

Sunday May 31st 2009
To the Church of Ephesus – Part Fifteen

1). Eph 6:10 ¶ *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*

a). The tenth verse of the sixth and last chapter of Ephesians begins with the word, ‘finally’.

b). What then follows are the concluding instructions that are to be given to those in pursuit of the Kingdom within the context of all that has gone before.

c). We have seen how this context began with laying the doctrine of the coming Kingdom of Christ - Eph 1:7 *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.*

d). And then with the Kingdom firmly established how the detail of what God has done for us personally was brought into view - Eph 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

e). Paul then drew attention to his own Apostleship to make clear the purpose that God had given to him with regards to the proclamation of the Kingdom and his ministry to those who are called to it - Eph 3:8 *To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.*

f). And with all this clearly in place came the call to personal holiness to those who would choose to be the recipients of the Kingdom –

Eph 4:1 ¶ *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 ¶ with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

g). And this was followed by the command to be continually filled with the Spirit which would bring about the metamorphosis within us in order that we would have the correct Biblical perspective on our relationships with one another as it is only through these relationships that our being humbled under the mighty hand of God is demonstrated - Eph 5:17 *Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 ¶ submitting to one another in the fear of God.*

h). Everything that we see here in this Book has to do with the absolute certainty of Christ's Kingdom, and the personal responsibility we have to put the scriptures into practice so that we may be found worthy to participate in the Kingdom administration with Him.

i). In the verses of this Book we can see in a very practical way that which is referenced in - 2Pe 1:3 *as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,*

j). It is without doubt that in the verses of Ephesians we have a succinct presentation of what it takes to be an overcoming Christian. And a poignant reminder of what it was the Church of Ephesus left when they left their first love.

k). And it is without doubt that the struggles for the original recipients of this letter were much the same as our own. However, being blessed to have their example to look back on we can determine not to leave our first love but to keep pressing on – Php 3:14 *I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

i/ And here would be a reality check for us – is the pursuit of the Kingdom really our first love, or is it what we do when there is nothing else more important?

ii/ And do we really believe that He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness? Because if so we really have no excuses.

l). It is the extraordinary power of faith in us if we do believe this, as we press toward the goal, that says, 'I don't feel this way, yet I choose to believe, I don't understand and yet I choose to obey'. It is no wonder that the scripture says - 1Jo 5:4 *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.*

m). And so, in order to make sure we are absolutely clear as to what is involved here we are told to finally *be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*

n). Our ability to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life - will not be found within our own resources but in our total obedience to the commands of Christ. It is in our complete insufficiency that He is found to be more than sufficient –

2Co 12:9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

o). *2Co 13:4 For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.*

2). The scriptures that we see in the last Chapter of Ephesians make very plain that our personal holiness and our scripturally correct relationships do not exist in a vacuum and are not just part of the proof of our worthiness to rule, although they certainly are, but are also invaluable to us as we engage in the spiritual warfare - *Eph 6:11 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). And again here as we read these verses the heavenly realm of the Kingdom comes sharply into focus. It is a realm that has been occupied for unspecified ages by Satan and his angels and is a realm that they have no intention of giving up.

b). The Church, as we have already seen, has been called to be the future occupants of this realm as it is promised them as an inheritance as a joint heir with Christ.

c). The very existence of the Church is a declaration of this intent – *Eph 3:10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,*

d). And is of itself a declaration of war.

e). It is through our actions that we either make clear our determination to take this realm and overcome our enemy or to acquiesce to his offer of peace and enter into an alliance with him thereby letting him remain in place - *Joh 8:44 "You*

are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.

f). We may know with certainty that the warfare is engaged and that all may be won or lost, depending on what we believe and how we fight.

g). Let's please remember that at the Judgment Seat there are overcomers and those who have been overcome – there is no neutral position.

