

Place: Lurgan Baptist: 16:10:2007

Reading: Philippians 3:1-14

THE WELL DRESSED CHRISTIAN

4. SILENCE THE ACCUSER

During thirty years of terrorist violence in Northern Ireland we were very aware of how important and vital the bullet proof vest was for the security forces. No doubt this protective coat saved many lives. On one occasion Napoleon ordered a bullet proof coat of mail. When ready the Emperor ordered the maker to put the coat of mail on. Drawing a pistol, *Napoleon fired shot after shot at the armour clad man.* Although bruised and shaken the bewildered man survived the severe test and was commended by the Emperor for his skill and workmanship. Now no Roman soldier in his right mind would ever go to battle without his breastplate. There were various types of breastplates, but the most common one was made of a moulded metal plate and was tailored to suit the soldier. Roman military breastplates were also made of heavy linen covered with overlapping animal horns which were laced together.

This breastplate extended from the base of the neck to the top of the thighs and covered both front and back of the soldier's torso. It was linked to and secured on the soldier by the girdle. The breastplate therefore gave protection to

all the soldier's vital organs. At times he was engaged in hand to hand combat in which he was in danger from a swipe of a sword or the thrust of a dagger. But while the soldier wore the breastplate, no sword or spear could pierce or penetrate to his chest or abdomen. The breastplate covered the entire upper body and protected all the vital organs from injury. Now last week we discovered that we can learn much about the Devil's tactics by examining the different pieces of the armour. Satan is a liar and accuser. He loves to destroy our Christian witness to the world with his accusations. He torments our minds, reminding us of our past sins and mistakes. When we begin to dwell on these past sins, then we forget the forgiveness we have received and feel that we are not worthy to serve the Lord. And once again, Satan has defeated us. This is why God has given to us the weapon we need to "**Silence the Accuser,**" the breastplate of righteousness. Now I want us to consider this breastplate from a 3 fold angle.

(1) THE PERIL WE FACE

You see, we are not facing spears or swords, bullets or boulders, we are facing the Devil himself. Now in this key passage Paul has certain things to say about our enemy that will help us to understand clearly the peril we face. Notice for example,

(a) **THE TARGET OF THE DEVIL:**

1. Look at the Devil's Target Generally:

Look if you will at (6:11) The word “ *Devil*,” represents the Greek word diabolos, which means slanderer, defamer, one who criticises and condemns. Does this not tell us something about the objective of the Devil ? Is Satan’s goal not to discredit, defeat, and devour the child of God ? This is how Peter pictures him. He says, “ *Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour.*”

(1 Pet 5:8) Like the lions mentioned in Daniels den, he also is seeking the mastery over the believer. Dr. Rendall says “ *a lion often trails the sick and diseased in the heard of the herd of deer, or it pounces on the animal that has been foolish enough to separate itself from the herd. Likewise the Devil keeps an eye open for the believer who is spiritually sick or who forsakes the company of other believers. Such a careless Christian makes easy prey for the Devil.*” The Christian is the Devils target generally.

2. Look at the Devil’s Target Specifically:

As we have noted the breastplate protected from the neck to the thighs. This was the section where the functional organs of the body were located. So the breastplate covered two vital areas, the heart and the bowels.

(a) The Heart:

Today see the heart as the seat of our emotions but not so then. To the Jew the heart symbolically represented the mind. Solomon wrote, “ *for as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.*” (Prov 23:7) Again he wrote, “ *keep they heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.*”

(4:23) The Lord Jesus said, “ *For from within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders.*” (Mk 7:21) Then there was,

(b) The Bowels:

Now when the Hebrew referred to the bowels, he was referring to the feelings and emotions. The Bible talks about shutting up the bowels of compassion and not loving someone properly. (1 Jn 3:17) *We ache in our stomach when we feel certain emotions.* So the heart refers to the thinking process and the bowels refer to the emotions. Do you realise that Satan has targeted your thinking and your emotions ? Satan wants to snatch the Word of God from you and fill your mind with lies, perversion, immorality, false doctrine, untruths and half truths. He does not want you to interpret things correctly. He wants you to say that sin is not so bad. He tries to entertain you with sin so that you won’t think it’s as evil as it really is. He makes people laugh at sin on television. He puts sin to beautiful music so that it confuses your mind.

