

***“Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, Introduction —
The Seven Dimensions of the Mystery, Part 6, Section 2”***

Introduction:

Paul’s teaching is indispensable for the Church which is His Body. He was appointed as Apostle of the Gentiles and given the knowledge and resources to communicate that to those that would be saved and live under grace. But the teaching and preaching of that to believers today is essential for us all and the reception of that teaching is surely a requirement for living under the fullness of that grace that is so freely offered. That is the focus of our teaching today:

- ***The Exhortations of Paul in Romans & Galatians are Fundamental***
 - ***Righteousness is NOT in any way THROUGH THE LAW, PERIOD!***

Gal. 2:19-21

19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

- ***Here Paul makes such a bold statement indeed! But do we really understand it? Do we seek to understand? Will we take God at his word? What might the consequences be of NOT taking him at his word, a Word that is so high indeed ...***
- ***For Paul, this was of fundamental importance and not to be ever compromised: Gal. 2:20 “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” If we do not take God at his word here in these statements of eternal truth striking to the heart of gospel truth, what can be the outcome?***
- ***This says it all. For what he is teaching here is that because of the blessing beyond all blessings, that Christ dwells within us as our hope of glory BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST IN HIS DEATH, HIS BURIAL, AND HIS RESURRECTION. The benefits of this for every believer are astounding and we shall continue learning of them throughout all eternity.***

But the apostle also wants us to know them well now, for they are provide the basis for our spiritual warfare of which he writes here in Eph. 6.

- ***The Ephesian Exhortations Regarding Spiritual Warfare are Dispensationally Significant***
 - ***Our spiritual enemies, seek always to destroy the work of God. Since God is working today under the abundance of grace, it would follow that Satan's work would be otherwise, based on law, for example. So the issue is always, how is God working.***
 - ***There are therefore two realms of conflict revealed by Paul here, one on earth and the other in the heavenlies, and one great spiritual enemy who has this world as his playground, for he is the prince of this world.***

Our Outline for Today:

- ***Our Spiritual Warfare is Heavenly In Character, Not Earthly — Vv. 10-12***
- ***First of All, We Must Protect Our "Loins and Heart" — Vv. 13-14***

Next time:

- ***Then We Must Also Protect Our "Feet and Body" — Vv. 15-16***
- ***Finally, We Also Must Protect Our Minds — V. 17a***
- ***Additionally, We Have Been Well Prepared Offensively — V. 17b***
- ***We Should Never Enter Spiritual Conflict Without Prayer — Vv. 18-20***
 - ***Let's first read the Scripture verses from Ephesians, chapter 6, where the apostle outlines the spiritual warfare that we are all, under grace and its fullness, encouraged to engage in to God's glory and praise:***

Our Readings for Today:

[READ] Eph. 6:10-12

***10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.
11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.***

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places *[in the heavenlies]*...

[READ] Eph. 6:13-14

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

[READ] Eph. 6:15-16

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

[READ] Eph. 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

[READ] Eph. 6:18-20

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

- *Again! must restate what should be so clear, the revelation Paul is giving here is **Dispensationally Significant**. We know that from his use of the word “Mystery” or “Sacred Secret” in verse 19: “And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel ...”*
- *So this section of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is a teaching that is a part of the Mystery or Sacred Secret. **THE TEACHING HERE ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE DEFINES THE SEVENTH DIMENSION OF THE MYSTERY TEACHING WE HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING HERE.***

I. Our Spiritual Warfare is Heavenly In Character, Not Earthly:

Eph. 6:10-12

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places [in the heavenlies]...

- *This teaching may seem contrary to the evidence, but our apostle knows best. But he wants to remind us that our own strength is never sufficient for the battles ahead. We must prepare well for the attacks ahead of us for they will come as he so strongly exhorts here.*
- *One type of warfare is visible, the other invisible, but the scripture could not be clearer as to the source of our greatest threats — they are from a heavenly source and they are “spiritual”, not in the good sense but in the evil sense indeed.*
- *We are in a war even if we do not know or want it, so engage!*
- *Again, this may not seem true at all, but we need to take the apostle at his word.*
- *“Finally” is a word of alert and also of completion, for the apostle is finishing up his critically important teaching here in this letter. The Context here now switches to what he calls “spiritual warfare”: This introduces the teaching. Our most important enemies, we writes, are spiritual — and they are spirits, not of flesh and blood. So special enabling is essential for victory.*
- *Quickly, let’s look at this phrase by phrase:*
 - *“Be strong in the Lord”: And in NO OTHER!*
 - *“... and in the power of his might”: And there is the power and the glory.*
 - *“Put on the whole armor of God”: This is the armor for battle that God has provided to us for our use. Other armor can provide no defense against the enemy’s attacks.*
 - *“... that ye may be able to stand”: If one cannot stay standing one will fall in defeat.*
 - *“... against the wiles of the devil.”: The devils and demonic strategies are subtle and powerful. Never forget it.*

- *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood ...”: This may be a hard lesson to learn, but we really must be learning it or the consequences are not avoidable.*
 - *“... but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world...”: The list here is long and he clearly has abbreviated it. My, my.*
 - *“... against spiritual wickedness in high places [in the heavenlies]”: Yes, the enemies are spirits. But they are never good but evil. Take note, new age religions of this world. God is not on your side. He stands against you. And so must we!*
- *So the apostle has outlined his approach, to describe the various articles of self defense, and as we shall see, at the end, God has provided the offensive weapon of his choice as well.*
 - *First, then, we see a defensive group of provisions by Almighty God are listed and then the offensive will be revealed:*

