

The Key Relationship

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[0 : 00] Well, as we continue then our progress through the letter to the Ephesians, we come to the final chapter, chapter 6, and we'll deal with the first half of this this evening up to the end of verse 12.

But we find at the beginning of chapter 6, remembering again, as mentioned so often in the past, that of course in the original text, in the original letter that was written, there wouldn't be chapters and verses.

And just the continual script and the chapters and verses subdividing the text were only added hundreds of years later. So reading this about children obeying your parents in the Lord, this carries on naturally from the relationship between husbands and wives as mentioned towards the end of chapter 5.

And then it goes on to deal with servants and masters and so on. So husbands, wives, now children. And it says children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right.

Now this term obey in the original in the Greek is a stronger term than nearly that of submission. If we go back to chapter 5, we see that verses 21 and 22 it says submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

[1 : 07] Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. Now the word translated submit implies an acceptance, if you like, almost kind of rank or seniority and submitting as a consequence.

I'm trying to think of an example. If you think, for example, of say two army officers or naval officers or whatever who are both of, say, equal rank. Let's say they're both lieutenants or something. And they've got discussing how to deal with a forthcoming battle or situation or an attack of the enemy.

And they've got a disagreement about tactics or how best to do it. But they're both of the same rank. What do you do? Well, what you do is you go by the date of their commission. And so one, say, might have had his commission dated February of one year.

And the other might have been dated, say, August or September of the same year when he was commissioned technically by the king or the queen at the time. And whoever has the seniority of commission technically takes command.

So although they're both of equal rank, the one has to submit to the seniority of the other. Although they're both of equal rank. But it's perfectly in order for them to discuss and debate and to put alternative points of view.

[2 : 20] And the one who ultimately has to give way to the other may express a different view, but accepts the rank, the seniority of the other. And that's what they go with. But it would be unthinkable for either of these lieutenants or officers to invite into their tent the private soldiers and corporals and sergeants and so on and say, What is it you think we should do?

How should we deal with the enemy here and so on? These lesser ranks, the NCOs and the private soldiers, they are not expected to debate and discuss and have their opinion and consultation taken into account.

They are to obey without question. When the officers come out of their tent and say, Right, we're going up on that ridge or we're attacking that field or whatever, then they just jump to it. They obey instantly.

That is the concept of obeying, of obedience here, as opposed to submitting one to the other. It is the sense of one equal submitting to the seniority, perhaps, of another equal.

It's first among equals and second among equals almost. This submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God in chapter 5, verse 21, and then verse 22. So this is a stronger term.

[3 : 31] It's like the equivalent of what the private soldier or the corporal or the sergeant must do when the officer speaks, as opposed to what two officers of the same right might discuss amongst themselves and one giving way to the seniority of the other, as he is required to do.

So that's what we have here. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. A sense of this is right implies that even heathens and pagans would recognize, well, this is really what ought to be done.

And, of course, that as we have, then it goes on to speak about honour thy father and mother, which is the first command of a promise, and so on. As both the confession of faith and the catechism would make clear, this command to honour your father and your mother, it expands out into all the other aspects of society.

In terms of father and mother, you're meant to recognize also those who have legitimate authority over you, say, at the quorum level or in parliament or local officers or judges or whatever, because these are legitimately set over you as part of the powers that be, which are ordained of God.

And in a spiritual sense, I suppose in a civil sense as opposed to spiritual, we're to recognize Jesus in the position of fathers and mothers in the order that God has set in the world.

[4 : 50] But leave that aside for the moment. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. In the sense of in the Lord, there's any one of three possible ways this can be taken.

And all of them are appropriate. First of all, in the things pertaining especially to religion and the love of Christ. Obey your parents in the Lord.

So, for example, your parents teach you about the Lord or teach you about, you know, attendance at church or reading your Bible or whatever. That which they teach you about the Lord, take it in.

Obey it because they're telling you the things of the Lord. Obey your parents in the Lord. Secondly, it can mean you obey your parents in the Lord, in other words, because this is what God has commanded.

You might not like what they tell you to do. You might not like their instructions. You might think they're totally wrong. And actually, you might think you know the truth better than they do. And there's good reasons why you shouldn't do what they say.

[5 : 45] But in the Lord, because God has commanded it, that's what you do. And that's a second sense. First, because it might be pertaining especially to the things of the Lord, to religion or the love of Christ.