Do you realise that Satan has targeted your emotions ? he makes you lust after wrong things, he draws out your affections to the wrong things. Satan feeds your mind and your emotions with false information. This is why we need to be protected with the breastplate of righteousness.

(b) THE TERRITORY OF THE DEVIL:

For Paul reminds us that the sphere of Satan’s operation is

located in the heavenly places. This realm though invisible to our physical sight is just as real as the world of mountains, seas, lakes and trees. Paul says in effect, “ *we are not fighting with mere frail men with all their physical infirmities,*” (1 Cor 15:50) Our conflict is not with the human and the visible but with the superhuman and invisible. You see, the target of the Devil and the territory of the Devil enables us to see the peril we face. But what about,

(c) *THE TACTICS OF THE DEVIL:*

For Paul refers to them as “ *wiles,*” or “ *tricks,*” Now why do we need this breastplate of righteousness ? We do so because,

1. SATAN ACCUSES US:

In John Bunyan’s Pilgrims Progress, we find the main character Christian is on his way to the Holy City. Along the way he meets Apollyon, Satan who tells him, “ *Thou hast already been unfaithful in thy service to God, and how dost thou think to receive wages of Him ?*” Christian replies, “ *Wherein O Apollyon, have I been unfaithful to Him ?*” And Satan answers, “ *Thou didst faint at first setting out, when thou wast almost choked in the Gulf of Despond, thou didst attempt wrong ways to be rid of thy burden, whereas thou shouldest have stayed till thy Prince had taken it off, thou didst sinfully sleep and lose thy choice thing, thou wast almost persuaded to go back at the sight of the lions, and when thou talkest of thy journey, and of what thou hast heard and seen, thou are inwardly*

desirous of vainglory in all that thou sayest or doest.” Do you know what Apollyon was doing ? He was reminding Christian of his many sins. He accused him of being unfaithful. Do you know what Christian said ? “ *all this is true, and much more which thou hast left out, but the Prince whom I serve and honour is merciful and ready to forgive, but besides, these infirmities possessed me in thy country and I have groaned under them and been sorry for them and have obtained pardon of my Prince.*” Do you know what Christian was doing ? He was claiming the breastplate of righteousness. Look if you will at (Rev 12:10) Satan has access to the throne of God and there he reminds God of the condition of His saints. “ *Lord, did you see what David just did ? He committed adultery with Bathsheba, and murdered Uriah to conceal his sin. God, are you going to judge him ? Are you listening Lord, did you just hear Peter deny Your Son three times ? Are you going to let him away with it ?*”

You see, Satan is the accuser. He accuses us before God and he accuses God before us. When he talks to God about us he tells the truth, but when he talks to us about God he lies. He twists circumstances and biblical truths making us blame the Lord for things He did not say or do.

2. SELF ACCUSES US:

You see, Satan encourages us to accuses ourselves. Do you have a problem with perpetual introspection ? This constant self-examination can be dangerous because often it leads to self accusation. You see, if the Devil can get you to accuse yourself, to dwell on the memories of past

sins, then he has won the battle. Does your memory ever accuse you ? The memory of past mistakes, that causes you to think, “ *God won't be able to use me again.* ” Do your feelings ever accuse you ? Sometimes we are run down from a lack of sleep, a lack of exercise, and then we have a tendency to give into feelings of depression, self-pity, or anger. Isn't it at those times 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 have done and all the things people have done to you.” My before you know it, you're defeated. This is why we need the breastplate of righteousness. We can take these memories and feelings to the Lord. What does the Lord do about them ? He puts them under the blood of Christ. They are gone. He buries them in the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:19) He blots them out like a thick cloud. (Is 44:22) He takes them off His record. We are made righteous and worthy in His eyes.

