



# The Epistle to the Ephesians

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CHAPTER SIX

# Walk in Obedience (6:1-9)

*“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’”*

## I. CHILDREN MUST OBEY PARENTS.

- This is one of the rare commands within the Bible strictly limited in application to “*children*.” Yet, this is broadly applicable because all people are children of their respective parents.
  - The word translated “*children*” is inclusive of all offspring under the care and responsibility of parents. Therefore, until the time when a child leaves the care of his parents, children must submit to parents.
  - Children must “*obey*” their parents because such “*is right*” and well-pleasing to the Lord (Col. 3:20). By obeying their parents, children obey God.
- Many argue that the “*children*” Paul addresses here were Christians.

“Evidently, these children are among the Christians who heard the letter in the church and observed the will of Christ ... Paul, however, addressed those who were mature enough to receive instruction into their consciences with effect upon their conscious activities. For that reason, it is imperative to accept the fact that the children here addressed are at least of age to be Christians” (Caldwell)

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## I. CHILDREN MUST OBEY PARENTS (cont).

- Many argue that the “*children*” Paul addresses here were Christians, but no one can possibly confirm this as authoritatively true. It seems to me that the simplicity of Paul’s admonition to “*obey your parents . . . for this is right*” is just the Spirit’s way of being very direct so as not to confuse children.
- It has always been “*right*” for children to obey their parents (**Exod. 21:15-17; Rom. 1:28-32**).
- Specifically, children are to obey their parents “*in the Lord*.” This phrase can indicate:
  - Faith and obedience to Christ (**1:15**).
  - Christ’s body, i.e. the church (**2:19**).
  - In accordance with Christ’s will and command (**4:17**).
  - Being connected to Christ and part of Him (**5:8**).
  - In service to Christ (**6:10**).
  - For Christ (**6:21**).

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## I. CHILDREN MUST OBEY PARENTS (cont).

- What does “*obey your parents in the Lord*” mean here in Eph. 6:1?
  - Some conclude that this means children should obey their Christian parents.
  - Others have concluded that this means it is according to God’s will that children obey their parents.
  - Another view is that children should obey their parents as long as their parents do not require them to violate God’s commands.

“This limits the submission. That is, whatever can be done in obedience to the parents without violating the law of God, that do” (Lipscomb)
  - There are strengths and weaknesses to each argument. Personally, I do not hold one position as stronger than the others. Each interpretation is supported by other scriptures.



# Walk in Obedience (6:1-9)

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## II. CHILDREN MUST HONOR PARENTS.

- “*Honor*” – value at a price, estimate; honor, reverence (Strong).
  - Children honor parents by obeying them in childhood, continually showing them respect, kindness, and love, and supporting them in old age and times of need (1 Tim. 5:4, 8, 16; Mark. 7:9-13, NET).
- Honoring father and mother “*is the first commandment with promise.*” What does this mean?
  - Some contend that this commandment (the fifth of the Ten Commandments) is the first to contain a promise. Yet, all commandments had the promise associated with longevity of life (Deut. 5:33).
  - Others argue that is the first of the Ten Commandments to contain a specific promise. Yet, specific promises are associated with the second and third commandments (Exod. 20:4-7).
  - I believe the “*promise*” refers to the fact that living a life of Godly submission and obedience generally leads to a long life (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; Prov. 3:1-2, 10:27), and “*first commandment*” indicates that the command to obey and honor parents has always been a foremost concern of the Lord.

# Walk in Obedience (6:1-9)

*“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath,  
but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”*

## III. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS.

- “*Training*” – the whole training and education of children (which relates to the cultivation of mind and morals) (Thayer).
  - Training children in the Lord’s ways is a lifelong responsibility.
- “*Admonition*” – calling attention to, i.e. (by implication) mild rebuke or warning – admonition (Strong).
  - There are times where parents must admonish their children. Warnings and rebukes are sometimes necessary. However, to admonish also implies encouragement of good conduct and not merely discouragement of poor behavior.
- The way parents train and admonish their children should be done in a nurturing way.
  - “*Bring up*” (“*Nurture*,” **ASV**) – to rear up to maturity ... to cherish or train (Strong).
    - And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (**ASV**).

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## III. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS.

