

Having considered the first piece of Christian armor last week (the belt of truth), we come this evening to the second piece—the breastplate of righteousness...

Now, I mentioned last week, that it's possible as Paul was imprisoned while writing this letter, that he had in mind the armor a Roman soldier would wear—first century Roman soldiers had six basic pieces of armor—a belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet, and sword—these constituted the armor that he would wear in battle...

Thus, I trust this is an obvious point, as the Roman soldier would only wear this armor when he went to war—he wouldn't wear it around the house—but, he would put it on as he left for battle—well, in contrast to this, the Christian soldier is to put on his armor every day and all day, as he is always in battle—7 days a week, 24 hrs a day...

- I. What Is It?
- II. Why Is It Important?
- III. How Is It Put On?

#### I. What Is It?

1. As you know, the Scriptures, and especially the NT, uses the term "righteousness" in two closely related ways...
2. [1] Positional righteousness—this refers to the imputed righteousness of Christ, that is received by faith alone...
3. It is perfect and positional—that is—it's reckoned to our spiritual accounts by faith—it refers to our legal standing...
4. This is the righteousness associated with our justification, and serves as the basis of our acceptance with God...
5. This is a righteousness not worked out by us, or put within us, but given to us, and put upon us—it's a positional...
6. Jer.23:6—"In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS..."
7. Rom.1:16-17—"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith..."
8. Phil.3:8-9—"Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith..."
9. [2] Practical righteousness—this refers to an imparted righteousness, that begins with our regeneration and change of nature...
10. This is that practical righteousness associated with our sanctification—it's imperfect and ever growing in this life...
11. This righteousness is put within us through regeneration, and we work it out, by faith and the work of the Spirit...
12. Eph.4:24—"and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness..."
13. Here we find similar language to our text—the language of "putting on"—we to put on the new man recreated in the image of God...
14. That image is described as—"true righteousness and holiness"—these terms are similar and basically synonymous...
15. But notice—we are to "put this man on"—that simply means—we are to personally and actively pursue righteousness...
16. Eph.5:8-9—"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth)..."

17. This brings me to the all-important question—what righteousness here serves as the Christian soldier's breastplate...
18. Well—let me suggest that these righteousnesses, though they must be distinguished, they can never be severed...
19. In fact—there's a sense in which every form of heresy, either fails to distinguish these, or else attempts to divorce them...
20. Roman Catholicism—this is the historical error of Rome—they failed to distinguish justification from sanctification...
21. Historic Catholic Theology, conflates or confuses these two righteousnesses, and end up with a salvation of works...
22. Modern Protestantism—this is a common error of many professing Christians—they divorce sanctification from justification...
23. Many contemporary professing Christians, radically separate these, and end up with a salvation that doesn't work...
24. It's for this reason, the OT repeatedly equates the coming righteousness of the Messiah, as being the salvation of God...
25. In other words—the salvation of God, as found in Christ Jesus, includes both a positional and practical righteousness...
26. These two are necessarily connected—together they comprise the salvation of God, the redemption of God...
27. Isa.45:8—"Rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. I, the LORD, have created it..."
28. Isa.54:17—"No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is from Me, says the LORD..."
29. Isa.59:16-17—"He saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that *there was* no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him. For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak..."
30. [a] Both are purchased—that is, both our justification and sanctification are secured for us through the merits of Christ...
31. Jesus Christ, lived, died, rose again, and intercedes for His people, to declare and to make His people righteous...
32. There is a real sense in which both righteousnesses, have been bought and secured by the blood of Jesus Christ...
33. Oh my friends, what a wonderful thought, what a powerful incentive to live holy—Christ died to make me righteous...
34. [b] Both are possessed—this means, no person is ever declared legally righteous, without being made righteous...
35. To put it more theologically—no person is ever justified without also being sanctified—they come as twin blessings...
36. 1Cor.1:30—"But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption..."
37. Righteousness refers to a perfect and position righteousness, whereas sanctification refers to a practical righteousness...
38. But notice—both are given in Christ, and they are given at the same time, when we get into Christ by faith...
39. [c] Both are important—that is, both are important with regards to the Christian armor, both have their place...
40. And I will even go further—no person ever goes to heaven without both—while Christ's righteousness earns heaven, no one enters it without a practical righteousness...
41. Matt.5:20—"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven..."