You see, nothing Satan can say or do will change our position in Christ. *Now it's important to distinguish between Satan's accusations and God's convictions.* The Devil is the Accuser, but the Holy Spirit is the Convictor. The Holy Spirit will only convict you **Legitimately.** He will not convict of sin that's been forgiven and put under the blood. The Holy Spirit will only convict you **Specifically,** and He will name the sin. He's like the Doctor, He will out His finger on the sore spot and push. The Holy Spirit will only convict you **Redemptively,** to bring you to joy and peace. But the Devil he is the Accuser, he accuses you illegitimately, he accuses you vaguely and he accuses you to lead you to despair. 1, 2,

3. SINNERS ACCUSE US:

This is another trick that Satan loves to pull out of the bag. He gets other people to accuse. Have you ever noticed that everyone in the Bible who tried to serve the Lord was falsely accused ? Nehemiah was accused of trying to become a king and to usurp the authority of others. (Neh 6:6-7) Moses was accused of being a dictator. His own brother and sister accused him of trying to misuse his authority and lord it over everyone. (Num 12:1) And of course we know how falsely they accused the Lord Jesus. He was accused of being a glutton and addicted to wine. (Matt 11:19) They even called Him demon possessed. (Lk 11:14-19) *He was condemned to death on the charge of being a blasphemer.* (Matt 26:59) But the Lord did not worry or fret about what they were saying because He knew the truth, that He was the very Son of God. What can you do when others accuse you ?

Turn to your Intercessor the Lord Jesus. He is on your side and He will justify you. Paul says, “ *what shall we then say to these things ? If God be for us, who can be against us ? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth. Who is that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.* ” (Rom 8:31) You see, when you are wearing the breastplate of righteousness, you know that your Intercessor is representing you before the throne of grace.

(d) SITUATIONS ACCUSE US:

Sometimes Satan makes us believe that our circumstances are accusing us. We tell ourselves, “ *Oh, if only I were right with God, I wouldn't be going through this difficulty.* ” Satan makes us believe that God is punishing us for sins by allowing us to suffer. Job is a classic example of Satan using circumstances to accuse a righteous man. Do you recall that Job's friends believed that his trials were the result of some sin in his life ? They accused Job again, and again of hiding his sins. (Job 5:17 8:1-6 11:1-20) They said in effect “ *if the circumstances were different, we would believe you Job, but what you are going through is proof that the Lord is punishing you for your sins.* ” Now while some difficulties may be the result of our actions, God does not use circumstances to punish us, nor does He desert us in the hour of need. Do you ever feel that God is punishing you for some sin ? Do you ever feel that the Lord does not care ? Then Satan is working through circumstances to accuse you. But those situations cannot defeat you, if you remember who is on your side, and use the breastplate of righteousness to protect your thoughts and emotions. (1)

(2) THE PROTECTION WE NEED

Now we have given careful attention to the peril we face in order that we might have an adequate background to think about the protection we need. You see, if the Devil is constantly seeking to defeat us, if he seeks to strike relentlessly at vital aspects of our life, then we will need ample and adequate protection from his attacks. Paul refers to this protection in (6:14) Now just as the belt we wear is to be composed of truth, so the breastplate that we

are to put on is composed of righteousness. The Greek word translated “ *righteousness,* ” in (6:14) is repeated 92 times in the New Testament and 30 times in Paul's letter to the Romans. As Dr. John Philips points out, “ *Righteousness is the theme of Romans. God's righteousness is **revealed** in the gospel (Rom 1:17) That same righteousness is **required** in man (1:18) Righteousness is **received** through faith in Christ (4:5) and righteousness is **reproduced** in the yielded life.* ” (6:12) Now just as it possible to interpret the word truth in two ways so it is possible to interpret the word righteousness in two ways. In the Bible there are two kinds of righteousness. There is,