II. First of All, We Must Protect Our “Loins and Heart”:

Eph. 6:13-14

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

- *I am sure when Paul wrote this he could nearly hear the response from some already coming forth. It would go like this perhaps: I didn't sign up for this battle. Wasn't I promised everything I wanted along with peace and safety as part of my salvation (like healing, spiritual fruit, etc.)? Wrong, the apostle is writing here. Whether you signed up for it or not, this is the reality: We are all vulnerable to the attacks of many enemies and we need to suit up and prepare for battles perhaps that we have never even conceived of.*
- *The ancient armor, we are told, was most importantly one that in two pieces covered the upper torso completely. It also went pretty low, to the loins as mentioned here. So this divinely designed and implemented “garment” was all one part of the armament.*

- *In summary, only the defensive and offensive weapons God has provided will allow us to stand against the crafty assaults of the spiritual foes that surround us.*
- *Now for the beginning of the list of defensive enablements, that which is most important to possess as we prepare for battle is God's provision to us of His Precious, Pure, and Powerful, TRUTH.*

The Truth, therefore, must be our starting point as we prepare for the battle ahead.

- *“The Truth”, is a key word for Paul. But the translators aren't as careful with the definite articles as they should be. That truth he has provided has many aspects and he enumerates them beginning with the protection for our hearts, the truth regarding our Righteousness.*

Here the reference is to “the righteousness”, clearly the imputed righteousness of our risen Lord Jesus, and not to our own righteousness. For our own righteousness could never be the basis for confidence sufficient for effective warfare. It can not provide a basis for a spiritual breastplate to protect the vital spiritual organs of life at all. So we are to always count on the former, of course, though satan and his emissaries will always try to convince us otherwise that our only enemies are physical and in this world.

- *But before we proceed note that the apostle had that wonderful passage from Isaiah's prophecy in his chapter 59 in mind here. For there the prophet wrote:*

Is. 59:1-17

1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear.

3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

4 None calleth for justice, nor *any* pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

5 They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper.

6 Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.

7 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.

8 The way of peace they know not; and *there is* no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

9 Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, *but* we walk in darkness.

10 We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if *we had* no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; *we are* in desolate places as dead men.

11 We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but *there is* none; for salvation, *but* it is far off from us.

12 For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions *are* with us; and *as for* our iniquities, we know them;

13 In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

14 And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

15 Yea, truth faileth; and he *that* departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw *it*, and it displeased him that *there was* no judgment.

16 And he saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that *there was* no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance [for] clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.

- *What Israel did not have we do! They still do not have their promised peace and righteousness. For they rejected their Intercessor, Who the Lord Himself. Praise be to Almighty God for his abundant grace!*
- *So what was needed was an Intercessor according to Is. 59 and only the Lord Himself was adequate to the task!*

The same was revealed to Abraham when he in obedience to God was about to offer up his only son. This is at the center of Biblical teaching on this grand subject of God's redemptive plan for sinners:

[READ] Gen. 22:7-8

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

- *And so in writing about the truth that transforms, he turns it seems by necessity of the Lord to God's Own Righteousness, the unique righteousness of the Lord God himself, as did the prophet Isaiah.*

Perhaps this word "righteousness" is the most important word in the Pauline revelation being found in his letter to the Romans alone 33 times and about 53 times in all of Paul's letters. So we will do the same here this morning and return to the word "truth" a little later as we finish today.

It was this word "righteousness" that captured Luther's mind and heart so long ago. It transformed mine as well some 50+ years ago when I read of it in the first chapter of the apostle Paul to the believers in Rome:

Rom. 1:16-17

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

- *A quick survey of Paul's use of this word will establish the far and then the near context for exhortations in chapter Eph. 6. Firstly, his use of the word "righteousness":*

Phil. 3:9. ... And be found in him, 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:

- *Here is an explicit statement of what Righteousness Paul is focused on. Then we look into Romans and finally, Ephesians to see that usage of this word continued:*

Rom. 3:21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

Rom. 3:25-26 Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, [I say], at this time his

righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Rom. 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Rom. 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

Rom. 5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom. 10:3-4

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

2 Cor. 5:21 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.

Gal. 5:4-5

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

- *With that background we now return to some selected verses about the truth beginning in Ephesians. Here we see the context of our exhortation in chapter 6, verse 14:*

Eph. 1:13 In whom ye also [trusted], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

- *Or the parallel in Col. 1:*

Col. 1:3-6

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which* ye have to all the saints,

5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

6 Which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard of *it*, and knew the grace of God in truth:

- *The others are also blessed:*

Eph. 4:15-16

15 ... But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Eph. 5:8-9

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are* ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

9 (For the fruit of the Spirit [*light*] *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

***Gal. 5:7* Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?**

- *So, to summarize our teaching for today: It is the possession of and knowledge of God's truth of grace though Paul upon which we stand as we prepare for spiritual battle. There is no other foundation firm enough. And that is all about Christ's righteousness, imputed to our accounts in that very moment of eternal salvation, when we believed the gospel of God's grace.*
- ***First of All, We Must Protect Our "Loins and Heart" with this truth of Christ's own righteousness imputed to our accounts:***

Eph. 6:13-14

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

- *Don't forget it! It is just that important. Amen. So wonderful indeed!*