The Breastplate of Righteousness

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Date: 19 March 2023

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us.!

Meaningful times, and I want to make sure you're aware of them and are here if you're able to. In two weeks from today is April the 2nd, which is Palm Sunday.
It's been our tradition for many, many years on Palm Sunday to gather in one service. We don't do Sunday school that day. We have everybody come together here in one service at 10 a.m.
We're going to do that April the 2nd. We're going to bring in every chair we have in the church and make room. I tell you that because another thing that we've done for a number of years is have one combined service in the summer.
It makes it crowded, but it makes every Sunday really special. Able to be together with both services, meet people that are here you may not always see. The good problem we're having is we're just having so many people on Sunday morning that it's making it just almost impossible to be able to make that happen in the summer.
[1:35] We've been meeting and working on this for a while. We asked a number of people in our church to give us a survey. We did a cross-section of the church, 9 o'clock service, 1030 service, each age group throughout our church.

We asked them to give us some feedback on our summer schedule. We tried to take that into account. Our people love our summer schedule.
Our people love being together. It creates a little bit of flexibility demanded because you have to change Sunday school rooms. Some people switch hours. They do Sunday schools kind of things. But it accomplishes so many things.
It's not just about being crowded in here. To be in one service in the summer enables families who have middle school and high schoolers who are, during the school year, split apart to be together and not have to be split apart.
It allows people who are members here but may not see other people to meet other people who are active here in the service. It allows all of our staff to be here in one service at one time to be able to share, participating and leading out in worship.
[2:48] It allows just a sense of togetherness and unity that is important for our church. However, attendance-wise, it's difficult to see.

And so we're actually meeting tomorrow morning at our regular staff meeting time of 835. Pray for us because part of what we need to do is finalize how we think we can best lead our church for a number of things, including for the summer.
It is something we value highly. It is something that we think is very important. It also is something that we can only do if we can physically, logistically make it work.
And so we will, in very near time, be able to tell you what we think we need to do for our summer schedule. But we're for sure going to do it for Palm Sunday.
We'll have an extra row here at the front. We'll be able to fill those 50 chairs up. We'll have an extra row of seating around the back, have another 50 chairs. And then we've got a couple other things we're doing to help us to be able to fit for Palm Sunday.
[3:55] So make note of that, Palm Sunday, one service, 10 o'clock. Then Good Friday is April the 7th. We will have our Good Friday service, 7 p.m. on that Friday night.

This is always, personally, one of my very favorite things we do as a church is Good Friday. When we come in here to sing and study God's Word, we'll take the Lord's Supper together on our Good Friday service.

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So if you're at all able to, be here Good Friday, April the 7th at 7. Another thing that we do every year is our sunrise service on Easter Sunday.
So that'll be Sunday, April the 9th. Three weeks from today, if my math is right, I think that's right, three weeks. That'll be outside at our south entrance.
The last couple of years, we've had great weather. And we've just had just a huge turnout the last couple of years. And so if you've already been or you usually come to sunrise service, we'll hope to see you back.
[4:53] If you've never been, let me encourage you, if you're able to, to make it fit your schedule on that Resurrection Sunday. Okay, it's a great, great time at 645. We do different music, different preaching than we do in our regular morning services in here.

And then we'll have a regular schedule that morning at 9 and 1030, Sunday school and worship service. Okay, so if you're able to be there, be there for all of that. Palm Sunday, one service at 10, Good Friday at 7, sunrise 645 in the morning, and then regular celebration services on Easter Sunday at 9 and at 1030.
All right, so hopefully you can be a part of that. We'll open with me to Ephesians chapter 6. Ephesians chapter 6, as we continue our study through the armor of God.
And we come tonight to the breastplate of righteousness. We have a good understanding, I think, already of the importance of covering your heart, your lungs, and your vital organs.
In our culture, we understand that. We're accustomed to seeing police officers that have on a bulletproof vest because they've got to protect their heart and their lungs, and they've got to protect their vital organs.
[6:10] We're accustomed to watching baseball or softball, and the catcher puts on not just a mask, but puts on a chest covering so they don't take a bat or a foul ball into the heart or the chest.

