

General Study Of Ephesians – Part 4

Ephesians 6:1-4 [NIV] *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honour your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with a promise, ‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”*

Directly after the guidelines for the marriage union of husband and wife, Paul gives guidelines for the outcome of that union, children.

In Ancient Rome, children were very vulnerable and often thrown out and abandoned, or worse.

As long as a child’s father lived, the child remained under the father’s absolute power.

The son or daughter could be a grown person and still be beaten, or at the father’s whim have their very lives taken from them.

Also, a father had the sole authority to decide whether to retain a new-born child or throw the baby out.

An ancient letter referred to by the expositor William Barclay where the father’s request to his pregnant wife is that if the child is a boy to let him live, but if a girl to throw her out!

Jesus Christ’s example of how He related to children, [Matthew 18:1-4; Matthew 19:13-14; Mark 10:13-15; Luke 18:15-17] set a new standard for the Gentile world. Mutual submission in the Lord Jesus Christ was the new order of the day for both children and parents, [Exodus 20:12 quoted by Paul].

Ephesians 6:5-9 [NIV] *“Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favouritism with him.”*

In Ancient Rome the institution of slavery was alive and thriving. Slavery was embedded in the very fabric of society.

It was like a plague from humanity’s early beginning that stretched across millennia well into the 19th century.

Israel had known slavery and had slaves themselves, but this was controlled by many commandments, and was a blessing more than a curse.

[Please download and study the article on this website with the title ‘*The Effective Alternative To The State Handouts And Benefits*’ listed under the main title ‘*The World Tomorrow*’.]

Paul’s call to slaves was to accept their status and the treatment that Christian slave-owners were to give to slaves in their control.

The attitude of Christian slaves was to be “*as to Christ*” transforming all work and recalling the words of Jesus Christ, [Matthew 25:31-36].

The same thought is repeated in verses 6-7, “*with good will*” that is an eagerness which does not wait to be compelled.

Verse 8 refers to present opportunities of service point forward to a future when Jesus Christ will assess the worth of a Christian’s life at His judgement seat, [Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10].

Slave owners are also told to act in a way which reflects their Christian calling [verse 9] with a caution against overbearing disposition, and a reminder that though they are masters of their slaves, they also have a heavenly Master, Jesus Christ, who cannot be bribed or corrupted in any way.

Colossians 3:22-25; Colossians 4:1 [NIV] “*Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favouritism. Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.*”

Uses the same idea of impartiality of treatment as part of a call to slaves **not** to exploit their Christian masters.

Paul’s letter to Philemon reflects the same teaching about his conduct towards his cheating and runaway slave Onesimus.

Ephesians 6:10-20 [NIV] “*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*”

In this concluding admonition the actual situation of the Christian Church in the world is faced with a call of steadfastness under trial and a summons to prepare for conflict.

Palestine in Christ’s day was under the occupation of the Roman army. The sight of a patrol of Roman soldiers on the street or road was a very common sight.

The apostle Paul was for two years under “*house arrest*” guarded by a Roman soldier night and day.

Paul looked at the armour of a Roman soldier and used it as an object seen every day by his readers to teach a spiritual message.

Do we today need to be wearing the spiritual armour?

Yes!

For our enemy, though not physically seen, is very real and the battle we are in rages at the speed of thought.

It is mainly with “*half-truths*” that Satan seeks to influence our mind that leads to actions that are rebellious against our Eternal Creator God.

Genesis 3:1 [NIV] *“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, “You must not eat from any tree in the garden”?’”*

This statement of Satan was only partly true, [**Genesis 2:16-17**]. **Satan was planting doubt of God’s Word and goodness in the mind of Eve.**

Another tactic of Satan is to make the way of the world that is the product of human thought and reasoning to seem so attractive, [**Genesis 3:6**] what God has denied Eve and Adam looked so desirable.

Today it is drugs, free sex, excessive food and drink, that Satan uses to deceive us.

1 Peter 5:8 [NIV] *“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”*

Satan is a spirit being invisible to us. A visible lion is **not** dangerous to its prey, but being invisible, Satan can attack at any time and usually focuses on the spiritual weak, spiritual sick or young Christians.

1 John 1:5-7 [NIV] *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”*

Lions attack mainly at night when it is dark so we need to be walking in the light of God’s presence.

I hope you now realise how essential the spiritual armour of God is to protect us from Satan’s attacks.

Belt of Truth – the foundational garment of a Roman soldier that allowed the armour to fit comfortably, was secured in place by a wide belt, [**John 17:17**]. Our spiritual belt is God’s Word, the Christian Bible, [**1 Peter 1:13**]. Paul knew that our knowledge of the truth needed to be constantly renewed.

Breastplate of Righteousness – the breastplate on the Roman soldier covered all the life-giving organs of the body, but only from the frontal attack. If we retreat we are wide open to Satan’s attack.

Where do we get this breastplate of righteousness?

Not by any righteous acts of our own, [**Isaiah 64:6**] **but by faith in what God the Father has done through Jesus Christ,** [**Romans 4:1-2, 21-25**].

Hebrews 10:38 [NIV] *“But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.”*

We are righteous, in harmony with our holy Eternal Creator God, by faith in Him and a constant forward walk following the lead of the Holy Spirit as we develop His character in our lives, [**Galatians 5:22-25**].

Iron-Shod Sandals – the Roman soldier had well-fitting leather sandals with iron studs on the soles and heels that enabled him to walk comfortably long distances over rough ground.

Matthew 28:18-20 [NIV] *“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’”*

This is the commission and walk in life that every true Christian should travel and be well prepared to walk.

Revelation 12:11 [NIV] *“They [Christians – verse 10] overcame him [Satan – verse 8] by the blood of the Lamb [Jesus Christ living in them and the faith they had in His sacrifice] and by the work of their testament [a loving lifestyle].”*

Isaiah 52:7 [NIV] *“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’”*

The “mountains” refer to nations, [**Romans 10:14-15**].

Shield of Faith – the large shield that the Roman soldier carried covered most of his body and was designed to be used as part of the combined defence of a group of soldiers, creating a box that would defend them from missiles that came from every direction, [**Hebrews 11:6; Romans 10:17; Luke 17:5, 7-10**].

Helmet of Salvation – the Roman soldier’s helmet covered the top, sides and back of his head. What is protected is the centre where all the functions of the body are co-ordinated and all decisions are made.

1 Thessalonians 5:8 [NIV] *“But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.”*

The hope of a better future for all humanity after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is a vision we have to constantly have in our minds.

Revelation 21:1-5 [NIV] *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’”*

Having this true vision of the future rule of Jesus Christ on earth will protect our mind from the stress of day-to-day trials and pain.

2 Timothy 3:15 [NIV] *“and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”*

A knowledge of God’s Word, the Christian Bible, will give us wisdom and faith in the future.

Sword of the Spirit – the Word of God –

Hebrews 4:12-13 [NIV] *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”*

The two-edged sword of the Roman soldier effectively carved out a physical empire.

The effective work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God will bring about the Kingdom of God on this earth.

The prayer outline taught by Jesus Christ to His disciples will be a reality, [Matthew 6:10].

John 16:13 [NIV] *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

The Holy Spirit will guide all people into the truth.

John 16:8 [NIV] *“When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.”*

Pray daily that the Holy Spirit will bring us and other people to the point of repentance.

2 Timothy 2:15 [NIV] *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”*

Allow the Holy Spirit to show us how we are to use the Word of God, the Christian Bible, to direct our lives and help others to study and rely on God’s Word.

Constant communication with our Commander –

Much of success in warfare is dependent on good communications, [**Ephesians 6:18**].

Prayer and thanks to God should be constantly on our lips and in our mind.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 [NIV] *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”*

Can we join Paul in this confident statement?

Knowing that we have been a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ, and will receive this greeting at the end of our physical life, [**Matthew 25:23**].

To hear Jesus Christ say this to me on judgement day will fill me with joy that will last for eternity. How about you?