***The Full Armor of God - The Breastplate of Righteousness

The Suffering of Spiritual Combat, No. 5 - PH31-01

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 1:28-30***

We have been looking at the passage in Ephesians 6:10-18 which had been explaining to us the spiritual armor which God has provided for every believer for engaging in the spiritual warfare against the demonic angels here in Satan's world. You'll recall that the first item that we looked at was called the belt of truth. We tried to show how this is Bible doctrine which is stored in the Christian's human spirit by means of the grace system of perception. We have indicated to you that it is the first duty of every Christian to put on this part of God's armor, and it takes time to do this. This is not something you are born with. It takes time to put on the belt of truth.

It is not unusual, even within circles of the ministry itself, to hear ministers who will express a great esteem for the Word of God; will explain to people how very vital and important the Word of God is; and, who will say it is the supremely significant thing in our lives, yet you may have had the experience of discovering that after all was said and done, the one thing you didn't hear in that service was the Word of God explained, even though you may have heard considerable expression on how important the Word of God is.

So the reason that we have gone over this in such detail is to try to give you what I trust now is a practical usable technique for your entering into the building of your own belt of truth. That's your first duty. The second item that we look at, followed by the belt of truth, He calls the breastplate of righteousness. This is also a piece of armor which must be put on before you can experience God's purpose of standing victoriously during this period of the angelic conflict. Again, it is quite useless for us to talk in terms that are perhaps challenging or poetic. The breastplate of righteousness seems very poetic and impressive. However, unless we can convert that to usable information and usable understanding, it will do us little good.

**The Breastplate of Righteousness**

So, now, in verse 14, he says, "And having on the breastplate of righteousness." This is the next piece of armor. So, let's take a look and see what the Greek language, first of all, says. It says, "Having on," which is the Greek word "enduo." "Enduo" is in the aorist tense. The aorist tense indicates a point of preparation for the battle. This is an action of many pieces of effort on your part to prepare yourself for the battle. That preparation involves the putting on of this breastplate. It is in the middle, indicating that you benefit by putting on this breastplate. When you pursue the steps that we have outlined for you in the grace system of learning God's viewpoint, you personally benefit by that. It is a participle which is a statement of fact.

We must connect the fact here, as a point of grammar, that it is in the Greek Bible an aorist participle, and an aorist participle indicates to us that this has to take place before you can do the main thing that the sentence calls upon you to do. That's the very first word in verse 14, which is, "Stand." Do not be defeated in the angelic conflict, but be victorious in the angelic conflict. Don't just happen to scrape by and be neutral, but be a victorious conquering believer.

The aorist participle says that before you can stand victoriously and not be a spiritual casualty in the age of grace, you have to have on the belt of truth. That also is an aorist participle which comes first. Then you have to have on the breastplate of righteousness. Because it is aorist participle, that means it comes before the victory is possible.

**Breastplate**

The thing that you put on is called a breastplate. The Greek has the word "thorax," meaning that which protects the chest area. It covers the area of vital organs in physical combat. It is attached to the belt of truth. In a Roman soldier's equipment, his breastplate was attached to his belt by leather thongs. The major piece of the Roman soldier's protection in battle was the thorax. The breastplate was his major protection in the face of the enemy. It was like what we might call today a bulletproof vest.

Some of you may have read in the paper. I think it was a San Francisco policeman who was kidded by the rest of the men on the force because he was just a patrolman. He was a traffic cop, and he always would show up for duty, and he'd wear a bullet proof vest. A couple of weeks ago, he pulled up to somebody who was speeding; flashed the light; pulled him over; got out of the car; walked over; started to ask for the driver's license; and, found a pistol pointed at him and the trigger being pulled. Nobody on the San Francisco force makes fun of him anymore now for coming to work with his "thorax" on, because he's alive, and he probably would have been dead because of some nut who started firing at him when he walked up to ask for his driver's license.

That is a vital protective piece of a Roman soldier's military gear, and we must convert that with equal importance to the Christian soldier's gear. You have to understand what the "thorax" is. You will not survive in the spiritual combat without it. You are surrounded by this angelic demonic host. They are firing at you all the time. You will be defeated. You will be torn apart internally with all the relationships of your life brought into some disastrous end--even those that you think are going great, unless you have this protection.

