

## **Ephesians - One Body of Christ**

### **“Service with a Good Will”**

### **Ephesians 6:1-9**

Now please turn to Ephesians 6:1-9.

***The Apostle Paul writes, children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. Bound servants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of service as people pleasers, but as bond servants of Christ. Doing the will of God from the heart. Rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man. Knowing that whatever good anyone does this, he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bond servant or is free. Masters do the same to them and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality in him.***

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Great, good. Have a seat. I know many of you have told me over the course of the week you've said I've been waiting to say it back. So I'm glad that we've been able to do that and move to that, that stage in our relationship now. So that's wonderful.

Well, as you can see here, Paul is continuing on in his teaching about how it is we are to understand God in light of our faith, how we are to develop sort of moral, ethical teachings in light of the faith that we have in Jesus Christ.

There's a moral psychologist. His name is Jonathan Haidt. He wrote a book called *The Righteous Mind* that I think is very interesting. He's not a believer. And yet what he writes about there very much reflects what we find in Scripture. And writers like Augustine and John Calvin talking about how we think and how we act and how our will informs the way that we act and behave in the world around us. And Jonathan Haidt says this about morality. He says all humans have a kind of moral taste, bud. Okay. They've got multiple moral taste buds. When we taste things morally. Sometimes you just see a thing you have to think about and think about taste buds. It's like if you eat a bitter fruit, your brain doesn't have to say, wait, that's bitter. And then you scrunch up your face, right? When you eat something sweet, you don't have to say, oh, that tastes good, but rather when you eat a chocolate fudge brownie, your body just goes, oh, that's good, right? Because you have this moral taste but then responds to the thing you even have to think about, it kind of goes around the brain. And Jonathan Haidt is saying that in human life we have moral taste buds, and those taste buds can change. And I think that's a useful way of

thinking about the Bible itself. What is the Bible doing? The Bible is helping us develop. As we said this morning when we started worship, the ability to taste and see that God is good, that he's sweet.

As a matter of fact, one of the most basic places in the Bible where we learn about our moral taste buds and we start to change and develop a taste for the things of the Lord is in the Ten Commandments. We're getting kind of the basics of moral taste buds, right? And that's what Paul is unpacking here. If you didn't notice that this whole section, these nine verses in chapter six of Ephesians is really Paul's explanation or exposition of the fifth commandment in the Ten Commandments is it's taking this very basic commandment, honor your father and your mother, and he's unpacking it. But notice, it's not just for families. It's not just about children and parents. It's also about bond servants and masters, people who work together in the business world, out there, in the world outside of families. Paul recognizes that actually, this fifth commandment is giving us some moral tastebuds for the whole of how we interact with authority. So I want to look at the fifth commandment as Paul looks at it. And as we do that, we're going to be reading the Fifth Commandment. You can find this either in Exodus 20 or in Deuteronomy five, but we're going to be reading it as if Paul is standing next to us. And then secondly, we have the Westminster Larger Catechism in one of our hands. Okay, so Paul is giving us God's infallible explanation of the fifth commandment. And yet we also have this great collection from church history, which is the Westminster Larger Catechism.

So I'm going to kind of cite both of them because they're all saying the same thing. And it's helpful in understanding that as we look at Ephesians chapter six. So what is the fifth commandment again, as Paul quotes it, ***honor your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord, your God is giving you.***

Okay, notice, first of all, he's talking about how are you supposed to live your whole life? And yet instantly he focuses in he's talked about how God is God alone and we should not have idols, and we shouldn't take the Lord's name in vain, and we should honor the Sabbath. And then as he's talking about these grand big things, he suddenly says, now honor your fathers and mothers.

Now notice he's not just talking about parents. You see in Israelite society as much as in Second Temple Judaism that Paul was living in. People understood that family was kind of the core, you know, the core structure of authority for all of society. As a matter of fact, if you were an Israelite, the tribe that you were in and the family that you were in would actually decide in many times what your calling was in life, you didn't get to grow up and kind of go to college and choose a major, okay?

