

St Mary's Allithwaite, 1<sup>st</sup> February 2026. Revd Amiel Osmaston

## Armour of God series: [The Breastplate of Righteousness](#)

### Readings - [Ephesians 6: 10-18](#) and [Titus 2: 11 – 3: 7](#)

For any of you who are visitors (welcome!) or who have missed our last 3 Sunday services, I'll just explain that we're doing a series of sermons on the Spiritual Battle and the Armour which God gives us to equip us in that battle. As Sue Wilson said at the beginning of this series: being a Christian isn't just nice, cosy and comforting - as Christians we are called to fight in the eternal cosmic Spiritual battle. This isn't weird 'Game of Thrones' stuff – it's sober reality....and very practical, down-to-earth, here and now.

Each Sunday we've looked at one of the 6 pieces of spiritual armour which St Paul lists in his letter to the Ephesians, chapter 6, which we heard read to us earlier:

They are the belt of **Truth**, the sandals of the gospel of **Peace**, the breastplate of **Righteousness**, the shield of **Faith**, the helmet of **Salvation**, and the sword of the Spirit which is the **Word of God**. We need to put on the full set of them in order to equip us for the Spiritual battle.

#### [Ephesians 6: 13 - 14](#)

Take up the full **armour of God**, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt round your waist, **righteousness like armour on your chest** .....

(...the breastplate of righteousness...)

..... Today we're going to look particularly at the "Breastplate of Righteousness". Righteousness is our defence, our armour, against all the powers of Evil. But for that very reason, our God-given righteousness is something which those powers of Evil are desperate to attack, damage, destroy.

**It's the same with all the spiritual armour that God gives us – it is our Protection, but because of that it is also a Target which attracts the attacks of the Evil One.** When we put on the spiritual Armour, we declare ourselves the enemies of Evil. And we can clearly see the many ways in which that Spiritual armour is being attacked in our world now: Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Faith, Salvation, and the Word of God....all are being threatened and undermined.

The powers of Evil have always attacked these gifts of God, and Evil keeps finding new ways to attack them, with new excuses from power-hungry leaders, new lies, new technologies....

**But let's not get scared or depressed or fatalistic** about all this.... remember – Satan can win temporary skirmishes, but he has already lost the War! He lost it 2,000 years ago when Jesus chose to die on a cross in our place, and was resurrected into Life. Jesus broke through the barriers of sin and death and connected us back into relationship with God. At that moment, the Evil One was defeated. He's still trying to fight a rearguard battle, but ultimately he can't win.

**So how can we join in the spiritual battle?** There are three vital actions:

1. Know what each piece of Armour is, understand it, become familiar with it;
2. Put it on God's armour daily and use it.... stand firm, defend, and attack when necessary; (*Often when I'm going into a difficult situation, I pray through Ephesians 6*

*and consciously receive and put on each piece of armour. It's easy to remember – Ephesians 6, and 6 pieces of armour!);*

3. Be prepared - learn to recognise how Evil attacks our spiritual armour.

So...know the armour, put it on, and be prepared. I'm going to take up each of those three vital actions and look at them more deeply in this sermon.

Now let's apply all that to the particular bit of God's Armour that we're seeking to know, put on and use today: the Breastplate of Righteousness.

1. **What is Righteousness? What is our breastplate armour made out of? Let's know our armour, understand it clearly, become familiar with it**

The word *Righteousness* is used 630 times in the Bible – it's a really important concept. But many people – even Christians – have a rather hazy understanding of what righteousness actually is.



Have a look at the four pictures in this slide: which of them (if any) says something to you about what Righteousness is?

*Pause* ..... Well, whichever picture you chose, you aren't wrong! Each picture relates to some aspect of what Righteousness is. It's about God's gifts of goodness, rightness, justice, virtue, relationship.

Paul was writing his letter in Greek, and the word for "Righteousness" in Greek has the same root as the word for 'Justice' and 'Justified' - "Dikaios...". Being Righteous means being in the right, judged as innocent, in a right relationship with God.

I want to focus on that last aspect, our relationships. In the spiritual battle, it's relationships with God and with each-other that are the Enemy's primary target.



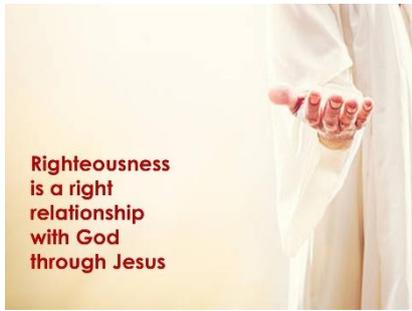
Relationships are what define us, aren't they?

