

8 X 8

Cause - Courage - Community

8X8 Pillar Passages

But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us. For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, there is no benefit in being circumcised or being uncircumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love. You were running the race so well. Who has held you back from following the truth? It certainly isn't God, for he is the one who called you to freedom. This false teaching is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough! I am trusting the Lord to keep you from believing false teachings. God will judge that person, whoever he is, who has been confusing you. (Galatians 5:5-10)

Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless. But I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God, just like your faithful service is an offering to God. And I want all of you to share that joy. Yes, you should rejoice, and I will share your joy. (Philippians 2:14-18)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects

our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin. (Hebrews 12:1-4)

I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. (Philippians 3:12-14)

INTRODUCTION

If not completely accurate, ancient Greek historian Herodotus, was at least a brilliant story-teller. Herodotus is credited with his one masterpiece "*The Histories*" a historical account of the *Greco-Persian Wars*. It should be known of course that Herodotus wrote from a purely Greek perspective, often lending itself to an one-sidedness that bordered at times on mythology. Nonetheless... we can at

least say then that he has recorded for us a time in our world's history that allows our modern world an inspiring and dramatic glimpse into an age and culture of cause - courage - and community. It is that same sense of cause - courage - and community that we seek, and yet has slowly disappeared from our own current social consciousness and quite frankly, is missing from the leadership of Western civilization. In the next five weeks we are going to look at a period in history from **480 B.C. to 360 B.C.** known as 'Classical Greek'. And in that period we will give our full attention to the ancient *Spartan* civilization of Greece and to their unique and intriguing ways of life.

Spartans were of course Greek, but if a *Spartan* of that day were to ever publicly admit that... they would not own that - but quickly disclaim it by saying something along the lines of that they had only a distant bloodline tracing back to the Greeks. During this ancient time period the *Spartans* were both an enigma and frustration to their Greek neighbors. The other surrounding city-states of Greece did not understand the obstinate, callous and cold-hearted ways of the *Spartan*, nor did they like what they perceived as

Spartan arrogance and aggressiveness. The Greeks by and large considered *Spartans* to be a “necessary evil” only to be tolerated because of their superior combat skills, brilliant military strategies, and unmatched courage. It was during this 120-year period (480 BC – 360 BC) that the *Spartans* were called upon by the collective states of Greece to lead a defense alliance known as the “*Peloponnesian League*.” As I said, the *Spartan* military was unmatched in their intelligence gathering, training disciplines, combat techniques, and of course their courageous battle instincts and warfare strategies. The league or alliance was being formed for the sole purpose of defending the Greek states and its people from the world’s biggest “bully” at the time - *Persia*. The reality of a *Persian* invasion that boasted of the largest army of foot soldiers in the known world (the alleged million-man army of the great *Persian King and General - Xerxes*) was a serious threat to Athens and the states of Greece, and so the *Peloponnesian League* was formed. In theory, other Greek city-states (members of the league) and allies believed that they could use the *Spartans* for frontline military protection

to buy themselves time to defend the great city of *Athens*. But in historical reality, *Spartan* people never allowed themselves to be used by anyone – especially by a Greek. Geographically, ancient *Sparta* was located in south-central Greece. *Sparta* was an inland metro-state within the protective confines of the Eurotas Valley, which lie deep into the *Taygetus Mountain Regions*. General ancient history reveals that this fertile and rich valley was the centerpiece for a unique society and a “way of life” that was more innovative, insightful, and as intriguing as any people group ever - except perhaps those of the "*Religio-Christo*" ideology that would come of course several hundred years later.

Personal Disclaimer

"To be clear, I do not want to present the Spartan people and their “way of life” as anything other than telling a story, or to use them as metaphorical characters and a historical people whose culture, values, and lifestyle leadership made what remains to this day a mysteriously

unique and courageous imprint on the path of the world's history."

Knowing what I know of the *Spartan* way of life, I do not in any way shape or form believe them to be moral mentors, or examples of a higher ethical standard. I need to tell you that my research clearly revealed that there was without question a much darker and far less romantic side to the *Spartan* face. I also want to say that my interest, research, knowledge, and public sharing of the *8X8 Spartan* story began many years before there was a movie called "the 300." Long before the movie 300 (featuring every dark haired actor in Hollywood with air-brushed abs), I was fully aware, very knowledgeable of both the strengths and weaknesses of the *Spartan* way... For example:

- The 300-year hard-line enslavement they imposed upon their fellow countryman - (the much weaker Messenian Helots).
- What the Greeks called the *Spartan's* lack of any traditional high cultural achievement or contribution.
- The *Spartan* disdain for any open government.

