

STAND – Part 2

Eph. 6:14

Battle of Quebec...

Parallel to the Christian life. Our Battle of Quebec occurs when we first believe. By faith we appropriate that which Christ accomplished for us at Calvary, when he shed his blood, averting God's wrath from those who would believe, and purchasing our redemption. We do that through faith, when we put our trust in Christ and in him alone.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Eph. 2:8,9

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. Eph. 1:13,14

As a result, we find statements such as we have in Romans 8:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
Rom. 8:1

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. 8:38-39

So right there in Romans 8 Paul is telling us that rulers (referring to spiritual rulers, invisible forces of darkness) will attempt to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, but they will be unsuccessful because we now find ourselves to be in Christ.

So we've got that established; we're saved; no condemnation; members of God's household; sealed with the Holy Spirit. But then what? What do we do after we've put our faith in Christ? Even though the spiritual counterpart to the Battle of Quebec may have occurred in your life, there are still stubborn pockets of resistance where the enemy continues his assaults, there is much territory that still needs to be reclaimed from the enemy and have the flag of Christ's rule and reign hoisted up the pole. The victory that was accomplished at the cross and initially applied to our lives when we first believed now becomes instrumental as we live out our new lives of faith in Christ in a world which continues to be inhabited, not just by pockets of resistance, but by the arch enemy himself, who has no intentions of letting up or giving in.

So that's the reality, and that's why, if you are a follower of Christ, you need to be put on the armor of God daily and continue to do so until the Lord takes you from here or returns. Last week, we looked at the belt of truth...

Last week: BELT OF TRUTH

BREASTPLATE OF RIIGHTEOUSNESS

The breastplate covered the front of the body and generally extended from the base of the neck to the upper part of the thighs. It was a tough, sleeveless vest, often made of leather or heavy linen, onto which were sewn overlapping slices of either animal hooves or horns or pieces of metal, like chain mail. Some were made of large pieces of metal molded and hammered out to conform to the individual soldier's body, custom-fit. The purpose of the breastplate should be fairly obvious. Heart, lungs, internal organs.

In ancient Jewish thinking, the heart represented the mind and the will, and the bowels were considered the seat of emotions and feelings, and other internal organs were associated with the conscience and the will. So for them, putting on the breastplate had to do with protecting the mind and the emotions, as well as secondarily the conscience and the will. Now think about it for a second: what are the two primary areas where Satan most frequently and most fiercely attacks us? I think it's the mind and the emotions. He wants to get at our thoughts and our feelings. If he can confuse us mentally, or create doubt or get us to buy into lies, cloud our minds with false doctrine and false principles and false information, if he can get us to buy into lies about forgiveness and meaning and purpose and significance in life, lies about who we are and our relationship with God, anything mental; and if he can disrupt our emotions, get us all stirred up inside, mess with our affections, fill us with anger, jealousy, suspicion, bitterness, fear, despondency, guilt, feelings of failure, whatever it might be, and get that emotion to control us, he's got us where he wants us. He's sidelined us and we're out of commission, maybe for a day, maybe for a week, maybe longer.

Paul says that for the child of God, our protection is the breastplate of righteousness. So what is it exactly?

Some say it's our personal integrity. But this can't be the case. Not that we're against personal integrity; God calls for us to be people of integrity, upright, honest. If you think that by relying on your own character, honesty, morality, goodness is going to be enough for you to withstand the schemes of the evil one, you are either spiritually proud or foolish or both. I don't stand before God in my own righteousness, so why would I think that I could with the devil? The enemy can quite easily stand against us when we attempt to stand against him and the forces of evil in our own integrity, in our own righteousness.

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord was standing by. Zechariah 3:1-5

In his vision, he sees Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord. It doesn't say so, but it probably took place in the remembered or anticipated temple in Jerusalem, where Joshua would be performing his functions as priests. And as he

performed his important function of representing the people before God, Satan appeared to accuse him. We're told that Joshua was clothed in filthy clothes, representing his and the people's sin, and Satan was probably pointing to those and declaring rather forcefully that Joshua had no right standing before the Lord as high priest because he was unfit for the job. Imagine how Joshua the high priest would have felt at this point. "The devil's right. I'm not worthy to be a high priest. I'm a sinful man. I've made so many mistakes in my lifetime. I am unrighteous." And what happens? Joshua didn't say anything. Presumably he had nothing to say. He was sinful and being sinful, he was unworthy. But here's the great thing: God spoke, and his words were a rebuke to Satan.

This is the picture of salvation presented by the clothing of Joshua in clean garments. I would guess that Zechariah had various scriptures in mind when he received this vision:

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags. Isaiah 64:6

Isaiah speaks of the Messiah being clothed with righteousness:

Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. Isa. 11:5

He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head. Isa. 59:17

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. Isaiah 61:10

Last week we sang The Solid Rock:

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.

Two important terms:

- Imputed righteousness
- Imparted righteousness

Imputed righteousness:

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Cor. 5:21

God took our sins and imputed, put them on, his Son, charged them to his account. That's what imputation means – that you take something that belongs to one person and you put it to the account of another. That's what God has done with our sins. He has imputed our sins to his Son and has punished them in Him.

But that's not the end of it. I mean, that's great and all because it leaves me with my debt canceled. You owed somebody \$10,000 and now you don't owe them anything.

But that's not enough. Because before I can stand in the presence of God, I must be positively righteous, because God is light and in him is no darkness at all. So as I put my faith in his Son, God imputes Christ's righteousness, his perfect observance of God's requirements, God's law to me. So when God looks upon me, he doesn't see me in my filthiness, he sees the righteousness of his Son, Jesus Christ, covering me. And as he looks at me and sees me clothed in the righteousness of Christ, God pronounced me to be righteous.

It is the full recognition, reliance, and acceptance of this truth that now becomes my breastplate of righteousness, so that when the accuser comes, and he will in a hundred different ways, as he did against Job and against Joshua the high priest and against the apostle Peter when Jesus says that the devil wanted to sift him, so he will come against you. And it will be with the breastplate of Christ's imputed righteousness that you will take your stand against the devil.

Imparted Righteousness:

If we stop with imputed righteousness, I am clothed and covered by the righteousness of Christ, and that is what makes me a Christian; that's the foundation, absolutely essential. But God doesn't stop even there. He now begins to work in me the righteousness of his Son. He imparts it to me, he makes it a part of me, works it into me. It's not only put upon me as a cloak or a covering, it is also infused into me.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Philipians 2:12,13

So the righteousness of Christ not only covers me, it has also been imparted to me, implanted, infused in me. So I am now able to work out my salvation, work out the righteousness of Christ that comes with my salvation, through good works which God prepared in advance for me to do. And as I do this, it is not me, it is not anything for which I can boast or take credit or feel self-righteous. Any and all good works which proceed from my life are because of the righteousness of Christ that has been imparted to me, for it is God who works in me, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Conclusion: