

## STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #119

6:12

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.

Some may read of all the spiritual blessings in the doctrinal and dispensational sections of this epistle, and think then that all there is to do is to sit back and wait. But there is a wrestling. As long as we are in this evil world, we are going to be subject to the attacks of the evil one.

There is a warfare. But it is not against flesh and blood. When Israel were to enter the promised land, they had to wrestle with flesh and blood, for the Canaanite was then in the land. It is likely that this verse above should be turned around to read that we do not wrestle with flesh and blood in heavenly places. So then our wrestling is not in the place where our hopes, but here and now while we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

And who is our foe? Where is his stronghold? Or is there more than one foe?

The word *against* is used 4 times in describing the foes we have to do with. We do wrestle;

1. *against principalities,*
2. *against powers,*
3. *against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and*
4. *against spiritual wickedness.*

But the strange thing about it all is that we are not to march out against the enemy as Christian soldiers or soldiers of the cross as the hymns would make it. But we anticipate.

In 3:10 we read of principalities and powers which have their stronghold in the heavenly places. But these are not likely to be evil ones. Whether evil principalities and powers still hold forth in the heavenlies, we do not know. We do read in Daniel 10:13 of such principalities and powers and their strong opposition to God's messenger. We read in Job that Satan mingled with the sons of God when they met together. Where this was we do not know. In Eph 4:8 there is a hint that there was a conflict when our Lord ascended into the heavens or thru the heavens. No details are given. So we cannot be sure of the place.

But we can realize a bit what is meant by the rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness. We only have to study the history of Christendom from the time of Paul till now to realize that altho there have been murders and persecutions against flesh and blood, for the main part there has been a subtle work on the part of the evil forces to deny the truth. They attack the Word of God. They deny the deity of Christ. They teach some other way of salvation. They have other gospels. They slander the person of God. They put up man-made organizations in the name of Christ and worship there idols and symbols and empty rituals, not knowing the substance. The rulers of darkness are bitter against the truth of the dispensation of the mystery. They have their own religious systems. In outward appearance, spiritual wickedness reigns supreme.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is one thing to know truth; it is another to acknowledge it. It is one thing to believe; it is another to have faith. There is some confusion of thot about these terms and it might be well to examine the truth and also ourselves to see whether we are in the truth.

There were some leaders who knew that this Jesus of Nazareth was a teacher from God, but would not acknowledge it. It might have endangered their religious position to do so. Or it might have had an effect on their social or political life. And they may have had business reasons. There is no particular good in the knowing of truth. It must be acknowledged.

And today there are many who believe, but have never exercised faith. The devils believe and even tremble, but they are devils still. Faith is belief in action. It is believing what God has said and acting on it.

And we know of some who profess to believe that aman cannot have faith or even believe God except God give him that faith. Beware of such, for they are looking for another way of salvation so that they can get everybody saved. Man was created capable of believing and exercising faith. We see this being done on every hand. Most of our business is conducted on the basis of faith (credit). It is very common for men to believe each other and have faith in each other. And if a man can believe another man, then he certainly can believe God. And if a man can have faith in his fellow men, then certainly he can exercise faith toward God. It is the same process. So the doctrine that a man cannot have faith except it is given to him of God is a false one, a lie, to mislead and take people captive for the evil one.

Now you will note that a man is compelled to believe if he is confronted by incontrovertible facts. Belief is not a matter of volition. A man cannot will to believe. But he does will to acknowledge or to deny the truth. He also wills to exercise faith or to trust. That is man's choice, either in his contacts with the world or in his relationship to God. His choice is his responsibility.

Faith is weak when man is fearful, when he is afraid to trust himself to the truth. It was so of the centurion who confessed that he believed, but asked the Lord to help his unbelief. But even if this man had faith only the size of a mustard seed, nevertheless it was efficacious. And as soon as faith was acknowledged, it grew. So if we want more faith, we must exercise that which we have. And it is the same with knowledge. We must use what we have or we will not gain more. That is just as true in the spiritual realm as it is in the classroom of the school.

A man cannot go day after day in his contacts with others failing to acknowledge Christ and then expect to grow in the knowledge of Christ. It just is not done. Even to gain strength physically, we must exercise. Why not apply that simple rule to spiritual things?

Anyone who reads this column knows that God's Word is truth, but not all admit it.

