

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 19TH - 20TH, 2022 // BOOK OF EPHESIANS

CHILDREN AND FATHERS (EPHESIANS 6:1-4)

The Spirit-filled life is marked by submission out of reverence for Christ (5:21).

- Within a Christian home, there is to be a divinely ordained order for how submission is to work.
- Husbands/fathers submit to God and love their wives like Jesus loves the Church (5:25-30), and wives submit to their husbands as to the Lord and follow His loving leadership (5:22-24).

Children in the home are instructed to simply "obey their parents" (vs. 1).

- "In the Lord" means that their obedience to their parents is actually obedience to the Lord.
- The first reason for this command is simply that "this is right"—this is the way God has designed and required it.
- Without training and discipline from parents, children run wild in society.

Children who have not been properly disciplined and trained inside the home to obey and honor authority struggle more with life outside the home.

- Not only do THEY struggle with life outside the home, but they become more of a burden to others than a blessing to others.
- We don't have to teach children to disobey—but obedience, respect, & honor must be taught.

Paul then quotes the fifth commandment (Exo. 20:12) and applies it to us as believers.

- We all are called by God to honor our parents.
- Adult children don't owe their parents obedience, but they do owe their parents honor.
- What it means to honor our parents will change as we grow into adulthood, but the principle from God's Word always endures.

- This is a command given with a promise (vs. 3).

Paul then speaks to our responsibility as parents in raising our children in a Christ-centered home (vs. 4).

- We're warned to be careful with how we parent and raise our children because we possess the power to shape them like no one else.
- To "stir up anger" (vs. 4a) suggests a repeated, ongoing pattern of treatment that gradually builds up deep-seated anger and resentment which boils over into outward hostility. How do parents sometimes do this?

Verbal, physical, or emotional abuse: where we make our aim to exert superior authority and strength over our children through physical force, hurtful words, or biting sarcasm.

- Discouragement: a child who never hears "Good job" or "I'm proud of you" can grow extremely unconfident and insecure.
- Over-protection: where we smother our children, we're overly restrictive, never trust them, and we continually question their judgment.

Using love as a tool of reward or punishment: where it's conditional on behavior.

- Not letting a child be a child: when we shame our children for acting childish, we're not being patient or loving them well.
- Our goal is to "bring them up in the training & instruction of the Lord" (vs. 4b)!
- Not just to make our children fear and obey us so our lives are easier.

Punishment is simply inflicting suffering on someone because of past behavior and isn't focused on training: simply on breaking them down through fear, shame, and pain.

- Godly discipline, training, and instruction are a form of discipleship within the home because they focus on teaching a child desirable and godly future behavior.
- Parents—we have a massive responsibility!

SERVANTS AND MASTERS (EPHESIANS 6:5-9)

Slavery in the Roman empire was much different than the racial slavery we're familiar with in the history of the U.S.

- About 1/3 of the Roman population were slaves and another 1/3 were freed slaves.
- Many would sell themselves into slavery to pay off debt or provide for their families. Slaves were often doctors, lawyers, and politicians and held prominent positions in Roman households.

In the early church, Christian slaves/bondservants could worship as equals alongside their Christian masters (this was a revolutionary idea; book of Philemon).

- Christianity DOES NOT condone slavery; in fact, Christian theology and biblical doctrine are to credit for the abolition of it.
- The broader application: How is a Christian to honor authority at work or on the job?

Obey, respect, and sincerely honor your boss as you would honor Christ (vs. 5).

- As Christians, we work to serve one Master: King Jesus. Every earthly master or authority in our lives has been placed there by Him.
- We honor Jesus when we honor, respect, and obey our earthly authorities.
- We don't kiss up or flatter our boss and then slander them beyond their back: we're sincere.

Do your work honestly, diligently, and thoroughly as unto the Lord (vs. 6).

- God is watching all the time, so we don't just work while we're being watched.
- We're not people-pleasers; we work to please God.

Have a good attitude (vs. 7-8)

- Our motivation for having a good attitude as we work is to please the Lord, knowing He will reward us.

MASTERS/EMPLOYERS/MANAGERS/BOSSSES (VS. 9).

1. Treat your employees/servants respectfully.
 2. Don't threaten them or abuse your power.
 3. Know that you are equal to that person in God's sight, and God doesn't play favorites.
- How we work and how we honor others in the workplace is a powerful testimony of our faith in Christ!

WARFARE (EPHESIANS 6:10-20)

There is a spiritual battle going on right now between darkness and light for the souls of humanity.

- You have a real enemy (Satan) who hates you and comes against you daily through deception, doubt, discouragement, and distraction.

- As a believer, you must find strength in the Lord and His power to stand against your enemy (vs. 10). We can only stand against our enemy and his schemes when we are equipped with the "armor" God has given us in Jesus (vs. 11).

- This symbolic "armor" represents certain aspects of the Christian life that enable us to stand against spiritual attack schemes.