3). Our foundation for understanding exactly what is involved in this warfare is found in the OT with the nation of Israel.

a). Israel had been redeemed from the bondage of Egypt for the purpose of receiving their inheritance in the land that had been promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - Ex 6:8 *'And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD.'*

b). As with the heavenly realm, the land that God was giving Israel was already occupied with Gentile nations who were not about to give up what they had. And these Gentile nations in addition to automatically being under the control of Satan and his fallen angels were also infiltrated by the nephilim, the offspring of the cohabitation of fallen angels with the daughters of men. An event whose very purpose was to thwart the plans of God for Israel - Nu 13:33 *"There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."*

c). Because of the corrupted bloodlines and because of the picture of Gentile world power that these nations represented which has to be brought to an end God's instructions to His people were very clear.

d). De 7:1 ¶ *"When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, 2 "and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. 3 "Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. 4 "For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. 5 "But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire. 6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the*

earth. 7 "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; 8 "but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; 10 "and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. 11 "Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them. 12 ¶ "Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers.

e). The scripture is very clear – there are 7 nations who are greater and mightier than Israel. In their own strength Israel could never defeat those nations, but the promise is that God will deliver them into Israel's hand. They are then to be 'strong in the Lord and the power of His might'.

f). The instructions God gives are very clear - 2 "and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. 3 "Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son.

g). And the reason for this is also very clear - 4 "For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods;

h). Any alliance with the occupants of the land would result in a turning away from God, would in effect bring about apostasy.

i). All that was required for total victory and the establishment of the Theocracy in which the nations of the world would be blessed through Israel, was faithful obedience.

j). Sadly, such was not the case - Nu 13:31 *But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we."* 32 *And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out,*

k). Ps 106:26 *Therefore He raised up His hand in an oath against them, To overthrow them in the wilderness, 27 To overthrow their descendants among the nations, And to scatter them in the lands. 28 They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor, And ate sacrifices made to the dead. 29 Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds, And the plague broke out among them.*

l). As a consequence of Israel's actions they find themselves even today separated from God and in disobedience awaiting the time when the wrath of God will be poured out against them in full measure during the time of Jacob's trouble.

m). And those of that first generation to come out of Egypt, as with so many others, who did not engage their enemy in accordance with God's instructions, found themselves separated from the land of their inheritance for all time – Nu 14:22 *"because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, 23 "they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.*

4). The picture for us here is pretty clear. The land we are called to occupy, the heavenly realm of the Kingdom, is presently occupied with fallen angelic beings far greater in strength and might and numbers than us. In our own strength we could never overcome them. It is only through the power of God that our victory can be attained.

a). And our enemy does not confront us physically with sword and spear in hand, but seeks to overcome us subtly – it is 'the wiles of the devil', if we are not properly prepared, that will bring about our downfall. For at every opportunity he seeks to have alliance and liaison with us, so as to draw us away from God – and the only point of contact he has with us is through our sin nature, our old man – Bob.

b). This is the very reason we are admonished - Jas 4:4 *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

c). Like Israel at Kadesh Barnea he seeks to have us believe the lie rather than relying on the truth of God in what appears to be impossible circumstances - Ga 5:7 *You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you.*

d). It is because of the nature of our enemy and the tactics of his conflict with us that we are told - Eph 6:13 *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.*

e). We can clearly see here that proper preparedness to engage our enemy is our individual responsibility – we are ourselves to 'take up the whole armor of God'.

f). Perhaps it is a self evident truth to realize that God does not wear armor, and if He did it would be far too big for us to wear, just like David with Saul's armor, but rather, 'the whole armor of God' is that which He supplies for us that we may have victory in this warfare.

5). But as we consider this armor and consider the warfare we must remember that this is a spiritual armor and a spiritual warfare. It is engaged in the spirit and fought in the spirit – We do not war according to the flesh.

a). *2Co 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 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, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. 7 ¶ Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's.*

b). The weapons of our warfare ‘are not carnal’, but exist entirely in the realm of the spirit. And as we will know, to do anything in the spirit requires the death of our flesh - *Ro 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

c). It will become obvious then that our fight is not expressed in railing at our enemy. It is not in binding and casting out and trampling on, but in the subjugation of our will to the will of God – to be in all things ‘spiritually minded’.

