



John's Schedule

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Wearing His Righteousness



Part 2 (981227PM)

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There is an army greater than any even to match on earth. An army of fierce and deadly warriors stronger than Caesuras, Stalins, Hitlers, or Ghengis Khans put together This army is stronger than Alexander's invincible hordes and the Father of Lies, the Murderer from the beginning, heads this army.... Satan

There is a war swirling around us

Yes, Satan is alive and well on planet Earth. We can see the trail he leaves wherever he goes.

- Behind divisions is the slanderer, the devil
- Behind temptation is the tempter from Eden
- Behind the lies is the liar and father of lies
- Behind death and blood shed is he who is the murderer from the beginning
- Behind confusion is the one whose name is destroyer and Apollyon

There is a war swirling within us

In C. S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters[1], Uncle Screwtape offers his nephew a little advice on the goal and strategy of temptation.

You will say that these are very small sins; and doubtless, like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. But do remember the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy. It does not matter how small the sins are, provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed, the safest road to Hell is the gradual one-the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.

Your affectionate uncle

Screwtape'

The victory comes from choosing Christ

Armor for Paul was more than pictures from daily life of the nearly omnipresent Roman Legionnaires. Very literally, the "whole armor of God" he describes is a picture of Jesus Christ. In verses 14-17 is a list of the combat equipment that the Holy Spirit issues to every believer at the moment of salvation. By faith and obedient experience we find Christ is:

1. **Choosing to wear his Truth** that is the belt of truthfulness. [John 14:6](#) Christ, saturates us with word of God and it becomes part of our very life.
2. **Choosing to wear his Righteousness** that is the breastplate we wear. [Rom. 13:14](#).
3. **Choosing to wear his Peace** as the shoes of the gospel of peace. [Ephesians 2:14](#) For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,
4. **Choosing to wear his Faith** as our shield of faith. [Ephesians 2:8-9](#) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.
5. **Choosing to wear his Salvation** as our helmet. [Philippians 4:7](#) And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
6. **Choosing to wear his Word** as the sword of the Spirit when we are letting His Word dwell in us. [Colossians 3:16-17](#) Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you,

We must put on his righteousness

Lets read our text tonight from [Ephesians 4:17-32](#)

How do we clothe ourselves, or put on these wonderful new attitudes and actions? Well, [Ephesians 6:14](#) tells us it is by putting on the armor or clothing of Christ. This morning we saw it starts in the Word as we wrap our lives up with the belt of God's Word!

1. **Belt of Truth.** To the Christian soldier a belt of truth means God's Word conforms every part of our life into "honesty," "truthfulness," "integrity," and "sincerity". So the Scriptures surround every part of our life: private and public, sacred and secular, business and church, recreation and worship. All of our life is **under the Lordship of Christ and the authority of His Word.**

Warning: *Dishonesty brings defeat!*

2. **Breastplate of Righteousness.** The breastplate was a heavy piece of armor that completely surrounded the body. To the Christian soldier this means a pursuit of personal, daily righteousness. We learn this can only be maintained by confession and repentance of sin.

Warning: *Impurity will bring defeat!*

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

What is the righteousness we are to put on?

First of all, Paul can not speaking here of self-righteousness. God condemns that as the worst form of sin. Sadly though, it is with self-made armor many Christians clothe themselves. They think that their own activities, self-motivated character and rule-keeping legalistic behavior pleases God. But instead of protection, self-righteousness is an invitation for Satan's attack! Why? Jesus warned it was the pathway to Hell. [Matthew 5:20](#) "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah also warned even for the well meaning saint, any self-induced righteous looking behavior has the stench to God that old, bloody bandages or used diapers would have after a couple of days to us. [Isaiah 64:6](#) But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away. So beware of self-righteousness.

Secondly, this isn't the glorious imputed righteousness we received the instant we were saved either. We already have been clothed in the dress of heaven's saints. We are wrapped in the once and for all blood washed robes of Christ's sacrifice. Remember, God made Christ, "who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" ([2 Cor. 5:21](#)).

Wearing Christ's Righteousness: our Glorious eternal Dress

Count Zinzendorf, the eighteenth-century German leader of the Moravian Brethren, wrote the great hymn "Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness," which was translated by John Wesley:

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness

My beauty are, my glorious dress;

'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,

With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in Thy great day,

For who aught to my charge shall lay?

Fully absolved through these I am,

From sin and fear, from guilt and shame,

O let the dead now hear Thy voice;

Now bid Thy banished ones rejoice;

Their beauty this, their glorious dress,

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness.

We can never attain God's standard of righteousness on our own, so it comes as a gift from Jesus[2] Christ.

