

] Provoke Not Your Children to Wrath [

Ephesians 6:1 – 9

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~ We live in an age of hyper self-esteem. Self-esteem is taught at university to develop confidence and values that will help graduates succeed in society. As a result, the overall thinking by the average person today is that they are the only ones who matter in this world. Self-value is code for insisting on one's ignorance. We have heavily instilled the concept of self-love into our children; but disobedience and rebellion is greater than it has ever been before in contemporary society. Sheltering our young people in a nonjudgmental environment, filled with praise for everything they do — right or wrong — has created a generation of monsters who are narcissistic, selfish, self-centered, pathetic; and who literally have no empathy, no regard for human life, no respect for authority, and no social skills on any level whatsoever. They're dead-behind-the-eyes zombies. Teaching tolerance of every wicked and sinful lifestyle imaginable has brought about a global philosophy that is thoroughly confused, suspicious of everyone, and utterly devoid of respect for the authority of God. I don't think any reasonable person would argue that this world is spinning out of control in regards to decent and civilized human behavior.

Our last report from our Spiritual Safari laid an introduction to this final chapter of Ephesians, and our overall subject is the church as a soldier. This report defines a soldier's relationship to other people in the world. Basic training and preparation for standing in Christ Jesus begins in the home with the parent-child relationship – and that encompasses the master-servant relationship, too; and it must begin there – it simply cannot be otherwise. Children who do not receive proper discipline and correction from a very early age will carry a life-long handicap as they begin facing their own battles in their homes, their workplace and in life, in general. A good, effective and successful soldier must follow orders to the letter and the letter begins with: children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right! Only when that command is learned and followed is the child ready to be promoted to the rank of officer where he gives commands to others;

because the ability to give commands to others is a direct result of being obedient to God....

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

~ Obeying Godly parents is right because the Lord says so; and it is the righteous and just thing to do — because God says it is the right and just thing to do. This is God's way of doing things, friends. Remember, it is said of Jesus that, as a boy, He went down to Nazareth and was *".... subject to Joseph and Mary."* See, there are two essential factors that must be taken into account in this verse: one, it is presumed that Paul is talking about the Christian home. Since we are speaking only to Spirit-filled and Spirit-led Christians, who are in the direct will of God, it is only reasonable that this tenet continues to apply. Obedience of children to parents is strictly confined to the circumference of being *"in the Lord."* If you have evil, ungodly parents, you are to obey your Father in Heaven — not them.

I have a special empathy for those who accept the Lord as children, but have unsaved parents. There was a very Godless heavy drinker of a man who said to his son, *".... now that you're a Christian you're going to have to obey me."* Well, the boy replied, *".... when you become a Christian, too; then yes, I'll start obeying you."* Christian parents have the privilege of claiming their children for the Lord. I think we all should do that, as I did with my two children, and grandchildren — on the very day they each were born. That doesn't save the child or necessarily mean they will accept Christ at the age of accountability, though; but it does mean a parent is relieved of that responsibility; and has the right to dedicate the lives of the children to the Lord, irrespective of how it works out later in their individual salvation. Every parent ought to avail themselves of leading their children to a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus. I'm afraid very few have that opportunity; and even fewer avail themselves of it. Many parents have completely lost their children at a very young age — which is beyond tragic.

The second factor we must keep in mind when taking this first verse of chapter six of Ephesians into account is that the word *"obey"* is an altogether different word than *"submit"* as we had in verse twenty-two of chapter five. Here, it actually means *obey*; whereas, as we learned,

“submit” is a different concept because, naturally, the wife occupies a position of equality. In that regard, it is merely a question of headship in the home. A child is to obey their parents as a servant is to obey their master. That is the same idea we have coming up in verse five of this chapter. Disobedience to parents is the lowest and worst act of lawlessness perpetuated on earth. All problems begin there. I don't think most people realize or accept that truth. Paul told Timothy that, in the last days, perilous times would come; and that time is marked by men being lovers of self, covetous, boastful, proud, blasphemous, liars – and *DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS*! It all goes together. That's second Timothy chapter three, by the way. Those things are totally indicative of the days in which we live. Some parents say, *“... I just cannot make that child obey me.”* Well, may I say? – Yes, you could; and you should – you just won't....

2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise)

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

~ If you are familiar with this Spiritual Safari, then you know the Ten Commandments are *NOT* the rule for Christian living. However, that doesn't mean we can just break them and sin willy-nilly, either. As Christians, in the direct will of God, we are called to a *MUCH* higher plane of living than the Mosaic System of Levitical Law. Honoring our parents by the life we live is the only commandment that promises anything to those who keep it. There is no reward or recognition in any of the other commandments; obedience to them is *expected*. Further, all of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament *EXCEPT* for the law of the Sabbath Day. I'm sure some of you don't like that truth; but even keeping the Sabbath has no promise or hope when applied to a day of the week. Keeping the Sabbath only promises something if you *DON'T* keep it – but *nothing* if you do. Two tragic life examples of those who did not obey father and mother in the Bible are Samson and Absalom. Samson, a judge, died very young. Absalom, also very young, died in rebellion to his father David. Two utter tragedies....

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

~ Under the dispensation of grace, there are mutual responsibilities and interactive duties required of the parents. Verse four also means punishment and discipline are never to be administered in a fit of rage. It is the parent's duty to teach their children the truths of Scripture — and to live them out before the child. Preaching at your children to live as a Christian when you don't live a life pleasing to the Lord is ridiculous and futile. Further, I believe the responsibility for discipline in training a child falls primarily to the father; although the mother is certainly included. If the board of education is not applied to the seat of knowledge appropriately by one of them, then proper correction is simply impossible.

Proverbs has a whole lot to say about this truth. If you '*spare the rod of discipline*' then you *HATE* your child. I didn't say that — the Bible says that, my friends. Proverbs also says, "*.... chasten thy son while there is hope and let not thy soul despair for his crying.*" Another Proverb says, "*.... foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.*" Also, saith the writer of the Proverbs, "*.... if thou beatest the child with the rod he shall not die*" and "*the rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.*" Of course, that never means to vent anger and discipline in vengeance; because the child will see a mean disposition; and that will, necessarily, provoke them to anger. It means to administer punishment in the admonition of the Lord. Discipline must take place so that the child might come to a vital relationship with God, and be fortified when he comes in contact with the world; and an occasional meaningless "*time out*" just doesn't cut it, friends. I don't think the Lord could make it any clearer than that....

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;

6 Not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

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

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.

~ We're going to deal with verses five through eight completely in our next report from our Spiritual Safari; and we're going to end this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God by meditating on verse nine, as it is the other side of the coin. As we have already said, this pertains to Christian's who are in the direct will of God only — Christian workers and Christian business owners — this defines the capital and labor of Christianity. When this is meted out correctly, according the Word of God, then it won't be necessary for a labor boss to come around and make sure the capitalist is doing what he is supposed to be doing. There are many Christian business owners today who do the right thing, and they are always very prosperous; because God will bless honesty and integrity in the workplace on *BOTH* sides of the time clock. The employee-employer relationship should be altogether different in a Christian concern. This is where the Word of God gets right down into the heart of our business — and the ethics of our lives; and we'll pick back up right here in our next report ~

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