

**EPHESIANS: THE CHURCH FROM START TO FINISH**  
**"Part XVI: God's Basic Angelic Conflict Training"**  
**(Ephesians 6:10-20)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

For decades as a Christian, I have noticed a real and sometimes overwhelming "struggle" that **all** Christians come to experience:

(1) Throughout the pastoral ministry, I have *often* seen that just as a believer decides to take on a ministry or office like teaching a Sunday School class, he suddenly faces trying issues and/or events!

(2) Dr. James Dobson's Aug. 1998 "Focus on the Family" form letter gives startling nationwide statistics about **pastors** on the matter:

(a) His ministry reports that 80% of America's pastors and 84% of their wives are either discouraged or fighting depression.

(b) The group reports that more than 40% of pastors and 47% of their wives reportedly suffer from burnout, frantic schedules or unrealistic expectations from their various congregations.

(c) Dobson's group estimates that nationwide, **50** pastors per **day** leave their pastorates due to ministry burnout, moral failure or contention with people in their local congregations.

(d) These statistics mirror findings of the Fuller Institute of Church Growth. As Dr. Dobson's letter reports, in 1991, this group found that 80% of the nation's clergy feel that their families have been negatively impacted by their churches, and 33% consider the ministry to be an outright **hazard** to their families!

(3) The problem extends to the man in the pew. Dr. James Dobson noted the following statistics that backed up his view:

(a) The Barna Research Council on Dec. 20, 1991 shared that 80% of church growth nationwide does **not** come from **new** people being **won** to **faith** in Christ, but from **church transfers**! However, 96% of America's adults say they still believe in God, Ibid.

(b) "Obviously, the majority of Americans are dabbling in religious expression that has no substance," writes Dobson.

**Well, what is making for such trouble for pastors and Christians in the pew? Why, and what's the answer?!"**

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

***Need: I have noticed that I and other 'normal' CHRISTIANS have at times SUDDENLY been faced with STRUGGLES over HARD events and/or issues that may be accompanied by confusing doubts or grave accusations coming from others or from within! WHY?!"***

**I. A WAR involving SPIRIT BEINGS wages about the Christian.**

- A. Paul noted that the **wrestlings** Christians experience are not against other humans as they **appear** to be, but with spirits, Eph. 6:12 KJV.
- B. Similarly, we know from Rev. 12:9-10 that Satan **now** has access to heaven to make trouble by accusing believers of sin before God.
- C. Since the Ephesians' **wrestlings** were not with men, but with spirit beings, we can **define** from the **wrestlings** we see in the Ephesian epistle **exactly what** experiences signal the presence of the angelic conflict: these include struggles from immature believers being tossed about by errant doctrine taught by deceivers (4:14), from lying among believers (4:25), from smoldering anger at suffering injustices (4:26), from stealing (4:28), from abusive talk (4:29-32), from immorality (5:3) & from marriage, family and business institution crises (5:22-6:9)

**II. Viewing Scripture, we can DEFINE the ISSUES of that conflict:**

- A. Like Israel's High Priest, Joshua of Zech. 3:3, the Christian is God's priest who counters Satan's evil agenda to destroy men eternally. The believer does this by praying to God for men and bringing the Gospel and God's Word to men. (1 Pet. 2:5,9 with Jn. 8:44 on Satan's work)
- B. Like Joshua in Zech. 3:1a, 3, when the Christian sins (as typified by Joshua's filthy garments), he is ripe for discipline from God even to the point of **death**, Exodus 28:43 re: Joshua; 1 John 5:16 for Christians.
- C. Well, Satan longs to nullify the ministries of God's priests who oppose his evil agenda. Yet, Satan himself cannot even touch believers (1 Jn. 5:18b). Thus, he attempts to **lure** the believer into **sin** in "I,C" (above) types of scenarios and then accuses the sinning believer before God for judgment so as to harm his ministry by God's withdrawal of blessing, Zech. 3:1c,2; Rev. 12:10. Satan may use other carnal folk (2 Tim. 2:24-26) or tempt directly by one's lusts (Gn. 3:1-6) for him errantly to flee or attack in events (Mk. 5:2-5) & thus **stray** from God's **will**.
- D. Christ, the pre-incarnate Angel of the Lord in Zech. 3:1b, 2 and the Christian's Advocate (1 Jn. 2:1) acts as a "Defense Attorney", pleading His atonement for sin for Joshua or today's **repentant** Christian.
- E. Thus, Christians must be cleansed and/or avoid sin to be victorious!

