

Ephesians 15-03-08a

This is Sunday, the 8th of March, 2015. We resume and continue our study in Paul's letter to Laodicea and Colossae, popularly known as Ephesians, in chapter 6 at verse 6, which says, to bond servants who have been enjoined to be obedient to their masters with fear and trembling and sincerity of heart as to Christ, not with eye service, remember that? Ophthalmos, doulos, a combo word made of those two parts. And not as men pleasers, but as bond servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, as bond servants of Christ.

This has been the running theme throughout this section of the letter. Submitting to one another in the fear of God, wives to your husbands as to the Lord. Just as you're subject to Christ, be subject to authorities.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ, in Christ, in Him, in Him. It's the resounding theme of this letter. What we do, we do as unto the Lord and not unto men.

Not to be pleasing to the eye, that's what that word literally means, eye service. I serve to be seen. I'm modeling my Christian life before others.

I want to set a good example, and so I will pose. I'm a poseur. I'm going to strike a noble pose to be admired by others.

If you've ever seen the greatest story ever told, Max von Sydow as Jesus Christ, what an ill-begotten choice. But in that whole movie, it's got a wonderful title, but the movie itself is perhaps the worst movie on the life of Christ I have ever seen. All people do throughout that movie is try to provide photo op for Catholics.

Saints strike poses, and they just stand there. Take pictures now. It's like the president shaking somebody's hand.

Okay, flash bulbs. Snap, snap, snap, snap, snap. And everyone's eyes are slightly elevated.

Their stare is slightly vacant. And am I looking holy? Can I look a little more holy? It's terrible. Eye service.

Ophthalmos doulos. Eye pleasers. Eye servers.

And men pleasers. There's anthropos. And then pareska is the word for being pleasant to men.

Are you happy with me? Can I make you more happy? This is the classic definitions of subjectivity. Well, we're going to look at this in our study this morning. Verse 6 in particular, when it says, both in verse 5 and verse 6, there's a common word in verse 5 and verse 6. Do you see it? Insincerity of heart from the heart.

What does it mean from the heart? Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, and we'll address that question. Father, we are grateful for the daily grace that you send to us, that you bestow on us, that you support and sustain us with. We are undeserving.

We have no merit that we can offer. We have no loveliness that creates any obligation for you or any deserving on our part. We know that everything we have is because we are in Christ.

You have opened that door of relationship and of opportunity and have challenged us to walk through it, not just for our eternal salvation, but for our daily salvation, our daily deliverance, our walk before you in this life with so many sustaining resources graciously given, the presence of your Spirit, the truth and the power of your Word, the encouragement and comfort that comes from association and fellowship with fellow believers who share an appreciation for all of these things, an appreciation for you, and a desire to be pleasing in your sight and to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ through whom we enjoy all of these blessings and potentials. We pray that as we spend this time looking at the truth of your Word, that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to each heart, that as a group and as individuals we will see your purpose, the path that we should walk, our part in the greater fabric of your plan, that we will grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray these things in His name.

Amen. Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters. Wives, be obedient, be submissive to your husbands.

Children, be obedient, subservient to your parents. In the Lord, as unto the Lord, this is God's plan and purpose. He thought it up.

It is His structure. It is His organization. It is His delegated authority.

It is His assignment of responsibility. And it is our privilege to be a part of that structure and that organization. Most people aren't.

Most people don't have a relationship with God through Christ. Most people don't have an assignment that defines their life and their purpose. We do.

We know exactly who we are. We know exactly why we are here. And anytime it's a little fuzzy as to how we should proceed, we have recourse.

It's something that everyone tends to take for granted now, but in the earlier days of information technology, computer support, if you went to a client and you're installing, oh, let's say, Microsoft Exchange, which is the server piece for email for an organization, and you want to configure this so that this organization of several hundred people, each has his own mailbox and he has a directory of other people in the organization that he can pull up and quickly find somebody to send email to. And this hooks into the Active Directory. Actually, I remember before there was Active Directory in Microsoft, but let's say we're in the days when that's open and functioning and

there is a synchronization of servers who are keeping their local copies of the Active Directory current and are talking to one another so that any person that updates it, it will ripple across and even go to the servers of related organizations or other offices.

