

“Christian Relationships--Part 2”

September 22, 2024

Ephesians 6:1-9

I. Introduction

After watching a television program about rebellious youth, a husband said to his wife, “What a mess. Where did our generation go wrong?” The wife calmly answered, “We had children.” Seriously, it seems that no matter where we look in our society today, we see hostility, violence, division, and rebellion. Husbands and wives are divorcing each other; children are rebelling against parents; employers are shutting down shops, employees are striking for a variety of issues and, on top of it all, there is violence everywhere. Paul wrote about this to the young preacher Timothy; turn to 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

As a society we have tried education, legislation, and every other approach that can be devised by mankind, but nothing seems to work. Peace and harmony seem to be out-of-reach. This just proves what we all know, you cannot legislate morality. There is only one solution, regeneration—a new heart from God and a new submission to Christ and to one another. Harmony begins with spiritual harmony with God. Then harmony with one another will follow in the lives of Christians as they submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ and, as Ephesians 5:21 says, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Last week we saw that God’s plan for harmony between a Christian husband and a Christian wife demands that first, they submit to one another. Following that Paul went on to explain that the husband must love his wife with a sacrificial love just as Christ loves the church while the wife must respect her husband (Eph. 5:35). In today’s Scripture Paul addressed two other groups of Christians and described how their relationships can have harmony in Christ. The first relationship is that between Children and Parents.

II. Children and Parents

A. Christian Children should obey their parents. Paul wrote that Christian children should obey their parents. He then gave four reasons why they should obey. 1. First, **they are Christians.** “**Children, obey your parents in the Lord.**” In Colossians 3:20, Paul put it this way: “**Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.**” Christian children are to put themselves under the words and

authority of their parents—they are to submit one to another—because to do so is to obey and honor the Lord—to please Him.

2. Paul then added, “For this is right,” i.e., **Obedience is right.** There is an order in nature that is ordained by God. Since the parents brought the child into the world, and since, contrary to childish beliefs, parents have more knowledge and wisdom than the child, it is right that the child obey his parents. In today’s society **Ephesians 6:1** probably would read, *“Parents, obey your children, for this will keep them happy and bring peace to the home.”* But this is contrary to God’s will; this is a lie from Satan. This is part of the devil’s plan to undermine, weaken, and destroy the family. But the right thing to do is for the child to obey his parents. Paul’s 3rd reason that children should obey their parents is that . . .

3. Obedience is commanded. The 5th commandment of the Ten Commandments, found in **Exodus 20:12**, says: **“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”** To “honor” one’s parents means much more than simply obeying them. It means to show them respect and love, to seek to bring honor to them by the way one lives.

Of all the Ten Commandments, this is the only commandment that relates strictly to family. It is the only one needed. It is the key principle behind all right human relationships in society. A person who grows up with a sense of respect and obedience for his parents will have the foundation for respecting the authority of other leaders and the rights of other people in general. But as we see all around us, if children are continually told they don’t have to obey their parents but can do whatever they wish and can have their own way, they soon ignore their parents, teachers, moral standards, and the law; all society’s restraints are gone.

All human relationships grow out of those of children with their parents. Children who respect and obey their parents will build a society that is ordered, harmonious, and productive. A generation of undisciplined, disobedient children will produce a society that is chaotic and destructive—everyone doing what they see fit.

4. Fourth, obedience brings blessing. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, Paul took the blessing of the 5th Commandment that was given originally to Israel and extended it to the Christian child who honors

his parents. Obedience and honor bring blessing. Paul wrote that a believer who honors his parents can expect two blessings: a) It will be well with him, and b) he will live long on the earth. Sin always robs us; obedience always enriches us.

B. Christian Fathers' responsibilities Paul then turned to Christian parents—especially the fathers—and their responsibilities toward their children. He began by writing, “**Do not exasperate your children.**” A different translation says, “**Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath or anger, lest they be discouraged.**” This is the father’s first responsibility: **Don’t provoke your children to anger.** This was a totally new concept for Paul’s readers. In Paul’s day, a father loving his children would have been hard to imagine. By Roman law, a father had virtual life and death power over not only his slaves but also over his entire household. He could cast any of them out of the house, sell them as slaves, or even kill them—and be accountable to no one. Paul was saying that contrary to the culture, “*Don’t use your authority to abuse your child, but to encourage and build up your child.*”

There are many ways fathers—parents—can exasperate their children. They (fathers) provoke their children and discourage them by saying one thing and doing another, by always blaming and never praising, by being inconsistent and unfair in discipline, by showing favoritism in the home, by making promises and not keeping them, and by making light of problems that, to the children, are very important. Christian fathers and mothers need to walk in the Spirit so they can be sensitive to the needs and problems of their children. Then they will be able to encourage and build up their children instead of tearing them down.

