Mind Gets Captivated By Christ

2 Corinthians 10:5: "Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

(**warning:** lack of righteousness robs us of this mind surrendered to Christ!).

When We Wear The Breastplate Of Righteousness Our Mind Is Tuned Heavenward

Colossians 3:1-2: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."

Have you ever noticed how carefully the satellite TV antennas are aimed? If you miss the signal, the picture is either distorted or doesn't even come in! Think of that—if you miss the signal, the Word of God, then the picture, Christlikeness, is either distorted or non-existent.

(**warning:** lack of righteousness robs us of this clear signal from God!).

When We Wear The Breastplate Of Righteousness We Reflect Our Ownership

Titus 2:10 describes the ideal Christian servant as "not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things."

(**warning:** lack of righteousness robs us of this reflection of His ownership!).

When We Wear The Breastplate Of Righteousness We Seek Peace For Our Souls:

1 Peter 2:11: "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

If you have a life threatening medical condition that is seriously aggravated by certain foods, chemicals, activities, what do you wear? One of those med-alert bracelets. They read, "Warning: penicillin, milk, etc. are life threatening!" So we are wearing all around us a righteousness bracelet: "Warning: fleshliness is fatal to the soul!

(**warning:** lack of righteousness robs us of this peace for our souls!).

When We Wear The Breastplate Of Righteousness We Live In Overflowing Joy

1 John 1:4: "And these things we write to you that your joy may be full."

(**warning:** lack of righteousness robs us of this overflowing joy!).

Check If You Are Wearing the Breastplate of Righteousness

We need to be careful that we wear each day the breastplate of righteousness. The chief characteristic of God who is "Holy, Holy, Holy" is to be the surrounding, protective wrap of our lives as believers.

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At Communion We Each Declare: We Live for Him

The Full Armor of God We Are Each to Wear

1. **Belt of Truth** (v.14a) Vital to every soldier was this belt from which all tools of battle hung. This belt also held the soldier's robe together. To the Christian soldier a belt of truth means that we are surrounded by "honesty," "truthfulness," "integrity," and "sincerity" that every part of our life is governed by truth.

Dishonesty brings defeat! If we are not belted, if our life is not held in by truth, any type of dishonesty will bring defeat to our lives. we wear his Truth as the guide of all our ways.

2. **Breastplate of Righteousness** (v.14b) The soldier's breastplate was a heavy piece of armor that completely surrounded the body. To the Christian soldier this means a pursuit of personal, daily righteousness. We learn confession and repentance of sin can only maintain this.

Impurity will bring defeat, so say no to sin daily.

3. **Shoes of Peace** (v.15). The sandal soles of the soldier were impregnated with heavy, spike-like hobnails, which gave him a good footing, and also kept him safe from stepping on sharp objects. If you injure a soldier's feet he's out of commission. To the Christian soldier this piece of armor is a call to both "readiness" and "peace of mind."

If our hearts are not kept in peace by Christ, then **anxiety will bring us defeat!** we wear his Peace as the shoes to walk through life.

4. **Shield of Faith** (v.16). To a Roman soldier, his shield was a portable metal-banded wall, which he hid behind in battle. It was 5 feet high, 3 feet wide and served as the deflector from the flaming darts of the enemy. Our Shield of faith extinguishes all the flaming missiles of the evil one.

Doubt will bring defeat! We wear his Faith, as our shield in battle.

5. **Helmet of Salvation** (v.17a). A soldier never was far from his helmet. Nearly any object on the battlefield could immobilize a soldier if his head was unprotected. So to the Christian soldier the meaning of the helmet is assurance of salvation. A Christian who is not assured that he has salvation is just totally immobilized because he's unsure about everything. He's unsure about God's promises, His Word, His protection. He's unsure about his destiny, his purpose in life.

Lack of assurance brings defeat

6. **Sword of the SPIRIT** (v.17b). Quick and deadly was the sword of a soldier. Vital to any victory was the hand-to-hand combat, which ended in the defeat of the enemy. To the Christian soldier this victorious sword comes only through a personal command of the Scriptures. This is essential to effectiveness in battle.

Neglecting the Word breeds weakness and will bring defeat in our lives.

