

THE ARMOR OF GOD

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS WITH PASTOR JACK ABELEN

Knowing our Adversary and the Armor of God Week 5: Ephesians 6:14b - Breastplate of Righteousness

Introduction

- A. We spent the first 3 weeks of our series looking at knowing our adversary - Satan's creation and fall, his methods and strategies against the world and the saints, his limitations and ultimate end.
- B. We began the Armor of God last time so we might stand (6:11), withstand, and having done all, still stand (13). The armor Paul references was well known to all of his day for it was an accurate description of a Roman soldier.
- C. Last week our study focused on having our waist girded with truth. This belt was one piece of the armor always worn by the soldier that enabled him to quickly cinch up his robe to free him to run or fight, providing mobility and readiness.
- D. As each piece of armor has a physical purpose, Paul uses them to teach us the spiritual armor we have as believers in Jesus Christ. This was a belt of truth. Subjectively the word truth means honesty or sincerity and speaks of whole-hearted commitment. A full devotion to Jesus will secure you and make you ready for the battle, freeing you to stand boldly!
- E. We must run expecting to win, having a heart for the battle regardless of the cost.
- F. Objectively, the word truth speaks of the authority of God's Word and it is that Word which must gird our minds (1Pe.1:13). If I have a lesser view of His Word, Satan will use it against me.
- G. Tonight we want to examine our second piece of armor that was to be worn at all times – the breastplate of righteousness. As before, let's look at the armor in its natural use and then talk about its spiritual application.

The Breastplate of Righteousness (Eph.6:14b)

- A. As he wrote to the Ephesians, Paul may very well have used the Roman soldiers guarding him as a point of reference for this teaching.
- B. The breastplate was vital for every soldier. Made of chainmail, it protected the body from the neck down to the top of the thigh, where all of our major organs are. The very word for breastplate in Greek gives us our word thorax.
- C. More significant to us is that those in Paul's day considered the heart the place of decision making and choice, and the bowels the place of feelings and emotions. Both are guarded by the breastplate that, like the belt, was to be worn all the time.
- D. Protecting the heart:
 - 1. It is with the heart that man makes his cognitive choices (Jer.17:9)(Mt.15:18-20)(Rom.10:9-10). It is a true use of the term when we speak of getting to "the heart" of the matter.
- E. Protecting the bowels:
 - 1. The bowels were seen as the source of feeling and emotion due to the physical responses emotions can produce: stomach aches, nervous butterflies, fear, expectation, and so forth.

2. The King James Version often translated this word simply as bowels, though in the New King James Version it has been replaced with words like yearning, affection, feeling, etc. Consider these verses in the King James Version as a few examples (Gen.43:30)(Php.2:1-2)(Col.3:12)(1Jo.3:17).
- F. These two areas of choice and feeling are often points of attack by our enemy. What can we do to be kept from his onslaught? We can wear the breastplate of righteousness that God has provided.

Righteousness Defined

- A. By definition, righteousness is that which God approves, accepts, commends and applauds. Man does not possess it on his own (Isa.64:6) and he has no hope of improving with time (Job.14:4; 25:4). Any hope of standing before God in our own righteousness is misguided and foolish.
- B. The scripture clearly teaches us of our inability to appear before God on our own (Lk.18:9-14) (Rom.3:10). Remember Paul's personal words on the subject (Php.3:4-9).
- C. Philippians 3:9 speaks of a righteousness God gives us and it is that righteousness which constitutes this breastplate. I suspect if we as believers knew what we had in Christ, most of our counseling could be set aside.
- D. Imputed Righteousness:
1. Often referred to as justification, it is that work of God accomplished in my life the minute I turn to Jesus. I am sinful by nature (Jer.13:23) and God's standard for me is perfection (Mt.5:48). But in Jesus, God gives to us the reward of His sinlessness, faithfulness, obedience and perfection.
 2. Jesus came and led a perfect life in every way before heading for the cross where He would willingly take the punishment due me for my sins, and give me in exchange the reward He deserved for His holy life. His reward being placed in my account is called imputed righteousness.
 3. God took my sins and imputed them to Jesus and took Jesus' righteousness and imputed it to me (2Co.5:17-21). One day I will be welcome in heaven even as Jesus was (Jn.16:10). That is why Paul could write Romans 8:10 and Philippians 3:8-9.
 4. Satan, in his hatred for God and for us, would like to convince us of our failures. Not a difficult argument knowing our lives, were it not for this imputed righteousness that protects my heart and feelings.
- E. Imparted Righteousness:
1. Also called sanctification in the Bible, this is the result of imputed righteousness whereby I begin to live out all that I have been given in Jesus. One is position; the other is practice. By the work of the Holy Spirit, I now become each day more of who I am in Christ - victory over sin, walking in obedience, love, and so forth. In Philippians 3:12-15, Paul declares he has was not yet perfect and yet three verses later, he says he was.
 2. Imputed righteousness assures me heaven if I die the minute I am saved (like the thief on the cross); imparted righteousness changes me daily so that outwardly you can see in my practice the lofty, glorious place I have been given in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

- A. This breastplate of righteousness protects me from Satan's accusations against me. It also keeps me from looking to myself and my weaknesses and instead has me depending upon Jesus and His righteousness to use me for His glory.
- B. Moses suffered the slander of others, even his own family. So did Jesus and so will you. Job's counselors were constantly insisting it was Job's failures and weaknesses that had brought God's judgments upon him. This breastplate will keep your heart and emotions in check.
- C. Remember Romans 8:35-37. Satan will not stop accusing so keep this piece of armor on 24 hours a day. We are secure in Christ (Jn.10:27-29)(Eph.1:6-8)!
- D. Next week we will look at the shoes that will keep us well-balanced.