42. Now—I've labored to clarify the fact, that these two must never be totally separated or divorced from each other...
43. But, my dear friends, as important as our practical righteousness is, it of itself, is a very poor spiritual breastplate...
44. To go into battle trusting in our own practical righteousness is not wise—we need a better righteousness than that...
45. Thus—I want to suggest that primary and foremostly, the righteousness that serves as our breastplate is the perfect, imputed, righteousness of Christ, received by faith alone...
46. Now—this doesn't mean that our practical righteousness isn't important, because it argues the reality of justification...
47. Our personal and practical righteousness (holiness), can only protect us as it argues a positional and perfect righteousness...
48. Thus, in this qualified sense, our personal and practical righteousness, can be viewed as the Christian's breastplate...
49. Only to the degree that it argues that I am in Christ, and that I have His perfect righteousness imputed to my account...
50. Thus—I suggest that ultimately speaking, the only righteousness that can protect our souls, is the righteousness of God...
51. 1Jn.3:7—"Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous..."
52. In other words—the person who is living righteously, proves that he is positionally righteous, just as Christ is righteous...
53. Thus—I suggest that in this sense we can say that our practical righteousness functions as a Christian breastplate...
54. Charles Hodge—"What is that righteousness which in the spiritual armor answers to the breastplate? Many say it is our own righteousness, integrity, or rectitude of mind. But this is no protection. It cannot resist the accusations of conscience, the whispers of despondency, the power of temptation, much less the severity of the law or the assaults of Satan. What Paul desired for himself was not to have on his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith (Phil.3:8-9); and this, doubtless, is the righteousness which he here urges believers to put on as a breastplate..."

## II. Why Is It Important?

1. In olden days, soldiers would wear breastplates—these were made of either thin metal or very thick leather...
2. It would cover the front part of the man, from the chest down to the upper thigh—it would protect his vital organs (heart, lungs, intestines)...
3. The breastplate protected the soldier's most important parts—it was essential—it was absolutely and completely necessary...
4. Most often, battles consisted of hand-to-hand combat, wherein an enemy would commonly use a short dagger...
5. Without a breastplate, all of the vital organs would be exposed—they would be left vulnerable for the enemy's dagger...
6. One thrust from our enemy, and the soldier would suffer defeat—he would suffer a death blow, a fatal blow...
7. Charles Hodge—"A warrior without his breastplate, was naked, exposed to every thrust of his enemy, and even to every casual dart. In such a condition, flight or death is inevitable..."
8. Now—brethren, it's for this reason, that I simply can not believe that by righteousness, is meant our holiness...
9. As important as this is, as essential as this is, as necessary as this is, I assure you, it's not a very sturdy breastplate...
10. Thus—my dear brethren, poor and needy Christians must enter into battle dressed in the righteousness of Christ...
11. Now—before I go any further, I need to make one last clarification, this righteousness includes two related things...

