

Chapel - Breastplate of Righteousness

2021-04-16 By Major Brian Coles



The apostle Paul listed several pieces of armor worn by the Roman soldiers of his day and made an analogy about the spiritual armor needed by Christians. Last time I was here we talked about the Belt of Truth. The second piece of armor, the breastplate, is likened to righteousness: "Having put on the breastplate of righteousness" (Ephesians 6:14).

Soldiers of that time did have a shield for protection. But during the heat of battle, attacks could come from unexpected directions, or there could be too many to ward off with just a shield. The breastplate provided protection against the unexpected and against overwhelming numbers.

The breastplate worn by Roman soldiers was generally made of iron. It consisted of overlapping pieces of metal with connecting front and back sections. There were rounded pieces protecting the shoulders and the breastplate usually rested on the soldier's hips so the entire weight wasn't carried on the shoulders. The overlapping pieces allowed for flexibility

of movement. This piece of armor protected the vital organs of the soldier during battle.

Adam Clarke's Commentary says the following: "As the breast-plate defends the heart and lungs, and all those vital functions in the region of the thorax; so this righteousness defends everything on which our spiritual existence depends." Proverbs 4.23 "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

"All Your commands are righteous". (Psalm 119:172), and we can put on the breastplate of righteousness by obeying God's commands. Where do we start?

There is an ancient proverb that says the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. In a similar way, the journey to put on the breastplate of righteousness begins with a single choice. Life involves a series of choices; and we can work at this one day at a time, choosing, with God's help, to make our next choice a righteous one.

Every action begins with a thought, and our thoughts need to be brought in line with God's words and commands. Correct (righteous) choices in life flow from a mind dwelling on God's Word. The time to start this process is now! What will your next choice be?

A lesson from ancient Israel provides an ironic example of just how important armour can be. Perhaps you recall the

cowardly and capricious life of King Ahab, but how did this evil king's life come to an end?

This selfish leader allowed a man to be killed just so he could have his vineyard (1 Kings 21). This king of Israel "did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him" (1 Kings 16:30, New Revised Standard Version).

God had prophesied that Ahab would die in the battle described in 1 Kings 22. So Ahab decided to disguise himself, while his ally King Jehoshaphat of Judah wore his own kingly robes.

Their enemy had ordered his captains, "'Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel.' When the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, 'It is surely the king of Israel.'

So, they turned to fight against him; and Jehoshaphat cried out. When the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.

"But a certain man drew his bow and unknowingly struck the king of Israel between the scale armour and the breastplate...at evening he died; the blood from the wound had flowed into the bottom of the chariot" (1 Kings 22:31-35, NRSV).

Is it perhaps poetic justice that this unrighteous king lost his life due to an opening in his armour?

Be careful, then, to gird on your breastplate of righteousness as you take your stand against your enemy, the devil.