

Introduction

I have to confess that I started this as a deep dive into spiritual warfare and the teachings in the book of Ephesians. I realized I was writing for my information and sharing it with others but should have chosen a better audience.

When I accepted Christ and his Salvation, I was consumed with the reality that everything I have done to get us to this point in my life and thereafter is forgiven, and I stand in the presence of God of the universe, Holy and blameless.

Jesus died to save us from our sins and to bring us into a direct relationship with God. What separates us from God is our sins, and what brings us back to him is Jesus taking our sins away from us. We are now in the presence of the Creator of the Universe as friend, Father, comforter, and guide. He lives IN us, and we live IN him. We are in His Kingdom, sanctified to his more significant purpose.

Romans 14:17-18

¹⁷ for the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

When I accepted Christ into my life, I soon learned that I was in Spiritual warfare, and it was intimidating to me. After watching the movie "Gladiator," I realized that was how I saw myself in the arena of life, attacking opponents with each move and having horrible circumstances if I failed. The whole world was watching every move I made.

Guilt, isolation, and weakness do not endanger my or your Salvation but do cause problems with our relationship with God and put up barriers between Him and us. It makes us vulnerable to widening the gap between us and God, lessening our peace and joy.

Concentrating on our mediator, the healer of that relationship, is the key to success. He supports us, not judging critically, with every move and blow we make against our opponent. We turn them into victims instead of us.

Our struggle with things or persons from within and without that diverts us from the mission God has given us. This divergence can be something as simple as Football or as complex as an addiction (legal or otherwise) that consumes us. Evil is all around us and in us, as we are worldly by nature. Our human side is at war with our spiritual side, and the world's minions are looking for every opportunity to find a crack in our defenses.

We must remember God is our King, and Jesus is our Champion. The eventual victory is ours.

I suggest a lighthearted book by C.S. Lewis, the author of the "Tales of Narnia," called The "Screwtape Letters." It is a lighthearted read on Amazon, Kindle, and Audible. It is a fun read. C. S. Lewis Takes the bite off the warfare.

The letter of Paul to Christians at Ephesus

Chapter One—Mental toughness.

The Christian Gladiator protects his mind by keeping his mind on the goal and working to improve his skills daily. Toughening his mind from useless distractions can bring a sense of failure, guilt, and being overcome. Keeping our minds and wills on Christ, God, and our mission, we look to God for the answers.

The book of Ephesians is an excellent letter written to US believers as individuals; they just converted up to seasoned followers, addressing our positions and empowerment through God's direct hand to prepare us to be Spiritual Gladiators, therefore giving a baseline of foundational strength to forge ahead in the arena of our lives in total confidence of our reliance in Christ.

Paul wrote to the leaders of the Church in Ephesus to prepare the young Christian warriors for successful lives.

2 Timothy 2:1-7

¹ You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. ³ You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴ No one engaged in warfare

entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. ⁵ And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. ⁷ Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

Notice vs2

² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

He addresses **the Ephesians** letter not to the Church but to the individuals of faithful followers of Jesus—you and Me.

Ephesians 1:1-2

¹ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul speaks individually to each "faithful" member in Ephesus and ALL faithful in Christ Jesus, which is US. Paul's discussion here is to prepare for Spiritual Warfare and help us to personally identify as warriors for Christ, assaulting Satan at every level and every opportunity, and how we accomplish this in Him.

Paul uses the term "faithful men", which by the way, is the term "anthropic," as humankind generally, or "faithful persons," so he is being politically correct to challenge humankind, not just men.

Is there to be a more perfect path? Are we more than just survivors of trials striving to get to heaven? Are we sent to do more than just survive? Is there a goal of a more glorious victory that we are all separated for? Are we equipped for more extraordinary things than just living until we die?

God is preparing us as Gladiators for the Faith, whatever our calling.

James tells us to embrace trials and tribulations. Whatever doesn't kill us will make us strong. We can face everything as a challenge to harden our resolve to complete the tasks he will give us.

James 1:2-4² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your Faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing

We are not alone in finding our way; we are given the "Golden Ticket" to success, so ask God.

