

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes May 21, 2008

Ephesians 6:1-9

- 1: Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
- 2: "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise),
- 3: "that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth."
- 4: Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger,
but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- 5: Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters,
with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as to Christ;
- 6: not in the way of eye-service, as men-pleasers,
but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,
- 7: rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to men,
- 8: knowing that whatever good any one does,
he will receive the same again from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.
- 9: Masters, do the same to them, and forbear threatening,
knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven,
and that there is no partiality with him.

Introduction: Today we continue studying a portion of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians dealing with issues of the family, specifically the raising of children and work. As with the verses on the relationship between husbands and wives, many Christians wish St. Paul had not addressed these issues. Our culture is very divided over what a parent can and should do in raising their children; and in many cases, especially in some public places, if parents carry out the clear instructions of Scripture, they may find themselves in court fighting to retain custody of their own children. And to some, St. Paul's instructions on the relationship between slaves and masters sounds down right un-Christian. How do we apply these passages in today's world? This is part of what we'll be discussing today on **Deep in Scripture**.

House cleaning items...

- Today's Special: "*Discipline the Lasts a Lifetime*" by Dr. Ray Guarendi
- We want your input!!! Phone: On air phone number: **1-800-664-5110** Off air: **1-740-450-1175**
Email: marcus@deepinscripture.com
Forum: <http://www.chnetwork.org/forums/forum51>

REVIEW: Today we're continuing our discussion of Ephesians:

- **In the first three chapters**, St. Paul describes the changes that take place in our lives once we have heard, believed, and then were sealed with the Holy Spirit in baptism, while **in the second half of Ephesians**, St. Paul exhorts the newly baptized Gentile believers how they must live out this new life, which requires surrender and faithful obedience.
 - In other words, St. Paul, in what we believe was a homily to be read at the liturgy when newly baptized Gentile believers were received into the Church, first gives them truth / facts about their new life in Christ, and then tells them how their lives ought to be different.
- **The overall context of chapters 4-6 addresses life within the Church, the Body of Christ.**
 - 4:1-10, Unity within the Church;
 - 4:11-16, Diversity of gifts and structure for ministry;
 - 4:17-5:21, Moral standards for life within the Church;
 - 5:22-33, Christian Marriage within the Church;

- This week, we'll begin chapter 6, verses 1-9, in which St. Paul addresses the relationships, first, between parents and children, and then, second, between slaves and masters.

Underlying St. Paul's instructions are FIVE VERY IMPORTANT ASSUMPTIONS / NEEDS:

- There are many needs in the family and in the workplace, but as St. Paul considered the struggles of this growing church made up of converts from Judaism and paganism, at least four issues / needs seemed particularly important for St. Paul to emphasize.
- Five of these underlying assumptions are **OUR NEED...**
 1. **TO LIVE BY CORRECT PRIORITIES;**
 2. **TO RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT HIERARCHICAL ORDER.**
 3. **TO RECOGNIZE AND RESIST OUR SINFULNESS;**
 4. **TO LEARN LIVE IN SUBMISSION AND OBEDIANCE;**
 5. **TO LEAD WITH SERVANT LOVE.**

Note: A mistake too often made in Bible study is to treat the Holy Scriptures as if they were intended to be a textbook or a manual for living; a very common mistake made by sola Scriptura Christians.

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 seems to encourage this:

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

 - Notice that Timothy did not learn his faith from Scripture *alone* but through the oral teaching of his grandmother and others;
 - St. Paul always assumes the authority of the tradition as it was being passed down from Jesus through the Apostolic teaching;
- The history of how the canon of Scriptures came together preclude the idea that they were intended to rest alone as a manual for living, especially as a manual for how to bring up, train, and discipline children.
 - Each NT document has a history, a context, a purpose; and eventually they were assembled because they were being read in liturgy;
 - What Scripture teaches must be guided by Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church guided by the Holy Spirit, not merely interpreted individually and applied blindly to our individual situations under the authority that "the bible says so." Too often this leads to misuse of the Bible to promote our own opinions.
- For this reason, I'm very hesitant to use Ephesians 6:1-4 as a template for how to raise and discipline our children. There is much in Scripture on this issue, but what is more important is to recognize the underlying assumptions upon which St. Paul builds his instructions.

1. OUR NEED TO LIVE BY CORRECT PRIORITIES:

- Our modern lives are inundated with conflicting priority systems.
- St. Paul emphasizes FOUR PRIORITIES in the order of his presentation:
 1. CHRIST (This presumes membership in His Church) [5:21]
 2. MARRIAGE (Vocation) [5:22-33]
 3. FAMILY / CHILDREN [6:1-4]
 4. WORK [6:5-9]
 - Note: St. Paul's tacet "acceptance " of slavery implies that this was, for many, the normal working environment, except for those who were wealthy or royalty;
 - The fight for the abolition of slavery would come later & be a long battle;
 - To apply what St. Paul has to say to our modern lives, we need to avoid reading into the text the modern issues of slavery and racism. He was addressing the fact that slaves & masters were sitting next to each other in worship, as today management and staff sit together in worship.

2. OUR NEED TO RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT HIERARCHICAL ORDER

- The problem he was addressing was the misunderstanding and misapplication of Christian freedom and equality (note the orders of the people he is addressing).
- The model for structure is the Church (4:11-12)
- The order of marriage is built on this mystery (5:22-33)
- There is a similar hierarchical order within the family: parents have responsibility over children (6:1)
- There is a similar hierarchical order within the workplace (6:5)

3. OUR NEED TO RECOGNIZE AND RESIST OUR SINFULNESS:

- St. Paul addresses two extremes of how he saw sinfulness being expressed within the Church, within marriages, within the family, and within the workplace:
 1. REBELLION against AUTHORITY; (note Genesis 3:16b)
 2. ABUSE of AUTHORITY;
- St. Paul gave TWO SOLUTIONS...
 1. SUBMISSION as to CHRIST;
 2. SERVANT LEADERSHIP in modeling CHRIST.

4. OUR NEED TO LIVE IN SUBMISSION AND OBEDIENCE AS TO CHRIST: (6:1-3, 5-8)

- It's very difficult to live in submission and obedience to God and his Church and to submit to authorities within the workplace unless we first learned to live in submission and obedience to our parents.
- Throughout the entire history of our Judeo-Christian faith, the advice for rearing children has been the same:
 - *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." (Proverbs 1:7)*
 - *"My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding...then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." (Proverbs 2:1-5)*
 - *"Let us reverence the Lord Jesus Christ whose blood was given for us. Let us respect those who rule over us. Let us honor our elders. **Let us rear the young in the fear of God ... Let our children have a Christian training. Let them learn the value God sets on humility, what power pure love has with him, how good and excellent it is to fear him, and how this means salvation to everybody who lives in his fear with holiness and a pure conscience.**" (1 Clement 21:6-9)*
- Respectful submission and obedience is a necessary ingredient for successful families as well as work environments:
 - Children to parents: (6:1-3)
 - Workers to bosses: (6:5-8)

5. OUR NEED TO LEAD WITH SERVANT LOVE: (6:4, 9)

- Obedience is best learned & practiced in an atmosphere of Christ-centered love:
 - In the home: fathers to sons: (6:4)
 - In the workplace: masters to slaves (bosses to workers): (6:9)