

The Armor of God: BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

.. having put on the breastplate of righteousness. — Ephesians 6:14 NKJV

The breastplate covers the chest. In our case the breastplate is made not of iron but of righteousness. A soldier with his breastplate on goes boldly into battle full of confidence. Righteousness allows us to stand before God, men and demons.

While the belt of truth shows you what is yours and what you can do, the breastplate of righteousness allows you to utilise what is yours. Without the breastplate of righteousness our faith would be like any mere religion – a form of godliness but no power to act. Satan would knock us down with one word of condemnation. Nor would we have the boldness to go before the throne room of God's grace.

What is the breastplate of righteousness?

To be righteous is to have a right standing with God. It is being justified and free of condemnation.

Righteousness is two fold. Firstly, it is imputed to us: this means something we are given free of charge without effort. This gives us the right to stand before God and speak to him as if we were sinless. Secondly righteousness is imparted into us: this means something that Christ works in us and with our cooperation. This grants us the inner strength to live and conduct ourselves in a manner that is pleasing to God.

Imputed righteousness

This is righteousness God puts on us. It is not earned but given. Let scripture explain.

- Romans 4:6-7 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 7 "Blessed [are those] whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; (NKJV)
- Romans 5:1-2 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (NKJV)
- Romans 3:21-25 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth [as] a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, (NKJV)

Abraham, in the Old testament, believed God and God considered this righteousness. In other words, God treated Abraham as if he had done nothing wrong simply because of Abraham's faith in Him.

This is sometimes hard for us to comprehend. That all our sins are forgiven and all our unrighteousness deeds are not held against us. We can come boldly to God as if we had done nothing wrong. God makes us right with Him simply because we believe and accept as ours the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins.

But this is only part of the story. Righteousness goes further than that. Imputed righteousness is the first investment of God into our life. It is something given to us to get us going. Treat it like a permanent grant. It comes with some expectations attached. The expectation is that you invest it to make your own profit. In this case imparted righteousness.

Imparted righteousness

This is what Christ is working in us with our cooperation. While imputed righteousness gives you the boldness and access into His presence. His presence gives you the power to change your life and put sin away from your life. It imparts something of God into you. This has always been God's ambition.

Let the scripture explain.

- Jeremiah 31:33-34 “But this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts;** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 “No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (NKJV)

The life and power of Christ changes us gradually into His likeness.

- 2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (NKJV)

God wants us to live holy lives. Not walking in sin or compromising our faith. The power of Christ inside you equips you to do this. As you submit yourself to the leading and power of the Holy Spirit sin will no longer have dominion over you.

The person who intends to be a Christian must keep the power of holiness and righteousness in his or her life and conduct. Have the breastplate of righteousness and ‘keep it on’.

The following scripture from Romans 8 sheds more light on this

- Romans 8:1-11 [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. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God [did] by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,
- 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those [who live] according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded [is] death, but to be spiritually minded [is] life and peace.
- 7 Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.
- 10 And if Christ [is] in you, the body [is] dead because of sin, but the Spirit [is] life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (NKJV)

Christ’s death on the cross washed away our sins and made us right with God. This allowed the Holy Spirit to come and live within us.

The Holy Spirit within us now gives us the life and power to live above sin. He imparts in you godly living. This is the breastplate of righteousness.

Imputed righteousness is what Christ gives to you the believer. The justification which let’s us stand righteous before God. This is called the righteousness of God. Imparted righteousness is what Christ is working in you now with your cooperation. You have the power to consciously live above sin – to conduct your life in a way that is pleasing to God.

Righteousness is God’s double sided protection for the Christian. It defends our conscience from all the wounds inflicted by past sin and failures and also keeps us from the constant array of temptations and lust that desire to inflict more harm on us.

How to put on the breastplate of righteousness?

Putting on the breastplate of righteousness is something we do consciously. Become aware of who you are in Christ Jesus. Come boldly into His presence (Hebrews 4:16). Don’t cringe in His presence. Accept the truth that Christ has

made you a pleasure in the presence of God. Expect Him to hear your prayer. Change your attitude and relationship with God in the light of what Christ has done for you.

Next, allow Christ to work His life and Will in you. Allow His Holy Spirit to give you the power to live above sin. Do this and you wear the breastplate of righteousness