

Message Transcript

BELT OF TRUTH AND ARMOR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

| EQUIP FOR BATTLE

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Stay standing with us at all of the campuses. I don't know about you but sometimes the weeks are so long and heavy and you get confused and it feels so dark out there, but then when you come in to church and you lift up the name of King Jesus, you are reminded that there is One who sits on throne, there is One in control. Can we celebrate King Jesus one more time?

So, good. Go ahead and grab a seat, get a Bible, and get to Ephesians, chapter 6. That's where we are going to be today as we continue in this summer series Battle Ready. And here's what we've been doing in this series. We've been rolling out our refreshed Mission Statement, which is:

Clear the Way
Equip for Battle
Deploy for Impact

Now, Clear the Way—that's a nod to who we are as a church. Because we believe that Jesus is the only One who can change anyone. So, we spend our time removing any and all unnecessary barriers to get people face to face with Jesus. That's what we are about as a church. And some of you believe that it sounds like.

No, but then the second part, which is new for us, we're making this powerful claim that, "Hey, our mission is to be equipped for battle." Maybe that sounds intense, "I've never heard Christianity talked about that way. I thought Christianity was like a walk, you're just kind of walking with Jesus and you're moving at His pace." And, yes. That is true. To follow Jesus is learning to walk at His pace.

Or, maybe you think, "I thought Christianity was all about love. We want to love God, and we want to be loving people who are transformed by His love." Yes. Yes. Yes. All truth.

But all of that walking and all of that loving is happening within the context of a war. And you walk a little bit differently when you are at war. Love demands



different things when you are at war. You place your life in someone's hands when you move from civilian to soldier. It's a big deal.

But over and over again, in the Bible, God uses these military metaphors, these war metaphors to communicate the urgency and the reality of the unseen world that we are sometimes unaware of or choose to be ignorant to.

So, yes. I want you to hear this today. You are a son or a daughter of God. But what is also true is that if you have placed your faith in Jesus, you have been enlisted into His army. And I think we need to think more in this way within the proper setting of which we live.

I love the way that Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones says it. He's a Renaissance Man: a medical doctor turned pastor, incredible preacher. Look at the way he talks about it. He says:

"We [Christians] understand that there is war that has been waged. Is this always in your thinking as a part of your Christian philosophy and always present in your mind? If not, you have a very defective sort of Christianity." Now, I just want to reiterate that. We can't just ignore it because otherwise we will have a defective or incomplete worldview. If we do not acknowledge the spiritual war that has been waged upon us, we will constantly be confused. We will blame God for shots that come from the devil's gun. We will live, not knowing who we are and who God is in the midst of this.

But if we can come to terms with the fact that, "Hey, the enemy has declared war and we are in the midst of it," it will begin to make sense of a lot of what we think. And that's what we're going to be doing in this series.

So, hopefully by now you've had enough time to get to Ephesians, chapter 6, starting in verse 11. But before we read, I just want to give you the framework for today. I want to give you the three big questions that I'm going to unpack. And, hopefully by the end of today you will have answers to. Okay? Here's the framework:

Who is the enemy?
How is the enemy going to attack us?
And,
How do we protect ourselves?



I don't know about you, but if I'm at war, I want to know as much as I can know about who the enemy is and how he is going to attack me. So, with that being said, hopefully you've had enough time to find Ephesians 6. If you don't have a Bible, don't worry about that. Everything is going to be on this beautiful screen beside me. Look at this, starting in verse 11. Paul says:

"Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil." I would highlight, underline devil. "For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places." (NLT)

Okay, I don't know about you, but you're just reading that, and you are like, "Huh?" But the thing that I want you to hold onto, we've got to get this right because otherwise we attack people who are not to blame—this is not against flesh and blood. It's not against your neighbor. It's not against that relative that you wish wasn't your relative. It's not against the political. It's not against those people who represent those things.

The battle is not against flesh and blood. It's against (here's some good news) evil rulers and authorities in an unseen world. So, I have an enemy that I can't see and who wants me dead. Great.

But here's what I want to focus on. Who is this enemy? Who is the devil? Because I think maybe you've heard that term, "I've heard that term. I don't know. Definitely bad, evil, but what is his origin story?" I think if we can understand him it will maybe fill in some gaps in our theology of who God is and who the enemy is.

