

Ephesians 5:22-33 and 6:1-9

The first 21 verses of Ephesians Chapter 5 contain some very startling contrasts. For instance, the sins of fornication, uncleanness, and foolish talking are contrasted with the virtues of righteousness and truth.

What is the meaning of this diversity?

Well, it simply means there are two very different *families* inhabiting this world.

There's the unsaved, whom Paul calls "**the children of wrath**," and there's the redeemed, whom Paul identifies as God's "**dear children**."

That's the bad news.

The good news is, God has made a way for "**the children of wrath**" to escape their

former family connection and become His
"dear children."

Yes, **"--- God so loved the world, that he
gave his only begotten Son, that
whosoever believeth in him should not
perish, but have everlasting life."**

John 3:16

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Well, the believers in Ephesus had done just
that.

They had accepted the Lord Jesus as their
Saviour, and had become God's **"dear
children."**

And certainly this new relationship had
produced some unthinkable blessings,
but it had also incurred some serious
responsibilities.

They were expected to be **"followers** (or
imitators) **of God, as dear children."**

And their old sins, such as fornication,
uncleanness, and covetousness" were not
to be even named among them **"as
becometh saints."**

Yes there were obligations connected with
this new family, and, as should be the
case in any family, there would be
family structure.

And that's why Ephesians 5: 21 speaks of
**"Submitting yourselves one to another
in the fear of God."**

Actually, in my last lesson, I quoted this
verse in reference to a Christian's
human family, but it also applies to a
believer's spiritual family.

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Now, this idea of submission is not very
popular in the society we live in.
People want to do things their way.

Today, it's all about my rights and my
privileges.

But that's not the way it works in the body
of Christ.

No, we're admonished to submit ourselves

"one to another in the fear of God."

And not only have we been taught this
precept, but our Lord Jesus
demonstrated this servant attitude in
His own life.

In fact, Hebrews 5:8 says: **"Though he were a
Son, yet learned he obedience by the
things which he suffered."**

So then, submission to authority is a fact
of life in a Christian's experience.

And even though that authority is usually
exercised by a human agent, a Christian
must recognize and honour the divine
authority that backs it up.

That's why, even though Ephesians 5: 21 speaks of "**Submitting yourselves one to another,**" it also reminds us that we are to do so "**in the fear of God.**"

And even though this particular verse refers to our brothers and sisters in the Lord, this principle also extends to the governing authority of the society we live in.

We see that teaching in Romans Chapter 13 where we are told "**the powers that be are ordained of God.**"

However, since we are presently meditating on Ephesians 5: 21, which deals with our interaction between those inside the body of Christ, let's take a moment to think about church government.

I Peter 5 makes it clear that God has set up elders to guide and direct the local church.

You might say they are God's *shepherds*.

In fact, in V 2 of this same chapter, their shepherding responsibility is clearly spelled out --- **"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof."**

However, in the very next verse, that is V 3, they are cautioned not to think of themselves as **"lords over God's heritage."**

No, under the Chief Shepherd, they are simply the *under shepherds* whose responsibly is to care for the flock.

And then, as I alluded to in my last lesson, Paul carries this attitude of submission into the Christian home.

Ephesians 5:22-24 **"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.**

23: For the husband is the head of the

wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

24: Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."

Now, I suppose there are those who would like to concentrate on the submission of the wife, but in actual fact, there are two members in this relationship.

And in actual fact, both of them have the privilege of picturing that mystical relationship between Christ and His Church.

The husband's example is the Heavenly Bridegroom, while the wife's example is the Church of Jesus Christ.

If we keep that in mind, I think a couple's responsibility before God will be seen in a much truer light.

In reality, His requirements are a blessing,
not a burden.

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At this point, I would like to skip over the
wife's responsibility, as we see it in
Ephesians 5: 22-24, and go directly to
V 25-27, where the Heavenly
Bridegroom's example brings the
husband's responsibility into focus.

You might say, by reversing this order, I am
putting the leadership in the hands of
the husband.

If he is faithful in upholding his
responsibilities, then there will be a
lot more reason for the wife's reaction
to be correct.

So then, as we turn to Ephesians 5: 25-27,
we will find that Christ's care of His
Church encompasses both the past, the
present, and the future ---"**Husbands**,

love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26: That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27: That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Yes, His care began in the past when we were enemies of God and on the way to an eternity in hell.

Even then, when we "**were dead in trespasses and sins,**" He was willing to be made "**sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.**"

Yes, He "**loved the church, and gave himself for it.**"

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And even now, during this present Age of Grace, He is busy sanctifying and cleansing His Church by **"the washing of water by the word."**

Now, what exactly does the Holy Spirit mean when He says the Word of God is the water that cleans and sanctifies us?

Well, let me hasten to say that only the Lord Jesus can cleanse us from our sin. It is Christ's sacrifice on Calvary that has taken away our sin.

