

"UNLOCKING OUR SPIRITUAL BANK ACCOUNT"
PART 14: EPHESIANS 6:1-9

So, I want to start out by just saying that I have personally benefited from us taking a fresh look at Ephesians. We actually studied this about 8 years ago in this class. I needed to study it again. It is such an important book because it contains really important theology, but it also says a lot about, practically, how we Christians are to live. It is important for us to take a fresh look at it every so often. There are other great books, other New Testament books, but Ephesians is special to me.

This morning we are going to focus our attention on parent-child relationships and master-slave relationships. To put it in modern terms, employer-employee relationships. Now, I realize my audience in this class is mostly older people (I put myself in that category) who have already raised their children and most of us are retired... most of us. Some of us are still working a little. BUT we are ALL in a position to help those who are younger than we are – people that are in our families or friends of ours who may be struggling in areas involving raising children and also work relationships. So, you can give them advice based on what you learn here today out of the Bible.

There are several things that we need to bear in mind as we get into Ephesians and continue our study here in Chapter 6. First that you need to remember, Paul is addressing believers -- at Ephesus originally, but he is also addressing ALL believers which includes us here today.

Second, we do not fight our spiritual battles alone. God has given us some resources. One of those resources is each other. We come alongside our brothers and sisters as we work through our spiritual issues. That is why we do the prayer requests [in this class]. We pray for each other and then we give advice [where] needed.

Third, the prerequisite for everything that Paul has been teaching us in this latter part of Ephesians is stated in Ephesians 5:18: "Be filled with the

Spirit." I have mentioned this over and over again because it is really important. If we are going to be successful, our lives MUST be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

The fourth thing to keep in mind is that [in] all human relationships the key is mutual submission. I get that from Ephesians 5:21 where he says, "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." And then in Philippians, Paul defines what submission is when he says, "counting others more significant than ourselves" (Philippians 2:3). Jesus is our example of this. He submitted to His Father's will and went to the cross FOR US. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8 KJV).

OK, so let's begin this morning in Ephesians Chapter 6, v 1 looking at parent-child relationships. Paul addresses the children first. Three verses to the children and one verse to the parents. By the way, I am very familiar with these three verses because my mom used to quote these to me all the time growing up. I don't know why, but she would quote them to me. Here we go. Chapter 6, v 1...

READ Ephesians 6:1

The [term] "children" here is not age specific. Paul is obviously addressing children who are old enough to know the difference between right and wrong. What seems to be implied in this verse is that the children are still living under parental authority. Such children are to submit to their parents and they do this by obeying them. They do what they are told to do. And they don't do what they are told not to do. And whenever a child asks, "why?" the Christian parent (just like my mother) can point to this verse and say, "because the Bible says, 'for this is right.'"

So then, the action that God requires of children is simply to obey their parents. Now, with kids you have to keep it simple. In our world the parental authority that God has placed over them may not be their biological father or mother. Unfortunately, this is often the case. It may be a stepmother or a stepfather or a grandparent or a foster parent or even a

teacher. No matter who the authority figure is, the biblical principle is the same. Obey them. Paul continues in v 2...

READ Ephesians 6:2-3

"Honor your father and mother..." he is quoting from the Ten Commandments, right? Exodus Chapter 20. I personally believe – this is just my personal conviction – that this verse applies to all children for life. While our parents are still alive, we should honor them. I lost my parents a few years ago. While they were alive, I did try to do what this verse says, even as we all got older and we moved apart and lived separate lives. Now, how do we honor our parents? We respect them, even though they are not perfect and can be very difficult at times. We are to speak respectfully and graciously to them. As our parent get older, we are to treat them with dignity. We are to make sure that they are cared for. Children, no matter how old, should never do anything to embarrass their parents in front of others. We are to love them. We are to care for them. We are to spend time with them in person (if possible) or on the phone. So, we are to live our lives in a way that makes them proud of us.

Paul says that this particular commandment carries with it a promise. And [this promise is] tied to the covenant promises that you can find in Deuteronomy. For us today these blessings are twofold. First, we will have a good quality of life. God promises to bless us because we honor our parents. And second, a quantity of life. There are a number of things that might contribute to a person's life being shortened that are beyond our control. But, to the extent that [we do have control], there are things that we CAN do to lengthen our life. When we honor our parents, God is pleased with us and I believe that He rewards us for this, in heaven for sure, but even in this life.