So, to do that I just want to take you to one place, because it's kind of wild. There is not that much about the devil, the enemy, in the Bible. We get a few verses here and there to describe who he is. And that's what I want us to do. As we are stepping into this place of war, what can we know about our enemy? Who is he really? The devil. So, Ezekiel, chapter 28—all of the verses will be on the screen next to me. It says:

"Then this message came to me from the Lord 'Son of man, sing this funeral song to the king of Tyre. Give him this message from the Sovereign Lord.'"

So, just a little bit here—this is written to the king of Tyre. But we will soon see that these words are actually for the devil. What many scholars believe is that this king was raised to power. He thinks he's doing really well. He is like a god, but God is exposing him. And it's like, "I'm talking to you, but I'm really speaking through you. You are a puppet."



"There is an evil ruler behind you and his name is the devil. He's the one that I really want to communicate to." There is this overlap between the physical and the spiritual when it comes to evil. Keep reading with me:

"You were the model of perfection full of wisdom and exquisite in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God."

So, now we know that he's not really just speaking to this king, we know about the garden and there were only a few people there. There was Adam. There was Eve. And there was this serpent, which we've come to know as the devil. I think this is important here for our theology too. It says, "You were the model of perfection. Everything God creates is good God is not some weird video creator like, "Okay, we have good guys. We need to create some bad guys they can fight against." No, he was the model of perfection. What happened? Look at verse 15, It says:

"You were blameless in all you did from the day you were created until the day evil was found in you."

I want you to hold onto this. The devil was created. The devil is not God's equal. God created two races: human beings and spiritual beings. The devil is powerful, but he is a created being who was corrupted. What was he corrupted by? Look at this, verse 17:

Your heart was filled with," say it with me, "pride because of all of your beauty. Your wisdom was corrupted by your love of splendor. So, I threw you to the ground and exposed you to the curious gaze of kings."

It was pride. Now, why that is important is because pride didn't just get the devil, it also got humanity. If you know anything about the fall of humanity it was pride that caused them to overreach. The same thing happened with the devil. He wasn't content with being the model of perfection. He wanted to be God. He believed that he could reach beyond what God created him to be.

And it doesn't go well. It says that he is cast down from heaven. And here's a little bit more information. He was not cast down alone. Revelation actually gives us more of an idea of what is going on here. It says:

"His tail," so the devil is also seen as a dragon, so more good news for you today, "swept away one-third of the stars in the sky and he threw them to them to the earth." Revelation 12:4 (NLT)



So, the enemy is the devil. Also included with that is one-third of the stars in the sky, which many believe represents angels—now fallen angels or demons. So, when we talk about these verses it's not just something we just glance over and read through. No, it's very real.

There is an enemy, and his name is the devil. And he's with a band of demons that are doing everything they can to keep you from the love of God. They are doing everything they can to wage war against God. That's where we are going with this.

And I know that maybe you're sitting here today, and you are like, "I'm so glad I'm here. Can you tell me more about an enemy that is trying to take me down?" I do want to tell you one more thing about this enemy. Look down at verse 19 for me.

"All who knew you," talking about the devil, "are appalled at your fate. You have come to a terrible end," and I want you to hear this, "and you will exist no more."(NLT)

God has a plan for the devil and there will come a day where he is no more. Our God proved that He is victorious on the cross over sin, death, demons, and the devil. That is what the Scripture says. And like Pastor Aaron was saying last week, when you know how it ends you fight differently. Your perspective is different.

We still live in this already but not yet type of space. But now we have a little bit more a framework of who the enemy is. He's not flesh and blood. He is powerful. He is meant to be taken seriously.

So, that moves us to the next question. How is the enemy going to attack us? That's a good piece of information to know. Right? And that's where the armor of God is very helpful. By looking at the pieces of armor that God offers, it tells us how we're going to be attacked. We need all of the armor of God for all of the strategies of the devil.

As we read this—the author is Paul—I just want to give you a little context. He's been arrested. He is imprisoned at this time. And he is chained to a Roman soldier. Every time he looks up there is another soldier. They are just chaining him from one to the next. He is very familiar with the items of their armor. So, Paul uses what he sees every day, what his audience would have seen every day, to communicate some spiritual truths.