And it is the One Who washed the disciples' feet Who is both ready and willing to wash us from the defilement of sin that we incur on a daily basis.

That's why 1 John 1: 9 says, **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**

However, having said all that, we must recognize the fact that God's Holy Word has a wonderful *cleansing* effect on our hearts and minds.

And I believe that's what Ephesians 5: 26 is talking about when it speaks of "**the washing of water by the word.**"

So then, how does the Word of God wash us, and, for that matter, how do we know we need washing?

Well, I don't think there's a short answer to either of these questions, but the long one is well worth the time we will spend on it.

And this long answer can be found in the layout of the tabernacle in the wilderness.

As you probably know, the tabernacle (that is the tent that God's glory inhabited)

was located near the end of a sort of courtyard.

As the priest entered this enclosure, he was confronted by the brazen altar.

That's where the sacrifices were offered, and that's where the blood was shed, making it a fitting type of the cross on which Jesus died.

And by its location, it emphasizes the fact that a person can only come to God by the way of the cross.

However, unlike the brazen altar, Christ's sacrifice was a one-time event.

As Hebrews 10:10 testifies: "**--- we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**"

Getting back to the Old Testament priest, as he continued to walk toward the tabernacle and toward his service for

God, he would encounter another instrument of cleansing.

This time the medium was water not blood.

Yes, standing before him was a rather large container called the laver.

It contained a quantity of water, and was to be used to wash his hands and his feet.

You see, as he walked from the brazen altar on his way to the tabernacle, he would have been soiled by the desert dust that he kicked up along his way.

Certainly there was no need to return to the brazen altar.

Its work had been accomplished.

However, if he is to enter the place of service, he must wash off this defilement at the laver.

And that is also true of the Christian.

A Christian is saved for time and eternity.

Christ has **"perfected for ever them that are sanctified."**

Nevertheless, his thoughts and his motives can be defiled by the world around him. And not only can they be defiled, but his very conscience can be hardened by the ungodly philosophies that crowd in upon him.

So not only does he stand in need of cleansing, but his conscience must be awakened as to his need.

Well, that's where the other aspect of the laver comes into play.

You see, not only was it an instrument of cleansing, it was a means of enlightenment.

And if we turn to Exodus 38, we will discover the source of this other asset.

Exodus 38:8 **"And he made the laver of brass,
and the foot of it of brass, of the
lookingglasses of the women assembling,
which assembled at the door of the
tabernacle of the congregation."**

You see, in those days looking glasses were
not actually made of glass.

They were made of polished brass.

Consequently, when the women lovingly
donated their looking glasses, they
were melted down to make the laver.

So then, in its new form, would the laver be
shiny enough to supply its old service?

Would the Old Testament priest be made aware
of the fact that he should wash his
hands and feet?

I believe he would.

And that's exactly what happens when a
Christian looks into the Word of God.

He is made aware of his shortcomings, and if he is wise enough to heed the advice offered him in James Chapter 1, he will do something about it.

James 1: 22-25 **"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.**

23: For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25: But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

So then, during this Age of Grace, Jesus is sanctifying and cleansing His Church

"with the washing of water by the word."

It's His ongoing work in this present age, and it will be His completed work in glory.

As Ephesians 5:27 tells us, when the bride of Christ sits down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, she will be **"a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."**

Yes, she will be without **"spot,"** being lovingly transported beyond the reach of temptation.

And she will be without **"wrinkle"** in a land where the ravages of time and decay can no longer assail her.

Her husband's care, both in the past and the present and the future, has come to a successful completion.

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Well, Christian husbands, that's the example we are called upon to emulate.

And Christian wives, the bride of Christ (although imperfect) has provided you with her shining example.

Only the Holy Spirit's enablement can fit us for this holy calling.

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Let us return then to God's admonition for Christian wives as we find it in Ephesians 5: 22 --- **"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."**

First of all, as we look at the very different requirements placed on husbands and wives, and even children, we must not lose sight of the fact that they all enjoy an equal standing before God.

As Galatians 3: 28 points out, **"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."**

However, having said that, we can't avoid the fact that God has set up a definite structure and responsibility within the family unit.

And even secular organizations, such as businesses, etc., recognize the value of structure.

If no one is in charge, then pandemonium will be the order of the day.

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So then, let us begin once again with wives, and this somewhat troublesome word *submit*.

Ephesians 5:22 **"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."**

From a purely worldly point of view, although, unfortunately, this often includes the attitude of Christians, this verse can be a source of double trouble.

The feminists would consider such a statement an insult to feminine abilities and self worth, while the male chauvinist commonly uses it as a license for abusive behaviour.

May I say that both of these concepts are a gross misinterpretation of God's Word.

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First of all, let's examine the notion that submission downgrades an individual to a second-class citizen, a person of inferior abilities and self worth.