- Children must not be left to themselves to learn about the world (**Prov. 29:15**). To the best that parents can, they should desire to shield their children from temptation as long as is possible.
  - The influence of Godly parents can be seen for generations (**Deut. 4:40, 12:25, 28**). Conversely, the influence of ungodly parents can also be seen for generations (**Zech. 1:4**).
- Special emphasis is placed upon the father for training and admonishing His children in the ways of the Lord. This is only logical since the husband is the spiritual head of his family (**Eph. 5:22-23**).
- If parents are not careful in how they rear their children, they can cause their children to become bitter and wrathful.

“The object of the apostle here is, to show parents that their commands should be such that they can be easily obeyed, or such as are entirely reasonable and proper. If children are required to ‘obey,’ it is but reasonable that the commands of the parent should be such that they can be obeyed, or such that the child shall not be discouraged in his attempt to obey” (**Barnes**)

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## III. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS (cont).

- Fathers must not “*provoke*” their children.
  - “*Provoke*” (“*exasperate*,” **NIV**) – to rouse to wrath, to provoke, exasperate, anger (Thayer).
- When parents treat their children in an unjust and unreasonable way, they cause their children to grow discouraged (**Col. 3:21**). When correcting children, truth and correction must always be spoken and acted upon in love.



# Walk in Obedience (6:1-9)

*“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath,  
but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”*

## IV. PRACTICAL ADMONITIONS FOR PARENTS.

- Show your children that you and your spouse are a unified front.
- Remember children are children (1 Cor. 13:11).
- Don't compare your children to other children (2 Cor. 10:12).
- Ensure that a punishment never outweighs the “crime” (Prov. 20:10, 16:11).
- Explain why your children's actions are improper rather than simply stating they did wrong.
- Do not strictly punish / discourage poor behavior; regularly praise / encourage good behavior.
- Don't pick up the rod when angry (Eph. 4:26).
- Regularly show and tell your children that you love them (1 John 3:18).
- Realize when to “pick your battles.”
- Admit to your children when you make mistakes.
- Recognize where matters of right and wrong have been violated versus when matters of conscience differ (this applies more for older children).
- Remain present in every sense for your children's successes and failures.
- Teach your children by example.

# Walk in Obedience (6:1-9)

*“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;”*

## IV. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BONDSERVANTS.

- By no means does this text support forced / cruel slavery such as what was evident in the United States for centuries and is still evident in some countries even today.
  - Slavery was not abolished by the gospel of Christ, but it did demand changes in the attitudes of both servants and masters (1 Tim. 6:1-2).
- Bondservants are required to serve their masters in:
  - Obedience.
  - *“Fear and trembling.”*
    - This same manner by which we must work out our salvation (Phil. 2:12).
  - *“Sincerity of heart, as to Christ.”*
    - We are to serve our fleshly master with sincerity as if we are serving the Lord Himself (1 Pet. 2:18-20).
    - By obeying our earthly masters, we do the Lord’s will (v.6).

# Walk in Obedience (6:1-9)

*“not with eyeservice, as menpleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.”*

## IV. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BONDSERVANTS (cont).

- We should work cheerfully, dependably, and heartily even when not seen by men (Col. 3:22-25).
  - Whatever “good” we do is known and remembered by the Lord, who will recompense us accordingly (2 Cor. 5:10).
- V.6-8 show a clear guide for building a work ethic that pleases God.
  - Serve with humility (v.5a).
  - Serve with sincerity (v.5b).
  - Serve with honesty (v.6).
  - Serve with cheerfulness (v.7).
  - Serve with trust (v.8).

# Walk in Obedience (6:1-9)

*“And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”*

## V. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MASTERS.

- Masters are required to possess the exact same traits as their servants.
  - Earthly masters serve the same Master as their servants (**Psalm 100:3**).
- A master (employer) will not demand of his servant (employee) anything beyond what he would be willing to do himself if the roles were reversed (**Col. 4:1; Matt. 7:12**).
  - This fact further proves enforced / cruel slavery is not supported by the New Testament.
- Though the responsibilities of a servant and master differ, earthly ranks mean nothing to the Lord because *“there is no partiality with Him;”* He shows no favoritism based on earthly rank (**Rom. 2:11**).