- Spartan pagan worship, and the religious rituals offered annually to the twelve Greek gods and goddesses of Olympus. (if you are curious they are... *Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Hades, Aphrodite, Apollo, Ares, Artemis, Athena, Hephaestus, Hestia, and Hermes*)
- The open and boundary free sexual practices of *Sparta*, and its social irony towards bi-sexual practices. (they allowed bi-sexual behavior, but prohibited any lawful gay or lesbian marriage)

In spite of their many sins, and their obvious moral and ethical flaws of character, I like many thousands of other history geeks have been captured by certain virtues and veracity to the "*Spartan Way*." Their sense of ***cause - courage - and community*** not only captures the imagination, but has provided insight for me as I have sought to establish those same virtues within Reunion's biblical vision for leading, living, and loving. For us it is Jesus who called us all to a community that ***'provides (hope) - protects (what is valuable) - serves (unselfishly) - and sacrifices (freely)***. I find (within context of course) that

even with all of its many flaws, the *Spartan* history is more than relevant.

One more time Reunion... At Reunion, We follow Jesus - We seek Him as our truth - He is our model, mentor, and Messiah. Jesus is everything we aspire and hope to be.

Having confessed this truth we are going to teach about the *Spartans*. Yes, I know that they are simply an ancient people group who for a brief period of time did unique and significant things for their people. But beyond that - even without God, they were a culture of courageous leaders, and a community committed to the succession of their children through the disciplined practice and repetition of their values and way of life. Within that way of life came not only the willingness, but the desired purpose to ***provide - protect - serve - and sacrifice*** for its peoples. Where has that sense of *cause - courage - and community* gone in our culture and our world? The *Spartans* were arguably (for that small moment in time) better than anyone ever (before and possibly after) at protecting - providing - serving - sacrificing for their way of life and the ones they loved. The only ones in history who could rival or surpass them

would possibly be those genuine first, second, and third century Christians who purely and faithfully followed Christ. If we dare consider the complete breakdown (Christians included) in our current abilities and ideas of how to lead the ones we love against the evil and chaotic aggression of our present world, I see the *Spartan* story (in part) as one certainly worth telling. So the questions are...

- *Can we learn from the Spartan way?*
- *What should we learn from them?*
- *What insights into the “Spartan way” might possibly re-awaken us to the very truth and goodness of our own faith in God and love for Jesus?*
- *What is it about the 8X8 Spartan story that could possibly help us as Christian men and women understand the heart of God, and His will for leading and shepherding the ones we love?*

Over the next four-week period I will focus our teaching on *Four Key Elements* of the *Spartan* history.

1 - The Battle of Thermopylae

2 - Spartan Warfare - 8 X 8

3 - The Lycurgus Upbringing (Agoge) (Ah-go-jay)

4 - A Leadership of Order and Sacrifice

During these same four weeks we will make parallels and find inspiration from Spartan history; but we will only draw our conclusions from the truths of the Bible. And we will receive our revelation and wisdom from the Holy Spirit.

We will focus on four key biblical elements of community and family leadership.

1 - Protect

2 - Provide

3 - Serve

4 - Sacrifice

8 X 8

Protect - Provide - Serve - Sacrifice

(Part 1)

“The Battle of Thermopylae”

In August, the summer of 480 B.C. the "***Peloponnesian League***" of Greece sent a group of warriors/soldiers numbering less than five thousand to the mountain region called ***Thermopylae*** on the north east coast of their borders. They were sent to defend the Greek city-states against the invasion of the massive Persian army numbering nearly one million. The Persians were led by their great ***King and General Xerxes***. The Persian strategy was to invade Greece by land from the North East and by sea through the narrow Artemesium Strait. They would march on, and sack the city of Athens. Using the control and occupation of Athens as the primary and strategic position of power to paralyze the rest of the Greek states while the mighty Persian navy (*estimated 700 ships*) would then finish off all coastal resistance from the allied Greeks from the South East to

South West shorelines. All historical researchers from this time period agree that Persia was the most powerful and mighty army in the world and this should have happened just as *Xerxes* planned. Yet history also tells us that the *Persians* and *Xerxes* never overtook Greece and never marched on Athens. Why and how would that not have happened?