**III. GOD'S victory is PICTURED in Isa. 59:16-18 and Eph. 6:10-24:**

- A. When Israel became so corrupt that no man interceded for her, **GOD** took on **His** salvation armor to **defend** her, Isaiah 59:16-18!
- B. Paul picks up this Isa. 59 theme of **God's armor** in Eph. 6:10-17 even to the extent of *repeating* the Isa. 59:17 **breastplate & helmet** parts!
- IV. **We thus define God's Basic Angelic Conflict Training as follows:**
- A. Lesson One - Each one who believes in Christ as Savior is a priest who must pray to God for the disciplining of men, and use his spiritual gift in God's assigned tasks to that end. Doing so resists Satan's evil agenda!
- B. Lesson Two - Satan **counters** this ministry by trying to check believers or their ministries any way he can, Jn. 8:44; Mk. 5:1-7 re: realms.
- C. Lesson Three - Since God **shields** believers from **direct** Satanic harm (1 Jn. 5:18), Satan can only further his agenda by getting the believer to **sin**. Then Satan can accuse him before God so that **God** must discipline the believer even unto death! (1 John 5:16; Rev. 12:10)
- D. Lesson Four - Believers must **match** Satan's **counter** effort as follows:
1. Step One - Put on God's belt by **telling the truth**, Ep. 4:15; 6:14a.
  2. Step Two - Put on God's breastplate by **hiding** behind **Christ's righteousness** *instead of* trying to use our *own*, 4:22-24; 6:14b.
  3. Step Three - Put on God's shoe armor by **settling** in our hearts just **how one is saved** to offset doubts that blunt our service, 6:15a.
  4. Step Four - Put on God's shield to quench Satan's destructive doubts by **trusting Scripture above all other sources**, Eph. 6:16.
  5. Step Five - Put on God's helmet by **trusting the security** of our **salvation** in Christ, Eph. 6:17a; 1:13-14.
  6. Step Six - Put on God's sword of the Spirit by **viewing Scripture as our final authority** for faith and practice, Eph. 6:17b.
  7. Step Seven - **Having armed for conflict, keep praying and doing God's assignment. Stick** to this task as Satan wants to lure us any way possible to **veer** from doing so, be it by our **fleeing** in **faithless fear** or **attacking** in **faithless, self-help** anger, Eph. 6:11, 18-20!
  8. Step Eight - If we fall for Satan's lure and become **defeated by sin, confess** it to God, 1 Jn. 1:9. Christ then appeals to His blood and Satan's case is thrown out, Zech. 3:1-7! However, depending on the **extent** of the sin's damage to our being effective for **future** service (1 Cor. 9:27), follow Scripture regarding what to do **next!**

**Lesson Application:** *God wants the believer to know he functions in an angelic war over men's souls, and that he must BIBLICALLY watch for and respond to the "wrestlings" that signal that conflict. Then he can WIN and minister effectively without CASUALTY!*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

Dr. Hudson Armerding, former president of Wheaton College, a leading Christian university in Illinois, wrote about a battle he once had in the angelic conflict. (Leadership, p. 26-27)

It happened while he took a brief **study leave** to live and work on a ranch in West Texas. In the **mornings** he would work on **manuscripts** and in the afternoon go about doing ranching chores. Since he lived alone, he prepared his own meals most of the time.

After lunch one noon he was washing dishes. He relates: "All during the **forenoon** a disturbing memory had kept coming into my consciousness. It was a memory of something that had happened years before -- an act of disobedience for which I was terribly ashamed. I had been convicted about that sin, had confessed it, and had sought by God's grace to forsake it and put it away. Yet that morning repeatedly the recollection of that experience kept coming back. It was like a constant **accusation** that would not cease.

As the **forenoon** went on, the situation got **worse**. By lunch time I was in agony of spirit because I knew the recollections were true. I knew that what was being said was accurate. But as I was bending over the dishes, suddenly this word came just as clearly as if someone was in the room: 'If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son cleanseth us from all sin' (1 John 1:7).

I knew that a more accurate translation would read: ' . . . **continues** to cleanse us from all sin.' Immediately, tears mingled with the dishwater because the Lord Jesus in mercy and through the Holy Spirit had reminded me of the unchanging truth of his word of forgiveness on the basis of his atoning sacrifice. Thus God overcame the persecution of Satan that was calculated to imprison me in guilt and to challenge the deliverance wrought by the Lord."

**In this case, Dr. Armerding used the sword of the Spirit in applying what he knew 1 John 1:7 said to the mental accusations of the evil one, and used the shield of faith by believing its message to overcome this Satanic attack. He thus could continue his key ministry of serving God by spreading His truth opposite Satan's evil agenda, and that by writing manuscripts on God's truths!**

**We should follow his example to be victorious as well!**