This may sound familiar because it's exactly what Jesus did. We were just in a series called Red Letter Talks where we looked at the words of Jesus and we said, "Okay, Jesus would constantly use stories and parables to help us see an unseen realm—to help us uncover spiritual truths that aren't normal to us that we couldn't see without them. So, He would use symbols like light and bread and shepherds to help us understand what is really going on.

That's exactly what Paul is doing here. You see, Roman soldiers had an incredible set of armor. They were great warriors. Each piece of their armor was intentional. It was used for protect them in specific ways from the attacks of their enemies.

Think about it like this. If I told you, "Hey, we're about to go outside, but before we do, I want you to put on this bullet proof vest." What did I just communicate to you? What is going to be our threat outside these doors? Bullets—I promise you guys, I'm never going to trick you. There are no trick questions. You can have confidence if I ask you a simple question it is a simple answer.

If I say, "Hey, put on this vest," it means we may come into contact with some bullets, and I want you to be protected. A lot of times police officers will wear a bullet proof vest.

Now, say you're not a police officer. Say you are a fire-fighter. And say you are at the fire station, the alarm is going off, bells are going, and in my mind you are all sliding down that pole to get ready for action.

And as they go to put on their gear, the only thing that is there is a bullet proof vest. What do you think they are going to say? "Thank you, but no thank you. Do you have anything in the way of fire or smoke—anything like that that I could put on? Because my enemy is going to be fire and smoke." Everything a fireman wears is protecting from the threat that they may potentially face.

What about teachers? What do they wear? Nothing. Exactly! We need to get them a helmet or something. They are only protected... They are exposed, protected by copious amounts of caffeine. But, hey. You did it. You made it through another school year. Can we celebrate and honor all of our teachers? You are molding and leading the next generation. We love you. Hang in there. We're going to get you a helmet.



But the armor of a police officer and the gear of a firefighter are specifically designed for protecting the threat that they will potentially face. The same is true of the armor of God.

Paul is saying, "Just like there is physical armor for these Roman soldiers—they wear this for very specific reasons—the spiritual armor I want you to put on, the armor of God, is specifically designed to defend us against the strategies of the devil.

I want you to have all of that in context as we read through this list of what is included in God's armor, because every piece we need to put on. Okay? So, we're going to be in verse 13. It's a longer section so just take a deep breath and brace yourself. Paul says:

"Therefore," because of this war that we war in, because of the enemy that we have, "put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness.

"For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Now, this is a spiritual war. We can't see the enemy, but we can infer, based on what kind of armor God says that we need, what kind of attacks are going to be on the other side. We have the play book of the devil because of how God tells us He's going to protect us.

So, remove the items for a second. If we're going to get really excited with items: shields, swords—I don't have any of these. Some of you are already on Amazon right now. I'm going to need a shield, a helmet—please don't buy any of that. What he's trying to communicate here is not the item, it's what describes the item.

What Paul is saying here is, "I want you to put on God's truth. I want you to put on God's righteousness. I want you to put on God's peace. I want you to put on God's salvation. And then, I want you to put on God's word."

Because just like I need a bullet proof vest if I'm going to be attacked by bullets, if I need God's truth that means I'm going to be attacked by the enemy's lies. If I need God's righteousness, he's very specific, then that means that my righteousness is going to be attacked. If I'm going to need God's peace...



You following me where I am going with this? So, each item—I want you to see them but then I also want you to focus on, “Okay, because this is true, that’s given me a sign to tell me how the enemy is going to attack me. He’s not going to attack me the way a flesh and blood enemy can attack me. It’s going to be something darker and smaller and quieter.

In this series all we’re going to do each week for the month of June is take two pieces of the armor and break them down and talk about what they are, what it means to put them on, and how that can protect us from the enemy. Are you all ready for that—the first two today?

Belt of truth, he says, “You need to put on the belt of truth.” Now, we wear belts today, but they are almost completely different in most ways, especially for the armor of God. The belt was foundational. It was what everything sat upon. And a lot of times for people who would wear belts, when they were ready for action, when they were ready to move, they would have to take their robes and stuff them into their belts. That signified, “It’s about to happen. We need to move.” And I shove my robe into my belt.

