

9. Strength in the Lord and His Mighty Power—Ephesians 5:21 through 6:24

In the previous lesson, Paul established the need for Christians to live as children of light, finding out or proving “what pleases the Lord.” The test for this proof comes from knowing that the “fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.” Using this test, Christians are to be careful how they live (Eph 5:15-18), making “the most of every opportunity.”

Paul turns in the last section of Ephesians to describe how Christians may maintain their relationships in this present world and defeat the devil who works against them. The strength of the Lord and his mighty power displays itself against the Devil and his evil tricks.

Submit to One Another

Eph 5:21

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

This passage begins with the idea of submitting to one another, showing the importance of submission to maintaining Christian relationships. The motivation for submission is our reverence for Christ. Paul called for this submission, telling us to have same mind as Christ in Phil 2:3-5:

3 Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. 4 And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. 5 The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had.

The key to good relations with God, Jesus, and fellow-Christians is to consider them better than ourselves, always looking out for their best interest. This works with the Father and the Lord, and it certainly works in the church, our marriages, our families, and our workplaces.

Christ and the Church Compared to Husbands and Wives

Eph 5:22-24

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

In today's world of equal rights for all, many balk at the wording: “Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands. . .” However, Paul has just commanded us to submit to one another (Eph 5:21). Just as the church must have an order that comes from authority. so must homes. In the church, Christ has it; in the home, husbands have it. Just as Christ uses his authority to save the church, his body, so a husband must use their authority to save their wife, their body. However, as Christians, we must submit to one another—an eternal principle governing all our lives.

Eph 5:25-27

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Literally, if demanded, and figuratively always, husbands should love their wives enough to give their lives for their wives. Wives come to husbands in all their beauty, purity, and faultlessness. The thought of abuse should never cross a husband's mind. The husband is to the wife as Christ is to the church.

Eph 5:28-30

28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church – 30 for we are members of his body.

That men are to love their wives just as they love their own bodies is the second analogy following the first: men are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Given these two principles, a Christian man would never abuse his wife anymore than he would abuse his own body.

Eph 5:31-33

31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

The profound mystery is how two—man and woman—can become one. Other passages offer insight into the mystery, which occurs with husbands and wives, uniting them as one flesh and also occurs with men and prostitutes. The Lord himself stated the principle eternal in Matt 19:4-6:

4 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

The devastation of sexual immorality is never better explained than by Paul's teaching that these sexually immoral people also become one flesh in 1 Cor 6:15-17:

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

Shall restless teenagers, homosexuals, promiscuous singles, or unfaithful married people unite their bodies with those other than a mate? "Never!" exclaims Paul. Paul concludes by stating the unique and devastating effects of sexual immorality in 1 Cor 6:18-19: "18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body."

The uniting with the Lord is the spiritual uniting between the Lord and his body, the church.

Children and Parents

Eph 6:1-3

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"-which is the first commandment with a promise – 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

As in all things, the will of the Lord comes first. Therefore, Paul conditions the obedience of children with the phrase "in the Lord." A misguiding or misguided parent is no excuse for a child to go astray. By citing one of the Ten Commandments, Paul shows that the reward for being obedient children is an eternal principle. These obedient children remain safer from harm and limit the possibilities of catastrophe coming into their lives: drunken driving injuries, contraction of AIDS and venereal diseases, bodily harm from evil companions—all of these and more come to disobedient children.

Children should never regard discipline as harming them. In actuality, their parents are protecting them from disastrous results. The role of discipline in our lives, according to, Heb 12:7-11, shapes and molds us for our own good:

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought

best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Eph. 6:4

4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Fathers, and mothers by extension, have responsibility not to provoke their children by nagging and unreasonable demands. Discipline laced with scriptural teaching should be the companion to every act of correction. The why and why not of discipline can always be understood when accompanied by God's word on the subject.

Slaves and Masters

Eph 6:5-8

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

Fortunately, many of us do not now live in a world of slavery, but many of our readers from around the world do. The responsibility of those subjected to someone else's will in the work place is the same whether the workers are bond or free, white collar or blue collar. Workers—bond or free—owe their masters or employers respect, fear, and sincerity. The key to the proper attitude of workers is that our work be in obedience, just like the obedience we would give the Lord. Paul also phrased this principle in Col 3:23-24: "23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward." We are to obey our masters and employers when they are not looking at us, for the Lord, our true master, sees us. The Lord rewards those who wholeheartedly serve; therefore, in this sense, our dedicated, everyday work for others is service to the Lord, whether we are slave or free.

Eph 6:9

9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

On the other hand, masters and employers ought to treat their slaves or employees as they would treat the Lord—no threatening or favoritism. In heaven, masters and employers, slaves and employees are one before God, the Father. In all these workplace situations, the Golden Rule applies to all parties, even if the other party is an abusive non-Christian: "31 Do to others as you would have them do to you (Luke 6:31)."

Build up Your Strength in Union with the Lord

Eph 6:10-12

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Our strength is in the Lord and his mighty power so that the least in the kingdom of heaven is strong beyond description when they take their stand against the schemes (wiles) of the devil. Paul repeats, "Put on the full armor of God," showing that Christians cannot enter the spiritual war against evil without full equipment. The struggle is a spiritual one against the spiritual forces of evil and wickedness in the heavenly places. These spiritual forces of evil in the world attack us

within our bodies and souls. John describes the point of attack in 1 John 2:16-17: "16 For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. "

Eph 6:13-18

13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

With the spiritual forces of evil on attack, only spiritual armor of God can defeat them. However, in this spiritual battle, Christians are armed and protected from the inside. Therefore, all the weapons are spiritual weapons: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God and prayer. With these weapons, the Christian spirit will struggle and win the fight against the evil one.

Final Prayers

Eph 6:19-20

19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

In his chains and isolation and fear, Paul's personal prayer was that he be fearless in making known the mystery of the gospel—a courageous ending to a courageous letter.

Eph 6:21-24

21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. 22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

23 Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

Final details and prayers for the church conclude Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 5:15-18: How does one prove what is well-pleasing to the Lord?
2. Eph 5:21: Who is to submit to whom?
3. Phil 2:3-5: How should we consider others?
4. Eph 5:22-24: Who is the savior of the church?
5. Eph 5:25-27: By what was the church cleansed?
6. Eph 5:28-30: How are husbands to love their wives?
7. Eph 5:31-33: When do husbands and wives become one flesh?
8. Matt 19:4-6: How long has the law of marriage been in effect?
9. 1 Cor 6:15-17: How does one become one with a prostitute?
10. Cor 6:18-19: What is unique about sexual sins?
11. Eph 6:1-3: What insures a long life on the earth?
12. Heb 12:7-11: What is the end of discipline?

13. Eph. 6:4: How are fathers to bring up their children?
14. Eph 6:5-8: How should employees act toward their employers?
15. Eph 6:9: How should employers act toward their employees?
16. Eph 6:10-12: Where do Christians get their strength? Against whom do we struggle? Where are the spiritual forces of evil?
17. Eph 6:13-18: What is the full armor of God? What will be the outcome of the fight with the devil?
18. Eph 6:19-20: For what did Paul pray?