

Sunday June 7th 2009
To the Church of Ephesus – Part Sixteen

1). Eph 6:10 ¶ *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

a). As we saw last week the final chapter of the Book of Ephesians begins to draw to a close with concluding instructions to those in pursuit of the Kingdom of the Heavens with regards to their engagement with the rulers of this age, those who are the original rulers over the earth, in what we know as the spiritual warfare.

b). Those who would overcome the world, the flesh and the devil – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life who will one day take the Heavenly land would of necessity have to be continually clothed in the whole armor of God, so as to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

c). And also as we saw last week, the weapons of our warfare in this conflict, which would encompass the whole armor of God, are spiritual weapons that are mighty in God.

d). 2Co 10:4 *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*

e). What we may conclude then is that during the course of what we might perceive as the mundane of our everyday life is an epic struggle between the powers of darkness and the Kingdom of light. Between those who already hold the scepter of rulership and those whose future is to hold it.

f). It is the wiles of the devil, his great deception, that has led so many to believe that this struggle takes place on some ethereal plane beyond our reach rather than the reality that it takes place in our hearts and minds in the midst of the ordinary.

g). Maybe we have never realized before the significance of our actions and our speech in the midst of our routine. There is nothing that we do or say that has neutrality in this conflict - Mt 12:30 *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.*

h). Mt 12:36 *"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.*

i). It's shocking to think isn't it that the very things that maybe we thought didn't really matter, may be the very things by which we stand or fall –
1Co 10:12 *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

2). To give us some perspective let's spend a moment bringing to our remembrance the very foundation of the present kingdom under Satan –
Isa 14:13 *For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north;*

a). To put it simply, it's pride.

b). Seduced by his own magnificence Satan perceived his own wisdom to be greater than the wisdom of God, and sought to replace God's will with his own resulting in his attempt to exalt his throne above the stars of God – to elevate himself above all the other angels, considering himself to be superior to them, thereby becoming God himself - the focus here then is self, self gratification, self exultation, self-centered.

c). The focus on self and self exaltation as a result of pride would have to be at the heart of the motivation of the angels who rebelled with Satan. The continuing jockeying for position amongst the fallen angels witnessed in the conflicts upon the earth would give testimony that these remain at the very heart of the kingdom of darkness and are elements of the darkness itself - Da 10:20 *Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come.*

d). The good news is - 1Pe 2:9 *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

e). And because we have been called out of darkness into the light we should take heed to the following - Ro 13:12 *The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*

f). Putting on the armor of light, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and putting on the whole armor of God are all then different ways of saying the same thing and are themselves contained within the admonition to 'be strong in the Lord and the power of His might'.

g). As we cast off the works of darkness, works associated with self, so we can put on the armor of light – that which has to do with humility and not pride.

h). As we put on the Lord Jesus Christ, so we are putting on the new man who is formed in the image of Him who created him – and if we are Christ like in how we live so we will make no provision for our flesh.

i). As we put on the whole armor of God so we stand against the wiles of the devil as he seeks to connect with us through our predisposition to pride and self righteousness.

j). And all of these are possible because our strength is in the Lord and in the power of His might. And this is not a nebulous statement, but one with its foundation in the first chapter of Ephesians - Eph 1:19 *and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.*

k). The power of His might in which we are strong is the same mighty power which He worked in Christ Jesus when He raised Him from the dead.

l). We are dealing with the power given to us by grace to live a resurrected life in the spirit because of the resurrection of Christ.

m). It is only in resurrection, as we come from the place of death by the power of the Spirit, that fruit can be produced in respect of the Kingdom – Ge 1:9 ¶ *Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. 10 And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 13 So the evening and the morning were the third day.*

n). And fruit is produced in resurrection as we cast off the unprofitable works of darkness, putting on the armor of light – as we put off the old man and put on the new, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and making no provision for the flesh – as we put on the whole armor of God so as to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil as he seeks to make covenant with our pride and self righteousness.

3). We have already seen that Christ's encounter with Satan in the wilderness was the ultimate contest between pridefulness and faithful obedience to the will of God

Mt 4:8 *Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" 11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.*

a). Here we see Satan offering Christ everything that is ultimately to be His, but offering it to Him in the present without His having to endure the suffering that had to precede His exaltation.

b). Although Christ was not susceptible to the temptation, the temptation itself was real and appealed to pride, fear and compromise.

c). Christ however deflects the attention from Himself and places it where it needs to be *For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve*

d). And in this statement is not only the Lord's acceptance of going to the cross, something we would see again later in the garden as a conformation and practical application of what He says here to Satan - Lu 22:42 *saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."*

e). But also the key to our own victory in the spiritual warfare.

f). Just as the scepter of rulership was lost in a garden, so it is regained in a garden. And which fruit we eat will determine which garden we have affinity with.

