

Ephesians 15-03-15a

This is Sunday, the 15th of March, 2015, one month to tax deadline day. We resume and continue our study in the book of Ephesians at chapter 6, verse 6, Ephesians 6-6. We have paused to examine the phrase, doing the will of God from the heart, the cardia.

What's the difference in a heart, a soul, a mind, a spirit, body? What is all that stuff? It's helpful for us to know at least generally the distinctions between these biblical vocabulary words so that when we encounter a command such as this, an exhortation that specifies one of these parts, we have some idea of how to do it. It's one thing to say, do this from the heart, but how do I get it into my heart in a natural and productive way so that I can actually fulfill this command? My heart is extremely unsusceptible to suggestion. I can tell my heart to feel a certain way and it just doesn't want to do it.

I reason with it and it just stares at me. It doesn't comply. It doesn't change.

My heart doesn't change because I tell it to. There's something going on in my heart that seems to be separate from my thought processes. So if I'm going to obey from the heart, how do I get my heart to be obedient? Well, we need to understand a little bit of the internal relationship between our invisible component parts and how they reside within our physical parts to make sense of this and to be able to do it.

I don't think you want, and I certainly don't want, to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and He says, well, did you serve and do the will of God from the heart? Did you love the Lord your God with all your heart? And I say, well, what do you mean by that? That's going to be the wrong question. We should know now. We've been told in the Word of God.

So that's the target of our investigation last week and this week to try to just generally discern what these parts are, how they work, what makes them go so that we can tune up our heart and make sure that it is compliant and is the seat of our love and our obedience. Let's take a moment to dedicate our time and our study of the Word of God before the Lord in prayer. Father, what a wonderful thing to recognize that we are your possession.

We belong to you. We have been inscribed permanently and eternally with your name through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as we have placed our faith in Him and trusted Him for our deliverance and trusted Him to qualify us and to bring us before you without fear of judgment, without fear of destruction, without fear of what we so richly deserve due to our nature and due to our decisions and due to our many failures. We recognize that because of your grace expressed in Him, we can rest, we can receive and enjoy the manifold blessings and provisions that come as a freshen of grace from above.

We thank you for that. We thank you for the peace that passes understanding, that keeps our hearts and minds. We thank you most of all for the Lord Jesus who voluntarily made all of this

possible for us, who loved us enough to sacrifice Himself on our behalf.

And there is no greater love. We know that in Him we can learn to think as He thinks and to be motivated as He was motivated to accomplish your purpose and your will in this life and to look forward to dwelling in your presence and His in the ages that are to come. We pray this morning that as we look at this part of your Word that God the Holy Spirit will make it clear and meaningful to each one of us that we will find strength and encouragement and motivation, that it will be a reminder to us that we live a supernatural life.

We have an identity and a calling, a purpose and a function that is transcendent, that goes well beyond the nuts and bolts of this earth. We pray that in all things in the presence and power of your Spirit we can glorify the Lord Jesus. We pray these things in His name.

Amen. Ephesians chapter 6, let's just refresh our minds. Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right.

Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with promise. There are many commandments with promise, aren't there? But in the list of ten this is the first one that talks about results. There is a promise.

Some promises are positive, some promises are negative. But honor your father and mother, there is a result, there is a concomitant, there is an outflow from that, and that is that your days will be long in the land actually, the errets in the Old Testament. This comes out of the Old Testament that people were so familiar with.

And just as a side note, we are very aware and sensitive to the erosion of what have been called divine institutions, marriage, family, nation, and nationalism. Patriotism has become something of a bad word. People blame appreciation of one's country and waving its flag for violence and warfare.

It really tickles me a little bit because I see all of the places where people want to fix blame for what is wrong in the world. Well, you know what is wrong in the world? It is religion. Look at all of these terrorists who do stuff in the name of their God.

Look at history and how this group and that group and the other group have done things in the name of their religion. And then others say no, it is nationalism. It is people being too busy trying to promote and defend and energize the interests of their nation and this excessive nationalism.

You know, you should not be proud to be an American. You should suppress that and be diverse and celebrate everybody's national origins and ethnicities and let us just, everybody is beautiful in his own way. You know, red and yellow, black and white, they should be all precious in our sight, on and on.

You know, race, people are bigoted about their nation, they are bigoted about race, they are bigoted about religion. And they never seem to trace the symptoms back to the source which isn't race, it isn't religion, it isn't nationalism, it isn't corporate prophets and that. It is the corrupt human heart.

It is not cars that produce cars. It isn't injuries and traffic deaths every year. It is people.

You well remember one of my favorite aphorisms of all time. Guns don't kill people. Bullets kill people, right? But when you look at those guns and you look at those bullets, why do the triggers get pulled and why do the bullets fly? People.

