

Turn with me in your copy of the Word of God or in your copy, in your bulletin to Ephesians chapter 6. And as you do, a quick plug for the blood drive next week. It's been shown in recent studies, they found out quite by accident that if you give blood as often as you can, which is I think every three months, it radically reduces your risk of heart attack and stroke. And they think it's because the red blood cells tumbling through your arteries and veins cause trauma against the endothelium, and the scarring actually is what produces, weakens the clot and causes the clot to burst, or not the clot, the atheroma to burst, and then you get a clot in your heart causing a heart attack, or in your brain causing a stroke. And reducing the number of red blood cells reduces the risk of stroke and heart attack considerably, and they found that out quite by accident recently. So just a quick plug that you might want to consider giving some blood as often as you can. As I hear the appointments rapidly fill up. Let's with the word of God open, let's pray. Father in heaven, you are righteous and good and true. We thank you, Father, for your word. The entirety of it is truth, and it performs its work in our heart. We pray this afternoon, Lord, as we turn to your word, that you would cause it to dwell richly in our souls for Jesus' sake. Send your spirit, O God, to save the lost, restore the backslider, and build up your people in faith, hope, and love for Jesus' sake. Amen. Also, let me as well, before

I read, thank David Lawton, Pastor Lawton, for filling in for me these last two weeks when I was away. Very grateful to leave you in good hands, and I'm sure the word went forth with power through him. But it's good to be back again from my travels this afternoon. This is the word of God, Ephesians 6 verse 10. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. Four, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness. against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand firm, therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, having put on the blessed plate of righteousness, and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one, and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. And also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly

to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak. to come this morning to the second

half of verse 14. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, that was our last message, the belt of the Christian world and life view when you're battling the devil who's the father of lies. Nothing is more important than having your head on straight, having the truth of the Christian world and life view firmly in your mind, guarding your thoughts. That's the first piece of the

armor, a foundational piece, the belt to which many of the other pieces of armor apply or attach. And this week we come to the second part and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, Now that verb, having put on, is interesting. It's an aorist imperative, which is an interesting verb in the Greek. I'll not bore you with Greek grammar this morning. But it carries the idea of, and when it's joined, the aorist, when you join it to the imperative, of an urgent imperative, an urgent priority. Your number one priority, Paul says, is put on the breastplate of righteousness. It's also in the middle voice, Verbs in English can be active, things we do, that we kicked the dog, not that you would do that, of course.

Or they can be passive, they can be done to you, the dog bit, I was bitten by the dog, dog bit me, active. I was bitten by the dog, passive. Well, the Greek also has a middle voice, and the middle voice stresses your responsibility, your part in the action. So Paul says, you must make this

your number one priority, and it's something that you must do. You must put on the breastplate of righteousness. Now, of course, Paul is describing the armor used by the Roman soldiers. You can picture it in your mind, those slatted metal armor that interconnected, covering the chest and the abdomen. It's actually called the thorax, is the term for the breastplate, from which we get the term thorax, our chest, but also our abdomen. And it went round the back. Sometimes you'll hear commentators speak about there's no armor in the back of the Christians, so we must always face the enemy, not turn tail. We must also be careful of other Christians who might stab us in the back. And that's often, sadly, a practical truth. But it's not the truth Paul intends here. The Roman soldiers had the thorax, the breastplate. covered the front and the back

of the soldier and protected his vital organs in a full 360 rotation. It's protecting the chest and the abdomen. And there may be some spiritual connection. You probably know that the Greeks and the Romans thought of the heart as the seat of the affections and the abdomen as the seat of the emotions. and the conscience, and we feel that. If your conscience is bothering you, if you're feeling stressed, you often feel that in the pit of your belly. And there may be some sense here that this thorax of righteousness, the breastplate of righteousness, is guarding our affections, our conscience, our desires, our

emotional life, may be part of what Paul is getting at. Now, when Paul speaks of the

