

# Paul's Letter to the *EPHESIANS*

## CHAPTERS 4, 5, 6: *God's Plan for the Church* (the Body of Christ) (CONTINUED)

### Principles for Relationships (5:21 – 6:9) (concluded)

#### **Parents & Children (6:1-4)**

**6:1-3** Children, obey<sup>1</sup> your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” – which is the first commandment with a promise – “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” [<sup>1</sup>*hupakouo*: to listen under (lit)] Parents are God’s agents over their children, who should willingly submit to the authority of the parents and actively do what is “right” Proverbs 6:20-23, Hosea 14:9, in order to please God Colossians 3:20. Paul quoted the first of the Ten Commandments that govern human relationships Deuteronomy 5:16. Even though the submission of the children to their parents should be for the sake of the Lord, He has kindly added the promise of a special blessing for those who are obedient to this specific decree. Submission encompasses both honoring (involving attitude) and obedience (involving action). The habitual behavior of being “disobedient to ... parents” is one of the indications of a life aimed at and entrenched in “wickedness, evil, greed and depravity”. Romans 1:28-32, 2 Timothy 3:1-5

In each of the relationship standards for authority and submission, the focus is on the Lord: “as to the Lord” Ephesians 5:22, “In the Lord” v.1, “of the Lord” v.4, “as you would obey Christ” v.5

**6:4** Fathers, do not exasperate<sup>2</sup> your children; instead, bring them up in the training & instruction<sup>3</sup> of the Lord. [<sup>2</sup>*parorgizo*: provoke to wrath, <sup>3</sup>*nouthesia*: admonition] Parents are called to discipline Proverbs 13:24, 22:6, Hebrews 12:5-11 and teach Genesis 18:19, Deuteronomy 6:5-9 their children, not in a harsh way leading to embitterment Colossians 3:21, but applying the same methods God uses with mankind<sup>2</sup> Peter 3:9. This verse specifically refers to male parents (the spiritual leaders); however, in context with the previous three verses v.1-3, it applies to both parents. In most 1<sup>st</sup> century households (pagan and Jewish), the fathers were rigid and domineering. Here, Paul made it clear: the relationships within Christian homes are to be very different. After physical and/or psychological child abuse, the worse thing a parent of multiple children can do involves the showing of favoritism to one or more child Deuteronomy 21:15-17, James 2:1,5-9.

#### **Employers & Employees (Slaves & Masters) (6:5-9)**

The authors of the NT wrote more about slaves than they wrote about kings. <sup>1</sup>Corinthians 1:26

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**6:5-8** Slaves<sup>4</sup>, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. (Obey them)<sup>5</sup> not only (to win their favor)<sup>5</sup> (when their eye is on you)<sup>6</sup>, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart<sup>7</sup>. Serve wholeheartedly<sup>8</sup>, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free<sup>9</sup>. [<sup>4</sup>*doulos*: a person owned as a possession, <sup>5</sup>*anthropareskos*: to please man (lit), <sup>6</sup>*ophthalmodouleia*: eye service (lit), <sup>7</sup>*psuche*: soul, <sup>8</sup>*eunoia*: enthusiastic, <sup>9</sup>*eleutheros*: one who is not dependent on another] Greek and Roman slaves had no legal rights and were treated as commodities. While the Bible does not speak directly against slavery, it speaks critically about its abuses <sup>Exodus 21:26-27</sup>. If all men followed God's relationship principles <sup>Ephesians 5:21 & notes</sup>, oppressive/tyrannical slavery would not exist. However, the principles mentioned here speak to trusting in God's sovereignty and applying them to Christian service in the workplace, calling for loyalty and respect <sup>1 Timothy 6:1, Titus 2:9</sup>. The Lord requires these directives to be followed by Christian workers, even when they are mistreated <sup>1 Peter 2:18-21</sup>, because the work they do should be done for the Lord <sup>Colossians 3:22-24</sup>, who will reward their efforts <sup>Job 34:10-12, Jeremiah 17:10, Matthew 16:27, Revelation 22:12</sup>.

Earthly compensations are temporary and often unsatisfactory; however, the rewards from the Lord for a life well-lived for His Kingdom are eternal and fully-pleasing. <sup>Matthew 6:19-21</sup>

There are many Greek words that have subtly different meanings, but are all translated "servant" (*diakōnos, therapōn, oiketēs, pais, hypēretēs*), but not "slave". The Greek word used by Paul in this section (*doulos*) is the only one that should always be translated "slave".

**6:9** And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. Having described the relational responsibilities of the "slave" (employee), Paul used this verse to declare those of the "master" (employer). As explained in the foundational principle of relationships <sup>Ephesians 5:21</sup>, the "slave" and the "master" are to submit to each other. Furthermore, no matter what responsibilities a person has in life, ultimately they will be held accountable to and judged by Jesus <sup>Hebrews 9:27-28</sup>. "God does not show favoritism", but judges a person on the basis of whether they "fear him" and do "what is right". <sup>Acts 10:34-35</sup> Paul (God) encourages Christians to not confuse social order and spiritual condition, because man can serve Him and He can use His "children" in any socio-economic status. <sup>1 Corinthians 7:20-24</sup> As "servants of Christ...who have been given a trust", every Christians "must prove faithful" to both their secular and their spiritual responsibilities. <sup>1 Corinthians 4:1-2</sup>

**In each of the three relationships mentioned (husband/wife, parent/child, master/slave), the positions have different responsibilities. However, in every case, the Lord requires there to always be mutual honor and respect between each pair of individuals.** <sup>1 Peter 2:13-17</sup>