

ARMOR OF GOD

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS WITH PASTOR JACK

Knowing our Adversary and the Armor of God (Ephesians 6:14b) Breastplate of Righteousness October 21st, 2015

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.

All right. Let's open our Bibles tonight - Ephesians 6:14, as we look at Paul's last instructions to the Ephesians regarding spiritual warfare and being a soldier in the Lord and, in this world, standing against the wiles of the devil.

Introduction

A. Knowing our adversary

If you haven't been with us, we started this series off for three weeks looking at our adversary, the devil. We looked at his creation, we looked at his fall, we looked at his methods, we looked at the strategies that he uses against the world (those who don't believe in Christ) and the strategies he uses against the believers (those who do). We talked a lot about how limited Satan is. I know sometimes people give him absolute power. He doesn't have that. We talked about his ultimate future, that he's not going to survive this thing. He's going to be judged eternally. And as Paul said to the Corinthians, "We should not be ignorant of his devices lest he would take advantage of us" (2 Corinthians 2:11). So we spent three weeks looking at that. All of those notes and studies are on the archive list on the website.

B. The Armor of God - stand, withstand, having done all to stand

Last time, we began looking at the armor. So three weeks of who are we fighting and then seven weeks we want to spend looking at how do we stand fast against him? But you remember last time verse 11, we read there, "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Verse 13, "to stand;" verse 13, to "withstand;" verse 13, "having done all to stand;" verse 14, "stand therefore." And you get the idea God doesn't want you to fall over. Right? Stand, withstand, stand, stand therefore. Which is a pretty accurate description and as we began to look at this armor, we realized that Paul was chained at this time to a Roman soldier all the time. So he literally had someone to stare at, and he was able to lay that whole armor out, and he began to give to it spiritual application so that, as he accurately describes what the Roman armor and a soldier looked like, he was able to paint for us and for them a spiritual portrait of our armor and our fight with the enemy and how we are to stand.

C. Having our waist girded with truth

Last week, we looked at verse 14 - the first part - which said, "having girded your waist with truth." That was our first piece of armor, and we learned that this girdle (or this belt) worn by all soldiers (and most men for that matter) was a belt worn around your waist that, when you wanted to get up and move, you would pull your robe up through it. It would release your arms to be able to fight. It would give your legs mobility without stumbling you. And so the belt is really preparing you for action, if you will. Each of the pieces of armor has a natural use and then, of course, a spiritual application. So this belt prepared us for battle, but it was a belt of truth. It wasn't just a belt, it was a belt of truth. And we talked last week about that word

"truth" because it is used in the Bible subjectively and objectively; and if you can't decide from the context which one to use, you're almost obligated from a biblical standpoint to allow all of them to be applied. From a subjective standpoint - when there is a subjectiveness to the word "truth" - it is always spoken of truthfulness or sincerity.

D. Paul teaches us about the spiritual armor we have as believers in Jesus

So Paul begins by saying to the Ephesians, "When you're battling the enemy, here's the first thing God wants you to do. Be prepared to move forward by having a sincere or a truthful commitment of your life to the Lord." The only one who is half-hearted in his devotion to God will not do very well in the battle. You're going to get beat up. You're sort of committed to the Lord, but you're sort of not, and so you're in and you're out, and you're up and you're down. There's never really much stability. Well that's not a way to stand fast and having done all to stand. So, put this belt on - this belt of truthful sincerity of commitment to the Lord.

E. We must run, expecting to win, despite the cost

And we talked last week about needing to have that honest evaluation where we want to win the battle. We have a heart for the battle regardless of the cost. I'm all in. I want to run to win the race. I'm willing to be a living sacrifice. I'm going to be single-hearted. That will give you the edge when the enemy comes up against you because you're not going anywhere. You're all in. You've thrown it all in with Jesus, and that's going to help you to be able to stand - ready and willing to run with a sincere commitment. And it's a piece of armor that will serve us well.

