

EPHESIANS: PRECISION THINKING FOR ACCURATE THEOLOGY

SESSION 23 | EPHESIANS 6:1-9

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BELIEVING CHILDREN AND PARENTS | EPHESIANS 6:1-4

- Verse 1 –
 - While wives were to **submit** (5:23), children are to **obey**.
 - The fact that the Scripture uses a different word sheds insight on the role of the wife.
 - Note: the command to promise to "obey" came into the English weddings in the first book of Common Prayer in 1549 (the same year as the "Act of Uniformity" that changed church services from Latin to English in the Anglican Church).
 - The Scripture does not require wives to obey, but to submit.
 - The Greek word **submit** has the idea of "rank" or "order" (see note on v. 23) while the word **obey** is ὑπακούω [hupoakuo], "to come under the hearing" (and thus heed what your hear).
 - The phrase **in the Lord** and **for this is right** could be put together to say, "this is right in the Lord." That is, for children who are **in the Lord** the **right** thing to do is **obey your parents**.
- Verses 2-3 –
 - Paul quotes Exodus 20:12, with a parenthetical note concerning **the first commandment with promise**.
 - However, Paul removed the last words of the commandment, **which the Lord thy God giveth thee**, to make this applicable to all believers.
 - Note that both in Hebrew and Greek the word for *land* and *earth* is the same word.
 - This is an example of one of the times in which Paul takes something from the Old Testament law and makes it applicable for today.
- Verse 4 –
 - Because there is an *order* in the home, with the **fathers** as the leaders of the home, the father has a great responsibility to lead wisely.
 - Harsh leadership is regularly condemned in Scripture, both by explicit teaching and by narrative.
 - The word παροργίζω [parorgizo] is literally *to come alongside wrath* and has no English equivalent.
 - In effect, it tells the father to *use a different tool* than the tool of anger/wrath. The tool to use? **the nurture and admonition of the Lord**.
 - The Greek word for **nurture** παιδεία [paideia] is an all-encompassing word for the training of a child, mentally, physically, and spiritually.
 - The Greek word for **admonition** νουθεσία [nouthesia] is "to put their thinking in order."

- Verse 5 –
 - The word translated **servants** is δοῦλος [doulos].
 - The KJV *interpreted* the word for life in England at the time, where slavery proper had largely (not wholly) ceased to exist, and *serfdom* was the common form of servitude.
 - According to English laws at the time, a person was not considered *property* and thus "slave" was not a relevant term.
 - The word itself, however, is a slave in its more traditional understanding, as slavery did exist in 1st Century Ephesus (and throughout the Roman Empire), though not in a manner totally equivalent to slavery in Colonial America or modern Islamic slave markets.
 - The word **masters** κύριος [kurios] is the same word translated **Lord**, often used in reference to Jesus Christ, but here clearly a reference to earthly **masters according to the flesh**.
 - Rather than condemn slavery Paul instructed the slaves how to relate to their masters (and vice-versa).
 - This should not be taken to mean that Paul condoned slavery. Rather, he was speaking pragmatically about the fact of life in the Roman empire.
 - The slave is to **be obedient** (the same word as used for children). This obedience was to be **with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart** and done **as unto Christ**.
 - In cases like this, the application can only come indirectly, and could be applied (though not dogmatically) to the employee/employer relationship.
- Verses 6-7 –
 - These verses continue with the manner in which slaves were to **be obedient**. Their obedience was **not with eyeservice** ὀφθαλμοδουλία [ophlamodoulia], literally, "slavery only when one was watching," nor as **menpleasers** but as slaves **of Christ**, and doing the **service with good will**.
- Verse 8 –
 - This verse contains an amazing promise, that all good work will be rewarded **of the Lord** both for **bond or free** (the word **bond** is also *doulos*, slave).
 - No further teaching is given as to how the Lord will repay **whatsoever good thing any man doeth**, but the promise remains nonetheless.
- Verse 9 –
 - As with wives and husbands (5:22-33), children and fathers (6:1-4), now Paul moves from servant to master, requiring of them laudable leadership, namely the releasing (literal translation) of **threatening**.
 - The **masters** were to know that they have a **Master** who is **in heaven** and that this Master has no **respect of persons with him** (i.e.: He is not impressed by rank).