

Ephesians 15-03-22a

This is March 22, 2015. We continue our study in the book of Ephesians, Paul's letter to the Laodicean church copied to Colossae. We're in chapter 6. We're looking at verses 5-9.

Let's take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer, dedicate our time and our concentration to His glory and to the commitment that we have to reflect the Lord Jesus Christ in this life. Shall we pray? Father, we're grateful for this day. We're thankful for the opportunity to spend time together looking at the truth of Your Word, hoping to gain a better understanding and to have it impressed on our hearts so that we think and act in a way that's pleasing in Your sight, a way that fulfills Your purpose.

We know that this is the path to genuine happiness and to peace, to living a productive and fruitful life. We pray that Your Holy Spirit will superintend both the delivery and the reception of this portion of Your Word this morning. May each one here be blessed, find it meaningful and helpful in the hours and days ahead.

And may we be drawn closer as a group, both to each other and to the Lord Jesus, and through Him to you. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Again, Ephesians chapter 6 continues a theme that began back in chapter 5 with submitting to one another in the fear of Christ, in the fear of God, submitting to one another. Everything that we've seen since then, chapter 5 verse 21, has been examples. It doesn't mean everybody submits to everybody else.

Nobody would ever get through the door, right? After you. No, after you. No, after you.

Oh, no, after you. Oh, I couldn't think of going ahead of you. Please go ahead.

No, I'm sorry. Everybody can't submit to everybody else. Right? It's all Indians and no chiefs.

It just doesn't work. No Native Americans, just chiefs. So we have examples.

There is authority structure. And so it begins with wives and husbands in marriage. There is an authority structure there.

As I have said innumerable times, authority structure does not assign quality to the people within it. Just because you are an underling doesn't mean you have less value. In many cases, the underlings are better people than the overlings.

To draw conclusions about value or quality or the character and esteem in which someone should be held based on where they are in an authority structure is a huge fallacy. But people do this in order to overturn an authority structure. They say, well, this authority structure devalues me because I'm an underling.

And I'm as good as or better than the overlings, so we should get rid of this authority structure. And it's a false premise. Your assigned place in an authority structure says nothing about your individual personal value.

Don't let anybody tell you that it does. This is the corrosive logic of Satan. This is what he used in the garden against Eve and subverted her, got her to partake of the fruit.

This fruit will make you wise. You'll be like God. You'll be just as good as He is, implying that because she's like the third person in the authority structure below God and below Adam, that she had less value.

Eat the fruit. You'll be enhanced. Now you'll have more value and it will level the playing field.

So we had this in verses 22 and following. The authority structure in a marriage is a necessary structure. It's necessary to a successful marriage.

This whole thing about, well, we're equal partners and we're going to have a committee meeting every time we try to do something. If you want to try that, go ahead, but it's not God's way. It's not God's model.

And it is compared directly to Christ and the church. Ask yourself, is Christ and the church, is that a committee meeting? Does the church meet with Christ and say, well, you know, Lord, we really think we ought to do it this way. We think we ought to go, we're thinking about building a church in this new community.

We thought we'd survey everybody and see what it is they like in a church and then we'll just build the church to fit what they like. They don't like steeples, so we thought we wouldn't build a steeple. And they don't like pews, so we thought we wouldn't put in pews.

And they like TV, so we thought we'd put in big screens. And they like multimedia sound, so we thought we'd put in a big sound system. And they love colored lights, so we thought we'd put in a lighting system.

And they love music, especially if the music isn't too preachy. So we thought we'd bring in a bunch of contemporary sort of only slightly religious music. And we thought we'd mostly have a praise and worship service that involves lights and music and sound and comfortable chairs and send everybody out on a high note.

This is not the model. This isn't God's plan. God says Christ is the head of the church.

And in exactly the same way, the husband is the head in the marriage. They are directly compared. And to the extent that you diminish the authority of a husband in marriage, you misunderstand the relationship of Christ to the church.

And you can see the correlation in this day and age where people are very little interested in what Christ wants in the church in the same way that they have very little understanding of the way marriage works. And that's why so many of them fail, even within the realm of faith. It's interesting.