If you're playing baseball and a catcher gets hit on the arm, it may hurt badly, but it won't be deadly. But if you take a foul ball or if you take a bullet or if you take a punch to the heart or to the lungs, to your vital organs, it could be deadly.
So we understand just the simple metaphor of the need to cover our chest, our torso, our lungs, and our heart.
But before we look specifically at the breastplate of righteousness, I want your mind to be considering why Scripture uses this metaphor of the armor.
Who would wear armor? Well, a soldier would wear armor, which is instructive to us to never forget that we are to be spiritual soldiers enlisted in a spiritual army involved in spiritual battle.
[7:31] And while for most people, or many people, they may say, well, that's quite obvious, if you look at the way that many believers or those who profess faith in Christ, how they live their life, or if you look at the way that many churches conduct themselves, it seems as if we have forgotten that we are to be spiritual soldiers in a spiritual army engaged in spiritual battle.

There's so much triviality and so much time that gets wasted and so much focus on things that just don't matter. And so don't miss the very obvious but the very important understanding that when Scripture says, put on the armor of God, it is because, it is the biblical expectation that you are a soldier.
And if a soldier in an army, and if in an army involved in spiritual battle. And so as Christians, we are soldiers enlisted in the army of the Lord Jesus Christ.
He is our commander. He is our leader. There is no mere mortal man who is in charge of us or in charge of what we do.
The Bible is very clear that yes, the Lord has given His shepherds, His pastors, His elders, His overseers in the Scripture to be leaders and servants and to guide God's people, yes.
[9:06] But the Scripture makes it very, very clear that the chief shepherd is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible makes it clear that yes, that the Lord has given leaders to a church and the church should follow their leaders.

But you only follow your leaders in as much as your leaders are directing you to Christ. And churches forget that. And pastors forget that.
And sometimes pastors think that it's about them or their name or their resume or their career or that people should follow what we say just because we said so.
The New Testament knows nothing of that. Those who lead God's people must be men who are in the Word, in prayer, sincerely, earnestly seeking to shepherd God's people, lead God's people in a

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way that is for their good and for the glory of Christ.
The reason for that is that none of us are the leader of the army. We are enlisted in Christ's army. [10:14] And we're not to be doing the work and the battle that we would pick and choose, nor are we to avoid the battles that we would like to sit out. Instead, we must be faithful to be a soldier in the army of Christ doing spiritual battle wherever it may lead us.

Whatever God's Word says is our standard, is our authority, and whatever it takes, it takes. And whatever it costs, it costs.
We are soldiers in an army enlisted to do spiritual battle. If we don't understand that, then all the discussion of the pieces of the armor will not merit us much profit if we don't understand what the whole purpose is for.
We are to be engaged in the work that the Lord has given us to do, and the work He's given us to do has opposition. And that's why we must be focused on following our commander, the Lord Jesus Christ.
So look back with me again in Ephesians 6, starting in 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.
[11:43] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of 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, therefore. Therefore, here's the first piece that we looked at a couple of weeks ago. Having fastened on the belt of truth, and now secondly, having put on the breastplate of righteousness. Having put on the breastplate of righteousness. Let's consider a few questions together this evening. Number one, what was the breastplate in Paul's day? When he uses this term, what did he mean?
What was he conveying? And what would those he was writing to 2,000 years ago have understood when he says, put on the breastplate of righteousness? The breastplate, the word for it is thorax.
[12:55] It was a piece that would weigh usually about 20 to 30 pounds. You remember from the Old Testament, Goliath's arm, because of his size, weighed about 125 pounds.

But typically, the thorax, the breastplate they would wear, weighed 20 to 30 pounds, and it was designed to be able to help them to withstand the attack of a sword. It was a sleeveless shield that they would put on.
It would cover their chest. It would cover their stomach. It would cover their midsection, their vital organs. It would cover their neck. And it would also cover their back. Sometimes the breastplate was made out of a heavy linen.
Sometimes it was made out of molded metal, usually iron. Other times, it would be made out of bronze. The breastplate had several components to it.
There were horizontal metal strips that would go around the side and it would connect in the back. It would have a set of metal plates that would connect it in the back, all designed to protect them, whether someone was in front of them or behind them.
[14:06] It would have overlapping pieces of, it could be metal, it could be horns. Sometimes it was pieces of animal hoofs that were a part of that breastplate to be able to help them absorb if they were attacked by a sword.

