

The Breastplate Of Righteousness

“ . . . and having on the breastplate of righteousness” (Eph. 6:14).

Because my position as a baseball player was that of a catcher, I am very appreciative of the protective equipment a catcher wears. If it were not for the catcher’s mask, I would be missing several teeth; if it were not for the catcher’s leg guards, my legs would be nothing but knots and bumps; if it were not for the catcher’s chest protector, I would have a damaged body. The only wish I have is that I could have worn the lighter weight equipment available today.

The chest protector of the Roman armor was known as the “breastplate.” Actually, it was more than a chest protector; it was a coat of mail, made of many overlapping metal plates, which covered the entire upper body, both front and back, to the neck of the soldier. The purpose of this vest-like piece of armor was to shield and protect all the vital organs of the body from harm. Like the first piece of armor mentioned, the girdle, the breastplate was defensive armor.

Both a “breastplate” of “righteousness” and a “helmet of salvation” are mentioned in one verse in Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa. 59:17). In another of his epistles, Paul spoke of “the breastplate of faith and love” (1 Thess. 5:8). In this setting, however, where he lists all of the Christian soldier’s armor, he speaks of wearing “the breastplate of righteousness.” The clear message, of course, is that all successful Christian soldiers must be clothed in righteousness.

The righteousness in which we stand is an extraordinary righteousness! At our best, according to the prophet, our righteousness is like “filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). It is certain, then, that we must have the righteousness of another! As the Apostle Paul elsewhere testified, we must have the righteousness of Christ. “Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:9).

The righteousness in which we stand is a functionary righteousness! While this righteousness is not our own, it is a very practical righteousness. Day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, as the righteousness of Christ is appropriated by faith, it is worked out in the functions of life. The more we experience His righteousness, the more we find that it is our righteousness, our life, our testimony, our defense, our all.

The righteousness in which we stand is a necessary righteousness! How can we stand “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” without the righteousness of Christ? We could never “withstand in the evil day” without this force. Nothing else can be substituted in the battle; nothing else will resist the onslaught of unrighteousness. Our victory is in Christ!