[One class member brought up a real-world situation where a child has irresponsible parents (who are alcoholics or on drugs) or a situation where the biological parents are not present in the home. I believe that even in this sad circumstance the child is to submit to and honor whoever the

authority figure is that God has placed over them. I shared the story of how my own father when he was a child faced this very situation in his own life.]

Are you ready to talk about parents? One verse... v 4.

READ Ephesians 6:4

The word "Fathers" here can be interpreted as "Parents." "Do not provoke your children to anger." In other words, be fair. Don't exasperate them. Don't frustrate them. Try not to show favoritism toward your other children. I know that is hard sometimes. But that can create a problem with self-esteem and things like that. A parent's responsibility is to help their children grow – to develop their mental capabilities, to help them become physically stronger, to teach them how to take care of their bodies, to develop their social skills and to develop them spiritually. Parents have a huge responsibility. Not just getting them ready [for school, church, etc.] but all this other training that they have to do. Paul says to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." A large portion of the book of Proverbs talks about that very thing, about developing a child's spiritual growth; to learn discipline, to understand God and who He is.

Children will not develop properly on their own. In our society I have noticed there is an increasing school of thought to not force things on our kids but "let them decide for themselves." Bad idea! It is not biblical. They need parental guidance and discipline. When left to themselves, children will not read. They won't study. They won't practice. Instead, they are going to spend their time watching TV or playing video games or scrolling for endless hours on YouTube. We have grandkids. I have seen this. They might even start chatting with who knows who on line. You really need to watch your kids. They won't eat what's healthy for them. Instead, they'll consume all kinds of junk food. They won't take a bath. They won't brush their teeth. They won't give of themselves to others and make their world a better place. You have to teach that to them, right? You have to teach them to do all that stuff. It does not come naturally. If you don't, they are

going to become self-centered and hang around with the wrong kind of people.

[It was brought up that in our class most of us have children that are grown and gone. Now our time is spent with our grandchildren and, in some cases, great-grandchildren. While certainly we like to spoil them, in some cases they may need us to influence them with the sort of godly instruction they may not be getting at home.]

One of the things about kids, if you ask them what they want to do, they won't say, "I want to go to church," with rare exceptions. If you give them a choice they will choose to stay home. NO! You have to train them. You have to take them to church and get them that influence of the Bible. The parent's responsibility is to guide these little people, these little sinners, these little reprobates (that is what they are), to help them develop into responsible and godly teenagers and eventually mature adults. Not an easy job, right? Not an easy job at all.

Now, some of us grandparents have at times had to take on this parental role for a while because, frankly, their parents were off doing their own thing for -- however long. Since their parents would not do it, we had to take the grandkids in for a while. *[Note: While doing this was not easy, because of our love for our grandchildren, it was something we did eagerly and with great joy.]*

To summarize what Paul is saying here: Children who live under parental authority (which includes those who are older but living under their parent's roof) are to submit to that authority by obeying what their parents say. Children of every age are to submit to their parents by honoring them, whether you are under their parental authority or not. You honor them for life by treating them with respect. As our parents get older, we are to do what we can to take care of them. Parents, likewise, are to submit to their children. What? How? By doing for them whatever is in the child's [or grandchild's] best interests – even if it means having to sacrifice

some of our own time, money and even to change plans. We do this because -- we love them. And we love the Lord. That's what love does.

Let's look now at work relationships. These verses may be helpful for you if you are still working part time, or for those of us who know people who are in the work force. There are several people I have talked to [recently] who are really struggling with their jobs. I gave them some advice based on what I know the Bible [teaches] and from my own experience.

Four verses to the employees and one verse to bosses. V 5...

READ Ephesians 6:5-8

As Christians, WHO do we really work for? The Lord, right? He is our Master. He is our real Boss. When I was still working, I had to constantly remind myself of this – that I was not working merely for Bruce or Steve or Don or Evelyn or Craig or Tammy, whoever my boss was at the time. I had some good bosses and I had some not-so-good bosses. I was working for the Lord. That's where the attitude of "fear and trembling" that we see in v 5 comes into play. It is not that we fear our boss, but we have a fear, a reverence for our real Boss, for God. We are to show the same respect to our earthly bosses as we would to the Lord Jesus Himself. After all, we are really working for Him, right? If you have a BAD boss, pray for them. If you have a GOOD boss, pray for them also. They need your prayers!