## THE TRIUNE GOD

The Scriptures insist that there is one God. Israel understood that they had one God. The heathen had gods many.

Yet at the very opening of the Bible, in the first verse and 4th word, we find the word God (Elohim). And Elohim is plural. It is not one. Nor can it possibly be two, for in the Hebrew that is another form of the word. It is strange to us, but Hebrew has 3 numbers instead of two as we have. They have singular, dual, and plural. So Elohim is three or more.

Yet here in the first verse of the Bible is a grammatical error. Elohim is plural, but the verb is singular. Then note that in 3:5 Elohim is translated gods (plural).

This is going to be rather difficult for some folks to see. There may be some light on the question in De 6:4. Literally, that verse reads, HEAR, O ISRAEL, JEHOVAH OUR ELOHIM IS ONE JEHOVAH. Again we have a plural subject and a singular verb in the Hebrew. But there is an insistence that the God of the Hebrews is one God. To those who do not know science or some of the wonders of nature, this presents a real difficulty. They resolve it by saying that there is no triune God, that Christ was only a creature and that the Holy Spirit was only an influence.

Let us see how this will work in life. How would I be regarded if I should insist that H<sub>2</sub>O was only one substance, water, and none other. That would be denying the existence of steam and ice. Water, steam, and ice are simply manifestations of a formula H<sub>2</sub>O which very few know the nature of or have seen, if any have seen it. And without thinking, many will say that H<sub>2</sub>O is water and think that is the end of it. But they will also have to consider steam and ice. They belong too.

Likewise there are many who think of God as Father, but deny the other two manifestations, Son and Holy Spirit. Now the Son was God begotten. And like begets like. So the Son has to be the same as the Father. If the Son is some sort of creature, then so is the Father, unless evolution is a fact.

Now H<sub>2</sub>O is basically a molecule made up of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. For all practical purposes, the molecule is so small that it is not seen. By itself it is nothing as far as we are concerned. But when a mass of them unite to form water, we have a manifestation. When that water freezes, we have a solid instead of the liquid. And under great heat it becomes a powerful force called steam. Steam is invisible.

And so God has never been seen. But He has manifested Himself to His creatures in three different forms, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now if He has not manifested Himself as Son or Spirit, then why should anybody say that He is manifested as Father? There should be a consistency even in denial.

Since the Son claimed the titles and attributes of Jehovah, we are forced to admit that they are one and the same. Therefore, if the Son were a creature, so also Jehovah.

## HIS REST #4

FRED RALPH

There are several words in the OT and NT translated REST, but the most important are *Sabbath*, *Shabbathon* (Heb), and *Sabbaton*, *Sabbatismos* (Gr). These are translated *Sabbath*, *Sabbath day*, or *rest*. We have already referred to Ge 2 where God speaks of His rest on the 7th day. Many times Israel were reminded of this and in Ex 31:12-18, after the 40 days and nites in the mount, Moses was told to command the people to keep the Sabbath; the day was holy to the Lord. Its importance was emphasized by the fact that any that defiled the Sabbath SHALL BE PUT TO DEATH. It was to be a sign between God and Israel forever.

When God gave a sign, it usually referred to something or someone that was to come, so what was the Sabbath a sign of? The Sabbaths were not confined to the 7th day. The 7th year was a Sabbath of rest, and after 7 of these periods the 50th year was the Jubilee. Other things seem to indicate that the ages will run in Sabbaths too, the first being the millennium or day of the Lord. This is a great subject and well worthy of study. Undoubtedly these things point down the ages to the great Sabbath when the Lord God will enter into His rest; when He will rest from all His works (1Co 15:28).

When the Lord came in flesh as the promised Messiah, He said COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT LABOUR AND ARE HEAVILY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. The offer was refused and the King slain. It was held open during Acts so that those of the dispersion might hear the gospel of the kingdom, the hope of Israel. This also failed, and after the last witness to the Jews at Rome (Ac 28), Paul pronounced the sentence of blindness and deafness on them. Then a new message was given to the Gentiles by Paul in 7 epistles which embraced a company with a heavenly calling -- the church which is His body. This is the gospel for us today.