There were also vertical strips that were a part of it. It went over the shoulders and it was able to be undone, which made it not only flexible to move, but it could be disassembled if the soldier was no longer fighting and they could more easily carry it and not have to wear it all the time.
They would put some kind of padding under the shoulders so it didn't hurt their shoulders. They would almost always wear some kind of a scarf around their neck to prevent chafing from the top part of the breastplate because it's designed to cover all the way up to their neck and all the way down their front, across the sides, and even on the back.
So when Paul says, put on the breastplate of righteousness, that's what people would have understood. It's something you have to put on. It's something that you have to adorn yourself with for a reason, for a purpose, something strong, something powerful, something that stays connected, something that covers the front, the sides, and the neck, and the back.

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But as I mentioned the last couple times we've been looking in this passage, not only is Paul certainly thinking of a Roman prisoner who very likely was right in front of him as he penned this, but as I've been mentioning to you, the idea of the armor of God is not something that's new in the New Testament.
[15:56] Paul is not only thinking for sure of a true first century soldier, he's also drawing on what he already knows of the Old Testament, specifically from the prophet Isaiah.

So keep Ephesians marked, but turn with me, if you would, to Isaiah chapter 59. I just want to show you that this may be new for you, that the armor of God actually has its roots in Old Testament writing.
We looked at a couple of these a few weeks ago. Here's another one. Isaiah 59, look at verse 15.
Truth is lacking and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.
The Lord saw it and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no one to intercede.
Then his own arm brought him salvation and his righteousness upheld him. He put on a righteousness as a breastplate.
[17:14] Do you know that was right from Isaiah? So when Paul writes this, absolutely have in mind a mental picture of a Roman soldier because his readers would have.

But, he's actually just drawing on what he knows of the Old Testament. The Lord himself put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head.
What's happening here in Isaiah 59 is it's the Lord himself who comes dressed as a warrior to bring judgment to his adversaries. To bring salvation to those who would turn to him.
And so what Isaiah is telling us is that God is absolutely going to deal with his enemies. But he's going to do more than deal with his enemies. He's also going to bring salvation to those who trust in him.
Specifically, if you go back to Isaiah 53, it prophesies of the work that Messiah will do. And so when you think of the term breastplate of righteousness biblically, your mind should go to Isaiah 59.
[18:33] This includes the image of a soldier but not exclusively. We're drawing here on the image that ultimately it is God's armor himself.

The armor of God is not merely the armor God gives you, it literally is God's armor. And so the Lord himself put on righteousness as a breastplate.
Now, I don't think Ephesians 6 is a commentary on Isaiah 59 but I do think it helps us to understand that this is absolutely in his mind as he no doubt looks at the Roman soldier and draws on the metaphor both of what he sees visually and what he knows from Isaiah.
Here's a second question. And to understand and interpret Ephesians 6 this becomes very, very important. What is the righteousness Paul is referring to?
what is the righteousness Paul is referring to when he says that we are to put on the breastplate of righteousness?
[20:00] Ikaio sinis is the word in the New Testament for righteousness and the question is what does he mean? You can generally think of righteousness in these three ways.

So we've got to figure out which of these three ways does scripture mean? We know he doesn't mean a righteousness that we have on our own.
That's one way the New Testament speaks of righteousness and it tells us that we have no righteousness on our own. So we know that Paul is not saying that we put on the breastplate of our works, of the good that we do on our own.
Philippians 3, 3-7 makes crystal clear that on our own we have no righteousness. Going back to draw from Isaiah, our own personal righteousness apart from the gift of the Lord is nothing more than filthy rags.
So we know he's not talking about we put on the breastplate of just our own unconverted self-good works. righteousness. Well, there's a second way that that word is used, that righteousness could be meaning.
[21:15] Decaiocines sometimes refers to the righteousness that we have as a result of what Christ has accomplished and imputed to us.