(a) Imputed Righteousness: This is Justification

That which God gives us by faith. One way of defining righteousness is having a right relationship to God. The character and quality of being right and just with God. Of course the unsaved man is so self-righteous. He thinks he is righteous because he is good. But the Scriptures remind us that “ *all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.* ” (Is 64:6) That's the best we can offer. If you hope to get into heaven based on your own goodness, you're the most deluded person of all. My ... if anyone could count on his self righteousness it was Paul. Paul had more going for him than anyone. If self righteousness was the way into heaven, he could lay claim to it, but he could not and no-one can. Do you recall what Paul said ? (Phil 3:3-9) Did you notice that Paul talks here about,

1. His Proud Religion:

Paul was a Jew by religion. What a pedigree he had. He was certainly proud of his religion but then he met Christ and one glimpse of the Lord from heaven was it all took to strip mere religion away from his soul forever. My is Paul a picture of you ? Have you passed through the ceremonies of the church ? Have you had the privilege of a Christian background and home ? A Protestant heritage. Proud religion that will dam your soul in hell.

2. His Personal Record:

Look at (3:6) His outward conduct was irreproachable. Is this you ? Does your life not out some Christians to shame ?

3. His Precise Reckoning:

For he says in (3:7) Paul was looking at his religious balance sheet and counting up his gains. He picked them up and put them on the scales and then he looked at Christ. He could have one or the other. His accumulated gains as a religious man, or Christ. He could not have both. He did not hesitate a moment, he picked up his once treasured gains and threw them away as trash. “ *What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.* ” What’s Paul saying ? “ *My own righteousness is useless, I must have the righteousness of God that comes through faith in Christ.* ” So he talks about,

4. His Perfect Righteousness:

Which he has received by faith. Do you see what he says ?

“ *Not having a righteousness of my own based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God and that depends on faith.* ” Have you this righteousness ? Count Zinzendorf, the 18th century leader of the Moravian Brethren, wrote the great hymn, “ *Jesus Thy blood and righteousness*, which was translated by John Wesley,

*Jesus Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are my glorious dress
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed
With joy shall I lift up my head*

*Bold shall I stand in Thy great day
But who to ought to my charge shall lay
Fully absolved through these I am
From sin and fear and guilt and shame*

Now this is called by the theologian’s **imputed righteousness**. Imputation means “ *to put to one’s account.* ” My when Paul looked at his own record he discovered that he was spiritually bankrupt, but when he looked at Christ’s record he saw that he was perfect. And when Paul trusted Christ he saw God put Christ’s righteousness to his own account. Do you know what that did ? That made right in the sight of God. The marvel of the gospel is that our sins were imputed to him and His righteousness was imputed to us. “ *For He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.* ” (2 Cor 5:21) Aren’t you glad that God does not see your transgressions ? Aren’t you glad that when God looks at you, He sees the

righteousness of the Lord Jesus. That's why you are able to sing,

***The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view***

(b) Imparted Righteousness: This is Sanctification

Just as imputed righteousness has to do with justification and our standing before God, so imparted righteousness has to do with sanctification and our walk with God.

There is the righteousness bestowed upon sinners, there is the righteousness required of sons. Now Paul recognised that he had imputed righteousness, but he also realised there was something for him to do. (Phil 3:10-14) Paul says that he wants to reach for the prize. Perfection. Christ likeness. Is this not what he means when he refers to the breastplate of righteousness ? He is not referring so much to imputed righteousness as he is to imparted righteousness. My if I am going to win the battle over Satan I must put on the breastplate of righteousness which is holy living. (Rom 6:12-14) Are you living a holy life ? Do you have a conscience void of offence toward God and man ? That is, does your conscience register nothing between yourself and God, nothing between yourself and others ? (Acts 24:16 Eph 4:24 5:9)