- Two realities: First, if we are living the Christian life faithfully, we will be spiritually attacked. Second, we can stand against those attacks in victory.

The source behind all our struggles as believers is not other people ("flesh and blood").

- The real enemies we struggle against and who come against us daily are the "cosmic powers of this present darkness" and the "evil spiritual forces in the heavens" (vs. 12).

- There is a real army of unseen demonic creatures that assist Satan in his attacks against us as believers.

THREE SCHEMES OF DEMONIC ATTACKS

1. Deception through heresy, false teaching, false religions/gospels, and false beliefs about God and spiritual things (Gen. 3; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Cor. 4:4).
2. Ordinary Demonic: worldliness (1 John 2:16); discouragement/despair, PRIDE, sexual sin/immorality, substance abuse, anger, bitterness, and unforgiveness (Eph. 4:27; Heb. 12:14-15).
3. Extraordinary Demonic: manifestations, demonization, irrational/bizarre/tormenting thoughts.

We can stand against these schemes by arming ourselves with the spiritual resources that are ours in Christ (vs. 13-18).

- "The Belt of Truth": Accepting the truth of God's Word and choosing to build our lives and practice of faith around it with absolute surrender.

- "The Breastplate of Righteousness": Putting on Christ's righteousness, and then living a holy, Christ-like lifestyle with a willingness to pursue repentance; choosing not to harbor or nurture known sin.

"Feet sandaled with readiness": This is a constant willingness to be obedient to serve, share, and live out our faith because of the gospel.

- "The Shield of Faith": Doubts and temptations are what the enemy throws at us constantly. But by faith in the promises, goodness, commands, and faithfulness of God, we can overcome!

- "The Helmet of Salvation": Resting our thoughts in who we are in Christ and in the hope of eternity rather than the cares of this world.

"The Sword of the Spirit": Jesus' example to ward off Satan was through responding to attacks through Scripture. This is what we are commanded to do!

- "Praying at all times in the Spirit": We are to live in constant communion with God, our spirits connecting to His while we practice His presence and petition Him for intervention.

- Paul himself knew he was in a spiritual battle that would only be won by standing firm and through prayer.

Paul's real enemies were not the Roman guards: his enemies were dark spiritual forces that had influenced others to imprison him, and perhaps even the demonic discouragement/attacks he fought against daily ("Thorn in the Flesh," 2 Cor. 12:7-10).

- His prayer request to the church in Ephesus is that he'd simply be faithful and bold as he stood against the attacks and preached the gospel in his imprisonment (vs. 19-20).

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT (EPHESIANS 6:21-24)

Tychicus was an associate of Paul's mentioned in other letters (Acts 20:4; Colossians 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12).

- Tychicus seems to have been often used by Paul as a messenger (vs. 21).
- Paul wanted Tychicus to encourage the Ephesians (and everyone else who read the letter) about Paul's condition during his imprisonment in Rome (vs. 22).

Perhaps one of the most important tools we have as believers in our spiritual battles is the encouragement we receive from other believers.

- If we're in a spiritual battle, we need to surround ourselves with other soldiers.
- When we realize that we're not alone in our fight and we partner together with other believers to pray for and encourage each other, it gives us strength to carry on.

We all need to be regularly encouraged by other believers in real friendship, authentic truth-filled conversation, and prayer.

- We need other Christians to speak truth to us, to call us out when we're in sin or error, and to lift us up when we're discouraged.
- We need to be that for other believers!
- Paul concluded the letter as he began it, with a reference to grace and peace (vs. 23-24).

Paul's blessing of grace and peace is to those who have an "undying/incorruptible love" for the Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 24).

- Our love for the Lord grows stronger when we're encouraged and surrounded by others who also love Jesus.
- Are you committed to cultivating an "undying," consistent love for Christ? Are you committed to Christian community in the church?

"I REMIND YOU TO FAN INTO FLAME THE GIFT OF GOD, WHICH IS IN YOU..." (2 TIM. 1:6).

- A fire left untended will almost always burn out.
- There are many Christians who have received the gift of salvation and other real spiritual gifts, but the fire of their passion for God has grown weak.
- God wants us to keep the fires of our love for Him, our spiritual gifts, and our love for others burning strong.
- In the everyday drudgeries of life, it can be easy to let our spiritual fire grow dim and burn out.
- Family struggles such as parenting can challenge us spiritually: but we're to fan the flame by being reminded of our amazing calling (vs. 4).
- Challenges in the workplace can lead us to forget who we are as Christians: but we're to do our work as unto the Lord (vs. 6).
- If we are living the Christian life faithfully, we can expect spiritual attacks. Satan wants our fire to die and for us to throw in the towel (vs. 11-12).
- We're to put on the full armor of God and STAND as we fight through prayer (vs. 13-19).
- Christian community helps tend the fire in our hearts and keep it from dying (vs. 21-24).