James 1:4-6. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But let him ask in Faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

Levi (Matthew) followed Jesus because he called him. There is no sign of prayer, testimony, or any other signal, only that Jesus called him. We forget sometimes that Jesus calls us not just to Salvation but to follow him.

¹⁴ As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him. Mark 2:14

The Church has fallen into a path of "Free Grace" or "Salvation for the asking."

- My Salvation is not dependent on Church attendance
 - Ignoring the need for fellowship and guidance in our walk, lacking accountability.
- I can sin as much as I want, and God will forgive me.
 - Ignores scripture for calls for Holiness ie Romans 6:1 ff
 - Can allow us to WANT to sin more than WANT holiness
- I don't need to repent of sin because I am forgiven, I can work it out myself.
 - Ignores the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives
 - Tending toward our work for victory over sin
- Varied levels of Faith.
 - Those who have better lives have better Faith

- Those who struggle more have less Faith, requiring more forgiveness, and therefore are lower in ranking
- I can conquer sin alone, so I am a stronger Christian than those who depend on God.
- We aim to go to heaven, so there is nothing else to do.

This person has become a couch-sitting observer, watching the Gladiators battle it out in the arena of life.

The problem with preaching Salvation and centering on this is that it leaves little room for growing our knowledge and relationship with God, a significant part of the Christian life. Knowing what we can and need to do as Christians, exercising our Faith, taking us from being the recipient of God's many blessings to his warriors for the Faith.

God created us as his warriors as He works through us:

Philippians 2:12-13¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Our Faith will be demonstrated by who we are and how he works through us.

James 2:18-20¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your Faith without your works, and I will show you my Faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! ²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that Faith without works is dead?

We become weak when we lay down our sword and do not work in the Faith.

Note that he uses the same term "faithful" as he does in his letter to Timothy.

Paul wrote directly to Timothy, the leader of the Ephesian Church. In that letter, Paul addresses the corruption of scripture on several levels and infers that the various teachings made by people challenged Paul's authority. In this opening, he is given a blessing from God and Jesus Christ, and he has all the authority from God to talk for him.

1 Timothy 1:18-20¹⁸ This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ having Faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the Faith have suffered shipwreck, ²⁰ of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

2 Timothy 2:2

² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Matthew 16:18¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

I don't know about you, but I can't remember when a gate attacked me. Christ called the Church to fight evil aggressively.

What are the gates of Hades specifically?

The gate of hell seems to be the grave. For the unrighteous death is the gateway to hell. The grave has no power over us through Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on the cross but is a gateway to being face-to-face with Christ forever.

Ephesians 1:3-14

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the Glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all

things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His Glory.

¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your Salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His Glory.

Salvation is the role of the Holy Spirit, and he seals us to our final destination. He completes us. What does that mean? We are broken, needy people, and he is there for us as no man or woman can be. He is our complete self-living, waiting for us to call on him.

Paul is building a foundation of our importance, goals, and missions for each of us as a Spiritual Warrior. This commission is given to us when we are accepted in the Beloved by the good pleasure of God's will. The importance of our commission is profound, not as a voluntary assignment, though we are Saved prior, so it is not related to Salvation but to our victories over sin.

⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

Paul makes it clear that our Salvation is not dependent on anything but his grace.

⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

The term "mystery of his will" references the "Mystery of the Old Testament" or the path of Salvation for the complete world outside Jewish traditions/law. "He purposed in Himself" refers to Christ as the bearer and executor of our Salvation through his plan.

¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

Remember that the Greek word here is *Στην οικονομία*, oikonomian or stewardship. Paul stresses the singularity of Salvation with all things gathered in Christ; He OWNS Salvation, and He alone disperses it to those who follow him. The reward for victory, ours through him, is eternal life.

¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His Glory.

The predestined keyword doesn't mean that God selected us along the way, but at some time, we received the inheritance of our missions from among those who "first trusted in Christ" by the purpose of his will to his Glory.

Our knowledge and complete understanding of our Salvation is not by anything we think or do but purely by the grace given to us through Christ, which keeps our minds fresh and secure from other distractions and continuously points us to our calling of following Christ.

¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your Salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His Glory

The Holy Spirit has sealed us and is the guarantee of our purchased Salvation to His Glory.