So Paul is not asking us to put on what God has already eternally clothed us with in Christ. This imputed righteousness is our secure and never ending protection from Hell. But, it is not what protects us from the roaring, prowling lion who seeks to

devour us. Satan must be fended off by the righteousness we choose to live out by grace in the power of the Holy Spirit !

God's Word is constantly calling us as saints to engage our will in putting on the new creatures we are in Jesus. Look at the lists describing the *practical* righteousness of a life of obedience to God's Word. [Ephesians 4:24-27](#) and [Col. 3:9-14](#).

Paul balances these two facets of true righteousness in Philippians 3. Salvation is solely from God,

"not having a righteousness of [his] own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (v. 9).

Daily choices of denying the flesh were up to him:

"Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (vv. 12-14).

This conflict between who we are positionally and what we choose to be practically is Paul's theme in [Romans 6](#).

"Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ... Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God" (vv. 1-2, 11-13).

The Cross of Jesus saved us once and for all from the PENALTY OF SIN (Hell is off limits for us). His sacrifice has given us moment by moment power to see the POWER OF SIN vanquished. And finally in glory THE PRESENCE OF SIN will be removed forever. One great Bible teacher said it this way,

"To put on the breastplate of righteousness is to live in daily, moment-by-moment obedience to our heavenly Father. This part of God's armor is holy living, for which God supplies the standard and the power but for which we must supply the willingness. God Himself puts on our imputed righteousness, but we must put on our practical righteousness. The church today is often guilty of supplying believers with the paper armor of good advice, programs, activities, techniques, and methods—when what they need is godly armor of holy living. No program, method, or technique can bring wholeness and happiness to the believer who is unwilling to confront and forsake his sin.[3]"

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

The path of wearing His righteousness

Holy living means we bear fruit for Jesus (*warning lack of righteousness robs us of this!*) [John 15:1-5](#) "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.² "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.³ "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.⁴ "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Holy living means we starve our lusts (*warning lack of righteousness feeds our lusts!*) [Romans 13:12-14](#) The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Holy living means we are rewarded for daily life during our pilgrimage here on earth (*warning lack of righteousness robs us of this!*) [1 Corinthians 3:12-15](#) Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Holy living means a mind captivated by Christ (*warning lack of righteousness robs us of this!*) [2 Corinthians 10:5](#) casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Holy living means a mind that is tuned heavenward more than earthward (*warning lack of righteousness robs us of this!*) [Colossians 3:1-2](#) If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. (Have you ever noticed how carefully the DISH TV antennas are aimed. If you miss the signal the picture is either distorted or doesn't even come in! Think of that, if you miss the signal [Word of God] then the picture [Christlikeness] is either distorted [flickering on and off] or non-existent [carnality].)

Holy living means we reflect our ownership: (*warning lack of righteousness robs us*

of this!) Titus 2:10 (slaves) not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

Holy living means we seek peace for our souls: (warning lack of righteousness robs us of this!) 1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, (If you have a life threatening medical condition that is seriously aggravated by certain foods, chemicals, activities, what do you wear? One of those MEDALERT bracelets. They read warning penecillin, milk, etc. are life threatening! So we are wearing all around us a righteousness bracelet WARNING FLESHLINESS IRRITATES MORTALLY THE SOUL!)

Holy living means we live in overflowing joy (warning lack of righteousness robs us of this!) 1 John 1:4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

Beward of unholy living

In Ezekiel the people of God were not living holy lives because of little choices they were making. God accuses them of spiritual adultery in Ezk 23 because they went every where but to Him to get help and advice. I wonder sometimes if the Lord had that in mind when He said in James 4:4-5

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

Do you spend more time getting your help & advice from TV, magazines and radio commercials than from God and His Word? That was God's message to them in Ezekiel. They needed to return to holy worship. Worship in Ezekiel is: turning eyes from present world and our problems to see God's holiness and His future Kingdom. God's presence makes everything glorious and worship alone brings us into His presence.

The Puritan writer Thomas Watson[4] observed that one of the certain signs of salvation is godly sanctification in ones life:

"sanctification is an antipathy against sin. ... A hypocrite may leave sin, yet love it; as a serpent casts its coat, but keeps its sting; but a sanctified person can say he not only leaves sin, but loathes it." He goes on to say to the Christian, "God ... has not only chained up sin, but changed thy nature, and made thee as a king's daughter, all glorious within. He has put upon thee the breastplate of holiness, which, though it may be shot at, can never be shot through"

Make holiness a habit :

1. We need to seek daily to be holy and righteous. We need to be confessing and repenting of sin in our lives. That is an injunction in the New Testament.

[1] Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, p. 56.

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

[3] Mac Arthur, *Ephesians 6:14*.

[4] *A Body of Divinity* [London: Banner of Truth, rev. ed., 1965], pp. 246, 250.

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