F. Objectively, the word "truth" speaks of the authority of God's Word

From an objective standpoint - when the word "truth" is used objectively - it is only used in the Bible to speak of the ultimate truth of God's Word; in every case. It literally means that you are persuaded and committed, girding your minds with the Word of God; that you're able to stand fast. Peter said (we've been doing Peter on Sunday mornings), "Gird up the loins of your mind," (1 Peter 1:13). Same application. So, sincere commitment to the Lord and then a heart that is confident that the final authority is before you in the Scriptures. If I have less than that view of God's Word, Satan will use it against me. I'll read something, and, "Oh, God probably doesn't love me now, and I'm probably cooked." He'll convince you pretty quickly that it doesn't apply to you. So the belt of truth prepares me to move out, to be ready for battle. But it falls under two categories - sincerity of commitment and the conviction that this Bible that is on your lap is the true Word of God. You can count on it. You'll die on it. This is one place you won't leave. Do that, and the enemy already is at a great disadvantage in the life of a believer who stands with that belt on.

We mentioned to you also last week (and it bears mentioning for the next few weeks) that these pieces of armor fall into two different categories. There is the first category, in fact they're the first three pieces of armor (in verses 14-15 here), that are always worn by the soldier. They were never taken off. And it is modified by the word in our text "having." So if you begin in verse 13, "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to

withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace." So those three were ones that were always with you, and, like I said, modified by "having." The other three that you find in verses 16-17 were pieces of armor that the soldier would lay down as he was sitting to eat or whatever he might be doing. But they were nearby, within hand's reach, and he would pick them up and use them as necessary. And so that is modified by the word "taking" in verses 16-17. "Taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and (take) the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." So these were ones that you would pick up. So you had three that you wore all the time, three that were with you all the time but not necessarily on your body. And those are the pieces that we were given. So the belt was always on. You had to stand fast, ready to go.

G. The second piece of armor - the breastplate of righteousness

Well tonight we want to examine our second piece of armor that was worn at all times. It's at the end of verse 14, and it says, "Having put on" (we wear it all the time) "the breastplate of righteousness." Before we look at the spiritual application, understand that there is a natural use for the breastplate.

The Breastplate of Righteousness (Ephesians 6:14b)

A. Paul may have used Roman soldiers as a point of reference

In fact, Paul may, as he was looking at this soldier chained to him under house arrest there in Rome, have looked at a Roman breastplate.

B. The breastplate was vital for every soldier

And several different kinds were made and even found from the 1st century, but the most common one was called a coat of mail. Mail. And it was a bunch of little interlinked rings or overlapping metal plates, and it was designed to protect you (who wore it) from the upper thigh area of your body all the way to the thorax, or up here through the neck area, and it was really to cover it all up. In fact, the word "breastplate" in Greek is "**thorax**." So the idea of this metal plate around you from the front was always designed to cover the trunk. All of the vital organs are in here, right? Those are the ones you didn't want people to take you out with. So your heart and your lungs and your bowels - they are all underneath this breastplate.

C. The heart was considered the place of decision making and choice; and the bowels the place of feelings and emotions

It may be even more significant when we realize that, for the 1st century believer and literally everything written in the 1st century, the heart was to them the place where decisions were made. When they used the word "heart," they talked about choices and the decisions that were made. The thoughts and the intents were always ascribed to the heart, and you'll read that in the Bible as well (Hebrews 4:12). Whereas all of the emotions and the feelings that you have

were ascribed to the bowels. Now, New King James translates them a little differently, but needless to say, those are the things that this breastplate was intended to cover - your bowels and your heart and the things that lead to life.

D. Protecting the heart - cognitive choices

So physically, all your vital organs are protected. Spiritually, it provided protection for the heart - where the choices were made, and the bowels - where you felt those things that came along with choice. So both choice (cognitive) and feelings are covered in this particular piece of armor. So, protect the heart.

Now the Bible does teach that with the heart man makes choice. The ancients taught that. The Bible certainly agrees with it. It is where the will and the conscience - that's where it's applied. It isn't just this muscle that pumps blood through your body. It is a descriptive place where God speaks about our making choices. In fact, it was Jeremiah, you remember, in chapter 17:9, who said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" But it spoke of that place of choice. Jesus said to His disciples, in Matthew 15:18, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart," (same word) "and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed" (and then He makes a list) "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man," He said to the Pharisees. But whatever comes out of your heart, that's who you are. So, that's the intention as the Bible speaks about; the word "heart" in Greek is "*cardia*," as you might suspect. But it speaks of the center of both our physical and spiritual life. It's the seat of the will, it's the seat of the soul, it's that place that will develop the character of man. It's a place where both sensibilities and desires and appetites are formed. So we have a little phrase that we use sometimes. We say, "Now we're getting to the heart of the matter." And that's really what the Lord speaks about when it comes to the heart.

