

# ***“The Breastplate of Righteousness”***

John 5:14

March 30, 2014

*“Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him,  
“Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore,  
so that nothing worse happens to you.”*

- John 5:14

“Wearing the breastplate means making the right decisions  
when faced with temptation.”

## **Righteousness Means Living Like Jesus**

Some have noted that the breastplate doesn't cover the “back” because no good soldier would turn & run in retreat.

We need to recognize that knowing what “not” to do does not take the place of teaching people “how to” do what needs to be done when it comes to wearing the breastplate of righteousness.

***Wearing the breastplate means living like Jesus did  
– a life of obedience to the Father's will.***

JESUS IS OUR MODEL OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The book of 1<sup>st</sup> John calls biblical Christians to live righteous lives.

### **Righteousness is impossible without Jesus**

- Romans 3:23 (we're ALL sinners...)
- Mark 10:18 (“no one is good, no not one.”)
- Ephesians 2:1-3 (we're all spiritually dead without Him)

*“Nothing we can do makes us righteous in God’s eyes.  
On our own, we’re simply in deep trouble.”*

Here’s the “good news” (a.k.a. “gospel”)  
***God gives us HIS righteousness  
when we become biblical believers!***

We can’t be righteous, so God makes us righteous in His eyes through the death of Jesus, who paid our debt of sin in full. (READ: Romans 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21)

Natural Next Question:

***“If God makes us righteous, do we really need to worry  
about the way we live?”***

*Does it really matter if we wear the breastplate of righteousness?*

**Answer:** Romans 6:12!

The whole point of wearing the breastplate of righteousness is that it helps us to **STOP sinning!**

JESUS FOCUSED ON PLEASING THE FATHER

***“The Son of God (our model) ALWAYS focused on  
pleasing His Father”***

Look for and underscore the demonstrations of Jesus’ desires in the following:

- John 8:28-29
- Mark 14:36
- John 12:49-50
- Luke 23:46

Jesus trusted His Father & desired to do His will.

For us to wear the breastplate of righteousness,  
we must do the same.

**Remember...** in matters of the heart, motive matters!

***Heart-check...***

***Do you REALLY want to please the Father above ALL else?***

JESUS WOULD NOT BE DISOBEDIENT

Luke 19:10 – Jesus came to “seek and save the lost.”

*“...even Christ faced potential distractions from His goal”*

- Matthew 16:21-23
- Mark 14:32-36
- Luke 4:5-7
- John 6:14-15

***“Even the good we do can keep us from God’s best.”***

God may have already shown you a distraction that limits your ability to serve Him first... Listen for God’s voice as you make daily choices.

Thoughts of the cross were painful for Jesus...

The battles He faced were intense, but He wouldn’t be detoured or discouraged...

***“Wearing the breastplate of righteousness means  
allowing NOTHING to get in the way  
of living out the righteousness God has already given you.”***

**Potential “obstacles”** that keep us from wearing the breastplate...

*Entertainment options*

*Pride*

*Peer Pressure*

*Friends*

*Anger*

*Internet*

*Money*

*Work*

*Fear*

*Selfishness*

*Family-needs*

*Lack-of-biblical-fear*

*Custom-fit Obstacle:* \_\_\_\_\_

***“IF we choose to wear the breastplate of righteousness, we MUST confront the distractions & obstacles we face”***

Get, trust, and empower an “accountability partner!”

**What do you sense God is asking you to avoid or stop doing?**  
(...ask your accountability partner or those Christians closest to you)

## **Day 2: The Enemy Attacks Righteousness**

Wearing the breastplate isn't easy...  
***because Satan is relentlessly working to lead us into unrighteousness***

We all struggle against 3 common enemies:

1. The World (cultural norms, tolerances, & expectations)
2. The Flesh (our sinful nature)
3. The Devil (see Ephesians 2:1-2)

*We ALL have a natural inclination to sin.*

***The Devil seeks to lead us to fail.  
He fights against our efforts to live faithfully obedient,  
righteous lives.***

Let's look at this issue thru the account of Adam & Eve...