You would think, think about this now. The world at large in this country, you would think the divorce rate would be a certain amount. But then if you looked at the Christian community, would you expect the divorce rate to be greater, the same, or less, given that these are people guided by the Word of God, filled with God's Holy Spirit, heading on the upward way, gaining new heights every day? What do you think the divorce rate is in the church? Depending on which survey you look at, it is either equal to or higher than what it is in the outside world.

It's pathetic. Why? Because people do not understand God's authority structure. They don't want to submit.

And when they find themselves chafing, instead of going to God and looking for assurance and comfort and guidance and perspective and understanding, their God is their emotion. I don't feel good, so I'm leaving. Well, that's not, as Jesus says, the way it was designed.

Moses permitted you to divorce because of your hardness of heart. But in the beginning, it was designed to be a permanent union of two people. So He describes that, and we've seen it in great detail.

It's a great mystery, verse 32, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Christ and the church. If you don't understand marriage, you will not understand Christ and the church, and vice versa.

Then we saw in the beginning of chapter 6, Children, obey your parents and the Lord, for this is right. And again, why is it that we have high teen suicide rates? We have massive drug addiction and drug dependence among young people, teenagers, and some of this is prescription drugs. Why are so many kids on Ritalin? Why are so many kids on Wellbutrin? Look, there is a time and a place for medical aid, but to drug your kids to get them to comply and to keep them from being rebellious and disobedient is unbiblical.

It's unbiblical. You don't drug children into compliance. You teach them and you train them up in the way that they should go.

You don't drug them up in the way that they should go. Look at the statistics sometime. Look it up.

Use Mr. Google. The number, the percentage of children in this country, young children, elementary age children, junior high age children, high school age children, that are on prescription medications for mood control is off the chart. This is a misunderstanding.

You know why they have to do this? Because parents are not present. All the parents are typically two income, well we have to both work in order to make enough money to pay for the flat screen and internet and our really nice cars and all the rest of it. And by making money and material prosperity the goal, well we both have to work.

And when we both have to work, there is nobody there to train the children. So, surprise, the children are not compliant and grow up like weeds. And gosh, I guess the daycare and the school system didn't teach them life skills.

And so now they can't focus their attention. They have been brought up babysat by television and video games. And so their minds are all screwed up.

And so the only way to keep them from running amok is to dumb them down with drugs that alter the chemical balances in their brain. This is nowhere near what Paul is talking about in Ephesians chapter 6. Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Now, what children are going to listen to this exhortation? In the Lord? Well, I don't care anything about the Lord and I don't care about what's right.

Well, then Paul's exhortation to obey their parents in the Lord for this is right is going to be water off a duck's back for them. He is talking about children who have trusted Christ as their Savior, who want to serve God and reflect God's glory in their life. If you are a person who wants to invest his or her life in eternity, then this is what you do.

And it isn't going to be easy. It is a struggle, as we will soon see. Honor your father and mother, the first commandment with promise.

The promise is only as good as the promiser. People make promise at the altar, you know, till death do us part, sickness and health, better for worse, richer for poorer, I'll stick with you no matter what. That promise is only as good as the character and the integrity of the person making it.

Well, what is your estimate of God's integrity? Many people have no interest in God, maybe no belief in God, and so this is useless, worthless. Unless you believe that God is someone who will fulfill His promises, you remember Hebrews 11.6? He that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him, that He will fulfill His promises, right? This has no persuasive power unless you are interested in God, unless you believe in God and you have a desire to please Him. Notice that Paul makes no effort to appeal to reason here, in the sense of, let me argue you into respecting God.

Let me give you enough evidence to see that this is really a good deal. He assumes that you have made that commitment and that you have that understanding already. And he's not talking to people who don't.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. You've already got a heart commitment to the Lord and to righteousness. Otherwise, this is no argument, is it? So this is in the household of faith.

These are people who care about the Lord Jesus Christ, who understand the relationship of Christ as the head of the church, husband as the head of the house, parents as the head of the children because this is right, because this is in the Lord. It's the first commandment with promise. Well, the promise doesn't mean anything unless you understand who it is that's making the promise.