brass plate of righteousness, what's he mean? Well, theologians helpfully, I think, divide the Bible's concept of righteousness. And the term righteousness in both Hebrew and Greek has the idea of measuring something to a standard. So if you're drawing a circle, especially in your childhood years, you would use a compass for that. You wouldn't just draw a circle freehand. None of us can do that. We can draw blobs freehand, but not really circles. Or if you had a carpenter in your house, measuring the architraves around your door, the woodwork around your door, you want them to use a square to make sure the 90 degree angle really is 90, not 100, 120, or 80, but 90 degrees. You want a right angle. You have to have a standard for that. To measure it, or a plumb line to get vertical in a house, or a plumb level to get horizontal. Those are important things if you're concerned about a building that stands true and doesn't fall over. So you don't estimate it, you don't guesstimate it, you take it all back to the standard of that which is vertical, horizontal, and 90 degrees. And in Bible terms, righteousness, of course, is taking everything back to the standard of God's law, what God says is right. It's the straight, the true standard by which all ethical thinking, all ethical feeling, all ethical doing is measured, the standard of God's law. Now, even in that terms, theologian will divide righteousness into two broad categories. Legal righteousness of your own and evangelical righteousness, gospel righteousness that's provided by Christ. So the legal righteousness of our own making, is that what Paul means? Well, no, it's not, right? Because we have no legal righteousness of our own. Paul is very clear about that. There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none who understands. We have all turned aside. We have together become unprofitable. There is none who does good, Paul says, no, not one. Romans 3, 10 and following. Our throat is an open tomb. With our tongues we have practiced deceit. The poison of asps is under our lips. Our mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Our feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in our ways. And there is no fear of God before our eyes." That's what Paul. That's Paul's devastating indictment about mankind. The best of us Jews, who were people of the law, and the worst of his world, pagan barbarians and Gentiles, there's none righteous, Paul says. None righteous. The Jews are privileged, but they're not better. Are we better than they, Paul says in Romans 3? No, not at all. There's none righteous. So for legal righteousness, we

have none. Paul goes on in Romans 3 now. As for the righteousness, Paul says, and now we know that whatever the law says, speaking about the law, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, Paul says, by the deeds of the law, by your own doings, can no flesh be justified, declared righteous in God's sight. So Paul is not describing legal righteousness of your own making. And that's very, very important. And you need to remember that constantly. It never fails to amaze me how often even people coming to this church, I was speaking to someone recently and we were chatting and I was asking them, If you died today, would you go to heaven? And he said, I hope so. That's always a troubling answer. Right, I hope so. Because it betrays doubt. Right? And when you doubt you're going to go to heaven, it's always a sign that you're trusting something that's not quite sure. You're like walking across a rickety rope bridge across a ravine and the pieces of wood are rotten. and you're kind of worried they won't hold your weight. And so when someone says, I hope I'm going to go to heaven, it's almost always bad sign, right? I hope so. So then I said, okay, on what do you base that hope? And the person said, well, I do my best to live a Christian life. I try to read my Bible and pray, and they spent a fair bit of time talking about what they do, and at the end, of course, after about four or five things about what they do, they say, well, and Christ has died for my sins, and I asked him to forgive me, right? But it's always worrying. If you lead off with what you have done, it's always a sign you're trusting on your own righteousness, right? And that's essentially a Roman Catholic system a scholar, I forget who said this, but he summed it up beautifully. Rome teaches the damnable doctrine of doubt. Right. And they think we're arrogant because we have confidence. But the reason they think we're arrogant is we think we are confident in ourselves. But if we have confidence that we're going to heaven, it's not that we trust ourselves, it's that we trust our savior. Not that what we have done is enough, Oh, but that what he has done is enough to save my helpless and ruined soul. So Paul is not describing legal righteousness here. Even the very fact that it's the armor of God, the armor that God supplies, is a sign, I think, that we shouldn't think of this as a righteousness of our own making. William Gurnall says very suggestively, the law allows no do-overs, sorry, no after game. The law allows no after game. You fail, you die. The law is like a sheet of plate glass. And it can be broken by a .22 bullet firing through the corner of it. It's no longer whole. Or by a sledgehammer. But either way, the integrity of that glass has been broken by a tiny crack or a huge hole in the middle of it. Right? The law is like that.

