

Sunday, June 30, 2013—The Battlefield of the Mind—The Breastplate of Righteousness

### **Introduction/Review**

- II Corinthians 10:4—last week in our study titled *The Belt of Truth* we began looking at the spiritual nature of our weapons by considering the first piece of armor the belt of truth.
- Ephesians 6:14—Paul instructs us to “stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” In modern times we might call this your mid-section, trunk, six-pack, or core. Anatomically speaking this region of the body is comprised of layers of muscles that allow the body to move from side to side as well as up and down. In other words they are foundational for all body movement.
- I Peter 1:13—Peter tells his readers to gird of the loins of their mind. Likewise Paul is not primarily speaking about a physical belt that goes about one mid-section because the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. Paul also wants us to girt up the loins of our minds, to fortify our minds with the truth of God. Our minds need to be girt, cinched, and reinforced with the truth.
- Ephesians 6:14—in this context it is safe to say that Paul’s general use of the word truth refers to those truths revealed to him for the church the body of Christ during the dispensation of Grace. Paul uses the word truth 50 times in 48 verses, so there are many aspects or categories of the truth we could have talked about from the Pauline perspective but we chose to speak about the following three: Paul’s gospel, the believer’s security, and the believer’s hope.
- Galatians 2:14—if someone has a problem in their core area it will not allow them to walk uprightly. We don’t want our spiritual belts pulled so tight that we become spiritual legalists. Sometimes throughout the day we may need to readjust our belts.

### **The Breastplate of Righteousness**

- Ephesians 6:14—the next piece of armor that Paul address is the breastplate of righteousness. Paul Sadler in his commentary on Ephesians states the following regarding the breastplate, “The breastplate is to be put on and never removed, as implied by the phrase “having on.”
- The breastplate was designed to protect a soldier’s vital organs namely the heart and lungs. If damage was done to these organs it most often would proved fatal to the soldier.
- The breastplate of a Roman soldier was the most glamorous, shiniest, and beautiful piece of the Roman soldier’s armor. The first thing you noticed on the Roman soldier was his breastplate. It was made of either bronze or brass, usually brass and started from his neck and went all the way down to his knees. It was composed of two different pieces of metal one went down the front the other down the back with the two pieces being held together with brass rings on top of the shoulders. Quite often the larger pieces of metal that covered the front and the back were made up

of smaller scale like pieces of metal similar to the scales of a fish. This was the heaviest piece of the Roman soldier's armor weighing 40 lbs (18kg) or more.

- The breastplate was extremely beautiful and elaborate. As the Roman soldier would walk too and fro some wonderful things would happen the metal pieces would rub together giving a luster to each other making them even shinier. Brass when exposed to sunlight shines and sparkles especially fine brass. When the Roman soldier would walk around and the sun's rays would reflect off his breastplate it would present a dazzling spectacle. So the beauty of the Roman soldier's breastplate was enhanced by using it if he had stored it away in a dark room it would have been beautiful simply because it was made out of brass. But by walking in it, and using it, the breastplate became more and more beautiful with time. Have you ever been riding in a car when a piece of metal on the side of the road glared the sunlight into your eyes? Can you imagine the Roman soldier's breastplate as he walked out of a house into the daylight what a rainbow of color show about when the sunlight hit his breastplate. What do you think it was like when a whole legion of Roman soldiers was assembled together?
- Just as a Roman soldier would wear a breastplate to protect his vital organs, Paul tells us that righteousness serves as the believer's breastplate to protect our vital organs against the wiles of the devil.
- When it comes to defining what kind or type of righteousness Paul has in mind here the commentators cannot agree. While they all agree it is not self-righteousness, some see it as imputed righteousness while others see it as practical righteousness.
- Regarding the imputed righteousness view Sadler states, "Some have suggested it is the "imputed righteousness of God" that is received upon conversion (II Cor. 5:21). This righteousness, however, is never said to be put on, suggesting that it could be taken off."
- Meanwhile, Ernest Campbell seems to disagree with Sadler when he argues based upon the Greek tense translated "having on" "that believers are to be those who have put on the breastplate of righteousness." This implies that Paul does have imputed righteousness in mind not practical righteousness.
- Sadler argues for the practical righteousness view when he writes, "We believe the breastplate is a practical righteousness which emanates from the new nature that is said to be "created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:24)." The breastplate has to do with our morality, that is, performing that which is right by living a life of good works. . . The breastplate of righteousness is a safeguard against the enemy's attempts to discredit us and the message we proclaim.
- For the record, Keith Blades and H.A. Ironside seem to agree with Sadler that Paul has practical righteousness in mind when speaking about the breastplate.
- In order to try and understand what is going on here I would like to focus on the word breastplate for awhile. The word breastplate occurs 28 times in 24 verses in the King James Bible. Twenty

