

The Breastplate Of Righteousness

Ephesians 6:14

Pastor John Miller

I want you to back up to Ephesians 6:10. We're probably going to read this every week. Beginning at verse 10 Paul says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles," I want you to notice the "wiles" or the schemes or the tactics, "of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood," it's not a physical war, it's a spiritual war, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day;" that is, the day of attack and temptation, "and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins," or your waist, "girt about with truth and," here's our focus tonight, "having on the breastplate of righteousness."

Paul makes it clear in this passage that we've been looking at that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high," or heavenly, "places." As believers, we are engaged in a spiritual battle. There are forces of evil that oppose not only God but oppose us as God's people. They cannot be seen with the naked eye, but they are every bit as real as that which we can see. Behind it all is the devil (verse 11), "the wiles of the devil." We learned that the devil is powerful, wiley, and wicked. He has wicked schemes. He has come to steal, to kill, and to destroy; but God has given to us armor. God hasn't sent us out in our own power to battle the enemy. He has given us spiritual armor so that we can stand in the evil day. So, he encourages us (verse 13) to take the whole armor of God—the whole panoplia of God "that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

The first thing that we put on is the belt of truth around our waist or "loins girt about with truth, and having the breastplate of righteousness." The way to overthrow the devil's lies is to put on the belt of truth. Also, the way to overcome the devil's accusations and to stand against him is to put on the breastplate of righteousness. So, satan is a liar, and we must put on truth. We learned that there are two aspects to that truth—God's Word, which is truth; and the living, which is truth. We know God's Word (the doctrines, the truth of God), we don't believe the lie of the devil, and then we live out the truth which means integrity. The belt of truth really is conveying the idea of the believer's integrity.

What was the Roman soldier's breastplate that we come to tonight? The breastplate was attached to the soldier's belt and was made of metal. Some say that sometimes they had breastplates that were made out of heavy leather covered with metal or also covered with chains, and it covered his body from his neck to his waist. It did, contrary to some view, cover his back and protected his heart and other vital organs, basically the very important part of your body—the heart, back, vital organs. It went from his neck down to his waist. It was a sleeveless vest and was open on the sides, but it attached to the belt. No soldier would go into

battle without the breastplate on. If you were to run out into the battle without the breastplate on, you could certainly be a casualty and wiped out. I believe that no Christian should try to stand against the wiles of the devil without having on the breastplate of righteousness.

What does the breastplate of righteousness symbolize for the believer? Well, Paul makes very clear that this is righteousness. It's not just a breastplate, but it's a breastplate of righteousness. Actually, in the Old Testament God says that He wears a breastplate of righteousness; so the truth is that we're taking on God—we're putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. The question that we want to focus on tonight is what kind of righteousness? The breastplate represents righteousness but we need to ask the question: What kind of righteousness? When you study the Bible, it's a good thing to ask questions. Someone said, "If you talk to your Bible, your Bible will talk to you." You need to sometimes ask, "Well, Paul, what do you mean by righteousness? What kind of righteousness? How do I get that righteousness? How does it manifest itself in my life?" So, if you talk to your Bible, your Bible will talk to you. We're going to ask the question of Paul, "What kind of righteousness is he speaking of here?"

For the Christian there are two kinds of righteousness. This isn't new. I've taught on it a million times, but I believe that tonight it's important to see it very simply and very clearly. For some, it's important to grasp this truth. There are two kinds of righteousness for the believer. They come in two different categories. Now, I want you to understand them. They are first of all what's called imputed righteousness and secondly what is called imparted righteousness. Those are just nifty little terms to explain them. I'm going to give you a lot of different synonymous terms to help try to shed light on these two kinds of righteousness. There is imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness or positional righteousness and practical righteousness. Now, if I were going to pick terms to best describe it as far as I'm concerned, that's the terms that I would use—positional and practical. Again, I make no apologies for being very simple and very clear because I believe that if you understand this Biblical concept it will transform your spiritual life. A lot of problems in the believer's life because they don't make the distinction between the two kinds of righteousness. We have a position in Christ. It's positional righteousness. Sometimes it's also called your "standing" in Christ. Then, we also have a practical righteousness. This is your living—how you live practically the Christian life. We need both kinds of righteousness if we're going to stand against the devil. Let's look at them individually and then again we'll contrast them.

