

speaking to God's people

freegiftfromgod

bible studies

Subject: The Armour of God – Pt 2 – The Breastplate of Righteousness

Scripture

Introduction

Commentary

Last time I spoke about the first of the pieces of the armour of God as described in Ephesians 6, which was to gird yourself with the truth. Today we will look at the second part of this armour, the breastplate of righteousness.

Righteousness is one of the key aspects of the New Covenant, particularly righteousness by faith. And there is much that we can see and learn from the description Paul uses when talking about it as a piece of armour.

When we think about armour we think about protection in a battle. We are at war in the spirit and so we must be equipped with the spiritual armour to wage this war. If we do not have the right armour and know how to use it, then we would be like those depictions of peasants running to fight tanks with pitchforks and shovels. We will have little or no hope of victory.

So let us begin to consider righteousness as a form of armour and what it can do for us in the battle we wage against the evil forces that surround us in the spiritual places.

Ephesians 6:14	<p>Paul instructs us in this scripture to:</p> <p><i>“...put on the breastplate of righteousness.”</i></p> <p>There is great meaning in this description. The breastplate of a soldier is a piece of equipment designed to protect the vital organs in the trunk of the body. In war if a weapon pierced the chest it is almost always fatal, especially if the heart was hit. In similar fashion if the devil can get into our heart and destroy it, it might be spiritually fatal. This is why the breastplate is used as an example of what righteousness represents in terms of the armour of God.</p>
1 John 3:21	<p>On this subject the Apostle John wrote the following.</p> <p><i>“Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God.”</i></p> <p>When we walk in condemnation we are not standing in the righteousness of God. When we condemn ourselves we are focussing on the errors of our ways rather than the righteousness of God that He has given us in Jesus Christ.</p> <p>It is a trap of the devil to try to drive us into self-condemnation, and if he manages to do that he has pierced the breastplate of righteousness. When we walk in condemnation the devil has taken away the breastplate of righteousness to leave our hearts unprotected and open to attack.</p> <p>This is why we must put on the breastplate of righteousness and hold onto it to defend against the attacks of Satan and his evil forces.</p>
Romans 5:17	<p>God has given us the free gift of righteousness without cost so that our hearts can stand sure and we can be protected against the evil one. Paul wrote:</p> <p><i>If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man</i></p>

	<p><i>Jesus Christ.</i></p> <p>Sin reigned through Adam and has been the cause of death down to this day. But in Jesus we have life through the free gift of God's righteousness, which we receive through faith.</p> <p>Abraham was reckoned righteous when he had faith and believed in God when he was told he would be the father of many nations, in spite of all the barriers that logic said was impossible.</p> <p>In the same way we have been reckoned righteous when we believe that God allowed Jesus to die for our sins and that he was resurrected for our righteousness. When we believe in Jesus Christ and His resurrection, and when we take on His death as our own through baptism, believing in the power of His death and resurrection to release us from sin, then God too reckons us righteous because we believed His word.</p> <p>How does the devil attack us? By putting doubts into our mind. By making us think that maybe it didn't happen as God said, that maybe we have not been set free from our sins and that maybe we are still in sin.</p> <p>But God says we are free from sin, dead to the law and the power of sin by taking on the death of Jesus as our own. And if we are no longer under sin, then we are righteous as Jesus is righteous. Not through anything we have done, but through believing in the power of God to overcome sin in Jesus Christ.</p>
Romans 3:20-26	<p>We now stand righteous before God in Jesus Christ. This is not achievable through works of the law but only through faith. Paul wrote:</p> <p><i>20 For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.</i></p> <p><i>21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it,</i></p> <p><i>22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction;</i></p>

*23 since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
24 they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,
25 whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show
God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins;
26 it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has
faith in Jesus.*

Here Paul shows us that no-one will be justified, which means to be made righteous, through works of the law for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. Sin is breaking the law or lawlessness as it says in 1 John 3:4.

But what we now see is that the righteousness of God is shown separate from the law. It is not based upon law at all but is based upon faith in Jesus Christ. And it is not received through doing anything, but is given as a free gift from God.

It had to be done this way for all of mankind was under the power of sin. God said in Romans 1 that he had given up on man because of his sin, and here he shows that all of mankind have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. So if God was to help man to overcome, He had to come up with a means by which he could overcome sin. He had to restore man to righteousness so that we could be in a place where he was able to help us. The method by which he did that is to just simply give us righteousness as a gift if we would believe in what he has done through Jesus Christ. There was no other alternative, as we could not become righteous through any other means.