4). The scripture records - 1Co 2:7 *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

a). The rulers of this age had no knowledge of the power of the resurrection, because if they had they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

b). For in the power of His resurrection is the power for those who would be joint heirs with Christ to live a resurrected life in the power of the Spirit, thereby overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil.

c). In crucifying Christ they opened the door, so to speak, for all who would pick up their cross daily and follow Him. The very ones, who in that future day, will replace them as rulers over the earth.

5). To the eyes of the rulers of this age, and to every natural eye looking on, the crucifixion of Christ did not look like a victory.

a). Mt 27:26 ¶ *Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified..... 29 When they had twisted a*

crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. 31 And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

Lu 23:39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

b). And scripture's own commentary on this event in no way fits the model of the super hero - *1Pe 2:22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;*

c). Here we see the acceptance of undeserved brutality and humiliating treatment without a word of reproach or the raising of a hand of resistance.

d). And why? Well the answer is in our scripture – He ‘committed Himself to Him who judges righteously’.

e). To have done anything else would have taken the Lord into pride as He would have sought to justify Himself in the face of His accusers.

f). It is as the scripture says - *Ro 12:19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.*

g). Our problem is that we want to be justified in the eyes of others now, so that our ego won't be damaged, or we won't lose face.

h). As for Christ so for us - *Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." Heb 12:2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

i). Christ's actions then were determined by where His focus was. He knew what was necessary to bring about His reign with His joint heirs in the age to come and therefore acted in accordance with what He knew.

j). Likewise our focus can be one of two places – this age or the age to come. Depending which it is will determine the way we live.

6). In the eyes of the rulers of this age and by extension the eyes of the world, Christ's actions at His crucifixion appeared to be weakness. And within the thinking of many Christians meekness and weakness have become interchangeable words.

a). But let's remember something - *Mr 11:15 So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold*

in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 16 And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. 17 Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

b). This is not weakness, but zealousness for God.

c). Mt 26:53 *"Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?"*

d). The Son of God could have at any time called on the complete power of the Godhead to change His circumstances, but chose not to – here is strength, here is courage, here is the power that overcomes the world, the flesh and the devil.

e). Meekness is never weakness, but power under control.

f). Meek = Greek word – ‘praus’ = apparently a primary word; mild, i.e. (by implication) humble:--meek.

g). Consider Moses - Nu 12:3 *(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)*

h). The same Moses who smashed the tablets of the Law and went through the camp of Israel with a sword putting to death those who rebelled against the Lord - Ex 32:19 *So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. 20 Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it.....26 then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, "Whoever is on the LORD'S side-come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. 27 And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.'" 28 So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.*

7). And with both our examples here of Christ in the temple and Moses in the camp of Israel we have a picture in relation to ourselves - 1Co 6:19 *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*

a). In the cleansing of the Temple we can see the cleansing of our own temple, where the deeds of the flesh are not to be tolerated but are to be cast out.

b). And on the death in the camp of Israel we see the same thing as we put to death the deeds of the body – without mercy - Ro 8:13 *For if you live according to*

the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

c). And what does the scripture say? - Mt 5:5 *Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.*

d). Do we have the ability to take charge of our circumstances? Yes, we do. Can we seek to justify ourselves in the eyes of others? Yes, we can. Is it within our power to avenge ourselves for a wrong that's done to us? Yes, it is.

e). But here is where being meek takes effect as we choose to take what we can do and lay it aside in favor of trusting God, because it is not the present that is our focus, but our appearance at the Judgment Seat with a view to the age to come.

f). Moses humility and Christ's humility is not seen in weakness, but in absolute faithful obedience to the Word of God.

g). Likewise, our humility is in setting self aside as we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God - and that place of submission to the Lord is then expressed through our relationships with one another in faithful obedience to the word.

8). And so to bring this over to some of the examples we have already looked at in our study of Ephesians what we will see is this –

a). Eph 5:21 ¶ *submitting to one another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*

b). Pride says, 'No, I'll only submit if I agree with what he says.'

c). Fear says, 'No, I can't trust him to make the right decisions.'

d). The world says, 'No, you'll just be a doormat.'

e). And right here is the spiritual warfare – the husband might be the worst 'head' imaginable but faith says, 'Yes, because I don't lean on my own understanding, but trust the Lord'.

f). Right here is where we overcome the world, the flesh and the devil as we refuse to be caught in the tempter's snare.

g). Right here is where the battle rages as we lay down our life now, that we may pick it up again then.