Oh, if we could just get rid of the guns, you know, look at the statistics. In countries that have strong gun laws, murders are less. No, they just find other ways to perpetrate violence on each other.

The violence is not down, it just takes different forms. Deaths may be down, but there are plenty of living deaths. You know, formal slavery is down, but there is enslavement all over the world.

There is oppression, there is man's humanity to man everywhere you turn. It's the human heart. You are not going to cure measles by painting over the bumps.

You're not going to get rid of strep throat by gargling a painkiller. You're not going to get rid of an obsessed tooth by just shooting Novocaine into the gums. There is a fundamental problem in the heart.

Well, that's what this passage is talking about here when it says you need to submit to authority. You need to recognize your place. Sometimes you exercise it if you're a husband or you're a parent.

Sometimes you respond to it and function under it if you're a child or a wife, and everybody is under some kind of authority. We've talked about the centurion who rehearses this principle to the Lord Jesus. I'm a man under authority and I exercise authority.

I say to one, come, and he comes. To another, go, and he goes. And he says, I know you have authority.

He understood, as few did, the universal nature of authority. It is God's way. It is God's plan.

There is authority in heaven. What's the last, one of the last things Jesus said before He elevated from the ground and disappeared above the Mount of Olives? What's one of the last things He said? All authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth. Why did He say that? Of all possible, I mean, this is a pretty important moment.

It's kind of the swan song, the coup de grace, the finale. It's the grand exit. Famous last words.

And what does Jesus say? All authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth. It's one of the last things He says. It's important.

So Paul is going through this. Children, obey your parents. Honor your father and mother.

First commandment with promise. In order that it may be well with you. And this is a universal principle.

If we figure this authority thing out and get it in our hearts, that's where it functions, in the heart. We do the will of God from the heart, it is going to be well with us. It's going to be well with us in the kingdom of our souls.

It's going to be well with us in this earth. And it is going to be well with us in the land of promise, our inheritance, the life that is to come. You can't go wrong getting this right.

There is no downside to being sensitive to and understanding our place in God's authority structure. It's important. You fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath.

Why? Sometimes it's fun to provoke people. People like to poke the bear, you know. It's fun.

Pull the chain. Let loose the goat. It's interesting.

And there are people who, probably more unconsciously, some of them do it consciously, but there are people who just like to poke the bear. They just want to see something happen. Let's get a reaction.

And not always in a humorous and lighthearted way. Things get a little dull. I'll say something or do something and stir up trouble.

I'm just used to it. It kind of mirrors the chaos in my own soul. And I can be preoccupied with somebody else's attitudes and behaviors and words and I don't have to think about myself.

I can be subjective and have my eyes on these people. Well, if the people are quiescent and not doing much, I'll throw a firecracker under them and now I can be preoccupied with them and I don't have to sit and dwell with myself because that is a very smelly room. I don't like my own company.

I don't really enjoy my own soul very much. I need distraction. I need diversion.

And trust me when I tell you there are people who thrive on controversy. And if there isn't any, they'll make some up or they'll start some just to wind it up and watch it go. It's part of our corrupt human nature.

You don't see Michael and Gabriel up in heaven winding up some angel and laughing and poking each other in the ribs. This isn't a part of the plan and purpose of God. And here's the thing.

First and foremost, it is corrosive to authority. It distracts people. It causes them to start functioning on emotion and on reaction and on subjective basis.

And it messes up responsibility and authority. That's the reason it's in this context. Don't provoke your children.

It isn't that the provocation is necessarily wrong in and of itself. There are people who need to be provoked. Sometimes you need to get somebody up off the couch to go do something and the only way you can do it is to stir up enough chemicals in their system to raise their heart rate.

Okay, that's not intrinsically wrong. But it is intrinsically wrong to provoke children to wrath in lieu of bringing them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Notice the contrast, don't do this but do this.

That defines and limits what part A is. You've got a don't do and you have a positive side. You have a don't be and you have a don't do be, right? You have to be a certain age, just right over your head.

Don't be a provocateur. Be a trainer and an admonisher. Where? In the Lord, of the Lord.

How often have we seen that phrase? All of these things, you've got one eye on heaven while you're doing this. You're thinking about function under God's authority as you do this. Fathers, husbands, you're under authority.

You do this in the Lord as under the Lord, recognizing that it is an assignment. Then bond servants, verse 5, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh. You could substitute employees, you could substitute students, you could substitute any name for which a person is functioning under the non-familial authority of others.

Sometimes you get a twofer. You're a student and it's your mom. You get an instructor, someone who's giving you lessons on an instrument or in some sort of sport or whatever it might be.

It might be a coach, it might be a scout leader, it might be a person you've gone to to learn a skill or a trade. You're in sort of an apprentice mode, whatever it may be. That's bond servant.