Think of Acts 2:38:

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit is a mighty gift, carrying many blessings and responsibilities. However, the mightiest gift is our being sealed by Him, God, until our Salvation is complete upon our death.

Paul points to Salvation as our helmet, which is an interesting thought.

2015, Will Smith starred as Bennet Omalu, a forensic pathologist in the Movie "Concussion" based on the expose ` "Game Brain" by Jeanne Marie Laskas,

which introduced "chronic traumatic encephalopathy" (CTE) brain degeneration suffered by professional football players and others that suffer non-concussive injuries over a length of time.

Since this research has come out, the science around CTE in not only football players but also common head injuries that do not resolve into noticeable concussions has broadened awareness of the hazards of unprotected head injuries. As a boy, I rode my bike without a helmet, like roller skates and skateboarding. Today, even joggers wear protective helmets. The Department of Transportation (DOT) and private organizations have updated regulations for Motorcycle and Auto Racing helmets in response to these findings.

We now see our skulls as more than just a buffer; the brain inside is as vital to our lifestyles as humans, not just the significant injuries but the more minor attacks on our brains over time.

Paul did not have this research available to him, but the Holy Spirit did. Salvation is our guardian from the significant attacks and the daily, seemingly minor knocks on our fundamental belief in Jesus as God. Oddly, when I discuss why someone has left Faith, it is not for the vast things that shake their Faith. It is the little things over a while. The Holy Spirit keeps us focused on God and our secure Salvation and protects us from those little invasions into our psyche.

We are hardened in this foundation of truth as we step forward.

With Salvation as our only goal, he could have stopped there. However, he is just getting warmed up. Remember, in the original movie "Avatar," the main character recounts how a good safety briefing gets his blood going. Paul is doing this here, setting our hearts right for our battle.

Ephesians 1:15-23

¹⁵ Therefore I also, after I heard of your Faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸ the

eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what the hope of His calling is, what are the riches of the Glory of His inheritance in the saints,¹⁹ and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

²² And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.¹⁵ Therefore I also, after I heard of your Faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,¹⁶ do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

Given the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge of Him, the Creator of the universe, the power that holds the universe together, knows all, and he gives us this gift. When the Master of the universe provides the gift of such power, it is for his Kingdom.

¹⁸ the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the Glory of His inheritance in the saints,¹⁹ and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power

Take that, you wimp, that would tell me that I am nothing, that I know nothing, and that I have no hope. I am rich in His inheritance, world; take your money and riches and shove it. My riches overwhelm me for eternity, not just the short time I have on this earth.

²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

²² And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

I sometimes suffer with the concept of him in me and me in him. I feel more distant from Him, as if he is looking down from heaven rather than residing in me. I know He said He is here in me, so He is, and it is in my Faith that I know it to be true. I guess most of my issues are around that I know he is a 24/7 God, and I struggle to be a 1/10 or a 1-day, 10-minute disciple, but he is working in me continually. I, by nature, am more patient than I used to be, taking the world over there rather than in my face, and there are other things, too. But in the end, the fact that people are comfortable around me tells me something.

Sometimes, I feel his presence through a song, a scripture, or a witness expressed (maybe through a movie or just a speech), but I don't feel close to him daily. I want to feel him more often, but my focus must be elsewhere to care for my life and family.

When I am found in the battle, fighting evil, I am closer to Him than any manufactured or manipulated emotion.

Our foundational Faith is our guardian; the Holy Spirit working through our Faith keeps us on track. Believing in Jesus as our Savior protects us from those who lead us astray with wild theories. The Truth of Jesus is the thing that holds us together, Jew, Gentile, and all others who come to follow Him.

This truth binds all Christians to the body of Christ. He has the power, and our knowledge of this truth is our wisdom and the basis for our "*wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.*"

This knowledge and deep-seated understanding in our hearts and minds is the word of God, implanted, embedded, in our psyche that cuts deeply into the souls of those we witness.

Chapter 2

In the 1960's there was a quiz show named "To tell the truth" where 4 contestants were trying to determine which of 3 people was the true one and which were imposters. The two imposters had been briefed on certain things about the genuine person to fake out the contestants.

