

6:14 *Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness...*

Stand Firm Therefore

Context

- As we focus on the “*breastplate of righteousness*,” remember that “*having put on the breastplate of righteousness*” is an extension of the command “*stand firm*.” This is how we “*stand firm*.”
- In Ephesians, “*truth*” and “*righteousness*” always occur together (4:24; 5:9; 6:14).

Defining “Righteousness”

- Righteousness is simply being right before God, Who is holy, perfectly just, and is righteousness.
- Further, righteousness is doing right things, believing/thinking rightly, speaking rightly, and treating others rightly...reflecting God’s “right-ness.”
- The ethical requirements of the Bible are the absolute standard of righteousness, since they are inspired by and reflect the character of the righteous God of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16).

Saving Righteousness

Not Self-Righteousness

- The apostle Paul, in making a case for the universal lostness of humanity, writes, “*there is none righteous, not even one*” (Romans 3:10).
- We are not saved by “*deeds which we have done in righteousness*” (Titus 3:5).
- READ Philippians 3:6,9.
- **The “*breastplate of righteousness*” is not a list of our great accomplishments or qualities.**
- READ Luke 18:9-14. The only way to be justified, or declared right before God, is to declare oneself to be utterly unrighteous.

Righteousness That Saves

- The only righteousness that saves is that which is credited to us by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 1:17; 3:22; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Philippians 3:9).¹
- One of the most important verses in the Bible is Genesis 15:6, where it is said of Abram, “*he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.*”

Having Put on the Breastplate

Clothed in Christ, the Righteous One

- Christ is called the “*Righteous One*” (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14). He “*loved righteousness and hated lawlessness*” (Hebrews 1:9).
- The metaphor of being “clothed” in Christ a common one for Paul.² This is an illustration pointing to our faith-union with Christ.

Protection from the Enemy

- The title “*devil*” (4:27; 6:11) means “slanderer” or “accuser.” In Revelation 12:10, he is called “*the accuser of our brethren.*”³

¹ Justification is God’s “pardoning [believers’] sins and accounting and accepting them as righteous....He imputes Christ’s active obedience to the whole law and passive obedience in His death as their whole and only righteousness by faith...by His obedience and death, Christ fully paid the debt of all those who are justified. He endured in their place the penalty they deserved. By this sacrifice of Himself in His bloodshed on the cross, He legitimately, really, and fully satisfied God’s justice on their behalf” (*1689 Baptist Confession of Faith in Modern English*, 11.1-3).

² Romans 13:12-14; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:24; 6:11; Colossians 3:10,12; 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

³ The “*servants*” of the devil “*disguise themselves as servants of righteousness*” (2 Corinthians 11:15).

- Whenever we are reminded of our sins, it is a new opportunity to run to the throne of grace, agree with the accuser about our sin, then rejoice in the forgiveness that is full, free, and final in Christ's completed work on our behalf.
- We must daily, hourly preach the Gospel to ourselves!
- The devil's two-fold goal is to get us to doubt God's love for us and to get us to believe sin isn't that serious.
 1. As believers in Christ, His perfect righteousness is our spiritual clothing; God loves us as infinitely and unceasingly as He loves His perfectly righteous Son. Nothing can stain or diminish that love.
 2. As believers in Christ, God's goal is to remake us into the perfect righteousness of His Son by His Spirit through His Word. Not only are we saved in His righteousness, but as our Shepherd, He *“leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake”* (Psalm 23:3).

Righteousness as Fruit of Salvation

- When Christ's righteousness is imputed or credited to a believer, the Holy Spirit begins the life-long process of conforming our lives to that righteousness: READ 4:22-24; 5:8-9.⁴

Vertical Righteousness

- In Zacharias' song (Luke 1:67-75), he tells us (by the inspiration of the Spirit), that Christ came so that we might *“serve Him...in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.”*
- God disciplines (not punishes) believers so that they may experience *“the peaceful fruit of righteousness”* (Hebrews 12:11).

⁴ READ also Matthew 5:6; 6:33; Romans 6:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 1:11; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:29; 3:7,10.

- We grow in righteousness as we are taught by God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 5:13).

Horizontal Righteousness

- We are justified (declare righteous) by faith in Jesus alone; the reality of our justification is by how it shows up in our lives. READ Matthew 25:34-40 (they are called *“the righteous”* in 25:37).
- Righteousness is to be a mark of how we deal with each other as believers (James 1:20; 3:18).

The Lord Is a Righteous Warrior

Isaiah 59

- In Isaiah 59:1-16a, it is shown that the people are completely unable to save themselves.
- 59:16b-21 describes the Trinity:
 - The God Who comes to save (59:16b-19), the Son.
 - The God Who sends the Redeemer (59:20), the Father.
 - The God Who abides (59:21), the Spirit.
- When He comes, He puts *“on righteousness like a breastplate”* (59:17).⁵

In Christ's Battle

- As we seek to proclaim the Gospel to the lost, we do so, in part, *“by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left”* (2 Corinthians 6:2-7).
- We wear the *“breastplate of righteousness”* by reminding ourselves of the Gospel every day, meditating on the perfect righteousness of Christ, which is ours before God. Daily seek to live out that righteousness by obeying the Word of God through the power of the Holy Spirit, Who is conforming us more and more into the image of the Son.

We battle against the lie of human self-righteousness

⁵ The prophet Jeremiah tells us that when the Son of David comes, *“this is the name by which He will be called, ‘the LORD our righteousness’”* (Jeremiah 23:5-6).