

## **Ephesians - Lesson 9**

*Ephesians 6:1-24*

### **Opening Prayer**

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, without Your help our labor is useless, and without Your light our search is in vain. Invigorate our study of Your holy Word that, by due diligence and right discernment, we may establish ourselves and others in Your holy faith; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

### **Review of Ephesians 5:1-33**

#### **Verses 1-14**

- Similar to the “then-now” themes we’ve seen throughout Ephesians, we see another similar one in this section with darkness and light.
- Each aspect of the old life or darkness (i.e. - foolish, fruitless, secret) is paired with aspect of the new life or light (i.e. - wise, fruit of light, revealed).
- There is no middle ground. You are one or the other.
- You are children of light, child of God, or a son of disobedience, opposed to God and a child of the devil.

#### **Verse 15-21**

- This section is tied to the previous section which describes darkness verses light, the then and now.
- The understanding of walk ties these verse together.
- It ties together the language of wisdom and worship
  - unwise - wise (v15)
  - days are evil - redeeming the time (5:16)
  - unthinking - understand the will of the Lord (5:17)
  - don’t get drunk with wine - filled up in the Spirit (5:18)

#### **Verses 22-33**

- As much as we’ve talked about sexual immorality and its tie to idolatry, we finally see what God intends for man and woman.
  - Husband lays his life down for his wife.
  - Wife submits to her husband.
  - Yet, at the same time they are one flesh.
- We see in marriage that this is a picture of Christ and His bride the church.
  - Christ laid down His life on the cross for His bride the church.
  - He sanctifies her, cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.
  - He is able to present Her in splendor, without spot or wrinkle.

### **Chapter 6:1-9**

#### **Overview**

- With Paul having already described the vocations of husband and wife, it nicely sets up chapter six where he continues to discuss additional vocations in the home.
  - Parents and children
  - Servants and Master (Employee and Employer)
- In the Small Catechism - table of duties, these are the primary scriptural passages that Luther uses to support our understanding of these vocations.

**\*READ VERSES 1-9\***

## Verse 1

- *Children...*
  - The first subordinate figure Paul addresses are children.
  - Their fitting response to their parents' authority is not merely assumed but encouraged as it is seen as a fruit of the Spirit that is worked through the regenerate.
  - The children are addressed as believers as they would have been participants in the service.
    - Also would have been baptized.
  - After marriage, while the parent/child relationship wouldn't be primary, this order would continue throughout their lives.
    - That means even though we are out of the house, on our own, we are still subordinate to our parents - ie the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment.
- *...heed...*
  - the commentary I've been looking at translates the children's response as heed.
  - Reason: children heed their parents not only when they obey their commands but also when they trust them, learn from them and believe what they are taught "in the Lord"
  - This word is more encompassing than obey, which is seen as a Law term.
- *...in the Lord...*
  - Children don't just heed to their parents because they birthed them or have been set over them with authority.
  - Parents are earthly representatives of God.
  - To heed to parents is to heed to God.
- *...for this is righteous...*
  - Righteous is in accord with God's will, conformity with his law.
  - As a word of Law this statement guides and condemns the hears, since children who strive to heed to their parents will fall short.
  - Christ is the only one who truly "heeded" to his parents.
  - Yet, true righteousness is given through Him.

## Verse 2

- *...which is the first commandments with a promise...*
  - We think of honor your father and mother as the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment.
  - Yet, in common Christian usage the Decalogue is abridged in such a way that the fourth commandment is indeed the first to appear with a promise.
  - That is...

## Verse 3

- *...that it may be well with you and you will be long-lived on the earth...*
  - This could be seen as two fold:
    - First, those children who heed their parents will live longer. Example:
      - Don't do drugs.
      - Don't play in the street.
    - Second, seen not in an individual sense but collective, nations depend upon nothing more than well-regulated family life.
      - As society devalues the family, crime and social issues increase.
      - We can see this today.