We still have something like this. I don’t know about you but for me, I grew up in a world where there were quite a few fights. And back in the day, at school, we wore our pants a little bit lower than we were supposed to.

So, a sign that would tell you that there was about to be a fight is if one fellow would stand up and pull his pants up. Lord willing, he had a belt, and he would tighten that thing, which is a horrible tell. Because if you were paying attention, you could just punch them in the face before they got ready. But that was a sign to be ready for action. My belt needs to be tightened. I need to be ready to move.

The King James version really captures what is happening here because the NLT just says, “Put it on.” But the King James says:

“Having your loins girt about with truth.”

I love the way that sounds. Barely know what it means. We need more. We need more girding up, I think, in our culture.

We see this language over and over again. 1Peter has it. But the idea is gird up the truth. Grab it. Get it into your hands. Roll up your sleeves. Be ready to move.



And it says, "With your mind." So, gather your thoughts. Control what you think. What is true? What is right? What is pure? That's what we want to be focused on when we talk about the truth of God.

And this will kind of be an anchor verse for this series. We looked at it last week. I want to look at it again this week because it's going to tell us a lot about how the enemy is going to attack the truth of God. Look at this in 2 Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 4. It says:

"For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ..." (ESV)

So, it says that we are meant to put on the belt of truth. We're supposed to be focused on truth. And it says, because of that we destroy arguments and every lofty opinion that is raised against the knowledge of God.

And we think the devil is going to be loud and there is going to be this explosion in the air, when it's really going to sound a lot more like a whisper, like a lie in the darkness to confuse us, to take God's truth and to offer a lofty opinion. This is what he's always done. He's an old dog with old tricks.

Think about what he did in the garden. For those of you who don't know, we believe that God created everything and everything was good. And at the pinnacle of it He created man and woman in His image, and He placed them in a garden,

And He said, "You are going to love this. You won't believe it, but I've given you power and dominion over all of it. I want you to take care of it. You can have all of this. All of this, but there is one thing, one thing this tree—don't eat of this tree because you will surely die."

And then the devil comes in and he takes that truth and he offers his opinion. He says, "Hey, I know what He said. But He didn't really mean it. If you do this your eyes are actually going to be opened," pride is going to come back through, "and then you will be like God. You'll be more than what you are. God is actually holding out on you in this time. I want to offer you more than what God can." If you haven't read the story—spoiler alert—it goes horrible. That does not work, and they do die. But this is the devil's playground—half truths, sweet lies that we want to believe.



Why do we need truth? Why is God so firm on truth? Because the devil is the exact opposite, he is known as a liar. That is his name. Do you know how much of a liar you have to be that that is your first name, that's how people know you? But that's what Scripture says. Look at John, chapter 8, verse 44. It says: "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning," he's talking about the devil, "not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (NIV)

Do you know how much of a dig that is? Your first language is lying. Whatever language you speak, he had to learn that one. What he knows is lies and lies upon lies.

Just go with me for a second. If there was a spiritual war and God said that truth is important and we need it to protect ourselves, what would we expect to see from an enemy, if there was one? Maybe, I don't know, hypothetically, we would see confusion in the realm of truth. It would be questioned. What is truth? We would see even the idea itself of truth being offensive and becoming the enemy.

Think about it today. You can't talk about truth in a positive light. Meaning you can't say, "This is truth." That's a problem. You can't talk about truth in the negative sense. You can't say, "That's not true." That's a problem. Anybody else seeing that? It's so confusing.

But if you whittle it down, this is why it is scary, moral absolutes are being erased. Nothing is really true. If there is no source of one truth, then it's all the same and at the same time nothing is true and nothing is a lie. And that's a dangerous place to be.

Everything exists within a spectrum of truth. What does that even mean? Words have meaning. Fire is hot. There are some truths that we need to hold on to and believe.

The lies that the devil have created a lot of confusion. But I just want to stand up here and tell you what I'm seeing. That the darkness is breaking. Truth is shining through. Young people, specifically, who have grown up where they have seen the flaws of everything is true and nothing is true at the same time—it is confusing. But people are turning to truth.