Secondly, because of what God has commanded. Thirdly, it can potentially be describing the limits of legitimate obedience. We think of Acts chapter 5, verse 29, where the apostles are told by the Jewish leaders, the son of heaven, don't speak anymore in this name, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

And Peter and the apostles, we read in that verse, then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men. So, in this sense of obedience in the Lord.

They would obey the Sanhedrin insofar as their commands were consistent with the God whom they were meant to be representing. But if they commanded something that was contrary to the true God, then the apostles said, our duty is clear, we ought to obey God rather than men.

So, if your mother or father commands you to do something, say, to worship a false god or to abandon the Lord or whatever, or to, say, you're older and married perhaps, commands you to go and commit adultery or something, then you are not to do that.

[7 : 05] Because you're to obey them in the Lord. God always comes first.

So, it describes also the limits of legitimate obedience. Insofar as that which is commanded is in line with that which the Lord reveals and teaches, it is to be obeyed absolutely.

But if there comes to be a clash between the authority of father and mother on the one hand, or any other authority for that matter, and God, we ought to obey God rather than man.

Even when the authority in question is either the Sanhedrin, you know, the Jewish council, or the General Assembly, or whatever it might be, if it's going against what God has revealed in his word, then it is God who must be obeyed rather than men.

So, these three are not either-ors. Each one is a possibility, but, you know, any of these three is applicable, and all are appropriate.

[8 : 07] Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long in the earth.

Now, this reference to, you know, the commandments of God which he has given us demonstrates that the law is not abolished in the New Testament. Christ does not abolish the law.

Remember what he says in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapter 5, you know, Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets, but rather, until heaven and earth pass away one jot and one tittle, shall there no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.

He's not come to destroy, but to fulfill. So, the law is not abolished in the New Testament, but rather, in its substance and essence, it remains eternally enforced.

Now, when we say eternally enforced, what do we mean? It means that, basically, in heaven, that which God commands on earth will still continue to be the case. And if you think about all the commandments of God, you know, will there be any other gods before the Lord in heaven?

[9 : 11] No, there won't be. Will there be any graven images in heaven? No, there won't be. Will there be anybody taking the Lord's name in vain? No, there won't be. Will there be remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy? Yes, because it will be one eternal Sabbath, resting in the Lord, in heaven.

Will we be honoring our Father and Mother in heaven? Yes, of course. Those who have been our parents, if they're in heaven with us, then that position will be respected, of course. But it won't elevate or lower their position in heaven, but it'll be respected, just like those of husbands and wives.

We'll know who our husbands and wives were if they're with us in heaven, but we won't have the same relation to them as before. Thou shalt not kill. Will there be killing in heaven? No, of course there won't be.

Will there be a daughter in heaven? No, of course there won't be. Will there be stealing? No, there won't be. Everything is free and is given. Will there be any bearing false witness? No. Will there be any covetousness? How can there be covetousness?

When you have everything you could possibly want in heaven, all the law and all the aspects of the law in that sense will all be eternally enforced in heaven.

[10 : 14] Other things will pass away. Faith will pass away. No need for hope. Will pass away with charity. Love. The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart. That will be eternally enforced.

The law is not abrogated. It's not passed away. It's not abolished. But rather it is eternally enforced. Some outward aspects of its application, as in worldly terms and in the Old Testament, do fade away.

As in the same ways if you think in terms of, you know, if you've got power cuts or whatever, as we sometimes have these past weeks, and you light lots of candles, or you light a candle in a dark room, that's great.

And if the candle's a long burning candle, then the daylight comes in, you open the curtains, and suddenly light floods the room. And as the sun gets higher, it floods the room with sunlight. The candle's still burning, but you still need the candle.

Has the candle become something wrong or bad? No, it's just that you don't actually need that light anymore. Not because the thing the candle did was bad, it was wrong. It's because now you've got huge amounts of natural daylight filling the room, so the candle is not actually needed anymore.

[11 : 22] There's nothing wrong with the candle. It's still doing the same purpose, but now that which is natural, provided by heaven, floods the room. You don't actually need it anymore.

But the purpose for which you use the candle is being now done perfectly by daylight, by heaven's light itself. So in that sense, the candle becomes not abolished, but it becomes superseded by the perfect light of heaven.

In Psalm 119, of course, you know the familiar verse, verse 105, My word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. But it is not itself the path.

