

# “Armor of God: Truth, Righteousness, Peace”

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Scripture Texts: Ephesians 6:10-20

**“Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace”**

INTRO: Truth as Sincerity, Righteousness as Holy Living

What does Paul mean by these words, “Truth and Righteousness”?

These are massive words. Theologically rich, and all throughout the scriptures, truth and righteousness are used in so many different contexts and can take on so many different meanings.

The context here is protection from the devil, as children of God. We have already been transferred into the kingdom of light, chosen by God before all eternity. Paul is calling us as Christians to the battle of sanctification.

Ephesians 5.

- “For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light (very closely related to truth) in the Lord; walk as children of Light, for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and **truth**.”
- Paul speaks of truth and righteousness as a fruit of Light. Now that we are light, we are to walk accordingly. The effects of the capital T truth, producing little truth, or sincerity in our lives. The effects of God’s justifying righteousness, producing holiness in our lives.
- I want to focus on truth and righteousness as the fruit of Light rather than the objective universal, Word of God and our justification. That is, the effects or fruit of Christ’s righteousness in our lives. Yet we must remember, we are NOT contrasting Christ’s righteousness to our own righteousness. We are emphasizing the

fruit of the capital L, Light.

- Romans 13. “Therefore, let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.... But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.” Romans 13:12,14

- Remember, the fruit of light is goodness, righteousness, and truth. And Paul uses this interchangeably with putting on Christ. The armor of Light, the Armor of God, putting on Jesus Christ. These all work together in our salvation.

## **TAKEAWAY?**

All this to say, I think Paul is emphasizing the fruit of the spirit in our passage, so I am focusing on truth as sincerity of character and righteousness as holiness, or as Calvin calls it, “Innocence of life”. However, both spring from Christ as Truth, and Christ as our righteousness.

Paul uses the image of a Roman warrior to inspire the Ephesians to keep watch against the devil and sin. He draws from multiple passages. One in Isaiah 59 imagines the Lord God putting on armor to establish justice and punish evil doing. Some of the armor is an exact quote from this passage. However, Paul uses a similar image of a warrior putting on spiritual armor in 1 Thessalonians where the breastplate is truth and love, not righteousness. That is to say, Paul does not consistently match different spiritual realities with a physical image. The specifics are not the key, rather the main thrust is in the overall metaphor.

### **Truth as sincerity or integrity.**

Belt as the piece which holds everything else together. Girding up your loins.

Even with me focusing on truth as sincerity of character, there are still so many aspects of a sincere character that I want to examine truth by contrasting it to specific sins, or types of people.

- As opposed to dishonesty, or scheming.
  - Story of Abimelech focuses on integrity vs scheming. Having been told Sarah was Abraham’s sister, Abimelech took her for

himself, when the Lord visited him in a dream. Abimelech responded, “In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.” God answered, “Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this,” So Abimelech rose early in the morning and summoned Abraham, and said, “How have I sinned against you that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.” Gen 20

- Abimelech did not scheme or deceive his way to Sarah. He took her with integrity, thinking she was available. Abraham on the other hand was a schemer. He deceived the king about Sarah for his own protection, despite the fact that it would put Sarah, and King Abimelech in danger of great sin.
- The constant result of scheming is conflict and tension. There can be no peace where truth is not upheld. Now listen to proverbs listing the 7 things which God hates. Note how many of them are related to deceit and conflict.
  - “Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers.”  
Proverbs 6:16-19
- The devil is a schemer. We are not to play the devil’s game. We do not produce fruit in keeping with Christ by lying and cheating.
- The second type of man, category of sin which opposes truth is hypocrisy.
- As opposed to a hypocrite.
  - “But the wisdom from above is ..... sincere or without hypocrisy.” James 3:17
  - One whose words pay lip service to God, but whose hearts are far from Him. Jesus constantly exposed the hypocrisy of Pharisees, calling them whitewashed tombs. And this is the constant temptation of Christians. We are so good at divorcing our heart from our actions. We are often so aware of how our actions are being interpreted, that we don’t give one thought to

the way God will judge our motives. Yet God examines the heart.

- As opposed to a man who tries to serve two masters.
  - o Closely related to hypocrisy, or maybe the error that leads to hypocrisy. It is impossible to give your whole heart to two masters. If you try, you only end up like the Pharisees, divorcing your outward appearances from your heart.
  - Jesus said, “You cannot serve two masters, either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” Matthew 6:24
  - o Now Jesus was speaking of money in this instance, but James includes the whole world, broadening it to God and the world.
  - “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?... Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners’ and purify your hearts, you double minded.” James 4:3-8
  - o The sincere man is transparent. There is no break between his internal man and his external man. No mask, no lies, no acting. James rebukes those double faced men, those who hide their motives, and true character.

### **A few applications about sincerity.**

- **WORSHIP:** Sincerity in worship is so important. We must be motivated by a love and fear of God, and a desire to worship Him. Imagine that worship is for worship. We do not gather to encourage one another, we do not gather to refill our cup, we do not even gather to have God refill our cup. and we certainly do not attempt to create a public image. Those who pray to be heard or fast to be seen have their reward in full. We gather to give glory to God, and it is before Him that we sing and dance. When we are motivated by a love and fear of God our Father, we will find it much easier to fight against our fear of other’s opinions of us, as well as our own prideful public

image.