Certainly, this is a commonly held theory,
but does it really have any
credibility?

For instance, can we depend upon the fact
that bosses are always smarter than
their employees?

Can we safely assume that those in authority
are superior to those under them?

Well, I think we all have an opinion on that
subject.

But, more to the point, at least for a
Christian, could we apply this theory
to the Lord Jesus?

Certainly, there's no doubt that God
referred to Jesus as "**my servant.**"

Isaiah 42: 1 "**Behold my servant, whom I
uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul
delighteth; I have put my spirit upon
him: he shall bring forth judgment to
the Gentiles.**"

And, certainly, Jesus was very willing to be
God's Servant.

As a matter of fact, it was a central
characteristic in His makeup.

He could say without reservation, "**I do
always those things that please him.**"

Does that make Him inferior to His Heavenly
Father?

Nothing could be further from the truth.

He is a full member of the Godhead, and
equal in every respect.

And yet, even though He was "**equal with
God,**" He "**made himself of no
reputation, and took upon him the form
of a servant.**"

No, a servant attitude does not indicate
inferiority.

In fact, in Philippians 2:5 it is held up as
a desirable characteristic ---"**Let this
mind be in you, which was also in**

Christ Jesus:

**6: Who, being in the form of God,
thought it not robbery to be equal with
God:**

**7: But made himself of no reputation,
and took upon him the form of a
servant, and was made in the likeness
of men:"**

So then, getting back to the subject at hand, a wife's submission to her husband's leadership does not reflect upon her ability or self worth.

In fact, it's not uncommon for a wife to be gifted in many areas that are not found in her husband.

So then, does that give her the right to take over the leadership of the family? God's Word says it does not.

Rather, she should employ her God-given talents to be a helpmate, seeking her

husband's good, and the good of the family.

And her obedience to God's command in no way downgrades her self worth.

In fact, both she and her husband have been given the unique responsibility and opportunity of fulfilling a very beautiful type.

Ephesians 5:22-25 **"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.**

23: For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

24: Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

25: Husbands, love your wives, even as

Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

And might I say, we shouldn't try to separate V 24 from V 25.

V 24 says **"as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."**

However, what are the circumstances under which the church is subject to her Heavenly Bridegroom?

Well, she is subject to a husband who loves her, and gave Himself for her.

How hard should that be?

In like manner, if a husband loves his wife, if he protects her, cares for her needs, and provides the umbrella under which she can safely dwell, she should have no problem following his leadership.

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And there's another compelling reason why a husband should be vitally concerned with his wife's welfare.

We find that reason way back in Genesis 2:

21-22 **"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;**

22: And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man."

Yes, Adam's wife was part of himself.

And because of that special one-flesh relationship, they pictured another very special one-flesh relationship.

As Ephesians 5:30 reminds us, Christians

"are members of his body (that is Christ's body), of his flesh, and of his bones."

And that one-flesh relationship not is only true of Adam and Eve.

It applies to all Christian marriages.

In fact, in Ephesians 5:28-33, Paul points to that unique relationship as the logical reason why husbands should care for their wives.

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29: For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31: For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32: This is a great mystery: but I

speaking concerning Christ and the church.
33: Nevertheless let every one of you
in particular so love his wife even as
himself; and the wife see that she
reverence her husband."

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And then, if God should bless a marriage
with children, He also blesses it with
further instructions.

Ephesians 6:1 "**Children, obey your parents
in the Lord: for this is right.**"

Certainly, not all children are born into
Christian families.

Some parents are haters of God.

Some parents teach their children to bow
down to false gods.

And some parents are very abusive in the way
they treat their children.

Happy indeed is the child who is born into a
loving Christian family.

However, being raised in a Christian home
doesn't make a child a Christian.

And even if he becomes a believer at a very
early age, he must pass through years
of development before he will possess
the spiritual insight necessary to cope
with the world around him.

In short, he must rely upon the adult wisdom
and protection of his parents during
those formative years.

That's why God's says ---"**Children, obey
your parents in the Lord: for this is
right.**"

It's their chief obligation, and it's their
ticket to safety and happiness.

And might I say, parents who insist upon
obedience have provided their children
with an invaluable treasure.

Its riches will stand by them both for time
and eternity.

On the other hand, parents who allow their children to disobey have shackled them with a severe disability.

As children grow older, they will face other authorities, such as teachers, governments, and employers.

How they react to these authorities will have a large impact on their happiness, and the happiness of those around him.

So then, God has placed a great responsibility on parents.

But He has also placed a responsibility on children.

Yes, He is speaking to children when He says, "**obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.**"

And if obeying is right, then disobeying is wrong.

And if we read a little farther, we will find that there is a reward for obedience.

Ephesians 6:1-3 **"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.**

2: Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

3: That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

What did Paul mean when he spoke of a child's obedience as **"the first commandment with promise?"**

If that's the first one, then there must be others.