The next generation is turning. I want to celebrate. We're going to keep celebrating. Hundreds of middle school students just came to a place where they gave up a week of their summer to go and to find the truth of God, to place themselves in a place where they could come to know Jesus and His truth. Can we celebrate the hundreds who made the decision to go to camp seeking Jesus?

Truth has a name. And its name is Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." My younger brothers and sisters, I just want to encourage you to keep coming.

And if truth is foundational, if everything else is going to rest on the truth of God, we need to make sure we have the truth. In a world where there is so much misinformation and so much extra information, where you can throw anything into Google and it will give you an answer back in seconds, you can develop a whole worldview, you can become an expert on anything in about 45 seconds. We need to be careful. We need to know what is true.

So, I just want to ask you and to have you really wrestle with this this week: What is the source of my truth?

Like I said, we're just going through life. There is so much that comes in from YouTube, Podcasts, books, celebrities—we just take a little bit from over here, a little bit from over here and we don't realize that we are accepting an opinion that was formed in like the last 10 years as the truth of our life. We're banking on it. And it's going to be exposed soon and we're going to come to find out that it's not as true as we thought it was.

If we are in the army of God, if we are in this battle, our role is to take those lofty opinions and they must be destroyed, not entertained. Scripture... Everything that I hear, my worldview as I create it, what I believe to be true, I've got to take it and say, "Is that what God's Word says?" If so, great. If not, I need to be willing to destroy it.

And that leads me to the next question:
Where have I accepted a lofty opinion that is in opposition to God's truth?
Where have I accepted an opinion that is in opposition? And this one is sometimes hard to see because we don't want to see it. Is there a lie that you want to believe?



Maybe it's something that you are doing in your life, it's a way that you are handling a relationship, it's something that you are doing, and you have this conviction like, "I don't believe that this is right. I don't believe that this is good. It's not true. But I really like the benefits that it gives me. And I'm afraid if I lay this down, there is not going to be anything better for me. At least when I have this it provides me some sense of love and control and power and it makes me feel good."

Do you see how we begin to exchange truth for a lie? I just want to challenge you, is there something like that in your life you don't really want to think about? You know the truth. You feel the conviction. But you're pretending that you don't see it. I think God wants to bring that to the surface.

Here's the thing. Jesus is the source of truth. And that doesn't just get applied to eternity. That's not just for you one day. It's not giving you some password to get into heaven. But, stay with me in this context of a spiritual war, if you are in God's army, Jesus is the King and the Commander. And we can't pick and choose what orders we'll follow and which ones we're going to ignore. They are all His and we have to accept all of them.

We need to commit to coming to know the truth of God. I need to know His voice. Because when the enemy whispers a lie, when the enemy tries to take a truth and bend it just a little bit, I'm so close to the voice of God, I know the truth of God so well that it becomes exposed in the moment and I take every thought captive and I dismantle arguments all in the name of Jesus. Nothing gets to stick. I can't control everything that comes in, but I do get to control what sticks.

Keep rolling with me. Now, with the belt of truth, verse 14, we're going to look at the next item. It says:

"Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness."

Who's righteousness? God's righteousness. He's being very specific here. What is righteousness? It's for sure a Bible word, a Christian word, not one that you use, probably, all of the time. Like, "Hey, babe. You're looking real righteous today. Lovely. Love what the Lord is doing."

But it's a big word and like most big words it has multiple definitions of what it could mean and all of them apply. So, when we think about righteousness here's what we are thinking about.



To be straight as opposed to crooked
To pass inspection. Approved. Up to standard
And then there is even a relational component:
Relationally, to be made right by another person
One author said it like this, "It means to be found pleasing in the eyes of the one you want to please."

We have a term for that as well: it's called first date. Right? That is what you want, to be seen as righteous. You want to pass inspection so you can move from this date to the next one. You want to offer all of your strengths and to hide every single one of your weaknesses and flaws.

I'm being honest with you. My first date with my wife, this is what I had to offer. And I knew it, which was very little. But blind date. Never met her before. I'm hanging out at this spot, and they had one of those "Pop Your Shot" basketball games, you know? Where you get to shoot.