**Strategies Satan uses to lure us into temptation:**

**STRATEGY 1:** THE ENEMY BEGINS A CONVERSATION WITH US (Gen. 3:1-7)

\*\*\* In the course of that initial conversation, Satan questioned God's Word (3:1), denied God's Word (3:4), and challenged God's character (3:5). The conversation ultimately led to Eve eating the forbidden fruit (3:6).

Eve's first mistake was entering into a conversation with the Devil.

**Have you ever entertained a conversation with the Devil?**

***"The longer we discuss the temptation with the serpent,  
the more likely we will give in and sin."***

The more we think about the temptation, the closer we get to failure.

***We must resist... by submitting to God*** (James 4:7)

***"We need to flee temptation by running directly to  
God and putting on His armor."***

***"The breastplate of righteousness that God gives us  
triumphantly deflects the arrows of the Enemy."***

Let's look at (and be honest about) some common excuses we use...

- *"...this sin won't hurt anybody..."*
- *"...no one will ever know about this sin..."*
- *"...God's grace will cover this sin..."*
- *"...whose to say this is even a sin?"*
- *"...stop being so legalistic & judgmental..."*

## **STRATEGY #2: ENEMY DIRECTS OUR ATTENTION TO WHAT WE'RE MISSING**

Advertising strategies lead us to focus on what we don't have...

Advertisers get us to see the voids in our lives, not our current blessings.

Satan is a great advertising agent!

***"When we focus on what we don't have,  
we place ourselves in a dangerous place of temptation!"***

If we BELIEVE that the Father makes adequate provision to meet our NEEDS, we won't be so inclined to focus on what we do not have.

***When Jesus is truly our heart's desire,  
the temptations of the Enemy will lose their luster.***

*Remember: ...it's HIS armor, not ours, that defeats the Enemy!*

Stop for a minute and think about ALL your blessings...

- Try to list them out on paper or in a typed document
- Take minute and go back to do it again...
- You'll be amazed... we can all come up with more & more...
- Now, thank God for His goodness & grace in your life :-)

### **STRATEGY #3: THE ENEMY MAKES SIN LOOK GOOD**

Let's be honest... most of the time we sin because sin looks good to us.

*“Like a hunter who lures in the prey by hiding his bait’s deadly consequences, Satan makes sin look inviting.*

Sin *can be* fun... but only for a time. (Hebrews 11:25)

The prodigal son probably had a good time as he “squandered his estate in foolish living” (Luke 15:13). In the end, though, he found himself a hired servant in a pigpen (Luke 15:15).

***“Unfortunately, we tend to focus on temporary fun, all the while ignoring sin’s long term consequences.”***

Question: *Are you easy prey for the Enemy?*

Wearing the breastplate requires taking these steps vs. temptation:

- ***Run to God in prayer.***
- ***Focus on God’s goodness & blessing.***
- ***Remember the consequences of sin.***
- ***Just say “No!” to the Devil’s offers...***
- ***Thank God for the use of His breastplate!***

### **Day 3: Running From Temptation**

Jesus faced temptation until He died on the cross!

***“Wearing the breastplate of righteousness helps you stand against the Enemy’s temptations.”***

The story of Joseph’s defense against the lure’s of Potiphar’s wife illustrate this...

#### **WEARING THE BREASTPLATE MEANS THINKING PROPERLY**

Read the account of Joseph’s battle in Genesis 39:1-23

Joseph was engaged in a very real spiritual battle/war.

Joseph appeared to have NO chance & EVERY excuse...

Joseph never compromised (even when that came at great cost).

**Genesis 39:8 = “But he REFUSED...”**

#### **Joseph focused on:**

- Not betraying his master’s trust
- Not sinning against God
- Not to commit “great evil” (v.9)
- Counting the cost... sin always costs!

**“Wearing the breastplate helps us know the difference between right and wrong.”**

***“If we think wrongly – if we misdefine what sin is and what sin’s not – we’re much more likely to act wrongly.”***

If Joseph had thought that adultery wasn’t wrong, he would have easily given in to Potiphar’s wife.



