

God Gave us Armor Part 2: Righteousness

— God at War, Week 13 —

Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV)¹

I. God's _____ is for _____

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

¹¹ Put on the full armor of God,

so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,

but against the rulers,

against the authorities,

against the powers of this dark world

and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God,

so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground,

and after you have done everything,

to stand.

¹⁴ Stand firm then,

with the belt of truth buckled around your waist,

with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith,

with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation

and the sword of the Spirit,

which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

II. The _____ of _____ Protects Us

- This part of armor protects the important region of the torso. If Paul has Roman armor in mind (which is likely), this would probably be the *lorica segmentata*, the common torso armor for Roman soldiers in the first century. This segmented metal armor protected the chest, sides, shoulders, and back.
- Paul is saying that it is vital that we have righteousness to protect us in spiritual battles.
- This breastplate of righteousness corresponds exactly to the description of God's armor in Isaiah 59:17 (cf. 11:5). This implies that this righteousness either comes from union with God, or from practicing the virtue of righteousness that matches God's. The point is connection and alignment with God himself, especially in conduct. But what does righteousness *mean*?

III. Righteousness in Paul: _____ and _____

- Most basically, the "righteousness" wordgroup (righteous, righteousness, "righteous-ize" [justify, declare righteous]) all refers to doing the right thing and to the status of having done the right thing. So:
 - "Righteousness" is what one ought to do in God's eyes, and what one has if one has done it; it is required of all humans.
 - One is "righteous" when one practices righteousness, in other words, when one lives as one ought and does what one should in God's eyes.
 - To be "justified" ("righteous-ized," declared righteous), is in effect, to be treated as one who is righteous; in a legal context it means to be declared innocent of wrongdoing. When the last judgment is in view, it means to have one's righteousness acknowledge by God the judge.
- Paul often uses the "righteousness" wordgroup in its ordinary sense. **Ordinary righteousness** means that righteous people practice righteousness and are thus declared righteous (justified, "righteous-ized"), meaning their righteous status is recognized (Eph 5:9; 6:1; 1 Cor 4:4; Rom 6:13; Rom 2:13).
- But amazingly, Paul also uses the "righteousness" wordgroup in an extraordinary sense. **Extraordinary righteousness** is the status of righteousness that God gives unrighteous people because of the righteousness of Christ. The truth is no human is righteous before God (Rom 3:10). But because of Jesus' death and resurrection, the status of righteousness is freely offered to those who will pledge their loyalty to Jesus by faith (2 Cor 5:21; Rom 3:23-24; 1 Cor 1:30). Nowhere can this extraordinary righteousness be seen more clearly than in Rom 4:5 where Paul says God "justifies the ungodly." *God declares righteous those who are unrighteous!* Very interestingly, we can see both these categories of ordinary and extraordinary righteousness together in one passage in Rom 5:6-10.
- So what kind of righteousness does Paul mean by the "breastplate of righteousness"? Since most of the armor expresses virtues that we "do," I think *primarily Paul is talking about ordinary righteousness*. We are to obey God's commands and do what we should do as obedient children. This will help protect us from Satanic attack. However, I doubt Paul ever envisions our ordinary righteousness apart from the extraordinary righteousness that is ours through Christ. *So we should understand the breastplate of righteousness as having a two-fold meaning: first, to the extraordinary positional righteousness we have because of Christ; and second, flowing from that, it refers to the practical ordinary righteousness of our day-to-day obedience*. Both are critical to our spiritual protection.

The Bottom Line

Get _____ in _____ and in _____

...by _____ and _____ the gift of extraordinary righteousness that comes through _____ and _____.

...by _____ seeking the _____ in "putting on the armor" of _____ to God (for ideas of what righteous obedience is, see Matthew 5-7).

¹ For the discussion of ordinary and extraordinary righteousness on the next page I am indebted to Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 262-96.