



02 Ep#506 Stop Keeping the “Rules”

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[music]

0:00:46.8 Sonja: Welcome to our second episode of the Armor of God series, where we're looking at St. Paul who told us about the... Putting on the full armor of God. We've covered the belt of truth, and today we're going to look at the breastplate of righteousness. And honestly, if I had any doubt at all that we were supposed to be doing this series, it is completely wiped out of my mind. After sitting outside and doing my morning prayer and reading through the readings today, I did not make the connection to the readings because I hadn't studied for the podcast yet. I hadn't gotten the preparation done. I, as I have said, I said last week and in the previous weeks, especially on the community, my schedule is kind of different than usual. So I'm having a hard time finding the time to do all the stuff I'm supposed to be doing. I've got a book edit I have to turn around that I only got two days ago. And with all the consults that I'm participating in and doing on Mondays and Tuesdays, that only leaves me Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

0:01:50.4 Sonja: So I have to do the edit, get that turned around by Monday, and the podcast. And it's been a lot. But what is very, very cool is as I was looking at the breastplate of righteousness, the readings today speak about what we're going to talk about, and that is righteousness. What is righteousness? That's a big church word. It's a big Bible word. And I'm not so sure that we always understand exactly what it is. I like to say it is the right thing. And it is. Literally, it means right living, and it comes from the root for straightness. And that word is the opposite of iniquity, which means crookedness. So the opposite of righteousness is iniquity. It's the difference between straightness and crookedness. And in the Bible, righteousness is a state that conforms to an authoritative standard. And that standard, it's, is God's own character. So God's character is the definition and the source of all righteousness. Now, John tells us in his letters, so you've got the Gospel of John, but then you have three letters that John also wrote, the Apostle John, we call them first, second, and third John. But in those letters, John says that God is love. And so when we look at what is righteousness, ultimately it is love.

0:03:24.3 Sonja: And so all of the rules are about love, or they're supposed to be. Now, they are.

God gives them to us out of love, and we're supposed to keep them out of love because they are the ways in which we love God properly, and we love one another properly, and we love ourselves properly. So rules are about love; they are not for the sake of the rules themselves. And on that line, I'd like to spend a little bit of time talking about sin because sin is a term that is, oh, it is so misunderstood. Sin is an Old Testament word that is brought entirely whole into the Greek or into the English even, the word sin. Sin is sometimes called missing the mark, but here's what the word actually means. It means a lot of things. It means error, mistake, wrongness, miss, lack, blame, loss, guilt, offense, unreality, untruth, faults, iniquity, what is crooked or what is twisted when it should be straight. Now, sin includes behavior, but also mindsets, perceptions, attitudes, doctrines, misunderstandings, all that stuff. So sin, if it means all of that stuff, I forgot one really main definition of sin, is forfeit or destruction.

0:04:57.9 Sonja: And so that's what, I gave you all the words, the literal words that sin means. But here's what I would love for you to begin thinking when you think of the word sin. We have this idea a lot of times that the heart is like a whiteboard and every sin that we commit puts a black mark on our whiteboard. And sometimes our whiteboards are full of black marks. Sometimes they're completely black. But Jesus, bless him, takes his holy eraser and he erases all the black marks and he makes our whiteboard, the whiteboard of our heart, he makes it clean in confession and in repentance. And that's not faults, but it's a very simplistic and narrow way of looking at the word sin or the idea or the subject or the topic of sin. Sin is anything that is destructive.

0:05:58.1 Sonja: In a philosophical sense, we could say that tornadoes and hurricanes are sin or that death is sin. Entropy is a sin because, those things automatically tend toward destruction. And so that's the part of sin that we are born into. It is the nature of the fallenness of the world. And so the fallenness of the world is called concupiscence. That's another big church word, but it's that it's living under a veil of sin. The entire earth and everything in it, all of us are in a sense born into that entropy or that tendency toward destruction. Everything tends toward death, tends toward falling apart and chaos and randomness. And so in that sense, we could say that such things are sin. And then you have actual behaviors that are sinful, things that we do that are destructive toward one another, lying, murder, adultery, those things that are in the Ten Commandments.