Who am I? I'm 'Amiel Osmaston'. The 'Amiel' comes from my parents who were the first climbers to get to the top of a vertical mountain in Uganda called Amiel. The 'Osmaston' comes from my ancestors who lived in the village of Osmaston in Derbyshire. I am a daughter, a grand-daughter, a sister, an aunt (and even a great-aunt!), a god-mother, a friend, a colleague... and I've been shaped and defined by all those relationships. They have made me who I am.

But most of all, I've been shaped by my relationship with God, and God's relationship with me. That's true of every human being, whether we're aware of it or not.

Am I in a 'right relationship with God'? That is, am I righteous? Is my relationship with God 'right' – is it loving, honest, openly admitting what's wrong, not pretending or hiding, giving and receiving freely, grateful, growing and deepening, joyful and celebratory?" Mmmm... maybe...some of the time.... !

But luckily I don't have to measure and judge my level of righteousness or my right relationship with God. If I did, I'd have to pronounce myself a total spiritual failure and crawl



away into a hole and hide. Ultimately my Righteousness doesn't depend on me or on my own spiritual efforts – thank goodness! My right relationship with God is pure GIFT. I can't earn it or deserve it. God offers himself to us in Jesus – all we need to do is to accept humbly, and start living the Jesus-way, living in close relationship with God through Jesus.

The most important thing to remember about Righteousness is that we can't create it ourselves. We can never be good enough by our own efforts or achievements to deserve a relationship with God.

Paul expresses that beautifully in his letter to his young friend Titus, who he calls "my loyal child in the faith we share".

**Titus 3: 4-7**

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, **not because of righteous things we had done**, but because of his mercy.

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, <sup>7</sup> so that, having been **justified by his grace**, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

In that passage we heard read to us earlier, Paul writes:

*(Read from ppt slide on left)*

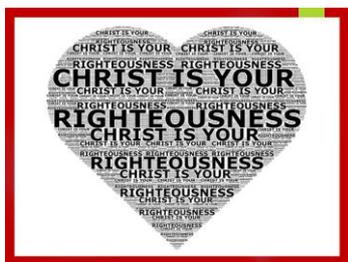
However many good and righteous things we have done, it can't earn us a right relationship with God. It's only possible through Jesus. We have been 'justified' (that's the Greek word DIKAIOS again, meaning 'we have been made righteous') only by grace, as a Gift.



Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing".  
*(John 15: 5).*

Righteousness (that is, being right, being OK, being good enough), comes only through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, when he opened the way for us to a right relationship with God. Salvation, justification, righteousness.... they

are all undeserved gifts from God. When we chose to become followers of Jesus Christ, we were given the Righteousness of Jesus – and each day we're drawn into sharing Jesus' right relationship with his Father God.



Christ is our righteousness.

And yet most people insist on trying to establish their own righteousness, by their own efforts. **Self-righteous** attitudes are all around us – Do-it-yourself righteousness.... thinking I'm perfect, trying to make everyone see how wonderful I am, trying to look right, "Look at me – aren't I good and holy? Aren't

I clever? Aren't I rich, beautiful, generous....?". Our modern culture is saturated with this preening, strutting, narcissistic self-righteousness.... self-admiration and wanting others to admire me. The media is full of celebrities, influencers, people presenting perfect Instagram pictures of their lives. It's all about attention-grabbing, with social media algorithms designed to grab and hold our attention. Welcome to the so-called 'attention economy'.

It's very profitable! But it's hollow, and it destroys real relationships rather than strengthening them.

2. **Now here's the second of our tasks in the Spiritual Battle**, which I listed earlier:

**Put on God's armour daily and use it.... stand firm, defend, and attack when necessary.**

Put on God's gift of Righteousness and use it to defend yourself against Self-righteousness. This Self-righteousness in contemporary society isn't new – it's just the technology that has changed. Jesus condemned self-righteousness very harshly. Several times he calls the Pharisees 'hypocrites' for sticking obsessively to keeping little detailed regulations, but not following the Spirit of the law.

Righteousness is not about rules and tick boxes. It's about having a right relationship with God, the God who himself is the heart of justice, mercy, faith and love, and so wants us to be the same.



Self-righteousness is not just hollow, it's more dangerous than that. It's one of the ways the Evil One flatters people and deflects their attention away from their need of God. As Christians we are called to stand strongly with Jesus against our world's attempts to create DIY self-righteousness. For that, we need (and everyone needs) the protection of real righteousness, Jesus' righteousness... God's gift to us of the **Breastplate of Righteousness**.



Why did Paul use the image of Righteousness being like a Breastplate? He was living under the Roman Empire, so it was natural to him to think of the armour of a Roman soldier. I don't know how you imagine a breastplate, but here are a couple of examples – the one on the left is a posh one which would have been used by a gladiator in the

amphitheatre. The one on the right is an ordinary one such as would be used by a typical Roman foot soldier. The breastplate protects the vital organs, especially the heart.

