

THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS

I. Ephesians: Nurture In Living Focused On God's Eternal Purpose For Christians

C. Nurture In Applying The Believer's Positional Truth To Life And Ministry

9. Nurture In God's Personal Spiritual Empowering For Victory In The Angelic Conflict (Ephesians 6:10-12)

I. Introduction

- A. When Paul wrote the "Prison Epistles" of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon, the fact that he was in prison troubled believers, Philippians 1:12-13; Colossians 2:1-2; 4:7-8 and Philemon 22; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1672, "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians."
- B. To nurture his readers, and for them to nurture others, Paul urged them to apply their positional truths in Christ to a godly walk, and Ephesians 6:10-12 specifically applied this to the need for victory in the angelic conflict:

II. Nurture In God's Personal Spiritual Empowering For Victory In The Angelic Conflict, Eph. 6:10-12.

- A. In Ephesians 1:19-21 KJV, Paul wrote that in Christ, the believer is positionally raised from the dead and set at the Father's right hand in the heavenlies "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion."
- B. Well, Ephesians 6:12 KJV reveals that in our experience, our "wrestle" (*pale*, the noun "wrestling", Moulton & Milligan, The Vocab. of the Grk. N. T., 1972, p. 475) is not ultimately against human foes, but against principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world and against spiritual wickedness literally in the "heavens" (*epouranios*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the N. T., 1967, p. 305-306), the **same** beings over which Christ is said to be enthroned in Ephesians 1:19-21!
- C. In reviewing the issues where "wrestling" could occur that Paul already mentioned in the epistle, we conclude they cover a wide variety of realms like pride (Eph. 4:2), disunity (Eph. 4:3), deception (Eph. 4:14), impurity (Eph. 4:19a), greed (Eph. 4:19b), lying (Eph. 4:25), harboring anger (Eph. 4:26-27), stealing (Eph. 4:28), hurtful speech (Eph. 4:29-31) and godless insubordination or oversight in human institutions (Eph. 5:22-6:9).
- D. Thus, it is imperative that the believer "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10) toward gaining spiritual victory over angelic conflict in all realms of life, meaning that the believer on his own is vulnerable to certain defeat before Satan and his demonic agents in his life, a truth we must always recall!
- E. However, as 1 John 4:4 reveals, the Holy Spirit of God who indwells and seals the believer as Ephesians 1:13-14 teaches is greater than Satan who is the god of this world, *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to 1 John 4:4; 2 Corinthians 4:4.
- F. To that end, the believer gains experiential victory in the angelic conflict "wrestlings" he faces regardless of the realm of life involved if he heeds Ephesians 6:11 as follows:
 - 1. The believer gains victory in the angelic conflict by "clothing" himself (*enduo*, *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 263) with the "full armor of a heavily-armed soldier" (*panoplia*, *Ibid.*, p. 612) of God, Ephesians 6:11a.
 - 2. Only in this way can he "hold one's ground in battle" (*histemi*, *Ibid.*, p. 382-383) against the "wiles, stratagems" (*methodeia*, *Ibid.*, p. 500) of the devil, Ephesians 6:11b.
 - 3. This directive implies several realities about the angelic conflict that we do well to recall (as follows):
 - a. First, the need for the "full armor of a heavily-armed soldier" (Eph. 6:11a) suggests that we are in a spiritual war and can face Satan's attacks at any instant like a soldier in a combat zone. We must always be mindful of the desire of Satan to attack us in any realm if we would succeed in all such spiritual battles.
 - b. Second, Satan has a variety of wiles or stratagems to get us to sin and thus to fail, so we must be wary and watch prayerfully for every kind of temptation in every realm of life, cf. Ephesians 6:18.
 - c. Third, our need is to "hold our ground," to stay in God's will without shifting from it independently of God's leading. Some applications of this would involve (1) holding to Biblical truth versus leaving it for errant beliefs (2 John 7-9 NIV, ESV), (2) staying with God's calling versus changing occupations (2 Tim. 2:4) and (3) using God's spiritual gift versus trying to serve Him in some other way (2 Tim. 1:3-7).
 - d. Fourth, if Satan uses "wiles" and "stratagems" against us, and we are not nearly as intelligent as he is, it is important that we not rely on our own thinking, but to stay focused on God's Bible guidance to avoid being misled by Satan into adopting errant views of people or circumstances we face in angelic conflicts.

Lesson: *Since we believers face angelic conflict in all realms of experience with beings far more intelligent and greater than us, but since Christ is far greater and higher in position than these foes, we must always fully depend on God's power, guidance, and equipping in all realms of experience for victory in the angelic conflict.*

Application: *May we thus be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might for victory in the angelic conflict.*