

**Eph 6:14 The Breastplate of Righteousness  
and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.”**

Well, if Jesus is the center of our life, then He should make a difference in our character and demeanor that's at least as profound as that of the work that we do. People should be able to tell who is a Christian by something about us. The Breastplate of righteousness, our lifestyle of righteousness is the most forward piece of Armor, the one that witnesses to the world that we are Christians, and it is the one most closely tied to our witness and testimony for Christ.

**What is the Breastplate of Righteousness?**

The breastplate is a coat of mail or scale plates that covers the trunk or chest, and protects the vital organs, such as the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, etc. In Paul's time it was probably a metal plate worn over a leather jerkin, or other padding, to protect the chest and back. Dictionaries define righteousness as "behavior that is morally justifiable or right." Such behavior is characterized by accepted standards of morality, justice, virtue, or uprightness. The Bible's standard of human righteousness is God's own perfection in every attribute, every attitude, every behavior, and every word. The Greek New Testament word for "righteousness" primarily describes conduct in relation to others, especially with regards to the rights of others in business, in legal matters, and beginning with relationship to God. Believers appropriate God's righteousness, and act righteously in our daily dealings with God and humankind. The bad news is that true and perfect righteousness is not possible for man to attain on his own; the standard is simply too high. The good news is that true righteousness is possible for mankind, but only through the cleansing of sin by Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We have no ability to achieve righteousness in and of ourselves. But Christians possess the righteousness of Christ, because **"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"** (2 Corinthians 5:21). On account of what the Lord Jesus has endured on our behalf, we are treated as if we had entirely fulfilled the Law of God and had never become exposed to its penalty. We have received this precious gift of righteousness from the God of all mercy and grace. This breastplate is not our workmanship; it is part of the armor that God provides for us, a righteousness that is not our own. We need to remember that true righteousness only comes from God. It is His standard that counts. Any other definition that we might want to give it will only result in self-righteousness, based on our own self-standards. It is through the New Birth that we are even able to approach God in righteousness. Eph 4:23-24 **23 and that you are to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.** It's not our doing, or our righteousness, because we are such good people, but it is because we have allowed God to work His sanctifying righteousness through us, and change us from the inside out. And so The trouble with the popular view of what makes someone a Christian that many non-Christians hold, that what impresses God are our own efforts to obey God, is that our righteousness can never be good enough.

**The Need for a Righteous Savior**

We're all in this same predicament. Rom 3:10-12 says **10 as it is written: "There is no righteous person, not even one; 11 There is no one who understands, There is no one who seeks out God; 12 They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt ;There is no one who does good, There is not even one."** And so, since all of us fall into the category of non-righteous, in terms of our own efforts, we're in trouble. indeed, the prophet declares to Israel that even their best righteousness is nothing more than filthy garments (Isa. 64:6 **For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our wrongdoings, like the wind, take us away.**). So when Paul talks about putting on the breastplate of righteousness, he is describing the righteousness that God gives us in the gospel, about which he wrote: **"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"** (2 Cor. 5:21). God has intervened decisively in this world to make sinners the righteousness of God. God

brought about this dramatic transformation, changing us from filthy to clean, from guilty to innocent, by making him who had no sin to be sin for us.

### **A Good Exchange**

At the heart of the Christian message are two equal and opposite transformations: God took Jesus, the only perfect person who ever lived, the only one who could ever stand before God on the basis of his own goodness—God’s own beloved Son—and stripped off from Jesus these clean clothes of faithful obedience. The Father tore off Jesus’s righteous standing before him and treated him as if he were the guilty one. He made Jesus to be blackened with our sin, our iniquity, our transgression—all the filthy thoughts, abusive words, and vile actions that you and I have committed in the past or will commit in the future. On the cross, Jesus suffered the penalty for all those sins against God’s holiness. As Isaiah put it, **he was pierced because of our rebellion; he was crushed for our iniquities. He bore the sin of many** (Isa. 53:5, 12). And then, equally remarkably, having treated the innocent one as guilty, God treats the guilty ones as innocent. Paul puts it like this: **“In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them”** (2 Cor. 5:19). Instead of counting our sins against us, God chooses to count for us Christ’s righteousness. As Isaiah had said, **“Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed”** (Isa. 53:5).

### **Our Righteousness is in Christ**

This great exchange applies only to those who are united to Christ, that is, to those who are Christians. As Paul says in Romans 8, **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”** (v. 1). In 2 Corinthians 5:17 he says, **“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”** On the other hand, the righteousness that comes through the cross also means that I can never take my sin lightly and just shrug it off. **I have been reconciled to God and made a new creature in Christ** (2 Cor. 5:17). God is now at work in me by his Holy Spirit, remaking me into the image of Christ. **His purpose is to make me part of a holy people, created for good works in Christ Jesus** (Eph. 2:10). Why, then, would I act as if I am still part of the kingdom of darkness and plunge back into my former way of life among the prostitutes and the pigs as if nothing had happened? The righteousness of Christ, painfully won for us at the cross, motivates us to strive hard toward an obedience that fits the new nature God is working in us. This means we **MUST** put on the breastplate of righteousness that has been worn by Jesus, and enabled for our use by His death on the cross.

### **Defending the Vital Organs**

When you see that the righteousness obtained for us on the cross gives us profound security in God’s love and powerful motivation against sin, you can see why Paul describes righteousness as our breastplate in our fight against the devil. Just as a breastplate defends a soldier’s vital organs, so the righteousness of Christ protects us against two of the chief lies that the devil wants us to believe, which are that God doesn’t really love us and that sin doesn’t really matter.

Paul says, **“you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God”** (1 Cor. 6:11). The justification we receive in Christ is merely the start of God’s work in us. New creation is the beginning of our transformation, not the end.

### **Putting on the Breastplate of Righteousness**

You and I have a spring inside, and it’s called the “heart.” Proverbs 4:23 gives us the following job:

Proverbs 4:23 – **“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”**

#### **1. If you don’t pursue righteousness, you will enter the battle unprepared.**

If you don’t put on the breastplate of righteousness, then you enter the battle unprepared. And if you enter the battle unprepared, then clearly you don’t understand the reality of the battle. Ephesians 4:27 – **“Do not give the devil a foothold.”** James 4:7b – **“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”**

**2. If you don’t pursue righteousness, you will enter the battle unprotected.** So, what is the purpose of the breastplate? Again, to guard the vital organs, especially the heart. And why would someone enter a battle unprotected? The only reason is if you don’t understand the seriousness of the battle. You don’t

enter this serious of a battle without guarding your heart. Going to war with the devil without the breastplate of righteousness would be like standing on the Cardinals Stadium on the turf between the teams during the hike without any padding—you're gonna get crushed!

**3. If you don't pursue righteousness, you will enter the battle unfaithful.**

Except for the grace of God, your heart and my heart are treacherous. Our hearts naturally lead us to push righteousness out of the way and rush toward unrighteousness. And sadly, sometimes the only thing keeping us making the righteous choice is not the lack of sin within but the lack of opportunity to carry out what our hearts truly desire. Without the breastplate of righteousness, we are not simply in danger of provoking the devil; we are in danger of joining him.