

The Duty of Slaves

Beginning in v. 5, Paul addresses slaves. In Paul's day, most slaves served in the home. Some scholars have given the estimate that up to one-third of the population of the Roman Empire during the first century A.D. were slaves, that is, about 60 million slaves. Many of these slaves were Christians. Paul advised Christian slaves to obey their earthly masters. The obedience of a Christian slave to his earthly master signifies his submission to Christ. Paul also listed seven qualifications that characterize proper obedience of a slave (vv. 5-7): (1) proper obedience (service has to be respectful); (2) "trembling" or "fear" (service with care to avoid mistakes as far as possible); (3) sincere (without hypocrisy); (4) service should be as to the Lord; (5) service should be consistent whether the master is watching or not; (6) service must arise from proper motives, not to please man but to please God; (7) the slave should have an attitude of good will towards the master; he should serve for the master's welfare.

In v.8, Paul states a very important principle: "... you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free." What do you think this principle means?

The Duty of Masters

In v. 9, Paul exhorts masters: "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 in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him." In other words, masters should seek to please the Lord in their dealings with their slaves even as slaves should try to please Christ as they serve their masters. Masters should also remember that their Master in heaven would not show favoritism to them because of their social or economic status.

If masters are not to threaten their slaves, how should they then treat their slaves? (see Col. 4:1; James 5:4). How do you think God the heavenly Master and Judge will deal with unjust masters? (see Matt. 7:1-5) Reflect on how employees and employers should deal with one another in the present time based on the principles from this passage. If you are an employee or an employer, think of some concrete ways which would contribute towards an ideal employer-employee relationship.

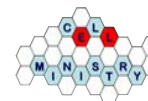
SUMMARY

What we do and how we do matters because all of life, be it family life or work life, is lived in, to and for the Lord.

Ephesians

Week 13

[Cell-group Discussion]



Ephesians 6 : 1 - 9

The section Eph. 6:1-9 relates to the theme of human relationships (i) between parents and children continuing from Paul's discussion of the husband-wife relationship in Chap. 5, and (ii) between masters and slaves.

The Duty of Children

In v. 1, Paul explains how children express their submission by obeying their parents "in the Lord." This means that obedience is built upon one's relation to the Lord. Obedience is right because it is in harmony with God's will for children.

Are children required to obey their parents if their parents tell them to disobey the Lord? Should obedience be blind obedience? Why? What about adult children? What should the response of a child who has become an adult to his or her parents?

Christians no longer live under the Law of Moses (see Rom. 7:6; 10:4; etc.), but Paul quotes the fifth commandment (see Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16) to emphasize that it is important in God's eyes for children to obey their parents (see v. 2). Now the command for children to obey parents become part of the Law of Christ. Children are exhorted to honor their parents.

What do you think is the difference, if any, between the command to obey (v. 1) and the command to honor (v. 2)?

When Paul restated the promise connected with obeying the fifth commandment, he changed it. What did God promise obedient Jewish children according to Exod. 20:12 and Deut. 5:16? What does "... that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth?" (v. 3) mean for Christians? Is this a promise from God? What is the difference between this last statement and the above mentioned promise in Exod. 20:12 and Deut. 5:16?

The Duty of Fathers

In v. 4, Paul advises fathers to do two things: (i) first not to exasperate their children; (ii) second, to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Why do you think Paul addresses fathers, and not mothers? Do you think Paul's advice is applicable to mothers as well? Why?

What does it mean for a father to exasperate his children? Why do you think Paul gave the advice for fathers not to exasperate their children? What does it mean for a father to bring his children "up in the training and instruction of the Lord"? If you are a father, do you meet the standards of Paul's exhortation in v. 4? In what ways have you failed? What changes do you need to make?