One: After a seven day delay and three bloody days of gruesome, grotesque, and savage ground fighting, the Spartan led Greeks lost the battle of *Thermopylae* to the *Persians* - and *Xerxes* and the *Persian Army* would advance forward to conquer several smaller Greek cities. But the invincible force known as the Persian Army and its mighty conquering will was fractured by the Spartans at *Thermopylae*. *The Spartans made them flinch, fear, and doubt not only themselves but their mission - they would fight on* but would never quite be the same. In reality, at *Thermopylae* the *Persians may have* won the battle, but lost the war.

Two: Almost 40% of the 700 ship *Persian Naval Fleet* were destroyed by storms as they sat waiting for orders from *Xerxes* to advance south-westward as an escort into the *Agean Sea* to rear flank the *Spartans* at *Thermopylae*. When the storms finally cleared enough to safely sail, they were delayed yet another two days as the smaller and more mobile *Athenian Navy* led by naval strategist Themoculies, contested them as they tried to sail thru the very narrow "*Artemesium Strait*." Although the Persian Navy did eventually advanced, they lost another twenty percent of their fleet in doing so. This was a costly delay and devastating losses - losses they would pay for later, as the rest of this mighty Navy would be almost completely destroyed nearly thirty days later. *Themoculies* and the growing *Athenian Allied Navy* would defeat the Persian Navy in the final sea *Greco-Persian* battle at *Salamis Strait*.

Three: *King Xerxes* went home after this battle, leaving the rest of the now failing campaign to his generals. History tells us that after nearly two years of an immense loss of life (*over 90% of the original army*), limited resources, and many failed ground and sea strategies, that the most powerful military force in the world left Greece without what they came for and never returned.

What makes this story one of the most intriguing in military and war time history is *how* and *why* the Greeks were able to defend and protect their homeland and the ones they loved against an enemy undeniably and decidedly much greater in number and stronger in force. The story of the past reveals at its core, there is only one answer to both questions... *How?* The Spartans. *Why?* Again, the *Spartans*. Yes, as I said earlier the *Spartans* did lose the battle at *Thermopylae* - but it was because of *how they lost to the Persians and why they died fighting that ensured them a bigger victory than* the one fought those three days of *Thermopylae*. They lost a strategic battle but truly were winning the war against unimaginable odds. At

Thermopylae the Persian army lost their advantage *both physically and psychologically*. From that point on the *Persians* literally could not regain enough of their own ***courage - cause - and community*** to do what they had come to do. And honestly, that will probably never be fully understood by anyone from anywhere other than within the hearts and memories of the men and women who served, sacrificed, and were witness to what the *Spartans* did to the *Persians* during those seventy-two hours at the *Hot Gates*.

Battlefield

Shockingly the *Thermopylae* battlefield was only a wide enough for just over four chariots to pass thru (20 yds wide). To the west the 5,000 ft high *Thermopylae* mountains and a 300 ft wall of jagged cliffs reaching straight up from the narrow beach - to the east of the pass was another twenty to thirty foot drop off into the deep waters of the ***Gulf of Malia*** and the ***Agean Sea***. So the *Persians* could not benefit from storming forward with their alleged million man army to overpower their enemy. After failing in his initial strategy of diminishing the

Spartans by filling the sky with thousands of arrows from his archers, *Xerxes* finally had to engage his forces on the narrow pass of the "***Hot Gates***" and fight "hand to hand /shield to shield" combat on the flat small plain of the "middle gate" while archers continued to try and launch an air assault against the Spartan led Greeks. Because of the close proximity of combat, *Persian* archers actually killed many of their own soldiers, and finally the air assault had to be stopped (another Spartan strategy). The allies of the *Peloponnesian League* did not represent all states in Greece and most of the soldier's other than the *Spartan's* were non-professional volunteer militia. According to *Herodotus*, the allied army at *Thermopylae* totaled anywhere from four to seven thousand men. They were however led by the great ***Spartan King, Leonidas*** (*lions son*), and three hundred of his handpicked *Spartan* warriors, who for reasons known only to them had chosen to send only three hundred while they left behind an available nine thousand in ***Sparta***. It is also true that the *Spartan* warriors chosen for this battle were selected because they all had male heirs to their name-sake. When the *Spartans* came to ***Thermopylae*** they

already knew the odds and what to expect from their enemy. They had been spying on the Persian army for six months. So before they left *Sparta* they had already placed their personal affairs in order and given instructions to their soon to be widows... “*marry a good man.*”

Know this, the Spartans did not go to Thermopylae believing they would win - they went knowing they could not lose.