0:07:07.0 Sonja: And then we have those mindsets that are so destructive. Judgments, condemnation, prejudices. So if you look at sin in this big general way, there's no way to get away from it. And it's more than simply the things that we do that are against the rules. And ultimately, here's the other thing about it. The rules are meant to keep us on the straight path of love. The rules are not for the sake of the rules. We don't keep the rules and the Ten Commandments because not doing so is a personal offense to God in the sense of, you know, he is offended and hurt in some selfish, self-centered way. He's offended and hurt in the same way that a parent is offended and hurt when a child doesn't do the right thing, and they themselves are hurt or destroyed because of their decisions.

0:08:07.0 Sonja: That's the sense in which sin is immoral. It's immoral because it is against love. It is against life. Anything against life and love is contrary to God's character. So the fact that it's contrary to God's character, which is life and love, is what makes it immoral. It's destructive. And because it's destructive, and because it's not according to God's character of life and love, when we commit sin, it separates us from God. And that's the other part of the destruction that offends him. And that's the part that another part of it that makes it immoral. It's not immoral because in and of itself is simply immoral. It's immoral because it is against human life and human love and divine

life and divine love. That is what makes it immoral. That is what makes it unrighteous. That is what makes it an affront to God. It is because God wants the best for you. And when you're not doing the things that are "righteous", when we're not keeping the law the way we should, those are the times when we get off the road and we crash the car in the ditch and we're hurt and sometimes destroyed.

0:09:27.1 Sonja: And so that's why God is offended by our sin. So it's not a matter simply of the black marks on the whiteboard. Sin is against the life of God in you and the love of God in you and the life that he wants to give others through you and the love that he wants to give others through you. That's the nature of sin. So it's not about the rules. We freak out sitting in the pew on Sunday or Saturday before mass thinking to ourselves, oh, my gosh, did I commit a mortal sin? Do I need to go to confession before I receive the Eucharist? And we're thinking of it in terms of, if I've broken this rule, God is going to be mad and is going to send me to hell. When the truth is, if you receive the Eucharist with mortal sin on your soul, you have compounded the mortal sin and you have desecrated the Eucharist, the body of Christ. And that is bad for us. It's bad for our souls and it also creates a scandal.

0:10:26.6 Sonja: So sin then is anything that is contrary to life and love. And that is why Paul says, put on the breastplate of righteousness. The Roman soldier would have fastened that breastplate around his chest, and there were two types. The first was fashioned by joining curved metal bands together using leather thongs, almost like scales, and the other was a type of chain mail made by linking small ripped metal rings together until they formed a vest. I'll see if I can find some pictures, but the purpose of both types of armor was the same. That breastplate protected the soldier's vital organs. And if he failed to wear his breastplate, an arrow could penetrate his chest and pierce his heart or lungs. Of course, that's an obvious kind of thing. But it's the breastplate of righteousness. And it's echoed in Isaiah 59, the Lord puts on a righteousness as a breastplate, and he goes to battle against injustice and corruption, restoring peace and restoring order to the land. We could say then, that the breastplate of righteousness or doing the right thing, the straight thing, is what protects your heart.

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0:13:00.2 Sonja: Now here's the thing about righteousness, and this is what the Pharisees could not get through their heads. In Isaiah 64:6, it says, we have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. Some translations say filthy rags. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind take us away. There is no one that calls upon your name that starves himself to take hold of you, for you have hid your face from us and have delivered us into

the hands of our inequities or our crookedness.

0:13:48.7 Sonja: Now, Paul almost completely quotes this section in the book of Romans, but he says, and it's part of what we learned as Baptists. It was called the Roman road, but it is the way to get people saved, right? And so in Romans chapter three, he says there is no one righteous, no not one. In Romans 3 verses 10 and 11, you can see that that is partly a quote from Isaiah, but then in 21 he says almost exactly the same stuff that's in Isaiah in that chapter 64:6. But he says, but now the righteousness of God, apart from the law, is revealed, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe, for there is no difference. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation or a mercy seat or an exchange, an atonement by his blood through faith to demonstrate his righteousness.