My buddy taps me on the shoulder and says, "Hey, she's walking in." Instead of turning to greet her, my move was the best thing I could offer, to show her how good I am at this game. After I finish and break 100, I then turn and greet her. It is only by the grace of God that I am married. I saw the grace of God before I knew Him. Okay?

So, what does it mean to be righteous? It means to be made right. And we can pretend. We can try to use our own righteousness. But it doesn't work. In dating, you've been a part of that relationship, you get into it two months and you are like, "How did you hide this well from me? How did I not see any of this?" It doesn't work in the spiritual world either. Righteousness.

And if you are new or searching, not sure what you believe about Jesus or Christianity, can I just offer you something to help you in your search? Every religion, outside of Christianity, is built on some level of self-righteousness. You are given a truth, and it's the foundation, and it is up to you to live up to that truth. It is up to you to make yourself right.

But I want to tell you today, the difference between Jesus and everything else is something called grace. We see it all over the Bible. It is not about you being self-righteous, it's about God offering His righteousness to you—Him extending and blessing you with His grace. That's what we get.

But even if we believe that, there are so many of us who follow Jesus and for so long we know that He's covering us with His body armor of righteousness, but we're still tempted to create our own armor, "You need to be protected." Yeah, yeah, yeah, "And God is the only one who can protect you."



"Maybe. But maybe I could do it myself. Maybe there is a world where I can be strong enough and powerful enough and smart enough. That no matter what comes I will be protected."

You know what the devil calls that? Lunch.

It's like when we try to build our own armor we just expose ourselves. Anything we build will be a counterfeit. Anything we build will cheapen what the designer created for us.

It reminds me of one of my favorite episodes of The Cosby Show where Theo wants a Gordon Gortrell dress shirt. And he goes and his mom actually buys it for him. He brings it back. And his dad is like, "This is a great shirt. How much did it cost?" And he says, "Ninety dollars." And he says, "Ninety dollars? I'm a doctor and I don't even own a ninety-dollar shirt. Put it back in the box. It's going back. You cannot have this shirt."

And his sister hears this and says, "Theo, don't worry about it. I can make one. I can make one that is just as good as the designer. Just give me a little bit of time, no sweat." She takes a few days. The day of the big date Theo is getting dressed and this is what she made for him. It is the ugliest shirt on the face of the earth. It looks nothing like a Gordon Gortrell.

I think this is exactly what we look like to the devil when we try to put on our righteousness: buttons missing, one side too long over here, exposed on this side, left open over here.

I think if God tells us we need to put on His righteousness, that's the only piece of armor, I think He means it. And if God wants me to put on His righteousness that means mine isn't enough, that means yours isn't enough. It's going to be attacked.

Go, back to this. I'm going to stick with this. The reason why I wear a bullet proof vest is because my flesh is not strong enough to stop a speeding bullet. In the same way, your righteousness, my righteousness, is not strong enough to stop the devil. He will attack our righteousness.

What is he attacking for? What is he trying to get to? What is God trying to protect us from with this armor? What is God trying to keep safe by giving us His righteousness? What's at stake?



This is something I actually learned this week during study. What I learned is that the Greeks and Jews didn't believe that the center of your emotions, your place of being, was your heart. That wasn't where everything came out of—trust your heart, feel your heart, all of that. It was actually their bowels. Translations have changed to help us when the cultural differences are just too big.

Like, for example, in Jeremiah he says, "My heart, my heart, I writhe in pain." The literal translation is, "My bowels, my bowels." It just doesn't have the same turn to it. Does it?

Think about your favorite love song swapping heart for bowels. Think about your pickup line switching heart for bowel, "Girl, you look so good. You make my bowels move." Wait. No.

But that is what God is trying to protect. He gives us His body armor to protect our affections and desires. That's what the body armor of righteousness is trying to protect because that's what the devil is going after, your feelings, your wants. If he could disorder those desires, if he could make you believe a lie that would cause you to put down the truth and stand there exposed and unprotected... The way he does that is through accusations against your righteousness.

And if you are not covered with the armor of God, he will make his way straight through. Because if the God of this universe wants, more than anything, for you to be made right with Him, which leads to true freedom in life, then the devil wants the opposite.

He'll say that you aren't righteous. You are not accepted. And what does that bring when you don't feel accepted? Shame. That's the opposite. You feel ashamed and that's what he wants you to feel. I don't feel righteous. And if I don't feel righteous, I don't feel like I can go be with God. I don't feel like I can be with other people.