Today, we are kind of like that with the Church. Which is real and which is counterfeit. Everyone will point to the bible and their interpretation. Others will tug on our emotions or appearances, maybe with a message that appeals to us.

As Gladiators, training for spiritual warfare is important to find a church serving the honest Jesus.

Hebrews 1:1-4¹ God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;³ who being the brightness of His Glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,⁴ having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

I usually tell people to start with the book of John. There, I find the "inner" Jesus, or more to the heart of the matter, the heart of our Savior and our God. We can then recognize the honest Jesus and reject the imposters.

Ephesians 2:1-10

¹ And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For by grace you have been saved through Faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

HE MADE us alive. We didn't make choices to become new people; He re-made us into who we are. In my case, I think it took a little more work than others, but I am the person He is making. He is still working on this stubborn person. I think of the song lyrics, "He is the potter, I am the clay." In my case, this is more like "I am the stone, and He is the stone mason." But whatever he does, what he needs to do for his family is to make us live together with him in the Kingdom of God.

We are no longer dead in our sins but have a new life in Him, so the world will see His benevolent nature and come to respect his greatness and judgment. We walk with His Gospel in His Kingdom headed for the "streets of Gold."

Our foundational Faith is our guardian; the Holy Spirit working through our Faith keeps us on track; believing in Jesus as our Savior protects us from those who would try to lead us astray with wild theories. The Truth of Jesus is the thing that holds us together, Jew, Gentile, and all others who come to follow Him. His path for us requires us to step forward, WALKING with him, in heavenly places. Our walk will be the Holy Spirit's window to shine Jesus' light. We reflect the faithful Jesus to the world so they can recognize the imposters and follow Him.

Understanding this is perfect Faith, not Faith without flaws but complete Faith.

Ephesians 2:11-13

¹¹ Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having

no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Paul is addressing Circumcision here in a spiritual sense. To the Jews it was the covenant bond started with Abraham that consecrated every male child to the family of Jews. This is the "Circumcision made int the flesh by hands" which was performed at 8 days old in obedience to God's instruction way before there was a Law. Gentiles or non-Jews and Jews at birth are both now consecrated through the blood of Christ. We are the "far off" which is a term used for Gentiles as they (We) were spiritually "out there."

Remember, in Acts 2:38, he promised we would receive the Holy Spirit speaking to the Jews on Pentecost. Well, the next verse opens it up to us all.

³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:39

Ephesians 2:13. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Everyone in Christ was brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 2:14-22

¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

The Temple in Jerusalem had three large courtyards:

- for all not sanctified Jews, including all women and all Gentiles
- for Jewish sanctified Men
- and for the priests to offer sacrifices

Then, there was a building where priests would daily perform rituals, offer prayers, etc.

Then, the inner building, or the Holy of Holy, was where the Ark of the Covenant was, and there were a few items and scrolls.

The Chief Priest of the lineage of the Aaron clan would offer a sacrifice to redeem the family of Israel for one year.

Imagine being the Chief Priest, spending a whole week of ceremonial cleansings, preparing your heart and mind to step into the presence of the Almighty God of the Universe and appeal for forgiveness for the sins of your whole nation of millions of people.

Remember that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving, and he builds US to be a dwelling place for His Spirit, a WHOLE building, growing into the HOLY TEMPLE of the Lord. He builds us for a purpose: His Glory, His honor, and His victory.

He builds us to be a tabernacle or Temple if you would like to use the OT terminology as a structure to shine, lighting the path to his Kingdom. The apostles (the New Testament writings) and Prophets (Old Testament predictions like Isaiah, Jeremiah, David, etc.) show the path less taken, which is our compass for our journey.

Each time we pray to God, we enter the Holy of Holy, the very presence of God on earth, to talk directly to him.

In Roman times, the Gladiator would say when the games would start, "We who are about to die to salute you," according to the rules at the time.

As Christian Gladiators, we dedicate our lives and efforts to the Glory of God with the knowledge that God is in us as in the old Temple, and we are devoted to him.

Chapter 3

Ephesians 3:1-13

¹ For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—² if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, ³ how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, ⁴ by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), ⁵ which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: ⁶ that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel, ⁷ of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

Gladiators had remarkable strength through training, personal devotion, and courage. Our arena is our lives, and we walk in his power, not our own.