0:15:01.9 Sonja: Because in his forbearance or his patience, we could say, God passed over the sins that were previously committed in order to demonstrate, at the present time, his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. So both the book of Romans, which is taken... Some of this teaching is clearly taken from the book of Isaiah, but the law, Paul is saying, cannot save us. It cannot make us righteous. The law never could make us righteous. And that's exactly what the readings said today. It was in the evening readings for today. It says, is the law then opposed to the promises of God? Of course, not. For if a law had been given that could bring life, then righteousness would in reality come from the law. Remember that the whole point of the rules or the whole point of the law was to bring life, but it couldn't. It couldn't bring eternal life. And that's what God wants us to have. So he says, for if a law had been given that could bring life, then righteousness would in reality come from the law.

0:16:07.5 Sonja: But scripture confined all things under the power of sin, that through faith in Jesus Christ, the promise might be given to those who believe. Before faith came, we were held in custody under the law, confined for the faith that was to be revealed. Consequently, the law was our disciplinarian for Christ that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a disciplinarian. For through faith, you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. So what Paul is saying there is that the law pointed out the narrow way that could help us live according to more life and love here on earth. But it could not give to us the righteousness or the rightness, the right living that could get us all the way to eternal life in heaven with God, because we all live opposite life and love because we also live in a fallen world. And so we're selfish and we're judgmental. That's the biggest thing, I think, is the judgment.

0:17:11.4 Sonja: But more than that, What he says here in this reading is that the scriptures showed us what was sin; it showed us what was going to get us off the path to life and love. And God allowed that, and he revealed that law to his people in order to, let's say, get them ready for the eternal life that would come through faith in Christ. So, He calls that law a disciplinarian. Why? Because if you've read any of the Old Testament, it feels mean. It feels strict. It feels suffocating because the rules are the rules, are the rules, are the rules, right? And so we get this idea because we're also fallen and we like rules. We like rules because they're measurable. I can measure, if I have a rule, then I can measure when I have not abided by the rule. And I can measure when someone else doesn't too. And that's the attractiveness of rules for us. We like being able to measure where we are, but we especially like to measure where other people are.

0:18:14.9 Sonja: And so Paul said that the law was a disciplinarian. Just look at it like the, just the Ten commandments, which sum up the whole Old Testament law. We like having those rules because we like knowing where we are right and wrong. So it's a disciplinarian. When we transgress those laws, we feel guilty, because we're looking at it as a rule against God who is going to send us to hell rather than bumpers or training wheels on a bike that's going to get us to heaven, that keeps us on the path.

0:18:52.0 Sonja: And we see God that way because it's a projection. We are the ones who want the rules so that we can measure both our own selves and other people against them. And that is a suffocating, death dealing way to live, both for ourselves and for other people, because we live under the fear of God's wrath. Why? Because we ourselves are raffle. We've talked about this quite a bit throughout The Little Way series, so I'm not gonna get into the judgment thing. I want to get more into the law bit because Isaiah says, and so does Paul, that our righteousness is as filthy rags. And that term, filthy rags is a Jewish way of saying menstrual clots. Menstruation was a time of uncleanness. That's why you see Mary and Joseph, when it says in the book of Luke that during the time or after her purification, they brought Jesus to the temple and they offered turtle doves and pigeons.

0:19:53.5 Sonja: And it was partly because of that purification of Mary's childbirth. And it's interesting to me that Luke is the only one who records that. And Luke was supposed to have gotten his information directly from Mary. He teaches from a feminine point of view throughout his Gospel. And of course, John actually has said to have gotten his, a lot of his wisdom from her too. But in this particular case, that time of purification shows a couple of things. First, that Mary and Joseph were law keepers, and that Mary was closing out the Old Testament law with her obedience and her baby, because her baby is the law personified. He is going to be the one who can keep the law in every detail, when it talks about a jot and a tittle. When Jesus said, not neither a jot nor a tittle will fall from the law until it's all fulfilled.

