

Protect Your Body

The Armor of God – The Breastplate of Righteousness Ephesians 6

“Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.”
Ephesians 6:14

We are in a spiritual battle and we don't wrestle against this physical world, but against the forces of darkness. Sounds like a sci-fi or horror movie, but it was a reality long before it was a movie script. This battle goes on everyday and as Paul explains it we have armor that we are able to put on to protect us. Part of this armor is the breastplate.

We have all seen movies or read books where there is an intense battle scene. As the battle rages on, one of the heroes is struck with a spear or arrow or bullet to the chest. He is thrown back from the impact and lies lifeless against the wall. Of course, we all gasp as we begin to reason that it is too soon for him to die or he wasn't the right one to die. Moments later, when there is a break in the battle, a trusted comrade comes to see his condition. To the amazement of his friend, the fallen hero opens his eyes. “You should be dead!” proclaims his friend. “I came prepared,” he says, as he reveals armor under his mantle.

The breastplate is an important piece of armor.

Think of a time when you have disobeyed God. I know for me, I do not have to think too hard nor do I have to go too far back. How did disobedience make you feel?

Let's take a little different approach. Think of a time that you compromised, or maybe you did not act justly towards someone. How did that make you feel?

For me, I felt it in my chest and stomach. It was this pain or heartache that came from within me. Even though there were times that I tried to ignore it, the pain would still be there.

The first piece of armor Paul mentioned is the belt of truth. Part of that is being truthful with myself in allowing God to reveal areas that are not right. The breastplate is then put on to protect me and help me in righteousness and along with the belt. This is armor that is never to be removed.

No Roman soldier would go into battle without his breastplate, a tough, sleeveless piece of armor that covered his full torso. It was often made of leather or heavy linen, onto which were sewn overlapping slices of animal hooves or horns or pieces of metal. Some were made of large pieces of metal molded or hammered to conform to the body. The purpose of that piece of armor is obvious—to protect the heart, lungs, intestines, and other vital organs.

*"And put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity."
Ephesians 4:24-27*

Is there anything in your arm or leg that is vital to your body? It is all in the chest area, with the exception of the brain, but that piece of armor comes later.

In ancient Jewish thinking, the heart represented the mind and the will and the bowels were considered the seat of emotions and feelings. The mind and the emotions are the two areas where Satan most fiercely attacks believers.

How does the enemy attack the mind and the emotions today?

How has the enemy attacked your mind and emotions in the past few days?

Satan creates a world system, a sinful environment by which he tempts us to think wrong thoughts and to feel wrong emotions. He wants to cloud our minds with false doctrine, false principles, and false information, and he seeks to undermine pure living and replace it with immorality, greed, envy, hate, and every other vice. He wants us to laugh at sin rather than mourn over it, and to rationalize it rather than confess it and bring it to the Lord for forgiveness. He is against righteousness and justice.

Do you see a need for the breastplate yet?

Let's look at the righteousness part of this armor. How would you define the word righteousness?

People sometimes have a misunderstanding of the word "righteousness". Paul is obviously not speaking here of self-righteousness, which is not righteousness at all but the worst form of sin. So many people take on this self-righteousness which is man-made legalistic rules that change the outside man, making him proud and spiritual looking, but they make God sick.

This is also not the imputed righteousness given to us at salvation (Romans 4:6, 11, 22-24). We are permanently dressed in that righteousness, throughout our lives on earth and throughout all eternity. God's imputed righteousness is the basis of our Christian life and of our Christian living. It protects us from hell, but it does not, in itself, protect us from Satan in this present life.

So what is this righteousness? The breastplate of righteousness that we put on as spiritual armor against our adversary is the practical righteousness of a life lived in obedience to God's Word. It is righteous behavior that is seen earlier in Ephesians 4:24-27, which having been done, will "not give the devil opportunity" (Colossians 3:9-14.).

This righteousness is living moment-by-moment in obedience to the Heavenly Father. To put it another way, this part of the armor is simply holy living which is seen in Scripture.

We know that a Christian would be living in sin if not practicing righteousness, but can you think of some of the benefits lost to a Christian who is not living rightly?

Right living protects and blesses the believer. If I keep within the speed limit, I will not be pulled over for speeding, I will not have fear when I see a police car, there is less of a chance that I will be in an accident, and I am obeying the authorities placed above me. Right living protects and blesses us.

Here are some things to consider if we are not living rightly:

1. It will cost the Christian his joy. In 1 John there are many commands and warnings given to believers “so that our joy may be made complete” (1 John 1:4, Romans 6).
2. It will cause fruitlessness. The disobedient Christian is unproductive in the things of the Lord.
3. It brings a loss of reward. Whatever the worldly, fleshly believer does will never amount to anything worth of heavenly praise (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).
4. It brings a reproach on God’s glory. The greatest evil of a Christian’s sin is its reflection on his heavenly Father. Unholiness fails to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect” (Titus 2:10).

Consider the words of Peter “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

Is God dealing with you about an issue that is not considered righteousness? Deal with it. Deal with it now.

What things need to be surrendered to God in your life that does not reflect right or holy living? It could be movies you watch or activities that you are a part of.

“The night is almost gone,” Paul says, “and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light...Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to fulfill lusts” (Romans 13:12,14)

Start today to live righteously, because we cannot afford to forget the breastplate.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

Not living rightly will:

- Cost a Christian his joy
- Cause fruitlessness
- Bring a loss of reward
- Bring a reproach on God’s glory