It is strange that in the prison epistles we find no mention of entering into rest, or any mention of the word *rest* at all, and this only helps distinguish this ministry from those which preceded it. There is a heavenly calling. It has no connection with the earth and its blessings which are Israel's sphere. We have enemies just as Israel did, but they are spiritual, not fleshly (Eph 6:12), and we are provided with an armor to enable us to stand.

We find that we must be good workmen; that we must run our race with eyes fixed on the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus; no mention of rest, but endeavor.

But we do have a goal or rest; accepted in the Beloved, presented as a church without spot or wrinkle, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, seated together with Him at the right hand of the Father, and that the church which is His body is to become THE FULLNESS OF HIM THAT FILLETH ALL IN ALL. What more could we want or need? So to talk of entering into rest is unnecessary. When He has finished all His work and enters into His rest, no doubt we shall share in that blessed occasion. But our aim is to be COMPLETE IN HIM (Col 2:10).

## INTERROGATIONS

## THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #48

DENTON C. ABBEY

114. *Of what shape, size and material should the altar in the church be made?*

Just where in the Scriptures did you find that a church should have an altar? Isn't that just another one of man's inventions without the sanction of God?

115. *How many dispensations do we find in the Bible?*

I don't know. But the first one is seldom, if ever, mentioned. In Eze 28 and Isa 14 we read of a great and wise and beautiful being, called a cherub. He was given dominion and power in God's creation. He had a responsibility or stewardship. Not much is revealed about all this. Then the second dispensation was another in which dominion and responsibility were given. That was to Adam. He was given dominion over all creatures on the earth, in the sky, and in the waters. And he had a special detail, to keep the garden in Eden. His failure was very much like that of his predecessor. Now in these dispensations there was a steward and a household or dominion to keep. There are 3 more dispensations in which sons or sonship is the dominant note, there being a firstborn in each one. Now you take it up from there.

116. *After man's fall, was it still his duty to replenish the earth?*

Yes. The command was repeated when Noah left the ark. He came into a new world that was empty. There has been some argument about whether this word means to refill or simply fill. But that makes no difference. The earth was not created empty or vain (Isa 45:18). But it was empty when Adam came into it. So he was to fill it, however you look at it. But the fall of man has made a difference in the outlook. The filling of the new earth is now in view. It will be filled with the nations of them which are saved (Re 21:24). It is plain that there will be no place there for the unsaved. And there is also a further revelation given in the Word. There is a filling of the heavenlies in view which is a part of the dispensation of the mystery. And both of these fillings result from resurrection.

117. *Does Joh 1:41 give us the warrant to use the word Messiah wherever we find the title "the Christ"?*

An interpretation is not a synonym. So we have no right to make such a substitution. Cephas is interpreted *A Stone*. Are we going to substitute *A Stone* for Cephas every time we see the name? Was the blind man to go and wash himself in *Sent* (Joh 9:7)? Should we say *God with us* instead of Emmanuel? Just try this system out for yourself further and see where it gets you. Messiah occurs only twice in the Bible, Da 9:25,26. Messiah also occurs twice, John 1:41 and 4:25. Now it is true that both Christ and Messiah come from words which mean anoint. But also in our English both the words nation and nature come from a root meaning to be born. There is no reason to say that these two words are synonymous. It might be well to look a little deeper.

In retrospect, it seems necessary that I write a few lines explaining *The Quick and the Dead*. From the letters received, there appears to be some confusion about the state of the dead.

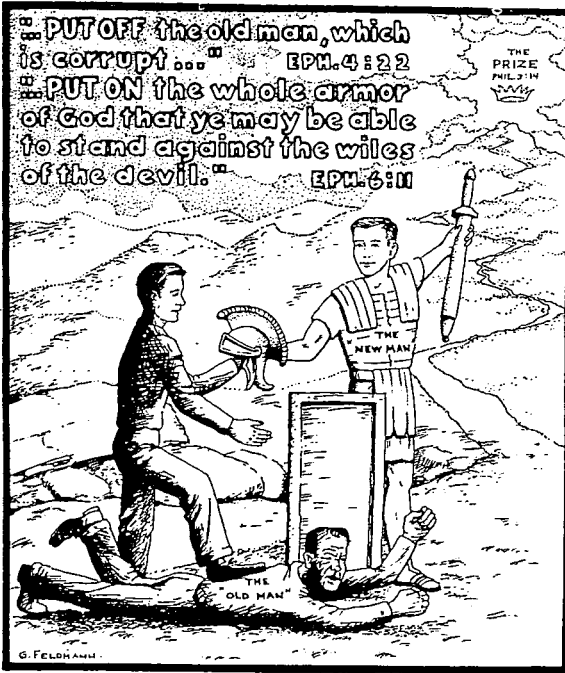
There are usually two phrases that are injected when the fate of the dead is mentioned. Just as soon as one mentions the fact that the dead are really dead, up come the questions of *soul sleep* and *annihilation*. Do these fit in with Bible doctrine of the quick and the dead? I would answer, Yes, and No. The question is not so much one of doctrine as it is the way we apply it. Basically, there is some truth in both these phrases and I might concur in some respects. But my application might be far different than that of most folks. I'll admit that there is something that goes on -- the Bible tells us that this is probably nothing more than being written in the Lamb's book of life. Paul makes reference to this in 2Ti 1:12. Whatever it is, I am sure that God has a record.

