

Ephesians

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] If you will take your scripture sheet, we are beginning a new chapter today, and we are also beginning a new month. This is our first session together for the month of March of 2017, and that means that spring can't be that far away.

So, keep thinking spring. Meanwhile, we are addressing your attention to chapter 6. And bear in mind, if you will, a point that we have made a number of times in the past, and it always bears repetition.

That is, you ought not to really pay any attention to the chapter divisions in the Bible. Whenever you come to them, conveniently ignore them. They are good for just one thing, and that is the location of the text.

So, when you're looking for chapter and verse, that's the way you find it. That's the way you find the address of where it's located, is chapter and verse. But, when you are studying the scripture with an intent of really understanding the message that's communicated, you need to just glide from one chapter to the next as if there were not even a break there.

Because I can assure you, there was not a break in the original text. And the original manuscript, that is, the original document that the writer who was inspired of God wrote, did not write it in chapters or in verses.

[1 : 24] Both of those, chapters and verses, were arrived at approximately 500 years ago. And before that time, they did not even exist.

So, bear in mind that what Paul is talking about in chapter 5 has to do with the filling of the Spirit, and the walking in the Spirit as opposed to walking in the flesh.

And he tells us that we are to be filled or intoxicated, if you will. In chapter 5, we are to be intoxicated spiritually with the Spirit of God, as opposed to being intoxicated with wine, which is too excess.

And, if we are, if we are following that biblical dictate of walking in the Spirit, it will impact our lives in a practical kind of way.

And one thing it will do, there is no possibility of a man walking in the Spirit that is not loving his wife in a sacrificial way.

[2 : 38] That's the burden of that chapter 5, as it concludes. And there is no way that a wife can be walking in the Spirit and not have a submissive Spirit where she recognizes the headship of her husband.

And he isn't finished. There is no way that a child can walk in the Spirit and not be obedient to parents.

Yes, the spiritual walk is just as applicable and available to a child as it is to an adult.

Assuming, of course, that the child has a personal relationship with Christ. And if he does, then the Spirit of God dwells in that child in the same way that the Spirit of God dwells in the adult who is believing.

And that will impact our life. There are two great reasons. Actually, I'm sure there are more. But there are two great reasons for regeneration in this life.

[3 : 44] For why God has provided this newness of life. And one has to do with the eternal. That impacts our destiny.

That is the long game, if you will. Well, that is the ultimate goal. And that is to be with Christ, which is far better. And there we will be always with the Lord.

That's the long term. The short term is to impact our lives today. Right here and now. And that covers the whole waterfront.

Because what have we got besides the present and the future? And so far as the past is concerned, you can forget that. Because that's all behind you.

Particularly the past that you lived before Christ came into your life. So, what Paul is saying is that when we are believers in Jesus Christ, and we are filled with the Spirit as opposed to being intoxicated with wine, it will have an impact on our lives in a practical way.

[4 : 45] And one of the initial ways that it will impact us is in our relationship and our connection with others. It will make a difference in the way a husband treats his wife.

It will make a difference in the way the wife responds to her husband. And in the case of a child, it will make a difference in the level of obedience and trust that is in that child.

And that's how Paul opens chapter 6. It says, children, obey your parents in the Lord. Goodspeed says, children as Christians, obey your parents.

For this is right. And I'd like to camp on that for just a little while. Because that really becomes the impetus for all of Christian behavior.

It actually becomes the basis, the greatest motivation for coming to faith in Jesus Christ and putting your trust in Him. Greatest reason in the world is it's the right thing to do.

[5 : 51] Taking into consideration all that God has provided, all that this fallen world involves. Putting our faith and trust in Jesus Christ is not only the smart thing to do, it's the right thing to do.

That should be our greatest motivation. And right, of course, is connected with the concept of righteousness. God is a righteous God.

And when we place our faith and trust in Him, it is nothing more than doing what you ought to do. There is a sense of oughtness there. And it is there for the child as well.

And Paul is using that as the rationale. The reason that a child should obey his parents in the Lord is because it's the right thing to do.

And, fellas, when we are committed to doing the right thing, and we do the right thing, you can be sure that it will result in right consequences.

[6 : 58] And sometimes those consequences can even be painful because we all know sometimes there is a negative price to be paid for doing the right thing. It shouldn't work that way.