0:20:47.9 Sonja: Those were the smallest marks in Hebrew punctuation. It would be like the bar, us crossing the T and dotting an I. And so he's saying there is not one bit of the law that is going to fall away. It will all be fulfilled and he himself is going to fulfill it, and then he's going to sacrifice for it so that we can all have righteousness, rightness, right? Living and straightness transferred to us through faith. That's the word imputed. Paul uses the word imputed elsewhere. That righteousness is imputed to us. It is transferred to us because we could not reach righteousness. We could not reach love and life on our own, not eternally and not even here on earth. I mean, we can't even, we don't even know what it is, real life and real love. It had to be revealed to us. And not only that, but the capacity to live in that way had to also be imputed or transferred to us through Christ in faith, because otherwise we would never have understood it or been able to live according to life and love.

0:22:00.8 Sonja: So when Paul says we have to have that breastplate of righteousness, which is an echo of Isaiah who prophesied that the Messiah would also take on that breastplate of righteousness, we... Jesus then modeled that breastplate for us. He shows us how to live with life and love because ultimately in Romans chapter 13, it says that love is the fulfillment of the law. And I'm getting ahead of myself a little bit, but I wanna talk about law because one of the things that used to bug me as a Baptist was the question of why don't we keep kosher? Why is it that we're supposed to keep some of those rules of the Old Testaments, such as those that are perhaps in the Ten Commandments, but we don't keep kosher. We don't stone adulterous people. We don't haul up a

heifer on the altar and slit its throat and pour the blood out around the altar.

0:22:56.7 Sonja: Why then are we picking and choosing which of those laws that we can keep and those that we're not supposed to, the dietary laws, this, all of that stuff? Why is it that we don't do that? And that used to bug me a lot. Why does Jesus take those Ten Commandments and then teach the beatitudes in a way that upset the Pharisee so much who felt like he was setting aside the law of Moses, particularly in a case like the adulterous woman when they drag her up to his feet and the law said that she should be stoned. And he said he who is without sin cast the first stone. He wouldn't stone her. So why not? Well, we're gonna answer that question when we get back.

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0:25:29.7 Sonja: For some of you who were well catechized in your past, this question is moot for you. But as they say, repetition is the mother of learning. So it's good for us to kind of all go back over it together. So there are a couple of different types of law. The first is the moral law, and that is based completely on God's character and his person. It cannot be set aside. And within that are a couple of different divisions that we're not gonna go into. But the eternal law which is from the mind of God, from eternity, the providential law, then natural law, which conscience can discover, there's human positive law, written laws in society, divine positive law, which would be Sinai and the Beatitudes or the Gospels, right? So those are under the moral law. The first three of the Ten Commandments are eternal and natural.

0:26:20.8 Sonja: And the fourth through the 10th have to do with society and the neighbor, parents, family, that kind of thing. They're human positive and divine positive laws. So the Ten Commandments are still in force because they are part of natural and moral law. They cannot be set aside because they're based on God's own character. Then you have ceremonial law that is included in the Torah and Leviticus. Those ceremonial laws regulate liturgy and worship and how and where and when and the kind of worship that the people are supposed to offer. In the Old Testament, the old covenant, they celebrated the liturgy in a way that commemorated their saving event, which was the exodus. In the New Testament, in the new covenant, we celebrate our saving event, which is the cross. And so the laws of the liturgy or the ceremonial laws necessarily change, and that would also

include those kosher dietary laws.

0:27:25.8 Sonja: Those were to keep people clean and pure, but not morally, ceremonially, liturgically. This is why Mary's childbirth and the offering for purification, it wasn't a statement of her impurity, it wasn't a statement of her immorality, it was rather a ceremonial impurity similar to something like, we go to confession and we fast before we receive the Eucharist. Something like that. The liturgy in its literal form, the word, it means a work of the people and it's symbolic of sacred things of spiritual realities and their sacred things and their spiritual realities had to do with the exodus. And, of course, for us, that's a spiritual kind of thing. Whereas for them it was literal; it was a literal saving event. Now it's literally saving for us too, our cross and death and resurrection, the passion. But it is a spiritual eternal salvation and not a literal, physical one.