***Beware... when you find yourself saying/thinking:  
“Everyone else is doing it, so it must be OK.”***

WEARING THE BREASTPLATE MEANS CHOOSING TO DO RIGHT

*“To wear the breastplate of righteousness, we must engage  
in right thinking.”*

**Genesis 39:10** shows us the Devil’s ***“temptation process:”***

- *First*, relentless attempts to tempt us...
- *Second*, an incremental strategy is employed against us
- *Third*, seductive words lure us... “come lie with me”
- *Fourth*, visual bait/enticement is often added

*Remember:* causing someone else to sin by your  
immodesty is also YOUR sin.

Joseph did not compromise or give in to the Devil’s temptations!

Joseph knew that had he sinned, he would have sinned against God (Ps. 51:4)

*The pleasures of disobedience aren’t worth the negative  
consequences that come with them.*

***Joseph made the right choice because he kept a righteous perspective!***

WEARING THE BREASTPLATE MEANS FLEEING TEMPTATION

Joseph intentionally ran as fast as he could from the temptation.

***“Seldom do we think of ‘wearing the armor’  
and ‘fleeing’ together.”***

**2 Timothy 2:22** - *“So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”*

***“God provides a way out of EVERY temptation.”***

(1 Cor. 10:13)

*“Sometimes, the way out that God provides is two feet that allow us to run in the opposite direction.”*

***Unfortunately, too often, we linger around temptation...***

Many of us want to get close enough to a sin to “taste it,” without fully “giving in to it” – ...then we wonder why we fail :-)

**A word of caution:** In the “he said, she said” battle that followed, Joseph lost. How careful do we need to be to avoid situations where we could be accused of sin – even wrongly? No wonder God’s Word tells us to “avoid even the appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

#### **Day 4: Standing Against Temptation**

*We come up with all kinds of excuses for why we give in to sin (way too often) without putting up much of a fight.*

Some real reasons real people really fail when tempted:

- We don't think we'll get caught
- We don't think the sin in question is a "big deal"
- Peer pressure (a.k.a. cowardice & lack of character)
- Worldly values beget worldly perspectives & worldly sin
- **We don't fear the consequences that may follow**
- Custom rationalization: \_\_\_\_\_

Let's look at the consequences of not wearing the breastplate:  
(see David with Bathsheba)

***It's dangerous to choose NOT to walk in righteousness!***

EVEN A MAN OF GOD CAN FAIL

David was a "man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14) & a man who "found favor in God's sight" (Acts 7:46).

"You'd think that a man with such a glowing resume wouldn't fail miserably when faced with temptation."

***"David reminds each of us that we are one bad decision away from falling into temptation."***

We need to put on the armor to protect us from the "sin that so easily entangles us" (**Hebrews 12:1**)

If David could fall into grave sin... so can you & I.

## DAVID ALLOWED HIS HUMANITY TO LEAD HIM

Driven by his sexual desires, David committed adultery.

***“David’s breastplate was nowhere to be found.”***

Compare David’s situation to Joseph’s situation...

- David failed when he let his hormones lead.
- Joseph followed God’s lead.
- ***Who or What leads you?***

**Do a heart check:** At times our emotions control us. At other times our need for approval drives us to compromise our morals in order to be accepted. Sometimes a drive for wealth leads us astray. Whatever wrongly leads us, we know that we aren’t wearing the breastplate of righteousness unless we are led by God’s Spirit.

## DAVID TRIED TO COVER UP HIS SIN

***“David’s attempted cover up required more and more effort and let him deeper & deeper into sin.”***

***“Keeping your sins hidden typically requires an exhausting amount of effort.”***

Contrast David's actions with those of his victim, Uriah...

- Uriah: Loyalty ruled over pleasure
- David: Pleasure ruled over ALL.....

A basic rule in spiritual warfare...

