

Submitting One to Another: a Family Study for the College and Career Class at Gulf Coast Baptist Church 7/30/23 by Steve Thomas

Introduction

Paul asked the Ephesians to do some things that are very difficult to do. In fact, these things are impossible to do outside of the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He uses actionable words like submit, love sacrificially, sanctify and cleanse, obey, and honor. These things go contrary to the nature of men and women. Believers have been striving to do these things for centuries, and for the most part failing. The way the letter to the Ephesians is written has positional focus first, then practical. The first three chapters of Ephesians points the believer to his position In Christ. At the beginning of chapter 4, Paul tells the believer to walk worth of his vocation, but uses an important “therefore” to start the chapter. Based on the truth expressed in the previous chapters, the believer should order his life in such a way.

Endeavoring to Keep the Unity of the Spirit

For the believer to live in unity, the Spirit must be in control. There are too many sin natures at play for true unity to result from carnal believers working together. In chapter 4, Paul uses some words which let the reader know that the spirit is in control - meekness, longsuffering, and forbearing in love. Directing the reader’s attention towards the unifying power of the Spirit, Paul then walks the reader to the practical outgrowth of that spiritual relationship - the spiritual gifts.

Gave Gifts unto Men

The spiritual gifts are the basis upon which the Body of Christ interacts with one another. Each is taking what God has given them, and then directing it towards other believers for their ultimate profit. Verses 12-13 talk about the specifics of how the believers (both present and future) can benefit from a spiritual mindset.

The ultimate goal of Christian maturity is laid out in verses 13-16. Christians being stable in their walk, interacting in love, being supplied by the Godhead for daily tasks - this is a beautiful picture of how the Body should be working. Notice that there is the presence of conflict and challenges, but they are being handled in a loving way.

Put Off, Be Renewed, Put On

Being warned of the unregenerate mind (vs 17), Paul gives the readers some ways to apply positional truth. The actions in verses 22-24 are mental, directing the believer’s focus to the place and standing they have In Christ. Framing the mind, imputing by faith what God says about the believer’s standing, the believer fights off the spiritual enemies that seek to bring the believer back to carnality.

The believer is to put off the old man (his position in Adam) and be renewed in the spirit that is in the mind. Putting on the new man (position In Christ) the believer can allow the Spirit to rid him of specific sins that characterized the old man.

This leads to kindness and a forgiveness of others based on the forgiveness that all have received from God. The start of chapter 5 walks the believer through some other obstacles to a spiritual walk - different works of the flesh and spiritual attacks from the Evil One.

The Spiritual Thermometer

Paul then preceeds his “family talk” with a reminder of what the characteristics of a spiritual believer are: a melodic heart that is focused on praising God, a grateful heart, and a submissive spirit. In order to be who we need to be to other believers, especially to those of our own household, we need to have a right relationship with the Spirit of God.

Conclusion

Being a good father, mother, employee, son, daughter, or sibling does not come naturally to anyone. An understanding of one’s position In Christ is necessary to establish a right relationship with God. An understanding of one’s spiritual gift is helpful to grow to Christian maturity. Also, an understanding of Christ’s relationship to the church will be useful in the study of familial relationships. Something that can never stray too far from the believer’s mindset is that without Christ he can do nothing.