E. Protecting the bowels - feeling and emotion

1. Now in terms of protecting the bowels, those are seen as the place of feelings and emotion; no doubt because of the physical experiences that you feel when you have certain kinds of emotions. You get nervous, all of a sudden you've got butterflies in your stomach, and they associate, "Well, that's in the bowels." It comes from within. Passion, everything that can be felt, nerves, anticipation, expectation. You just kind of - when you feel it right here, that's pretty much what the Bible talks about in terms of bowels.

2. The word is often changed from the King James where it is almost always translated "bowels," and it's an old word, and you go, "Bowels? What in the heck is that?" But in the New King James, you'll read words like "yearning" and "affection" or "feeling." But it's always that same word, if you like. In Genesis 43 when Joseph, in his bowels, was moved to his brothers who he hadn't revealed himself to, the New King James says that "his heart yearned for his brother" (verse 30). But that's that word, that "feeling" word, if you will. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, "If there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of

the Spirit, if any bowels of mercy," is what the King James says (chapter 2:1-2). But if you go to the New King James, it says, "if any affection and mercy." But it's that same reference, if you will, to that which is going on in your gut. So spiritually applied, these 1st century bulletproof vests, which is really what they are, were designed to protect the heart - the seat of your thoughts and your decision making, and it was designed to protect your bowels - the seat of how you feel or the emotions you experience.

F. The two areas of choice and feeling are often points of attack by our enemy

And I'll tell you what - there are two areas where Satan would love to bring havoc to your spiritual life, and it is those two: the decisions that you make and the way that we can be moved by how we feel. So that people will say, "Well, that's just how I felt!" rather than, "I'm governed by what I know, and then I have my feelings line up underneath." So, the belt of truth - keep it on - prepares you to run, to battle, to stand. This breastplate has a spiritual component. It protects your heart and your emotions. But notice, it isn't just a breastplate any more than it was just a girdle. It was a girdle of truth. It's a breastplate of righteousness. So here's the protection God says, "Put on in the battle with the enemy. Put on a breastplate" (that thing that you wear that covers all these areas), "but make it a breastplate of righteousness."

Righteousness Defined

A. Righteousness is that which God approves, accepts, commends, applauds

Now the word "righteousness" means that which is right with God, if you will, or that which God approves of or that which makes me acceptable in God's eyes in terms of my behavior. It's vital that you understand, I think, the importance of the word because, if it's going to be a good tool that you're going to use to stand against the enemy's lies and his temptations and all, you're going to want to make sure you're applying it correctly.

Man can never stand before God and be acceptable before Him in his own righteousness. In other words, you haven't got what it takes to stand before God and be declared right. Isaiah 64:6 says, "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." And, "There is none righteous," we read (Romans 3:10), "none of us. Not even one." So, look, because we were born in sin, there is no hope of making ourselves any better. Right? You've got to set that aside first. You can't clean your act up. You can't. You can't make yourself right. You were born in sin. Job 14:4 says, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Answer, "No one!" God says to us we can't fix ourselves. Job 25:4 says, "How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?" Or literally, how can a sinner be born pure or make himself pure?

So the armor we are told here to put on in our battle with the enemy is not only to protect our decisions and feelings, but it is not an armor that is supported by our good behavior or somehow, "I've been doing really good this week, so I can stand fast." That's not righteousness.

That's not a breastplate that God would give you. In other words, He's not saying, "Hey, clean up your act. Do you feel better about yourself? You tried really hard. Put on that breastplate." No. He's saying, "You need the righteousness that I can give you." The fact that we have all fallen short of God's glory is evident, I think, in experience, isn't it? I mean, I don't think any of you, being adults, would say, "No. I've never sinned." If you can say that, we need to have you see a doctor because you're living a delusional life. Nobody in their right mind would come up with that kind of assessment of themselves.

B. Scripture teaches that we cannot appear before God on our own

So, we fall short, and the Scriptures teach that as well. When Jesus was teaching the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, especially there in Luke 18:9, it says, "He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous." And that was the Pharisee. He stood around, and He said this, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men....that I give tithes of everything I own." He made a whole list of cool stuff that he did, and the Bible says, "He went away having prayed with himself." He thought he was right with God. God wasn't listening because He's not buying that story. And the guy went away feeling good about himself because he'd applauded himself and heard himself patting himself on the back. The sinner stood far away, head down, unable to look up, beating himself on the breast with great grief. And he said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" "No righteousness with me." And God said, "He can go home just as if he'd never sinned." Justified.