However, the catch to the above phrases *soul sleeping* and *annihilation*, is the fact that deep down they reflect unconsciously, that there is a spirit in man that does not and cannot die. This is not true. There may be something that remains, but it isn't soul and it cannot be spirit. So, hidden in these two is the secret belief that soul sleeping allows the spirit to sleep which appears as death. The annihilationist actually suffers the same guilt. He uses this strong term because he feels that the one who uses death to describe this earthly passing is not only consenting to the death of the body, but also to the extinction of the spirit. But it is true that the Bible described those who were dead as sleeping. But it is only in contrast with those who are perished. For our Lord Himself confessed that sleeping and death were one and the same. See article 14 for the usages of the word sleep.

Now if a person wishes to believe that something goes on after death with these exceptions, I will acquiesce. If you feel that your faith is enough, or Christ's assurance that He will raise you from the dead, well and good. But let us not cover our beliefs with innocent phrases that appear to conform when they do not. So I subscribe in a measure to *soul sleeping*, but not to spirit sleeping. I also can claim some guilt to being an annihilationist, but only concerning the body, not the spirit.

So let us consider: is it a question of application, or of doctrine? We all agree that a man dies, but disagree on how he dies. We all believe in salvation, but disagree on its application. All believe in baptism, but few agree on how it is applied. And so I will confess that the saints who are dead are described as sleeping, for some day they will awake. However, those outside of Christ, who are dead, will never awake because they are perished. And if there is no resurrection, then those asleep in Christ are perished (1Co 15:13-18).

We will continue this exposition next month with some other details that need attention.



### PUT OFF -- PUT ON

We must hasten to assure you that the old man is not to be put off in the absolute sense. That is not in our power. It was taken care of on Calvary. There our old man, the old nature was crucified with Him. The purpose was that the principle of sin might become inoperative in us, that we no longer might be servants, yea, slaves to sin. So in the putting off here, it is the former life, the deeds of the flesh that must be put off.

The Christian must cut all ties with the former life and practices. Any compromise will end in defeat. There is no testimony when there is no change in one's way of living.

And how foolish it would be to try to put on the whole armor of God without putting off the deeds of the flesh! There is no room in the whole armor of God for the flesh, the old nature. It will not cover it. The flesh will be showing somewhere. And how often we see this very situation in believers. And no matter how carefully they may try, the flesh will manifest itself in some way.

Also there must be a period of training before taking up the whole armor of God. It is not for the novice, the untrained. When there is a prize to be won, the contestant must be careful to obey all the training rules.

And the picture is correct in the showing of the prize. The conflict is not about our salvation, but comes after salvation and has to do with a reward or prize. The devil cannot touch our salvation. He cannot take it away. But he can beguile the believer of his reward. That is where the conflict is.

One of the sorriest spectacles one can see is the defeated believer. Failure to withstand results in idolatry, serving the belly-god, going back to the old man.

### THE EDITOR'S DESK

Those who have the Companion Bible know what a great help it is in the study of the Word. Much of the time there are more helps on the page than text. The marginal outlines help to see what is the argument so that one does not lose the thread of thought. Ofttimes there is a complete concordance of an important word right in the margin. Then the 198 appendices in the back are worth the price of the whole book. We still have a supply of these Bibles. They are \$15 in maroon buckram, and \$19 in green quarter leather binding. Prices are postpaid.

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