This doesn't mean you've got to be in manacles and shackles and shipped across the ocean and they put you in a galley for a while and then took you out and now you're building a bridge or serving in a cotton field someplace. Bond servant means you have obligatory service. When you see bond servant, just think obligatory service.

I am not the one driving the train. Actually, that's a bad metaphor. Do you ever think about that? The one driving the train has very little control.

The tracks determine where you go. Driving the bus is better. You can take a bus anywhere.

Train, that's Calvinism. It's foreordained where the train is going to go. All you can do is kind of control how fast it gets there maybe.

But bond servant, you're not the one setting the agenda, making the plans, defining the priorities, setting the goals, observing the milestones, taking the measurements, chastising the weak and lazy and inefficient, sorting the goodens and badens. You're under that system. You are a smaller wheel in the bigger machine.

Bond servant, don't think manacles and chains. Don't think conquest in the ancient world and ripped out of your cultural roots and all the rest of it. It's not what it's talking about.

You are serving in some obligatory manner just maybe to get a check. Maybe you're a galley slave just so you can keep the bills paid. Bond servants, be obedient to those who are your masters in the world of the flesh.

They're not your master, capital M. They're not your Lord, capital L. They're a small L Lord. They're a small M Master. They have the delegated authority from God on this earth in any one of almost infinitude of capacities.

And do it respectfully. Fear and trembling. Now are we to fear and tremble looking at the fleshly Master? I fear and tremble because my boss could fire me and it would be really hard to get another job.

I do it with fear and trembling because he's a yeller and boy, if I get on his bad side, I'm just going to get a big riot act read to me. What's the basis and nature of this fear and trembling? Who should we be fearing and trembling before? The Master, capital M, who is above and beyond. We saw the passage last time.

Don't fear those who can just kill the body. Fear the one who can cast both soul and body into fire. Fear Him.

Fear and trembling. This is, and it's an interesting perspective. And we want to cultivate this perspective.

Here's one of the first ways to get your heart right so that we can do the will of God from the heart. Not with eye service, not pleasing men, but as bondservants of Christ. Notice the transition there.

You can circle in verse 5, Masters according to the flesh, circle bondservants of Christ in verse 6 and just draw a line between them. When you look at your Master according to the flesh, you say, you know what, I am a bondservant of Christ and I will serve this earthly authority as unto the Lord. I will do it as a bondservant of Christ.

They used to, they used to loan slaves in the classic sense of slaves. You've got a guy that

wouldn't be there except that he's in slavery. But maybe somebody has a crop to get in.

And you can see this in the Colonial Times, Life of Washington and so on. You'd have slaves, but maybe there's a task bigger than what your slaves can do. Well, a neighboring plantation, neighbors were often your relatives.

You've got a brother, you've got an uncle, you've got somebody else, and he's got a crew, a working crew. And they would loan field hands to come over and help bring in a crop that was too big for the native dwelling group to handle. Well, what happens? He's actually the slave of Uncle Jonas over here, but he's going to come over to George's plantation and work.

Well, I ain't going to chop no cotton because Masa Jonas didn't tell me to chop this row. Is that how it worked? Uncle Jonas says, look, you group, I'm sending you over there and for the next three weeks you do what they tell you. My instruction to you is to do what the master over there tells you to do.

So which master are those loan slaves serving? Are they serving their ultimate master or are they serving their immediate master? Both. Because the overarching final authority has told them, serve these temporary masters here. That's what's going on in this passage.

I'm a bondservant of Jesus Christ. He has put me under the authority of this teacher, boss, coach, instructor, whatever it may be, employer. I will serve them as though the instructions came from my real master because that's my overarching authority instruction.

You have to do it this way. Now, suppose you get some inane and frustrating guidance, goofy policies, extra work, unfair, unkind, annoying, wrong-headed, inefficient, waste of time, waste of resources, just makes your inner blood boil and you begin to cast imprecations and aspersions and negative invisible grenades and ammunition at this extremely dumb authority. Right? I find this unfair.

I find it inefficient. I find it just dumber than dumb. How can we stand before the Lord God and seriously you want to try to see lawyer your way out of that standing at the judgment seat and saying, well, but Lord, look how dumb it was.

I mean, you can't really blame me, can you? He says, well, yes, I can because you were in class on that 15th of March Sunday morning when you were in Ephesians 6 and I told you to serve that authority the way you would serve me. Do you love me or not? Did you hear my word or not? Did you think about it and apply it or not? This conversation is coming up at the judgment seat of Christ for me, and I'm pretty sure it's going to come up at the judgment seat of Christ for you. So here's my thought.

I would rather disinvest now from my heartfelt belief that some of the instructions I get, and trust me when I tell you, some of the instructions I get, the needle on the meter in my brain is broken

from being twisted off, pegging at how much I disagree with having to do some of the things I do. It's I can preach for the rest of the day on all the reasons it shouldn't be done the way it's being done. However, I have peace and I am relaxed and I do it, and I do it well.