Just like a wedding dress can be ruined by one stain. So a person's character His legal record is destroyed by one misdemeanor, in a sense. No longer perfect. And God requires personal perfect and perpetual righteousness. Some of you know that a good friend of my son was killed in a car wreck some weeks ago. The person driving that car was a medical student, very sharp, very gifted. She was actually in the pre-med program at Chapel Hill, but very gifted, from a very wealthy family. But she was driving well over 100 miles an hour and was intoxicated. And she's now charged with felonious vehicular manslaughter. She's going to jail for a long time. And the fact that she might have been a great student up to now, a great person up to now, has never done anything major that was wrong up to now, doesn't change the fact that her record is being destroyed by this one act, this one stupid act that's ruined everything. And likewise, you and I, we have no righteousness of our own. We have broken God's law, not just in one place, but we've actually broken God's law in every place. When we realize that all of the law can be summarized by loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, loving our neighbor as ourselves, none of us have done that. We've broken God's law at every point. So no legal righteousness of our own. So that leads us with what theologians call evangelical righteousness. Gospel righteousness. Now even there, we have a choice. Because theologians describe, break down the evangelical gospel righteousness into two subsections. Imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness. Imputed righteousness, William Germel summarizes as righteousness wrought by Christ for the believer, outside of the believer. And imparted righteousness is the righteousness of Christ imputed in and to a believer's life, changing us, wrought in us, wrought for us. So imputed righteousness, I-M-P-U-T-E-D, is the righteousness of justification where God forgives all of our sins, and receives us as righteous with the righteousness of Christ, imputed, wired. Think of a bank transfer. You might have a child at college, and they call you and say, Daddy, I'm out of money. And you gotta wire money across to them. In the old days, they've got credit cards now, but you wire money across to them wherever they were, and that money arrives in their account, and it's imputed to their account, it's wired. And the imputed righteousness of Christ is the righteousness of Christ wrought for us. It doesn't make us better people, it just makes us right with God. Not because of anything we have done, not even because we have believed, not even because we have repented, but simply because of what Christ has done. Imputed righteousness outside of us, right? And then imparted righteousness is the righteousness of Christ worked in us. That does make us better. It slowly but surely sanctifies us as we are transformed, right? As you think of maybe a glass full of concentrated blackberry juice, and you start adding,

pouring clean water into that glass, and gradually more and more the blackcurrant juice is diluted, and the glass becomes purer and purer and purer, and you keep doing that forever and a day, and eventually you won't be able to taste the blackberry juice at all. And the gospel's like that, as Christ is pouring the Holy Spirit into us, applying his doings and dyings for us, he's gradually diluting out our sinful thoughts, words, deeds, our habits, and replacing them with himself as we become more and more conformed to his image. And I think, Paul, I think both of these are in play here, imputed and imparted righteousness, but the one is the foundation of the other. Imputed righteousness, right, first of all. That when you're fighting against the devil, you have to be absolutely sure of your justification. And as I said, justification is those two parts. All of your sins are forgiven. but also all of Christ's righteousness has been wired into your spiritual bank account. And both those things are vital in part of our justification. There's a well-known theologian called Tom Wright, N.T. Wright, he denies the imputation of Christ's righteousness. He says justification is just the forgiveness of sins. And then the righteousness with which we are justified actually is Christ making us better people. And that's the righteousness by which we're justified. No, that would be terrible because we'd never have assurance because that would always be an incomplete righteousness in our life and would always be left worrying, have I done enough? Have I tried hard enough? Have I repented enough? And all those things. No, the doctrine, the biblical doctrine of justification has those two parts. The forgiveness of all of our sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness. It's like chocolate chip cookies. To have a chocolate chip cookie, you've got to have cookie and chocolate chips. If you only have cookie, you haven't got a chocolate chip cookie. If you only have forgiveness of sins, you haven't got the doctrine of justification. You've got to have cookie, forgiveness of sins, and the chocolate chips of Christ's righteousness imputed to your account. And that's, of course, what Paul is saying. Paul says, by the law shall no flesh be justified. But he says, no. The righteousness of God apart from the law has been revealed being witnessed by the law and the prophets. In the Old Testament, it was always that witness of this way that God would justify sinners apart from their law keeping. But now the righteousness of God apart from the law has been revealed being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Even the righteousness of God through faith, not through works, But through faith in Jesus Christ, whom God set forth as a propitiation, a sacrifice that cancels wrath, through his blood, by faith, for there is no difference, Paul says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that's in Christ Jesus. Glorious, right? And Paul, in