This is frightful. Please remember that we don't just want to survive. The point is to be able to fight and win. The Word of God does not condone the United States military policy of fighting to lose. The policy of the Word of God is fight to win. That's what the Greek word "stand" means. We could go to the average Christian today and say, "Christian, one of the most important items for you to survive, and for you to be able to serve victoriously, is the breastplate of righteousness." If you would ask him to explain what the breastplate of righteousness is, he would be hard-pressed to convert that into practical usable terms to you. That's what we were hoping to be able to do in this session.

**Positional Truth**

This breastplate is described specifically in terms of righteousness--the breastplate of righteousness--which is the Greek word "dikaiosune." This is not a reference to the righteousness of Christ which is imputed to the believer at the point of salvation. As all of you, I'm sure, understand, the moment that you receive Christ as your personal Savior, and the moment that you breathe out faith toward him, several things take place in your life, one of which is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The moment you believe in Christ as Savior, you are baptized by God the Holy Spirit into Christ, the Bible says. This means that you are joined, you are placed in union with the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13 describes that for us. This union places you in God's sight in His Son. This means that everything that Jesus Christ is now accrues to your credit. Because you are in Christ, you now, in the sight of God, possess the righteousness of Christ. This is positional truth.

2 Corinthians 5:21, for example, spells that out to us in very specific terms when it says, "For He has made Him (God the Father made God the Son) who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." How are you and I made the righteousness of God? Well, obviously not in our practice. We are not perfect people in our practice. Yet, we do have the righteousness of Jesus Christ at this moment. If you are a Christian, you've got it now. This is positional truth. Because of our position in Christ, we have this righteousness. So at salvation, you and I not only have our sins forgiven, but we also have the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to our credit. That's called justification.

Paul is speaking here in Ephesians 6:14 to those who are already in Christ. You'll notice that in verse 10, in beginning this passage about the Christians armor, he says, "Finally, my brethren." So, in this passage he's talking to Christians. Here he is telling Christians to put on the breastplate of righteousness. If they are Christians, they already possess the righteousness of Christ in their position in Christ. Therefore, he cannot be speaking about positional righteousness. He is not speaking about putting on the perfect standing in the sight of God that an unbeliever needs to put on. This is what an unbeliever needs to do. He needs to put on the righteousness of Christ relative to God looking at him and see no sin in him.

This is a different kind of righteousness. He cannot put this righteousness on again. You only put the righteousness of Christ relative to salvation on once. This is a righteousness related to your lifestyle. In other words, it is right living. It is a living situation which reflects your positional righteousness. It is righteousness that you can put on by yourself. You can decide to do right. You can decide to do wrong. You can do that which is right in the sight of God, and thus reflect your positional righteousness. Or you can choose that which is wrong in the sight of God, and thus not reflect your positional righteousness.

So what we are talking about here is righteousness as a quality of right living. The old English spelling for righteousness was "rightwiseness." That's how the word used to be spelled in Old English. It became "righteousness" in time, but the idea is doing what is right in your daily practice. Righteousness is the truth of Bible doctrine in the human spirit. That's the belt of truth expressed in right actions. Another word that the Bible uses for this is godliness. That's what he's speaking about in terms of a breastplate of righteousness. He's talking about your personal godliness. This is what the apostle Paul means in 1 Timothy 6:3: "If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words (that is, to sound doctrine), even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness." This is a doctrine which produces godliness. There is some doctrine which does not produce godliness. There is some doctrine which does not produce "rightwiseness." It does not produce right living. That is doctrine of demons.

However, there is a doctrine which does produce right living. This is the same thing you have in 1 Timothy 4:8 also: "For bodily exercise profits little, but godliness is profitable unto all things having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." It is good to exercise physically, but godliness (right conduct in your living) is the thing that counts on a long term basis. You may be all out of shape physically, but when you get all out of shape spiritually, that's when you're really in trouble (for whatever comfort that may be to some of us).