In reality they went to *Thermopylae* on a suicide mission ***to protect, to provide, to serve and to sacrifice...*** this they did.

The Spartan strategy was to battle with such gruesome ferocity and raw brutality that no matter what the outcome at *Thermopylae*, the *Persians* would no longer have the courage or the will to follow ***Xerxes*** further into *Greece...* this they did. ***Leonidas*** knew that he must hold the passage at “*Hot Gates*” long enough for the *Greek* fleet to surprise and perhaps overtake the *Persian* fleet... this he did.

Leonidas knew he must give *Athens* seventy-eight hours once the battle began to prepare for the Athenian allied defense... this he did. The irony of this battle is, amazing as it sounds was within a whisper of being even far more amazing. The Spartans could have actually defended the “*gates*” for as long as needed if they were not rear flanked. The only two chances *Xerxes* had to do this would be

1 - With his Naval Fleet

2 - to discover some sort of passage through mountains which could lead his soldiers into a rear flank position.

For seven days at the “*Hot Gates*” *Xerxes* did not have his fleet, and for two full days of the actual combat battle he did not know that a small and secret mountain passage called “*the Anopae Path*” existed. On the afternoon of the second day *Persians* captured a betrayer... a *Theban Greek* guide named *Ephialtes*. Weak and eager to stay alive he gave *Xerxes* the directions to the *Anopae Path* through *Kalladromos Peak*. *Xerxes* sent his best troops of “*Immortals*” to travel all night; at morning light they defeated a small guard of *Phocians* guarding the “*Anopae*

Path.” By noon of day three the *Immortals* had moved into a rear flank position to attack from a distance with archers. *Leonidas* got news of the breach just before dawn... quickly he sent away all but about 700 Greeks by morning light. He addressed his men as they rose “*enjoy men breakfast, for tonight we dine in Hades.*” What transpired after that is one of the most unbelievable stories of battle *courage and cause* in the world’s history. *Leonidas* and his men killed more *Persians* in the morning of the third day than they had in the previous two days.

The Spartans fought in their legendary *Spartan Phalanx* until they were flanked from the rear by the *Persians*, and then they fought in their deadly 8 x 8 “*Hoplite*” combat style until their swords and spears were broken. *Herodotus* recorded that the Spartan warriors then fought with rocks, armor, and teeth. Viciously they fought to protect - to provide - to serve to sacrifice for the ones they loved until the last Spartan warrior was dead. *Leonidas* lifeless body was found on top of slain *Persians* at four deep, covered by slain *Spartans*. *King Xerxes* cut off his head and placed it

on a pole in the middle of the battlefield in an attempt to raise the morale of his panic stricken soldiers. It did not have the impact he had hoped for... his men trembled all the more at the sight of *Leonidas*. Although that day *Xerxes* held in his hands the head of *Leonidas*, there would never be a day that he lay a hand on the families and countrymen that *Leonidas* and his men loved.

Teachable Truth

"To Protect and Provide we must Serve and Sacrifice... there is no other way."

Protect

- ***Psalm 91***
- ***John 17:11-19***
- ***1 Corinthians 12:18-27***
- ***Psalm 144:1-2***
- ***2 Corinthians 10:3-5***

8 X 8

Cause - Courage - Service - Sacrifice

(Part III)

“Spartan Warfare - 8X8”

(2 Corinthians 10:4, Ephesians 6:10-18)

