There are two aspects to righteousness imputed and imparted, that is, positional and practical. When we forget the imputed, we’re in trouble. When we don’t live out the imparted, we are in trouble. And Satan understands this. Consider the following missive from Lord Foulgrin to his disciple Squaltaint:

“My beloved Squaltaint,

Make the vermin ignore us when we’re there, and exorcise us when we aren’t. Let them lay hands on people and cast out the demon of loneliness, the demon of back pain, the demon of kidney stones, and the demon of constipation. Not only is this a distraction from our central work, on their minds and morals, it has a bonus—because of their silliness, others conclude ‘all this demon stuff is nonsense.’

When they ponder demon activity, make Bible believers think, ‘Back then, but not now; over there, but not here.’ Let the gulf of time and distance convince them they’re somehow beyond the cosmic war.

I’m pleased when the squadrons teach them nothing about us, and when they teach error and excess about us. Let them see us behind every bush or behind no bush at all. Let them see us in every convulsion, handicap, foaming at the mouth, gnashing of teeth, or display of superhuman strength. Or let them see us in none of them. Let them fear we’re everywhere or imagine we’re nowhere. Psychological and medical labels are easy to hide behind. ‘Multiple personality disorder?’ Been there. Done that.

Fortunately, many of these spiritual warfare experts don’t know what they’re doing, even when they publish how-to-manuals on casting us out. I don’t minimize the horror of sudden eviction. It’s humiliating and unnerving. The first time it happened, all I could think of was the Enemy casting me into the nether darkness before my time.

But even if the expulsion works, it leaves a vacuum. How will they fill it? Let them cast us out, or imagine they have, as long as the vermin keep making the daily choices that invite us back in. Let them ‘name’ and ‘bind’ us to their hearts’ content, as long as they entertain the thoughts and engage in the activities that give us power over them.

Make them think we can control them against their will, or, because they’re Christians, we can’t influence them at all. Both lies are useful. If they never think about us, we have them. If they always think about us, we have them. Ignore us, they’re ours. Obsess over us, they’re ours. Having their eyes on us is as good as having them on themselves. The only important thing is, they don’t have them on Him.

The Book doesn’t tell them to rebuke a spirit of dissension, but to agree and be united in the same mind. It doesn’t tell them to rebuke a demon of incest, but that the offender must repent and change his behavior or be expelled.

We can short-circuit discipleship by telling them they can break patterns of sin simply by uttering magic words requiring no ongoing acts of obedience. Who needs accountability and discipline to establish new patterns of purity when they can simply cast out the demon of lust? … I’ve been in deliverance encounters where I’ve fed them a steady stream of false information. You can’t imagine how many of them believe what I say, even when they’ve rebuked me as a ‘lying spirit’! I saw an entire chapter of a book conveying information I gave them—nearly all of it I just made up while they tried to exorcise me! Did somebody say ‘gullible’?

… It’s not power plays and sweeping declarations of our defeat that frighten me, it’s quiet prayers for personal holiness and greater yieldedness to the Enemy. Far better that they focus on us than look to their own hearts or ask the Enemy to cleanse them…
A. Introduction  

B. The Breastplate of Righteousness  

C. Paul’s Point  

D. Application

A. Introduction: As we did last week, we will first examine the context of each element in the armor, next consider Paul’s application, and finally look at the broader issues in scripture.

As we have been seeing, there is a natural flow to these passages and one of the things that leads to strange interpretations is looking at sections in a vacuum. The context of course is community, the local church. And the examples of how to live in this context were the relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves, or as we see it, employers and employees.

A major struggle that impacts these relationships and those within the church is that of spiritual warfare. This is why Chapter 6 flows directly from 5. There is also a flow from each piece of armor to the next. Hanegraaff notes this when he specifically speaks to the flow from the Belt of Truth to the Breastplate of Righteousness.

"Truth without righteousness is abhorrent. No matter how correct our worldview, or resplendent our orthodoxy, if it is not coupled with righteousness, we forfeit the moral authority to speak. In the words of Puritan writer William Gurnall, ‘An orthodox judgment coming from an unholy heart and an ungodly life is as ugly as a man’s head would be on a beast’s shoulders. The wretch who knows the truth but practices evil is worse than the man who is ignorant.’”

