

APPLYING THE TRUTH AT HOME

Ephesians 5:22-33

Part 1

Intro: We come this morning to a very important part of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. Everything in Ephesians is important because it is a part of the Word of God. I remind you that the Apostle Paul wrote this letter under conditions that were entirely different from any letter that you or I have ever written. He was moved by the Spirit of God in writing every word that we find in this epistle. Ephesians, like all of the other books of the Bible was "given by inspiration of God." Paul was the writer, but the Holy Spirit was the Author. There isn't a word in this epistle that Paul did not agree with. It has marks of his character throughout the letter. But the Holy Spirit led Paul in the choice of every word that we find here, so I have no hesitation at all in saying that for thirty Sundays we have been studying the Word of God. And because it is the Word of God, it never needs revision. It never needs to be updated. It is just as important, and just as authoritative today as it was when the Apostle Paul completed it over 2,000 years ago, and prepared to send it to the church in Ephesus. Like every other book of the Bible, Paul's letter to the believers in Ephesus was perfect! And we can do nothing better than to accept it as God's Word. Like all of the Bible it is like a light that shines in a dark place.

Now along this line I want to take you to a verse in the OT book of Proverbs which not many people really understand. I love the book of Proverbs and, like some of you (I hope I can say, "many of you") I read a chapter in Proverbs every day. Its thirty-one chapters make it an ideal book to read in a month's time. And how refreshing it is to turn each morning to this book to drink in what the Holy Spirit led Solomon to write approximately 3,000 years ago. When you hear all of the ideas that are circulating around in our country about how we are supposed to live, how great it is to have this book of practical instruction which, like Ephesians, is just at up-to-date now as it was when Solomon wrote it many, many years ago.

The verse I am thinking about has been going over and over in my mind in recent days. It is found in toward the end of the book, in Proverbs, chapter 29, and verse 18. Listen as I read it to you:

18 Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

In Hebrew poetry (because that is what it is) you frequently have two statements. Sometimes they are two ways of saying approximately the same thing; at other times they be in contrast with each other. In this particular verse the two statements are saying the same thing, or at least emphasizing the same truth.

What did Solomon have in mind when he referred to a “vision.” Well, as you read through the Bible, you find that God had various ways of speaking to His people. Sometimes he spoke directly to them, as He did so often to Moses. Sometimes He spoke to them in dreams. But sometimes he spoke to them in visions. You see all of these, and perhaps other ways also, as you read through the Bible. When Solomon said, “Where there is no vision,” he was talking about the Word of God. It was like saying, where people are not depending upon what God has revealed in His Word, the people perish. But it does not mean that they die (although that has been the judgment many times which people have experienced when they have turned away from the Word of God. God has given us His Word. He has told us what pleases Him, and what displeases Him. So it is not the we don’t have the Word of God. We have it, but too often people refused to be guided by it. Keil, a well-known Hebrew scholar of past days, translated this verse with these words:

Without a revelation a people become ungovernable; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

The translation that is given in the margin of my Bible is that when people do not pay attention to the Bible, they “cast off restraint.” If people live according to the desires and inclinations of their own hearts, chaos is going to be the result. And that is what is happening today in our country, and in many other countries of the world, because we have turned away from the Word of God. We have made it illegal for the Bible to be read in our schools, and you know as well as I do how terrible things are taking place even in the lives of children today, tragedies which could be avoided if parents read the Bible, and taught the Gospel to their children. We have put God out of our lives as a nation, and we are reaping the results of neglecting the Word of God in government, in business, in education, in society at large. You don’t need to me tell you that we have social problems today for which all of our experts have no answer. We are busy tearing down barriers which God has established and we are too blind to see that we are destroying ourselves.