First of all there is imputed or positional righteousness. Theologians refer to this as "justification." Positional righteousness is that righteousness when God declares the believing sinner to be righteous based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. When you are saved, when you are born again, when you have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit by faith in Jesus Christ, you then immediately are given righteousness. It is imputed to you. By the way, that imputation concept (and it is a Biblical concept) is a banking term which means to put to the account of. It would be like you are bankrupt (and you say, "Amen, brother, I am. I identify with that,") and someone takes a bunch of money and deposits it into your account. "Hallelujah, Praise the Lord!" Wouldn't that be cool if someone said, "Hey, I got a couple thousand dollars. I want to put it in your bank account for you. You can have it." I won't argue with that. They're

imputing that to you. What you didn't have, they just gave you. Well, we don't have righteousness. We're spiritually bankrupt. We have nothing by which we can commend ourselves to a perfectly righteous and holy God; but through our faith in Jesus Christ, God does something we can't do. He imputes to us, He puts to our account, He puts in our record, He puts in our empty account the very righteousness of Jesus Christ. How righteous is Jesus Christ? He's perfect, right? He's the very righteousness of God. So, justification is the act of God where He declares the believing sinner righteous.

Now, let me make a very important point: Every Christian has imputed righteousness. Every Christian has positional righteousness. Every Christian has been justified, and justification does not come in degrees. There is no one Christian more justified than the other. Every Christian is equally righteous before God as any other Christian. Now, if you're feeling defeated tonight, and you're feeling unspiritual tonight, and you're feeling like you're a second-class citizen in the kingdom of God, and God doesn't really love you as much as he loves that person over there because they have a nicer Bible than you do and they knew exactly where Ephesians was when they opened it—you kind of fumbled...you had to look at the table of contents—so you're feeling kind of lousy tonight and satan's going, "You're a lousy Christian." You are equally justified before God as anyone else. Just this truth can absolutely transform your life. You can't improve upon it. You can't become more justified. The moment you are born again you are declared righteous before God; and it will never, ever, ever, ever change. Amen? That's a marvelous truth!

Every Christian has that standing—that position—equally. What exactly is it? Turn with me to Romans 3. I don't want to take too much time, but this is important. This is one of Paul's main themes in many epistles—how we are justified. The entire book of Galatians is written about how we are righteous before God, but in Romans 3:20 (and we studied it on Wednesday night) he says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified," there's our word, or righteous, "in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Write this down. No one is justified by keeping the law. You don't become righteous by doing good things. Now notice verse 21, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets," so it's something that even in the Old Testament God spoke of and prophesied. Notice verse 22, "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." The second point I want to make, not only is a person justified or righteous apart from the law or keeping the law or doing good deeds, we're also justified by faith (verse 22) in Jesus Christ and it's for, "all them that believe," through faith. Everyone can be righteous before God by faith in Jesus Christ. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Write this down. We are saved by God's grace. We are justified apart from law through faith in Christ and by God's grace. Freely means without a cause "by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just,

and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." When God justifies the guilty sinner, He does it in perfect justice and righteousness. Verse 27, "Where is boasting them? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." Here's the summary (verse 28), "Therefore we conclude that a man," or person, "is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." So, it comes back to that first point. We are declared righteous by God totally separate and apart from any good deeds or righteous deeds or any law keeping that we might perform. Go back with me to Ephesians 6.

Charles Swindoll says this about justification or positional righteousness. He says, "This positional righteousness can never be forfeited, lost, diminished, or taken away." I agree one hundred percent. Once in Christ, always in Christ. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Period—that's where that verse stops. Satan is the accuser of the brethren, and he accuses us before the throne of God night and day. This righteousness is absolutely essential for you to stand against the accusations and the temptations of satan; and because we will stumble, we will fall, we're not perfect, and satan will come and use that to attack and condemn us, we need to stand in this doctrinal truth that I am justified. I am declared righteous before God. So, you can say, "Bug off, Beelzebub!" That's what I tell him. He may accuse you, he may point his finger at you, and he has a long bony finger. I don't know how, but I just think the devil's got this long bony finger of accusation and wants to accuse you. "You shouldn't be in church tonight because you're a big sinner. Who do you think you are singing songs," and "Who do you think you are calling yourself a Christian?" You need to remind yourself that you have trusted Jesus as your Savior and God has imputed righteousness to you. We'll come back to that in just a second.

