

Armor of God—Breastplate of Righteousness

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BIG SANDY, Texas—One of the most encouraging sections of Scripture is found in the book of Ephesians. In that letter, the apostle Paul described a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:10-13) and the spiritual weapons (verses 14-17) available for the children of God to use.

In this article, we will discuss the second weapon—called the breastplate of righteousness (verse 14).

Different from holiness

For the sake of this article, I want to mention how I view the difference between righteousness and holiness.

- Although righteousness and holiness are similar, there is some difference.
- Since many sources defined righteousness as "what is right," I like to define righteousness as "doing what is right."

Romans 6:19—"I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness [doing what is right] for holiness."

Ephesians 4:23-24—"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness [doing what is right] and holiness."

Good works

- Titus 3:4-7—Paul wrote about our relationship with God *not* being due to our works (actions) of righteousness (doing what is right).
- Titus 3:8—However, Paul clearly instructed people (who have been called to God) to be zealous to maintain good works (doing what is right).
- James 2:14-26—James talked about faith and action.

James 2:14—"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?"

James 2:21—"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?"

James 2:25—"Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?"

They thought they were right

Matthew 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."

Luke 18:9-14—"Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: `Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess." And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." ' "

Romans 10:3—"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God."

Motive, emphasis, priority

Righteousness is more than doing what is right. It certainly includes motive, emphasis and priority.

- *Philippians 3:3-6*—The apostle Paul described the error of allowing confidence in the flesh to be the reason for obedience.
- *Philippians 3:7-11*—Paul described the motive, emphasis and priority of his obedience.