I add to it. I go above and beyond in doing what I don't believe in work-wise based on this passage. I think, you know what? It doesn't make any sense to me, but this is the authority that has been appointed over me by the Lord God.

He said, you're my bondservant and I want you to fulfill the policies and purposes of this authority that I'm placing immediately over you. Do it for me. Well, say no more.

If I'm doing it for the Lord Jesus, if He knew something I didn't and it made sense to Him in ways that it would never make sense to me, then I'll trust that He knows what He's doing. If He wants to change the purposes and the outcomes that this authority is defining, that's His business. He didn't tell me to straighten out my authority.

He told me to treat my authority as though it were Him. And so as long as I can do it in the Lord, I'm going to do it and I'm going to do it well. I'm going to do it 110% and I'm going to have peace.

And I'm going to say, you know, that doesn't make a lick of sense to me, but apparently it makes sense to the Lord because He hasn't done anything to change where these tracks lie for this train. I'm just the engineer and I've got the throttle on full. And if we're going to go down these tracks, we're going to do it fast and we're going to do it well, and every car in the train is going to make it.

You have to do it this way. How do you change your heart? How do you change, in Hebrew it's lev, in Greek it's kardia. What do we know about the heart? The Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword.

Say it with me, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a critic of what? Thoughts and intents of the heart. Where are your thoughts and intents? Well, I think with my mind, don't I? I do. Isn't that news? So why is that talking about the thoughts and intents of the heart? What did Jesus say about what defiles a man? Your disciples are harvesting grain on the Sabbath and eating it with unwashed hands, unsanctified hands.

Jesus said it is not what goes into a man that corrupts him, that defiles him. It's what proceeds out of the mind, what proceeds out of the heart. That's what corrupts a man.

That's where we are judged, judged on the thoughts and intents of the heart. So can I decide what my thoughts and intents are going to be? Yes, I can. I can reject certain lines of argument that my mind wants to bring to my heart.

You know, logically speaking, according to the definitions and the standards of practice, it ought to be this way, my mind says. My heart says, you know what, I'm a servant of Christ and I have

not been given the authority to set this agenda, to make this policy, to define this goal. My authority says get into harness, pull on those traces, get that plow running deep and straight.

Doesn't matter what field it is, it's not your concern. If I want you to define the field and set the direction of the plow furrows, I'll let you know. But right now I've given that to somebody else, it is up to you to pull the plow.

Right? So in my heart I decide this is my purpose and the arguments that my mind is making to the contrary are going to be silenced and set aside because I know that this is right. Children, obey your parents in the Lord. Why? This is right.

Do it because it's right. Well, why is it right? My parents are wrong. Your parents may be wrong, but obeying them is right, if you can do it in the Lord.

Servants, obey those who are your masters according to the flesh as bond servants of Christ. You're a lone servant. Let Christ talk to the authority about procedures and policies and goals and directions.

I'm a bond servant of Christ, and that I can do from my heart. I may not agree with the details of what I am asked to do or told to do, but I can dedicate my entire heart to serving Christ. And if I know I'm pleasing Him, the peace and the reconciliation with that which I cannot change, you know, that refrigerator magnet prayer, Lord, grant me the serenity.

What is that? The serenity prayer, I think they call it. Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, you know, the power to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference, some such thing. You don't have to pray for that.

That's not something you ask for. Lord, give me the serenity. The serenity comes from obedience.

Do this passage, you'll have serenity. Oh Lord, give me serenity. I already told you how to get serenity.

Why are you standing around praying? Get in the harness, pull on the traces, pull the furrow straight and true in whatever direction the authority that I put over you told you to do it. And the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds where? In Christ Jesus, in Him, in the Lord, for the Lord, of the Lord. Who promises peace? Not as the world gives.

Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you, Jesus says. What are you asking for something you've already been given? But we have to function under our true authority, our Master, capital M. That's how this happens.

It's not a request. It's not something you wait to descend from above. Oh, peace, come down on

me like a dove.

No. Peace is available. It is a choice and it is a choice to recognize and function under God's authority structure.

It's so clearly defined here. Ours is not to reason why. Ours is not to reason why.

As I used to say when I was a midshipman, ours is but to do or fry. Getting demerits is fondly known as getting fried when you're a midshipman. Yeah, got fried, 15, that'll be three hours of marching on the Red Beach.

But it's not often our call to define circumstances. We don't control the world. What we do is control our own hearts, direct our hearts, ensure that the motive that impels us is love for the Lord Jesus Christ and a desire to please and serve Him, knowing that this is what pleases the Father.

This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And what's the rest of it? Three more words. God in heaven spoke and said, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

What are the next three words? Hear ye Him. Hear ye Him. That's how it works.

Let's pause here and take our break.