0:28:36.9 Sonja: Not primarily, I mean it is literal and physical, but it's primarily spiritual. Whereas for them it was primarily literal and physical. So that's the ceremonial law. Then there are what are called judicial precepts. They were punishments and enforcements. You see that in Exodus chapter 21. And they differ by society and time and circumstance. So it wouldn't be appropriate now, right, to drag an adulterous out to the street and stone her to death. Now then it was, and in part this illustrates what the church calls a progressive pedagogy. God tolerated some things in the beginning in order to discipline us, is the word that Paul used in the readings today. To discipline us, to get us ready for the more comprehensive law of love, which is much more demanding and much more comprehensive. If you compare the Ten Commandments to the Beatitudes, Jesus, he expands on all that was in the Old Testament.

0:29:49.4 Sonja: He says that we're not supposed to just refrain from murdering one another, but that we should actually not even be angry with one another. And this was the sticking point for the Pharisees; they liked their rules a lot because they're visible and we can show them off the way we keep those rules. And so Jesus then was going deeper with that sermon on the Mount. He wasn't setting aside the natural moral law because that can't be done. What he was doing was embracing all of that natural moral law and then going deeper, going deeper in love and deeper in life so that the Ten Commandments are actually just the minimum; they're just the minimum to keep us on the path to life and love. And that's part of why the church says, if you're gonna do an examination of conscience, use that Ten Commandments because it is the natural moral law.

0:30:45.6 Sonja: But the Pharisees were far more concerned with the ceremonial law and the judicial precepts, not the heart and character of God. But because they were so good at keeping those ceremonial laws and those judicial precepts, when Jesus said to the disciples, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. And they all look at each other and they're like, oh, my gosh. Well then who's gonna make it in? Unless your righteousness? There's that righteousness again, the rightness, unless your rightness surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is the righteousness of God. He perfectly fulfilled the law in his own person, both toward God and toward his neighbor on the cross and in every other way. And he showed us what that love and life of God looks like when we're living it the way we can and the way we should.

0:31:44.9 Sonja: Now we have his power to do that. Paul says, through faith in Christ that righteousness, the ability to be righteous, to be straight, to be and do the right thing and be in right standing with God in a way that leads us all the way into heaven with him, where he, where it is all life and love purely, all of that has to be transferred to us from Christ. We cannot do this on our

own. Philippians 2:12 through 13, which Paul also wrote, he tells us to work out our salvation. But he says it is God who for his good purpose works in you both to desire and to work. And Augustine put it this way, when God rewards our merits or our works, he crowns his own gifts to us. All your worry about keeping those rules is as filthy rags.

0:32:48.6 Sonja: None of it is good enough. Now, does that mean we should just throw our hands up in the air and say, Nope, I clearly, since God does it all, I don't need to do anything? Well, that's not the case either, because God created us for good works beforehand in Him so that we would walk in those, Paul also said. Garrigou-Lagrange, he said, in the work of salvation, all is from God, including our own cooperation in the sense that we cannot distinguish a part as exclusively ours, which does not come from the author of all good. And he's echoing Paul, everything we have, we have from God, we have the ability, the grace, the sight to see. The ears to hear, the health, everything, the strength, all of it comes from God and it comes from him in faith. So if you're lacking in an area, trust that he is growing you into life and love.

0:33:50.1 Sonja: Do your best and let God carry you the rest of the way. This goes along with what we talked about last week with the belt of truth and standing. All we're supposed to do is stand, because in Isaiah 59 it says, the Lord's own arm worked salvation for him and his own righteousness sustained him. He put on righteousness as his breastplate. It is God who does all of it. God had mercy on us, in our blindness, in our deafness, in our judgment, in our complete inability to live in life and love. And so his mercy, not judgment, his mercy flowed to the lowest place, which is our sin and our weakness. And it still does. Mercy triumphs over judgment, James says. Why is that? Because Paul says that it demonstrates God's righteousness.