That is the Good News of the gospel. It says that as long as we preach that we are going to live in such a way... I am unashamed of the gospel because I know I cannot save myself, but it was by the work of Jesus on the cross. Accusations come and go, but our truth is rooted in the cross. Your righteousness, my righteousness is not strong enough to defend against the attacks of the devil. And he does not stop attacking.

I want to read something to you from Revelation, chapter 12. We're going to get a picture of how relentless the enemy is. It says:



"Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, 'It has come at last—salvation and power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to earth the one who accuses,' the devil accuses "them before our God day and night. And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony." (NLT)

He accuses them day and night non-stop. He is relentless. I want you to hear this. Without the armor of God, the devil's accusation will confuse your feelings, steal your affection, and bring disorder to your desires. You will become a victim to these attacks and accusations.

Anybody feeling that today? Anybody feeling like your desires, your feelings, your worth, your identity—how you think about yourself and what you think about God—are being attacked. Do you know why that is? It's because you're being attacked. It's because you have an enemy who is relentless day and night, night, night and day bringing accusations against you.

And I don't know what they sound like to you, but I can tell you what it sounds like to me, "You are unwanted. Nobody loves you. The only reason why you are there is because you're only half known. If people knew who you really were, if people knew where you came from, if people knew what you did, you would be brought out of that place. You don't even belong there. Do you think God wants to save a spot for you? God doesn't love you. Are you kidding me?" Or then you begin to shift into this idea of, "Okay. Maybe if I can't have this, if I could just have that." And then you feel these whispers and accusations come against you, like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. If you could just have that then you would be good."

And all of these accusations just get hurled at us. And we bring down our identity. We bring down our worth. And we bring down this idea that our righteousness, if we were ever responsible for, we forget that "No, it's not us." We begin to believe the lie that it's all built on us and what we've done, what we've provided, what we bring to the table.

And that brings us to the last point, the last question that I want to answer today.

How do we protect ourselves?

And all I want to do is take what we just learned and respond with truth. That's why it's so important to read Scripture because it applies today. We're going to read something and then we're going to apply it. This is what it means to study the Bible.



"So, when we read through Revelation it told us how we will defeat the devil, how we will overcome. We will defeat the devil by the blood of Jesus and by our testimony. We will defeat the enemy by the blood of Jesus and by our testimony.

Here's what that looks like, practically. When the enemy attacks and comes after you with lies, after your righteousness, when he says, "You aren't enough," when he says, "You are the worst," when he whispers in your ear, "If they only knew what you did. How could anyone love someone like you? You will never be accepted," shame, the opposite of righteousness just fills you. You don't feel right.

Then he has you on the ropes. It's like he has you on that witness stand hurling accusations at you until you break. And the phrase I want you to memorize, this is what Scripture tells us to do, when the enemy attacks our righteousness, this is what I want you to remember:
I plead the blood of Jesus Christ.

I plead the blood of Jesus Christ. There are so many of us that when we get attacked by the enemy we don't make that plea. We either plead guilty or innocent. And both are harmful.

We either plead, "No, no. I'm actually innocent. I'm good. I'm not that bad." He will expose that. Or, we funnel into that land of shame and say, "No. You are right. I am broken. I am messed up. I am unlovable."

Either one of those pleas leads you right to the devil. The only one that will create distance and allow you to stand and overcome the threat and the fire of the devil is to say, "I plead the blood of Jesus Christ. I plead the blood of Jesus Christ."

There was a time in the Old Testament where God was rescuing His people from Egypt. And He was sending a series of plagues, and they were affecting the people of Egypt to get them to let His people go. But they wouldn't do it. And finally, He sent the last plague. And He said, "Your firstborn will die unless you take the blood of the lamb and go over the doorpost of your house." What would that signify? It was signifying that everyone else was on their own. But these houses are protected by the blood. And anyone who was in that home, anyone who pled the blood of the lamb were protected and kept safe.