# Stand Against the Devil (6:10-20)

*“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”*

## I. BE STRONG IN THE LORD.

- It requires strength to fight the good fight of faith (1 Cor. 16:13).
  - As has been made evident throughout this epistle, true comes from the Lord and not ourselves (Eph. 1:19, 3:16-17, 20). This is equally true when in terms of contending against Satan.
- Whether we realize it or not, while living on earth, we live in the midst of a war that never ends (Gal. 5:17; James 4:1; 1 Pet. 2:11; 2 Thess. 3:1-2).
- Satan has “wiles” – we must not be ignorant of them (2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:8; Job 1:7, 2:2).
  - Such wiles and schemes can include:
    - Blinding us with false doctrine (2 Cor. 4:3-4).
    - Enticing us to indulge our fleshly desires (Eph. 2:1-3).
    - Bringing persecution to those who are righteous (1 Pet. 5:8-9).
- We CAN resist the devil; we are not forced to sin against our will (Rom. 6:16-18, 8:35-39).

# Stand Against the Devil (6:10-20)

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

## I. BE STRONG IN THE LORD (cont).

- Satan’s strength is not measured carnally because the battle is not one of “*flesh and blood*” (2 Cor. 10:3-5).
- We are fighting in a spiritual war against a dangerous enemy (1 John 4:1).
  - Satan’s very name means “*adversary*” (Rev. 12:9).
  - Satan is the “tempter” (John 8:44).
  - Satan is a master at concealing his true identity (2 Cor. 11:13-15, 4:3-4).

# Stand Against the Devil (6:10-20)

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## I. BE STRONG IN THE LORD (cont).

- This passage necessarily condemns carnal warfare (**Matt. 5:43-48**).
  - Government has authority to wage war against flesh and blood; individual Christians do not (**Rom. 13:1-10**).
  - A Christian’s battle is not set against anything on earth, but *“against principalities, against powers, against, the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*
    - Carnal warfare is contrary to the New Testament principles of love and peace. Any view of Romans 13:1-7 which contradicts, or negates the force of, dozens of New Testament passages obligating Christians to love and to be at peace with all men, is obviously incorrect . . . Followers of the “Prince of Peace” are to love their brothers (1 Pet. 1:22); their neighbors (Mt. 22:39), and their enemies (Mt. 5:44; Rom. 12:20) . . . Carnal warfare is specifically forbidden the Christian. Paul writes: “Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds).” (2 Cor. 10:4). Our battle is “not against flesh and blood” (Eph. 6:12); rather, it is spiritual. And in it, we employ the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), not an instrument of blood (**Wayne Jackson, The Christian and Civil Government**).

# Stand Against the Devil (6:10-20)

*“That you may be able to stand in the evil day.”*

## I. BE STRONG IN THE LORD (cont).

- The “*evil day*” is any time we are presented with a temptation to sin (Eph. 5:16).
- We must use every tool at our disposal to battle Satan and his minions during evil days.
  - Recognize we cannot fight the battle alone (Eph. 6:1; James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9).
  - Make preparations (Gal. 6:7-8).
  - Be determined to overcome (1 Cor. 15:33).
  - Look for the way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13); there will ALWAYS be an escape route!
  - Look to God’s Word for direction (Psalm 119:11).
  - Realize that even if we win a battle, the war never ends (Luke 4:13).



# Stand Against the Devil (6:10-20)

*“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;”*

## II. THE ARMOR OF CHRIST’S SOLDIERS.

- Wearing “*truth*” is a must for a spiritual soldier.
  - God’s Word is the source of truth (John 17:17).
  - Truth frees us from the shackles Satan seeks to bind upon us (John 8:32).
  - We must lay aside man’s wisdom and stand prepared with God’s wisdom (1 Cor. 2:4-5).
  - Truth purifies and will always stand (1 Pet. 1:22-25). We must array ourselves with truth and stand with it.
- We must wear “*righteousness*.”
  - To wear righteousness is to apply truth to our lives (1 John 2:29, 3:7; James 1:22-25; Rom. 6:12-13, 16-18).
  - We must put on an attitude that flees from evil (Rom. 12:9; 1 Thess. 5:22).
- Preparation provided by the “*gospel of peace*” is a necessary part of the spiritual soldier’s attire.
  - The gospel prepares us for every battle (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

# Stand Against the Devil (6:10-20)

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## II. THE ARMOR OF CHRIST’S SOLDIERS (cont).