In our discussion from part one and two of this series we learned that the actual three day battle of *Thermopylae* between the *Spartan* led Greek allies, and the mighty million man *Persian* army ended in defeat for the Spartans and the Greeks. Yet because of the brutally savage and clearly superior combat skills of the defiant *Spartans* during those seventy-two hours ultimately the *Greeks* would win their war against the invasion of *Xerxes* and the *Persian Empire*. How this battle was fought by the *Spartan* warriors determined the eventual victorious outcome for Greece against overpowering odds. It is important to note that courage alone was not enough to do what the *Spartans* did - but rather it was also in large part due to the disciplined warfare and precise hand to hand combat tactics of the *Spartans* that led them to kill the soldiers *Persians* at

a rate of over fifteen to their one. Knowing that the odds were decidedly against him, the great Spartan general *Leonidas*, had strategically located the heart of the battle as we said between the sea and a wall of rock. *Leonidas* knew from months of spying on the *Persians* that *Xerxes* had a group of Special Forces (*The Immortals*) available for battle as well. But he also knew that the *Persian* combat strategies and disciplines would be no match for his hand-picked warriors, who had for years been trained in the disciplines of the *Phalanx* and the mastery of "*Hoplite Warfare*." "*Hoplite Warfare*" was not just a style of fighting - for the *Spartans* it was a code of combat discipline that each man would uphold to the death. "*Hoplite warfare*" was developed so that *Spartans* could ***protect- provide -serve - and sacrifice*** for the ones they loved. They not only loved family and country - they loved each other.

To begin with, the *Spartan* weapons and armor were far superior - not only in face to face combat, but they were also the perfect defense against the devastating *Persian*

archer attack. Herodotus records that it was indeed an attack so immense and effective that the *Persians* boasted that their archers would “*blot out the sun*” with their arrows. Of course this prompted the now famous line from *Spartan* warrior *Dieneces*... “*Then we will fight them in the shade.*” The heavy *Spartan* bronze shield (*Apsis*) was strapped across the left forearm of the warrior in battle; a *Persian* arrow could not penetrate these shields. The *Spartan* warrior wore a bronze covered chest and rib protector, as well as bronze protectors for abdomen, thigh, and shin. But perhaps their most effective piece of protective armor was the seamless bronze helmet which protected main arteries of the warrior’s neck and throat. This helmet was padded in such a way as to protect them from concussion or stunning blow to the head. This armor was heavy, but effective and intimidating. Each *Spartan* had trained for a minimum of ten years with the armor so that they could use it to their advantage in warfare (more on this later). The *Spartans* had two primary weapons in combat. The first was an 8 foot spear (*Dory*) with a razor sharp iron tip at the top, and a blunt iron head attached to

the bottom. This spear was the *Spartan's* primary weapon. The spear was considered by observers and outsiders as awkward and too long by most combat standards. But the *Spartans* used the long spear to keep an opponent at a distance while inflicting a fatal wound to their opponent. The backup weapon was a single edged sword (*Xiphos*) which was 18 inches long, with a heavy blunt handle that was used for striking a blow to the jaw or skull of their opponent.

The style in which the *Spartan Hoplite* used these weapons was a discipline learned from many years of training and repetition. Spartans were in superior physical condition, allowing them to use their weapons and armor in battle without fatigue and failure. Primarily the *Spartan Hoplite warrior* fought in what was called a “Phalanx” or tight formation that would vary in numbers of men across, but always eight men deep. Because of the width of the battlefield at *Thermopylae*, *Leonidas* brilliantly formed the *Phalanx* in three groups of **8 X 8**. They would utilize assigned groups warriors based on years experience

together. In *Spartan Hoplite* tradition, a group could stay together for thirty-years. The groups of the *Phalanx* were strategically used to control the battlefield tempo, and the morale of their own warriors. No one ever stood and fought front line for an extended period of time. This was achieved by each *Hoplite* being methodically replaced, rested, and then returned to the front line by a rotation dictated by the timed and simultaneous steps of the men. These steps were never out of sync, or independent of the man on the right or left. The direction of steps was controlled by a “fife” who, after having been briefed (in this case by *Leonidas*), of the field strategy, would play high pitch tones that could be heard in battle above the battle noise.

For example; one pitch meant right step, another pitch meant left step, and another for what was called the “*feint step.*” At *Thermopylae*, fighting in this way, and in those conditions and parameters, the *Spartans* could have in reality defended the “*Hot Gates*” pass for weeks against *Xerxes*’ army had they not been betrayed and compromised

into a position of being rear flanked. The fighting technique of the *Spartan Hoplite* would be duplicated for centuries including our own. The *Hoplite Warfare* was also unique in that a warrior only fought in *Phalanx formation* with his right hand - he never used his shield to protect himself - only to protect the man on his left. There had to be absolute trust and deep love between the men in the **8 X 8** formation you see, because the *Spartan warrior* never fought to defend himself, but only to defend the man next to him - which in turn defended the women, and children he loved.