It is now time to recognize his power in us. We talk about the "Power of Prayer," which indicates that WE have power when God has it. We must acknowledge and consider his power before praying in His throne room.

Psalms 135:5-7:

*⁵ For I know that the LORD is great,
And our Lord is above all gods.*

*⁶ Whatever the LORD pleases He does,
In heaven and in earth,
In the seas and in all deep places.*

*⁷ He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth;
He makes lightning for the rain;
He brings the wind out of His treasuries*

God's power is endless. He is all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient), and cannot change because he is complete in every way (immutable) and has no beginning or end in any way (eternal).

Paul acknowledges that he has no power but can speak of God and his nature and relationship with us through His grace alone. As I become more and more aware of these essential characteristics of God, I am humbled that he could love a filthy rag as myself.

As one theologian once said (I am paraphrasing):

"I am not becoming worthy of his Salvation through what I do. I am more like a battered container thrown on the roadside; it is filthy, damaged, and useless, and he takes me out of the gutter of my own existence and repairs my inner and outer self, giving me a new life. A life with purpose, challenges, and His victories for His Glory."

⁸ To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; ¹⁰ to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the Church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through Faith in Him. ¹³ Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your Glory.

This in our hearts protects us from lies and deceit that would wound our Perfect Faith, causing us to doubt.

Paul is preparing us to enter our arena. His example and His ministry is to teach the Gospel, our weapon against all those who make spiritual war on us. As one body founded in the days past and applied to us today, weapons of spiritual warfare are not what we might expect. Preaching the Gospel can mean going into the town square, as it were, and speaking the truth of the Love of God and his Salvation; however, Jesus told us that we would be

recognized from the world by our love for one another, something the world does not have.

We perform daily acts that set us apart from the world, making us shine in the darkness as a church and as individuals. As simple as it may seem, these things are what drive Satan and his minions crazy. Like the Gladiators, we fight the things that try to take us down, be it in our bad habits and temptations or actual attacks from evil in this world.

¹¹ Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and Spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. Hebrews 4:11-13

The rest in the book of Hebrews is in the presence of Christ, our Savior, our shepherd, who protects us, and the Holy Spirit that holds us close—the relief and comfort of not having to fight for my soul.

Living the Gospel is the Word of God in us, the Two-edged sword.

Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His Glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through Faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ²¹ to Him be Glory in the Church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

You and I are established in Christ's Church by the will of God, and we are equipped with the power and Love of God for his goodwill to spread to the earth. We are fully equipped for the march to Glory, which is ahead. It is with the "fullness" of God, through our Faith, that grounds us in his grace

¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ours is the victory in Christ.

Ephesians 4:1-6

¹ I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one Faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Let us picture an ancient battlefield, like the valley next to Megiddo, where more battles were fought than any other location on earth.

Jesus rides his white horse riding to and fro along the front. On one side of you are faithful warriors of old prepared for war (Jews and the Law and Prophets), and on the other side are younger Saints(Gentiles young in Faith), wary and uncomfortably preparing for the battle in front of them. This is a picture of the Jews in Christ formed and trained by the Law, and the Gentiles, just learning and being reconciled to him through Faith and the leadership of the ancients. We know victory is ours, but some might physically fall in the battle against the enemy, but they will be given great honor in heaven.

Everything we carry, our separation in truth, is brought together under one banner, the cross of Calvary and the Risen Lord, Master of the Universe.

He equips us through the Holy Spirit to attain Holiness by defeating evil:

Victory in the land is before us.

Paul addresses this simply in the letter to the Galatians churches:

Galatians 3:1-9

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ² This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of Faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? ⁴ Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

⁵ Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of Faith?— ⁶ just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." ⁷ Therefore know that only those who are of Faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by Faith, preached the Gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." ⁹ So then those who are of Faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

One thing to remember is that Paul talks to gentile and Jewish Christians. The Jewish Christians came out of a background of extensive rules and traditions designed to keep their minds and hearts on following and pleasing God in every facet of their lives. The Gentiles came from a background of polytheism, where they fashion their gods more like humans, with our weaknesses and emotions warring with each other and with humans. They could only hope for the best.

We citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven are called to Spiritual Warfare daily, each striving for Holiness. Paul brings us together in a shared awareness of the singular promise to all: Jews with disciplines to enable their relationship with God, Gentiles without disciplines of Holiness.

2 Timothy 2:1-7¹ You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. ³ You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴ No one

engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. ⁵ And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. ⁷ Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

2 Timothy 2:1-7¹ You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:1-4¹ But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

Revelation 12:11-12¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. ¹² Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

Revelation 14:14-16¹⁴ Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. ¹⁵ And another angel came out of the Temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." ¹⁶ So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

He has prepared calls for us all to fight the battle before us:

Galatians 5:22-26

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.* ²⁴ *And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* ²⁵ *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.* ²⁶ *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

Ephesians 4:7-16

⁷ *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.* ⁸ *Therefore He says:*

*"When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And gave gifts to men."*

⁹ *(Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?* ¹⁰ *He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)*

¹¹ *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,* ¹² *for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,* ¹³ *till we all come to the unity of the Faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;* ¹⁴ *that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,* ¹⁵ *but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—* ¹⁶ *from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

We are chosen not to sit around and be survivors but victors, united in Christ and Christ alone:

¹⁵ *but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—*

¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

God has given us tools as gifts to complete our tasks for the spreading of the Gospel to all humanity:

Apostles: to go forth and plant churches

Prophets: to speak the truth of the Gospel to open the doors for the Holy Spirit to work

Evangelists: to spread the Gospel in the Church to the community

Pastors: to shepherd the flock as they depend on God daily.

Teachers: to prepare, strengthen, encourage, and build foundations of their Faith through the Word of God.

In some way, we each have a calling in one or more of these categories, and the Holy Spirit guides us.

Ephesians 4:17-24¹⁷ This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; ¹⁹ who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

²⁰ But you have not so learned Christ, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²² that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the Spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and Holiness.

We were lost in a forest of wantonness and vacant dreams, without any hope of ultimate victory, and Christ came for us, renewing our minds to a state of hope. We are chosen for a destiny of victory, personally and in the Body of Christ, the Church. Our victories will include the present timeline of earth among the world and in the Eternal, feasting at the table of the King of the

Universe, sovereign Lord of all. Our victories in this world bring us crowns to lie at his feet, be they victories over sin or spiritual warfare battles over the King of the world.

Our challenge and calling is for Holiness, the ultimate defeater of the enemy, to sit at the feet of our Savior. As we savor his word, we act on those words. God doesn't speak so that we can enjoy the sound of his voice, and he says so that we will listen, digest, and act.

We are to testify to His greatness so that our walk is secure and we can walk into battle in Holiness.

Ephesians 4:25-32

²⁵ Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. ²⁶ "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷ nor give place to the devil. ²⁸ Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. ²⁹ Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

When we follow Jesus, we leave the world behind and reject our bad habits, refuting any stain on our character. Easier said than done, but it is our reliance on the Holy Spirit for the wisdom, knowledge, and courage to move forward.

Ephesians 5:1-7



Gadiator weapons in the Roman Era

Gladiators would train for days, learning to use their weapons effectively in the arena. They needed to know how to use their own weapons and defend against their opponents' handling of weapons.

We must understand what our enemies use to bring us down and how to use our resources to defeat and attack them.

¹ *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.* ² *And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*

³ *But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;* ⁴ *neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.* ⁵ *For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God.* ⁶ *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.* ⁷ *Therefore do not be partakers with them.*

Their weapons:

- Fornication
- Uncleaness (generally unclean behavior or language)
- Covetousness (desiring what we do not need)
- Filthiness
- Foolish talking
- Coarse jesting
- Deceiving with empty words

Our weapons:

- Sanctification
- Fruits of the Spirit
 - Goodness
 - Righteousness
 - Truth

Sanctifying ourselves is separating ourselves from evil. We can't be isolated from everything but can not participate or walk the line between Evil and God. If there is a line between Evil and Good, we should not get close to it. If there is a distinct line, who owns it?

Ephesians 5:8-14

*⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. ¹³ But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. ¹⁴ Therefore He says:
"Awake, you who sleep,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light."*

Walking in the light is walking with Jesus. Once we step onto that path and walk in it, we will feel the lightness of his freedom from sin, and the light of the path gets brighter with each step.

