

Guard Your Hearts!

Ephesians 6:13-14

East Berlin Community Church

Pastor Keith A. Mosebrook

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Introduction

- The number one killer in America is heart disease.
- The best cure for heart disease is prevention. We need to become “heart conscious”.
- The Bible calls the center of the entire man, the “heart”. It is the center of our thinking, emotions, feelings, and decisions. It is where morals are decided and courses of action are determined.
 - Matthew 12:34b-35-- *“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.”*
 - Proverbs 23:7 -- *“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he... Eat and drink...But his heart is not with you.”*
- We must guard our spiritual “heart”.
 - Proverbs 4:23-- *“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life.”*

Guard Your Hearts!

A. By Putting on the “Breastplate” of Righteousness! Ephesians 6:13-14

- Ephesians 6:13-14-- *“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. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with the truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness.”*
1. The Roman soldier’s breastplate—protected the heart and vital organs.
 2. Protected also the intestines and bowels.
 - a. Greeks believed that the center of one’s emotions was located in the bowels or intestines.
 - 2 Corinthians 6:12 -- *“You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections”*
 - 1 John 3:17-- *“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in Him?”*
 - Ephesians 4:25-- *“be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you!”*
 - b. Problem with today’s counsel to “Follow your heart”.
 - Jeremiah 17:9-- *“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?”*
 - Jeremiah 17:7-8 -- *“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is in the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.”*
 3. Spiritual application:
 - a. Satan attacks not only our minds, but also our hearts, confusing our emotions and perverting our affections, morals, loyalties, goals, and commitments.
 - b. We make provisions for the flesh.
 - Romans 13:14-- *“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”*
 - c. To protect our heart and bowels, we must put on the “breastplate of righteousness.”

- d. Jesus Christ Himself wore it.
- Isaiah 11:5-- *"righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist!"*
 - Isaiah 59:16-17-- *"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 garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak."*

B. By Putting on the Right Kind of "Righteousness"

1. Definition of "Righteousness" — means to be "right on" the mark, meeting the standard.
2. Different Kinds of Righteousness
 - a. **Self-righteousness**, that is, a self-made, do-it-yourself kind of reaching the mark.
 - Luke 18:9-14 -- *"And He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'"*
 - 1) Trusts in himself, in his own goodness.
 - 2) Evaluates his righteousness using two criteria:
 - a) Compares himself with others.
 - b) Lists the legalistic good works he has done
 - 3) Does everything to be seen of men.
 - Matthew 6:5-- *"love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corner of the streets, that they may be seen by men."*
 - 4) Is proud, puffed up, full of himself
 - b. **Imputed Righteousness**
 - Romans 4:1-8-- *"What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham is justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scriptures say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as a debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also described the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute sin.'"*
 - 1) God imputes perfect righteousness to our account on the basis of our faith, not our works.
 - Romans 4:22-25-- *"And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification."*
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21-- *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*
 - 2) We cannot put on with what God has already clothed us. We are permanently dressed in the righteousness of Christ.
 - c. **Practical Righteousness**, that is, living according to God's standard with God's power.

C. Putting on the “Breastplate of Righteousness” involves....—Romans 6:13

- Romans 6:13-- *“And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”*
1. **Yielding ourselves to God.**
 2. **Yielding the “members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness to God”**
 3. **Choosing to obey the word of God.**
 - Romans 6:17-19-- *“But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves to righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for holiness.”*
 4. **A life-long process of “putting off, renewing our minds, and putting on”**
 - Ephesians 4:20-24-- *“But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”*

D. Failing to put on the “breastplate of righteousness...”

1. **Can destroy our lives and those closest to us!**
 - James 1:14-15 -- *“each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death.”*
2. **Can decimate our emotional well-being!**
 - John 15:9-11 -- *“As the Father loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”*
 - Psalm 32:3-4 -- *“When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.”*
 - Psalm 51:7-8 -- *“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones you have broken may rejoice.”*
 - Psalm 51:12a-- *“Restore to me the joy of your salvation.”*
 - Psalm 32:10-11-- *“Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; But he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”*
3. **Can bring disgrace to God’s name and His Word.**
 - 1 Timothy 6:1 -- *“Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed.”*
 - 2 Peter 2:7-8 -- *“delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds,)”*
 - Genesis 19:14 -- *“Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city! But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking!”*
4. **Can disqualify us from further service and rewards.**
 - 1 Corinthians 9:25-27 -- *“And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore, I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it under subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”*