

THE ARMOR OF GOD

"The Breastplate of Righteousness"

King Ahab desired to retake Ramoth Gilead. Frustrated with his own army commanders, he asked King Jehoshaphat of Judah to fight with him in a campaign against Aram (or Syria). "Let us inquire of the Lord first," King Jehoshaphat said. So King Ahab called upon his prophets. About four hundred of them, led by Zedekiah son of Kenaanah, to the man prophesied victory against Aram for the kings.

King Jehoshaphat was not impressed. "Is there not a prophet of the Lord that we can inquire of?" he asked.

"Sure," Ahab said, "Micaiah son of Imlah. But I hate him because he always prophesies bad things for me."

"The king should not say such things," Jehoshaphat told Ahab. So Ahab sent for Micaiah. The messenger who got him warned him that all the other prophets had spoken victory for the kings. Make your words agree with theirs, he told the prophet. But Micaiah let him know that he could only speak what God told him to.

"Should I go to Ramoth Gilead?" the king asked him when he arrived.

"Sure, why not, go ahead. Attack, take Ramoth Gilead, be victorious," Micaiah told him.

"How many times do I have to tell you to tell me the truth, Micaiah?" Ahab said, recognizing the prophet's sarcasm.

"I saw Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the Lord said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.'"

"I told you he never tells me anything good," Ahab said to Jehoshaphat.

"Therefore, hear the word of the Lord," Micaiah declared. "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne and the host of heaven standing on his right and left. 'Who will entice Ahab king of Israel to go to Ramoth Gilead and die there?' One suggested this and another that. Finally, a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord. 'I will entice him,' the spirit said. 'By what means?' the Lord asked. 'I will go and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.' 'You will succeed. Go and do it.' So now the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these your prophets. He has decreed disaster for you."

The word of the Lord incensed Ahab. He had Micaiah locked up in prison and put on rations of bread and water only. But he also decided to take precautions. He told Jehoshaphat to dress in his royal robes while he, Ahab, disguised himself and went into the battle. Jehoshaphat agreed to this plan. What he didn't know was that the King of Aram had instructed all his chariot officers to concentrate their attacks on the king of Israel. When Jehoshaphat found himself surrounded and hard pressed, he recognized the foolishness of his position and cried out to the

Lord for help (2 Chr. 18:31-32) and He rescued him.

But an Aramean soldier drew his bow and shot at random. The arrow pierced through Ahab's deception, entering through a chink in his breastplate and mortally wounded him. He died that day and the dogs licked up his blood according to the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah the Tishbite (1 Kings 21:19; 2 Chr. 18:33-34).

Eph 6:14

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; (KJV)

We have girt our soldier with truth. Today we examine the breastplate of righteousness.

*We know that the devil is a liar. We talked last week about his nature, that the word **DEVIL** means **ACCUSER AND SLANDERER**. As truth is the foundation of our existence, lying is the general foundation of his character. Accusation and slander are particular elements of his lying nature. It is for defence against the accusations and slanders of the devil that we are given the breastplate of righteousness.*

1 Cor 1:30-31

30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." (NIV)

2 Cor 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (NIV)

It is only in Jesus through the cross that we have righteousness, His righteousness. This righteousness that has been birthed within must be put on in our daily walk if we are to be mature in Christ.

Heb 5:12-14

12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (NIV)

Teachings about righteousness are meat. Righteousness is referred to as a breastplate. The most common Roman breastplate from the 1st to the 3rd century AD was segmental (like we have on the felt board). It was made of overlapping curved bands of iron fastened to internal leather strips and wired to each other. It covered the shoulders and the front and back of the torso. Leather thongs at the bottom attached the breastplate to the belt, thus holding securely in place and transferring some of the weight (anywhere from 40-75 pounds) from the shoulders to the

waist. All body armor would have been worn over a padded arming doublet.

I see the padded arming doublet as the righteousness of Christ within. Without the padding, the armor would simply transfer the blows, not absorb them. Jesus is our righteousness. He is the Lord our Righteousness as Jeremiah 23:5-6 declare. Having faith in him is how we received righteousness within. We need to understand what he accomplished for us on the cross in order to stand against the accusations of the devil. This righteousness born within must be put on.

Eph 4:24

and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (NIV)

This is the essence of righteous is and the breastplate as a defensive weapon. But God does not want to stop there with us.

Phil 2:13

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. (KJV)

1 Pet 2:24-25

24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (NIV)

Titus 2:11-14

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

13 while we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (NIV)

He didn't make us righteous so that we can be spiritually prideful. No, he made us righteous in order that we may do righteously. The outside of the breastplate is "righteous does." which leads us to a verse of scripture we must deal with.

Isaiah 64:5

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. (KJV)

Adam Clarke's Commentary-

[As filthy rags] `Idiym (heb 5708). Rab. Mosheh ben Maimon interpretatur `idiym, vestes quibus mulier se abstergit post congressum cum marito suo. Alii pannus menstruatus. Alii panni mulieris parientis.-- "And we ben made as unclene alle we: and as the cloth of the woman rooten blode flowing, all our rigtwisnesses."-- Old Manuscript Bible. If preachers knew properly the meaning of this word, would they make such a liberal use of it in their public ministry? And

why should any use a word, the meaning of which he does not understand? How many in the congregation blush for the incautious man and his "filthy rags!"

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary-

[But we are all as an unclean (thing)] (kaTaamee' (heb 2931))-- legally unclean as a leper. True of Israel, everywhere now cut off by unbelief, and by God's judgments, from the congregation of the saints.

[And all our righteousnesses]-- plural, `uncleanness' extended to every particular act of theirs, even to their prayers and praises. True of the best doings of the unregenerate <Phil. 3:6-8; Tit. 1:15; Heb. 11:6>.

[(Are) as filthy rags]-- literally a cloth of removals [idiym (heb 5708), from `eed (heb 5708), to remove or put away as unclean]; a menstruous rag <Lev. 15:33; 20:18; Lam. 1:17>.

[Fade as a leaf]-- <Ps. 90:5-6>.

Phil 3:6-11

6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. (KJV)

Titus 1:14-16

14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. (KJV)

Lam 1:17

Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her: the LORD hath commanded concerning Jacob, that his adversaries should be round about him: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them. (KJV)

Why were all their righteous acts as a filthy rag before him?

Isa 64:7

And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. (KJV)

Barnes' Notes-

[But we are all as an unclean thing] We are all polluted and defiled. The word used here [Taamee' (heb 2931)], means properly that which is polluted and defiled in a Levitical sense; that is, which was regarded as polluted and abominable by the law of Moses <Lev. 5:2; Deut. 14:19>, and may refer to animals, people, or things; also in a moral sense <Job 14:4>. The sense is, that they regarded themselves as wholly polluted and depraved.

[And all our righteousnesses] The plural form is used to denote the deeds which they had performed-- meaning that pollution extended to every individual thing of the numerous acts which they had done. The sense is, that all their prayers, sacrifices, alms, praises, were mingled with pollution, and were worthy only of deep detestation and abhorrence.

[As filthy rags] `Like a garment of stated times' [idiym (heb 5708)]-- from the obsolete root [aadam], "to number, to reckon, to determine," e. g., time. No language could convey deeper abhorrence of their deeds of righteousness than this reference-- as it is undoubtedly-- to the vestis menstruis polluta.

Apart from him we can do nothing. All our acts not directed by him are as "filthy rags" that will be burned up. We need to do righteously.

I Jn 2:28-29

28 And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

29 If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him. (NIV)

I Jn 3:7

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. (NIV)

Internally, righteousness defends against slander and accusation. Externally, righteousness is a weapon against wickedness.

Rom 6:13-23

13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey-- whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now

offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.

21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV)

Obedience leads to righteousness which leads to holiness which leads to eternal life.

People are enslaved by sin. This is how satan moves. He's a coward. The way of the world is wickedness and the world rulers of darkness and the wickedness in high places is what righteousness works against as an offensive weapon. He sets up the world's strongholds to move wickedness. Righteousness is the light that works against this darkness.

Prov 4:18-19 (NIV)

18 The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.

19 But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.

It is a war! Righteousness is a matter of Repentance (vs. 4-6), Rescue (vs. 16-19), and Reward (vs. 20-29).

Ps 18:1-34

1 I love you, O LORD, my strength.

2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

3 I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.

4 The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.

5 The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me.

6 In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.

7 The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry.

8 Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it.

9 He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet.

10 He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind.

11 He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him-- the dark rain clouds of the sky.

12 Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced, with hailstones and bolts of lightning.

13 The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded.

14 He shot his arrows and scattered [the enemies], great bolts of lightning and routed them.

15 The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of breath from your nostrils.

16 He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters.

17 He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me.

- 18 They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the LORD was my support.
 19 He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.
 20 The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me.
 21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I have not done evil by turning from my God.
 22 All his laws are before me; I have not turned away from his decrees.
 23 I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin.
 24 The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.
 25 To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless,
 26 to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd.
 27 You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.
 28 You, O LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light.
 29 With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall.
 30 As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him.
 31 For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the Rock except our God?
 32 It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect.
 33 He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights.
 34 He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. (NIV)

Ps 58:1-11

- 1 Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?
 2 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.
 3 The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.
 4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear;
 5 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.
 6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.
 7 Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.
 8 As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun.
 9 Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath.
 10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.
 11 So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth. (KJV)

*In case you didn't think it was a war, check the foot washing ceremony in this Psalm!
 Wickedness and righteousness are moved by words.*

2 Cor 6:4-7

- 4 Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in

troubles, hardships and distresses;
5 in beatings, imprisonments and riots; **in hard work**, sleepless nights and hunger;
6 in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love;
7 in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; (NIV)

Living righteously will require work and labor. The Lord Jesus tells two parables in Luke that give us both sides of righteousness. The Pharisee and the publican in the temple (Luke 18:9-14) and the widow seeking justice (Luke 18:1-8).

Luke 18:1-8

1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.
2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men.
3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, '**Grant me justice against my adversary.**'
4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men,
5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"
6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says.
7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?
8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (NIV)

Righteousness is by faith and must be put on by faith.

Rom 9:30-33

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.
31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.
32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;
33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (KJV)

How is the armor maintained and repaired?

Heb 12:11-14

11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.
12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.
13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. (NIV)

Ps 141:1-5

1 O LORD, I call to you; come quickly to me. Hear my voice when I call to you.

2 May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

3 Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.

4 Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers; let me not eat of their delicacies.

5 Let a righteous man strike me-- it is a kindness; let him rebuke me-- it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it. Yet my prayer is ever against the deeds of evildoers; (NIV)

I Jn 1:7-9

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (KJV)