(Ephesians 6:13-18)

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. So use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle

*you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy **belt of truth** and the **body armor** of God's righteousness. For **shoes**, put on the **peace that comes from the Good News**, so that you will be fully prepared. In every battle you will need **faith as your shield** to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. Put on **salvation as your helmet**, and take the **sword of the Spirit**, which is **the word of God**. Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere. NLT*

Word Study

TRUST - DISCIPLINE - PREPARATION - LOVE
LOYALTY - CONSISTENCY - DEVOTION
VISION - HUMILITY - SINGLE-MINDEDNESS
SELFLESSNESS - BROKENNESS - ASSURANCE

8 X 8

Service and Sacrifice

(Part IV)

“Lycurgus Upbringing - Agoge”

"Lycurgus" a name that was legendary in the ancient world as the individual who conceived and gave birth to Sparta's complex and superior military-based society. Historians date his reforms and military disciplines to sometime between 9 and 7B.C. Though Lycurgus seems almost mystical in historical actuality, the system of social and political order for which he is given credit was and is to this day indeed very real. Spartans defined it as... *“a habituation to a way of doing a thing.”* By 480B.C. there had been nearly three centuries of *“Lycurgus Upbringing”* and now this is who the Spartans were... this was not merely something they did. I want to consider some methods and practices of the **Agoge** (the warrior way), that reflected their strong and successful sense for defending and protecting the ones they loved. I also want to mention some of the prominent philosophies that inspired *Lycurgus*

to create such an upbringing, and of course for the Spartans to fully embrace it.

First - Education and development of mind, body, and spirit given to every Spartan child. At age 7 every Spartan began a formal education and life skill training. Spartan boys taught to love learning, and how to develop critical and situational thinking skills. Primary and essential to their education was the development of physical and motor skills in regards to offensive and defensive martial training far advanced to that of any other society of the time. This training was done with daily repetitions within intentional and competitive environments using progressive techniques for strength, conditioning, and hand-eye coordination. This repetitive environment created critical development of mental discipline and emotional intelligence. But the underlying theme for all forms of education however was that of each one's social responsibility, sense of community, and love of fellow Spartans. Friendships were nurtured and encouraged, to build a sense of belonging, and to heighten the mutual trust within those relationships. This

was seen as essential to success in battle. Fierce loyalty was produced among the younger “*aitas*” (hearer) with teaching from the older “*eispnelas*” (inspirer), on the purpose and benefits of responsibility and countability, not only to one another, but for just one glorious opportunity to protect both family and friend in the name of Sparta. The result was contagious courage, unwavering confidence, and an unmistakable identity, completed with a personal commitment to pass from generation to generation the Lycurgus Upbringing to all Spartan men and women.

Second - The young Spartan girls were not obscure, ignored, devalued, and uneducated as were Athenian girls; left only to await their pre-chosen marital destiny and life circumstance. The future for a Spartan woman was not lawfully beyond their control, or beyond their scope of interest. They too, were educated in the same way and at the same ages as the boys; the only differences being they were not taken from the family home or focused toward martial training and the military code of conduct - but they were taught an appreciation, deep gratitude, and successive

value to the men for who they were and what they did. As they grew into early womanhood they were equipped in literary skills and both civil and domestic comprehension. Their training also taught them to be comfortable and confident in both competitive and physical environments. In the *Lycurgus Upbringing*, a Spartan women could purchase goods and services, own land and businesses. Often the Spartan women were accused by observing cultures as “*ruling their men.*” This was hardly the case. Because of their training and upbringing the Spartan women were as confident in their identity, as the Spartan men of theirs - and they too valued their role just as the men valued theirs. A women's place in the social structure of Sparta was *egalitarian* and so it necessitated that they be educated, capable, and regarded as significant contributors to the “Spartan way.” A note-worthy Lycurgus philosophy went something like this... “*weak Spartan women, make weak Spartan men.*”

Part of the Spartan success and strength in both *service and sacrifice* can be traced to that very philosophy. A historical literary work simply known as... "*Sayings of Spartan Women*" quotes *Gorgo*, the wife of Spartan King Leonidas in response to a question from an Athenian woman, "*Why is it that you Spartan women are the only ones who rule your men*"? (*Gorgo* reply) "*We are the only women who give birth to real men.*" Although this was not the typical attitude of all Spartan women, it certainly was a representation of their confidence and security as women.

