

Ephesians 6: 14; “The Armor of Truth and Righteousness”, Sermon # 8
in the series – “To be Strong in the Lord”, delivered
by Pastor Paul Rendall On October 14th, 2012,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.

There is nothing like a good testimonial to sell a product. If you have to go to war, there is nothing like good body armor to give you a greater confidence and assurance that you might survive an attack from an enemy. Listen to this. (Found on bulletproofme.com) “My name is Keith Lepor and I am one of your customers from Boston, Massachusetts from where I work as a freelance photojournalist.” “I have actually been working since October 2007 as a Forward Media Team Leader and Photojournalist for ISAF/NATO.” “I am writing to let you know that less than three hours ago in the Korengal Valley of Kunar Province, Afghanistan I was shot in the chest (over my heart) and your body armor saved my life.” “The plate has been damaged and I will need to get a new one upon my return to the USA in three weeks.” “With all best wishes, Keith Lepor.” (A VERY LOYAL AND HAPPY CUSTOMER) Another testimony – “Staff Sgt. Fred Rowe of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) testified before the House Armed Services Committee's joint session of the air and land forces subcommittee and the seapower and expeditionary forces subcommittee.” “Rowe is currently assigned to the 3-187th Infantry at Fort Campbell, Ky.” “Rowe told Congressmen, that in Iraq, he was saved by the body armor he wears, and said that he and the soldiers he knows feel confident their protective gear is capable of protecting them.” “I took three rounds to the chest -- with body armor,” Rowe said. “All three rounds were stopped by the plates. It hurt, but I was still mission capable. I was still able to do my job. And once I got my breath back, I was breathing fine and I was thanking the good Lord above that everything was all right.” “Rowe said he knows the ballistic plates in his protective gear are designed to hold up to a volley of three shots -- and the gear he wore met that standard.” This afternoon I would like to introduce to you the sufficiency of the Christian’s body armor; the armor of truth and righteousness. It is very capable of protecting you in the spiritual battles with Satan, if you will only take it up and wear it. If you wear it, you will be much more confident of standing in the evil day when it comes. Let’s take a look at that which will protect your heart and mind in the day of spiritual battle.

1st of all – When you enter into spiritual battle you should gird your waist with truth.

“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth.” The girdle or sash was worn as a short tunic girded at the waist and it held all the armor together; the scabbard for the sword, the breastplate above. It was the loins of the soldier that were girded. Our spiritual loins must be girded up by truth. The Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1: 13 instructs us to gird up the loins of our mind. The loins refer to the

center of strength and balance in a man. The strength and balance of a Christian are found in binding himself in constancy and commitment to a sincere obedience to the truth of God's Word. This obedience flows out of a sincere spirit. It begins in right thinking. Psalm 32, verse 1 says, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit is no deceit. (guile) When a person first comes to Christ he should know and understand that there is a body of truth called "the faith" which he becomes obedient to. That "form of doctrine" to which he is delivered. (Romans 6: 17) A person becomes obedient to the Apostles doctrine because He has Christ for his Lord and he knows that he is under orders to Him; under the authority of Scripture because it is given by God to define the Christian life and warn us of the errors of men, and the deceptions promoted by Satan. Biblical truth is the center of every offensive and defensive action taken by the Christian. But it is accompanied by genuine unfeigned personal faith being exercised by the Christian. Satan is promoting lies and half-truths, but God's Word is truth, and to defend himself, the Christian must gird it on. When it is girded on, all incoming thrusts of the enemies sword, all of the fiery darts and arrows of error and false doctrine will be met with the truth and they will not penetrate to bring spiritual wounds, confusion, and deception. There is an exclusivity to truth that will not allow error and lies to co-exist with it. Truth will always stand against every error that comes to lead the Christian to destruction, and it will prevail. But truth must be girded on in order to be effective. This each believer does, by deliberately receiving and bringing their thoughts, opinions, and feelings under the authority of Christ in His Word. The truth holds us; the truth keeps us safe. When we believe that Jesus is the only Savior of sinful men, we are safe. Errors in truth and doctrine keep men from God, and from being saved. They must be exposed. When truth is mixed with error or lies, souls will perish unless there is a person who is girded with truth, who will come and take up the sword of the Spirit and hack away the error, or exposes the lie. This is the duty of every Christian, but especially the pastor. The church is the pillar and support of the truth. (1 Timothy 3: 15) But the pastor especially is to take heed to himself and to the doctrine that he teaches. He is to continue in them for in doing this he will save both himself and those who hear him. This means that the pastor is to continue to take heed to himself see if he himself is sincere in regard to the truths that he preaches to others. If he is sincere, he will promote that same sincerity in others. The Apostle Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 1: 12 – "For our boasting is this, that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you."

The 2nd article of armor which the Christian will have to put on is the breastplate of righteousness.