You would you would grow up and your dad would say, you're going to work in the temple. Why? Because you're a Levite. That's all you get to do, okay? Or if you're in the line of Aaron, you're going to be a priest, okay? If you live a certain part of the land, you're going to be a shepherd. If you live in another part of the land, you're going to be a farmer.

You see, your family would decide where you fit into society. Not only that, all of society was seen as a big family. As a matter of fact, the king would be referred to as the father. Okay, you think about that. That's even true in our Lord's Prayer, isn't it? We say Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Do we then say your family come notice we don't. We say, father, your kingdom come because you're a king. Father. Lord, you're a king. Father to us all. Here's another example. If you go back in the Old Testament, you look in the Hebrew. Do you ever notice that it actually doesn't say there's a new word for Israelite in the Old Testament?

You could say it. It would be something like Israel eat. Okay, because we know that you can call someone a Jew to hide a year who did okay, or something like that. But interestingly, when you talk about Israelites in the Old Testament, know what they're called Bene Israel, sons of Israel. Because if you're in Israel, you're a son. You see father and mother in the Ten Commandments. And the fifth commandment is about more than just family relationships. Now, remember I said, we're going to have the Westminster Larger Catechism next to us. It's a document that our denomination, the PCA, uses as kind of a gathering document to help us understand what do we believe about these things. So if you look at the Westminster Larger Catechism, it's not a fact.

If you were doing a Bible study on the Old Testament, Ten Commandments have the larger catechism open next to you. It's a wonderful, wonderful, just teaching friend and help as you're going through the Old Testament. So when it gets to the fifth commandment, the Westminster Larger Catechism says this, this language of father and mother is really speaking to all authority structures according to age, experience and gifting isn't an interesting, interesting definition of authority.

It's authority structures according to age. So yes, your elders have an authority over you. It's good and right to say yes sir and yes ma'am. As a matter of fact, I would encourage you all to say that all the time. I told my daughters this always say yes, sir and yes, ma'am, you can never lose by showing respect to other people.

Okay, but notice there that the Larger Catechism says yes, it's experience according to age, but also according to experience. Okay. Gifting these things can also give authority. You know where I used to live in Washington DC, I had a mechanic, a car mechanic. His name was Hector, and I

would take my car to Hector and when I would walk in to Hector's garage, it didn't matter that I was president of arts in Washington, New York and Chicago.

It didn't matter that I had an Old Testament PhD. I would say, Hector, my car is making this noise. He would say, you need to do this. And I would say, yes, master, yes, master. I will do that because you have more experience in gifting in this area than I do. Okay. Yeah. Well, not when I teach Old Testament oftentimes, particularly being in DC as it is here in prior, would you would have people who are gifted in a lot of other areas in ways that I was not gifted.

So when I would talk about the Old Testament, I would be the one with authority. And yeah, when I would talk about things outside of the Old Testament, oftentimes there would be people with greater authority in the class. I can remember one time I an illustration that I had been using, to explain a thing that happens in Hebrew, and I was using this illustration from Tom Clancy's book and movie.

It's in both, Hunt for Red October. Okay. Some of that submarine Russian submarines did, and I would use this example, let's say look at Hebrew. Does this to me. Okay. And as I'm doing it, I realize two rows back in the class is a two star admiral submariner. Okay? And he's a friend of mine, I know him, I know him just through the family and everything.

And so I realized this. I'm in the middle of teaching this class. Oh, wait, I can't do this. Like I usually do it, right. So I used it. I used my illustration, but then I said, Admiral Diesel, is that true? And he said, yeah, that's kind of true. Yeah, that's kind of that's, that's maybe something like that happens.

Okay. Because he has authority in that area. No matter how much I know about Hebrew. Okay. He has authority in that area. You see, we have to recognize with the larger catechism that the structure of all of human society is a system of authority that is reciprocal. It changes, and therefore it should be marked by respect and collaboration, and that all of this begins and ends and springs out of the context of the family.