The second kind of righteousness is imparted righteousness or practical righteousness. This is what theologians call—don't miss it—sanctification. The first big word, justification, which means God declares you righteous (listen to me carefully) and sanctification, where God is actually making you righteous. One is positional, and one is practical. Now, they are joined together. We cannot separate them. Whatever God has joined together, let no man put asunder; and having been justified by faith, we should go on to live a life of holiness before God—not perfection, but a growing holiness.

Justification is me in Christ, positionally; sanctification is Christ in me. Listen to me very carefully. When you are justified, God declares you righteous. Underline the word "declare." When you are sanctified, God makes you righteous. Underline the word "makes." There's a contrast between being declared righteous and being made righteous. The goal of the Christian life is to bring up my practice, my position, my sanctification, to an equal level of my position. I am righteous in Christ, now I need to live up to that. I need to bring up my holy living to the same—not to earn, not to merit, not to deserve favor with God, not to win brownie points, not so God will bless me, not so that I can go to heaven when I die; but because God has given me this standing, I want to glorify Him by the way that I live.

Paul is writing to Christians, and he's telling them to put on this breastplate of righteousness. Most likely, his emphasis is on imparted righteousness. Write this down, Philippians 2:12. Paul

tells us to, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The idea is that you live it out. It's the very same word that would be used of a mathematical equation. I do not like math. I do not like numbers, and I'm horrible at math. I remember in junior high I had this math teacher that loved math, and I thought he'd lost his mind. He'd write these big things on the board. He had chalk all over him. There was just chalk all over him. It's like it's just creepy dude, you know, and he's just writing all these numbers. To this day, I have no idea what was going on. He's writing all these numbers and comes to the...he'd get so excited when he came to the conclusion and got the answer as he's writing on the board. The students would have to go up and do that. I was just scared to death that he was going to call me to come up and do that. I'd just be holding the chalk going, "Uhhhh." This is the very word that Paul is using here to work out. It would be used of a mathematical equation where you start and go and it comes to this conclusion. That's what he's saying. What God has given to you, what God has worked in you, you work out. He's not saying work for your salvation. He's saying work out your salvation. So, we have been given righteousness; now we need to live it out. Now we need to work it out, and we do it with fear and trembling.

How we live either fortifies us against satan's attacks or makes it easier for him to defeat us. Now, we have our position that cannot change, and there we need to stand and rest. We need to retreat to that quite often, but we also need to live a life that doesn't give fuel to the devil. We don't want to purposely sin and give him ammunition to be able to fire at us and bring to us condemnation. Why do we need to wear this breastplate of righteousness? The answer is simple. The devil is a slanderer. The word "devil" actually, and we have it there in Ephesians 6:11, means that he is a slanderer. That's what the word "devil" actually means—slanderer. He comes to slander us before God, and then he attacks us. In Revelation 12:10 it actually says that he is the accuser of the brethren. By the way, let's leave that dirty work up to the devil and stop doing that ourselves. Let's stop accusing people of things and just kind of leave it up to the devil. The devil accuses us before God. Now, listen to me very carefully. When satan talks to God about us he tells the truth, but it's no surprise to God. But, listen carefully, when he talks to us about God guess what he does—he lies. When he talks to God about John Miller he tells the truth. "John Miller this..., John Miller that..., and everything he says is true. When he comes to me, and talks to me about God, everything he says is a lie—you need to know that.