- PARENTING: Easier said than done as I am finding out but fight against insincerity in parenting. This applies to little kids, and adult children. When your actions are motivated by others opinion of you, rather than a love for your kids and God, your kid picks up on it so quick. This is especially true and especially hard to self-diagnose when your actions are motivated by your own child's opinion of you. It is so easy to conflate love for your kid, and your kid's opinion of you. But people sense when you are saying things in order to win affection, verses speaking from affection. When we look to serve God alone in our parenting, our love towards our children will be genuine and our teaching will be effective. When we are motivated by a love and fear of God our Father, we will find it much easier to fight against our fear of other's opinions, as well as our own prideful public image. That is why it's called the armor of God.

“What counsel can you give me towards the establishing of my judgment in the truth of Christ?” pg. 300 Durrell.

- 1- A sincere, or steadfast heart and mind.
  - a. Thinking about the passages we read in James, so much of our character is shown in the way we pray. Do you pray in child-like faith or with doubting? Do you ask God for things to spend on your own passions? This one especially hits me hard. We must not be double minded in our prayers to God.
- 2- Attend to the ministry of the word.
  - a. Our standard of Truth, our foundation. Without a knowledge of the scriptures, we cannot hope to build our judgements on anything secure. We are either left to follow our own desires and emotions, or the desires and betterment of an institution. Only the truth of God is an unshakable foundation. Kings will come and go, nations will rise and fall, our own emotions and convictions will change with the day, but the word of the Lord stands forever.
- 3- Enslave not thy judgement to any person or party.

- a. We are not republicans, we are Christians. We are not Lyndenites, we are Christians. We are not even First CRC'ers. We are the universal bride of Christ. We base our standard of truth and our ultimate loyalty upon Christ, and from that foundation we go out and love others. But if our judgements are tied instead to what this or that person thinks of us, we will be unable to make sound judgement.

### **Breastplate of Righteousness**

- Like Truth, righteousness is used differently in different contexts. Usually when Paul uses the term righteousness, he is referring to Christ's imputed righteousness which is ours through faith. That is justification. And this is certainly our only defense against the attacks of the devil. When the devil accuses us and shoves our sin in our face saying we deserve to die, we can truthfully acknowledge our sin, and say "yes, I do deserve to die, but Christ died for me". What a comfort, and defense against the devil. There is no spiritual protection greater than that of right standing with God.
- However I want to focus on righteousness as a fruit of light. "For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light, for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and **righteousness** and truth." Eph 3.

### **What does Righteousness look like?**

- Breastplate as the biggest, most protective piece of armor. It covers all the vital organs. We can survive amputated limbs, or flesh wounds, but our life depends on the protection of our organs. And what are these organs? Our soul and conscience. That is to say, our heart. We must protect our heart from sin, attack, and despair.
- There are many reasons to walk in paths of righteousness. Because God commands it, for God's glory, for communion with God, for its own sake, and its effects. Here Paul is emphasizing its protective nature.

## What are some of the ways righteousness protects us?

- Righteousness gives us access to God
  - o That He listen to our prayers
    - “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are attentive to their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” 1 Peter 3. “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like our, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.” James 5.
    - God turns his ear away from the wicked, and towards the righteous. And he not only hears their prayers, but he answers them. He watches over us like a shepherd.
    - “For the Lord watches over the way of the Righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”
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    - “He makes me walk in paths of righteousness for his names sake.”
- Righteousness protects us from sin and death.
  - o “When lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. LATER, But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.” James 1.
  - o Proverbs constantly pictures wisdom and righteousness protecting a man’s heart from the adulteress, from bloodshed, from lies, and ultimately from death. Righteousness brings the sweet fruit of life and peace.
- What council can you give me towards walking in the paths of righteousness?
  - o Keep your breastplate on!
  - Similarly to what I focused on a few weeks ago, the conflict is universal and permanent, therefore we must keep our armor on!

“The devil attempts to make the Christian throw away his breastplate by presenting it as that which hinders the pleasure of his life.” When we are tired of the fight, Satan reminds us of how uncomfortable it is to sleep in armor and tempts us to view God’s law as boring and insensitive. To this we must remember how Paul begins this passage. We are called to be on the alert, to wake up and keep watch. It doesn’t matter how uncomfortable it is to sleep in armor; we are not to sleep. To Satan’s slander against the word of God, we must fight him using the word. Think of Jesus promise that God’s commands are designed to bring us joy. Think about the proverbs. Righteousness leads to the sweet life and peace, while wickedness leads to corruption, and eventually death. And most of all, dwell in the comfort that Christ is our righteousness, and he will not lose any whom the Father has given to Him. Our armor is not burdensome, it is a joy.

- Get some Christian friend as thy faithful monitor.
- Mature, trustworthy friends are a great blessing of Christian fellowship. We need brothers to proclaim the divine word of salvation when we become uncertain and discouraged, or when our hearts are sick with sin or grief, or hard with pride. They have a pulse on our lives, and like a heart monitor, they track our internal health, steadying our fears, warning us from danger, and sounding the alarm in case of emergency. As Bonhoeffer puts it, “The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; when his own heart is uncertain, his brother’s is sure.” Pg 23. We ought to give ourselves to Christian brothers who have proven themselves faithful friends.

Finally, Paul calls us to soundness and holiness of life, that we would give ourselves to the service of God and protection from the devil. He concludes the entire passage by reminding us to pray at all times in the Spirit that we would remain awake and in the fight. So let us close tonight, asking for strength, for truth, for righteousness.