2. Train and instruct your children. Paul went on to write to “*train and instruct your children.*” Instead of exasperating his children, a father is to “**bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.**” It isn’t enough to supply the physical needs of one’s children, i.e., food, shelter, and clothing; the Christian father is to look after their emotional and spiritual needs, too. God has chosen the parents to provide the kind of training the children need as they grow from helpless infants to young men and women ready to go out into the world. **Turn to Deuteronomy 6:4-9.**

Training includes the idea of learning through discipline. Discipline may mean to punish or penalize for the sake of enforcing obedience and perfecting moral character, but it also means to train or develop by instruction. Both are important responsibilities of the Christian father. Our so-called “progressive” society opposes the “old-fashioned” idea of discipline. They say, “*Let the children express themselves.*” Or “*If you discipline them, you may warp their characters.*” “*There shouldn’t be winners and losers. This will hurt their self-esteem.*” Yet discipline and rebuke are a basic principle of life and evidence of love. I was pleased to hear the mother of one of the 14-year-olds who was involved with beating the elderly man last week say, “What my son did is wrong, and he deserves whatever punishment they give him.” Turn to Proverbs 3:11-12. Proverbs 13:24 adds, “**He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.**”

BUT parents must be sure that discipline is done in the right manner. To begin with, discipline must be done in love and not in anger, otherwise “**They will become discouraged**” and injured in either their body or spirit. If parents are not disciplined, they surely cannot discipline others, and “*flying off the handle*” never made either a better child or a better parent. Discipline must be fair and consistent. Consistent, loving discipline gives assurance to the child. He may not agree, but at least he knows that his parents care enough to build some walls around him until he can take care of himself.

As well as training through discipline, parents must use instruction to train their children. The Book of Proverbs is an inspired record of a father sharing wise counsel with his son. Children do not always appreciate a parent’s counsel, but that does not eliminate the obligation to instruct and encourage them. Instruction isn’t just factual information, but right attitudes and principles of behavior as well.

III. Christian Labor Relations

Paul’s final illustration of the principle of Spirit-produced mutual submission is that between slaves and masters which certainly applies to all employee-employer relationships—Christian Labor Relations. First, Paul wrote that **Christian Employees should obey their Employer.** The 1st reason is that **They are really serving Christ.** Servants—employees—do have “**earthly masters**” but their true Master is in heaven.

Paul wrote, “**But like slaves of Christ, serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.**”

Christian employees are to give willing obedience to those under whom they work, as if they were serving God. **1 Corinthians 10:31** says, “**So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.**” **Turn to 1 Peter 2:18-21.**

Being a Christian should always make a person a better, more productive, and more agreeable worker. If a Christian finds an employment situation to be intolerable, he should consider quitting and looking for something else. But as long as he is employed, he should do the work to the best of his ability. The faithful believer does not simply do the minimum his job requires or only work hard when the boss is watching. He never needs to be checked up on. Whether or not anyone else is around, he always does his work to the best of his ability. “**Obey with respect and fear and with sincerity of heart.**”

Paul wrote, “**Doing the will of God from your heart.**” **Obeying one’s earthly masters is the will of God.** A Christian can perform any good work—secular or religious—as a ministry to Christ and to the glory of God. For this reason, the worker must do his job “**wholeheartedly**,” since he is serving Christ and doing the will of God. There were tasks assigned to the slaves of Paul’s day and to employees today that are detested, but as long as they are not disobeying the will of God, they are to be done just the same.

“**Wholeheartedly**” and “**doing the will of God from your heart**” both indicate the importance of a right heart attitude on the job. **Ecclesiastes 9:10** says, “**Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.**”

Finally, Paul wrote, “**The Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does.**” **Obedience will be rewarded by the Lord.** God’s rewards are always dependable and always appropriate. An employer may not appreciate or even be aware of the good work one does, perhaps because he is indifferent or someone else takes credit for the work. But God knows and God will reward. No good thing done in His name and for His glory can pass His notice or fail to receive his blessing. Then there are the . . .

B. Christian Employers’ responsibilities towards their employees

1. He must seek their welfare. Paul wrote, “**Treat your slaves in the same way,**” If the Christian employer expects his workers to do their best for him, he must do his best for his employees. The employer

must serve the Lord from his heart if he expects his employees to do the same. He must seek their welfare. His relationship with his workers is one of mutual respect and a desire to glorify God. As [Colossians 3:24](#) says, “**It is the Lord you are serving.**”

2. He must not threaten. Paul wrote, “**Do not threaten them.**” The Christian employer uses his authority and power as little as possible and does not throw his weight around or lord it over those under him. He is never abusive or inconsiderate. He must not threaten. He realizes that his own authority is God given. The faithful Christian employer knows that he is a fellow servant with his employees and is accountable to the same master.

3. Finally, He must not show favoritism. God is no respecter of persons. He will judge an employer or an employee if he sins, and God will reward him if he obeys. A Christian employer cannot expect favoritism from God simply because of his position; nor should a Christian employer play favorites with those under his authority. Paul warned Timothy in [1 Timothy 5:21](#) “**Keep these instructions without partiality, and do nothing out of favoritism.**” One of the fastest ways for a leader to divide his followers and lose their confidence is for the leader to play favorites and show partiality.

IV. Conclusion

Spirit-filled believers—whether husbands or wives, parents or children, employers or employees—are to be equally submissive because they are equally loved, equally cared for, and equally obedient to a common Master, their Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. We all have roles and tasks that make for an orderly world, but they do not make people more or less valuable. We all have the same Lord and face the same judgment. If we are filled with the Holy Spirit and if we are joyful, thankful, and submissive, then we can enjoy harmony in the relationships of life as we live and work with other Christians. We will also find it easier to work with and witness to unbelievers who may disagree with us when our lives are lived as God commands. Writing to Christians in Colosse, Paul had the same message, [turn to Colossians 3:12-17](#). “**And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**”