Okay. Now notice in this ten commandment, the fifth commandment, the Lord doesn't just say honor your father and mother because it's the right thing to do, right? What does he say to the child, to the subordinate, to the one who is, lower in the authority structure? He says, honor your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord has given you.

You see, if Israel was to succeed in this land of Israel and Canaan that the Lord is giving them, they must recognize the life giving skill of honoring the father and the mother. See, honoring in this way assumes that every person is moving through life, gaining achievements, gaining experience, stature in maturity. The child becomes the parent. The noob right becomes the wizened expert.

The one who's wet behind the ears becomes the gray haired sage. And as a result of that, we have to recognize that we're constantly in moving and changing structures of authority. We all exercise authority in one way or another, from the king to the servant, from the CEO to the intern, from the parent to the child. We all exercise authority, and therefore we must recognize and honor these systems of authority that God has put in place.

Now, there's three people who are involved in this commandment and how Paul unpacks this commandment. Okay. The first two are explicit. The second one or the third one rather is it's more implicit. So we're going to talk about just briefly at the end. But these are the three people who the Fifth commandment is talking about.

First of all, you have the child. The child is called to honor. Then you have the parent who was called to receive the honor. And then thirdly, you have the equal or the pure. All of these are involved in this fifth commandment. So let's look at all three. First of all, let's look at the child children, kids, subordinates at work, citizens.

You are called to honor your parents, your employers, your superiors, and whatever context you're in, you're called to show them honor. It's called to honor the authority structure that you find yourself in. You're supposed to look for those who are, you know, a little farther along in life, those who have more gifting this were a little bit more mature.

And as you meet them, you honor them for their place. They might they might be younger than you. Actually, I think Hector was probably younger than me, but he had more experience in this area, and so I honored him. I honored his knowledge and his authority. There. You see, by honoring those around us who the Lord has put in our lives, we are indeed honoring life.

So you can't be here. If it wasn't for your father and your mother. I don't care how terrible they are. I don't care if they're present in your life or not. You would not be here if it wasn't for them. And the Lord is saying honor it because you honor life. Honor authority. In this way, by honoring your parents, you're honoring the creational order that God has made and sustained.

Now, let's be clear about something that does not mean that we honor the individual in their behavior, no matter what. This is kind of like what we talked about when we were talking about marriage last week, right? You don't just honor the individual no matter what. We even have a story in acts five where Peter and the apostles are being called to deny Christ.

And what does he say? We honor God, not man. Okay, just because Caesar is telling you to do something doesn't mean you do it. You have to always honor the Lord first and foremost, and yet recognize that there is still an office, right? There's an office that those in authority have that should be honored. But honoring does not mean enabling.

It doesn't mean giving in. It doesn't mean letting someone abuse more or encouraging destructive behavior, but rather it means fleeing abuse, breaking out of destructive family dynamics and patterns, and doing this because you're steeped in God's Word, you're fervent in prayer. You're seeking the counsel of others around you. I know this is hard. This can be particularly difficult in families where there are destructive dynamics, right?

You know what it feels like. You know that if for some of you, if you go home on Thanksgiving and you just live out the gospel life that the Lord has called you to, it's going to make people angry, right? You're not going to be doing the thing that you're supposed to be doing, right? We don't do that in this family.

What are you doing coming in here being all bright and sunny and cheerful and encouraging others and edifying them and being firm in the truth of the gospel. What do you mean by doing that? You're messing up the system. Even Jesus himself recognized what it was like to go back and be a prophet in his hometown, right? Say Jesus, who do you think you are talking this way?

See, this is not easy. And yet it's how we honor our fathers and our mothers. We honor them by honoring the God of the universe who gave them to us. We trust in his providence that he put us in their lives. Let me just have a side conversation here about this word that Paul uses when he switches from parents or children and parents to servants.

And now the ESV properly translates as born servants. And that's good. That's a good translation for them to use here, because this is not just talking about something like slaves. We have to be careful, particularly in a Western context, because in the earlier translations where they say slaves, most people hear this and they think, well, I think about slavery in the United States and in the North Atlantic.