Jesus is our advocate. You say, "Well, what are we going to do? He's up there talking to God about how messed up we are!" You have a lawyer. Guess who He is? Jesus. You see those cop shows on t.v. "Well, I'm going to talk to my lawyer! I'm not answering any more questions." Well, you have a lawyer, and He's not some public defender that doesn't give a darn—forgive me if you're a public defender here tonight. You can't have a better defense lawyer. Satan is before the bar of God, "John Miller this..., John Miller that..., and I'm over in the corner, "Oh, no! I am had! Man, everything the devil says is true about me." Jesus steps up and says, "Father, John Miller has trusted Me as his Lord and Savior and he has been justified, so everything against him is under the blood." The Father brings down the anvil, "I declare John Miller to be perfectly righteous," and I go skipping out of the courtroom. Amen? We have a defense attorney, and the Bible tells us that in 1 John 2:1-2, "...if any man sin, we have an advocate," that's what that word means. We have an advocate, we have a lawyer to plead for

us, "...Jesus Christ the righteous." One of the problems is that satan will accuse and seek to condemn us. Remember, the devil is "wiley" (verse 11). It means that he has schemes, tactics, and methods. Not only is he accusing me before God, but he comes and attacks me individually.

There are three "wiles" or tactics that I want to mention before we wrap this up tonight. I want you to notice them. First of all, satan gets us to accuse ourselves. This is a tactic, a method, a scheme of the devil. This list could be quite long, but I want to mention these three. Satan gets you to accuse yourself. You say, "Well, what do you mean by that?" Many times Christians fall into a constant self-examination, a constant self-condemnation. They get into what I call the "sin"-drome—they focus on their sin and can't see past that. That's all they think about, "I'm so sinful. I'm so wretched. I'm such a worm. I'm just nothing." I'm saying, "Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! But why are you dwelling on that? Why are you focusing on that? Yes it's true, but that's who Jesus died for." Amen? He died for wretched sinners. He died for the ungodly. He didn't die for the good, the godly, or the righteous. He died for the ungodly—that's me! I don't know about you, but that's me. I think that we all qualify as being ungodly. We're all outside the righteousness of God, and we need a Savior. Why do we wallow in and focus on that—this kind of morbid introspection and self kind of condemnation?

There's a difference (listen to me very carefully) between the Holy Spirit convicting us of sin (which draws us to Jesus) and the devil condemning us (driving us away from the Lord). Let me give you some of the contrasts. God convicts us in love; satan accuses us in hatred. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to convict us; satan uses our feelings, our emotions, and our memories to accuse and condemn us. When God convicts us, it draws us closer to Him; when satan accuses or condemns us, it pulls us away from the Lord. How do you know the difference between conviction and condemnation? Conviction will bring you to God in repentance. Condemnation drives you away from God. I'm convinced there are people at home tonight that didn't come to church because they didn't feel worthy—nobody is worthy. No one is worthy to come to church or come to God or open the Bible or talk to God—none of us are worthy! Join the club.

Satan wants you to believe that God loves others but He doesn't love you, and he's trying to drive a wedge between you and God. God's conviction leads us to discipline and devotion; satan's accusations lead us to depression, discouragement, and despair. When God convicts us, it's so that we might look ahead and have hope; when satan accuses us, he wants us to look back and to give up. I'm sure that many of you can identify with that. The minute you sin, satan is right there to go, "Aha! And you think you're a Christian? You think you're going to heaven? You think God loves you? You weren't really ever saved! You're not even born again. You don't have the Holy Spirit. How could you do such a thing?" He seeks to drive you away from God rather than coming to the Lord in humility and repentance. Satan wants us to dwell on our own sins. He doesn't want us to focus on God's grace. He doesn't want us to be reminded of God's imputed righteousness and the forgiveness that we have.

The breastplate protected the soldier in the area of his heart and vital organs. So, I think it's

conveying the idea of our feelings and emotions. It's very, very dangerous to live your Christian life based on emotions. I'll never forget being a young Christian and the joy that came over me when I first accepted Jesus Christ. It wasn't long after that that I kind of lost that joy, I lost that feeling, I lost a sense of His presence, and I thought I lost my salvation. I really kind of hit the depths. I was just in despair. I thought it didn't work for me. I'm not really saved. Everyone else is smiling, but I don't feel God or sense His presence. "Lord, where are you" and I prayed. It felt like the ceiling was brass and my prayers are bouncing off the ceiling, and I don't see or feel God. I just felt like God had forsaken and abandoned me. Then I discovered that as a Christian, that was what was called a "trial" or a "testing" and that we are to live by faith not by feelings. Have you discovered that? It says, the just shall live by...tingles; the just shall live by...goosebumps; "The just shall live by faith." Amen? Not feelings but faith. God said it, I believe it. God said He will never leave me nor forsake me. God said that as far as the east is from the west so far has He removed my transgressions from me, and I'm believing God's Word. I'm not going to believe my feelings. Feelings come, and feelings go. Feelings are deceiving. My faith is resting on the Word of God not my emotions. Don't let the devil deceive you tonight! Put on that breastplate of righteousness, standing in Christ complete.