It will be well with you and you will live long in the land. This is the land of promise. This is the place of inheritance.

Do you want to take the minutes and the hours of your life and invest them in something? You stop and think about the time that you spend. It's an investment. So like money, it would be wise to think about the return on that investment.

What do I have to show for the time that I have spent? Entertainment is good up to a point in the same way that spices and sweeteners are good up to a point for our food. But we don't get a glass and fill it up with 12 tablespoons of sugar and put just enough water in it to make it syrup and then drink it, do we? It's not healthy. A little sugar is fine.

A little butter is great. A little salt, a little pepper, a little spice, a little chili pepper, a little Tabasco. But you don't fill up a glass with Tabasco and chug it down.

In the same way, entertainment is good in moderation as a spice for life, as a condiment, as an accompaniment, as something to maybe help some of the less palatable things go down. You work a hard day. It wasn't fun.

You struggled. You're tired. Watch a little TV, something light, something wholesome.

It's a spice. It's a sweetener. But in its place.

You get online, look at a little Facebook. It's a spice. It's a sweetener.

You can maintain some family and friend connections that way in moderation. If you spend three and a half hours looking at Facebook, that's your glass full of sugar syrup. I tell you now, that is too much time online.

Time is currency. Balance that against the time you spent reflecting on the Word of God. Did you spend three and a half hours reflecting on the Word of God or three and a half hours reflecting on the funny pictures and videos? Who are you and why are you here? What is the return on investment for reading stuff online, watching videos online, YouTubing online, watching cats do funny things online versus thinking about all of eternity to come and the Lord Jesus Christ that

died for us? Paul is putting these things in perspective and he says, look, it's not an all or nothing.

It is a matter of proportion. It is a matter of perspective. All things are lawful, but not all things are edifying.

And it is up to us to ensure that what we do is kept in balance. There's nothing inherently wrong with a lot of things unless we do them to excess. That it may be well with you and that you may live long in the land.

This is the land of promise. This is the place of inheritance. Do you want to live long in the land of which we have all been made citizens by faith in Christ? Do you want to have treasure in heaven? Do you want to have useful function? Do you want to be close to the Lord Jesus and partake of the hidden manna and walk with Him in white? Help Him administrate the kingdoms that are to come? Be useful? Make Him glad that He died for us? This is the way.

Be sensitive to authority and to opportunity within that structure. You fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath. Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling and sincerity of heart, simplicity of heart.

Remember, sincerity is simplicity as to Christ. Now he is turning a corner here in this whole chapter 5, chapter 6. Remember how all the way through the beginning of the book he was saying, in Christ, in Christ, in Him, in Him. We have all of these things in Him.

Now he is talking about the nitty-gritty of this life. Here is the pressure. Here are the boxes in which you find yourself.

We are constrained. We have limits. We can't just do whatever we want.

We are constrained. How do we function within those constraints and restraints? So here is marriage. Here is family.

Here is life, life in terms of duty and function. Be obedient with fear and trembling, simplicity of heart as to Christ, not with eye service as men pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the psuche. First one, simplicity of heart, purity of heart, simple one motive of heart.

That was cardia. Up in verse 6, I'm sorry, up in verse 5. In verse 6, doing the will of God from the heart, that second heart isn't heart at all. That's not cardia, it's psuche, from the soul.

You have thought this through. Your heart has a pure motive and that comes first. I want to serve Christ.

The heart is the place of decision, it is the place of purpose, it is the place of commitment. What does it say? With the heart one believes unto salvation, over in Corinthians, with the tongue one

confesses. Actually it's Romans, Romans 10:10. It is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

The heart is the seat of belief, it is the seat of purpose, and that comes first. Simplicity of heart as to Christ. Based on that, we can then do the will of God from the soul.

You set your purpose, that's your goal, then you organize your life in line with that goal. With good will, verse 7, doing service as to the Lord and not to men. How many times does He have to tell us, do what you do as unto the Lord, not to men.

The parallel passage in Colossians is almost word for word the same here. Knowing that whatever good anyone does, verse 8, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is slave or free. It isn't whether you are the authority or you are serving under authority.