But in a fallen world, it does. Yet, we are committed to the principle that even if there are negative consequences to be realized from doing the right thing, God is still committed to utilizing those negative consequences even in a positive way.

That's the whole burden of Romans 8.28. And I would remind you, that is not simply a Christian cliché. That is a doctrinal, biblical truth. That God works all things together for our good, for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

So, righteousness and doing the right thing is the supreme motivation. Children, honor your father and your mother, which is the first commandment with promise.

And that simply has to do with going all the way back to the Mosaic Law. And it is one of those that is incorporated in the Law of Moses, how that children are to be obedient to their parents.

[8 : 16] And when he says that it is the first commandment with promise, and the promise is that thou mayest live long on the earth. Well, that needs a little qualification because it doesn't always work out that way.

Sometimes the most obedient child to parents at the tender age of 12 may be taken out of this world with an incurable disease.

So, what does this mean? That it may be well with thee and that thou mayest live long on the earth? This is not to be taken as a specific kind of promise for an individual any more than are some of the Proverbs that are mentioned in the Old Testament.

A proverb is not, as they are given in the book of Proverbs, a proverb is not something that is invariably true in any and all cases. No, no.

And it ought not to be held to that. A proverb is simply that which in the vast majority of cases will be found to be the case.

[9 : 27] And that's one reason it's called a proverb. It's proverbial. But it doesn't mean that it's ironclad and that there are never any exceptions to it. It just means that as a general rule, this is the way it works out.

This is the way life works. And the same thing could be applied to this. Honor your father and your mother, which is the first commandment with promise. And the promise is that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest live long on the earth.

And all that is saying is, in this community, in the Christian context, Christian community. And by the way, all of Paul's letters, as well as the word of God in general, is not addressed to the unbeliever. It's addressed to believers. And particularly in the Pauline epistles, which has to do with the marching orders for the body of Christ, the apostle Paul sets forth under inspiration certain principles and priorities that are to be implemented by believers.

And they are for believers only. The scriptures are not expecting nor requiring Christian behavior from non-Christian people.

[10 : 43] They are not expecting to dance to the Christian tune. They can't. And Paul talks about that in Romans 8 when he says that those who are not in Christ are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

That means they cannot be responsibly obedient to the law of God, even if they wanted to. And they can't want to. Because they've got that old nature, and that's all they have.

And the only thing that can penetrate that and break into it is the gospel. And when that does, it brings about a change that enables that person to render obedience to the Lord.

And when he talks about the principle here of children obeying their parents, he's talking about in a Christian community, in a Christian context, that is only a positive for everyone in that community. In fact, you will find children that behave and children who are responsive to their parents' wishes and their parents' commands, etc., tend to produce an orderly society and is far removed from the principle that we would call juvenile delinquents.

[12 : 12] A juvenile delinquent is the opposite of a child that behaves and obeys their parents. And we all know that this concept of delinquency is the foolishness that is bound up in the heart of the child that Proverbs talks about.

And it is parents' responsibility to create an atmosphere that will be conducive to that young child coming to faith in Christ so that that young, tender life can be directed towards spiritual things and an attitude of obedience to parents.

And if that occurs, the whole Christian context and Christian community is going to be well advantaged. In fact, the law prescribed, and Paul is not referring to this here because we're not under grace but under law, but nonetheless, under the law, which could be very severe in some cases, provision was made for a delinquent son.

And it was very severe. In fact, I do not recall any place in the Old Testament where even though the provision was made, it was ever actually exercised.

And the provision was in the law of Moses that if you have a son who is rebellious and will not listen to reason and is not subject to authority and is continually disobedient, you are to bring him to the elders at the gate.

[13 : 48] That's the authority figures in a given community. And there make the accusation. And if there is not repentance and a change of life from that son, the elders are required to stone him to death.

Now, that's about as severe as it gets. But I'll tell you what. Do you think that that might be some kind of a deterrent to possible behavior on the part of other young men in the area?

I suspect that it would be a powerful motivation to straighten up and fly right, would it not? Now, that's a very severe kind of thing. But there is that kind of severity that existed under the law of Moses.

And Paul is not appealing to that here, but it is more of a grace motivation here. And he's looking at the benefits of it.