the next chapter in Romans 4, you remember, Paul selects two great illustrations from the Old Testament, Abraham and David. Abraham, who was Father Abraham, one of the best of the Old Testament saints in the Jews' mind, and David, the king who messed it up with Bathsheba. And Paul teases out, you remember, how both Abraham and David are justified. He says, what shall we say then that Abraham, our father, is found according to the flesh, according to his own work? For if Abraham was justified by works, Paul says, he has something to boast about. But what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness. Now to him who works, Paul says, his wages are not counted as grace, but as debt. When you do a fair day's work, you expect to get a fair day's wage. But Paul says, but to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted as righteousness. Even Abraham, great father Abraham, was justified by Faith alone. And then Paul goes to David, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputes righteousness apart from the deeds of the law. And he goes to Psalm 32, as it is written, blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven. And whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin. Abraham the best of the Old Testament, and David from one perspective, the worst of the Old Testament, they're all justified by faith alone. Not by works. And as Paul thinks of us fighting the devil, it's vital that you have a firm, legal foundation on which to stand, and that cannot be righteousness of your own doing, it's got to be the righteousness of Christ. Because when the devil comes in like a flood and starts reminding you of all of the things that you have done, and all of the things that you have not done, you've got to be able to point to Jesus and say, But all of the things that He has done in His death, in His burial, in His resurrection have justified me. He was delivered up because of my transgressions. He was raised because of my justification. He was delivered up because God counted me as a sinner. But he was raised from the grave, the debtor's prison, because God no longer counts me as a sinner, he counts me as righteous. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul says, through whom we have access. Not what you have done, but what he has done. And that is the foundation, that is the number one, um, ethical protections as we face the devil's fiery dart, his accusations, right? So the imputed righteousness of Christ is the foundation, but it always leads to the imparted righteousness of Christ. Once you believe in Jesus, once you see the cross, once you get Golgotha and what happened there, it does something in you. You can no longer think of sin the same way. The Duke family back in Northern Ireland were famous, very wealthy. They owned Duke Transport, which

is a bit like the Covenant Transport you have here. Huge trucking firm, and they were multimillionaires. Lived in a big mansion. And they were very much involved in the horsey world of Northern Ireland. And their daughters were very famous Olympic equestrian riders. And one of the daughters doing that cross-country badminton event, jumping over all those huge jumps that are like five feet on this side, and they drop 10 feet down on the far side, and they really spooked the horses and so forth. When she was racing at badminton one year, she jumped over one of those fences, and the horse fell, and she fell, and the horse fell on top of her, and she was killed. And at the big mansion, there was a huge stables and paddocks behind the mansion. And Mr. Duke sold all of the horses. He fired all of the stable staff. Why? Because his daughter was dead. And because she was dead and died on a horse, he wanted nothing more to do with horses. And imagine if you asked him, where did your love of horses go? He loved the horses. They died where my daughter died, he would have said. And in a similar sense, if you really believe in Jesus, your love of sin dies with the death of Christ. And you can no longer look at sin the same way, right? And so the imputed righteousness of Christ, that God the Son would love me and die for me, will change the way you think of sin. And if it hasn't done that, it actually undermines your assurance that your sins have been forgiven. Even if you're a Christian, you've believed in Jesus, if you go back to the prodigal lifestyle, the prodigal son, back to the pigs and back to the pigs' fodder, your assurance of the imputed righteousness of Christ is undermined, and that will undermine your ability to stand firm against the devil. And so I believe this shield of faith, or rather shield of righteousness, is both the imputed righteousness of Christ, his righteousness for us, But it has to also feed into the imparted righteousness of Christ, which always flows from the one, like water and wet, the imputed righteousness of Christ for us in the gospel will always transform us with the imparted righteousness of Christ. So if you remember, In Titus 3, Paul, in the third chapter of Titus, Paul's big stress is good works, right? He wants the church to be ready for good works. Remind them, he says, to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work. And almost immediately after he says to be ready for good work, he reminds him of their sinfulness. We are once disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. And then he goes through the gospel. But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and by renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out upon us richly through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And then he says, this is good. These things are good and acceptable. Remind them of these things,



