

INTO THE MYSTERY

A STUDY IN EPHESIANS

Eph 5:21-6:9
Nic Gilmour

Battle Within: the Cost of Rebellion

Nov 21-22, AD2020
NCCC

❖ INTRO: Godly submission and human rebellion

- Trinitarian submission (Phil 2:5-11) and self-giving love. Submission minus our human baggage – culture, pride, woundedness, fear. Eph 5:1 lit. “mimic” God (Gk: *mimētai*).
- Mutuality of submission is linked to the ongoing filling by the Spirit (5:18). Segue from spiritual *truth* to *application* (5:3-20 wrt holiness, 5:21-6:9 thru Godly submission.)
 - “God has so bound us to each other, that no man ought to avoid subjection. And where love reigns, there is mutual servitude” (*Galatians, Ephesians, Phillipians, Colossians* by John Calvin)
 - ‘Power-over’ v ‘power-under’ (*The Myth of a Christian Religion: Losing Your Religion for the Beauty of a Revolution* by Greg Boyd)
- 5:21 lit. ‘be submitting’ – note tense, implied as an ongoing act. Not “Lording it over”, but serving one another (Mk 10:42-45).

❖ CHILDREN/PARENTS – towards inter-dependence

- 6:1 “obey your parents in the Lord...”
 - Listen and obey. Training for a life of purposefulness and usefulness.
 - Q: what about abuse?
- 6:2 “Honor your father and mother...” so much more than mere obedience. Parents, inspire and model a sweet Spirit.
- 6:4 “do not exasperate....bring them up in training and instruction of the Lord” – lead them from *dependence* to (not *independence*, but) *inter-dependence*.
 - Parents’ chief role in life (and the pressures to neglect it).
 - The roles of *formative* and *corrective* discipline (Heb 12:11-12).
 - Can’t subcontract out our kiddos development.

❖ EMPLOYEES/EMPLOYERS – honorable service

- 6:5 “slaves obey your earthly masters...” Not condoning slavery, but temporary advice for Jesus-followers in a world gripped by systematic and systemic sin.
 - Bondservants/ masters; and historical context – 1/3 Ephesus; in antiquity slavery considerably diminished as Christianity thrived (cf by the time the US was birthed; *The Color of Compromise* by Jemar Tisby).
 - Historical: Bible as key text for Christian abolitionists (EG William Wilberforce, Charles Spurgeon, Harriet Stowe, Theodore S Wright, John Wesley, Sojourner Truth, Charles Finney *et al*).
 - Biographical: Ephesians (and Colossians, Philemon) carried by Tychicus and Onesimus from Rome to Asia minor.
- Analogy for employer/employee relations. 6:5 “respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart.” (Honor is given, trust is earned).
- 6:6 “not only to win their favor when their eye is on you” (lit. ‘people-pleasing’ through ‘eye-service’) – our perspective is eternally higher!
- 6:6,7 “as if you were serving the Lord.” Yikes! Stewardship time/effort (Col 3:23, Rom 12:3, 1 Pet 4:10).
- 6:8 “reward” Whaaa?! I just want ‘cheap grace’! (Gal 6:7; *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer).
- 6:9 “do not threaten...[because you’ll eventually give account to] their Master *and*

yours” – the classless Kingdom (Gal 3:28; *The Rise of Christianity* by Rodney Stark). Beware costly ‘success’ (Matt 19:23-26, Jas 5:1-5).

❖ **WIVES/HUSBANDS – selfless mutual-giving**

- 5:22-24 “Wives [submit] yourselves to your own husbands”. Role of headship/ leadership. (Col 1:15-23; Jn 13:1-17; *Lead like Jesus* by Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges, Phyllis Hendry).
- 5:25-29, 33 “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (note the Vv correcting men are threefold).
 - Mutual submission - wives may be called at times to give IN, but husbands are always called to give UP
 - Husbands: “Is today a good day to die?”
 - 5:33 “love...and...respect” (*Love & Respect: The Love She Most Desires, the Respect He Desperately Needs* by Emerson Eggerichs).

❖ **CHURCH/JESUS – radical followership**

- Ultimate model, yet undeniably a “profound mystery”! (5:32).
 - Positional v Progressive v Perfect Sanctification. 1:4; 4:22-24;3:20-21.
- 5:26,27 “to make her holy...radiant...without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish”. The ironic beauty of *perfected yet imperfect* (2 Cor 3:17-19).
- Self-mutilating bride. Breaking covenant community, despising or neglecting the church, gossiping or tearing down. Don’t do the devil’s work for him.
- Our context: existential loneliness, fragmentation, and hyper-individualism – with a side-order of pride. (cf Rom 13, 1 Pet 5, Acts 2:42-47, Heb 13:7, 17; *Under Cover: Why Your Response to Leadership Determines Your Future* by John Bevere). Ouch.
- ‘Truth’ in post modern contexts.

❖ **REFLECTIONS for the brave of heart**

- Do you ‘revere’ Christ (*viz.* hold Him in highest regard, truly submit your life to His will, seek His approval above *all* else)? If ‘nup’, go for a walk and reflect. If ‘yep’, read on.
- Why is submission so hard for us? How have you allowed culture, pride and/or woundedness to determine your perspective on this?
- Ask those who know you what they think has appeared harder for you – submission in parenting, work contexts, marriage, church-life, or other ways to Christ? (Prov 27:6).
- How have you ‘done the devil’s work for him’ lately? (ie broken or spoken against Jesus community, even in your heart). What measures will you take to heal this?
- Pray with a friend for an ongoing filling of the Spirit to help you thru this process, and know that healing will come!