So the point is my righteousness before God is insufficient. "There is none righteous. No, not one." (Romans 3:10). "There is none righteous." So this breastplate that Paul suggests that we wear - that we can stand wearing, that we should always have on - is not any kind of a self-righteousness. When Paul wrote thirty years into his spiritual, born-again life, he wrote in Philippians 3:4, "If anyone in this life could have been confident in the flesh or trusted in the flesh, I think I would have had a better resume," and he made a whole list of the things he did. He was "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law," (as far as he could tell, he was) "blameless." That's how he felt about himself. That's how he felt about himself. But, when he came to know the Lord, he said, "What things were gain to me, I have counted as loss." In fact, he used the word for "refuse." "They were 'dung' to me so that I could win Christ."

C. The righteousness given to us by God

And then he says in verse 9 of Philippians 3, "I want to be found in Him, not having my own righteousness," (or that which we think will make us right before God) "which is from the law," (or through behavior, if you will) "but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." So, the righteousness that Paul says you and I should be able to protect our heart and our decision and our feelings in has nothing to do with our ability to stand before God in our own power. But rather, it is because freely given to me by Jesus is a right standing with the Father through His sacrifice. So every time that the enemy comes and says to me, "You're a loser," I can readily say, "Yep! I am. But I'm going to heaven because of Jesus."

"Oh, you're not very good. You're not very faithful. You've fallen way short." "You're right. But I'm going to heaven because of Jesus." It's His righteousness given to me that protects me. It protects me from the lie of the enemy, from his accusations, from his finger pointing, from even using others to make me feel bad about myself. Because all I have to do is look to see that it is the Lord who has given me the ability to stand before Him. And then the enemy's accusations can have no effect on my heart, my choices; nor can affect (very much) my emotions which might very well be very discouraged if I started thinking about how far short I'd come. I truly believe, as far as Christians are concerned, that if you could get all the Christians to wear this breastplate, 90% of our counseling could go away because that's what people usually struggle with. "Oh, I don't know if God loves me.....I don't know if I'd done this.....nanananana" (whining) You just see the devil with that hammer, hitting them over the head. Look, all of the need for cheerleading could be set aside if I could be secure in my decisions and feelings that I stand before Christ - righteous in Him. That's the breastplate God wants you to wear. He wants you to see yourself as He sees you so that your heart can be protected.

Now this righteousness from Jesus to you is given to you in two ways. The moment that you believe in Jesus, confess your sins and ask Him to be the Lord of your life, you are given Jesus' righteousness. The Bible word is "imputed." Not such a big word, but it literally means that what someone else has is placed in your account; so that the minute you get saved, if you were to die five seconds later, you would be received into heaven for you are covered with the righteousness of God in Christ. He died, he rose, you live. "You're forgiven as far as the east is from the west," (Psalm 103:12); sins cast into the seas. He remembers them no more. The minute you believe - "imputed" righteousness. It goes into your account. You're good. You're good. From the minute you get saved, you're good because that's a transaction that God carries forth. If you live (beyond your salvation - you didn't die as you were praying or no one baptized you and held you down and didn't let you up), there is another portion of that work which God does which is that He, in the process of making you more like Him, seeks to sanctify you. So there's a sanctification that takes place, and then there's an "imputed" righteousness.

D. Imputed Righteousness

1. Now, "imputed" righteousness is referred to as "justification" in the Bible. The minute I come to Jesus, I am "just as if I'd never sinned." Did I sin? Oh, lots. "What do you think you're so special then?" Well Jesus died for me, and His blood cleanses me from all sin. "Imputed." I don't deserve it. I didn't do anything to earn it. I just opened the bank account, and He just put it in there. There. You get eternal life. That's "imputed," right? Justification.

"Imparted" righteousness is the term "sanctification," and it's one of those processes that takes a lifetime. Now both are taught, both need to be understood, and those will both protect your heart.