0:34:50.5 Sonja: I'm gonna read that passage out of Romans again. But now the righteousness of God, apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and for all, on all who believe, for there is no difference, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation or a mercy seat by his blood, through faith to demonstrate his righteousness. Because in his forbearance or patience, God passed over the sins that were previously committed. There's that progressive pedagogy to demonstrate at the present time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

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0:36:26.1 Sonja: It is your justification to believe in the propitiation, in the mercy, in the atonement of Christ, and not simply with your head, but with your actions. I trust in that mercy. I trust Jesus. I trust in you. And so John says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So what is the law now? It's the law of love, but what does

that actually mean? Especially for those of us who, who maybe don't even know what love is? And I would argue that none of us really does. None of us understands that agape love of God, that sacrificial love of God, that sacrifices without regard to emotion, when it's in the best interest of the other person. None of us knows how to love our enemies. None of us automatically goes the extra mile for other people. None of us does. Without that grace of God, we cannot live the kind of love that Jesus showed us on the cross. We just can't.

0:37:36.5 Sonja: But thankfully, by virtue of our baptism and our confirmation, we have the Holy Spirit. We have the Holy Spirit's power. And that's why Paul says we must have faith in Christ. We rely on the Holy Spirit's power to do those things that we cannot on our own do, which is very little, because our righteousness is as filthy rags, again. And when Jesus is teaching such things, I can't imagine that they could have seen and heard the things that Jesus was teaching and not said to themselves, Man, I mean.

0:38:12.0 Sonja: This is deep, man, this is way different than the ceremony keeping the ceremonial law and the judicial precepts, which by the way, for us, probably a judicial precept an example would be like teachings on in vitro or bio-ethics, those kinds of things, those judicial precepts or remember they can change with the times. But Jesus is not saying to them that when he says that, your righteousness has to be greater or surpass that of the Scribes and Pharisees, or you will not enter the kingdom of heaven, he's not saying that God transfers that righteousness based on our good works, I mean, sometimes Protestants will accuse us of saying that; he's not saying that, he's saying that external righteousness, or keeping the rules the way the scribes and the Pharisees did it without the interior righteousness that precedes from the heart that's supposed to characterize God's children. He's saying that you can't please God, you can't reach life and love, the degree of life and love that is God, that is his character, that is his person, you cannot reach that you can't.

0:39:23.7 Sonja: And this is the thing, He's not preventing us from being there, He's saying, You're so far apart from me, you couldn't bear being here with me, and so he's teaching us how to grow in that life and love so that we can conform more greatly to his own life and love, and we can expand our capacity to receive that life and love and to communicate it to others. And I actually had a little bit of a discussion with my editor yesterday in which we were hammering out something I had written for clarity, and the question was, I had made a statement that whatever capacity for love we have here on earth at the moment of death is the capacity that we enter Heaven with, so imagine your spiritual artery, like a heart artery, imagine that it's clogged with plaque. The plaque of sin, there's not a lot of love that can get from God to you because your artery is blocked by a bunch of sin. His love can't get to you, and it's his love that purifies us, and so the church father saw Ecclesiastes 11:3, where a tree falls is where it will lie, they saw that as a sort of statement about the permanency of the soul at death, so that whatever capacity you leave the earth with is the capacity with which you can receive and enjoy God's love.

0:41:00.1 Sonja: So if your artery is very small, let's say just by potential and creative-ness, he not only will clear out the plaque of sin in the artery to make it clean so that his love can get to you, but he also adds grace to that nature, so that the artery can actually get bigger, so not only does he purify us with his love here on Earth, and part of that happens through our good works when and only when they are done from love and for love, they purify our spiritual artery. And they can even make it bigger, and that's the whole goal, he doesn't care about the rules for the sake of the rules, he doesn't care about the mass rules for the sake of the rules, he cares about the mass and the liturgical rules, because he wants us to be as close to him as possible so his love can get in that artery and

clear it out and make it bigger, so that he can give you more of his love, and so that you can give more of his love. That's what he's doing. That's what the rules are for, the Old Testament rules were...