And you start having this structure, well, this all sounds grand. It all sounds great. But on paper, it's the answer to the communication need of the organization.

So they want to get this put in place and have everybody come in the next day to find that they have Outlook available and configured on perhaps their terminal services-based session with the server. Maybe they don't even have local resources. They don't necessarily load everything off their Drive C. It's all coming from a server.

Maybe they're using a Citrix thin client. And so you're called in at the end of the day, and what we'd like is for you to install this Exchange and this Outlook and have it up and running and have everybody just walk into a brave new world the next morning. Okay, fine.

You get out your 5 1/4-inch or a little bit later 3 1/2-inch floppy disks, and you begin installing on your server's, oh, 600-megabyte hard drive. That's the server for the entire organization, 600 megabytes. Maybe it's an SD drive, ESDI, latest, greatest thing.

Might even be SCSI if they have a lot of money. Fastest thing you can buy. So you begin shuffling your floppies in, and it loads the software, and you move to the configuration screens, and you begin filling in the information and the addresses and so on, and all of a sudden a little window pops up, and it says, file not found in directory thus and so.

There used to be directories instead of folders. A directory thus and so not found. Or maybe you get all the way through the installation configuration, and you say, okay, start server blue screens.

You reboot, and it can't load things. Here's my point. You are now late at night faced with a problem, and there is no Internet.

So you have a choice. You can either call Ghostbusters, or you can call the tech support at Microsoft. Well, do you have a support account with Microsoft so that you have the privilege of calling in? No, you don't, because it costs thousands of dollars that your relatively small and struggling organization doesn't have to spend for these occasional needs.

So where do you get the answers? I've got an issue. I've got a crisis right now. Where do I get the answer? How do I fix this? And by the way, even in this day of Internet and abundant and ubiquitous resources, you can still easily get into a place where nobody has an answer to your problem.

Well, we'll get back to you on that. We'll kick it up to higher echelon maintenance. Somebody will call you soon.

We promise. Somebody will get back to you within 24 hours. Great.

Everybody's going to come back in tomorrow morning expecting all this stuff to be working, and you can't get back to me for 24 hours, which usually stretches to at least 48. Where do you get answers when you need them when you don't have a reliable source, a source that is dedicated to being there and helping you when you need it? Those of us that have been in that situation, this is genuine stress. There is pressure.

There is money on the line. A client can back out and say, if you can't get it working, we're not paying for it, and we're not paying you. And all of your travel expenses and your overhead and everything else is just sunk cost.

It's CODB, as they used to say, cost of doing business. And the fact that we've retracted our business from you leaves you twisting in the wind, in the hole, in the red, out of sorts, out of answers, out of fellowship, out of a lot of things. In many different places in life, we can come up against a challenge.

Where is the answer? We have an answer. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, when it comes to our life before God, we have the support contract. We have the hotline that's available 24-7.

We have access by virtue of being in Christ through the ever-present Holy Spirit directly to the throne of grace of the Creator of the universe. Always, ever. Doesn't even matter if we messed it up.

Well, I inadvertently ran the copy the wrong direction, and I have wiped out all of my work. Not to fear. God is in His heaven.

He loves us. He has promised us grace to help in time of need. It's a tremendous privilege, and we so often tend to forget to make the call.

We forget to offer the prayer. We forget to look in the direction of answers. This is the answer.

Ephesians 5 and 6, built on the foundation of the first four chapters, is telling us, here is your guidance. Here is your support. Here are your instructions.

This is the way you should go. Walk in it. It could not be more clear.

Couldn't be more clear. It is as clear as any passage anywhere in the Word of God. And it begins with orientation to the organization.

Where are you? You are above some, and you are below others. Think about it. The centurion understood this, and he had a better grip on it than the disciples who were walking with Jesus on a daily basis.

