

1 December 2013

We are called, we labour and we are protected in Righteousness (Pt 3 Righteousness)

Today we continue our topical study of righteousness. In our previous study we covered three points; (1) seek righteousness, and (2) follow after righteousness and (3) thirst and hunger after righteousness. In this study we will look at three additional points; (1) believers are called in righteousness, and (2) we are to put on the breastplate of righteousness, and (3) we are to sow to ourselves in righteousness.

Let us add a little detail to our points:-

1. We are called in righteousness.

Is.42:6 I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

The Lord Jesus Christ said that He came to call the sinner to repentance, which means the lost law breaker is convicted in his heart; he then believes unto righteousness, and when he does so his sin is on Christ and he is imputed with Christ's righteousness. And then the Lord calls him in righteousness.

What does this mean? Well, when we look at the use of 'call' as it pertains to believers we know that; (i) we are the called of Jesus Christ (Rom.1: 6), and (ii) we are called to be saints (Rom.1: 7), and (iii) we are called unto the fellowship of Jesus Christ (1Cor.1: 9), and (iv) we are called to walk worthy of the vocation (Eph.4: 11), and (v) we are called unto liberty (Gal.5: 13), and (vi) we are called in one body (Col.3: 15), and (vii) we are not called unto uncleanness but unto holiness (1Thes.4: 7).

The call on a persons life begins according to Rom.8: 30 with his call to be saved, perhaps the Holy Spirit convicting him (see Jn.17: 7) and continues throughout the believers life and includes the call not unto uncleanness but in holiness. This is confirmed where Paul points out that when a person is saved they are a new creature in Christ (see 2Cor.5: 17), and that new creature is created in righteousness and true holiness (see Eph.4: 24).

So the saved sinner believes unto righteousness, is imputed with Christ's righteousness and then called in righteousness unto holiness. He does not believe unto uncleanness, is not left in his own sin, or called in evil, yet some church ministers today have convinced their congregations that sin is good and their minister is good when they sin, because science has proved that we are born with the disposition of sodomy. Even though the Holy Scriptures say that sodomy is an abomination before God (see Lev.18: 22). Quiet frankly, those 'ministers of God' who call sin good should remove themselves from the pulpit, because ministers of God are called to preach righteousness (Ps.40: 19 & 2Pet.2: 5) not uncleanness.

So for those ministers in the Anglican and Presbyterian Church in NZ who claim that sodomy is good because a person is born a sodomite, well I guess they could use the same argument for the remainder of the law. Because we are *all* born in sin (see Rom.5: 12), but Christians who believe the Holy Scriptures believe that their sin is on their Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, they believe that He *alone* bore their sin on Himself at Calvary, and they are imputed with His righteousness. And when He calls a believer to do any task for Him, whether administration, giving, preaching, teaching, or feeding the lambs, he calls the person in righteousness not uncleanness, because that is what the Bible says. That means He calls Christians to be an example of righteousness unto holiness (see Rom.6: 23), he calls them to live in purity, in uprightness, and in right standing. Now we know that none can live sinless lives as the Lord Jesus Christ did, but those who are called, are called to live each day as if they are righteous, striving daily, walking daily in the power of the Holy Spirit, in the sanctification of the daily reading of Scripture (Jn.17: 17) and dying to their sin (see 1Cor.15: 31).

You will know when the task you are doing in your church is one that God Almighty or your minister has called you to, because you will live and breath the words of God, your heart will seek righteousness not uncleanness, and certainly not be making excuses for your sin as the Sodomite minister does, and you will thirst and hunger for righteousness. And as you walk and demonstrate to the Lord your ability to walk with this attitude as David did, then you place yourself in the position of being called by God for greater responsibility. But, if your attitude is one of making excuses for your sin and others, or twisting Scripture to suit your sin, then if you "feel" called by God to do any thing, whether administration, giving or preaching it will not be God Almighty of the Scriptures that is calling you, but Satan who calls you, as he calls his ministers to deception, delays and lies. Before you think that such a statement is a little strong, why don't you put aside that thought for a moment and subject your thinking to 2Tim.4: 1-4, where Paul foretells of the time when churches will not be calling ministers of God unto righteousness, but calling them according to their own lusts. Let us read together verse three and four; "And the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables."

Imagine if a witch applied to Laidlaw College to train in the ministry but refused to give up their sorcery, and if the college accepted her, then the church called them, would they be called of God or of Satan? I suggest that if they are unrepentant, and believe they are called, yet their calling is contrary to the Holy Scriptures, then they are called of Satan, not God Almighty. They are hearing their call of their father the devil unto uncleanness, whereas believers are called unto righteousness.

2. Put on the breastplate of righteousness

Eph.6:14 *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*
See also Is.59: 17.

Both Paul and Isaiah talk about the breastplate of righteousness. In Isaiah it is the Lord that puts on our righteousness and this is confirmed in Is.61: 10, whereas in Eph.6: 14 the believer is encouraged to put on his armour in the battle, which includes the breastplate of righteousness.

Generally a Christian puts off something before they put on something, for example:-

Rom.13: 12 says "that we are to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light."

Eph.4: 22-24 says "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man...And that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Then there are occasions where the putting on is doing something in contrast to our sin or uncleanness, for example:-

Rom.13: 14 says "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."

Col.3: 8, 9, 10 & 12, where verses 8 & 10 say, "But now put off all these anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. And have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

1Thes.5: 7 & 8 says "For they that sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."