2 Peter 1:3 says, "According as His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that called us to glory and virtue." Here you notice that godliness (righteousness, right living, and right practices) is connected with knowledge. This is knowledge of Him. This is the doctrinal information that we get from the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, the breastplate of righteousness is something very very specific. It is practicing righteousness. A Christian can take steps to put this kind of practicing righteousness on himself, but he does this as a result of maturing spiritually. An immature Christian can never live right. An immature Christian does not have the breastplate of righteousness on him. Therefore, he cannot live according to that which is godliness (standards of godliness). He simply cannot express right living.

Now he can go along with a kind of a pseudo godliness. This looks pretty good until he comes to a point of temptation and testing. Then, unless he's got the spiritual maturity which constitutes the breastplate of righteousness, he will break down and reveal that he cannot make right choices. He cannot live right.

**The Spiritual Maturity Structure**

So, the breastplate of spiritual righteousness for spiritual combat may be viewed as the spiritual maturity structure of the soul that we have referred to. This is a pentagon of maturity in the soul. We have indicated that the Bible tells us that a Christian who has grown up spiritually will have five basic things that will be true of him.

1. He will have a grace orientation.
2. He will have a relaxed mental attitude which means he will be free of mental attitude sins and bitterness.
3. He will have a mastery of the details of life. He will be able to control material things. He'll be just as godly a man when God is prospering him with money as when he's broke.
4. He will have a capacity to love. This means that he will have a "phileo" capacity to love (a soul capacity).
5. He will also have an inner happiness which is not based on any external factors.

The spiritual maturity in the soul will result in right actions. That is the breastplate of righteousness.

So, for a moment let's take a look here at this business of getting to be a mature Christian. The Bible, in describing maturity, uses the word "edification." Spiritual maturity is described by the word "edification," and there are several forms of the word "edification" that I want to call your attention to, because they tell us something about how to go to spiritual maturity, and thereby how to secure the "thorax" of righteousness.

**Edification**

1. The first word is the word "oikodome." "Oikodome" refers to the act of building a structure. It is a process of construction. You have this in several places in the Bible. You have it, for example, in Ephesians 4:12. Paul says, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the working of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." There it is building as a process. It is a procedure of erecting a structure. Ephesians 4:16 also uses that: "From whom the whole body fitfully joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." The body of Christ builds up gradually by a process. Ephesians 4:29 says, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, to the process of building spiritually that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

This word "edification" comes from two Greek words. It comes from the word "oikos" which means "house," and from "domeo," the verb, which means "to build." So, the idea of edification in the Bible is the idea of building something. The Greek word "edification" means to build something, or to erect some kind of a structure. For that reason, we call spiritual maturity the spiritual maturity structure of the soul, because that's what the Greek word itself means. It is a process of building a spiritual maturity structure for right living or godly actions.

1. There's another form of this word "edification," and it's "oikodomia." "Oikodomia" means the result of the construction--the thing that you put up--the building. For example, we have this in 1 Timothy 1:4 where Paul says, "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies which minister questions rather than godly edifying, which is in faith, so do." Godly edifying here is the result of a construction. He says don't be talking about things and arguing about things which do not end up with a spiritual maturity building in your soul. You also have this in James 1:4: "But let patients give her perfect work that you may be perfect, edified, in entire lacking nothing."
2. Then there is a third variation of the word "edify" and it's "oikodomos." "Oikodomos" means the builder, which in the spiritual maturity structure, is God the Holy Spirit. He is the builder. We have this in Acts 4:11: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which has become the head of the corner." There you have the builder of the spiritual maturity structure, the "oikodomos." These are the people who are putting the building together, or they are the edifiers. Now here are the 3 words. "Edification" in the Bible means building a spiritual maturity structure. It can refer, first of all, to the act of building; it can refer to the thing that you build--the structure; or, it can refer to the builder itself. The word is used to emphasize those various facets.

Here is the thing that we're dealing with. We start with the grace system of perception. We won't explain that again. You understand that. From the grace system of perception results the belt of truth. You have put on the belt of truth because you have taken advantage of the grace system of perception. You've used the grace system of perception; you've got a belt of truth; and, out of that evolved the spiritual maturity structure of the soul which is called here the breastplate of righteousness. Now that's the connection. The grace system of perception gives you the belt of truth, and from the belt of truth comes the breastplate of righteousness, or the spiritual maturity structure in your soul. In Ephesians 4:12-13, we have the description of the breastplate of righteousness in terms of spiritual maturity. First you put on through the grace system of perception the belt of truth, then comes the breastplate of righteousness. Without the grace system, you can't secure the "epignosis" that you need in order to store the truth in your human spirit which constitutes the belt of truth. Remember that the belt of truth is "epignosis" in the human spirit. If you haven't done that, you can't go on to the next stage of putting on this breastplate of righteousness.

