

Sunday March 19th, 2006

Spiritual Warfare Series part 6

The Breastplate of Righteousness

1). Eph 6:10 ¶ *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 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. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-*

a). And it is interesting to note the armor of God being worn by God as recorded in - Isa 59:17 *For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, And was clad with zeal as a cloak.*

2). We will remember from last week that in order for us to put on the whole armor of God we must begin by having the belt of truth firmly in place.

a). This would be seen in having the same kind of determination and resolve as Joshua and Caleb at Kadesh Barnea in respect of our calling and our inheritance – taking the truth of what God has said about these things as the foundation for our race of faith - Php 3:13 *Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 ¶ Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind;*

b). And we also noted that to come to this kind of resolve we need a measure of maturity in understanding God's eternal plans and purposes.

c). Israel could not engage the enemy in the land of their calling until they had first been redeemed from the bondage of Egypt and then led by the Spirit to the borders of the land, being instructed into a mature knowledge regarding God's purpose for them.

d). And as we noted the same would be true for us – We have been redeemed from the bondage of sin and are being led by the Spirit to the land of our calling and while on this journey God desires to teach us all we need to know about the land and what it takes to get there through the ministry of Pastor/Teachers as they proclaim the gospel of the glory of Christ.

e). And once we have come to this place of maturity we must resolve to enter the conflict with the inhabitants of the land, according to God's instructions, being 'strong in the Lord and the power of His might'.

f). And as we noted with Israel last week, maturity does not of itself bring about resolve. Israel knew but still chose to believe something else.

g). Nu 13:30 *Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."*

3). Once we have the belt of truth firmly in place we are then able to attach the next piece of the armor, the breastplate of righteousness.

4). Now let us remember the reason for needing the armor –

a). Eph 4:14 *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

b). Eph 6:11 *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

c). Eph 6:13 *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.*

d). We need the armor then in order to stand against and have victory over the systematically organized plan of our enemy to overthrow us from the goal of our calling. A plan that is based upon deception.

5). To understand this a little more fully we can turn to the Book of Revelation and see the Church in judgment at the end of this dispensation recorded by the Apostle John, he having been transported in time and space to witness this event. This is what we find –

a). Ephesus - Re 2:4 *"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

b). Pergamum - Re 2:14 *"But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam.....15 "Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate*

c). Thyatira - Re 2:20 *"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.*

d). Sardis - Re 3:1b... ¶ *"I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2 "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.*

e). Laodicea - Re 3:17 *"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' --and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—*

f). Throughout the condemnatory remarks Christ makes to the Church we see the outworking of deception – from the leaving of their first love in Ephesus to the juxtaposition of the church's perception of itself and the reality of the Lord's perception, in Laodicea.

g). At some point then we see a turning away from the truth concerning our calling, which leads to the believing of the lie resulting in deception – the systematic plan of the enemy - 2Co 4:3 *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

h). The solution to this problem for those who would see is repentance, changing one's mind about that which God has said, exemplified for us in Christ's words to the Ephesian Church - Re 2:5 *"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works,*

6). And it is this concept of doing 'the first works' that brings us to the Breastplate of Righteousness.

7). We will have noted that our Ephesian scripture instructs us – Eph 6:14 *Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*

a). And what we will find significant here is that we are to put on the breastplate of righteousness. It is an action we are to do, as a result of our choice.

b). This being the case the righteousness referred to here cannot be the righteousness of Christ imputed to us at our new birth, as the reception of

this righteousness is based entirely upon the action of Another, completely apart from ourselves.

c). We can see this in the original type - Ge 3:21 ¶ *Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.*

d). The covering for sin given to Adam and Eve involved death and shed blood and was entirely the work of God. And for us also our covering for sin involves death and shed blood and is entirely the work of Christ – Ro 5:17 *For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of **the gift of righteousness** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)*

e). No, the righteousness we see in Ephesians 6:14 is akin to that we see in - Re 19:8 *And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

8). The righteousness spoken of here is in the plural form, hence 'righteous acts' – and shows us a process over time where numerous 'pieces of righteousness' if you will are accounted to us.

a). And such would be the same for the breastplate in Ephesians 6:14.

b). The gift of righteousness of Romans 5:17 is a one time, never to be repeated event, but the breastplate is made up of a continual process of righteous acts born out of faith.