Romans 5:1-2

God had to do it this way so that we had a chance to have the victory over sin and also be able to have protection against the arrows and barbs of the evil one. If we had been able to be righteous by our own strength then it could be taken away. But not even the devil can take away the gift of God.

And we also see God's wisdom in this section of scripture:

	<p><i>1 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.</i></p> <p>It is through faith that we have access to the righteousness of God and when we stand righteous the devil cannot overcome us. When we have the confidence to stand in the face of the devil who condemns us and we can say that we are righteous through Jesus Christ, there is nothing more the devil can do but try another tack. And he will try another tack, but fortunately the Lord has provided other armour and weapons through which we can fight his evil plans.</p>
Romans 10:3-4	<p>We must understand the keys to this breastplate of righteousness, what it means and how to use it. One of those keys is in this scripture which says:</p> <p><i>3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4 For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified.</i></p> <p>This righteousness comes from God as a free gift to those who believe in Christ. And in this righteousness we see the end of the law. We are no longer under the law when we accept the death and resurrection of Christ as our own, which we do through baptism in water.</p> <p>It is not possible to have the righteousness of God under the law & so it was necessary to remove the law, or rather, to remove us from the law. The law had to be removed for in it we are reminded of sin and it is the law that condemns us before God. Paul said in Romans 7:1 that “...<i>the law is binding on a person only during his life.</i>” Thus when a person dies, they die to the law.</p> <p>So when we die through taking on the death of Jesus in baptism, and when we are raised out of the waters of baptism, we truly are new creations, born again to live a new life in Jesus Christ. And we do this by faith, believing we are set free from sin and set free from the law. We can then receive the free gift of righteousness and have a righteousness not based upon works of law but on the truth in Jesus Christ.</p>

Galatians 2:11-21

The challenge we have in all of this and the stumbling block that the devil will throw up at us is how to live separated from the law. At times all of us will look at the law and feel that we must keep it and if we break it we are committing sin. Paul wrote about this issue to remind us that we are set free from the law and to remember this always.

Almost the whole of the letter of Paul to the Galatians was about this issue. The Galatian church had begun free from the law, but when some members of the circumcision party came to them they were teaching that the people had to be kept under law. Paul was aghast that they could accept this teaching which would take them back. He used some very strong words saying:

18 But if I build up again those things which I tore down, then I prove myself a transgressor.

19 For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God.

20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

21 I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose.

He shows that the issue occurs when WE build up those things that were torn down. When WE put ourselves back under law we are no longer living in the gospel of Jesus Christ but under the law of Moses. And as he concludes above, this nullifies the grace of God. Let me repeat. When we put ourselves back under the law of Moses we make the grace of God NULL and VOID and as Paul says, if justification (or righteousness) were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose. If we could be made righteous through the law then there was no reason for Christ to come and die for us for we would be able to be freed from sin. But the law cannot do that, which is why Christ came.

And just to drive home this point, Paul said in Galatians 5:4

“You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.”

	<p>Those who seek righteousness based upon keeping the works of the law have been cut off and severed from Christ. Christ is of no advantage to you if you are trying to live under the law and as it shows here, you have fallen away from the grace of God.</p> <p>Pretty serious stuff! Don't think for a moment that I am opposing what the law says for it is holy, just and good. But to come to Christ and to receive the righteousness from God based upon faith you must escape from the law.</p>
So what next?	<p>As I have mentioned, this is pretty serious stuff. A lot of this will be difficult for some of you to absorb, especially if you have come from a background where you are told you must keep the law of Moses. It is possible to live righteous before God apart from the law. And just because we are apart from it that does not mean we ignore it. We must uphold it, not because of fear of judgement or condemnation, but because our hearts tell us it is the right thing to do. And when a person is righteous, they do by nature what the law requires because they do what is right, just as Jesus did. And if people are righteous, there is no need for the law because they do what is right.</p> <p>All if this is possible and the process is well defined in the Bible as to how it all works. I cannot go into it now, but if you check the eBooks on my website you will find information that explains this process further.</p> <p>So now it's your turn. What would you like to add to this conversation? Send me an email (link below) or engage with me on Twitter (@JohnBLemmon) and let's have the discussion continue.</p> <p>Feel free also to send this to others so they can join the conversation, as there is so much more I could add, but then that leaves nothing for you to say. I hope this has added value to your own walk with Christ.</p>

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