You cannot build this spiritual maturity structure that we have talked about through any kind of experience. This is the way Satan hits this factor. So, what does the Christian do? He thinks, "Well, it's a matter of experience. It's a matter of some kind of experience, but an experience of inspiration will not build spiritual maturity. So, what does he do? Summertime comes along. You can pick up any kind of Christian periodical and you'll see ads on Family Christian Conferences up here in the cool hills of Colorado. What do you do? You say, "That's what I need. I need the experience of getting out there in the inspiration of the cool hills of Colorado so I can build some spiritual maturity structure. So, you hustle yourself up there with your family; you sit there; you sit around the campfire in the evening; you listen to the challenges; you throw a stick on the fire as a commitment to the Lord; and, you come back as empty as when your left.

A man recently related to me a serious family problem. The first thing he said to me was, "I've got to go home and do a lot of self-crucifixion. I just collapsed inside in horror over what the poor man was going to do to try to solve a problem. He was a casualty before my eyes in the spiritual combat. He didn't know that the reason he was a casualty was not because he lacked some experience, but because he lacked a degree of the breastplate, and Satan had gotten to him through a member of his family. Self-crucifixion is never going to do it.

Neither is going to some great big rally. Have you ever noticed how excited people get about a rally? Here comes a big religious speaker to town and rents out a big stadium. The advertising is put out. Have you noticed this? When the big name religious leader is here, the smart business people in town get on the air and they give ads on the radio to associate Mrs. Loveless's Sweetheart Soap with this evangelist. They're taking advantage of his presence. Do you know what they know? They know that this guy's going to come to town. They know that cars are going to be parked all over the countryside, and there are going to be sincere people that are going to go rushing here to this stadium to sit here on the seat and listen to this great great speaker of the Word of God. Then they know that it's going to click along for a few days, and then the rally is going to be over. The cars are going to be gone. He's going to be gone. He's going to be out of town. His crew is going to be gone, and all that's going to be left there is the debris like after a big rock concert. That's really what's left.

You do not get anywhere in a breastplate of righteousness so that you will do right living on the basis of inspiration; challenge; self-crucifixion; any ecstatic experience that you may have had of any kind; any big rally that you attended; or, any spiritual retreat you go to. Just get over that notion, and you'll do yourself a great service. Somebody recently said to me how some fellow was very proud that a large number of his fellow church members had all gone to a big rally together, and he was so pleased. He thought something spiritual had been accomplished. The poor guy didn't realize that these short-term bursts are just absolutely nothing. Yet, it is easy to get people to get excited over a short-term spiritual binge, and Satan says, "Go to it buddy. That's what I like because nobody is going to build a breastplate of righteousness on that sort of thing." It is false guidance for spiritual leaders to soup up a spiritually unarmed Christian, and then urge him to charge out to meet the demonic enemy in combat. That's going to be disastrous.

Experience apart from Bible doctrine in your human spirit never amounts to anything. Experience can only confirm that doctrine is true or false. Experience will never produce doctrine. Experience will confirm sound doctrine, but experience will never lead you to the truth. That's my point. You will never gain a protection through experience. It's only as experience is related to doctrine.

Unfortunately, Christianity is doing-oriented. Satan sits back and laughs at all the Christians who are running around doing things to serve the Lord. They're doing their thing. They don't have on a breastplate of righteousness, and he's shooting them down left and right. Edification in 1 Corinthians 14 is declared to be the greatest thing in the Christian's life. The apostle Paul was faced in Corinth with a church that was abusing the gift of tongues which did exist at that time. In trying to resolve that abuse, Paul said, "Listen, I want to clarify to you that edification is the big thing in your life--building spiritual maturity." He was talking about what he later called the breastplate of righteousness. He said, "That is the thing, not an experience of any kind including a spiritual gift that did exist at the time of speaking in tongues." So, in 1 Corinthians 14:3-4, Paul says, "But he that prophesies (that is, who explains doctrine) speaks unto men to edification and exhortation and comfort. He that speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he that prophesies edifies the church." Any spiritual gift that you use will bring edification. If you used the gift of tongues in the New Testament church, it was edifying. However, that's all the good it did. It didn't help anybody else.