12. [a] Jesus' blood—this is always implied—Christ never robes us with His righteousness without removing our unrighteousness...
13. [b] Jesus' obedience—the righteousness of Christ, consists of Christ's perfect obedience to God's righteous law...
14. Charles Hodge—"This righteousness is an infinitely perfect righteousness, consisting in the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God, which satisfies all the demands of the divine law and justice, and which is a sure defence against all assaults whether from within or from without..."
15. Thus, in speaking about the perfect righteousness of Christ, we are talking about the doctrine of justification...
16. And in speaking about the doctrine of justification, we must remember this includes forgiveness and acceptance...
17. 2Cor.5:21—"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him..."
18. [1] It protects us from accusations—that is, when our conscience, or else our enemies, condemn us for our sin...
19. In Rev.12:10, the devil is described as—"the accuser of the brethren, who accuse them before God day and night..."
20. I want to spend more time on this point, because I believe it's a very popular way our enemy levels his attacks...
21. But brethren, remember Satan is not our only enemy—we all have a more immediate enemy called the FLESH...
22. This is to say—while we have an accuser in Satan, we have another accuser that exists within our own souls...
23. And these two will team up, and attempt to level all manner of accusations against us, to cripple and weaken us...
24. How can you go to God in prayer, how can you come before Him in worship, having committed such sins...
25. Isa.32:16-17—"Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever..."
26. 1Jn.2:1-2—"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world..."
27. Heidelberg Catechism—"Q. How are you righteous before God? A. Only by faith in Christ Jesus. Although my conscience accuse me that I have grievously trespassed against all the commandments of God, and have not kept one of them, and further am as yet prone to all evil, yet nevertheless, if I embrace these benefits of Christ with a true confidence and persuasion of mind, the full and perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, without any merit of mine, of the mere mercy of God is imputed and given to me, and that so, as if neither I had committed any sin, neither any corruption did stick to me, yes as if I myself had perfectly accomplished that obedience which Christ accomplished for me..."
28. [2] It protects us from fearfulness—that is, our breastplate provides a sense of boldness and renewed strength...
29. For example, think of a soldier entering into battle with some indescribable metal formed into a large breastplate...
30. For the sake of illustration, let's say this breastplate covers him completely—from head to foot, front and back...
31. Heb.4:15-16—"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Rom.8:32-34)..."
32. Horatius Bonar—"Thy works, not mine, O Christ, speak gladness to this heart; they tell me all is done; they bid my fear depart..."
33. [3] It protects us from temptation—having our spiritual chests protected provides motive to resist temptations...

34. My friends, when we grasp what it took Christ to give us this breastplate, this should motivate us to life holy...
35. 1Cor.6:20—"For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's (His possession)..."
36. [4] It protects us from haughtiness—this is a constant temptation that all Christians endure—to look down on others...
37. Thus, we must ever understand, that our acceptance with God is based solely upon the righteousness of another...
38. Phil.3:8-9—"Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith..."
39. [5] It protects us from sadness and sorrow—remember brethren, in Christ we are more than forgiven but accepted...
40. There's a sense in which this righteousness garment reminds us that we are God's children and heirs of heaven...
41. Just as Jacob's gift of the multicoloured coat argued his love for Joseph, so too, this garment argues the promise of God's eternal love...
42. Or to change the analogy, we could liken Christ's righteousness to the wedding garment, which assures me entrance to the feast...
43. Isa.61:10—"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels..."
44. Hymn—"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress; midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, with joy shall I lift up my head. Bold shall I stand in thy great day; for who ought to my charge shall lay? Fully absolved through these I am from sin and fear, from guilt and shame..."

### III. How Is It Put On?

1. Before I go further, let me address an issue that I don't think I mentioned last week—and that is the use of *participles*...
2. The apostle Paul uses four key participles throughout this passage—"having girded...having put on...having shod...taking the shield..."
3. The form that these particular *participles* are in (aorist middle), is commonly used to signify commands or exhortations...
4. This is how they are used here—Paul uses them as commands—Christians must put these pieces of armor on...
5. Thus, Christians soldiers must put on the righteousness of Christ—the perfect and flawless obedience of Christ...
6. Let me suggest briefly, three simply and practical ways, Christian soldiers are to put on the breastplate of righteousness...
7. [1] Intelligently—that is—Christians must learn more intently and accurately, what JUSTIFICATION entails...
8. My dear friends, let me put this as plainly as I can, if you don't understand that word, you're not prepared for battle...
9. [a] Understand the NEED for justification, [b] the GROUNDS of justification, and [c] the MEANS of justification...
10. [2] Assuredly—that is—be sure that you labor for a solid and well-grounded understanding of Biblical assurance...
11. [3] Continually—that is—every morning, as you start your day, remind yourself of these grand and blessed truths...
12. Hymn—"Thy righteousness, O Christ, alone can cover me: no righteousness avails save that which is of thee" Hymn—"My hope is build on nothing less, than Jesus blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name..."