Turn over with me to Romans Chapter 10. Righteousness in the Scriptures is spoken of in 2 broad senses – The righteousness of the law, or a legal righteousness. And the righteousness of faith, or an evangelical righteousness.

The legal righteousness is that which demands an absolutely perfect obedience, personally performed, and perpetual in its duration. The man, woman, or child that does those things which God's law commands shall live by them. The problem, of course, is that the first man Adam who had the opportunity to keep the 1 good commandment give to him by God, failed to pass the test. And thus he fell from his original righteousness and passed on to us the fatal consequences of that fall. We are "in Adam" when we are born into this world; fallen in our nature from this original righteousness. Can we then with a fallen nature and guilty of many sins work out a righteousness of our own in relation to God's perfect Holy law? Can we then ascend to heaven to bring Christ down to save us from our sins? Can we descend into the Abyss to bring up Christ from the dead that we may have power to live to God's glory? No, the righteousness of faith. This is an evangelical righteousness.

This evangelical righteousness itself consists of two aspects as well – Imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness. The imputed righteousness is that perfect obedience which our Lord Jesus rendered to God Himself and His holy law on our behalf. He rendered this perfect obedience both in His keeping all the commandments of God, and in submitting to the punishment of death on the cross as a substitute in our place, bearing the wrath of God there so that we who believe would not have to. When we believe, this perfect righteousness is imputed to us by God the Father, we come to have a perfect legal standing in the sight of God. We will speak more about this we get down to the shield of faith, but suffice it to say that we are protected by Christ's righteousness both in terms of our guilt legally, and in terms of our approving ourselves unto God in our obedience after conversion to Christ by His grace. This, I believe is the breastplate of righteousness spoken of here. It is not only an imputed righteousness, wrought for the believer, and on his behalf. It is also an imparted righteousness wrought by Christ for the believer, and conveyed by grace into the heart of believer; that is, the righteousness of our sanctification. It is based upon "a principle of new life, the life of Christ, planted in the heart of every child of God by the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit." The righteousness imputed covers the righteousness imparted so that all our obedience, all of our righteous works, are completely covered by Christ's blood. All of our works after conversion are made acceptable because they are wrought in Him. (John 3: 36) What this righteousness in the breastplate does, is to protect the vital organs of our heart and conscience from the attacks of Satan upon them. Satan cannot take a true Christian to hell, but he can, by deceitful scheming, cunning temptations, and alluring wiles keep the Christian from obedience and holiness. Besides, he may not know who are God's Elect and who are not. And so his purpose is to sift. His purpose is to drain the life blood of holiness from the Christian. His is to attempt to prove that a Christian is no Christian at all, or to get them to dishonor their God if he can.

This is where the breastplate comes in. Christ's righteousness is what protects us and give us confidence in our striving to be holy, in our deciding to be obedient. We remember that Christ was, and is, the perfectly Holy One in whom we trust. We remember that He put on righteousness as a breastplate. Turn with me over to Isaiah 59: 16 – "Then 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 intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him and His own righteousness, it sustained Him." "For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as with a cloak." I hope that you can see from this passage that it was Christ's obedience that merited God's favor toward us, not ours. With that in mind then, we do battle for truth and holiness in His name. We are sober, we watch, and are alert to the tempter's suggestions, we put on the breastplate of faith and love as it says in 1 Thessalonians 5: 8. Since our Christ has purchased this armor of light for us we will stand, walk, and fight the good fight in it. We will do our best to maintain a conscience void of offense before God and man. When Satan accuses us our sinful past or our inconsistent present actions, or the feebleness of our obedience, we remember that we stand in Christ's righteousness, and we trust that by the new principle of His grace within our heart, we will follow after Christ in obedience to His Word. We can exercise faith, we can show our love to God and man, we can keep His commandments; all because our heart is safe behind the breastplate of Christ's righteousness. And it is strengthened by His grace. You must have this breastplate to be strong and safe in the Lord.

I now want to bring this message to a close, because I believe that this is enough for now. You and I should ask ourselves these questions. Do I have the loins of my mind girded with truth? Do I not only have a Bible in my possession, but am I sincerely attempting by God's grace to apply truth to every situation in my life, as I am coming into it? Does the truth of the Bible hold me and bind me to a practical as well as a doctrinal obedience? That is what it is there for. And, will I remember the difference between a legal and an evangelical obedience? Do you realize that you can never perform the first, but that you must always attempt the second? And do you realize that all of your attempts to obey all the particulars of God's Word are based, really, on the grace and strength which Christ alone supplies; that of yourself, you can do nothing? That even when you do well or fail, that it is Christ's righteousness that protects you, keeps you, and establishes you? Believing and putting on that knowledge you will stand in the spiritual battle in the evil day. May the Lord help each of us to be strong. May we be valiant for truth and His servants in righteousness.