If you exercise that responsibility well, you are going to receive good from the Lord. So when it's hard, when it doesn't make sense, when it's frustrating, when it's difficult, we shift our perspective. My heart, my simplicity of heart is to please God.

He has given me this assignment. I will fulfill it. I want to please Him, and I know that when He is pleased, the same good that I do here, He is going to do to me.

This is the path to peace. This is the path to fulfillment, to satisfaction in life. You can do a lot of things that burn time, but they are not ultimately satisfying.

This is the satisfaction of knowing that your time was well spent. And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening. This word giving up is *afiemi*, giving up.

Actually, it's a different form of that same word. *Afiemi* is, we have two words that have this root. One is the word for forgiveness.

Afiemi, and it means *apa*, away from. You turn something loose and let it go. *Afiemi*, it's actually *apoiemi*, and it means it's going to go away.

It's release, forgiveness. This is *aniemi*, *aniemi*. It's a fairly rare word, and it means to turn loose of it.

You think, well, why does he use such an odd word combination here? To relax is the idea here. And it really goes to the heart of people who are, they're control freaks. Now, I wouldn't know about this, having never been a control freak myself, but I understand academically that you can get to be nitpicky.

You can be very interested in things going exactly right, down to the fine detail. You can micromanage. You can oversupervise.

You can become burdensome in the exercise of your authority. And you let it be known that if

anything isn't exactly the way you want it, your overbearing interest in this is going to result in unhappiness for the people trying to get their stuff done. I think the reason the word aniemi is used here, this is the word that basically means let it go.

Let it go. It's the same root as forgiveness. Forgiveness is you release someone from the guilt, from the desire for retribution, and I will make them pay.

I will wreak vengeance upon them for some crime, some sin. Aniemi is that this is God's forgiveness. I've let it go.

I have no more investment in that. I've taken care of it another way. The Lord Jesus Christ has died for that.

You've acknowledged it, 1 John 1.9. That's it. There's no more power left in that sin. This is aniemi, and it means, look, you're breathing threats and violence on people for these small little nitpicky things.

Let it go. Just let it go. Back off.

Be more gentle. Look at the way the Lord Jesus exercises authority over the church. How many different ways are churches capable of messing up, overemphasizing one thing, underemphasizing another? Look around.

Look at our 500-odd denominations that we have now. Everybody's doing it a different way. How overbearing is the Lord Jesus in His exercise of authority as head of the church? Is He coming down and striking steeples with lightning? He works through the Word and through the Spirit.

He looks for those who are responsive, who love Him enough to want to please Him. He educates and informs. He guides.

He disciplines. He corrects in and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. But He's careful.

He gives us time. He gives us space to grow. He's slow to anger.

He's quick to forgive. And we should be that way. Aniemi, those who have authority should let go of the threatening aspect.

How much love is there going to be in a threatening relationship? I do what I do under threat. If you want to have a loving marriage, if you want to have a loving family relationship between parents and children, how much love is that going to squeeze forth out of people's hearts when there's this constant threat? The threat of my bad attitude, the threat of my disapproval, the threat of my coming down and raising cane and slamming doors and yelling. They're kind of mutually exclusive, right? So if you want to nurture love within an authority relationship, and this is in personal relationships, it's love with emotion.

In business relationships, it's love in the sense of policy, in the sense of goodwill, mutual benefit. You've got to let go of the threatening. There is a time to warn.

God does this throughout Scripture. God makes it clear. You remember in Deuteronomy we looked at here's what will happen if you do not keep the covenant.

But God doesn't spend His time stomping around threatening. And masters of slaves, especially those who are endeavoring to please and endeavoring to do what is right, He says, let go, give up the threatening, knowing that your own master also is in heaven and there is no partiality with Him. He is going to be eminently fair.

How do you want your Father in heaven? How do you want your Master in heaven to treat you? Do you want Him to be constantly threatening you with mayhem? Or do you want it to be a positive relationship? Well, the vertical should be reflected in the horizontal. That's the idea. And that brings us to verse 10.

And when we come back from the break, we're going to look at this very familiar passage. It's been one of our memory verses for some years now. We're going to look at the full armor of God.

Let's pause here and take our break.