Nowadays we picture the heart as representing emotion and love, with heart-shaped emojis and Valentine cards covered in red satin hearts. The **heart** in New Testament times didn't just represent the place of our emotions. It was seen as the control centre of the human person, involving your will, your feelings and desires, your moral choices and intelligence. They also saw it as the location of the spiritual part of a person. So in battle it was vital to protect the heart. For Paul, God's gift of righteousness was the only thing strong enough to form a protective spiritual breastplate over our hearts.

3. The third and final of our tasks in the Spiritual Battle, which I listed earlier, is that we need to **Be prepared - learn to recognise how Evil attacks our spiritual armour**.

In Scripture **Satan** is the personification of the powers of Evil and is seen as a fallen angel who rebelled against God. **Satan** has many names in the Bible. The name "Satan" means in Hebrew 'Adversary', 'Accuser', 'Obstructor'. In the Book of Revelation, St John refers to Satan

as “The Accuser of the Brethren” (that’s the old King James translation... nowadays we’d say “The Accuser of the followers of Jesus”. ‘The Accuser’ is one of the most appropriate names for the Evil One. One of his favourite methods of attack, is to accuse us.

Satan attacks our righteousness, by trying to undermine and destroy our right relationship with God, and by trying to undermine and destroy our right relationships with each other.

### **Two examples of how he is doing this:**

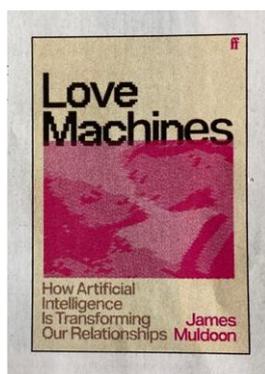
First: At intervals we all hear those subtle whisperings from the Accuser in our minds, saying things like, “Do you really think Jesus is real? That he answers your prayers? Maybe it's just your imagination.... Anyway, you're hopeless, you're a total failure as a Christian. What makes you think God would really want a relationship with you?”...and so on...

When you hear that, recognise the attack and refuse to listen. Stand firm and fight back! Stand up straight, thump yourself on the chest (on the breastplate of righteousness), and say “Get lost, Accuser! Even if I do fail, my relationship with God is rooted firmly in Jesus. You can't destroy that!”

Secondly: another example, this time of the way Satan attacks our righteousness by trying to undermine our right relationships with each other. It seems to me that there’s a determined attack going on widely in our contemporary world, an attack on ‘right relationships’.

I'm not against tools such as the Internet, social media or artificial intelligence - they have already brought huge benefits, and AI is likely to bring us more benefits through enabling medical research etc. However, any tool can be used for good or for evil.

Time spent in real face to face relationships, is being replaced by on-screen relationships. There is increasing mistrust between people as we look out for scams, hackings, lies and deceptive artificially generated images. If I get a phone call from anyone I don’t know, I tend to automatically assume it’s a scam. Our trust in other people is being destroyed. It’s no wonder that mental health problems are becoming so wide-spread.



Recently, I read a review of this book by James Muldoon, called “*Love machines: how artificial intelligence is transforming our relationships*”. His research is mainly about so-called “AI companions” – that’s an artificially generated ‘person’ who can be summoned onto our screen and is programmed to chat with us and respond to us ‘personally’.

These photos are of a selection of AI Companions which people have created and tailored to their own needs. Here is a quote from the book:



“AI companions can offer emotional support, intimacy and even therapeutic care, especially for those who feel isolated or underserved by human relationships. But their rising popularity reveals something more unsettling. There is a

potential for users to become extremely attached and emotionally invested in these apps, in a way that could have serious long-term negative effects on an individual's well-being. AI companions take everything that makes social media addictive - validation, connection, a sense of belonging - and intensify it..... They offer the simulation of a close, meaningful relationship. Your AI companion, therapist or romantic partner isn't just a passive observer; it's an active participant in your life, always available, always affirming and always about you”.

It's tragic when people feel the need to live in such an unreal hallucinatory world. It can so easily become obsessive, and cut us off from a right relationship with God or with each other.



The spiritual battle that we are engaged in, is very complex. Sometimes it's hard to see what is Evil and what is not....what will damage relationships and what will build them up. Let's pray for the gift of spiritual discernment as we try to see the difference. And then let's pray for the courage to make a stand and to challenge what is Evil.

#### **Ephesians 6**

**“Put on the full armour of God.....  
Pray in the Spirit at all times ....  
keep alert...  
..persevere”**



In summary, the last instruction that Paul gives us in his letter to the Ephesians, is:

*(Read text on slide)*

And be encouraged! No-one can take away your righteousness – the right relationship you have with God in Jesus – whatever the Accuser may say. Stand firm!

I want to end with the confident words from Paul's letter to the Romans, which I often read aloud to myself when I'm feeling under attack or a bit wobbly:

**Romans 8: 33 - 39** <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any accusation against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

<sup>34</sup> Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ..... <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

<sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.