(Again, we are not looking to the Spartan model for ethical and moral standards - we are telling the story.)

Third - It was the *Lycurgus Upbringing* that taught communal practices for meals, celebrations and religious observances. From the time children were seven years old they took all meals together in large communal groups to connect each young person with the idea of developing a genuine love and respect for one another, leading to a sense of service, and willingness for sacrifice. This created the

close community they wanted, and eliminated social awkwardness and self-centeredness. This practice continued into adulthood. There was no pecking order, or hierarchy system to which children were forced towards, there was only Spartan community and the overriding sense of responsibility towards those in that community. Needs were met within those educational and training communities both for the boys and girls. Obviously, not all of the *Spartan ways* were positive or desirable, but to hear their story, is to understand how they learned to both serve and sacrifice for the ones they loved in ways that we do not, or often will not. The *Lycurgus Upbringing (law)* and the whole of the Spartan way of life was not written within volumes of tablets, scrolls and "how to" books. Spartan society succeeded unchanged for centuries without one written code. The Spartan people were law-givers not law-makers. Sparta was a simple military and communal society, yet it was comprehensive in education and day to day life. It did not permit the shabbiness and greed of wealth driven societies - nor did it breed the sloth and contempt of entitlement and socialist cultures.

Conclusion

The Spartans recognized and responded to...

- **The beauty of a courageous human spirit.**
- **The obvious human need for mutual responsibility (*countability*) and personal discipline.**
- **An environment for testing and proving of the human will and capabilities.**
- **The potential of a true community possessing common cause, secured identity, and an honorable mission.**
- **The emotional and physical advantage of a structured and disciplined development of both the mind and body.**
- **The vanity and waste of endless philosophical debate, muse, and cynicism.**
- **The greater glory and legacy of willing service and selfless sacrifice.**

(Proverbs 6:20-23)

My son, obey your father's commands, and don't neglect your mother's teaching. Keep their words always in your heart. Tie them around your neck. Wherever you walk, their counsel can lead you. When you sleep, they will protect you. When you wake up in the morning, they will advise you. For these commands and this teaching are a lamp to light the way ahead of you. The correction of discipline is the way to life. NLT

(Psalm 119:11)

I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. NLT

(Romans 12:1-21)

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you

think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.

Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all! Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the Lord. Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads." Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

8 X 8

(Part V)

A Leadership of Order and Sacrifice

In the final analysis of the Spartan society and their glory years, it is important to look at the philosophical foundations upon which the Spartans built a very profound and dynamic way of leadership. For the Spartans this leadership began and ended as we know with “*order and sacrifice.*”

- There was *order* in the sense that the entire *Spartan way* had specific and purposeful priority place with each and every aspect of their life.
- There was *sacrifice* in the sense that any opportunity found to make a contribution to the *greater good of Sparta* and its people was considered glorious and honorable.

We have already talked about briefly about the *leadership impartation system* of mentoring and teaching Spartan laws and their social/domestic expectations. The next piece of that system was to impart and internal commitment to order in the lives of the young people of Sparta to ensure a competent and consistent leadership succession. *This leadership began with prioritizing the two things Spartan's valued most.*

- *First they valued Spartans, and the quest for Spartan life.*
- *Secondly they valued their pagan religion and quest for immortal glory.*

Priority was placed around those values creating a unique leadership system of order and sacrifice. This dictated to all Spartans (men and women) that time, education, and resources be given to these central values. No demand was too hard, and no sacrifice too great to protect and preserve what was valued by all. Nothing had greater priority, and every Spartan grew to understand and love these leadership

values because they were imparted to each child from an early age. Those who could not or would not embrace these values did not lead or survive as a Spartan. Religious practices and observances took precedence over any activity, event, or personal commitment (and on most occasions even war). Because they valued their families and fellow Spartans above all else - they formed all educational training, martial and military training, and all societal entities and customs to compliment and to support the ideals of loyalty and love for family and service to the community. Because Sparta was a militaristic society, greed for financial wealth or political power was not usually a temptation or possibility. Besides... ones material possessions paled in comparison to the opportunity for immortal glory through the leadership of order and sacrifice. Common meals were day to day practices among the children and young people as they were being educated and trained for leadership succession. And the sharing of personal resources and intellectual property were freely yet dutifully imparted by older yet relevant leaders to a younger Spartan. The repetition of the leadership order and

the intentionally constructive activity that was given to everyday life eliminated confusion and boredom for the young, helping to create both a personal connection to the community, and secure sense of purpose and destiny.