So let's think about "imputed" for a minute. Due to the fall, each of us is born sinners by nature. By nature. There's really no way to change our nature. If we could, then we wouldn't really need Jesus. We could just put in the order and change our nature. Jeremiah 13:23 says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots?" And he said, "Then may you also do

good who are accustomed to do evil." In other words, if you could change your nature, then you could change your behavior because behavior comes forth from nature. "Out of the heart," as Jesus said there in Matthew. So, we cannot begin to touch our nature. God's standard for admission, by the way, into heaven is perfection. Matthew 5:48, "You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." So unless you're perfect, you'd better apply for righteousness because yours isn't going to make it. You're not perfect. You've fallen short somewhere along the road. In fact, Jesus puts it another way so we won't miss it. In Matthew 22:37 He said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." And then, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Now, if you can do that with everything you've got, then you can go it alone. But that doesn't work for us. Either way I think we're doomed, aren't we?

2. Now, because of our hopeless situation and the fact that we can't attain to God's standard of righteousness, the Father sends His only begotten Son into the world so that He might save us, and He offers us a gift of His righteousness - and His righteousness was a sinless life. He lived the perfect life. He didn't sin. He was tempted. He obeyed the Father. He did always those things which pleased Him. And He dies, not for His sins - He has none, but for yours and mine. He pays the price. And the Bible uses the word "imputing" His righteousness to us to describe that in your credit account with God goes the blood of the Lamb. So you go to stand before the Lord one day, and maybe you're nervous. You're about to die, and you go, "Man, I'm a mess-up. I don't know if I'm going to make it." Well, you probably wouldn't make it if you didn't have this account with Christ. When you stand before the Father one day, it'll be Jesus standing next to you, claiming you to be His own. You're covered in His blood. You're good! The Savior is going to stand next to you - not because you deserve it. You don't. Not because we lived up to it. Not because we earned some portion of it. But simply because "imputed" to us is His righteousness. We get treated as if we were Jesus, and He got treated as if He was us! And so God "imputes" His righteousness to us. He lived a life without sin - spotless and holy, perfect in obedience in every word and thought and deed. And then He took the punishment we deserve, and He went to the cross. "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6). You've read that, right? "We have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Or you can read that Peter verse since we've been going through 1 Peter, chapter 2 where it says that He suffered for us, "by whose stripes you were healed, who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness." "Imputed" - we get it immediately. "Imparted" - God begins to change you so that you become more pleasing in His sight. The righteousness of God begins to be worked out in your life. So the result not only was that my sins are forgiven, and I'm cleansed, but to my account is credited the holiness and goodness and sinlessness of Jesus. It was "imputed" to me. So when I go stand before the Father one day, I'm not going to have to worry about what I did. I'm so glad of what He did. And the only thing that's going to be brought up is what He did. You're forgiven. That takes a lot of pressure off, doesn't it? It'll even enable you to start trying to walk with God because if you fail, it's not like the book is closed on your life. God is there, covering you with His righteousness. Do your best. Fail every time if you need to, but try because you're covered already. You can't lose. You win because of the righteousness of Jesus.

3. So, God took my sins, and He "imputed" them to His Son who died and gained victory over them. And then He took Jesus' faithfulness and holiness and perfection, and He put them in my account. So I get rewarded every day as if I was the faithful one. How does that make you feel? The Lord rewards you like you're His Son - that He was faithful. And you get the credit for that. It's amazing. It'll blow your mind. But, man, it'll sure get you to love the Lord, won't it? God forever sees me in His Son, washed in His blood, perfect in His sight. And by faith I am clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17), and we've been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

Well, one day when I get to heaven, I'm going to be acceptable in God's sight because Jesus went to heaven and was acceptable in God's sight. You remember that John 16:10 verse where it talks about the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the world, and it says, "He will convict the world of righteousness" (same word) "because I go to the Father and you see Me no more." Or literally Jesus said, "I've become the standard. You want to get into heaven? Watch Me. I'm getting into heaven. Now all you have to do is live like Me," and you go, "I can't!" "All right. If you can't live like Me, you'd better believe in Me, and then I'll give you what I have." That's the exchange. That's why Paul was able to say to the Romans in chapter 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Don't you like that? He's not holding a couple of pages back in His back pocket in case you flip out or anything. Right? "No condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Paul, when he wrote to the Philippians in chapter 3:8, said, "I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," and then he talked about wanting His righteousness.

