

## Ephesians Chapter 6

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One of the best descriptions of the book of Ephesians is, "It starts in the heights of heaven and ends on its knees!" As I state a lot, there's no chapter breaks in the original letter. I need to state that first, as the first half Ephesians describes all the wonderful things God does for the Christian church. I would argue He created the church for His glory. The last 3 chapters (this is the last one) tells us what He expects of us as members of the church. That leads to a fancy Christian term called sanctification: It just refers to a believer's life from the time they accept Jesus as God until the time they go to heaven. None of know how long we get to live, but God wants us to use that time to be grateful for our salvation and also be a witness for Him! It doesn't mean we must wear a "repent or die" sandwich board, or travel abroad as a witness for Him! However, I realize some are called to travel that way. Most of us are just called to be a witness for Jesus using the gifts God gave us and of course just helping when possible! Anyway, the second half of Ephesians book focuses on what the "sanctified" (us) are called to do as believers!

With that said the chapter break between Chapters 5 and 6 is a "strange one". (I wouldn't have pick it!) Paul was busy focusing on Christians relationships with other people and how we should interact in the situations he described. In the last part of Chapter 5, Paul dealt with the issue of marriage. Paul wasn't married when he wrote this, although some scholars argue he was married, and after his conversion his wife left him. Anyway, Paul ministered to a lot of married couples. Besides this is the Bible so I accept his advice! Obviously, he doesn't cover all there is to know about marriage. Paul is focusing on is how to be a good witness for Jesus in the context of marriage. The key line in Chapter 5 is Paul states Jesus is married to the church! (We are not all female in heaven!) The idea is we should love our spouses as much as Jesus loves the church which is the ideal relationship. Of course, all of us make mistakes. The underlying point is when we trust God to guide our lives we should act as He desires in our marriages.

That leads us to Chapter 6. Since Paul is focused on family issues, he then switches to how children are to treat their parents and vice versa. Paul quotes one of the 10 Commandments which is to honor one's parents. Paul points out this is the only commandment with a promise, "that they may live long". Yes I am well aware some parents and children die young so it is a general principal. I also realize most kids go astray, but eventually most turn back to God when they get older. A good education on how they're supposed to live usually pays off over time as most of us older parents realize! Verse 4 says fathers are not to provoke their children to rath. In other places in the bible, the Greek word for fathers is used for both parents, here it's strictly men (fathers). It doesn't mean we're not to discipline our children. What Paul is saying is he wants our children to see us care about God and it eventually "sinks in". To raise a child teaching them to honor and fear His judgment will usually benefit them over the long term. Most of us have heard the statistics on boys who grow up without fathers and the negative affect that causes. Grateful for men who step in roles to raise boys properly!

Since Paul "covered" the family, the next topic is the work environment. In Paul's day, roughly a third of the population of Ephesus were slaves. They were legal property of the owners who could treat them however they wanted. Praise God slavery for the most part no longer exists and I'm grateful for efforts to end it completely. The principals Paul teaches in Verses 5-9 are excellent tools for the workplace as we can easily apply these principals to bosses and employees. I realize many people work in a situation where the boss is a rotten person. Still we're called to be a good witness for Jesus in that hard situation. In effect, we must remember Jesus is our boss, it's necessary to please Him and not just the person who is over us. I realize situations can vary and if we feel God's leading us elsewhere, we can pray our way through such situations.

The best analogy I remember on this is imagine we have a desk job. At one moment our boss stands in a place watching everything we do. The next moment they leave. Will we work harder when he or she is there? Of course, I like to think in terms of Jesus being our boss and is always watching. At the least we agreed to work however many hours a day we agreed to work, and therefore must do a good just as that is what we agreed to do. Paul's point is even if we're in a tough work situation, we're to do it well, as we owe that to God let alone our employer! Yes, that's common sense, but it still helps to remind us of that reality in work.

A similar situation applies to Christian "bosses": Obviously, it doesn't mean we can let an employee be a bad worker just because he or she is a Christian. Nor is it fair for them to let them stop working as to well, do something for Jesus "on the clock". Paul's point is to treat people fairly because as a boss, one is still "on the clock for Jesus" so to speak. Paul also makes the point that to be free is obviously better than being a slave. Paul didn't fight the existence of slavery not that he didn't think it was wrong, but it is important to remember he "had bigger fish to fry" as he was focused on helping Christians live as He called us to live which again is that fancy "sanctification" word!

The next logical question is if we're to live as God calls us to live in all these relationships, how are we to do that? After all, none of us are perfect and the world belongs to Satan. I was once taught a lesson I never forgot. If someone said they wanted to sell you, say Manhattan Island, you wouldn't believe the offer because you didn't believe they really owned it! When Satan tempted Jesus by saying he'd give to Jesus all the kingdoms of this world, it wouldn't be a real temptation unless Satan really owned them! I am just helping us to remember we live in a world in effect ruled by Satan and that won't end 'till Jesus returns to "claim proper ownership"!

I can just hear many of you saying, "OK John I guess I believe that, so what?" That leads us to the last part of Chapter 6. Paul's telling us how we can deal with demonic battles and still be a good Christian. Keep in mind Paul was probably chained to Roman guards, so he used the visual of the Roman soldiers in how they dressed as spiritual symbols of what he was trying to communicate. My point is Paul is not being literal when he says to grab a shield and a sword, it's obviously metaphors for what he's trying to communicate to us. This section doesn't mean we go sinless if we do what Pau says, just that we'll win battles of temptation if we keep in mind a few things that I'll discuss below:

Remember that Romans wore tunics (robes). To run and not trip, they must tie up their tunic under their belts to run better. Paul compares the Gospel message to being able to run well and not stumble. If we believe Jesus is God and we can't lose our salvation, that's walking in the truth. I realize when we sin it just means we're a bad witness at that moment, but it does not affect our salvation. Then Paul compares the breastplate the Roman soldiers wear to being in right standing with God. In other words, we protect the vital organs by trusting in God's truth. Roman shoes were tough leather with nails like cleats that an athlete wears in soft ground situations. Romans did well in battle because they held their ground based on the type of shoes they had. The analogy is we have peace about our salvation by standing in Jesus.

Paul then compares the Roman shield to being able to withstand the "darts" Satan throws at us. Roman shields had an oil finish to resist flaming arrows. So when demons accuse us of not being good enough for God, we can not be afraid of such accusations, because we know NO ONE is good enough for God. All of us are saved by grace alone! Along the similar line Paul compares the Roman helmet to knowing we are saved. In other words, good "head knowledge". Finally, Paul compares the Roman sword to the Word of God. Remember there was no organized bible in those days. So it's a matter of using our time regularly to learn God's word as to understand our relationship with Him. Finally he reminds us to pray

regularly and often. To me pray is all about lining up my will with God's. When I pray for something that doesn't happen, I assume it's not His will! I love praying for things I'm grateful for! Happy people are grateful people and I want my life being grateful no matter what. That is why I said this letter starts in the "heavens" and ends on our knees.

The final few lines mentions the guy who actually delivered the letter to verify it's from Paul! He ends it with a benediction in effect to remind us of the peace we have in Jesus along with the grace he gives to all believers that we can't lose no matter what. With that positive thought stated, I'll end here! If you want to read my sources for this book, click on the links for the longer versions.