I say to one, come, and he comes, and to another, go, and he goes. I have those that have the rule over me, and I obey their lawful orders. Anytime we get thrown for a loop, many of us used to listen to a pastor who talked about the tools that you use when you are suddenly sort of hit in the head, and you can't really remember anything.

It just all flies out of your mind. There's a crisis. There's an unexpected challenge.

What do you do? Well, there are quick things to do to get focused, to start the system rebooting so that it will function. And this is claiming the promises of God. Grab a promise.

Well, you grab them if you know them. This is why we focus on memorization. Grab a promise.

It is the quickest way to get the vapor lock resolved and start the engine in your soul functioning again. God the Holy Spirit will speak in and through promises. Claim them.

Aim faith at them and begin the reconstruction process. Hard on the heels of claiming the promises of God is refreshing the view. You first have to wake up and start thinking.

If you've been knocked unconscious, if you've been knocked silly by some unexpected challenge, you've got to get your brain functioning, which means, okay, I think my eyes are closed. Maybe I should open them. I think I'm laying down.

Maybe I should stand up. I should check myself for broken bones and open wounds. Okay, I'm still functional.

I don't need emergency first aid. Let me stand up and figure out where I am. I can't even remember exactly what happened.

Stand up and look around. Who am I? Where am I? Why am I here? That's Ephesians 5 and 6. I am integrated into, I am woven into the fabric of the plan of God. I am under authority.

I exert authority. If no other place, I am the king of the kingdom in my soul, and I have to exert authority over the rabble that tends to rise up in opposition, which can be our emotions, can be our impulses, can be our baser human physical instincts. The king has got to exert control over the subjects in the kingdom.

Remember in the Wizard of Id, the king used to always say what? The peasants are revolting. Yes, they are. And many times our corrupt nature is revolting in both senses of the word, and we need to exercise authority over it.

This is all about orientation. How do I function where I am? And I have divine instructions. I have exhortation from God Himself on how to do this.

And I don't do it based on how I feel. I don't do it based on what I want. I do it based on my

instructions.

So, wives, be submissive to your husbands as you would be submissive to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loves us. Children, obey your parents in the Lord.

This is the right thing to do in the Lord. Obey them. If they're out of the Lord, go down and buy me another bottle of whiskey, and I'm going to drink it and then bust it over a table and start assaulting your mother with it.

That's not in the Lord. Obey in the Lord. Well, how do you know if it's in the Lord? That's preparation.

That's consistency in pursuing understanding of the Word of God and reflecting on it, digesting it, understanding it, seeing its application and its pertinence. This is a healthy spiritual life. You can't do things in the Lord as unto the Lord if you don't know the Lord and you don't know what it is to please Him.

And many people don't know that. They think numerical evangelism pleases Him. They think intruding yourself into the lives of others for the purpose of evangelism pleases Him.

They think I had a guy come up to me at the close of the conference I was at in Nashville and say, I've got a question for you. I said, what's that? I felt like I would probably know the answer just in that Christian context. He said, I've got a question for you.

What's that? What's the one thing you can take with you when you go to heaven? How would you answer that question? What's the one thing you can take with you when you go to heaven? It's what God has put in our souls, right? We can take righteousness and peace and sanctification. We can take the treasury of the Word of God that we have learned. That's why we're learning is to take it with us.

So I said something to that effect. I said we take what God has graciously granted to us and taught us. No, that's not it.

The one thing you can take with you is other people. Oh, really? Didn't see that coming. Yeah, others.

Those that you have won to Christ, you can take them with you. You can lead a squad or a platoon or a company or a battalion. That's the one thing you can take with you is other people.

And I thought, Lord God in heaven, thank you for your Word and your Spirit and that we can understand your purposes a little bit better than that. This is how we face challenges. Listen carefully.

We can be surprised by unexpected circumstance when everything flies out the window and you

can't even remember what's the first book of the New Testament. Think, what are my promises? Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Let not your heart be troubled.