To which I would add, all this needs to be grounded in love when it comes to relating to others both within and without the community of faith.

B. The Breastplate of Righteousness: So first let us take a look at the Roman breastplate. The NIV Bible Background Commentary states:

"The “breastplate” normally consisted of leather overlaid with metal, and it protected the chest in battle; like the helmet (6:17), it was used only in battle, not for normal wear. Roman soldiers were to face forward in battle, side by side, so the armor needed to protect only their front. In view of Isaiah 59:..., this “breastplate of righteousness” is truly “God’s armor”.

“He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak” (Isaiah 59:17).

There is some disagreement over the previous view, that the breastplate only covered the chest, and much has been made of this position. Wiersbie speaks to this disagreement:

1 Alcorn, Randy, Lord Foulgrin’s Letters, Multnomah Press, Sisters, OR, 2000, p. 172-174
“The breastplate was very important to a Roman soldier. It was a coat of mail that covered the front and back of a soldier’s body from the neck to the thighs. Some have taught that the Christian doesn’t have any armor to protect the back and, therefore, he should not turn around and run. But Paul was thinking of a Roman soldier when he wrote the letter to the Ephesians. The breastplate he was writing about covered the entire upper body and protected all the vital organs from injury.”

C. Paul’s Point: Once again there are two possibilities in interpreting truth in this context, either of which are consistent with the general teachings of scripture.

1. **Imputed righteousness.** This view holds that Paul is referring to God’s provision of righteousness through the work of Christ on the cross. We are positionally righteousness and no one can bring an accusation against us, which is the spiritual battle.

One obvious problem with this approach is, we don’t put on this righteousness because it is imputed to us. But as we’ll see in a moment, that doesn’t rule out this view.

2. **Imparted righteousness.** On the other hand, there is imparted righteousness which relates to sanctification. This speaks to the truth that once we are saved our lives should reflect that salvation. And while we depend on the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life, it can still be argued that we put on this righteousness.

I think we’ll see we can make a good argument to consider both these positions as we see how the Breastplate of Righteousness helps us fight the good fight. Stott puts it this way:

“... as with the two possible meanings of ‘truth’, so with the two possible meanings of ‘righteousness’, it may well be right to combine them, since according to Paul’s gospel the one would invariably lead to the other. As G.G. Findlay put it, ‘The completeness of pardon for past offence and the integrity of character that belong to the justified life, are woven together into an impenetrable mail.’”

D. Application: Once again we’ll start with a definition.

**RIGHTEOUSNESS** (Heb. sadiq, saddiq; Gr. dikaiosyne). The Lord God always acts in righteousness (see Ps 89:14; Jer 9:24). That is, he always has a right relationship with people, and his action is to maintain that relationship. As regards Israel, this involved acting both in judgment (chastisement) and in deliverance (see Ps 68; 103:6; Lam 1:18). The latter activity is often therefore equated with salvation (see Isa 46:12-13; 51:5). In passages from the Prophets (see e.g., Isa 1:2-9; Jer 2:4-13; Mic 6:1-8) the Lord is presented as the Judge, and Israel as the accused party, with the covenant supplying the terms of reference.

As God acts in righteousness (because he is righteous), so he called Israel to be righteous as his chosen people. They were placed in his covenant, in right relationship with him through faith (see Gen 15:6; Hab 2:4), and were expected to live in right relationship with others. The king was called to be in a right relationship with God, his people, and the surrounding nations (see Ps 72:1-4; 146:7-9). Righteousness begins as a forensic term but easily becomes an ethical term in the OT. Much the same is found in the NT.

Righteousness means a right relationship with both God and one’s fellow human beings (see Matt 5:6, 17-20; Luke 18:14). The gospel is effective because, along with the proclamation, a righteousness goes forth (Rom 1:16-17).”

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“I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 9:24 ESV)

“The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed” (Psalms 103:6 ESV).

“My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples” (Isaiah 51:5 ESV).

“… he [Abraham] believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6 ESV).

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5:6 ESV).

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”” (Romans 1:16-17).

Now I want to take the balance of the session to talk about both imputed and imparted righteousness and how they impact the spiritual battle.