So let me give you a couple of terms to think with me theologically here tonight. It's what theologians would call imputed righteousness. righteousness. This is the righteousness that Christ has that he imputes.

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He puts in our account. And you'll have no trouble finding theologians who, when they think of the breastplate of righteousness, who believe that this is how we should take it, that it's the imputed righteousness of Christ that Paul is telling us to put on.
And if that's how you take it, then what Paul is saying is that we are to every day put on, think about, actively consider the reality of what Christ has accomplished on our behalf as our Savior.
And certainly that's true, we should do that. Certainly that's true, we should do that. There is a third way that this word can be used, and that is not so much about our justification, but more in terms of our sanctification, our godly behavior that we do as a believer as a response to what Christ has done in our life.
[22:44] This is what theologians would call imparted righteousness. So we think in terms of these categories tonight, imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness.

The righteousness that is true because it's what Christ has purchased or our follow-through, our obedience, not our good works apart from Christ, but the good works we would do because of our salvation.
Now this is a biblical concept too, Ephesians 2.10. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, that He prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
You with me so far. So when we say the breastplate of righteousness, we know we're not talking about the good works of unconverted man. That's shot down all over the Scripture.
He could mean you put on the righteousness of Christ that He has imputed to us, or He could mean it's about our sanctification, dealing with the imparted righteousness that because we have the Holy Spirit of God living within us, that we are now able to walk in the good works that God has prepared for us to do.
[24:06] And that is also certainly true. It's true that we should think every day about the salvation Christ accomplished for us, and it's true that every day we should live in obedience in response to that salvation.

Those things are both absolutely true. So the question is which way does Paul mean it? Well, I do think it's helpful for us to see that his wording is that we are to put on the breastplate of righteousness.
It's something that we are to put on, something that we are to make sure is a part of our day every single day. And so, just to give you a couple other terms, we speak of imputed and imparted righteousness.
We could also use these two words that we've talked about at Ladies on a Theology recently, that we have positional righteousness and practical righteousness.
Positional righteousness is this, if you are a believer, positionally you are counted righteous because of Christ. That's your standing before God. But as a believer, we want to become in practice what we are in position.
[25:25] We want the daily follow-through of our life to match with our standing we have in Christ. And so, justification and sanctification, imputed righteousness, imparted righteousness, positional righteousness, or our practice of our life, all of these things are hopefully helping us to understand that while there is a distinction between positional and practical righteousness, they can never be separated from each other.

And here is where I think we get the fullest understanding of what Paul means. You are to put on the breastplate of righteousness. You are to live out, apply what it means to obey Christ in response to what he alone has done for his people.
And when we live like that, we are putting on the breastplate of righteousness. It's not just about thinking and meditating.
There is an active follow-through that there must be. But neither is it just about actions that we do on our own, it's our action as a response to what Christ has done.
This is exactly what Philippians tells us, that we are to work out our salvation, not work for, work out. Take the salvation that only Christ can provide, and now work it out.
[27:15] Unfold it. Apply it. Take it to its limit in every situation. So, what we want to do with imputed and imparted righteousness, they're distinct, but they're never separated.

So, every day of our life, we think about what Christ has done for us, and now, with that in mind, we obey whatever he commands.

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righteousness. That's how you put on the breastplate of righteousness. It is a daily remembrance of the sacrifice of Jesus that then drives us to a place of obedience of our commander in his army as a spiritual soldier.
we are to put on the breastplate of righteousness. Here's another question. How does this righteousness protect us?
Because whenever Paul uses this language, the breastplate of righteousness, he absolutely is drawing from Isaiah 59, he's absolutely drawing from the image of a soldier, and he uses the term breastplate because the breastplate, by its design, is to protect you.
[28:36] So it's a fair question to ask, how does righteousness protect us? How does knowing what Christ has done for us and living it out, you put that all together, how does that protect us?

How does Christ's work on the cross protect you? How does your obedience in Christ as a result of your relationship with Him protect you?
Let me give you just a couple of ways you can make note of. One, it reminds us of who we are in Christ. It reminds us of who we are in Christ.
We must remember that we are to be clothed in His righteousness. And if you are clothed in His righteousness, it should compel your heart to want to honor Him.
sing. So, if you want to get a church to sing, if you want to get a church to serve, one way is you just always lecture them on they should sing or they should serve.
[29:48] Here's the better way, get them to fall in love with Jesus. And when that happens, your heart won't be able to keep from singing nor will your hands and feet be able to keep from serving. Why?

