

Ephesians

Lesson Seventeen Obedience in the Church

6:1-9

Introduction:

1. After establishing the essential nature of the church, Paul began to focus on how a member of the Lord's body is to live.
2. The Christian walk is personal – putting off the old man and putting on the new.
3. Yet, it also affects our relationships with one another – in the church and in the home.
4. The key to those relationships is submission – first, to God; then, to one another as God has ordained.
5. Submission is demonstrated in obedience, especially in the relationship of children to parents and servants to masters.

6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right

- A. In God's plan for the home, parents have authority over their children and children are to obey their parents.
 1. This is true for all children, whether or not they are Christians.
 2. But, it is especially significant when both parents and children are Christians.
- B. Children are to obey their parents.
 1. The Greek word for 'obey' is different from the word for 'submit' (5:22).
 2. Yet, obedience grows out of an attitude of submission.
 3. This Greek word means, "To hear under (as a subordinate); to listen attentively; to harken to a command; to obey or be obedient to."
 4. Thus, children are to listen to and to follow the instructions given by their parents.
 5. If they refuse, discipline becomes necessary.
 6. Being disobedient to one's parents is a serious offense to God (Romans 1:30; 2 Timothy 3:2; cf. Luke 2:51).
- C. This authority is placed in both parents – father and mother (cf. Prov. 1:8; 6:20).
- D. Children are to obey their parents "in the Lord."
 1. This phrase modifies the verb "obey."
 2. In other words, children are to obey their parents unless their parents command them to disobey the Lord.
 3. Parents must make sure they are not leading their children away from the Lord by their teaching and instruction.
 4. Godly parents would never want their children to disobey God.
 5. Colossians 3:20 states: "Children, obey your parents in all things," but this does not mean in violation of God's word (cf. Eph. 5:24).
 6. Note that this passage does not teach that if the parents are "in the Lord," then the children are also "in the Lord."
 - a. Some will use this verse to try to justify infant baptism.
 - b. The children in this verse are old enough to hear, understand, and obey their parents – and the teaching of Paul.

- E. Obeying one's parents is right, meaning, "Just, righteous, in harmony with divine laws; approved of or acceptable to God."

6:2-3 Honor thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth

- A. The word for 'honor' means, "To fix the value of; to prize, revere, or venerate."
1. Children must learn and respect the value of good, godly parents.
 2. Disobedience demonstrates a lack of honor and respect.
 3. This command is found throughout the Bible (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; 27:16; Proverbs 20:20; Matthew 15:4-6; 19:19; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; cf. Genesis 18:19; Jeremiah 35:18).
 4. Obedience to this command is to continue throughout one's lifetime.
 - a. When a child matures, he leaves "father and mother" and begins a home of his own (5:31).
 - b. Then, "father and mother" allow him to leave and respect his new role in a new home.
 - c. Though he does not continue to "obey" his parents in the same way, he does continue to honor them (cf. Mk. 7:9-13; 1 Tim. 5:3-4, 8, 16).
- B. This commandment is the first of the 10 Commandments with a specific promise attached to it (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16).
- C. The promise was that it would make their dwelling in the land of Canaan pleasant, profitable and lengthy.
1. Had the children of each new generation honored the parents of the previous generation, respect for God and His laws would not have been lost in Israel.
 2. The same principle is still true today.
 3. Children who honor and obey their parents have a foundation laid on which to build a good life.
 4. Those who do not are on their way to a life that is endangered and may be shortened.
- D. Please note that in quoting this passage, Paul leaves off the end of the verse that refers to "the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."
1. The promise of the land of Canaan had been fulfilled already by God.
 2. Furthermore, the Jews lost that promise and that land by their rejection of God and of Jesus.
 3. There is no promise today for the Jews to be restored to Canaan.

6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord

- A. God also has instructions and duties for parents, especially fathers.
1. While fathers are specified in this verse, the principles apply to both.
 2. Fathers are the head of the household and responsible for the rearing of children – but, not alone, without the help of the mother.
- B. While children need discipline in order to learn to obey their parents, they are not to be provoked to wrath.
1. The word for 'provoke' means, "To anger alongside; to enrage, to rouse to wrath; to exasperate."
 2. In Colossians 3:21, Paul adds, "Lest they be discouraged" (disheartened).

3. Punishment and discipline must be delivered and balanced with love and encouragement.
 4. Concerning this phrase, Barnes wrote: *"That is, by unreasonable commands; by needless severity; by the manifestation of anger. So govern them, and so punish them - if punishment is necessary - that they shall not lose their confidence in you, but shall love you. The apostle here has hit on the very danger to which parents are most exposed in the government of their children. It is that of souring their temper; of making them feel that the parent is under the influence of anger, and that it is right for them to be so too."*
 5. Also: *"There is no principle of parental government more important than that a father should command his own temper when he inflicts punishment. He should punish a child not because he is 'angry,' but because it is 'right;' not because it has become a matter of 'personal contest,' but because God requires that he should do it, and the welfare of the child demands it."*
- C. Children are to be brought up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord."
1. The ASV reads: "But nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord."
 2. The ESV states: "But bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."
 3. The Greek word for 'bring them up' means, "To rear up to maturity; to nourish, nurture, or train – with the idea of cherishing (fatten, pamper)."
 4. The Greek word for 'nurture' means, "Education and training, including disciplinary correction."
 - a. Thayer defines it as: "The whole training and education of children (which relates to the cultivation of mind and morals, and employs for this purpose ...commands and admonitions, ...reproof and punishment."
 - b. This is the same word used for the chastening of the Lord (Hebrews 12) and the instruction of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16).
 5. The Greek word for 'admonition' means, "A calling attention to, a rebuke or warning; an exhortation."
- D. Thus, a child is to be cherished by his parents – so much so that they seek his best by laboring to nurture him to maturity and to prepare him for life as an adult and, especially, as a Christian.
- E. This involves instruction that is reinforced with discipline.
- F. It also involves an awareness so warnings of danger can be issued.
- G. Thus, there are several things that parents must know.
1. They must know the Word of God.
 2. They must know the role of parents.
 3. They must know the individuality of each child.
 4. They must know the daily events of the child's life.