The word of God, the written word, is not itself the path. It is not the way. It is that which illuminates the way. It is that which guides us on the way.

Only Christ himself is the way, the truth, and the life. Yes, you could say, oh, he's the word made flesh, so the word is the way. Okay, yeah, perhaps we're being a wee bit clever with words here.

[12 : 26] But the point is that God's written word, that infallible word of God, is intended to be that which guides and lights our way.

It is to bring us to Christ, who is himself the way. The Bible, in all reverence and respect to it, is not God.

It does not save us. It is possible to know the Bible inside out in the original Greek and Hebrew languages and still be lost and still be a non-believer.

It is not possible to know and love Christ as he alone can be known and loved and still be lost. The devils know him, yes, but they don't love him.

So Christ alone is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus alone is the fulfillment. And his word and his spirit, he continues to open the way to us, to guide us in it.

[13 : 23] And by his spirit, he speaks to his people. Remember, when Isaiah says, chapter 30, verse 21, So the law is not abolished, but rather it continues to be eternally enforced.

But the need for it becomes less and less. As the believer is enabled to do by heaven's natural light and love, that which once he or she did simply by obedience to the law.

Like the candle in the dark. When the light comes, you don't really need the candle anymore because you have that. Verse 4, Again, we're talking about the potential abuse of legitimate authority.

It is not to make cruelty the servant of self. And they say, well, I can do whatever I like because I'm in charge here. I can ruthlessly punish my children or I can abuse those who are under my power and my care.

This is something which is potentially a risk with any authority. Whether it be a captain on a naval ship, whether it be a commanding officer in the army, whether it be a king or a prime minister or somebody in power.

[14 : 42] They can always abuse their power for their own ends. They can always crush others if they so choose. But the doing of it is something that can only benefit them for a short time.

Rather, fathers and all those in authority, it specifies fathers, although of course it includes mothers. But as commentators have said, fathers tend perhaps less to, mothers might be more inclined to indulge their children, to be softer towards them.

Fathers are more perhaps inclined to fly off the handle or perhaps become angry or perhaps become overly disciplining in that sense. They are not to abuse their legitimate authority, not to make cruelty the servant of self, but rather to make discipline the servant of God.

And to make it the benefit of the child. That those under their care, even if they may need discipline at times, that it will be ultimately to their benefit. And it will be to bring them on in the knowledge of right and wrong and of the things of the Lord.

Nurture and admonition of the Lord. The nurture of that which is by example and environment. The admonition, that which you do by teaching and by word.

[15 : 58] That is the purpose of such authority. So that the authority you have can be used for the good of those under your care. And their ultimate good is to be brought on in the knowledge and love of the Lord.

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh. Now when it says servants, of course, it means slaves. And slavery was widespread.

It was saturating the Roman and Greek world. In fact, it saturated almost all of the world for the first sort of 17, 1800 years. Since the time of Christendom went all the way back to ancient times.

And it really boils down to the simple equation that the poor you always have with you. Those who are economically poor are dependent upon those who are economically rich.

They have nothing with which to pay, nothing with which to sustain themselves. They sell themselves to those who employing them will feed them, clothe them, house them. Or they may be captives taken in war.

[17 : 00] In which case, the same applies. They have no power themselves. Those who have power over them will utilise their labour, their services to serve others. And people couldn't help their slavery.

But it was a fact of life. Now, what the gospel does not say is what many a modern theologian would no doubt wish it would say.

Is that rise up against your masters and break off your shackles. And off you go on a demo and demand at the Colosseum. No, we want freedom. We want pay. We want better conditions. We want to throw down the authority.

Equality for all and so on. All that kind of thing. Well, that would have got very short shrift in Roman days and an awful lot of bloodshed and fearful consequences.

Plus the fact it would allow people to say that Christianity was simply about political rebellion. Now, of course, the kingship of Christ is way bigger than any political objectives down here.

[17 : 58] Let's say you get equal pay for a time. Let's say you get your liberty from your master. Then what are you going to do? How are you going to feed yourself? How are you going to provide? You say, well, that's great if you've got employment, if you've got income, if you're well-to-do, that's wonderful.

But if you're not, you're back to the same problem again. The social and political issues that afflict every age are not the things about which the kingdom of God is primarily about.

Not because they're unimportant. But because they are passive. They are concerned with, yes, the here and now, which matters, and how we deal in the here and now does matter.