Ro 1:17 *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

c). And it is no surprise that the righteousness of the breastplate would correlate with the fine linen of the Bride, as only those who have on the breastplate will be in a position to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, and it is the overcomers who will make up the Bride of Christ. The two really go hand in hand.

9). And in order to understand the righteous acts of the saints we need to go back to God's dealings with Abraham

a). Ga 3:6 ¶ *just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

b). And what exactly was it that Abraham believed God about?

c). Heb 11:17 *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.*

d). Abraham believed what God had said concerning Isaac in relation to the land and the inheritance and he then acted in accordance with what he believed demonstrating his faith in action.

e). *Jas 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.*

f). Not only did Abraham believe what God had said but he organized his life in accordance with what God had said.

g). And please note that what God had said related to a land, an inheritance and his descendants

h). His belief, his faith was accompanied by works – righteous acts – that brought his faith to a place of completion.

10). And exactly the same must be true for us - *1Th 5:8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.*

a). In other words once we have determined to go into the land and claim our inheritance, having put on the belt of truth in the likeness of Caleb and Joshua, we would then organize our life in such a way as to be faithfully obedient to all that God has said regarding the reward of the inheritance in the land of our calling. What we believe will be translated into action, good works, righteous acts within the scope of our calling, fulfilling our responsibility as a servant in the Lord's house. Doing this we will put on for ourselves the breastplate of righteousness, now, and will be preparing for ourselves the wedding garment that we will put on at a time yet future.

b). In fact it is only by having the determination to succeed, represented in the belt of truth that we will have the incentive to organize our lives in faithful obedience.

c). It is only by maintaining the belt of truth that we will sustain our faithfulness for the long haul. These two pieces of armor work in unison for our protection, to let either slip will open us to deception.

d). And the breastplate being described by faith and love in our Thessolonian scripture is completely consistent with this thought.

i/ Faith has to do with believing what God has said and we know that faith, after the new birth, must be accompanied by works.

ii/ And love is the Greek word *agape* which denotes sacrifice. Whether we see this as love for one another or love for God makes no difference as the result is the same – something of us must die for the benefit

of another. Particularly our flesh would need to die and this would be a righteous act emanating out of faith.

11). It is sobering to consider that the Christians in Ephesus to whom this great spiritual warfare passage is written, is rebuked at the Judgment Seat, as we saw, for leaving their first love.

a). They turned aside at some point from seeking the kingdom first, they were deceived, and pursued other things, while still of course retaining their function as a church.

b). And the Lord's admonition to them is to repent, to change their minds about what they are doing, and do the first works.

c). Note that – works – righteous acts – to get back to doing what they did when seeking the kingdom was fresh and new.

d). Where are we in the midst of this?

e). When scripture says we will need patience, perseverance, endurance, long suffering, those words are not there for rhetorical effect

f). Scripture admonishes us - Ga 6:9 *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

g). It is the breastplate that protects the heart.

h). Heb 10:35 *Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.*

12). Also note the church at Sardis who had a name that they were alive, but as far as the Lord was concerned they were dead.

a). And why? Because their works were not perfect/not complete before God. Their faith had not been brought to its goal.

b). They had believed what God had said, but this had not translated into works. And what did James say in relation to the salvation of the soul? - Jas 2:20 *But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?*

13). The breastplate of righteousness does not exist apart from faith and works and neither faith nor works can exist apart from the word of God,

2Ti 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. And the word specifically as it relates to our calling and the land of our inheritance. It is essential if we are to have victory over our enemy. Without it we cannot be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

a). Church let us make sure even now, that we have the breastplate of righteousness firmly in place.