Verse 12 says, "Even so you, for as much as you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that you may excel to be edifying of the church." Paul says, "You people are so interested in having the gift of tongues in Corinth. I would suggest you would be more concerned for edifying the believers. That's the thing that counts." In verse 26, Paul says, "How is it then, brethren, when you come together that every one of you has a psalm; has a doctrine; has a tongue; has a revelation; or, has an interpretation? Let all things be done onto edifying." So, Paul says, "No matter what the spiritual gift is that you're using, if it doesn't edify people, it's no good." This is because God's purpose is not for you to edify yourself with your spiritual gifts. That's incidental. However, God's purpose is to edify the body of Christ so that people can build a breastplate of righteousness.

Now you come into the picture. You are an instrument in helping each other build a breastplate of righteousness on the basis of the information of the Word of God. The edification of the believer is the work of the pastor-teacher (Ephesians 4:11-12). For this reason, how a church is being conducted is determined by the number of people in that congregation who reflect the fact that they have put on the breastplate of righteousness. If you want to evaluate the spiritual condition of a church, you do not do it by how many people are attending the service. You do not do it by how much property that church owns. You do not do it by how air-conditioned its buildings are. I'll tell you that for sure. You can have all kinds of trivial, stupid, inane ways of judging the spiritual condition of a church. You don't judge it by how friendly they are at the door when they meet you, or how unfriendly they are when they leave after they've listen to the sermon, or anything else.

You judge a church on the basis of how many people you see are building the breastplate of righteousness. Obviously, you can't do that in a service or two. This takes a long haul estimate of a church over a period literally of years. You see that out of that place, poor people who have spiritual maturity developed. They came with nothing; they hung in there; and, they went out with something substantial. They had their ups; they had their downs; but, mostly it was always going up because they knew how to handle their problems in their lives. The spiritual condition of a local congregation is determined by that issue, and that issue alone. How many spiritual maturity structures have been built?

Acts 9:31 says, "Then had the churches rest through all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied." These churches were multiplied. They were walking in the fear and the respect of God. They were walking in "rightwiseness." They were walking under the comfort of God the Holy Spirit. Why? Because they were edified. All these churches had been edified by the teaching ministry of the apostles. They had the stuff with which to build their spiritual maturity. So, the spiritual maturity structure in the souls of the church members cannot be statistically evaluated nor reported. When anybody tries to report statistically on spiritual results, that's public relations stuff, and you should understand that. That's just some preacher who's trying to make a mark, and he's trying to interest the undiscerning to come and join.

Recently a church had a large sign. The thing went for about 40 or 50 feet across the whole front of the property, and it said, "Don't just watch us grow. Come and join us." This meant that if it's growing, that must be the place that God is working. This is the old statistical fallacy again.

Now if they had said, "Don't just watch our spiritual maturity structures growing. Come and build one yourself," that would have been a little better. It is deceptive to evaluate a church on how friendly it is; the prospect of making new friends; or, social or business help. None of these things will move you to a spiritual maturity structure. You may join a church and find that you get a lot of business help. That will work against you. Entertainment will not mature you as a Christian. There are some people think that, "Oh, if I could just find a church where they have things; they do things; and, they run social things, it would mean so much to me." It wouldn't mean a thing to you. It would just be kind of a narcotic to help deaden your spiritual problem for you. The only question when you look at a church is whether the pastor-teacher is teaching doctrine in usable form. That will give you a spiritual maturity structure for the angelic conflict.

