

## Introduction ( )

Suit Up – series in the Armour of God. Read Ephesians 6:10-14. This morning we are going to look at the second piece of armour that Paul mentions.

Paul says that we are to put on the whole armour of God so that we can stand firm, stand secure against the deceit of the devil. The armour is spiritual armour because the battle is a spiritual battle – not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers. The foundational piece of the armour is the belt of truth. Truth provides the solid foundation and security that the Christian needs in this changing world.

Read [Eph 6:10-14](#)

The second piece is the ‘breastplate of righteousness’. No soldier would enter hand-to-hand combat without his breastplate. You leave yourself completely exposed to attack. Likewise, a Christian will also be totally exposed without this essential piece of armour.

## The Breastplate

### What protection does the breastplate offer a Roman?

The Roman soldier’s breastplate was made of hard leather (SHOW PIC) perhaps with interwoven brass rings or plates, or moulded bronze or iron. It was attached around the chest and abdomen. It covered the area between the neck and the upper part of the thighs, thus protecting the vital organs of the soldier.

In this era hand-to-hand combat was almost always necessary and this armour gave a balance between protection and ease of movement (Cops = bulletproof vest).

### What protection does the breastplate offer a Christian?

The breastplate protected the ‘vital organs’. What do the ‘vital organs represent for the Christian? It seems funny to us today, but the biblical writers often referred to the organs that fill the abdominal cavity as the seat of your emotions, feelings, desires and affections (spilled his guts, butterflies in your stomach). Satan often attacks Christian through the ‘vital organs’ – i.e. through our feelings, desires and emotions.

There is nothing inherently wrong with your emotions, feelings, desires or affections – they are God-given. However, they need to be protected from the attacks of the devil.

#### 1. **Desires and affections**

Satan will enflame desires (envy, lust, anger, hate, revenge, worry, comfort) that we think, when met will bring us happiness, satisfaction and joy – but actually they just bring us

disappointment and pain. We are protected against desires that lead to sin by the breastplate of righteousness.

## 2. Emotions and feelings

Satan will play on our emotions. We will feel condemned because Satan loves to remind us of our failures; we feel ashamed because we are struggling with the same sin still! We feel inadequate because we haven't gotten enough Christian disciplines under our belts. We feel unworthy because we are not measuring up!

How does righteousness protect us from our feelings and desires that don't lead to God?

## The meaning of righteousness

### God's righteousness

Before we get to the breastplate let us define righteousness. The only way to define it is in reference to God: God is righteousness because he always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right (Grudem). God is perfect in his moral character, in justice, in purity, in truth, and in goodness, and therefore He is the measure of what is right and righteousness.

God judges everything according to His righteous standards and so for you or me to be righteous in His sight would mean that we were perfect like Him.

### Our righteousness

It should be apparent that a breastplate of my own righteousness or integrity or purity or right standing before God would be pretty hopeless. It would be hopeless in protecting us from the Devil's attacks. Acting righteously before God is important, but our righteousness is flawed. And Satan loves to make expose the chinks in our armour – and there are plenty of holes! He comes to us and says, 'what kind of a Christian are you? You do this and do that. You are continually falling short in the Christian life you claim to lead. You're an embarrassment to Christianity. Look at all these other Christians who are doing so much better!'

### The gift of righteousness

We need another righteousness to protect us. And this is what says in Philippians 3 he basically says, 'If you want to have a personal integrity contest I will win hands down!'

Philippian 3:4b-9 'If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. 7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider ... I

consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.’

The breastplate is the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ.

The best way to understand how we can be righteous in Christ is to look at two biblical words: condemnation and justification.

*What we are going to talk about not is often avoided by ministers because it is complicated to teach and preach and to can be difficult to grasp. However, the first time I heard about justification was at Bible College and it transformed my Christian walk. It is at the heart of the gospel and you don't understand fully what God has done on the cross for you until you understand justification. So that is how we are going to finish off this morning. And we'll apply it next week.*

## Justification by faith

Justification is the opposite of condemnation. *When a law court finds a thief guilty of the charge of stealing he is condemned and sentenced.* In the same way we are condemned by God because of our sin (Rom 3:23) and should be separated from God in a place called hell for all eternity. That would be a fair and just judgement.

In justification God the judge pronounces us not guilty (innocent / right). He wipes away our guilt and makes us acceptable before a holy God. How does God do this and remain just? *The SA law courts unfortunately have a reputation of declaring people not guilty when they are – because of things like corrupt individuals or police bungling.* However God does not bend the law or turn a blind eye to get us off. Sin must be punished and it was punished in Christ.

2Corinthians 5:21 God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus had no sin but was made ‘to be sin for us’ – i.e. When Christ died on the cross he had not sinned and did not deserve to die yet in dying there he chose to take your sin and mine upon himself. And so he ‘paid the price’ of justice before God. God’s judgement upon sin was poured out on Christ so that we are not condemned.

Note that justification refers to the *status* of the Christian (righteousness before God) not to *actual intrinsic* (acts and deeds) righteousness. I.E. justification does not make you instantly sinlessly perfect, we still sin but when God looks at you he sees you in the perfection of Christ and that is how He loves you (embraced and accepted on basis of Christ’s perfect life)!

Think about this problem: What happens if you were to pray in this service now and you accept Christ for the first time and your sins are forgiven. As you are filing out the church any old

granny decides to hold up the queue and have a chat to the minister. And she just doesn't stop. And so you have some evil thought towards the granny. Eventually you get out the church and as you walk to your car this same granny who is not late to get her roast out of the oven throws her car in reverse and runs straight over you! The next thing you know you're standing before God and he says, 'sorry you know those sinful thoughts about the granny – you didn't ask for forgiveness, outer darkness for you.'

How does God accept you – justification by faith – God sees your sins past, present and future as forgiven in Christ. God doesn't just take away the condemnation; He gives righteousness (SHOW GRUDEM PICTURES). God not only forgives us and cleanses us from our sin, he gives us the righteousness of Christ. The end on 5:21 says we 'become the righteousness of God'. The right standing, the perfection, the holiness, the acceptability that Christ has is given to us. The Bible even says it is credited to our account.

## Conclusion

When you put on the breastplate you put on the sure confidence that we are acceptable to God not because of what we do, but because of what was don't for us. You put on peace with God – no longer at war with because of our sin. You put on freedom from working and working and working and working to be acceptable – because the more you work the more you are tempted to say "I deserve it, I have earned it". You put on a declaration:

- You cannot sin in such a way that you become LESS righteous than you already are (so don't fall to the temptation to feel ashamed, inadequate, failure, or unworthy;
- You also cannot perform in such a way to make yourself MORE righteous than you already are (so don't obey to become approve, obey out of an overflow of your love for your saving God)

Stand with me: "He became sin || who knew no sin || that I might become || the righteousness of God"