Paul says, that they might be careful to engage in good deeds. The foundation of the good works

of the Christian life is the work of Christ upon the cross.

And we can't think of him dying for us and living for us without being inspired to go forth and to live for him, to turn away from sin, to be renewed in our minds, to lay off the old man. which is being corrupted in accordance

with the lust of deceit and to be transformed by the renewing of our mind and to put on the new man which in the image of God has been created in knowledge and righteousness and holiness from the truth. And so Paul says as you're fighting against the devil, you have to have your heart, your guts protected by the imputed righteousness of Christ. He loved me, he died for me, what he has done is enough And then we also, we put on the breastplate of righteousness by reminding ourselves of the gospel. And then by more and more seeking, as Paul says, to live a life void of offense before God and before men, by laying aside our sins and growing in righteousness. Because if our conscience defiles us, John says we have no confidence before God. If we're living in gross, unrepentant sin, it undermines our confidence before God. And by necessity, it'll undermine our confidence to stand before the devil. And so when you face your infernal foe, Paul says, you face it by getting back to the truth of the gospel, the truth of God's word, and by getting back to the truth of the gospel, what Christ has done for me, and what Christ is doing in me. And it's not us, it's Christ.

If we look to Jesus and say, Lord, Help me to remember my sins are forgiven. That I relate to God on the basis of the Lord's, your perfect righteousness. That the terrors of law and of God, the accusations of the devil with me can have nothing to do.

And then help me, Father, more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness. That I might be lock, stock, and barrel committed to Christ. But when you're fighting the devil, And in those days, and there are many of them, when we find not a lot of the imparted righteousness of Christ in us, and we think, oh, what are we gonna do? It's always back to the imputed righteousness. That's the foundation, that's the ethical foundation on which we do battle with the devil, that I stand. In life, and I stand in death,

not on what I have done, but on what Christ has done. And even on my worst day, and on my best day, my righteousness cannot add to that foundation, nor can it remove that foundation. What Christ has done alone, is enough to make up for all that I have done and all that I haven't done. So Paul says, you've got every

day to begin with the gospel. Luther once was asked by his students, why do you preach the gospel every day? He said, because I forget it every day. And if Luther can do that, and I can do that, and I do, you can do that too. Gotta begin with the gospel of Christ dead for us, and Christ risen for us. For us, outside of us, that even

our sins, even our betrayals of Christ cannot undermine or sully this breastplate that surrounds us. Have you trusted Christ for your salvation? If I were to ask you today, if you died, would you go to heaven? Are you certain or not? And if you're not certain, it can only be because you've lost a vision of the certainty and the perfection of the Son of God. Back to Jesus, calmly says, let me gather you under my wings. wings of protection, wings of the gospel, and your sins, though there are many, they're forgiven. That's the foundation on which we fight the devil. Amen. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the gospel, its truth, its power. Pray, Lord, that Christ's work for us and Christ's work in us will increase, that we will live with assurance, sure, that we are on the Lord's side and that you're for us. And if you are for us, who can stand against us in time or eternity?