But look at the last part of this verse: “But he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” “The law” is another word for the Bible. Keeping it means obey-

ing it. This is the way of true and lasting happiness. People want to exercise what they believe are their rights. People are doing what is right in their own eyes. They even overrule their consciences which God has placed in all of our hearts, and we are reaping a whirlwind that make our tornadoes and hurricanes look like a gentle breeze. But we all need to realize that God is not dead. He doesn't even get sleepy. He knows everything that is going on in every life, and He is beginning to tighten the reigns on us. But most people don't recognize that God is in our troubles individually, and as a nation. And, as I have said in the Tableau, the story of the children of Israel in Egypt in the book of Exodus, teaches us that when we don't pay attention to the judgments of God, the judgments multiply and get worse. They did in Egypt until every Egyptian family was calling for the funeral director.

When people turn away from God, from the Gospel, and from the kind of living that Paul has described in chapters 4 and 5 in Ephesians, lives are ruined and society falls apart. The same Apostle Paul who wrote to the Ephesian church, wrote to the churches of Galatia, saying this:

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal. 6:7-8).

Now I have called attention to the teaching of Scripture on these things because, as you have seen from our Scripture reading this morning, that we have come to that place in Ephesians where Paul focused his attention on the home – wives, husbands, children, parents (Fathers in particular), and then in the workplace.

I would remind you this morning from Scripture that when God created the universe in which we live and all living creatures who live in it, he created Adam and Eve, telling us that this is what marriage is. It is not just a man and a woman living together. It surely is not two men living together, or two women living together, calling it marriage. The home is the foundation of any society, and it has to be a home built upon God's pattern. All other relationships that people want to call marriage, are an abomination to the Lord, and fall under God's judgment.

There was a marriage and a family before there was a city, or a nation, or even the church. And as the home goes, so goes the nation. If God's plan

is violated, society cannot continue. God has been very patient with us, but there are signs that His patience is being exhausted. We can't continue to trample on the Word of God in our homes and expect to have the blessing of God. We have turned from God and His Word. We have despised His Son and scoffed at the Gospel which is the only hope for those who by nature are sinners. There is forgiveness that is available for us sinners. It is a gift from God, but it comes to us at the supreme price of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ Who died that sinners might thereby be saved from eternal judgment.

So our situation is not hopeless, but it is if we continue to ignore God and what He has told us in His Word. Paul in Ephesians has told us what God has done to save us from the penalty of our sins, and from the power of our sins as well. There is no hope for enjoying the blessing of God instead of His judgment except through faith in Christ. And the people who would take the Bible away from us are the worst enemies that we could possibly have. They are trying to take from us the only way to true happiness which is submission to God and to Christ and to the Word which He has given us and preserved for us. Paul's generation was just like ours, and he said to his generation what needs to be said to our generation. We had it just a couple of Sundays ago. His words are right in this same chapter we have been discussing, Ephesians 5:14:

Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.

The Devil knows how to get to us, and Paul in our text was preparing us for that passage in chapter 6 where he will tell us that we are engaged in a spiritual warfare, and he wants us to know from this passage that the place where the Devil strikes first, is the home. And we as Christians need to be fully aware of what is going on today in our own beloved country. It doesn't take a community to raise a child. That is pure nonsense. The Bible tells us that it takes a father and a mother who love God and who love each other, who will teach their children the Word of God, and who will pray for them, and show their children by their own lives of obedience to God, the way to true happiness and ultimately to heaven. We need parents who understand that the only way to know God is through knowing Jesus Christ Who is the only Savior that there is.

The reason that the Bible is so important is because it tells us about God. It tells us the truth about ourselves. How different the message of the Bible is from what people will tell you who don't know the truth of the

Bible. What the Bible tells you is the truth. What people will tell you in contrast with the Bible says, is false, totally false. More and more of the voices that we hear in the world are intent on turning us away from the Bible, from God, from Christ, and for those who truly love the Lord. Never before in my lifetime have I seen such an attempt on the part of those who profess to give us the news, professors in colleges and universities, many of the actors and actresses in Hollywood, and even those who teach children from K to 12, are bombarded us and our children with the idea that evolution is a fact and that creation is a meaningless theory. They want to get God's Name off of our money and out of our pledge of allegiance to our flag and our country. President Bush is hated because he professes faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Paul in Ephesians, and in Colossians, where he wrote to Christian wives and Christian husbands, was dealing with the battle of the ages. What Paul wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit, is not only needed in our churches today, but it is absolutely mandatory that if we are going to please God in our lives, and see Him work in the lives of our children, we must obey that the Lord tells us to do as parents in order that our children will grow up to walk with us as we walk with the Lord.

