



THE BREASTPLATE... OUR PROTECTION

Last month we started looking at the armor of God from Ephesians 6:10-18. We saw that the belt of truth (biblical truth) is not only fundamental to the Christian life, but also foundational. The Word of God is absolutely essential to our growth and development as Christians.

This month let's look at the breastplate of righteousness. For the Roman soldier, this provided protection for the front and back and went down to the top of the thighs. Paul sees this as a picture of how at salvation we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

This is beautifully summed up in 2 Corinthians 5:20-21;

"Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

That is what we call positional righteousness which is in no one else but God. It is a perfect righteousness. So when God looks down on a child of God what He sees is a person clothed in the righteousness of God. Positional righteousness is how God sees us. Romans 5:19 *"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also, by one man's obedience many will be made righteous."*

The word "made" has the meaning of being in a permanent state or condition. This points towards the fact that once we become a child of God it is a permanent step that nothing or no-one can change.

It is important to recognize that part of being clothed in the righteousness of Christ, is the fact that we have no righteousness of our own. The apostle Paul constantly referred to himself with this in mind. In Romans 7:18 he says; *"For I know that in me (in my flesh) nothing good dwells..."* Again in 1 Timothy 1:15 he says; *"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."*

Literally Paul is openly declaring that he was the worst person who ever lived; in effect that we are all the worst person who ever lived. Whilst that is not great grammar, it is good theology nonetheless.

Isaiah put it a bit more bluntly when he said in chapter 64:6; *“But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”* So it is clear why we need to become born-again. In his book *Practicing the Presence of God*, Brother Lawrence stated it well when he said in a prayer; *“...left to myself Lord all I will ever do is sin.”*

By now I hope you have seen that we have no righteousness of our own, which is the reason why we need to be clothed in the righteousness of God. This sort of righteousness is not obtained by doing a whole series of legalisms. This righteousness is obtained by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

So once we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, this is validated by a practical righteousness. Stated simply, positional righteousness is clearly revealed in a changed life – practical righteousness. Paul once again says it so well: Philippians 1:10-11 *“...that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.”*

As stated before, positional righteousness is how God sees us, however, practical righteousness is how others see God in us. Practical righteousness is all about walking the talk. Sadly, many so-called decisions for Christ are not true commitments. Interestingly when Jesus gives His evangelism strategy to His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20 He says; *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...”*

Jesus’ clear instructions are to make disciples not obtain decisions. Disciples are disciplined followers of Jesus Christ. The word “make” is in the imperative, which means it is a command not an optional extra. As we walk with God in His Word, He promises to be with us to the end of the age.

Remember friends, positional righteousness will always be reflected in practical righteousness.

*By Carl Carmody
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