

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

Review:

- ***We Have Been Taught by Paul Concerning The Dynamic of the Christian Life, Under Grace, Given for Our Understanding — In Galatians and In Romans:***
 - ***The Teaching According to Galatians***
 - ***Galatians chapter 5, and especially verses 16 through 25, contain the most detailed teaching in Paul’s letters on how the Lord God works in a believer. Let’s read it again.***

Gal. 5:16-18, 25

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. [the spiritual life]

***18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.
...[the lists follow]***

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

- ***The life of the believer being blessed by reception of the abundance of grace (Rom. 5:17)) is so much more than law keeping as the apostle writes here. It is the difference between the “fruit of the spirit” and the “works of the flesh” as Paul outlined here in a few words. The one therefore is all about fruit, the other is all about the works. The contrast is as concretely drawn here as possible.***
 - ***The summary statement of Paul’s Positive teaching is stated here in verses 16-18 where we see the two different living dynamics or ways of life in operation, the one, of the spirit (or spiritual) and the other of the flesh (or carnal) — spiritual on the one hand, carnal on the other. But are we grasping this distinction as so well stated here? And this is the challenge for us again today here as we open Paul’s letters together.***

- ***To summarize the teaching, Paul states here in Galatians 5, verse 24, the reason behind this so boldly worded declaration: Our flesh has already been crucified! The apostle uses such strong and compelling language here, doesn't he, because the fact is that God has already worked to defeat the flesh at the cross but the believer may refuse that teaching by attempting by the sin nature to "better oneself" through religious means, attempting to defeat the flesh using the very power of the flesh itself! Of course, that effort can never succeed as he wrote in the early verses of chapter 3:3:***

Gal. 3:3. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

- ***But it should strike home in us readers. For attempting to use the flesh to improve the flesh according to a legal standard can never succeed. The whole teaching regarding the dynamic life of the believer under grace is stated in these three verses, verses 16-18:***

Gal. 5:16-18

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

- ***Verse 16 states a condition, in effect, that if (and when) a believer is "walking in the spirit" he is NOT ABLE to fulfill the lusts or strong desires of the flesh. This is NOT saying what so many want it to say, that we SHOULD NOT but rather that we WILL NOT. So SHALL=WILL here according to the Greek text.***

Then and only then the spirit dwelling within us wages direct and victorious warfare against our sin nature thereby disabling its power to influence us as long as we are "walking in the spirit".

That is what the rest of that verse means, "so that ye

cannot do the things that ye would.”

Why? Because then the Spirit is waging a victorious battle against the flesh. This is surely a wonderful teaching indeed and is so distinctive of how God is working today under grace. This was not true in other dispensations when no one possessed a new nature and the work of the Holy Spirit was so controlling.

- ***Cast yourself onto his grace and accept the free gift! It is that simple, because of verse 24: Those In Christ “have crucified the flesh with its lusts” All who are in Christ! The key to this life of living above the desires of the flesh is here, in reckoning upon this precious truth that having been crucified with Christ our reckoning upon this truth allows the spirit to subdue the flesh therefore allowing the new nature’s desires to be borne in us as the fruit of the spirit.***

Isn’t God’s abundant grace so wonderful? Amen.

○ ***The Teaching According to Romans:***

- ***We looked Romans, chapter 7 last time where we saw how the apostle revealed the life of a believer who has chosen to live under a legalistic system Rom. the inside out. He writes here of a person he seems to know well, and he should, of course, for that person is Paul himself! And there is a false teaching that goes to these verses for support which we must consider. For here the apostle describes the conflicts in the life of a believer who is “carnal”, NOT those in the life of an unbeliever***
- ***Paul was a believer and writes here about being a believer. What he writes cannot possibly be true of an unbeliever:***

Rom. 7:7-9, 13

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence [= lust or strong desires]. For without the law sin was dead.

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

...

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

- ***Paul was a believer and writes here about being a believer. What he writes cannot possibly be true of an unbeliever though many try to interpret it that way. He writes here about giving up the liberty that he had in Christ under the sufficiency and fullness of his grace, for the sake of a legal righteousness defined by the Law. Apparently he thought that Law and Grace were somehow compatible.***

The result was not what he had expected. Sin became even more sinful as it was in fact magnified under the domination of a law, and, even more significantly, the Law of Moses to which he refers here.

- ***Dispensational Contrasts Are Seen Throughout This Pauline Teaching***
 - ***The Law Versus Grace contrast is seen everywhere. Take note!***
 - ***This signifies clearly a change in dispensation, first of all regarding the gospel and then also regarding the dynamic of living for the believer. For it is indeed “The Reckoning that Counts” as a very well written small booklet by Miles Stanford is titled.***
 - ***There are also other dispensationally significant teachings that we must understand well. For the differences are often more important than the similarities. This is all about what God is doing. If we do not know that, how can we possibly know what we should be doing as coworkers with the Lord of glory? Think about it. That is a profound question indeed. And we do need to know how to answer it. These differences are often in the way the Holy Spirit is working in the lives of believers.***

Our Outline Today:

- ***The Exhortations of Paul in Romans & Galatians are Fundamental***
- ***The Ephesian Exhortations Regarding Spiritual Warfare are Dispensationally Significant***

- ***Dispensational Considerations Make All the Difference for Our Understanding***

I. 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?***
- ***For Paul, this was of fundamental importance and not to be ever compromised: “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.”***
- ***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.***

II. 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.***
 - ***Two realms of conflict are revealed by Paul realms of conflict and one great spiritual enemy who has the world as his playground, for he is the prince of this world.***
 - ***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:

[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.

- *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. Let's*

look at some of the teaching from a high level today and plan on a more in-depth teaching next time.

III. Dispensational Considerations Make All the Difference for Our Understanding:

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]*...

- *The Context here concerns what he calls “spiritual warfare”: This introduces the teaching. Our most important enemies, we writes, are spiritual – and they are spirits...*

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;

- *Defensive, tools are first listed here: truth and [the] righteousness, Christ's, not ours. 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.*
- *The translators aren't as careful with the definite articles as they should be. Here the reference is to “the” righteousness, clearly the imputed righteousness of our risen Lord Jesus, and not to our own righteousness which could be no breastplate to protect the vital organs at all. We are to always count on the former of course though satan and his emissaries will always try to convince us otherwise.*

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.

- *Peace, the peace of God, and 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?*

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

- *And then the helmet to protect our minds — our eternal salvation. A conviction regarding this is essential of our minds are to be protected under the assault of our spiritual foes.*
- *And then only now does he list an offensive weapon — the sword of the spirit. Here is the only offensive weapon at our disposal. This weapon must be prepared and ready to use but held in abeyance until all our defenses are in place and we are ready for truly aggressive spiritual battle using the sword of the spirit which is the specific “utterance” of God that is appropriate for the attack at hand.*
- *This is not the “general word”, the “logos” of God, but rather the specific “utterance”. These are to be found in scripture. Next time we plan on looking more carefully at this teaching, so study this week in preparation for that.*

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.***

- *So spiritual warfare is at the heart of Paul's teaching and here he identifies the Gospel of Grace as part of the Sacred Secret. Amen, and so be it. The gospel of grace is at the heart of spiritual warfare as it's truth is Satan's greatest enemy. So it must always be boldly presented and always, without compromise, defended. Amen.*
- *Paul's prayer here is regarding all saints but also for himself. Even Paul was subject to the attacks of the enemy, so surely we are too. Where is our boldness? Where is the power in our witness?*