4. Now, in the battle that we fight with the enemy - the accuser of the brethren - Satan, in his hatred for God and then for you, would love to convince you that those things are not so. He wants your heart troubled. He wants you worried about where you stand with God. He wants to upset your emotions. He wants to steal your peace. He wants to keep you from His rest. And it comes with this churning that, if you believe what the Bible says, wouldn't happen in your life; that you have the righteousness of God "imputed" to you. It's yours! God said so. I almost think sometimes it's too good to be true. But He said so. In my account is the blood of Jesus. People will say, "I don't feel saved." Well, what do you want me to do? "I just don't feel it." Well, then, do you believe it? "Well, I guess I believe it, but I don't feel it." God is true. You can't go by your feelings. "I thought it was good to eat two gallons of ice cream. I felt like that was the right thing to do for a little while." (Laughing) The enemy comes along, and people call all the time... .."Does God really forgive my sins because I sinned again today?" (whining tone) Yeah, He did. "All those wicked things you've done?" Yeah, every one of them. "Are you sure?" Yeah, unless Jesus died, and it only works for a while. There's a time limit on there or something. But there's not, is there? So, to protect ourselves, we have to constantly wear this breastplate of Jesus' righteousness. We have to see ourselves as God see us in Him. My feelings come and go. There are days I feel great. Other days, I'd just as soon stay in bed. I had a fellow tell me a few weeks ago, he said, "I decided I'd come to church early tonight because if I go home, I may not come back." And I said, "Well I stay here and eat dinner because if I go home, I might not come back." (Laughing) Your feelings aren't always so

dependable. But God's Word is absolutely dependable. Right? It lasts forever. So I'm covered by the holiness of Jesus, who is perfect. On my own, no way. In Christ, no problem. Now that happened the minute you believed. Before you had time to do anything right or wrong, that's just given to you. And I'll tell you what - the moment you believe, you will never be forgiven any more than that day. You won't be any more loved than that day. You won't ever be more acceptable to God than you were on that day. And when you start showing God some faithfulness, it isn't going to change your relationship. You'll have it the same way. It's His righteousness. It's the same. "Imputed" in my account the minute I confess Jesus and receive Him as my Lord. That's "imputed."

E. Imparted Righteousness

1. How about "imparted"? If, then, you believe this, your life changes. The word "sanctification" is the word that's used for "imparted" righteousness, but it is really living out in practice what God has given me in grace. It is living out in practice what God has given me in grace so that I'm able, now, to live in such a way that it reflects that I know that I'm right with God; that I stand right with Him; that I'm given a life. So the Holy Spirit comes in, and He begins to change my life inwardly and outwardly, and He brings me into that fellowship with God that my account allows. I'm washed, I'm cleansed, I can come boldly before His throne. But I can also live in a way that pleases God. And that's what sanctification is all about - so that I am saved, and because I'm saved, I begin to act a certain way. Because salvation is more than a position. It's also a practice. Right? In Christ, I'm saved. Nothing's going to get to me. On the other hand, when I'm saved, my life begins to change. I begin to live the kind of life that God would want me to do, and I finally have the power to say "no" to sin and "yes" to Jesus and be convinced it's right.

"Imputed" righteousness makes "imparted" righteousness possible. Does that make sense? When you grab hold of the righteousness you have in Jesus, now you can begin to freely walk with God without fear or worry or somehow having that pressure. Paul, thirty years after he was saved, still felt like he was learning. He was still hungry. He said, "I want the righteousness of life in Christ. I want to have that outworking of that which I believe." He even said in Philippians 3:12-15, "I'm not perfect yet, but I'm mature." The New King James says "mature." The King James says "perfect." The word is "*teleos*," and it just means to come to completion. So Paul said, "I'm not there yet, but thirty years after I got saved and 'imputed' righteousness was given to me, I still want to live the kind of life that shows that to be so." So I must never forget the righteousness that has been "imputed" to me. I've been saved and delivered by Jesus. There's nothing left for me to do. But if I know that, if I'm free from, "I've got to save myself or impress God or do something so I can go pray tonight - Lord, did You see everything I did for You today? I'm hoping You'll answer this prayer now," or, "Lord, did You see the money I put in last month? That was hard for me, but I did it for You, Lord. Now here's what I want." That all comes from a life that isn't sure about "imputed" righteousness. If I realize that my standing with God has nothing to do with me, and it has everything to do with Jesus, knowing that to be so gives me the confidence to pursue the Lord and look to Him for strength to live for Him knowing that my gains and failures don't affect my relationship at all. Right? Good day, bad day - same relationship. If I'm trying, if I'm seeking, that

relationship doesn't change. In fact, sin can alter the fellowship, but the relationship can't be hampered. I can cut myself off by sin. God'll have to deal with me, maybe severely, but I'm still His son. So, the "imputed" righteousness is absolutely vital because when I know that He'll finish the work that He started - if I know, and if you know tonight that you're in a position with God that can't be improved upon in terms of standing - you're in. You're in, you're in, you're in, you're in, you're in. Then your service to Him from that position can certainly help you draw closer to Him because you're not having to bargain anymore, you're not having to do what you do in the world. "I get a little, you get a little." There're all those weird things that go on in your mind because you don't put this breastplate on. And the breastplate says, "I'm in. Now I want to begin to serve God."