Then there are examples where we are to simply put on something, for example:-

Col.3: 14 "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Did you notice Col.3: 10 which spoke about the new man (a Christian) being "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Which means that the Christian is a new creature in Christ that *God* created (see also Jn.1: 13) after His image. Hence, our new man is created in the image of God, by God's Holy Spirit. And it is only this new man, the Christian, not the minister of Satan that puts on the breastplate of righteousness. We suggest that the minister of Satan would, in contrast put on the breastplate of uncleanness. And in this spiritual battle that we war in each day I would much rather be on the side of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who according to Holy Scripture will one day cast our enemy the devil and *his* angels in to the bottomless pit (see Rev.20: 1-3). You may not be able to see our adversary, but we see the fruits of his warfare and those of his disciples, whether they are blind to his manipulation and deceit or whether they are actively deceiving others. For a Christian who believes the Bible, there is nothing more important to learn of this battle and live each day as if the warfare they are in is a reality, and therefore they would put on the armour, and be as vigilant in this spiritual battle as the soldier in Afghanistan or Syria. And part of that armour is the breastplate of righteousness the piece of armour that covers the heart where we believe unto righteousness (see Rom.10: 10). Did you get that? The particular piece of armour that covers the heart, to protect from spears from the devil, where if we were to get a direct hit, we would be dead, is the breastplate of righteousness. The only thing that protects a man is to receive Christ's righteousness (which occurs after he is saved by believing the gospel of Christ crucified, because he is imputed with the righteousness of Christ), and the only thing that keeps a man from back sliding is his daily striving to walk uprightly with the righteousness of Christ protecting his chest. When we act in uncleanness we allow the devil to attack our heart, we allow his subtlety to deceive our heart from the truth.

The next time you do something that is contrary to the Scriptures check out if you feel pangs in your heart. If you do not, perhaps it is because you have become numb to the feeling, and made excuses for your sin. I suggest that pain is our unrighteousness, our uncleanness opening up the way for the devil to attack, hence we are to make no provision for the flesh (Rom.13: 14), we are not to feed the flesh with anything that is unclean. Is it any wonder that He does not call a man in uncleanness and it is only when a man purges himself (dies to the lusts of the flesh and of our eyes and our pride) that "he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, [and] prepared unto every good work" (2Tim 2:21).

Let us encourage the young in the faith who are not experienced in the battle, to daily put on the armour of God from Eph.6: 12-18, and for this point, let us encourage them to put on the breastplate of righteousness.

3. We are to sow to ourselves in righteousness

Hos.10: 12 *Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for [it is] time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.*

See also Phil.1: 11

Our verse says that we are to sow to ourselves in righteousness, and then when we go to Paul's writings to the church today, we establish that we are to be filled with the fruits of righteousness. And what is the seed and who is the sower? According to Lk.8: 11 the seed is the word of God and Matt.13: 37 points out that the good sower is the Son of man, and we know that believers are members of the body of Christ continuing his work here on earth and are therefore sowers of the word today. And according to 2Cor.9: 10 he that ministers seed to the sower both ministers bread for our food, and multiplies our seed sown, and hence increases the fruits of our righteousness. Therefore our brethren, our fellowsoldiers who sow seed increase the fruits of our righteousness, which elaborates on our points that we are to sow to ourselves in righteousness, because when we do, we increase the fruit of righteousness in our brethren.

And of course when we sow a seed in righteousness the fruit that is born from that seed is not uncleanness but righteousness, and hence Paul continues and expands the teaching from Hosea. Then Jam.3: 18 says, "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace". So when we sow to ourselves in righteousness we are preparing the seed to germinate into fruit that is righteous and peace. And we know that the fruit of the Holy Spirit of God is in righteousness and truth (see Eph.5: 9).

In our previous point we established that a believer is born, is created a new creature in righteousness and true holiness (see Eph.4: 24). And hence a true believer is never born in uncleanness and true filthiness. And our verse from Hosea and Phil.1: 11 affirms this conclusion, because the Holy Spirit of God which is given to every believer bears fruit of the Spirit of God, and it does so unto righteousness and truth. So again we affirm a minister of Satan cannot be a Christian because they are born in sin, yield unto iniquity and sow in unrighteousness, which is not the fruit of the Spirit of God, but the god of this world.

Let us remember that when we sow seeds we scatter a seed of the word of God and that seed contains an idea to change the hearts of the hearers. This suggests that the seed should be given out in small amounts, not a 20 ton truck full of biblical doctrine, because according to the Oxford dictionary a seed is a "unit of reproduction of a flowering plant, capable of developing into another such plant". It is a very small unit, that when watered germinates and grows in to fruit. So what does that mean for our point? If you want to put some time into sowing to yourselves in righteousness then be aware that if your righteousness either has no peace, no charity or is over the top with biblical doctrine when you are with those whom you want to plant the seed in, then it could be that the idea is too much and will struggle to take root. And remember that some of us sow and others water, but God gives the increase (see 1Cor.3: 7). So be careful that when we water or sow the seed we do so with charity and peace and we do so, not with what we think is righteousness, but with the pure words of Holy Scripture, so that we do not either destroy the seed that has been planted by another, or sow seed that is clothed in error. Because the Holy Spirit of God brings forth fruit in righteousness *and* truth, hence we need to ensure that our sowing is down in righteousness *and* truth.

Let us encourage each other to sow seeds of righteousness, that the Lord Jesus Christ would be glorified in our labours.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our third study on the topic of righteousness we have covered three points; (1) believers are called in righteousness, and (2) we are to put on the breastplate of righteousness, and (3) we are to sow to ourselves in righteousness.