Yes? Which is the first commandment with promise. Is that referring to the second commandment? How so?

[15 : 01] Where does this first commandment come from? And it's referring back someplace. Where does it refer to the first commandment?

Well, I would say, yeah, it's the commandment of children, honor your father and your mother. That's one of the commandments. Right. And this is hearkening back to that.

And this is the way you cannot honor your parents. A child cannot give greater honor to their parents than by being submissive and obedient to their will.

Yes? It then is going back to the second commandment. So maybe it's not. I'm not sure. But... I think that's the basis for it. Yes, it changed from that. If I understood you correctly, other weeks, you said that when the tenth commandment was presented to the Jewish community, and then when

Christ died for us, that replaced the Old Testament, and he's become a sacrifice for us. And so we say through Christ, and therefore the tenth commandment really don't... are not in effect anymore.

[16:23] Did I hear you that correctly? Yeah, well, when Paul said... Maybe there's some of that states that this had conflicts with that. Yeah. Well, when he says we are not under law, but under grace, that's the principle, I think, that he is getting at here.

Now, this does not mean, and I'm glad you brought that up because this is an excellent place to inject it. This does not mean because we are not under law, under the Mosaic law, this does not mean that Christians are lawless.

Because Romans 8 addresses this when it says that... Well, I think... Yep. Yep.

We are under the law that Paul refers to here in Romans chapter 8. And when he says... Verse 2... Verse 1, Romans 8 says, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

[17:36] For what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. And as an offering for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.

In order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. So here, he is saying, we who are believers...

And I think he's principally addressing the Jews because actually Romans addresses both Jews and Gentiles. And sometimes it's quite clear that he's talking to the Jew because he even addresses the Jew as such.

Other times he's addressing Gentiles. And in either case, the Jew was well familiar with the law from which he had been delivered and brought under this law of liberty in Christ Jesus that has set us free from the law of sin and death.

And what this law does is it provides an entirely different motive for obedience. And our obedience is to be predicated upon the love that we have for Christ because of what he has done for us and in us.

[18:53] And this supersedes the law of Moses. Let me put it this way. The law of righteousness is that which changes the heart.

The law of Moses could do nothing but require external obedience. It did nothing for the person inwardly.

It could not regenerate the heart. The law could not impart life. The law could only pronounce judgment. It could not deliver from death.

But when Christ comes in, he comes in with a power and a love that transcends the external. It is internal. Let me put it this way. This is maybe the best illustration I can think of. When the law of Moses says, thou shalt not commit adultery.

[19:53] Let me ask you a question. I am assuming that as Christian men, you are faithful to your wife. Are you faithful to your wife because the law says, thou shalt not commit adultery?

Or are you faithful to your wife because you love her and you would not want to wound her? You would not want to betray her trust, her confidence, and her love.

So you are faithful to your wife because you choose to be. Not because, well, actually, I would go out and cat around like a tomcat if it weren't for that commandment that says, thou shalt not commit adultery.

That's what keeps me in line. Well, that's a pretty poor motivation. We are to have a motivation that is far greater than that. And that's the motivation that Christ brings with him when he comes in.

So we render obedience to the Lord and faithfulness to our wife out of choice, not out of I'm afraid of the consequences if I don't. That's a pretty poor motivation.

[21:10] So what the law could not do, that's what Paul is talking about here. The law could not forgive. The law could not redeem. The law could not restore.

The law could only say guilty, guilty, guilty. And Christ paid the penalty for that guilt. And with it, he's given us a whole new motivation. We are constrained by the love of Christ to do what we do and to live as we live.

And that's supposed to be the thing that is to energize and motivate young people. Now, granted, that may be a pretty tall cup to drink for a very young person.

But as they mature and grow and develop their faith in Christ, then this should be the character of their life. It definitely gives us guidance.

Absolutely. For our lives. You know, it gives us the guidance of what's right and wrong. Right. But now we don't do it because it says back then.

[22 : 13] We do it because of the reasons you gave. Exactly. Christ's love for us. We're in the life. And thank you, Joe. And in order for parents to have and to parent children of this caliber, it requires that mom and dad have their act together.

Because if there is anything that will not fly with a child that tends to build resentment in a child, it's this.

You don't do as I do. You do as I say. No child wants to hear that. That's right. What they need is mom and dad as a positive role model.