d). According to our scripture our weapons are mighty in God, bringing us right back to being strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

e). And these weapons are for ‘pulling down strongholds’ they are for ‘casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God’, for ‘bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ’.

f). There has often been the thought amongst Christians that what we have just looked at takes place apart from us. Pulling down strongholds would be claiming the high places for Christ. Literally standing on a hill top and verbally pulling down the strongholds of immorality and drunkenness etc. in the city below. Casting down arguments would be engaging the JW's, by refuting their doctrine. And the high thing exalting itself against the knowledge of God would be the false religions and Satanism which we would occupy ourselves with trying to destroy.

g). And in these is the seductive deception to pride, cloaked with a mask of religious righteousness. This is the very wile of the devil we are to stand against as he seeks to have us focus on the external rather than on our self.

h). Although our warfare is for the taking of the heavenly realm of the Kingdom our battleground is not there but in our hearts and minds.

i). Pulling down strongholds then becomes personal and is part of our pursuit of personal holiness as we seek to dismantle the fortified city that the enemy has built in our lives through years of wrong thinking and demonic conditioning with the dynamite of the truth of scripture. And often these strongholds are so well established that the pulling down requires an absolute trust in the goodness of God because what we are required to do flies in the face of everything we have come to know.

j). Many of us have experienced this very thing in the past couple of weeks as we have wrestled with what scripture teaches about our relationship to the governing authorities.

k). And some will still have parts of the wall of that particular city remaining that are so firmly in place that they have to be dismantled by hand, stone by stone.

l). Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God would take us straight away to being wise in our own eyes, when our choices declare that we know better than God. Here is where we will be looking for the wiggle room. Looking for the loophole that will justify our disobedience.

m). This is the battle between the flesh and the spirit - *Ga 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*

n). And it is here in the midst of this conflict between the flesh and the spirit that every thought is to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

o). Something that is a simple thing to understand, but often an enormous struggle to bring about.

p). *Lu 22:42 saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."*

q). And here it is so plain for us to see – ‘not my will, but Yours be done.’

r). So if we bring this over into our own lives it would look like this – ‘Lord I really don’t want to do what you require of me in this situation, because basically my pride is in the way. Nevertheless, I choose not to do what I want, but to do what You want.’

s). And this is possible because our strength to do it is in the Lord, if indeed we trust Him.

6). We have had in our type with Israel and the earthly land a sobering picture of what not to do in respect of the fight with the enemy, but we are truly blessed in that scripture also gives us a perfect model of how to successfully engage our enemy with a view to the heavenly realm of the Kingdom.

a). What better example could we have than that of Christ – the One who is worthy to open the scroll and redeem the inheritance?

b). We should remember that although He is God in the person of His Son He came to the earth in the likeness of sinful flesh and in doing so willingly accepted a subordinate position to the god of this world - Heb 2:9 *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.*

c). And it is in this lower position, in the form of a man that He engages in the spiritual warfare with Satan to establish His worthiness to take the heavenly land and usher in His Kingdom. His was a present action with a future consequence.

d). Mt 4:1 ¶ *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" 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.*

e). Here in three temptations we see in microcosm the completeness of the wiles of the devil. Each one appeals to pride and each one, from a worldly viewpoint, would give a justification for Christ's claim to Deity.

f). The Lord could have done any of these and really knock him flat. But every time He takes the focus away from Himself and places it on the truth of scripture – 'It is written'.

g). He humbles Himself under the mighty hand of God and the scripture is fulfilled - Jas 4:7 *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

h). And there are two important observations we can make here. The first is that this encounter comes about when no one else is watching, which may speak volumes to our own warfare. And secondly, the absolute assertion, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' Sets the stage for

Christ's victory over the powers of darkness through His death and resurrection thereby setting the pattern for our own victory.

i). Yet as we consider Christ's crucifixion and all the horrors that attended it there is nothing there to the natural eye that looks like victory. In fact as He hung upon the cross even His disciples saw nothing but defeat - Lu 24:21 *"But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.*

j). And in this is an important key to our own victory in the spiritual warfare. And this we will continue next week, if the Lord is willing.