The convert himself has a problem. When a new Christian comes to the Lord, He doesn't know what kind of a church to look to. Have you ever heard some leading evangelists get up and very proudly say, "My converts are told to go to the church of their choice?" That's like having a brand new baby in a hospital and saying to this baby, "Dear baby, we want you to take the home with your choice. We will now parade these parents before the glass. Please take the home of your choice." He doesn't know. If he had enough intelligence to be aware of what's going on, how would he know how to look at some of you and say, "That's what I want for my parents? That's the home of my choice. These are the people who will train me and teach me." You know that if he knew better he wouldn't pick you. The convert doesn't know. What does he know about picking the church of his choice so that he can grow and build a spiritual maturity structure? He doesn't have half a chance to put on a "thorax" at all. Furthermore, a baby cannot care for himself.

And don't miss this please: Nor can person who has sat in church for 50 years and never grew up. You can visit some mental institutions in this country where people have grown bodies. They've been around for 35 years, but they talk like little three-year-olds. They can't make choices to make decisions for themselves either. There are some Christians who think that just because they've hung around church for a long time, or they grew up in church, that they're capable of having the discernment to making spiritual decisions, and they are not. They can hardly even decide what church they should go to or not go to.

The object of the Christian life is to get the armor on for the battle. We're already in it. You don't do this through emotional kicks or through praise of love. The pastor-teacher's authority in a local church is specifically provided to build the breastplate of righteousness on the members. God has given us two spirits for building this spiritual maturity structure. He has given us God the Holy Spirit who makes the grace system work. He has given us the filling of the Holy Spirit through confession of sins in order to make us teachable by God the Holy Spirit. We also have a living human spirit. This is the object (the target) of the grace system's instruction, and it is the foundation for building spiritual maturity. You and I come spiritually alive. We get a living human spirit at the point of our spiritual birth. Human knowledge does not affect our spiritual knowledge. Human capacity does not affect our capacity for spiritual growth. It is only that which we store in that human spirit that we can use to develop the breastplate of righteousness.

How fast you put on the breastplate of righteousness and how fast you put up a spiritual maturity structure (thinking of it in those terms) depends on your rate of taking in doctrine. One of the first things that determines how fast you're going to put on the breastplate of righteousness and how well you do it is by coming to church. I cannot warn you enough that I have been amazed how often I see people absent from church at the very service that something is explained that is the answer to the problems in their life. This is how Satan will do things. He will keep you coming, and then cause you to miss the one service you should not miss. Be aware that that's how he operates. So, building the breastplate means being in church--just being in church. That means all the time regularly for the instruction--the continuity from Sunday to Sunday where the method of teaching is line-upon-line and precept-upon-precept. The continuity is important. If you go to a church where you walk in and it's a text here one Sunday, and a book here the next Sunday, and something else here, then you're not going to miss anything. If you skip, you're not going to miss anything. Continuity is not a problem.

Let me tie this together for just a moment. Here's the problem. We have the spiritual maturity structure in the soul that we've been talking about. We won't go over this in great detail because we've done this before. The facets of the spiritual maturity structure, or the breastplate of righteousness which is the same thing, is first of all being oriented to the grace of God. 2 Peter 3:18 and Hebrews 13:9 speak of the grace of God as an attitude of life. You remember that in 2 Corinthians 12:10, we looked at five things that Paul says are points of suffering in his life. He said, "I'll welcome those points of suffering because they develop spiritual maturity in me to enable me to come to a point of putting on the container for the super grace life." The container is the spiritual maturity structure. When you put on the breastplate of righteousness, you are prepared for living under God's super grace life that James 4:6, 2 Corinthians 12:9, and Psalm 23:5 speak of.

**The Facets of the Spiritual Maturity Structure**

Paul uses the word "infirmities" meaning weakness. He said, "I welcome weaknesses in my life. They teach me grace." Secondly is the mastery of the details of life (Luke 12:15, 1 Timothy 6:6). We have the word "to be content" used in 1 Timothy 6:8 and Hebrews 13:5, meaning satisfied with what God has given you. Paul says he welcomes being under necessities. That teaches him how to handle the mastery of the details of his life as a mature Christian. We also have a relaxed mental attitude ("agape" love). Ephesians 4:31-32, Colossians 3:15, Ephesians 3:19, and 1 John 4:7 use the word "agape." In 2 Corinthians 12:10, Paul uses the word "reproaches." He says, "Reproaches cause me to learn how not to be bitter when people reproach me." Then we see the capacity to love as part of the breastplate of righteousness in John 13:34 and Colossians 3:14. This is the "philos" love. This is the total soul camaraderie with God, with mate, and with friends. 1 Corinthians 16:22 speaks about that. In 2 Corinthians 12:10, he uses the word "persecutions." Persecutions cause me to develop my camaraderie love with the elements in my life--the people around me. Finally, there's inner happiness (John 15:11, Philippians 4:4). It speaks about a joy in John 17:13, 1 John 1:4, and John 13:17. Paul refers to this in terms of the word "distresses." "Distresses," he says, teach him how to have an inner happiness.