Sometimes people will sin and then feel guilt and then estrangement. Many times they give up in reading, praying, and walking with God. That's a dangerous scenario. Satan tells you that you're not worthy. Satan tells you that God doesn't love you; God won't forgive you. "You sinned one too many times! That was the last time God will forgive you, and you blew it! You're out!" That's a lie from the pit of hell. First John 1:9 ought to be memorized by every Christian. This is what is sometimes called the Christian's bar of soap. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." There you have it. All you have to do is confess. Now, you're not getting saved again—this isn't justification. This is what's called "fellowship."

The first epistle of John is all about fellowship, and if we are children of God we're going to walk in the light as He is in the light; and when we do, the blood of Jesus Christ is continually cleansing us from sin. I don't lose relationship, I just lose fellowship. It's kind of like the sun is always shining in the daytime. Today we had a cloudy day; we had a cloudy morning. I was able to go out and sit on my patio because it was a little cooler, but I still put up an umbrella. I sat under the umbrella, but I couldn't see the sun. It was blocked, but the sun was shining behind those clouds. The minute the clouds moved out of the way, I could see the sun. So, your sin is like the clouds. God's love is always shining. Sometimes your sin separates you from God, but you don't lose your relationship. You're still His child, but as you confess your sin God forgives your sin—the clouds move away—and you begin to see, feel, and experience the sunshine of God's love. What we need to do is "walk in the light, as he is in the light," and then we have constant, continual, "fellowship," koinonia with the Father as we confess our sin. That means we agree with God that what we've done is wrong and He cleanses us, and the sun of His love begins to shine once again in our hearts. Don't let your heart condemn you. In Isaiah 43:25 God says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

Let me give you the second tactic of the devil. He also uses others to accuse us, and I won't dwell on this but as I said tonight, he's the accuser of the brethren, let's leave it to the devil. You know, every person in the Bible that tried to serve the Lord or be used by God came under attack and criticism. Nehemiah wanted to build the walls of Jerusalem and Sanballat and Tobiah opposed him, right? They falsely accused him saying, "You just want to be the king! You just want to be the big shot! You just want to be the new king of Jerusalem!" They attacked him. Sometimes people will accuse and attack you. This is where living practical righteousness comes into play—their accusations will not stick. There's nothing you can do to keep people from accusing you, but what you can do is make sure that they don't stick. Accusations will come, but they hold no water if you're living a life of righteousness.

King David, the psalmist of Israel, was always under attack and being ridiculed, put down, and mocked. David talked all through the Psalms about many are my enemies, many are they that accuse and come against me. David even prayed what was called precatory prayers—prayers where he would say, "Lord, I just pray for my enemy. I pray that You'll bust their teeth in their mouth!" Those prayers are never found in the New Testament—ah shucks! That's one prayer I can put into practice, "Lord, just bust his teeth out for me right now in the name of JESUS!" Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for them which persecute," not pray that their teeth get busted out. David had all these enemies. Let me tell you this, if you decide, "I want to serve the Lord. I want to be used by God. I want to be His instrument," guess what's going to happen to you? People are going to attack you. "You can't do that! You just think that you're more spiritual than I am," or they're going to accuse you of motives that don't exist. They're going to come against you.

Moses was accused and attacked by his very own brother and sister, Miriam and Aaron. Paul the apostle was under attack by so many enemies that came against him, and even our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ was referred to as being a demon-possessed man, a friend of publicans and sinners. One time his own family thought He had lost His marbles and came to try to save Him from Himself—they so misunderstood. The only thing you can do is stand in your righteousness and continue to live out your righteousness. You can't stop people from criticizing or attacking you. I have people come to me all the time, "Pastor, will you just pray for me. These people are saying this and saying that, they're doing this and they're doing that." My question is, "Is what they're saying true?" "Well, no." "Then, don't worry about it. Just thank God it's not true!" In Peter's epistle it says, "If any man suffer as a Christian...but not as a thief...or a busybody in other men's matters." If somebody is putting you down, just make sure they're not doing that because you're a busybody—get your busybody out of there! Do the right thing and the accusations won't stick.