9). Eph 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,*

a). Pride says, 'No, she needs to do what I want'.

b). Fear says, ‘No, I’ll only love her if she loves me back so I won’t get hurt’.

c). The world says, ‘No - stand up and be a man and put her in her place.’

d). And right here is the spiritual warfare – the wife might be the most unlovable, unreasonable woman imaginable, but faith says, ‘Yes, because I don’t lean on my own understanding, but trust in the Lord.’

e). Right here is where we overcome the world, the flesh and the devil as we refuse to be caught in the tempter’s snare.

f). Right here is where the battle rages as we lay down our life now, that we may pick it up again then.

10). *1Pe 2:18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. 19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.*

a). Pride says, ‘No, I’m not going to be treated like that’.

b). Fear says, ‘No, what will my co-workers think of me?’

c). The world says, ‘No, sue’.

d). Right here is the spiritual warfare – the ‘master’ might be the most warped, demanding, demeaning individual imaginable, but faith says, ‘Yes, because I don’t lean on my own understanding, but trust in the Lord’.

e). Right here is where we overcome the world, the flesh and the devil as we refuse to be caught in the tempter’s snare.

f). Right here is where the battle rages as we lay down our life now, that we may pick it up again then.

g). I think by now we get the picture.

11). In none of our examples here does faithful obedience appear to the natural eye as victory. In fact to the natural eye it appears weak and wimpy. And the nature of the battle is such that no one may ever know it’s taking place. Again something that attacks the heart of our pride.

a). To overcome our pride, conquer our fear and refuse to be conformed to the world will often take courage and strength of enormous proportions.

b). It all appears contrary to what we would think to be true, or even what we were taught was true.

c). But look what the scripture says - *Php 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those*

under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

d). Col 2:15 *Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it*

e). Lu 22:69 *"Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God."*

f). 1Pe 5:6 *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,*

g). Jas 1:12 *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

12). Eph 6:14 *Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*

a). The whole armor of God then as it relates to our examples from earlier is simply this – having our waist girded with truth is entering into this conflict with sincerity of heart. Being truthful in our determination to engage the enemy in the way that scripture describes. Deciding to be doers of the word and not hearers only. Without this sincerity the rest of the armor cannot be put on.

b). The breastplate of righteousness would reference the righteous acts that will come from the metamorphosis as the word transforms us and in this we see the dying to self and walking in the Spirit – not my will but Your will be done.

c). Our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace speaks of peace with God and the peace of God. We have peace with God through Christ's sacrifice for our eternal redemption. And we can have the peace of God through our complete trust in Him - Php 4:6 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

d). Both aspects of the gospel of peace need to be in place if we are not to stumble when our enemy comes.

e). Above all we are to take the shield of faith with which we can quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And this really is self explanatory. It is our faith, our believing what God has said and then acting upon it that will protect us from the temptation to sin and from receiving the lie. This is primary piece of armor that will ensure we are not overcome - 1Jo 5:4 *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.*

f). The helmet of salvation is explained in - 1Th 5:8 *But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.*

g). It is here we find the anchor to our soul as we look to the hope that is set before us. It is the absolute certainty of the hope that must govern our choices and is the context in which the renewing of our mind is to take place.

h). And right alongside the helmet of salvation is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

i). As the enemy's tempting blow comes so we parry it with the shield of faith and then wield our own blow upon him – 'It is written...'

j). And we do it in the ordinary by being a wife, being a husband, being a father, being a child, being a bondservant, being a master, by obeying the governing authorities, by being submissive to those who rule over us, by doing nothing through selfish ambition or conceit, by considering all men better than ourselves, by loving one another in the way that God in Christ loved us.

13). Now more than ever do we need to stand and having done all to stand. And it is only as we prostrate ourselves before the Lord in total submission that we are able to stand upright with our feet shod with the gospel of peace.

a). Eph 6:18 *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints - 19 ¶ and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

b). And so the final admonition – with respect to this great conflict we are to pray continually for one another and we are to be watchful for ourselves and for each other because of the craftiness of our enemy. And we are to pray for the going forth of the word in whatever context the Lord would have it spoken – whether here, in the Bronx or in Kenya – for every soul is precious in the sight of God and the field has been sown in preparation for the harvest.

c). And for ourselves let me exhort you – let us not rot on the vine, but take the nourishing and the cherishing and the pruning that the Lord gives us and let's produce fruit 100 fold to the glory of God by our Lord Jesus Christ.

d). The only question that remains for us is, 'How courageous a warrior are we prepared to be as the circumstances of our life unfold before us?' As it is in the degree of courage we have in going to the cross I respect of our circumstances that our inheritance will be reckoned - Lu 9:23 *Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*