1. **Imputed Righteousness:** Let’s started with imputed righteousness, which is necessary if we are even to be in the battle. After all, first comes salvation. As we’ve already noted, we don’t put on this righteousness because by its very nature it comes from God.

What we do have to put on is a constant awareness of our positional righteousness. It is an awareness of this righteousness that allows us to stand against “Satan’s wiles.” Remember, one of the way Satan wins is by keeping us defeated and ineffectual. He does this by accusing us with twisted truth.

Satan isn’t the only accuser. Just as we have to deal with “the world, the flesh, and the devil,” there are accusers, “the world,” other men, “the flesh,” ourselves, and “the devil,” Satan. And it is by putting on the breastplate, that is by living in the awareness of our righteousness, that we can stand against the enemy. Let us consider each and how imputed righteousness lets us stand against the enemy.

a. **Satan as accuser:** Satan is seen as the accuser in both the Old and New Testament.

“… the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.” “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.” (Job 1:8-11).
“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.”” (Revelation 12:10).

Satan may be the father of lies, but often his lies are simply half truths. His accusations correctly state the truth of our sins. And if we accept what he tells us, or accuses us of, we will fall. But if we focus on the truth, that our sins have been paid for, we will stand, not in our righteousness, but in Christ’s.

b. Ourselves as accuser: Often Satan simply makes use of our self-accusations. While we don’t want to become self-righteous, we don’t want to fall into the opposite extreme.

I’ve had clients who have come to me stating they can’t forgive themselves. But if you think about this carefully, you will understand this is a practical form of arrogance. What they are really saying is their standards are higher than God’s, for He can forgive them. Therefore, how can they not accept His forgiveness if they claim to be believers?

This is where we get to the a distinction I make between guilt and godly sorrow, or conviction. Guilt comes from Satan and cause us to feel defeated, to withdraw from God and into ourselves. When we remember the breastplate, then we can distinguish between false guilt and the Sprit’s conviction which moves us closer to God and repentance. Wiersbie notes:

“Some Christians have a problem with perpetual introspection. This constant self-examination is dangerous because it often leads to self-accusation. The Devil knows that if he can get you to accuse yourself—to dwell on the memories of past sins—then he has won the battle.

... Besides our memories of past mistakes, Satan also uses our feelings to accuse us. When we are run down from a lack of sleep, poor eating habits, a lack of exercise or an illness, we have a tendency to give in to feelings of depression, self-pity or anger. It’s at these times, when we are feeling depressed, that the Devil comes to us and says, ‘that’s right! Keep throwing fuel on the fire. You have a right to feel sorry for yourself. Remember all the things you’ve done and all the things people have done to you.’ Before you know it your are defeated.”

Here the breastplate protects us from our own lies, for example, that we can trust our emotions. We can trust God’s truth. We are forgiven. Yes, we are sinners, but in Christ our failures don’t keep us from obedience and usefulness.

c. Others as accusers: Finally, the third accuser is others. There are always those who are willing to help remind us of just how fouled up we are. And I’m not talking about legitimate encouragement, I’m talking about the kind of friends Job had. Oh sure, they mean well, but after they done, so are you. Consider Zophar’s words to Job …

“Should a multitude of words go unanswered, and a man full of talk be judged right? Should your babble silence men, and when you mock, shall no one shame you? For you say, ‘My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in God’s eyes.’ But oh, that God would speak and open his lips to you, and that he would tell you the secrets of

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wisdom! For he is manifold in understanding. Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves” (Job 11:2–6 ESV).

There is a final response to the accusations of Satan, others and ourselves.

“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?” … “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Romans 8:31, 33-34).

So while we don’t put on imputed righteousness, we do put it on in the sense we live in its reality. But there is more to the Breastplate of Righteousness. There is also the need to live out its reality. We are to grow in sanctification. This is what we mean by …

2. Imparted Righteousness: As we have noted earlier, fighting the good fight means living the Christian life and that’s what it means to live out the reality of righteousness in our lives. We need to be more than positionally righteous. We need to be practically righteous. MacArthur puts it this way:

“To put on the breastplate of righteousness is to live in daily, moment-by-moment obedience to our heavenly Father. This part of God’s armor is holy living, for which God supplies the standard and the power but for which we must supply the willingness. God Himself puts on our imputed righteousness, but we must put on our practical righteousness.”

When we live in the reality of our positional righteousness, we will find it easier to live out a practical righteousness. Keep in mind the Christian life is a relational one, relationship with God, relationship with others. It is here where some of the greatest battles go on. It is here that practical righteousness is most vital.

What are the practical benefits of imparted righteousness, that is of putting on the breastplate? Can you think of any you’ve experienced?

a. Joy: First of all comes joy. I know it’s hard to remember at times, but true joy comes with obedience, not with circumstances going “our way.” John in his first epistle gives a number of instructions for the Christian life, and he tells us he …

“… write(s) this to make our joy complete” (1 John 1:4).

If we are living in joy then we aren’t going to live in a defeated or ineffectual way, because we understand our position in Christ and can live accordingly.

b. Fruit of the Spirit: When we live with practical righteousness, we put forth the fruit of the Spirit which is exactly what Satan doesn’t want.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who

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belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22-25).

And so joy flows out of practical righteousness which in turn produces the fruit of the Spirit.

c. **Rewards:** Of course living an obedient life brings reward. Salvation and eternal life are a gift. But there are rewards for works done in Christ.

“If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. … Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?” (1 Cor. 3:12-16).

Notice that we are back to seeing the need of being empowered by the Spirit. He indwells us, but we must remember to constantly be filled with Him.

“*You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you*” (Romans 8:9 ESV).

So, here we are. We are to live in God’s truth which includes the reality of our positional righteousness. And living this way, we will remember that we fight spiritual warfare by putting on a practical righteousness. And we can live that way as long as we live on dependency in the power of the Spirit.

’Twixt gleams of joy and clouds of doubt
Our feelings come and go;
Our best estate is tossed about
In ceaseless ebb and flow:
No mood of feeling, form of thought,
Is constant for a day;
But Thou, O Lord, Thou changes not;
The same Thou art alway.
Out of that weak, unquiet drift
That comes but to depart,
To that pure heaven my spirit lift
Where Thou unchanging art;
Lay hold of me with Thy strong grasp,
Let Thy almighty arm
In its embrace my weakness clasp,
And I shall fear no harm.

I grasp Thy strength, make it mine own,
My heart with peace is blest:
I lose my hold, and then comes down
Darkness, and cold unrest.
Let me no more my comfort draw
From my frail hold of Thee;
In this alone rejoice with awe –
Thy mighty grasp of me.
Thy purpose of eternal good
Let me but surely know;
On this I’ll lean – let changing mood
And feeling come or go –
Glad when thy sunshine fills my soul
Not lorn when clouds o’ercast,
Since Thou within Thy sure control
Of love dost hold me fast.

~ John Campbell Shairp

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The Gospel of John
A Miniseries
Putting on Your Armor ~ The Breastplate of Righteousness

Ephesians 6:14

A. Introduction
B. The Breastplate of Righteousness
C. Paul’s Point
D. Application

A. Introduction:

B. The Breastplate of Righteousness:

(Isaiah 59:17)

C. Paul’s Point:

1. Imputed righteousness.

2. Imparted righteousness.
D. Application:

(Jeremiah 9:24; Psalms 103:6; Isaiah 51:5; Genesis 15:6; Matthew 5:6; Romans 1:16-17)

1. Imputed Righteousness:

   a. Satan as accuser:
      (Job 1:8-11; Revelation 12:10)

   b. Ourselves as accuser:

   c. Others as accusers:
      (Job 11:2-6; Romans 8:31, 33-34)
2. Imparted Righteousness:

a. Joy:
   
   *(1 John 1:4)*

b. Fruit of the Spirit:
   
   *(Galatians 5:22-25)*

c. Rewards:

   *(1 Corinthians 3:12-16; Romans 8:9)*

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Personal Application: How do the first two tenses of salvation relate to imputed and imparted righteousness? How do you see these impacting your own walk, especially as it relates to Spiritual Warfare?

Prayer for the Week: Lord, may Your Spirit help me to live out Christ’s righteousness in my life. In His name, amen.