Because if you love your commander, you will do what He's enlisted you to do. And when you think of what He has done for you and you respond in obedience because of His work, it reminds us of who we are in Christ.
Now, this is important because, remember, if you're a soldier, that means you're in a battle. If you're in a battle, that means you have an enemy. So you need to understand that one of the things your enemy will do to try to attack you is to make you doubt God's love for you.
That's what the enemy always does. Tries to make you doubt God's love for you. And when you put on the breastplate of righteousness every day, you're reminding yourself daily, here's what Christ has done for me, and now as a result of that, I'm going to live for Him.
So every day, we're reminded of the cross. And when you think of the cross, you think of grace and mercy and pardon and forgiveness.
[31:06] And you think of Romans 5, 8, that God demonstrated His love faith, this way, that while we were sinners, Christ died for us.

Putting on the breastplate of righteousness helps us by reminding us of who we are in Christ. Now, on the one hand, your enemy may try to make you think that God doesn't love you because you're so guilty and awful.
If that doesn't work, your enemy may try to make you think that God doesn't love you because of sin in your life or disobedience in your life.
Or He may lead you to think that because you're being obedient, you no longer need His love. You're doing pretty good on your own. The enemy will look for whatever your weakness is. And when you put on the breastplate of righteousness, it reminds yourself of who we are in Christ.
And the cross reminds us of two things, at least these two things. One, God loves us. And two, Romans says, should I just keep on sinning that grace may increase?
[32:18] And the answer is what? God forbid. May it never be. So the breastplate of righteousness reminds me of who I am in Christ. And when the enemy makes me think I'm not loved, I think of the cross where God poured out His love for me.

But if I ever think that it doesn't matter how I live, I should also think about the cross. Then I should never use His grace as a license to disobey Him.
And thinking in these terms reminds us of who we are in Christ. I was reading just last week, it's a letter that Martin Luther wrote to a friend of his. His friend's name was Jerome Weller.
This is 1530. His friend Jerome was struggling with all kinds of despair. Here's what Martin Luther wrote in 1530. I know this wile of the devil.
If he cannot break a person with his first attack, he tries by persevering to wear him out and weaken him until the person falls and confesses himself beaten.

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[33:25] When the devil throws our sins up to us and declares we deserve death and hell, we ought to say this. I admit I deserve death and hell. What of it?

Does this mean that I shall be sentenced to eternal damnation? By no means. For I know one who suffered and has made a satisfaction in my behalf.
His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and where He is, there I shall be also. So, that's putting on the breastplate of righteousness, reminding us of who we are in Christ.
The second thing it does is it guards our heart. When Paul uses the language of a breastplate, he absolutely expects his readers to think of the heart.
That's what the breastplate does in part is cover your heart. Physically. Spiritually, Proverbs 4.23 says, Above all else, guard your heart, for this is the wellspring of life.
[34:32] Everything comes from your heart. So, we guard our heart. To put on the breastplate of righteousness is to fight for joy, because one thing you will not know is true, complete joy in your life while you are disobeying the Lord.

And so many times people that have marriage trouble or relationship trouble with their children or issues with other friends or even believers in the church, so many times it comes down to this issue. Are you obeying Christ? And is the other person you're striving with here, are they obeying Christ? And here's part of the problem. If you're trying to honor the Lord and they're not, there's only so much you can do. Romans speaks to this, as much as depends on you, live in peace with all men. But it doesn't all depend on you, it depends on them too. And so the first question you have to ask yourself, if your marriage is full of conflict, am I striving to obey the Lord?
[35:45] And if I'm not, then deal with that. Don't make it more complicated than it is. I mean, finances are real and how you communicate are real and how you conflict are real, but here's the deal.