You see, if we are not living a holy life, then we're giving the Devil, the accuser, the ground to condemn and cripple us in our fellowship with God. Satan will underline in our

minds the sin we are harbouring, and this will eliminate us to fight the battle of the Lord. You know, there are Christians who think that because they have the imputed righteousness of Christ, it does not matter what they do. Oprah Winfrey was interviewing people on her programme some time ago, who were having affairs with married people. One woman who had a long standing affair with a married man was saying how happy she was. But then someone raised the question of morality. " Wait a minute," the woman protested. " *I am a Christian but my personal life and my religion don't have anything to do with one another. God wants me to be happy and if I am happy with this man then God does not mind.*" Is God more interested in making us happy or holy ? My if you are not living a holy life, you're not wearing the breastplate of righteousness. Do you remember the prayer of Murray McCheyne ? " ***Lord, make me as holy as it possible for saved sinner to be.***" 1, 2,

(3) THE PATH WE TRAVEL

What is the direction we must travel ? Well Paul puts it this way, " *stand therefore having on the breastplate of righteousness.*" (6:14) Satan is our relentless foe. Holy living is our defence against his assaults, but we must put on this piece of equipment that protects all that is vital to Christian life and experience. You see, we are not to put on the breastplate of righteousness,

(a) INTENTIONALLY:

You would not think of going into the day without putting

on clothing even if it were relaxed and casual dress. So must we also put on Christ every day. For surely the breastplate of righteousness is simply the life of Christ shining through your life.

(b) *DEPENDENTLY:*

For you and I of ourselves cannot live a holy life. We need the indwelling and the infilling of the Holy Spirit in order to maintain this practical righteousness. Therefore we are to the breastplate on intentionally, dependently and,

(c) *CONTINUOUSLY:*

For practical holiness should be everyday business for every believer. Listen to the injunctions of the New Testament. “*let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*” (2 Cor 7:1) Paul exhorts us to “*abstain from all appearance of evil.*” (1 Thes 5:22) The Lord through Peter says, “*be ye holy for I am holy.*” (1 Pet 1:16) This does mean that we are going to be perfect. We are to strive to be perfect, but we will fail. When we do sin, we are to confess it and repent of it. We are to put on the breastplate of righteousness daily. What I was a year ago, or even a month ago, or even a week ago, is not the most important thing. It’s what I am in the presence of God today that counts. Are you practising righteousness today ? Did you live a holy life today ? When you awoke this morning, did you put on the breastplate of righteousness this ? Will you be able to look back at the close of the day and see where you’ve been able to ward off the insinuations and

the accusations of the Devil ? One day a young Christian came into a mission station in Korea to visit the man who had been instrumental in his conversion to Christ. After the customary greetings, the missionary asked the reason for his coming. “*I have been memorising some verses in the Bible,*” he said, “*and I want to quote them to you.*” He had walked hundreds of miles just to recite some Scripture to his father in the faith. The missionary listened as he recited without error the entire Sermon on the Mount. He commended the young man for his remarkable feat of memory, then cautioned that he must not only “*say,*” the Scriptures *but also practise them.* With glowing face, the young man responded. “*Oh, that is the way I learned them. I tried to memorise them but they would not stick, so I hot on this plan. First, I would learn a verse. Then I would practice what the verse said on a neighbour who was not a Christian. After that I found I could remember it.*” My we need to learn the Word of Truth and then go out and translate that truth into living righteousness.

In 1973 Los Angeles motorcycle officer Edwin Goulart bought a bullet proof vest for 50 dollars, and since that time he has been wearing the vest under his uniform. In September 1974, a motorist shot him with a .32 calibre pistol as he was writing out a ticket. Goulart suffered only a chest bruise because he had taken time to put on his bullet proof vest. My will you put on the breastplate of righteousness and keep it on ? For when you are caught in the thick of the Devils slander and accusations, there will be no time to put it on. But with it on, you will be invulnerable from the attacks of Satan.