You believe in God, you believe in me. I am preparing a place for you. I'm coming back for you.

It's all going to be okay no matter what happens. Nothing faces you but what is common to man. God always provides in terms of sustenance through or deliverance out of.

I mentioned a while back, you know, there are three different ways that God grants salvation. He either sustains us through a long-term challenge. He will give us victory over that challenge or He will pluck us up out of that challenge and remove us from it.

It no longer pertains. It no longer applies. Wait for it.

One of those three forms of salvation is in the plan and purpose of God. You're not going to be left there. Remember Jesus said, I will not leave you orphans.

I will come to you. I will give you another comforter. He will lead you into all truth.

Think about your promises. Think about your principles. Think about the doctrines.

Pull them into your mind. Don't think about, oh my gosh, we're out of money and here come the creditors. Oh, here's a health challenge.

What are we going to do? What about the doctors? What about the money? What about the separation? What about I'm going to do without this bereavement, whatever it may be? Stop and think, who am I and why am I here? This is a pop quiz. This is a story problem. And I can't panic.

I've got to think. Think, I know the answer to this. How do I know that I know the answer? How do I know that you know the answer? Because one of your primary promises is, God says, I will never test you with something you don't know the answer to.

Never. We are never tested above what we are able to handle. Never.

Any test we face, any challenge that comes, you know this. You know how people say now, it's popular to say, something comes up and they say, I've got this. I've got this.

I know the answer to this. In television, it's always the woman now. The men are helpless and clueless and running around bumping into things, and a woman says, oh, I've got this.

She's going to solve it. This is the feminist agenda now. Did you hear that, where is it, Germany, they've now passed a quota where they're required, every board of directors must have 30% women on it.

All the people that don't have 3 out of 10 women on their board of directors, they've got to get rid

of some guys and hire some women. It's the law now. This is going to be the thing, because you may have heard some statistics quoted recently in a certain community where there was a racial issue in terms of a shooting, and they've gone in and done a study, and they came back and said, it is a statistical fact.

We've done this exhaustive study, and we have found that the minority racial group is 80% of the time bound over for trial when they're arrested, where only 56% of the time is the dominant racial group, black and white. Blacks are far more likely to have a more severe penalty, far more likely to be bound over for trial. Therefore, we have proven that there is discrimination in Ferguson.

It's discrimination. We always suspected it. Now we know for sure.

What is the fallacy in that conclusion? Could there be some cultural issues in that community? Could there be a very high rate of single parent or no parent families in that community that contribute to crime? No. The reason it's higher for this racial group is because they are arrested and prosecuted with prejudice. That's why.

The police and the judges are corrupt, bigoted, and prejudiced. That's why the numbers are disparate. They don't match.

You've got so many blacks and whites making up the percentages in the population, but the crime figures and the arrest figures and the conviction figures are much higher for the blacks than they are for the whites. Obviously, this is prejudice and bigotry. There are endemic problems in that community, not necessarily of their own making, not necessarily all their own fault, but the knee-jerk response, the fallacious response is, well, it's the cops' fault.

It's the prosecutors' and the judges' fault. That's why there's disparity. Don't be fooled by this kind of thinking, and don't follow that pattern of finding somebody to blame when there is actually evidence that there is an internal endemic problem that needs to be addressed at its roots.

I don't need to get other people to accommodate my corruption and my brokenness. I need to find God's solution for my corruption and my brokenness, in which case it doesn't matter what people do. Orient to the plan and purpose of God.

Find the truth. How much emphasis has there been on the truth? The truth is not always pleasant, and usually when I hit on the truth, I find myself embarrassed and humbled. That's one of the ways I know I have hit the truth.

If I am embarrassed and humbled, it's probably true. And there is a matter of acceptance and moving forward. This is what God the Holy Spirit has given us to do.

So when we come to verse 6, if you are going to be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, this is the circumstance assigned by God. How did you end up being a bond slave? Egyptian person? Cypriot person? From whatever region, whatever Roman

conquest came along? Maybe you got poor and had to sell yourself into bondage, and then you got sold again? Orphaned? Taken in? Enslaved? Unfair? Unjust? But here I am. I'm a slave.