- A key part of the Christian soldier’s defense is the “*shield of faith*.”
  - Satan tests our faith, but faith is so vital that without it we cannot please God (2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:6).
  - Faith will motivate us to never give up during the ongoing war against Satan (Heb. 11:1-2; 2 Tim. 1:12).
- A good soldier must wear his helmet. A soldier of Christ wears the “*helmet of salvation*.”
  - The hope of salvation reinforces everything we do (1 Thess. 5:8). It keeps us fighting and battling against Satan (1 John 5:11-13, 18-21).
- The only offensive weapon the Christian soldier needs is the “*sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*.”
  - The word of God is the sharpest sword to ever exist (Heb. 4:12).
  - The word of God also provides defense (1 Pet. 3:15; Matt. 4:1-10).
  - When handled aright, word of God makes Christ’s soldiers wiser than all our enemies (Psalm 119:98; Tit. 1:9).

# Stand Against the Devil (6:10-20)

*“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—”*

## III. THE ACTIVATING FORCE BEHIND THE ARMOR.

- Prayer is a powerful weapon against Satan. It is both an offensive and defensive weapon that is equally important to the armor as the shield, helmet, etc.
  - The early church used prayer as a weapon (**Acts 12:1-7**).
    - Contextually, Paul uses prayer here as a tool for aiding “*all the saints*” (1 **Tim.** 2:1), including himself (v.19-20).
  - Prayer is a weapon without limit (**Acts 12:21-24**).
  - Prayer is the soldier’s direct line of communication with the Commander of the Christian army (1 **John** 3:22, 5:14-15; **Heb.** 4:15-16).
  - Prayer keeps the soldier “*watchful*” against the adversary and helps him endure (**Col.** 4:2; **Matt.** 26:41).
  - Prayer helps refocus the soldier’s perspective (**Phil.** 4:6-7).

# Stand Against the Devil (6:10-20)

*“and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”*

## IV. PAUL’S REQUEST.

- Paul, like all Christians, was an “ambassador” for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).
- Paul often asked for prayers of the saints (Rom. 15:30; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1, 22).
  - Paul specifically requested for wisdom and opportunity to speak “*as I ought to speak*,” i.e. speak the right things the right way (Col. 4:2-3; Phil. 1:12-14).
- Paul’s chains did not detract him from the responsibility he bore in preaching the gospel. Do we possess the same attitude (Acts 8:1-4)?



# Closing Remarks (6:21-24)

*“But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts.”*

## I. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF TYCHICUS.

- In addition to this letter being intended to provide instruction the Ephesians, the delivery of the epistle by Tychicus would also provide an opportunity for Paul’s companion to alert the church of Paul’s affairs.
  - Paul desired for the Ephesians to know his affairs, how he was doing, and he wanted them to know “*all things*” Tychicus would convey; such news would “*comfort*” their hearts rather than cause them to lose heart (**Eph. 3:13**).
    - The bond between the church and Paul was incredibly strong after the three years he labored in Ephesus (**Acts 20:36-38**). The Ephesians were likely concerned for Paul’s welfare.
- Tychicus had traveled with Paul during his third missionary journey (**Acts 20:1-6**).
- Tychicus delivered this letter, as well as the letters to Philemon and the Colossians (**Col. 4:7-9**).

# Closing Remarks (6:21-24)

*“Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”*

## II. PAUL’S CLOSING PRAYER.

- Paul’s final prayer for the Ephesians recorded in this epistle is one praying for “*peace*,” “*love*,” and “*faith*.”
- Love is “*from*” God. We are only capable of loving because God first loved us (1 John 4:7, 19)
  - One can only imagine the peace, love, and faith the Ephesians would feel after reading the contents of this letter and being reminded of:
    - The redemption each Christian has in Christ (Eph. 1:3-13).
    - The equality between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2-3:7).
    - The love of Christ (Eph. 3:14-21).
    - Christians’ unified goal of spiritual growth and holiness (Eph. 4-5).
    - God providing strength to fight against Satan (Eph. 6:10-18).
- Just as the epistle began with an emphasis on “*grace*” (Eph. 1:2), so it ends with the same emphasis. Such is fitting what has been termed the epistle of grace.
  - **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS OVEREMPHASIZING GRACE** (as long as we preach the scriptural version it).