1. Buckled up by the Belt of Truth (Eph. 6:14a):

Truth is to hold us up, hold us in, and protect us from falling. This belt of truth is much like the restraints we strap around us when we get into one of those dangerous, high speed twisting, turning rollercoaster rides at some amusement park. The belt and bars that hold us are designed to keep us safe no matter how fast the car spins, twists or drops. We are held in. Truth holds us in.

God wants both. He wants us to know the content of truth and live the integrity of truthfulness. Truth means we have the readiness to obey; we have the integrity of commitment to truth; and we are opposed to all deception, dishonesty. We have no loose ends of our life that dangle and trip us up. We are girded, belted, strapped in by truth.

Our lives are to be surrounded and held together by truth we know, believe, and practice.

2. Guarded by Breastplate of Righteousness (Eph. 6:14b):

Every Roman soldier wore sleeveless armor that covered him from the neck down, past his waist, protecting his vital organs including his heart, lungs, and intestines. Made of cloth or leather sewn with pieces of animal hoofs, bones, and metal, it formed a barrier to swords, spears, and arrows.

For us as believers this righteousness is to be consciously put on. So this is not the justifying righteousness of Christ that was imputed to us. We can't put on what God has already imputed to us (Romans 4:5-6; 5:1). This is also not self-righteousness that God hates and sees as filthy rags. This is rather the constant flow of a believer's choices to obey God's Word.

When we wrap our life with righteous choices, like the soldier's armor we protect our lives from Satan's hijacking attacks.

Satan wants to cloud our emotions with anger, impatience, and selfish ambition.

Satan wants to confuse our thinking with error and lies.

Satan wants to desensitize us to sin, so we lose our compassion.

Satan wants enflame our natural tendencies to hide, rationalize, and blame our sins on others.

We are safe only when we have our thoughts captivated by Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), and when we set our minds on things above (Col. 3:2). Without that righteousness by choice, we are constantly getting not lead poisoning we hear about so much lately, but the deadening mind-poisoning Satan uses to sidetrack and debilitate us each time we allow him to.

The Five Key Truths of Spiritual Warfare

There are five key passages on spiritual warfare, and each of them has a very specific message for us to apply. As we turn to each one and read the verses, note the lesson and apply it, by the power of God's Spirit, in your life.

JESUS said to resist Satan we must—*USE GOD'S WORD.*

In Matthew 4:1-11 we saw that God's Word works, Jesus even used the Old Testament to defeat the Devil!

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, **but by every word** that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "

PAUL said to resist Satan we must—*USE GOD’S WEAPONS.*

In Ephesians 6.10-17 we see that our spiritual weapons are not human inventions or works, as Paul wrote:

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 **For the weapons of our warfare are** not carnal but **mighty in God** for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

JAMES said that to resist Satan we must—*LIVE SUBMISSIVELY in God’s sight.*

In James 4:7-10 we see submission to God precedes any resistance of the Devil.

James 4:7-10 Therefore **submit to God.** [is first and then, and only then can we] Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

PETER said to resist Satan we must—*LIVE HUMBLY in God’s sight.*

In I Peter 5.5-9 we see that God calls us to clothe ourselves with humility before we resist the prowling Devil.

1 Peter 5:5-9 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” 6 **Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,** that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 **Resist him, steadfast in the faith,** knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

JOHN said to resist Satan we must—*LIVE HOLY in God’s sight.*

In I John 3.7-9 we see how powerful a pure life can be, and how disabling impurity can be.

1 John 3:3, 8 And everyone who has this hope in Him **purifies himself,** just as He is pure. 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might **destroy the works of the devil.**

As we’ve already seen, our spiritual immune system is laid out in Scripture as having three factors: **spiritual health** (eating and drinking in God’s Word, plus exercising each day by walking in the Spirit); **spiritual armor** (understanding and uses the armor Paul commands

us to use in Ephesians 6:10-18); and **spiritual warfare** (resisting the devil and his demons). If you neglect any part of your spiritual immune system—Satan and his army have a point to step up their campaign.

2 Cor. 5:14-15 (NKJV) For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live **should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.**

2 Cor. 5:17 (NKJV) Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation**; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new

2 Cor. 5:20 (NKJV) Now then, **we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us**: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

2 Cor. 5:21 (NKJV) For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**