

Ephesians Week 11

6:1-9

Summary

Summary of the Text

Paul continues with the household roles, moving from husbands and wives to children and parents and masters and slaves. One of the most important things to note is that wives, children, slaves are all addressed directly, and are thus treated as equal members of the Christian community.

Children are commanded to obey their parents for the reason that it is right, as demonstrated through the Old Testament command for children to honour their parents. Paul points out that this is the first command with a promise attached, namely that they might live long in the land (original emphasis). However, quite appropriately, the promise is broadened out to reflect the whole earth being the promise not just one portion of land.

Fathers are then addressed with a prohibition and an exhortation. They are not to anger their children, tying back in with chapter 4 on anger, as this gives the devil an opportunity to corrupt. Rather, they should bring their children up with discipline and instruction. This is both teaching about Jesus and the way in which it is appropriate for Christians to walk, as well as correction in behaviour.

Slaves are to obey their masters with fear and trembling, not of those masters but of Christ. The focus is that they should fulfill their duties in a sincere way, as if they are slaves to Christ, as opposed to simply doing their work for human praise. Ultimately, the promise is that the true Master (Lord) see all service rendered and rewards all good service.

Finally, masters are to also understand themselves as slaves of Christ, which impacts the way they treat their fellow slaves. They should not threaten but direct with fear and trembling because their Lord will also judge them and he is impartial when it comes to status. Being a master will not excuse you at judgement.

Application

In terms of children and parents it is important to remember that children are full members of the community who are morally responsible. They are not simply to be received as members once we've made something of them, but are to be viewed as gift now and to be grown in the same way we all are.

Also, as parents we need to be aware that the responsibility for training and raising our children in the Lord is ours. We cannot simply send our children to Sunday school and think the job is done. We need to be seeking opportunities to instruct and correct our children. This is why it is important that children have the attitude of obedience so as to receive proper instruction.

Perhaps the harder application is masters and slaves. In contemporary society we don't have those categories. In which case it might be appropriate to consider the way in which we do our work. Employees should seek to do their job well for Christ's sake and not for notice, raises or promotions. And managers or owners should be careful in how they direct work and treat their employees.

Discussion

There wasn't really much discussion at all this week, likely because it was fairly straight forward.