This is the way you live the Christian life. And then you live it before them. And by the way, there isn't any greater gift that you can give to your child than the deep, abiding love for your wife.

Nothing builds security and stability into the lives of children more than them able to witness between the two people who mean more to them than anybody in the world to see those two people deeply in love with each other.

[23 : 39] That builds security, stability in the life of a child. And it is extremely important. So, Paul has a word of admonition here to fathers. And you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.

Now, that's something that every dad needs to take in mind. Because it's entirely possible for a dad, we're all capable of it, of descending into the flesh.

And when we do, we can set a negative role model for that child. And let me tell you something. You would be amazed at how attentive and how children pick up on things when you think they're not paying attention and they're not watching.

Someone has said, children are God's little spies. And they are a lot more observant sometimes than what you think they are.

And they pick up on things. And one of the things that wounds the heart of a child is for a child to sense that their parents want them to be something that they aren't.

[25 : 02] And a child reasons this way. Well, mom, dad, if the way you live is good enough for you, why isn't it good enough for me?

Why do you expect a different standard from me? Well, that's a logical question for a kid to ask.

Because after all, any boy that we would categorize as normal, if he has got a reasonably biblically centered father to look up to, unless I miss my guess, that boy wants to be like his dad more than anything else.

I want to grow up to be like my dad. And there's something wrong somewhere if he doesn't. I remember hearing a really sad story from a man who was in a position to know.

This goes back to the 1980s. And this young man pled guilty to four murders.

He pled guilty in the court of law to the murder of his father, his grandmother, and two neighbor ladies who just happened to be close enough to know what happened and would be witnesses against him.

[26 : 44] And he pled guilty to those murders on a plea that the prosecutor would not seek the death penalty, but life imprisonment.

And I visited this young man a number of times in prison. And he was telling me that they get a certain amount of money each month, and they can go to the commissary and buy whatever they want.

They could buy candy. They could buy different kinds of things. And he said he was saving up his money to buy a nice card for his mother for Mother's Day.

And I said, oh, really? He said, yeah. He said, some of the cons here, they make cards. You know, they make homemade cards for their mother and send to their mother and everything.

And I said, and what do you all do for Father's Day? And he said, Marv, he said, the card shop doesn't even have any cards for Father's Day.

[27 : 55] I said, what? Why not? And he said, there's no demand for him. He said, a lot of the guys send cards to their mothers, but not their fathers.

And he said, a lot of them, a lot of them don't even know who their father is. And a lot of them really have it in for their father. And they consider their fathers to have, you know, failed them or whatever.

And many of them are filled with resentment and animosity toward their fathers. And they don't want to honor them on Father's Day. That was a real wake-up call to me.

I had no idea that. And, you know, that was a maximum security prison and still is. And it makes me wonder if that scenario is played out in prisons all across the country.

We in this nation today are suffering from a terrible, terrible curse of very poor parenting and very poor father role modeling that is taking an enormous toll on our whole culture.

[29 : 11] There are so many men who are failing as fathers. And, you know, reason and logic tells us that to a certain degree you can expect that from the non-Christian constituency.

But there's also been a huge failure ratio even among those who profess Christianity. And that's not the way it ought to be.

And that's exactly what Paul is addressing here, that fathers are to treat their children in such a way that they will not develop a sense of resentment and bitterness against the parent, but that the memories will be what they ought to be.

And we'll close with a couple of other comments. Dana? I probably shouldn't follow up after this story. That was a wonderful story. But you're talking about how kids see a lot.

My son's 29 now, but he was probably about third grade or so over in church. And, of course, you know, kids never pay attention to, you know, he's sitting there drawing, doodling, whatever.

[30 : 26] And then thinking, you know, why do I even bring him here? You know, kind of a waste of time. And the sermon that day was on, if you love somebody, say you love them in the morning.

Each morning. And there's a sob story about a person died and they hadn't said, I love you.

Working for myself, my wife went to work first.

I always saw my son off on the bus. And every day after that, his son always said it about people.

Yeah. And I talked to him about that in high school.

I said, oh, I don't remember that sermon. But he did. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Thank you. I appreciate that. We'll continue this next week, the Lord willing.

And thanks, guys. Enjoy your breakfast and the day ahead. Thanks.