Well, there are others.

In fact, there are 9 others.

Collectively, they're called the Ten Commandments, and they're found in Exodus Chapter 20.

And as you read through these ten
commandments, you will find this is the
first one that comes with a reward.

It is found in Exodus 20:12 **"Honour thy
father and thy mother: that thy days
may be long upon the land which the
LORD thy God giveth thee."**

And if you turn to Colossians 3:20, you will
find something else about obedience.

**"Children, obey your parents in all things:
for this is well pleasing unto the
Lord."**

So, my young Christian friend, do you want
to please the Lord?

I hope you do.

Well, that's where you start.

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Under God's inspiration, Paul has dealt with
the role of Christian husbands.

They are to emulate the care of the Lord
Jesus for His Church.

And now he is dealing with Christian
fathers.

Who should they emulate?

Well, he really doesn't say, but using the
same principle, I think they should
emulate their Heavenly Father.

So let's turn to Psalm 103:13 where we read
--- **"Like as a father pitieth his
children, so the LORD pitieth them that
fear him.**

**14: For he knoweth our frame; he
remembereth that we are dust."**

Yes, like a wise father, our Heavenly Father
tempers His reasonable demands with the
fact that His children are limited.

As Jesus once said to His disciples, **"I have
yet many things to say unto you, but ye
cannot bear them now."**

And a Christian father should also keep that fact in mind.

Certainly, just like his Heavenly Father, he must insist upon obedience.

It's for the good of his children.

But he must also remember his offspring are only children, not adults.

He must remember Paul's admonition found in Ephesians 6: 4 --- **" fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."**

I'm sure we all know people who have rejected the love of a Heavenly Father because of an unloving and austere earthly father.

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And then we come to the relationship between servants and masters.

Actually, the Greek word that is translated
"servants" in the passage before us is
usually rendered *slaves*.

Yes, there's no doubt that some of the
congregation in the Ephesian church
were both Christians and slaves.

And that wouldn't be too unusual,
considering the fact that the Roman
society they lived in contained a large
percentage of slaves.

And so, part of this epistle is specifically
addressed to Christian slaves.

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Today, we see slavery for what it is --- a
system that degrades and suppresses
human beings.

And, incidentally, Christians have played a
large part in eradicating this scourge
on society.

However, in the passage before us, the Holy Spirit is not addressing the evils of slavery, but rather, He is addressing a Christian's attitude under such circumstances.

Certainly, we wouldn't be too surprised if we discovered these believers harboured a deep-seated resentment against their masters.

Such a reaction would be normal.

But would it be Christian, and would it be beneficial to their health and well-being?

Let's see what Paul advises.

It might surprise you.

Ephesians 6: 5-8 **"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;**

6: Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers;
but as the servants of Christ, doing
the will of God from the heart;
7: With good will doing service, as to
the Lord, and not to men:
8: Knowing that whatsoever good thing
any man doeth, the same shall he
receive of the Lord, whether he be bond
or free."

Fortunately, we don't have to work under
such conditions.

We're not slaves.

We're free men.

However, most of us have sold our time and
our talents for an agreed upon
remuneration.

It's how we put bread on the table.

So, in a real sense, these instructions
apply to us.

Certainly, a Christian should give an honest day's work for a day's pay.

To do less would be stealing from our employer.

However, there's much more involved here than the simple fulfillment of a contract.

You see, for a Christian, there's a better way.

There's something that puts employment, even slavery, on a higher plane.

Ephesians 6: 6 says we are "**the servants of Christ,**" and that puts a whole new face on our employment, doesn't it?

We're "**doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.**"

And because we are serving the Lord, Who looks on the heart, we shouldn't engage in "**eyeservice, as menpleasers.**"

We shouldn't be creating a false impression simply to please the boss, and we shouldn't stop working when he's not looking.

No, we should be **"doing the will of God from the heart."**

You see, for a Christian, there really isn't any such thing as secular work and spiritual service.

Whether we are a preacher or a plumber, a missionary or a machinist, we are serving the Lord.

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The story is told of that memorable Christian missionary, William Carey, whom the Lord used so effectively in China.

When he was applying for foreign service, he was asked --- "What is your business?"

Actually, the question was meant as a slur,
for they knew he wasn't an ordained
man.

He answered, "My business is serving the
Lord, and I make shoes to pay
expenses."

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And then V 9 ends with an admonition for
employers:

**"And, ye masters, do the same things unto
them, forbearing threatening: knowing
that your Master also is in heaven;
neither is there respect of persons
with him."**

We've seen that principle throughout this
lesson, haven't we?

Be it an elder, a father, or an employer,
they have a responsibility to their own
Master.

So then, these are the actions and reactions
that God requires of Christians.

They reflect His wisdom and His care for His
children.