2. "Imputed" righteousness tells me that I'm going to heaven whether I die the minute I get saved or a hundred years later. The thief on the cross had no time for "imparted" righteousness, but he got the "imputed" part, didn't he? "Today you will be with Me in Paradise," Luke 23:43. He never went to church, never wrote a tithe check, wasn't able to do any acts of mercy. I think he just yelled at his buddy. That was about it. And he went right to heaven with Jesus that day, though he had been a murderer. "Imputed" righteousness. Knowing I've been redeemed allows me to commit, without fear, to the Lord and seeks to put on the new man. It protects me from the lies of the enemy. "You're not doing very well." "I know, but I'm in Christ, and I'm trying my best." I'm praying as much as I know. I'm putting my best foot forward. I find my failures constantly before me. But the lies of the enemy have no influence. They can't discount the work because given to me already is righteousness with God. I have that already. I can't mess that up. That's why I came to begin with. "Lord, I need salvation." "Okay, here you go. Put this on." So the "imparted" kind now just brings me around to begin to want to walk with God. I can seek God on the basis of His work for me and rest in the fact that, in all of my weaknesses, He can make me strong. It takes all the pressure off. You see what I'm saying? It takes all the pressure off of you. You're in! "Well, does He love me? Does He.....?" Stop it! It's ridiculous. He loved you yesterday, He'll love you today. "I wasn't very lovely today." Oh, He knew that. You should see what you're going to do on Thursday, and He still loves you. It doesn't matter. "Imputed," right? I'm safe. Sins are as far away.....like this. I'm in because of Christ. If I have to worry about Jesus' work and was it effective enough for me, now I've got all kinds of problems with my outlook about salvation. But if He's the Savior, if He's the Lord, if He got into heaven, and He's the way to go, my faith in Him gives me credit for all He did. Great. Let's put that off the table then. I'm in! Now, how can I begin to please Him and walk with Him - when I'm weak, when I don't know for sure, when I fight back, when I'm rebellious, when I have anger in my heart, or bitterness that I feed, and I should be doing better. And the enemy finds all those hooks to hang on to. I'm driven back to this "imputed" righteousness. I'm good. But now I should be walking with God, and that's when the "imparted" righteousness really comes into play.

Conclusion

A. The breastplate of righteousness protects us from Satan's accusations

I wear the breastplate. It's essential. Because the accuser of the brethren, like a roaring lion, is looking to devour. And Satan will do a lot of things. He'll accuse God to you. He'll accuse God to you. "Well, God's not very fair, God's not very kind. You've been praying. He hasn't been answering. I think it's because of the things you haven't been doing. If you could just be a little bit holier and a little bit wiser, a little bit more committed, a little bit more diligent...." You're going, "Yeah, all of that's true, but none of that matters because I've been 'imputed' righteousness." So as long as I'm trying, the enemy's got no hand in it. Now if you're messing around and trying to hustle God, God won't be hustled. He knows if you're trying or not. But if you're trying, there's no place for the enemy to hang onto. We're all weak. Weak and weaker. What does that leave us? Weak! Right? And the enemy wants to make a play for us based on that. Satan will accuse God of not being fair. Satan, according to the Bible, sits before God accusing us, and he's usually telling the truth, I think, about us. "Look how selfish he is. Look how prideful he is. Look how....." And we go, "Yeah, that's us." And I'm sure the Lord went, "Yep, that's him! To a tee. But, look, he's got 'imputed' righteousness. The blood of the Lamb cleanses him from all sin." Ohhhh. You lose. Satan doesn't want you to rely upon God's righteousness. He would rather you begin to accuse yourself of failure. And that's not hard to do, considering what he has to work with. How often have you heard, "Do you really believe enough? Do you think you have enough faith?" You're just going, "I don't know. I don't know. I'm so discouraged. I thought I believed. And last week I stopped believing, and now this week, I'd better believe again. I don't know....." And here's the enemy, just beating you over the head. Keep on the breastplate. God will convict you of sin to repent and turn back to Him, but Satan will seek to condemn you in sin, and the result is he'll drive you away from God. You want to know if it's the Lord or the devil? The Lord will convict you to pull you in, and Satan will lie to you to push you away. Satan will have other people accuse you. Ever had that happen? I'm sure you have.