In the same way, when Jesus went to a cross, when He became your sacrifice, when He imputed His righteousness, when He imparted His righteousness to you, He was saying, "Let My blood be enough. Let it cover the cost of your sin. And let it be the thing that transforms you. I didn't just save you from it, I'm actually forming you, imparting My righteousness to make you become more and more and more like Me."

I plead the blood. Here's what that looks like. When you hear the whispers from the enemy attacking your righteousness, and he says, "You aren't enough," don't respond by trying to say, "No. I am enough. I am enough." Say, "I plead the blood. He made me enough."

"Man, if they knew what you did..." Don't try to combat that. Just say, "I plead the blood."

"I know what Jesus did on my behalf. I know that my God was willing to leave heaven and come to earth for me. I know my God lived a perfect life, went against opposition, and even went faced the devil, himself. He went to a cross and nailed my sin and the penalty of it to the cross. I know that my God resurrected three days later, defeating you and your lies and the accusations. So, I plead the blood."

When you hear lies of, "How could anyone love you?" "I plead the blood because I believe in John 3:16. I believe that God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son, that we would not be condemned but we would be saved. That is my God. It's not about what I did, but it's what Jesus has done on my behalf. I plead the blood."

When we begin to take this really seriously, it will begin to impact every part of our lives, "I plead the blood. That's all that I know. I'm not here to battle with you, I'm not going to argue whether I'm a good person or a better person, I'm not trying to go toe to toe with my righteousness, I lift up the righteousness of Jesus and I plead the blood."

"I'm not pleading innocent. I'm not pleading guilty. I'm pleading the blood of Jesus. And I believe that there is nothing that can pierce the blood of Jesus. I believe that if I am covered by that I am going to be alright. I will stand victorious with Jesus."

So, right now what we are going to do is we are going to move into a time of prayer and worship where we are literally going to pray and plead the blood of Jesus. And if you are sitting next to a family member, a friend, feel free to put an arm on them. You are going to pray and plead the blood of Jesus over them. If you are in a spot today and you are like, "I want that. I want the blood of Jesus. I'm tired of being attacked. I'm tired of the accusations. I'm tired of not having a way out." We want to offer you that.



We are going to have prayer teams at all of our campuses. Feel free to stand up and move your way out. We would love to pray and plead the blood of Jesus over you, because it is the only thing that can save you. He is the way, the truth, and the life. And you can leave here today with Him.

So, right now, at all of our campuses would you stand to your feet? Once again, if you came with someone feel free to just throw an arm over him. We're going to plead the blood and then we are going to worship. We're going to follow those words.

I just want to ask you... I know there is a lot out there and you want to get out of here and you have other things, but I just want you to lock in for the next four or five minutes. And I want you to pay attention to your words. And I want you to see how things change when we plead the blood of Jesus. So, right where you are just close your eyes and bow your heads and extend a hand and let's plead for the blood.

Father, we thank You that You did not leave us alone. Even though we tried our pride took us out. God, we chose to distance ourselves from You. We chose to stand unprotected. And even sometimes we enjoy the life outside of You. But, God, I pray in this moment that we would acknowledge the very real war and the enemy. God, I pray for everyone who is listening today that they would have the confidence to put on the belt of truth and the armor of Your righteousness, that we would come to know and to love truth. That we would stop being taken down by lies, but we would put on Your righteousness. And to do that we only know of one way. It's not to be better. It's not to do good. It's not to try to outshine someone else. God, it is plainly to come to You and to plead the blood.

I plead the blood of Jesus over everyone in our church. I plead the blood of Jesus over the families, if you are with your family right now just say, "I plead the blood of Jesus. I plead the blood of Jesus."

God, we raise up the next generation and they are not coming alone. We plead that the blood of Jesus would cover them and lead them. God, I pray for all of those who have not placed their life in You. I pray that today they would know the God they can step into. They could receive Your righteousness, that the blood can cover everything that they have done and that, God, You will meet them right where they are and You will offer them eternal life. And it's not based on them. It's based on You.



God, I pray in the name of Jesus, that you would remove every lie that has been put forth. God, I pray that You would dismantle them. Give everyone here just two minutes of clarity during this worship as we sing out and we raise our voices, as we plead the blood of our Savior, of our Victor, of King Jesus, Himself, that You are the One who we sing to. You are the One we believe in. And all of God's church says: Amen. Let's worship.