## Verse 4

- *And fathers...*
  - Paul now turns his attention to fathers or parents.
  - This admonition could be understood to include also mothers.
  - Paul may have narrowed his address for good reasons:

- Husbands is the head of the wife. Because of this he is ultimately the head of the household.
- Also, the OT consistently holds fathers accountable for obeying or violating the commandments of God - ie the fall in the garden.
- Also, Paul addresses the father as the representative of God. Just like in the marriage analogy, it is the male figure that represents Christ to a female, churchly bride.
- Also, you can say that fathers are more inclined to harshness with their children than mothers.
- *...don't provoke your children to anger...*
  - The father is warned not to abuse his authority through excessive severe discipline, partiality, and unreasonableness.
  - He is to exercise his fatherhood as God does.
  - He is to treat his children as fellow members of the body of Christ

### Verse 5

- Paul moves to the next vocations of servant and master.
- A contemporary example of this would be employee and employer
- *Slaves...*
  - Paul addresses first the slave/servant - "Not our modern day understanding of slavery, which focus on race and cruel punishment."
  - Slaves were essentially property
  - Yet, they were usually well-treated and valued, and held position of stewardship.
- *...heed your fleshly masters...*
  - The word heed comes up again.
  - They are not only to their master's orders but also to listen to his warnings, instructions, mandates, and promises.
  - They are subordinate to their master.
  - The baptized recognize a deeper truth in their relationship: that in heeding to their earthly lords, they are giving honor to their heavenly Lord.
  - Even where masters may not be Christian, slaves are to submit and thereby be conformed to the suffering of Christ.

### Verse 9

- *Masters...*
  - They are to treat their servants the same way Christ treats them - with mercy and forgiveness.
  - Masters are led by the Gospel in how they deal with their workers - that is not to threaten, coerce, or abuse his workers.
  - Ultimately, Christ is the master over the employer, as the employer is over the servant.
  - This doesn't mean that a Christian employer has to put up with laziness or sloppiness by the servant.
  - The Christian employer administers his position within the earthly kingdom with fairness and for the welfare of the other employees and his customers.

## **Chapter 6:10-20**

### Overview

- Now we get into the Armor of God

**\*READ VERSES 10-20\***

**Verse 10**

- *...strengthened in the Lord...*
  - Paul is not calling upon us to seek a strength from within, but to find it's strength in God - where he has promised to give it.
  - "In the Lord" recalls all that Paul has said about what it means to be joined by Christ in Holy Baptism.
  - Being "in the Lord" evokes the understanding that the Lord equips his warriors.
  - This provides the perspective for the Christians' entry into spiritual battle.
  - We don't look to our own ability to fight, but to the strength of the Lord.

**Verse 11**

- *...let yourself be clothed...*
  - None of the actions may be counted as our contribution to winning the battle.
  - It is the Lord's battle and his victory on our behalf.
  - Earlier, Paul has said that the Christian has "put off...the old man," a hint of Holy Baptism as the moment when one is clothed with Christ.
  - The recurrence of this clothing vocabulary invites us to consider the armor of God as the baptismal robe from Rev. 19.
  - Ultimately, this armor has already been given to us.
- *...stand...*
  - Appears only three times in Ephesians, all in this pericope.
  - Paul isn't describing an offensive attack, where we storm the enemy position.
  - Rather he envisions the enemy's final assaults on the army of Christ.
  - Because Christ has won the victory for us, there's no need for the church to attack.
  - Just stand firm while Christ continues to defend us against the mortally wounded foe.
- *...schemes of the devil...*
  - the mortally wounded foe specifically addressed is the devil and all his schemes.

**Verse 12**

- *...For our struggle is not against flesh and blood...*
  - There is an external battle brought on by the visible enemies of the Christian church:
    - False teachers - Eph. 4:14; 6:11
    - Oppressive Government - Revelation 13
    - Pagan neighbors and the enticements of the old life - Ephesians 2:1-2
  - Paul says that flesh and blood figures are not the real enemy.
    - While they are, Paul's trying to provide fair warning where the real danger lies.
  - It is the devil and will elaborate on the spiritual forces that are allied with him.
- *...heavenly places...*
  - This is not heaven - the place of the blissful enjoyment of God's presence
  - This is the lower heavens - the realm of spiritual battle.
    - Paul doesn't work with the "three story" view of the universe - heaven earth hell, but has a more complicated cosmology.
  - Paul wishes to lift our eyes to see the true nature of the battle that is being waged on a grand, cosmic, and spiritual scale.