five of those times are in reference to the breastplate of Israel's high priest and they don't have anything to do with righteousness.

- Exodus 25:7—the first time the word breastplate occurs in your Bible it is used in connection with Israel's tabernacle and religious system of the law.
- Exodus 28:1-4—the breastplate was one of the holy garments that those who ministered in the priest's office would wear.
- Exodus 28:15—the breastplate of the high priest is specially called the breast plate of judgment.
- Exodus 28:16-21—twelve stones were to be set into the breastplate of judgment one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Exodus 28:29-30—when Aaron the high priest entered into the holy of holies he bore the sins of the nation and the breastplate of judgment protected his heart from the judgment of God upon the sins of the nation.
- Ephesians 6:14—we are to have on the breastplate of righteousness because our sin issue has been settled and judgment and justice have been satisfied by the word of Christ. The word righteousness occurs 64 times in 57 verses in Paul's Epistles.
- II Corinthians 11:3—remember that the winds of doctrine are designed to corrupt our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ. The winds of doctrine are going to say and do to primary things: 1) complicate matters, 2) cause you to think that Christ is not enough.
- I Corinthians 1:30—Christ is our righteousness. Just as Christ was the truth last week when we studied the belt of truth, this week we learn that Christ is our righteousness.
- II Corinthians 5:21—we have already been made the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.
- Romans 3:21-25—God is now in the righteousness business. He declaring his righteousness and that sin has been dealt with and paid by the sacrifice of his son Jesus Christ.
  - Hebrews 9:26—Christ “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”
- The breastplate of rightness is our defense against the following three questions.
  - Romans 8:33—Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?
  - Romans 8:34—Who is he that condemneth?
  - Romans 8:35—Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Remember that the breastplate of judgment stood between, separated, and protected the heart of the high

priest as he entered into the holy of holy to offer sacrifice for the sins of the nation.  
When did the breastplate of judgment become the breastplate of righteousness?

- Isaiah 59:1-2—Israel's iniquities separated them from God. Just as the breastplate of judgment protected the heart of the high priest. Israel needed to have the judgment and justice of God against their sin satisfied. Notice the contrast here between Israel's condition and Paul's third questions in Romans 8:35.
- Isaiah 59:12-16—when the Lord looks at Israel's condition it displeased him because there was no intercessor there was no way for judgment to be satisfied. Therefore, in verse 16 the Lord himself is going to have to take up for Israel and for her what she could not do for herself.
- Isaiah 59:17—the Lord Jesus Christ put on righteousness as a breastplate and contended for Israel. Upon the cross Christ suffered the judgment of God against sin and stratified the offended justice of God. It is here the breastplate of judgment became the breastplate of righteousness.
- I think that the breast plate of righteousness is the imputed righteous of Jesus Christ. In Christ no one can lay anything to our charge, condemn us, or separate of form the love of Christ. It is righteousness of God manifest at Calvary that once and for all time defeated the adversary. Therefore, I know it will allow me to stand against the wiles of devil now as we withstand in the evil day.