

***“Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, Introduction —
The Seven Dimensions of the Mystery, Part 6, Section 3”***

Introduction:

We have begun to study Paul’s letter to the Colossians. And because he focuses his introduction to that letter on verses that directly refer to “the mystery”, in this case in chapter 1 and verses 26 and 29, for the sake of our understanding, I thought it appropriate to look at all the uses of this important word in Paul’s letters. That subject has been our dwelling place for a while as we considered each of the seven dimensions of that mystery revealed through Paul for the Church which is His Body:

Col. 1:23-29

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Paul writes here something so important that we surely cannot miss it, the it is through the preaching, warning, and teaching of all that the church is to made “complete” “in Christ Jesus”, verse 28. So these dimensions of the Sacred Secret, the Mystery Revelation through Paul, are so very important.

Today we continue that study looking at the last of those dimensions, the spiritual warfare of believers today. Paul mentions that word “mystery” in Eph. 6:19 in the context of spiritual warfare. And that is where we find ourselves today and also next time as we plan to finish this subject then, reaching that verse 19 and the end of his letter to the Ephesians.

Review:

- *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*
- *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]...

- *So, the apostle writes here, we are in a war even if we do not know or want it. We must prepare well, he states with great certainty, for the attacks ahead of us will come as he so strongly exhorts here. We must therefore prepare for these battles that will come. This kind of warfare is invisible and from a heavenly source. This is “spiritual” warfare, not in the good sense but in the most evil sense we can conceive.*
- *Our most important enemies, we writes here, therefore are spiritual and the enemies we shall face are spirits, not of flesh and blood. So special enabling is essential for victory.*
- *The apostles here then outlines his teaching on the spiritual warfare we face today, as members of the Body of Christ, living in the realm of his abundant grace in this Dispensation of the Grace of God. The first five chapters of this letter are the introduction to that teaching.*
- *He first describes the articles of self-defense that the Lord has already provided for our use, and then, at the end, we see how God has also provided the offensive weapon of his choice as well.*
- *First of All, We Must Protect Our “Loins and Heart”*
 - *We are all vulnerable he states here and must prepare properly for battle as any soldier must using the tools that have been provided.*
 - *Now, right at the beginning of the list of defensive enablements, is that which is most important to possess as we prepare for battle: It is God’s provision to us of His Precious, Pure, and Powerful, TRUTH.*

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;

- *The Truth, therefore, he writes must be our starting point as we prepare for the battle ahead. This is of critical important IF WE WOULD STAND IN BATTLE WHEN THE ATTACKS COME UPON US.*
- *“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 now beginning with the protection for our all the critical parts of our beings (the head excluded), truth regarding our Breastplate of Righteousness.*

Here the reference is to “the righteousness”, clearly the imputed righteousness of our risen Lord Jesus, and not to our own righteousness. 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, his righteousness. Satan and his emissaries, of course, will always try to convince us otherwise us that our only enemies are physical and in this world and that therefore our own righteousness, religious and legal at best, will be sufficient for victory. Satan and his emissaries will always, however, be the victors in such a battle. For our own righteousness could never be the basis for confidence sufficient for effective warfare.

- *Last time we took note that the apostle here had that wonderful passage from Isaiah chapter 59 in mind here. Remember these fateful words of the prophet and yet they are words of hope as well, for an Elect Nation of Jews yet future, to be gathered just before Christ’s second coming:*

Is. 59:14-17

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...

- *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 in freely providing to us the Lord God's Own Righteousness, the unique righteousness of the Lord himself. For he is our righteousness, his act of selfless love in dying for our sins once for all, has now been credited to our accounts as our own! Praise God for such unlimited grace.*
- *It seems that this word "righteousness" may be the most important (or one of the most important) word in the Pauline revelation. For it is found in his letter to the Romans alone 33 times and about 53 times in all of Paul's letters. We looked at many of those verses last time and then also some where we find the equally important Pauline word, "truth". Here are a couple of them to remember today:*

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.

- *In other words, those who are already just or righteous shall also live by faith. So the righteousness was already a reality FIRST! For the word "just" simply means "righteous". Now that is something that should convince any doubter as it did Martin Luther so long ago. Some other verses are these:*

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:

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

- *See also Rom. 10:3-4 & 2 Cor. 5:21. With that background we looked in Ephesians itself to see how the apostle introduced these great subjects of "righteousness" and "salvation" and "truth" there:*

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, *And there is a parallel passage in Col. 1:3-6.*

- *So, to summarize our teaching last time, it is the possession of and knowledge of God's truth of grace through 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. The previous chapter here in Ephesians says it so well from a very practical and non-theological perspective:*

Eph. 5:8-10

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 *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

- *And so, here in chapter 6 in the context of spiritual warfare, he teaches that 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 [*Christ's righteousness, not ours, except by imputation!*]

- *This is his righteousness, his righteous act in dying for our sins, in particular. Don't forget it! It is just that important. Amen. Romans chapter 5 teaches this so well as do some other passages too:*

[READ] Rom. 5:16-19

16 And not as *it* was by one that sinned, so *is* the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification.

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.)