A typical daily schedule consisted of...

- *Early rising for reading and meditations.*
- *Literary lessons.*
- *Agoge training.*
- *Physical fitness and strength training.*
- *Competitive games.*
- *Music and religious lessons.*

Evenings were filled with social and family activities and a common meal for dinner. Each Spartan girl, boy, man, and woman drank a little wine with dinner. The wine was measured and cut with water so that each one could find digestive benefit and enjoyment from the wine. Spartans did not drink to get drunk - to be caught drunk meant being

publicly disciplined and humiliated for the lack of leadership and self-discipline.

Male Leadership Order

At twenty years of age the best of the Spartan men were chosen the formal military, but their day to day lives changed little. Those not chosen entered into public and civil service. For the soldiers, their order became stricter and the discipline more rigid - their responsibility to protection and defense of state and family more intensely focused. Marriage was not only permitted but encouraged.

The Spartans believed that the more a man loved, the more he would sacrifice. After seventeen years of leadership and martial training the Spartan soldier was now given a permanent assignment to a hand-picked group or phalanx of men. The group would stay together until either a glorious death or retirement. And actually to the first was preferred. These men were not kept apart or secluded from their families but remained part of their daily lives - keeping them attached they held them more closely. Their children were trained and taught by men and women who

continually re-enforced and honored who their fathers were and what they did for Sparta - the children were taught that their fathers and mothers were heroes for their leadership of service and sacrifice.

Female Leadership Order

A Spartan woman could marry at nineteen - but not before. At twenty years old the female leadership order came to a Spartan woman in the form of the oversight of family properties and estate holdings. They also managed the servant staff and the planning for regular participation in religious observances and festivals. They remained active, fit, and informed. The Spartan women were valued and viewed as both civilly and socially relevant.

Discipline and fitness were a significant part of the order that Spartans formed their lives around. They believed that physical and emotional health was something valuable to be imparted as well. Sloth and laziness were not modeled or valued - so it was never imparted nor tolerated. And although the Spartans during their glory years had enslaved fellow their fellow Greeks (*the Messenes*) to farm and

manufacture, they themselves were never lazy or unfit mentally or physically. The spirit of this leadership order was kept in place not by legislated law or fear of punishment, but rather through the passing on of the passion and awareness of the greatness and glory of the Spartan way. Their laws and commitment to order were written in each Spartan's heart and imparted from generation to generation through the leadership of service and sacrifice for one another. It was this passion and brotherly love that magnified the effectiveness of the final virtue of the Spartan mystique... Sacrifice. More than any other characteristic that history reveals of Sparta and its legends is that of its powerful and unwavering willingness to sacrifice. Certainly each Spartan man and women believed self-sacrifice to be most noble and courageous, but they took it to levels that up until that point had never been seen. To give one's life, to protect or defend the ones they loved was what a Spartan lived for. This was imparted not legislated. Sacrifice such as the Spartans came as we said from other places than a book of law. Discipline was again a driving force behind the courageous actions of men

whom historian Heradotus told were ashamed to face family and community if the circumstance called for sacrifice and they did not make it. Thermopylae was only one example of how the Spartan love for Sparta was acted out. Sacrifice of that kind always changes the face and course of history. Sacrifice of that kind is precisely why we are still intrigued and inspired by the events of Thermopylae nearly twenty five hundred years later...

A Bible Study Guide for Leadership of Order - Service - and Sacrifice

John 15:13-17

"There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you

ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other."

Psalms 37:23-30

"The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand. Once I was young, and now I am old. Yet I have never seen the godly abandoned or their children begging for bread. The godly always give generous loans to others, and their children are a blessing. Turn from evil and do good, and you will live in the land forever. For the Lord loves justice, and he will never abandon the godly. He will keep them safe forever, but the children of the wicked will die. The godly will possess the land and will live there forever. The godly offer good counsel; they teach right from wrong. They have made God's law their own, so they will never slip from his path."

Hebrews 10:11-18

"Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand. There he waits until his enemies are humbled and made a footstool under his feet. For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy. And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so. For he says, "This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then he says, "I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds." And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices."