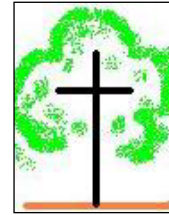


the heart. *Sandals* made the soldier ready for immediate service, and while we are engaged in a battle, it is *the gospel of peace* that signifies our readiness to attack evil. *Faith* is like a *shield* – protecting us from the devil’s most severe attacks. *Salvation* is the *helmet* enabling us to think and speak clearly. *The Word of God* is the *sword* used by the Spirit in attacking the devil and warding off his attacks.

Prayer is an essential part of the strategy – prayer not just for ourselves, but especially for all God’s people. The essence of the “attack” is “*to make known with boldness the secret of the gospel*”.

**Reflect:**

- Are you fully equipped? At what points in your life do you feel your greatest present need of “the whole armour of God”?
- We sometimes assume that we need to be praying much for the unbelieving world about us. Why is prayer for the whole body of the Lord’s people so important?



## Alive in Christ!

Six Studies in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians  
by Peter J. Blackburn

### 6. Equipped and Ready

Reading: Ephesians 6

Paul’s consideration of the whole new way of life in Christ came to a specific new direction with 5.21 – “*submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ*”.



It is important to discern the general qualities of our new life in contrast to the prevailing life-styles of our time. It is significant to have a Spirit-filled life which overflows in our worship of God. But an important part of being “*continuously being filled with the Spirit*” is in “*submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ*”.

In chapter 6 Paul goes on consider relationships between children and parents and between slaves and masters. He then goes on to describe the battle against spiritual forces and our need for God’s whole armour.

#### Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup>*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

<sup>2</sup>*“Honour your father and mother.” This is the first commandment with a promise -* <sup>3</sup>*“in order that it may be well with you and you will live long in the land” (Ex. 20.12).*

<sup>4</sup>*And fathers, do not exasperate your children, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

<sup>5</sup>*Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart as to Christ,* <sup>6</sup>*not in the manner of eye-service as those just out to please men but as slaves of Christ who do the will of God from the heart,* <sup>7</sup>*servicing with good will as to the Lord and not to men,* <sup>8</sup>*knowing that each one, if he does good, will receive good from the Lord, whether slave or free.* <sup>9</sup>*And masters, act in the same way towards them. giving up threatening, knowing that their Lord and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with him.*

<sup>10</sup>*Finally, be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of his might.* <sup>11</sup>*Put on the whole armour of God in order to enable you to stand*

*firm against the scheming of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against blood and flesh. It is against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spirit-forces of evil in the heavenlies. <sup>13</sup>Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, in order that you may be able to resist In the evil day and, having accomplished everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand then “having put truth as a belt around your waist” (Is. 11.5), and “having put on the breast-plate of righteousness” (Is. 59.17). <sup>15</sup>Have your feet well shod “with a readiness to spread the gospel of peace” (Is. 52.11). <sup>16</sup>At all times take up the shield of salvation, with which you will be able to quench all the burning darts of the evil one. <sup>17</sup>And take “the helmet of salvation” (Is. 59.17), and “the sword of the Spirit” which is “the Word of God” (Is. 11.4). <sup>18</sup>With all prayer and petition pray on every occasion in the Spirit, and to this end keep on praying with all perseverance and petition for all God’s holy people, <sup>19</sup>and for me, in order that a word may be given to me, when I open my mouth, to make known with boldness the secret of the gospel <sup>20</sup>on behalf of which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may speak out freely and confidently as I ought to speak.*

*<sup>21</sup>Now so that you will know how I am faring and what I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will let you know everything. <sup>22</sup>I have sent him to you for this very reason, so that you will know how we are faring and that he may encourage your hearts.*

*<sup>23</sup>Peace to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>May grace be with all those loving our Lord Jesus Christ with a love unfailing.*

## Children and Parents

Today there is a strong emphasis on personal fulfilment and a forceful objection to submission in any area of life. This has resulted in a great deal of confusion and pain.

The home is the first place where submission has to be learnt. The Lord himself expects children to be obedient. (“*In the Lord*” doesn’t mean that you only have to obey parents who are Christians!)

In Luke 1.51 we have the example of the boy Jesus “*submitting himself to*” Mary and Joseph.

Parents – and especially fathers – are to provide an attitude and environment in which children can be brought up “*in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*”.

## Slaves and Masters

Slaves are to realise that they are to express the will of God by the way they obey their earthly masters.

Masters, for their part, are to exercise their authority under Christ’s Lordship over both master and slave.

Paul does not here call for the abolition of slavery. However, “*there is no partiality with God*” – God does not relate to people on the basis of their human status and authority.

### Reflect:

- What makes a home truly Christian?
- In today’s society what does the Lord expect of Christian employer and employee?

## Equipped for the Battle

Earlier in the letter Paul wrote about the old life which has to be “put away” and the new which has to be “put on”.

He now makes it clear that we are involved in a great struggle between the plan of God and *the scheming of the devil*, a struggle *against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spirit-forces of evil*. We are not just to exhibit the qualities of the new life in Christ. We must be equipped with *the whole armour of God* for this spiritual battle.

The *truth* of God’s revelation is like a *belt* holding the armour together and carrying the sword. *Righteousness* – the character of our life in Christ – is like a *breastplate* – protecting the vital organs and especially