0:42:03.5 Sonja: To get them ready for this revelation in Christ, that is so radical, it's called a Gospel. Good news, the good news is, God wants you to live a life that is so amazing and so for, that it communicates life and it communicates love, and it enlarges everything in you and around you, so that ultimately you can experience that love to a greater degree than you ever imagined in heaven with him who is life and love, that's what he's saying. He doesn't care about your roles, he doesn't care about your black marks on your whiteboard of your soul, all accept that those black marks keep you from receiving His love. He wants us to go to confession and get rid of that mortal sin before we receive the Eucharist, because if we don't, we're not gonna receive the benefit of the touch of Jesus Christ in his body and blood in the Eucharist. That's why not because he's offended personally and selfishly that you have done something wrong; he's offended because it's immoral that you would choose not to live from that life and love, that's what he's offended by, and it's not for him, it's for you, and it's for the rest of the world, because when our artery is clear and it enlarges by grace, we can communicate that love to the rest of the world, to the people that we have in our families and our influence.

0:43:42.2 Sonja: Somebody said on the community, our territory of souls, I believe it was Maria, he wants us to be righteous and not just look righteous, because when we are wearing that breastplate of righteousness, it guards our hearts, it guards the spiritual artery, it clears it out of all the sinful plaque, and it enlarges the spiritual artery so that we can receive more of his love. That is the point. And so when we were talking about that, my editor and I, we were hammering out, what exactly does this mean? What is God saying? It's not about judgment for the sake of judgment, he doesn't want us judging, because those are projections, the judgments that we are making about ourselves first, that we're putting on other people because they're too hard to see, and when we do that, we are.

0:44:31.6 Sonja: Narrowing our spiritual artery we're not loving the person in front of us through whom God is trying to give us something important that we need to know about ourselves and our lack of love and our deficits of love, that's why he says, Don't judge, because we will stand before him and judge ourselves, all of those projections will be removed and he's gonna show us how we see ourselves and what we know about ourselves, and because of judgment, we cannot receive mercy, and when we cannot receive mercy, we cannot receive love, and when we cannot receive mercy and love, we cannot receive God, we cannot receive His life, and we will stand before him and say, I can't believe it, I can't believe in your mercy, I can't receive your love, and we will banish ourselves to hell because of that judgment.

0:45:16.8 Sonja: That is what he's trying to tell us. What is the breastplate of righteousness? It is the breastplate of love, it is the breastplate of doing the right thing in love for love, and from love and love is to treat someone better than they deserve when it's in their best interests, that means forgiveness, because that is good for both me and the offender; it means mercy and leaning into rather than withdrawing from people who ignorantly hurt us; it means boundaries in charity, when people don't love properly, we have to help teach them what proper love is, which means you can't abuse me and you can't abuse the people who I'm responsible for. And if I'm called to sacrifice my life for the good of another, then I will do so; I will do so while standing in truth. If you will persecute me unto death, I will stand with that belt of truth, I will stand in righteousness of love, and

I will allow you to do that without retaliating. If you are determined to persecute me for the truth, I will continue to love you with boundaries and with grace and with mercy, because it not only purifies my spiritual artery, it also increases it, so that I can receive more of that life and love.

0:46:47.8 Sonja: When Jesus said, I came to give them life and give it to them more abundantly, this is what he's talking about, he's talking about the life of God Himself, that God wants to communicate, and he gives us the rules and the laws in order to keep us from falling off the cliff and destroying ourselves and the people around us through judgments and unforgiveness and other transgressions against the straight-ness of God's love and law, everything is moving in the direction of that light and love of God, and anything that stands in its way is sin, it's destructive. So let us put on that belt of truth, and let us put on that breast plate of righteousness and stand in that armor of God and allow God to defend us and to grow us in love and in life.

0:47:00.5 Speaker 4: Thank you for listening to the Sacred Healing 12:30 podcast. Find out more at biblestudyevangelista.com, because love heals.

