

Paul continues with his Roman legionnaire illustration by referencing the 'breastplate' also known as a cuirass.

For a Legate (a senior officer, often a political appointment, equivalent to a General) the breastplate would be of polished metal, shaped to appear muscled. For lesser mortals it would be made of leather (in early times it would be dyed red – the original 'red wall?').

The breastplate was a secondary piece of equipment as the wearer would be behind his shield, however, it would still deflect or reduce the effect of a glancing blow.

The whole of a legionnaire's armour works best when it is complete and becomes truly awesome when deployed en-masse. It's a bit like being faithful by oneself, or being part of a worshipping community.

Paul's analogy of the armour of God gives each element a specific moral or faith focus. Whilst we may not see armed soldiers on our streets everyday, as Paul's listeners would have, we can still admire the imagery.

A breastplate would be tied together, or buckled on the wearer. Either way it would be helpful to have someone helping you into and out of it.

A basic unit of legionnaires was a 'contubernium', a team of eight men lead by a 'Decurian' who all shared one tent – and food. They would form close friendships, especially in time of conflict. Sounds very like a basis for a 'housegroup' to me.

Read Ephesians 6:14

1. What do you think 'righteousness' means today? How does this compare with what the Bible teaches about righteousness?
2. Our God is often described as both 'just' and 'righteous'. Are these terms mutually inclusive? How do they fit with God also being 'merciful'?

3. There are some elements of Roman armour not mentioned by Paul, greaves (metal shin pads effectively) and arm guards (the same but for the lower arm, leather or metal). What moral or faith aspect would you ascribe to these? Why?
4. Where else in the Bible is there a reference to armour? What happened in that story? (I'm thinking Saul for one).
5. What examples can you give of someone in current news who could fit the term 'righteous? What is the difference between righteous and being self righteous?
6. In the time Paul was writing the sight of a Roman legionnaire would be a daily occurrence. Apart from a few, rare re-enactments or an old film we may never have seen one. What current day image can you think of to make the same points that Paul makes?
7. The 'breastplate of righteousness' seems to indicate that, despite our best attempts, sometimes the enemy gets inside our defences. When have you felt that you are being overcome? How does thinking about our righteousness in Christ help us when we pray?
8. I, personally, like history and early church history is one of my favourites (hence some knowledge of Roman military). What can we learn from the history of Paul's time that we can apply to every day living today? What doesn't work and why?
9. Roman citizens were exempt from death by crucifixion, yet legionnaires were not. Do you know why that would be? (The answer is more strange than you may imagine).

Prayer Points

Please pray for peace and comfort for the family of Sarah Clarke (mum Esther and brother John), who died unexpectedly on Wednesday.

Prayer for Spiritual Renewal: Gracious God, as I walk through this season of Lent, renew my spirit and draw me closer to You. Help me to let go of distractions and focus on what truly matters. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit, that I may live a life of faith, hope, and love. May this Lent be a time of transformation and deeper communion with You.

Give thanks to God for female leaders among BMS' partners who willingly volunteer to serve within rigid cultural systems. Pray against spiritual discrimination in church, ministry and all levels of leadership.

Sermon Notes



BIBLE STUDY

March 9th 2025

The Armour of God: The Breastplate of Righteousness

As we read in our series on Daniel last year, an unseen battle is going on around us in the spiritual realm. In Paul's letter we see that God has provided everything we need to stand firm and resist evil, but we are called to be actively aware of both the struggle and the resources available.

In Ephesians 6 the apostle Paul gives us the clearest description anywhere in Scripture of believers' resources for the spiritual battle. He vividly describes them as armour, which we must repeatedly take up in prayerful reliance on God.

If you would like to join a Connect Group, please contact the church office 01424 730001