But in the brief time that remains this morning I want to tie together the verses that we had last Sunday which immediately precede what Paul had to say to wives, then to husbands. As we get into chapter 6 we will see how he went on to speak to children, and then especially to fathers. And then he added important words to servants and masters. For us I agree with those who say these final instructions apply to our jobs in the world.

I think that most pastors who deal with Ephesians 5:22 and following, do so with some hesitation because these are verses over which Christian wives and Christian husband often disagree with each other. There is no question about the responsibilities that Paul placed upon wives, and then upon husbands. The problem is that these instructions run contrary to what we want to do.

But I believe it will help all of us who are married to notice a very obvious fact about Paul's approach to this subject. He did not begin here. He began by helping us to understand in the first three chapters more about this wonderful salvation that God has provided for us in Christ. Paul was writing especially to Christian wives and Christian husbands. And he wanted them to understand what God has done for us in Christ to

save us, and what he continues in our lives to perfect us. Then, in a very strong way, he wrote to them about how they were to live. He called it, as we have seen, their walk. He described it in different ways. Peter in his first epistle spoke of a Christian lady who had a husband who was not a Christian. But even there he told her that the kind of a person she was, and how she responded to her husband in a way that would please the Lord, was the key to winning her husband to Christ. The husband and wife here in Ephesians are both Christians, but the basics of their relationship to each other was the same if either was not a Christian. The main point in all that Paul said here, and that Peter said in his epistle, is that we need to be primarily concerned about pleasing the Lord. I spoke to begin with this morning about a very important proverb in the book of Proverbs. Let me give you another proverb here. It is found in Proverbs 16:7. And this is what it tells us:

7 When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Now I don't consider Lucille to be my enemy. She is my best friend. She is the dearest person on earth to me. But the point is that if the Lord promises that if I make it my primary business to please Him, he will make my enemy into my friend, then how much more should this apply to a husband and wife because we both have the Lord on our side. And this applies to all of our relationships. This is the way elders and deacons must be. This is the way we ought to be with our children. This is the way we should be with each other in the church. *Pleasing God must be the item of first importance on my agenda, and also on yours. And this means not only pleasing the Lord in what we say, but even in the way we think about each other.* Verses 19, 20, and 21 speak of a person who is seeking to please the Lord.

But let me add one more thing before I close. *We not only need to be concerned about what we do, but how we do it.* Paul brought both of these point together in verse 21: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." What is a good word to describe a person who submits to another? I would say that this goes back to verse 2 of chapter 4 just as Paul was beginning the practical section. (Read Eph. 4:1-2.). And what is "the fear of God"? I like to think of the fear of God as it is expressed in the little chorus, or hymn, that we often sing,

In the sweet fear of Jesus, let me begin each day,
Fearful lest I should grieve Him, fearful lest I should stray . . .

Concl: I hope we have all gotten something for our souls this morning,

the importance for all of us to keep our eyes on the Lord, trusting Him to enable us to always be concerned about pleasing Him first.

Years ago when I was in school down in Texas, I often heard cowboy stories that usually made a good point. One was a story of a cowboy who got married. He couldn't read, and he had married the love of his life, but she couldn't read either. Well, his cowboy friends thought they would pull a joke on him, so across the front of the house where the groom was taking his bride to live with him, those cowboys put a sign in large letters that said, MY WIFE IS BOSS. As they approached the house he and his bride saw the sign. Neither one knew that the other couldn't read, but she said to him, "What does that sign say?" He stalled saying that he couldn't read it from such a distance. She kept asking him what it said. Finally, he said, "Oh, I can read it now. It says, GOD BLESS OUR HAPPY HOME."

That is a simple story, but maybe it will help us to remember to keep our eyes on the Lord, and remember that true happiness always comes to us when our chief purpose in life is to please Him.