18 Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life.

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Today's Teaching:

- *We Must Also Protect Our "Feet and Body" — Vv. 15-16*
- *Finally, We Also Must Protect Our Minds — V. 17a*

Next Time:

- *Additionally, We Have Been Well Prepared Offensively — V. 17b*
- *We Should Never Enter Spiritual Conflict Without Prayer — Vv. 18-20*

I. We Must Also Protect Our "Feet and Body":

- *So we are preparing our defenses, with the truth, the faith, our breastplate and shield ... And now the next part of our preparations:*

Eph. 6:15-16

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

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

- *"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" and "Above all, taking the shield of [the] faith": **Peace, the gospel of the peace of God, and the shield of THE Faith! Each of these is dispensationally significant, meaning they are based on realities that were not present for other believers living under other dispensational plans. My, my, isn't this wonderful? These are our blessings! Ours!***
- *Again the translators were not careful enough with their use or non-use of definite articles, unfortunately. For here the reference is to the body of teachings, the doctrines, handed down to us.*
 - *The difference is significant, the difference between faith and the faith, between good news and the good news, between truth in its general character and "the" truth in particular.*

- ***What is this gospel? Is it not the gospel of the grace of God — Grace and peace through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other gospel for Paul, see Gal. 1:***

Gal. 1:6-7

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

- ***Then we come to the shield of the faith delivered to the saints by Paul, of course. The definite article gives emphasis to this being the body of doctrine and not a personal faith that is his focus here. The message is that without this shield we are in some real trouble when it comes to spiritual warfare. It is easy to see why when we consider that it is through the body of doctrine given to the churches through Paul that we learn what God is doing today under grace, during this Dispensation of the Grace of God.***

Without that we cannot really know what God is doing today and what is distinctive for today. It is that simple. Without it we cannot count on or reckon upon it as we are exhorted to be doing.

So it is critically important for us to know this. Satan's warfare is directly focused against God's working since it is his own working that he is promoting for his own glory and that is always contrary to the Lord God's work with its intended glory and honor where that alone is due. For only he is worthy.

II. Finally, We Also Must Protect Our Minds:

Eph. 6:17a And take the helmet of salvation ...:

- ***And then the helmet to protect our minds — our eternal salvation. A conviction regarding this is essential if our minds are to be protected against the assault of our spiritual foes.***
 - ***Salvation, in this context, what is it? Well, without the Pauline revelation regarding this salvation, under grace, and not under works of law, we cannot know the Lord God's view on this subject.***

The near context here in Ephesians is most important:

[READ] Eph. 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: And then the rest of Paul's powerful teaching on salvation under grace is also so needed.

[READ] 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 [the] righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) [This is all based on the work of Christ in his dying for our sins...]

2 Thess. 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

1 Tim. 2:4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

[READ] Tit. 2:11-14

11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

... [there are so many more] ...

[READ] Acts 28:28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.

- ***“Salvation” is an interesting and important word, of course, and Paul uses it often. It is critical therefore that we grasp its significant in each of its three tenses, past, present, and future, and in each usage of the word know which the apostle is referring to:***

- ***Past tense: Referring to our sins with their unavoidable penalty. This has been fully paid already, Paul writes.***
- ***Present tense: Referring to the power of sin still within us. The provision of victory has been made. Will we use it?***
- ***Future tense: Referring to the presence of sin within us. In due time, the promise even goes to this extreme. No sin will enter heaven's glory. The Lord will remove it entirely.***
- ***“The helmet of the salvation” then is a significant aspect of the defensive side of spiritual warfare. For the helmet protects the mind against the enemy’s attack. So our constant and unchangeable knowledge of the gift of salvation protects us when the enemy comes calling with lies about our “salvation still to be earned” or “needing to be proven by good works” somehow. NO! WE POSSESS THIS SALVATION ALREADY AND CAN NEVER LOOSE IT BY WORKS SINCE WORKS WERE NOT NEEDED TO GAIN IT. IT WAS A FREE GIFT!***
- ***This helmet of our eternal salvation is now directly connected with the only offensive weapon available to us, “the sword of the spirit”, which is “the word of God”:***

Reflections on the Teaching Today:

EMPHASIZE TAKING GOD AT HIS WORD — WHAT HAS BEEN STATED AS TRUE FOR US SAINTS — WE MUST COUNT ON THAT. THAT IS THE KEY TO OUR DEFENSE AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL ATTACKS OF THE ENEMY. OUR VICTORY DEPENDS UPON IT.

BUT THERE IS MORE, OUR OFFENSIVE WEAPON AGAINST THE ENEMY — THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD! NEXT TIME.