And here is the Apostle Paul saying, if you find yourself as a slave and you've got a master according to the flesh, serve them fully and wholly. Be obedient with fear and trembling of the physical master? No, of God in heaven who has assigned you this challenge. He didn't assign everybody the slave challenge.

This is the carefully conceived, foreordained circumstance God in heaven chose for your soul, for my soul. I wasn't born in Australia. I wasn't born in Alaska.

I wasn't born in Brazil. I was born in California. God help us all.

Born in California. Where were you born? Was ordained by God. Where and with whom did you grow up? It was ordained by God.

Where are you now? Ordained by God. Foreseen by God. Assigned by God.

This is where this child of mine can shine, can overcome, can reflect glory. This particular place. Nobody else, my child, fill in your name here, gets this problem, which I know they can solve, which I know they can handle, which I know they can claim the promises, principles, and doctrines of my word, says God.

They can overcome and they can shine like a 300-watt bulb. Just this person in just this place. It's not accidental.

It's not happenstance. It is an assignment. In the assignment, these are the instructions.

Don't focus on people. Focus on God. Don't focus on how did it happen, who can I blame, how can I explain it, how can I extricate myself and get out of it.

Focus on pleasing God. He put me here. He either caused it or allowed it.

He knew it was coming. He knows today, right now, that this is my assignment. He hasn't sent an angel to grab me and break the chains and open the gates, kick me in the side and say, come forth, Peter, you don't need to be here anymore.

I'm still here. It's God's plan for my life. How can I please Him in it? Here's how.

This is how. Doing the will of God from the heart. In sincerity of heart.

In genuineness of heart. Now, my question is, how do you do this? How do you get your heart? Have you ever seen somebody doing something in a lackadaisical fashion and say, well, his heart's really not in that. I see them practice on the piano, but their heart's not in it.

They're just fumbling through the scales. They're not trying. They're not advancing.

They're not gaining. They're not learning. They're just, you know, if I wait long enough.

Mom said I have to practice half an hour. Only 29 minutes to go, you know. Never can get that F sharp out of the D scale.

I don't know what's the matter with me. Just fumble along. Heart's not in it.

How do you get a sincere heart? You just say, heart, be sincere. Okay, I'm sincere. I love these scales, especially my left-hand scales.

Oh, boy, can't wait to do that. Try that B natural scale with your left hand. Yum, yum.

Can't wait. It's the highlight of my day. Not so much.

How do you do it from the heart? How do you do it with sincerity of heart? Well, it would help to know what part of us is the heart. What is your heart? The Bible talks about four different components of our existence. There is the heart, kardia in Greek.

We're just going to look at the New Testament since we're New Testament people. Kardia is the heart. Psyche or psyche, if you want to be, you know, trendy in your transliteration.

The trendy people turn the upsilons into Ys, and it's psyche. I like psuche better. Kardia, psuche, the nous, the mind, and the soma, the body.

Body, mind, heart, and soul. These are the common terms. You can add a fifth one there, which is nouma, your human spirit.

That pretty well comprehends the New Testament vocabulary for me, myself, and I. For you, yourself, and y'all. You've got the heart, kardia. You've got the soul, psuche.

As a gloss, that's not the full meaning of psuche, but you've got the heart, kardia. Soul, psuche. You've got the mind, nous.

You've got the spirit, nouma. And you have soma, the body, the flesh. Well, here we have the heart.

It doesn't say the mind. It doesn't say the soul, or does it? What does it say? Well, we're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, if we're going to do this, if this is going to happen, if we're going to actually please God, and we have sincerity in our heart, it would help to know what part of me this is so that I can cultivate it and prepare it so that I can obey this command.

This is not a suggestion. It's not an encouragement. It is a command.

It's an imperative. We must do this. How do we do it? It would help to understand where it happens so that we can make it happen.

That's what we'll see when we come back from the break.