But God is not concerned simply to make your life better or more comfortable for a few short years. He is concerned about redeeming your life from that in which it is truly enslaved.

From that permanent darkness, that spiritual darkness, which will enslave you not only for time but for eternity. You can be a slave master with hundreds of slaves and still be in bondage.

[19 : 03] You can be a slave and still be free if you are in Christ. So servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling.

Now the key relationship here, this is what we've got to see here in the letter here. The key relationship is not the human or temporal one.

Though God has obeyed us. You know, he has put us each in the position we're in, ultimately. That will pass. The human relationship, master, slave, employee, employer, servant, whatever it may be, that will pass away in a very few short years.

And your status in society will have no bearing on your judgment at the last day. If we think in terms of, you know, 1 Corinthians 7, verse 22, this is what we read.

For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant to a slave, is the Lord's free man. The Lord has made him free in Christ. Likewise, also he that is called being free is Christ's servant.

[20 : 07] Now, the gospel is not about keeping people in bondage. Because the very previous verse to that, 1 Corinthians 7, verse 20, where it says, Art thou called being a servant? A slave.

Care not for it. But if thou mayest be free, use it rather. If you can be free, that's great. Become free if you can do it legitimately. But the gospel is not about slaves running away from their masters or going on demos or making political change and demands and so on and forcing the hands of the masters.

Because God's objectives are so much bigger than that. But like fallen human beings that we are, and myself too, plenty of times, you like to think, you know, why didn't Jesus just show them?

Why didn't he come down from the cross and say, ah, you see, I am more powerful than you. Here's my 12 legions of angels. Here's my angelic power. Stick that in your pipe and smoke it, Pilate.

And all you Roman legions, you can't do a thing about me. See all you Jewish leaders that tried to be crucified? Look at how strong I am now. Wouldn't that just have been fantastic?

[21 : 13] Wouldn't that have just been brilliant? But it's too small an objective. It makes you feel great for a few moments or a few hours or even a few years.

But at the end of the day, these things pass. Christ's kingdom is not of this world because that is too small. Think of the vastness of the universe or even the solar system and how tiny this little world is.

In comparison to all the other planets and stars and so on, what should it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Now think of the vastness of what God has made.

This is the kingdom over which Christ rules already. Already. This is the eternity, the vastness more than that, bigger than that over which Christ has already come.

So tempting as it will be to change the world and just jolly well show them who's really in charge. It's only the expression of a few minutes of feeling brilliant.

[22 : 17] Yeah, just showing them. But, you know, it's not worth it. That's bowing down and serving the devil, the glories of this world which he offered to Christ anyway in the temptation. But Christ's kingdom is bigger than that.

And the eternity and the glory that he offers to slaves and masters and bond and free alike is so much bigger and more lasting than anything you've got down here or anything that is on offer down here.

At the last judgment we know we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. But rather the key relationship is not masters and slaves.

It is rather the relationship in the Lord. This is what we see in verse 1. Children, obey your parents in the Lord. For this is right. Verse 4.

Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Again, verse 5. Servants, be obedient to your masters. Then there are your masters according to the flesh. But fear and trembling and singleness of your heart as unto Christ.

[23 : 19] Verse 6. Not with I, servants, men, please, verse, but at the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will, verse 7. Doing service as to the Lord and not unto men.

And likewise, we turn the page at verse 9. Ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing, threatening, knowing that your master, but also is in heaven. Neither is the respective persons with him.

You see the point here. The key relationship is about being in the Lord. Everything that children are to do in respect of their parents and parents in respect of their children, it's about being in the Lord.

Masters and servants is about being in the Lord. It is this eternal relationship which this is all about. Understand that which will last.

Understand that which is permanent. And so servants are to be obedient to them that are your masters to flesh with fear and trembling. It doesn't mean, oh, fear and trembling of master.

[24 : 17] Oh, in case he's caused or angry with me. No, the fear and trembling in the context is not so much of their human masters as of offending against the Lord. Offending against the Lord if they serve with eye service as men please us.

Verse 6. And not as the servants of Christ. They are to be doing the will of God and not just their own will. The fear and trembling is to be of offending against God. This eye service, you know, just when people are watching you, when the master's watching you, well, I'll do everything right.

But when he's not, I'll do what I like. This eye service as men please us. It's behaving one way when the master's eyes are upon them, but differently when they think no one is looking.