6:5 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

- A. The obedience and duties of a Christian carried over into the relationships between servants and masters.
- B. The word for 'servant' actually means, "Bondservant or slave."
1. This word could be used of literal or figurative slaves.
 2. It was also used for both voluntary and involuntary servitude.

- C. THE BIBLE TEACHING ABOUT SLAVERY
1. It must be remembered that slavery is a political institution that has long been a part of human societies.
 - a. It was not ordained by God.
 - b. Yet, it has often been a part of the governments of men.
 2. The Gospel does not condemn slavery specifically.
 - a. God commands submission to authority (Romans 13:1ff).
 - b. The Roman government was corrupt and immoral in many ways, including the practice of slavery.
 - c. Yet, the Bible is not a book of violent political revolution.
 3. However, God did seek to regulate and mitigate the cruel aspects of it.
 - a. Servants were to be obedient to their masters; but, masters were to treat their servants with kindness and dignity.
 - b. Servants were to remember that we are all servants of Christ; and, masters were to remember that God is Master of all.
 - c. Onesimus was to return to Philemon, but he was to be treated as a Christian brother in the Lord (Phm. 1:12, 15-17).
 4. And, by the principles of the Gospel, God sought to eliminate it.
 - a. God's desire is for all men to be free (cf. Isa. 58:6; Jn. 8:32-36; Gal. 5:1; Phil. 2:12; cf. Exodus; Esther; etc.).
 - b. The example of God as Master will lead to liberty.
 - c. The understanding that all Christians are slaves to Christ will end human bondage.
 - d. The Golden Rule will bring slavery to an end.
 - e. The recognition of the brotherhood of man will abolish slavery.
 5. There will always be forms of bondage in this world – whether, slavery, taxes, debts, regulations, or such like – but the Christian must conduct himself as a child of God according to the Gospel of Christ.
- D. The most direct application of these principles in the modern world will be seen in the Christian's relationship to his occupation and employer.
- E. The Christian is to serve by obedience with fear and trembling.
 1. This is the same word for 'obey' in 6:1.
 2. This is the same word for 'fear' in 5:21.
 3. This phrase is used to emphasize the seriousness of a situation or obligation (cf. 1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 7:15; Phil. 2:12).
 4. It is not a terror of one's master, but a respect for one's duty of service.
- F. The Christian is to serve with singleness of heart – meaning, "In sincerity and honesty, free from pretense and hypocrisy; not self-seeking, but generous."
- G. The Christian is to serve man as if he were serving God (cf. Col. 3:23-24).

6:6-7 Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not to men

- A. 'Eye-service' is work that is done under the master's eyes, or only when he is looking.
- B. Christians are to act the same when the master is present or absent.
- C. We are to labor as though someone is always watching – because God is!
- D. Thus, we work not to please men, but to please God.
- E. With this attitude, our work will always be from the heart and with good will.

6:8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free

- A. Wherever the child of God serves, he is seen by the Father in Heaven.
- B. God will reward good works and faithful service.
- C. This is true for both the freeman and the slave.
- D. Note these other verses on the relationship between servants and masters:
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 7:20-24
 - 2. Colossians 3:22-25
 - 3. 1 Timothy 6:1-3
 - 4. Titus 2:9-10
 - 5. Philemon
 - 6. 1 Peter 2:18-20

6:9 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

- A. The other side of this relationship involves how a master should treat his servants.
- B. Basically, Peter invokes the Golden Rule – masters are to behave appropriately to their servants, just as servants are to act properly toward their masters (cf. Matthew 7:12; James 2:8).
- C. Masters are to exercise their authority without threats, especially of physical harm (cf. Leviticus 25:43; Daniel 3:6; etc.).
 - 1. Roman law allowed slaves to be treated as animals, even murdered.
 - 2. The follower of Christ must be concerned with the interests and well-being of those under his authority (cf. Col. 4:1; Matt. 8:9; Acts 10:7-8).
- D. Earthly masters must remember that they are overseen by and will answer to a Heavenly Master.
 - 1. God is always concerned with the treatment of those who are under the authority of others (cf. Psalm 140:12; Ecc. 5:8; James 5:1-7; etc.).
 - 2. This is an important principle: ***God often treats us the way we treat others!*** (Cf. Matthew 6:14-15; 7:1-2; 18:21-35; James 2:13)
- E. It must always be remembered that God is not a respecter of persons – He is perfectly honest and just in His rewards and judgments (cf. Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:11; Colossians 3:25; James 2:1, 9).