The breastplate of righteousness, in other words, protects your capacity to serve the Lord. It protects you from becoming a spiritual casualty. The demons use unbelievers to capitalize on our spiritual weaknesses. Satan himself accuses us before God when our breastplate is not in place. Failure in any facet here of the spiritual maturity structure is going to cause you to go to unrighteous living.

Now let's back it up. Unrighteous living is represented by the old sin nature. Again, we will not go in detail because you're acquainted with it. But just again we will call your attention to the Christian's exposed condition. This is a Christian without the breastplate of righteousness on. He is a Christian who has a strong side to his old sin nature, where he's cranking out human good. He has a weak side where he's cranking out sins. He is an ascetic on one side, where he's acting under legalism--the do-gooder. He has an evil side where he's acting under lascivious--the Playboy or Playgirl magazine type of philosophy represented here by the lascivious situation. This is the Christian without his armor on.

You might say, "Oh, I'm not that bad." Yes you are. You're born with it. Stop kidding yourself because we know, and God knows. So, you might as well know. This is the thing we live with. That's a Christian without his breastplate of righteousness on. This is a Christian that has to have this overcome. You have a pattern of lust that Ephesians 4:22 says expresses and breathes through this old sin nature. This is overcome by the Christian with the breastplate of righteousness on in the form of a spiritual maturity structure.

All of this can be destroyed by reversionism--that doctrine that we've already been through. Revisionism is backtracking in your spiritual life. It is accompanied by indulgence to the lust patterns of the old sin nature. You have no breastplate to resist those lust patterns. You are characterized by emotional domination the soul rather than operating from your belt of truth. Reversionism glorifies a pseudo breastplate of righteousness, and Satan breaks right through it. Your asceticism often seems to be a very fine breastplate of righteousness. This is the basis of a false hope.

Many a parent has been fooled concerning his youngster. They'll go to one church, and this kid is hit with doctrine; he comes home; he's grinding his teeth; and, he's chewing away. So, finally the parents say, "Let's take him over to this church. They have a beautiful young people's program." He gets in there, and there are lots of girls; lots of fun; lots of parties; and, lots of programs, and pretty soon he comes home and they catch him reading his Bible. "Look at him growing spiritually." Then pretty soon while they're praying, they notice that he closes his eyes and bows his head. "What wonderful advancement in his spiritual life since we put him in this beautiful church where they have a young singles program." No, he was making spiritual advancement, dear parent, when he was grinding his teeth, because he was kicking like the apostle Paul against the goads of God's truth. Now he has conned you into putting on a false pseudo breastplate of righteousness, and you think your kid is going someplace.

There are terrible consequences when this is not in place. We don't have time to pursue this, but just think of what happens if you don't have a mastery of the details of life. Today we have a shortage of fuel. Now we're being told we should prepare for the shortage of food because that is the next thing. If you don't have a mastery of the details of life, and that piece of your breastplate on, things are going to be tough for you. They are really going to be tough. What would happen to the relaxed mental attitude of bitterness pervading your soul? What if you were not a grace oriented person and you were bound and determined that you're going to have your rights, and you're going to insist on them, and you're not going to be a yielding person? What if you had incapacity for having a rapport love, soul-to-soul? What if you couldn't have an inner happiness that wasn't based on personal circumstances and things?

So, this is a great and wonderful thing that God has made possible for us, not only to give us the belt of truth, but then to permit us to build a breastplate of righteousness. With this you are protected against the worst that Satan can bring to you. However, remember reversionism breaks up your breastplate, and you who once stood, may discover that you no longer have the protection you once had. So, there never comes a time when you don't have to keep the armor in repair by the constant intake of God's Word. Thank God he's made it possible for us to do that.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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