Now, let's [talk] about this whole bondservant, slave language that Paul uses here in Ephesians. Paul is NOT at all advocating slavery. There are critics out there who have suggested that... "Look at what the Bible says!" Anything you read that was written back in time, you always have to look at in historical perspective. It is not fair to judge people's writings 2000 years ago or 500 years ago based on today. You have to read it in [the context of the times] to understand it. The same thing here. Slavery was the common practice in the Roman society of Paul's day. For us living here in 21st Century America, slavery was abolished officially in 1865 with the passing of the 13th amendment. That was a long time ago.

As I studied this whole section [of Ephesians] going back to Chapter 5 and husband-wife relationships, I was struck with this profound truth... There is no biblical distinction made between one's secular life and one's spiritual life. They are directly linked together. Where does our reward for a job well done come from? Well, we might at times get a raise (once in a blue moon) or a promotion or praise from our boss. We might even win an award – Employee of the Year. But, we might NOT. We might get passed over a promotion that someone else gets. That's not fair! Our reward ultimately comes from the Lord Himself. He is our Boss. That is what v 8 says... "from the Lord." So here is what you need to understand from this passage – work hard, be diligent, don't be lazy, be content, don't complain, follow the rules, don't argue, don't cheat the company, go the extra mile, do the best job you possibly can and why? Because you work for the Lord. And some day you want to hear those words from Jesus: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Am I right?

Now, one more verse and we will wrap this up...

READ Ephesians 6:9

The picture I [showed on the PowerPoint in class] exemplifies just how crazy the workplace can get at times. A lot of pressure is put on employees by customers and by management – pressure to perform or produce at a high level. The stress can be overwhelming at times. This one verse, is God's word to those who have been entrusted with the power and authority to supervise others.

Paul says, "Do the same to them [to your employees, whoever is under you]." As a Christian boss, you submit to your employees, "as to the Lord." Remember what Paul said back in Ephesians 3:21, "submitting one to another." All human relationships require a mutual submission. So then, how do bosses submit to their employees? By meeting their employees' needs the best way they can. Sometimes management will tie your hands. There is only so much you can do, but you do the best you can. First of all, as a Christian boss, you love them. You treat them with respect and

kindness. You give them the extra training they need. Believe me, some need a lot of extra training. You encourage them and you work with them so that they can become better at their job. And then, here is a big one – as a boss, you hold them accountable for their performance.

Now, one thing that Paul admonishes bosses NOT to do is “Stop your threatening.” People in the workplace can be so frustrating! That is why Christian bosses have to prepare themselves daily in prayer before they head to work, or maybe on their way to work. “Oh God, help me!” They need to ask God for wisdom in dealing with all the demands of the job. They need wisdom and patience in dealing with sometimes very difficult people. They need wisdom in handling challenging situations. This is why I said earlier, we need to pray for our bosses.

I am going to let you in on a little secret. Actually, you already know this. The reason why life is so hard is that we are in a spiritual battle. You knew that already, right? Peter says, “Be sober-minded; be watchful...” What is sober-minded? It means “[to be] self-disciplined, to think rationally and not foolishly.” “Be watchful...” Be alert. “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). That old devil, Satan himself, and his army of demons are out and about with the goal of destroying us (believers). He wants to hurt our witness. He wants us to question the goodness of God. He wants us to be miserable and not joyful. That is what the devil is trying to do.

So, in closing, be sober-minded and watchful. It is vital that we start every day in prayer asking God to give us wisdom and strength to face the day. Our adversary is a very strong adversary. But our God is much stronger, right?

Next week we are going to wrap up our study of Ephesians by looking at how we can affectively counter our adversary the devil. God has given us the tools, the weapons, we need to do that. We are going to look at that next time.

[At the end of this lesson I include 9 minutes of what was a lengthy and candid discussion among our class members, some of whom are retired teachers and principals. The comments are worth listening to.]