Walking in the light, we gain victory DAILY.

Ephesians 5:15-21

¹⁵ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

¹⁷ Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Some Christian radio stations broadcast great songs and hymns to help us through the hard times when we feel alone and can't feel God present.

I am reminded of a married couple driving through town and coming up behind a young couple cuddling in the front seat; this is before bucket seats, and the wife turns to the husband and says, "Doesn't that remind you of us years ago?" which his response is "I didn't move." Our relationship with God is similar; he doesn't move, but we do. These songs that make a melody in our hearts can be a soothing way to soften our hearts and make us feel his presence again.

Ephesians 5:22-33

²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the Church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴ Therefore, just as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the Church. ³⁰ For

we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹ *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."* ³² *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.* ³³ *Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

Our daily support system is our family. Paul teaches us how our family should look and how the Church should be the same.

Husbands are the spiritual head of the house and should sanctify the family with his leadership. In the present day, this job is often left to the wife, who leads the children, as the husband leads her.

It is essential to discuss submission here. The word for submission in Greek does not mean to yield totally. That is a different word. The word used here is hypotasso, the combination word "hypo" under, as in "Hypodermic" and "tasso" like a "tassel," meaning aligned under. Men are aligned under Christ in the family as the Church aligns under Christ, who loves the Church and cares for her, giving his life and death to consecrate her.

²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for her,* ²⁶ *that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,* ²⁷ *that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

Men are to care for those given to them by God.

²⁸ *So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.* ²⁹ *For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the Church.* ³⁰ *For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.*

Ephesians 6:1-4

¹ *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* ² *"Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise:* ³ *"that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."*

⁴ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:5-9

⁵ Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; ⁶ not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

⁹ And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

In every army, there is an order of command and control. This order is for each soldier to understand their responsibilities and expectations. Paul has prepared us for battle in every way, giving us the tools to fight the good fight daily with God and Jesus inside us, guiding and carrying us on.

Ephesians 6:10-20

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of Faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of Salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— ¹⁹ and for

me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel,²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Your preparations are complete.

Ephesians 6:21-24 Personal notes to the fellowship

²¹ *But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you;* ²² *whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts.*

Personal note to us all:

²³ *Peace to the brethren, and love with Faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* ²⁴ *Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.*

Five disciplines to help your walk:

Fasting—take a few minutes to separate yourself from the worldly things.

Philippians 4:8⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Meditate—Seek the peace of God

Psalms 46:10-11

¹⁰ *Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!*

¹¹ *The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge.*

Confess your weaknesses: humility in every corner of you being

Mark 9:24

²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

Worship: Approach God in Jesus' Righteousness.

Psalms 1:1-2

¹ Blessed is the man

Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,

Nor stands in the path of sinners,

Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

² But his delight is in the law of the LORD,

And in His law he meditates day and night

Pray: In the presence of the Lord in Jesus' Righteousness

James 5:16

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

APPENDIX A

My perspective on the interpretation of the book of Ephesians:

Each of us reads and interprets scripture with presuppositions, and I would like to clarify my own thoughts on Ephesians before I dig in.

1. I believe the Holy Spirit authored the bible with the hands of inspired writers who accurately put pen to paper.
2. The general perspective of Paul's letters is that they are in response to current issues; however, I believe the letter to Timothy and the Ephesians were Authored by the Holy Spirit prophylactically in response to the direction the Church needs to take in the future, their future and ours.

3. Looking back on the history of the Church, the European Church would become a political animal, the brains, while the Church in what is now Turkey would be the heart and soul of the foundational Church. The Church and other churches of Asia Minor will be the stable churches from which our Christianity, both Western and Eastern ideologies, will ultimately be born.
4. The letters that Jesus gave to the churches of Asia Minor would ultimately withstand persecution from within and without being models for us even today.
5. I believe that when Jesus addressed Ephesus as losing their first love, I don't think he was talking of their love for him, but their love of spreading the Gospel. When he challenged them to *repent and do the first works*, *Revelation 2:5* was not to retrieve the Love of Christ through works, but to hold to their calling of building the Church, organizing new churches, and disciplining intensely.