B. Moses, Jesus and Job suffered the slander of others

Moses was accused of being a dictator. His brother and sister accused him of misusing his position and not sharing it. Jesus was accused of being a winebibber and demon-possessed, and there were false witnesses at His trial. Oh, the enemy man, he'll use whatever he can to get you to get off this breastplate. But keep it on! Given to me is eternal life through Jesus Christ. That's mine. You can't have it, and no one can take it from me. Right? So I'm good. In all of my struggles, I'm good. Now that doesn't mean I'm happy with my sinful ways, but I know that they don't affect my standing with God. He's working in me to make me more like Him. Turn to Jesus. He's your Intercessor. Remember, He's going to be the ultimate Judge. Paul said to the Corinthians, who were always after him it seemed, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself" (1 Corinthians 4:3). And I thought that was a cocky guy. But the next verse says, "For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord."

C. Satan will continue to accuse

And then he said to the Romans, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31) So, I'm good. Satan will seek to have circumstance support his lies that God hates you. How long did Job's counselors sit next to him and go, "You brought this on yourself, pal. Just cough up what sin was it that you did because I know you did something horrible. Horrible suffering, horrible sin. That's the way the universe works." These were his friends! Sort of. And they accused him constantly. And Job maintained his innocence because that wasn't the issue. But even his friends turned against him. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

So, be ready to move with truth. And then put on, by faith, this breastplate, and wear it. Don't take it off. Don't think, "I'm feeling pretty good today. I think I'll take it off." No. You'll get slammed. He's a bad guy. "Imputed" righteousness saved me. "Imparted" righteousness changes me and enables me to live for the Lord. They're not necessarily connected in the sense that you can drop the one and lose the other. It's because you have the one that you can do the other. So when Jesus says, in John 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand." I'm saying, "I'm good. You can get me when you can get Jesus out of the picture. Good luck with that. Let me know how that goes for you." So when the enemy comes in like a flood, God puts the standard up. I put the breastplate on. Who am I in Christ? It's important to know. Paul said to the Ephesians in chapter 1:6, "to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence." I'm good. And so are you, if you're saved. Can you remember that? The enemy's a liar, man. He's a liar. I know you're a failure. You know I am. It doesn't affect my salvation. Jesus died so I could be saved. Now you can start walking in that. "Oh, I'm going to do my best. I wonder if I prayed hard enough. I wonder if I did....." Shut up! (Laughing) Forget that stuff. Do your best. "Oh, I wonder if I prayed with enough faith. The grain of a mustard seed doesn't seem...." Shut up! Remember that this week. "Oh, pastor said, 'Shut up.' That was pretty much the whole message." (Laughing) Isn't that wonderful?!

I have to just keep it on - breastplate of righteousness; covering the heart, covering the emotions. Your feelings won't be moved if you keep it on. I can't begin to tell you how many people in our church, as well as the last church I worked, spend their entire life wondering about where they stand. "I wonder if I'm good enough. I wonder if I'm faithful enough. I wonder what happens when I show up. Oh, I hope I did good." And they're just beating themselves over the head, and then circumstances happen to go, "Oh, I know this is because I didn't do very good last night. I didn't pray long enough. I should have prayed five more minutes! Five more minutes!! I honked at the guy on the way home, and I know God's punishing me. Ahhhh!" Just nuts. Just shut up! Put on the breastplate. You're saved, right? You're saved! Now walk with God. You can't fail. You're saved! "I don't know if I can witness to people." Well go try! "Well it didn't work...." You're saved! Just be faithful. Step out. Let God use you. "What if I fail?" You can't fail. You're saved. "God will work in you to will and to do of

His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Let Him work. Quit running around with your heart exposed and your feelings hanging out. You can't do that! You will die. And you'll be the one who's in for counseling for four years, "Can I see someone else? I still don't feel good. Still don't feel good." You can feel just fine. You're in. Aren't you? You're in.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson

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