Think of Gehazi in 2nd Kings chapter 5 who Elisha had as his servant. And when Elisha wasn't looking, or he thought he wasn't looking, he goes off and tries to get money and clothes off of Naam in the city.

But of course, the Lord sees all these things. As Hagar said of the Lord in Genesis 16, Now, God sees me. And that's not in the sort of big brother sense with CCTV cameras everywhere.

[25 : 28] It's rather God sees you. Not for watching over you and trying to catch you out. God sees you for good. He is always there, keeping an eye on you. He is always looking out for you.

God sees to me. So when the servant is serving his master, the Lord sees him all the time. Even if the master doesn't. When the children are obeying their parents, they're seeing all the time.

When the parents are in their relationship with their children, or with their fellow employees, or whatever, in their workplace, the Lord sees them all the time. And everything that we do is to be done as unto the Lord.

You know, as Paul understood the futility of seeking to please mere men. You know, this is what we read in chapter 1, verse 10 of Galatians.

Where he says, you know, Now do I now persuade men, O God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

[26 : 27] And in Christ there is neither bond nor free. There is neither, you know, Jew nor Greek. Neither male nor female. That's what we read. Galatians 3, 27, 28. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ are put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither bond nor free. Seventh or master. There is neither male nor female. You're all one in Christ Jesus. This is the relationship that matters.

This is the relationship that lasts. All of these other relationships, they're legitimate. They're ordained of God, yes. But they will ultimately pass away.

The key relationship is that which is in the Lord. And that is what is being emphasized in these few verses here. So we recognize that masters and slaves alike are to recognize that there is a greater master to whom they must themselves give an account.

The master is to recognize that his servant or his slave is one who is to be treated as a brother. One who is under his care. This goes way back to the Old Testament.

[27 : 32] Leviticus 25, verses 42 and 43. For they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt. They shall not be sold as bondmen. Thou shalt not rule over him with rigor, but shalt fear thy God.

To fail to have the gentleness and the mercy of a kind master toward his servant was to abandon the fear of the Lord. And that's what we read there in Leviticus.

It is way back then in the Old Testament. Masters alike will have to answer to their ultimate master. You know, as we mentioned, you know, 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 10.

But we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. However he has behaved, whether it's a master or a slave or whatever, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

There's no respective persons. Again, that's the Old Testament teaching. 2 Chronicles 19, verse 7, where the Lord says, You can't bribe God.

[28 : 47] And those words were spoken to a king, a king of Judah. But there's a higher king to whom we must all answer. So in verse 10, So as with the relationships, this being the key relationship which will inform and direct all others, that relationship in the Lord.

So as to the power and might of which we have none, Christ has all the power that we need. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Now we go back to chapter 1 of Ephesians and we see what Paul wrote in verse 19. What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe according to the working of his mighty power?

The very fact that we are redeemed at all is evidence of the power God has exercised in our individual case. If it took the power of God, which it did, to create the heavens and the earth, that we think of the vastness of the universe that God spoke into being, that is one thing.

But infinitely greater power was required to redeem you if you are a saved soul. Because God created the heavens and the earth in six days, as we know, that to redeem a soul from death, even if only one soul had been redeemed, it takes the death of his only beloved son, God the Son, upon the cross.

[30 : 16] For the God-man to die, to give his perfect life, the perfect sacrifice, the last drop of blood, as it were, the divine blood, that is the highest price, the highest cost ever paid, any time, by anyone ever, in heaven or on earth.

That's the price of redemption. It's far more costly than creation. But this is the power of God to redeem souls. It took all the power of God has, and he was willing to expend it.

So never worry about God not having sufficient power to fight your battles for you, to help you through. Because he has the power, it is his power, which alone can redeem. Be strong in the Lord in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armor of God, that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Now, Paul, of course, in Rome, would be surrounded by Roman soldiers coming and going backwards and forwards.

He would have first-hand vision of their armor and all that they wore. The power of Rome at that time was unsurpassed in the world. Its army was the vehicle by which it conquered almost all of the known world.

[31 : 30] And all of Rome's economy went to feeding the army. It was actually a complete military dictatorship. We think of Rome as being, oh, you know, the civilization and the Roman baths and the beautiful buildings and so on.

Yes, all of that was built on the back of military conquests. The military were ruthless. Their tactics in the military terms were genocidal throughout the countries that they attacked and conquered and so on.

So we shouldn't perhaps get all sort of geary-eyed and romantic about the grandeur that was Rome. It was utterly brutal. And it was, as I say, genocidal in much of its treatment of other nations and peoples.

But the military power of Rome would be something very familiar to Paul. He's surrounded by soldiers everywhere and their armor is constantly before him. So when he says, put on the whole armor of God, he's talking about that with which he himself and the Ephesians would be familiar as an illustration.

So this is the key relationship. He's surrounded by this. He wants them to understand the concept of armor and protection and battle. It's through quite a lot of his writing.

[32 : 42] But in every place where the metaphor and illustration is used, its spiritual quality is emphasized. Thus we have, for example, in 2 Corinthians 6, verse 7, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness in the right hand and on the left.

And likewise, again, 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 8, where there's reference here to, Let us who of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.

It's armor, but it's in the spiritual context. Likewise, Romans 13, verses 12 and 14, where we read, You know, the night is far spent, the day is at hand.

Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts they love.

And when we begin to look at the armor in all its pieces, we will see that Christ is actually the fulfillment of all that armor, every aspect of it, every piece of it. The other thing that we need to recognize, it says, Take unto you the whole armor of God.

[34 : 06] And we'll come to that in a minute, because it's necessary to have everything that God gives. He doesn't give anything that's superfluous. You know, if you're putting together a car engine, I've used this illustration many times before, and you find whenever it's ready to go, you're left with a couple of wee screws.

I wonder where these went. Ah, well, it doesn't really matter. It's working okay. Every little screw, every little piece, every aspect of the armor will have a purpose. It will have a reason why it is there.

You might think, oh, well, I've got my guard and the truth, and I've got my belt going on. Oh, the buckle's missing. Or the buckle's there, but maybe the pin that goes through it isn't there. Every little bit matters.

Every little thing matters. Every seemingly insignificant aspect of the whole machinery matters. You know, time and time again, I've found whether it's with a car or whether it's with a daily life or whatever.

One little thing that's not there can make all the difference between something being successful or a failure. You know, if you, let's say, you're locked out of your car, and you think, well, the car's working.

[35 : 12] In fact, it's just that I can't get in. So I can't unlock the door. So I can't do anything. So everything works right, but now I can't use it. Or let's say that the plug in your kettle doesn't work. So if the plug doesn't work, nothing works.

So these things that seem small and insignificant, it's the whole armor of God. And so when it comes to our relationship with the Lord, we think, oh, well, there's bits of the Bible that are good.

You know, the gospel accounts, maybe some of the letters of Paul, maybe Isaiah and Genesis. You know, there's a lot of obscure bits. You know, we read Habakkuk and Nahum and all these other things.

Well, these are all there for a purpose. Every part of God's written revelation will be there for a purpose. This work of the sword of the Spirit, this work of the armor of God, it's all there for a reason.

It is all worth reading. It is all worth recognizing. It is all worth imbibing. God doesn't waste a single word. So when we're to take the whole armor of God, make sure we take all of it.

[36 : 13] Because even the obscure parts will have a purpose. So put it on for the strength the Lord has. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities.

That means of demonic powers. Against the powers of dark places. Against the rulers of the darkness of this world. Spiritual wickedness in high places.

Now notice this word wrestle. What it says there. Wrestle against. If you're wrestling, it's hand to hand. It's like two soldiers fighting. You're looking into your enemy's eyes.

It's not sort of shooting an arrow at a distance or pressing a button on a missile who's miles away to blow up the enemy somewhere else. It's hand to hand combat. You see into the eyes of the enemy who if you don't kill him, he is going to kill you.

You can feel his breath on your face. You can sense his fingers grappling with yours. This is gritty battle. It's really hand to hand stuff. And this is what we wrestle against the devil.

[37 : 15] Because he is determined to destroy us. He is determined to bring us down. He will not waste any effort at all. He knows exactly what he's doing.

Because the powers of darkness. Well John writes of course. We look at chapter 5 verse 19 of 1 John. We know that we are of God. And the whole world lieth in wickedness.

In this darkness in which we are. We wrestle. Not warfare at a distance but close to. Hand to hand. And the rulers of the darkness of this world. It's a present darkness.

And all the world is in this darkness. And as we mentioned in prayer earlier. It doesn't matter whether the governing powers of a country are those of a false religion. Or those of atheism or communism or whatever else it may be.