You can chase all that stuff all day long, and if you're not seeking to honor and obey the Lord, you're just chasing yourself on a treadmill and getting nowhere. It guards our heart because when we think of the breastplate of righteousness, we think of the cross, what Christ did for me and my response to it.
And if you're not seeking holiness, you'll never walk in the joy you were designed to know. It not only guards our heart, here's the third thing it does, it guides our emotions.
The breastplate of righteousness guides our emotions. I get this from 2 Corinthians 10 5. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ.
We don't entertain sinful thoughts. We don't let our emotions dwell on things that are not biblically true. We don't let ourself talk like, I know the Bible says this, but I feel this.
[37:08] It's a Sunday night crowd. Let me just be blunt with you. Who cares how you feel if you're disobeying the Lord? Remember, Jonah felt just fine asleep in the boat.

He was about to get tossed overboard. Never mistake your comfort with your own sin as God's indifference for it.
Instead, we take every thought captive. We let our life be ruled by the Word, not our feelings, truth, not lies. Our enemy loves it when we live by feelings and emotions.
Because if you're governed by your flesh, it will not go well. We sing a song before the throne of God.
You'll be familiar with this verse. When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, upward, I look and see him there who made an end to all my sin.
[38:21] Because my sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free. For Christ, the just, was satisfied.

And because of what the Lord has done for us, the wrath of God has been satisfied by the work of Christ on the cross.
So, when Satan tempts you to despair, look to the cross. When Satan tempts you to live by emotion, look to the cross.
When you look to the cross, be reminded of the imputed righteousness of Christ and the imparted righteousness that we follow through in obedience.
And remind ourselves that God loves us. And because He does, we want to honor Him. That is to put on the breastplate of righteousness.

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[39:22] And then one last question. How do we do it? How do we put on the breastplate? If we know what the breastplate's designed for, we understand the metaphor, we understand the righteousness we're talking about, how do we practically put on this breastplate of righteousness?

Let me give you a few words here that I think will help you to think through it. We'll just start with where it begins and where it ends. First, write down the word deliverance. Just beside it, you can put the word salvation.
To put on the breastplate of righteousness begins by making sure that you belong to Christ. There must first be conversion. If you're trying to go do anything apart from being united with Christ, then you're going nowhere.
You must make sure that you belong to Christ. It starts with spiritual deliverance. 2 Corinthians 5.21, For our sake He made Him to be sin, who knew no sin, that in Him we would become the, what?
Righteousness of God. This is where it starts. Deliverance. Salvation. Our breastplate of righteousness protects us.
[40:42] Think of it this way. When you think of putting on the breastplate of righteousness, we typically think first about being protected from the wrath of our enemy.

But there is something we're saved from even more than that. We're saved from the wrath of God. The wrath of your human enemy is one thing, but it's a small thing.
The wrath of God resides upon you. It's an eternal thing. So, to put on the breastplate of righteousness is to make sure that we're spiritually delivered, we're spiritually saved, saved from what?
Saved from hell, yes. Saved from sin, yes. But even more precisely, saved from the wrath of God. That's the first thing. So, it starts with deliverance, salvation.
Second, write down the word dependence. Once you are saved, now we live with daily dependence upon the Lord. We rely on His provision.
[41:51] We rely on His strength, His word, His spirit. We put on our armor so we're prepared for whatever He would lead us to do.

And whatever He has led you to do, He will provide you and see you through. So, it starts with deliverance, that's salvation. Dependence, that's daily relying upon Him.
And third, write down the word discipline. We must grow daily in our spiritual disciplines. This is, again, Ephesians 2.10. God has prepared you for good works that we should, what's the metaphor He uses here?
Walk in them. So, Paul in Ephesians 6 says that we are to stand. He says we are to put on. But in Ephesians 2, he says we are to walk, meaning we go forward.
Lord, spiritually, in your spiritual disciplines, you're to walk in them. You're to be progressing in your spiritual disciplines.
[42:55] If I were to ask any of you tonight, what are the spiritual disciplines? You could rattle them off. Prayer, Bible study, worship, serving, using your spiritual gifts, giving.