***"The Enemy works in hiddenness."***

*(That's why Jesus loves the lights on!)*

***"Wearing the breastplate enables us to live righteously so that we have nothing to hide."***

***"If you need to hide your actions... you're not wearing the breastplate of righteousness!"***

THE GOOD NEWS: GOD DID NOT GIVE UP ON DAVID

Read **2 Samuel 11:27**...      *"...the Lord considered what David had done to be evil..."*

NOW... the very next words

Read **2 Samuel 12:1**...      ***"So the Lord sent Nathan to David..."***

*"The Lord did not leave David alone; instead, He sent him a prophet whose words brought David back to confession & repentance."*

**NOTE:**      Repentance did not eliminate David's consequences.

The good news for us is that God graciously gives us new opportunities to put on the breastplate of righteousness – Amen!

Pray this verse (everyday):

***“God,  
create in me a clean heart,  
and renew a right spirit within me.”***

- Psalm 51:10

### **Day 5: Tough Choices In the Gray Areas**

Countless people get confused in life’s “gray areas” – or so they say.

Too many assume that “the ends justifies the means.”

***Gray areas tend to be those conditions under-which we often give in to sin or temptation... but don’t like to admit it.***

What “gray areas” do you face?

- T.V.
- Movies
- Facebook / Internet
- Unhealthy relationships
- Battleground of your mind (toying with sin mentally)
- Worldly priorities & perspectives

**2 God-honoring questions (asked & answered)**  
**will guide you thru the gray area:**

- 1. Does the Bible speak to this topic?** (and do I know enough of the Bible to be certain I am embracing it's directives)
- 2. Which biblical principles might guide me on this?**

**Question #1** relates back to the Belt of Truth, and ahead to the Sword of the Spirit because the Bible is our guide to Christian living...

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** - *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

**By contrast... sometimes we know just enough Bible to be reckless in our decisions...**

Have you ever heard these types of comments:

- *"I've never read anything in the Bible about gambling, so it must not be wrong."*
- *"Well, Paul told Timothy to take some wine for his stomach, so God must allow some drinking now and then."*
- *"They didn't even have movies in the days of the Bible, so how can the Bible speak to this issue?"*
- *"...God knows I don't really mean it..."*

***“Just because we haven’t read anything in the Bible about a certain topic, that doesn’t necessarily mean that the topic isn’t addressed by the Bible.***

*Furthermore... a single Bible text doesn’t usually show the full extent of the Bible’s teaching on the topic.*

(Base your interpretation on the Bible’s full-context position on a matter.)

**Be honest:** if you don’t know what the Bible truly teaches on the issue you’re facing, get help! (**Note:** be careful who/what you trust to “help you”)

**Question #2** focuses on **3 core biblical decision-making principles:**

If everything wrong were preceded by the words: “Thou shalt not,” at least then the gray areas would be clear...

***God has given us some biblical principle to live by... we need to learn how to apply His principles.***

A. *My actions should not be a stumbling block to others.*

- *1 Cor. 8:1-13 explains the “weaker brother” principle*
- *If my actions cause another believer to sin, I have wrongfully become a stumbling block to that person.*



***“The biblical believer wearing the breastplate  
of righteousness should refuse  
to cause any other brother or sister to stumble”***

Heart-check: Have you ever said or thought – “If \_\_\_\_\_ is tempted by something I do/did, that’s their problem... and THEY need to get over it.”

**\*\*\* Biblically... it’s YOUR problem too!**

**B. My actions should build up others.**

- 1 Cor. 10:23-30 = the “*build up others*” principle
- Christian liberty is a means to build up others

***A Christian’s freedom ends when it  
leads another astray.***

***“Wearing the breastplate of righteousness  
means choosing to put others before ourselves...  
(laying down our rights in the name of righteousness).”***

**C. My actions must glorify God.**

Glorifying God means denying self & focusing on Him.

Glorifying God means being willing to sacrifice your dreams on behalf of others (which sounds a lot like Jesus, doesn’t it?)

Glorifying God means “giving up much for the profit of many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor. 10:33)

***“Wearing the breastplate of righteousness is as much about others as it is about us.”***

***“Wearing the breastplate means that we live as Jesus did... to please the Father.”***

(No matter what!)

# Let's Pray