Unless it is following Christ. It will be against Christ. Unless it will be for the Lord. It will end up being against it. There is no such thing as neutrality.

[38 : 15] People would have you believe that. Oh no. A secular government. You know that's neutral. It's neither for nor against religion. Yes it is against. You'll find that a so called secular government will be determined.

To eliminate Christianity. Eliminate Bibles from public places. Eliminate Christian witness from any place. Refuse to have Christians.

Or those who follow a semi-Christian denomination or organisation. Refuse to have them even as asylum seekers. And leave aside the case of Asia Bibi.

If you think of how many Syrian refugees have been seeking asylum in Britain. How many thousand. It's small thousands. But four or five thousand or whatever.

Maybe eleven thousand have been wedded. How many Christians amongst that have been wedded? It's like less than three hundred. And that's over the last couple of years.

[39 : 13] They discriminate against the followers of Christ. Even though the Christians are the ones most persecuted by ISIS. Most sought to be exterminated by the Muslim powers of Syria and Iraq and so on.

Those who have suffered most are kept most at arm's length. So much for your neutrality and secularism that supposedly doesn't take sides.

It always takes sides against Christ. The whole world. Life and wickedness. Jesus said, He that is not for me is against me. He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

And the darkness of this world is real. And as soon as you try to go against that darkness. You think, I'm fine. I'm not experiencing real attacks of the evil one.

I'm not conscious of the devil having to go at me. I think I'm okay. That's fine. As long as you're floating downstream. As long as you're going with the flow that he wants you to go. That's fine. You try resisting the devil.

[40 : 15] And then you'll soon see how quickly he turns against you. How quickly he attacks you. Because our enemies are spirits. We wrestle not against flesh and blood.

But against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world. In other words, our enemies are spirits. In 2 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 4. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Spiritual enemies cannot be seen. A spirit is invisible. A spirit is invisible. The demons that inhabit it. The swine in Gadara.

Or the man with the withered hand in the synagogue. Or all the people that Jesus pledged. You could see the soul who was suffering at the hands of these demons. But you never saw the demon pop out.

And have it described. And what it looked like. Because the spirit, the demon is itself invisible. It is a spirit. Now if something is invisible. That gives it the complete total advantage.

[41 : 17] The armies of this world. Would pay huge sums. If someone could develop some kind of military hardware. That would render them invisible. To their enemies.

Because it gives you the total advantage. Over your enemy. And it puts them at the total disadvantage. You cannot see the devil.

You cannot see his little minions. You cannot see their attacks coming. You only know. Because the Bible tells us. That the attacks will come. And the more you try to follow Christ.

The more the evil one will attempt to attack you. You cannot afford to be. Without the armor of God. No invisible demonic spirit is afraid of you.

He's not bothered. You have no strength or power. In and of yourself. You have nothing. You and I. We have nothing. We say. Oh I'm strong. Look how many press ups I can do. Look how many weights I can lift.

[42 : 17] Oh yes I'm strong. That definitely is not. But he laughs at that. He can possess such a strong soul. Look at the strength that the man of the Gadarenes. Before the Gadarene demoniac had.

He could break asunder the chains. With which people tried to bind him. The devil laughs at human strength. Because he is a spirit. Not only is he invisible.

But he is powerful. And he is not afraid of us. The only person he is afraid of. Is Christ. Put on the whole armor of God.

Believe you me. You will need every piece. You cannot afford to be without. The whole armor of God. To stand against the wiles of the devil.

Because he will try everything. He can even transform himself. Into the appearance of an angel of light. He can say. Oh no this is good. This is fine. You know. Think of the temptation. The serpent put to eat in the garden.

[43 : 12] Oh you surely won't die. You shall be his gods. No I'm good in him. It was true. It wasn't a lie. But it was a deception. In an attempt to get her to do something sinful.

The good news for us is. That the devil does not have the power. To compel you to sin. He cannot make you do it.

Never forget that. You have that much power. In the sense that what Christ has defended you with. You can tell him to be gone. You can defeat him.

You can say. Get thee behind me Satan. He has not got the power to compel. Contrary to what we might often think. The power that he gets.

Is because we let him. Is because we like what he suggests. Because we open the door. And welcome him in. We allow him to take charge of our lives.

[44 : 15] Because that is our human nature. But the Lord alone. That is the good news for him. Thank you. Thank you.