But we could rattle on and on the spiritual disciplines that should be a part of our life. Here's the question, not can you recite them, but are you walking in them? Are you moving forward in them? So, it starts with deliverance, being saved. Dependence, relying on Him every day. Discipline, as we obey Him.
Then a fourth word, write down the word devotion. Don't miss this one. A true soldier of Christ loves Him.
There's a whole lot of people trying to earn their way into heaven. Here's what they're missing. They don't love Jesus. They may fear hell.
[44:01] They may desire heaven. But one way to know if you are a true soldier in the army of Christ is simply this, do you love Him?

That's what Jesus asked Peter, right? Do you love me? That's always the forefront of our mind as a believer.
Do I love Him? If you refuse to use your spiritual gifts, could it be that, do you love Him?
Do you not love Him? If I'm ever at a wedding and a bride comes down the aisle and the groom is sitting next to me and he's checking his phone, I'm walking out.
I don't care how dressed up he is. If he doesn't love that woman, something's missing. And he may whisper to me, yeah, but I've gone through all the motions.

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[45:11] We've got a reception plan. I've got a honeymoon plan and we've picked out a house and we've got flowers and I've got on a tuxedo or a suit. I mean, I've got all the externals. But here's my question to him.

Do you love your bride? If you don't love her, none of the externals will ever make up for that. And we've got a world filled with people who fear hell, crave heaven, and do not love Jesus.
And so they get religious and they just sit and they endure the teaching of the word and they endure the singing of the congregation because they don't love the one that they're supposed to be singing of so they sit out.
They don't love the one they study of so their mind just rambles. And they go home and think God was pleased because at least they came.
That's not love. There's deliverance, there's dependence, there's discipline, but there must be devotion that you love Christ.
[46:37] If I tell Marcia I love her and my actions and my words betray that, there's a disconnect. On the other hand, if I serve her and take care of her and she says, Michael, thank you, do you love me?

And I say, not really. I'm just trying to earn my way to heaven. As hyperbolic as that sounds and crazy as that sounds, that's an exact metaphor of what so many people are doing with their relationship with God.
They don't love Him, they're just trying to do enough to earn their way to heaven. That's not conversion. So when Paul says, put on the breastplate of righteousness, this is not just about facts you know, it's about one you love.
Never lose sight of that. And that leads us to our final word, and that's death. It starts with deliverance. We're saved.
It moves to dependence. We rely on Him. We grow in discipline. We have devotion. And then one day, the body gives out.
[48:02] 2 Corinthians 4.16 says, we do not lose heart, though the outer man is wasting away, the inner man is renewed day by day. Now, I want you to hear both sides of that verse.

On the one hand, here's the good news. Your inner man can be renewed every day. The joy and the love of the Lord can be renewed no matter what's happening to you on the outside.
But the other half of the verse is true, too. The outer man is wasting away. This body won't last forever. And one day, as a soldier in the army of God, you will have your last battle.
The hymn writer said it this way, and then one day, I'll cross the river. I'll fight life's final war with pain. And then as death gives way to victory, I'll see the lights of glory.
What's he talking about? He's saying, I'm going to be faithful until the very end. Because when the believer dies, though he die, yet he lives.
[49:23] Which is why Christ is our hope in life and death. We put on the breastplate of righteousness because when our body gives out, that which we have thought of, the one which we have obeyed, and the king which we have worshipped, it will be to him that we go.

Forever and forever. Put on the breastplate of righteousness. Every day, think of what Christ has done for you as a response to what he has done.
Follow through in obedience. And when your enemy tempts you to feel unloved, remember the cross. He loves you.
And when you're tempted to think your obedience is irrelevant, remember the cross. And you live for him.
And every day of your life, you grow in devotion, and you grow in discipline, until one day, in death, you meet him face to face.
[50:52] And what you will experience will simply be the greatest fulfillment of what you've longed for all of your life anyway. that is to put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Lord, we thank you for your word. Thank you for what we can learn and understand. I pray, Lord, this would be helpful. I pray it would be encouraging.
I pray it would cause us to grow not only in obedience, but in devotion and love for you and with you. And it's in the name of Jesus we pray.
Amen. God bless you. Love you guys. You're dismissed. We'd like to invite you, wherever you are around the world, to raise your voice and get in on singing together Psalm 115.

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Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. You made the study yours. You trained. God bless you.
[52:07] Amen.

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