Thirdly, and lastly, satan uses our circumstances to accuse, attack, and condemn us. We must stand in the righteousness of Christ. This is where the breastplate of righteousness is so very important. He'll use our circumstances—in difficult circumstances, times of adversity, darkness, and difficulty, often satan tells us it's because of our own sin. "If you were more spiritual your car would start, you wouldn't have had a flat tire, you'd have more money in the bank, you wouldn't be sick. If you were more spiritual you wouldn't have got cancer," and he attacks us.

How about the book of Job? Job was a righteous man. God was actually bragging about Job. He said, "Job is a righteous man. He's one of the most upright men that there were." Satan said, "Well, if You let me afflict him, take away his health and his wealth, he'll curse you, God, to Your face." God said, "Okay. Go ahead." Job, in one day...you think you've had a bad day? Everything that could go wrong went wrong. He literally lost everything. He lost his health. All he had was his loving, helpful, supportive wife who said, "Honey, why don't you just curse God and die." "Thank you, sweetheart. I needed that word of encouragement." Then, his three friends show up—everyone needs friends like that, right? Ding Dong! The door rang. "Okay. Fess up!" Can you imagine that? Everything that could go wrong, all that happened. They sit down, "Okay, Job, what'd you do?" "What do you mean, what'd I do?" "Yeah, what'd you do? Come on, fess up! You had to have done something wrong for God to be punishing you like this. There has to be something that you did for God to let this come on you." Job is like, "I didn't do anything." He just pleaded his righteousness through the whole book, and then he was vindicated at the end of the book; but so often we believe that our problems are the results of our sin. Let me tell you, God doesn't work like that.

There are times that God will chasten you because you've sinned. They are corrective—to bring you back. They are also protective—to keep you from drifting farther away; and they're also perfective—to perfect and make you more like Jesus Christ. They are to cause you to grow. Many times God allows these troubles in our lives because He knows that will help us to glorify Him and to be better equipped to do our service for the Lord, so don't misinterpret your circumstances. The minute something goes wrong, "God's mad at us! God doesn't love us! Why did God let this happen?" This is such a common reaction, "Why did God let this happen?"

Do you know that asking why does not take away the problem or lessen the pain? If you broke your arm and went to the doctor, and he told you in graphic detail how you broke it and why that bone broke, would that take away the pain? Would that help it to heal better? No. What's helpful is when the doctor says, "It's going to get better. You've got a future. There's hope, and you have something to look forward to." So, getting the answers why isn't going to take the pain or the problem away, and we don't always know why. I'm convinced that we're wasting our time trying to figure out why God let's things happen rather than just responding in faith and obedience letting God use it in our lives to make us more righteous and more like Him. I believe God can use our circumstances to help us live the breastplate of righteousness. We sing, When darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on his unchanging grace; In every high and stormy gale, My anchor holds within the veil. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.

Now, it all comes back, in conclusion, to Jesus Christ. Jesus is the truth. We fasten Him around our loins. Jesus is our righteousness, and we stand in Him complete. Don't let the devil tell you otherwise. You are in Christ. There's no condemnation. There's no separation. There's no defeat, and Christ is in you. This imputed righteousness is me in Christ; the imparted righteousness is Christ in me. I am in Christ—declared righteous; Christ is in me—to make me righteous. Sanctification is progressional. Sanctification is something you can grow in. You can become more righteous, and you ought to be more righteous. Every day you ought to be made

more and more like Jesus through prayer, Bible study, through responding in faith and obedience through trials. God uses the circumstances in your life to mold, shape, fashion, and make you more like Jesus Christ. What a blessed, blessed truth that is!

So, we stand in His righteousness, we walk in His power, and in Him we are complete. We're studying that on Sunday morning in the book of Colossians. By the time we finish this series on Wednesday night and Sunday morning you ought to be well able to stand in Christ against the onslaughts and attacks of the enemy. Don't let him whisper in your ear that God doesn't love you, God won't forgive you, and you're not worthy because you have an imputed righteousness; but "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Amen?