**Verses 14-17**

- Paul now moves onto describe the armor of the soldier.
- Paul proceeds to portray six articles of armor - all of weapons are primarily used for defense.
- Each item is a divine virtue bestowed on us through baptism, through incorporation into Christ.

- Again, the act of clothing the soldier recalls, most basically, the image of putting off the old man and putting on the new man, further drawing in the baptismal imagery.

1. "Truth" (6:14), the first item in the divine armor, in addition to its prominent place in 1:13 and 4:24, has recurred frequently in the letter as a fundamental quality of Christ conferred on Christians (4:21; 5:9; see also 4:15).
2. "Righteousness" (6:14), pictured as a breastplate, is regularly associated with clothing in biblical imagery<sup>225</sup> and thus carries deep baptismal resonance (prominently in 4:24).
3. "The Gospel of peace" (6:15), which was already connected with footwear in Is 52:7, is at the core of Paul's description of Christ's work on the cross (Eph 2:13–17), which the Christian has joined through Baptism (Rom 6:3; Col 2:12), and "peace" is a major fruit of Baptism as it draws the church into unity (Eph 4:1–6; "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," 4:3).
4. Closely associated with the Gospel of peace is "the shield of faith" (6:16). "Faith," which is always in Jesus (1:1, 15), stands at the center of the trio "one Lord, one faith, one Baptism" (4:4), and, as a good held in common, works for the unity of Christ's body (4:13; cf. 1 Cor 12:13).
5. The "salvation" (6:17) that is the Christian's helmet recalls those key Ephesian texts proclaiming that the Christian who is united with Christ in his death, resurrection, and ascension is thereby "saved" by grace (2:5–8). This "Gospel of ... salvation" is connected to the Christian through baptismal sealing (1:13; cf. Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21).
6. The "Word" and "Spirit" (6:17) that are connected to the final piece of armor, the short sword,<sup>226</sup> are the most explicitly baptismal items of all, as Paul has declared that Christ cleansed and washed his bride by "the washing of water in the Word" (5:26).

### **Chapter 6:21-24**

#### ***\*READ VERSES 21-24\****

#### **Verse 18**

- *Every prayer and petition...*
  - As we opened Ephesians with a formal prayer, Paul now ends with an encouragement to pray, specifically for him.
  - In the NT, the pair refers to public, liturgical prayers of the gathered congregation.
- *...praying at every opportune time in the Spirit...*
  - Paul is asking the Ephesians to remember him, in their regular daily prayer.
  - All access to the Father, opened up by the Son's work, is mediated and inspired by the Spirit (2:18; 3:5; 5:18).
  - Paul's own prayers in Ephesians have been consistently Trinitarian.
- *...giving full attention...*
  - Brings about this idea of be alert at every moment
  - Also brings to mind Christ's word in the Garden of Gethsemane to "watch and pray"

- The admonition has the understanding of the end times, to wait for Christ's return.

### **Verse 19**

- *...might be given...*
  - This implies God as the giver, to him the prayer is directed, and from him the word will come.
- *...in opening my mouth...*
  - The passiveness of Paul's preaching is reiterated by this expression.
  - The prayer implies a desire to speak not his own words, but the Lord's
  - As an apostle, his mouth is but an instrument of God, and only God can give success to his speaking.
- *...mystery of the gospel...*
  - Recalls Ephesians 3:3-6
  - Mystery has now been disclosed.
  - The gospel is for all people, even the gentiles.

### **Verses 23-24**

- Here we see a final greeting of Paul, which is typical of ancient letters.
- This is largely parallel to the opening words of Ephesians - specifically around the words grace and peace.
- Peace indicates the reconciliation that has taken place between us and God on account of Christ's work on the cross.
- Grace indicates receiving the underserved favor of God. Grace has been a prominent theme throughout Ephesians.
- *...incomruptibility...*
  - This modifies the entire blessing
  - Describes the resulting state of those who are in the Lord.
  - In the new life in Christ, they are thus in incomruptibility.

### **Questions?**

Thoughts/Questions

Any other items you would like to discuss?

### **Closing Prayers**

O God, source of all abiding knowledge, through Word and Spirit You both enlighten the minds and sanctify the lives of those whom You draw to Your service. Bless those here who teach and those who learn, that all the baptized may apply themselves with ready diligence to their tasks and faithfully fulfill their service according to Your will; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.