But we have to be clear here what Paul is talking about here when he uses this term, do loss and what we have in the Old Testament with that word severed, that Hebrew word severed, that means servant is not slavery of the type that we see from the 17th to the 19th century in the United States and in Europe.

Okay, first of all, just to be clear, that slavery, that North American colonial slavery was based off of abduction, which itself is a capital offense. And in Exodus, 1621, it's called a capital offense to kidnap someone that would automatically make this whole system, something of which you would be guilty unto death for, has to do with breaking up of families.

It has to do with us, which also is a serious crime in the Old Testament, not treating one another as if they are made in the image of God. That would also be a serious crime. We have to always remember whenever you read about slavery laws in the old Testament, always remember that in the background of every one of those laws is the overarching law on how we're supposed to treat one another, which is what love your neighbor as yourself.

So whatever you do in that system of slavery, of servanthood, of bond servants, you have to love them sacrificially as yourself, even if you are a master over a servant. And that, of course, does not describe what was seen in the United States, particularly in its history. And it is a great shame to the church that there were men who could expound on the glories of the atonement and on the wonders of the glory of God.

And yet when it came to the doctrine of anthropology, that is the doctrine of humanity, they would take verses like this and say that it supported the American system of chattel slavery. That is a shame to us, and it should be a warning that men of such theological insight can make such a grave error. We ought not think ourselves better, so we ought to be careful about those things as well.

But look at what the author of Proverbs says in Proverbs 23:22. Listen to your father or mother who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. You see, by honoring authority in a biblical way, we are doing a good thing.

We are honoring life. Fourth century pastor John Chrysostom, who is known as Golden Mouth because of how good of a preacher he is. Don't, please don't ever not be tempted, but don't ever feel like you need to call me Golden Mouth, okay? For any reason. All right. But John Chrysostom, who was called Golden Mouth, he said this, the child who learns to respect and honor their parents is already shaping their soul in virtue and in love.

You see, Paul adds that honoring our earthly authorities, this is how we honor Christ. You're ultimately honoring Christ himself. He's your master. He's your Lord. Honor him by honoring those that he has put providentially in your path. So that's talking about children. But secondly, notice this is also talking about parents how want we be as parents. And Paul is telling us this parents, employers, law enforcement, government officials, political figures honor those and care for those who are you, who are given authority over the responsibility is not just on the subordinate.

The burden is yours. Be worthy of respect and honor. All right? Just as we said about marriage, be worthy of love. Be worthy of respect, you heads of state, you heads of companies, be worthy of the honor of the human dignity that you are shown. You ought to show to others, being sensitive to the needs of those who are under your care, even sacrificing yourself for them as Christ sacrifices himself for the church, it should be said that Christian leaders are the best leaders to have.

It should be said that if you've if you've been saved, okay, then that's the kind of boss I want to have. I remember I was talking to a Christian in a country where there was restricted belief, restricted Christianity. As a matter of fact, you could be thrown in jail by the government if you were found out to be a Christian.

And yet there came a time of this when the story was going around amongst the church. That one of the one of the governors in the area had gone to get surgery, and that surgery would involve him having to have, general anesthesia. And in this particular country, that's very dangerous for a powerful political official to go under general anesthesia, because they could do whatever they want to him when he's under General anesthesia.

Right. And so he walked into the surgeon and he handed the surgeon a wad of bills, and he said, make sure I make it through this, okay? Right. And the surgeon said, oh, you don't need to do that. And he says, no, no, I won't. I'm going to do this. Take it, take it, take it. I want you to have it.

And the surgeon said, no, you don't. You don't need to. You see, I'm a Christian and I don't. I can't take your bribe. And the government official looked at him for a second. When you're a Christian, he said, yeah. He goes, okay, good, and put the money back in his pocket. Okay. That's how we want you to think about bosses and CEOs, right?

If I'm in a company, I'll wait. My CEO's a Christian. Oh. Good. Good. I know I'm in a good place. We're going to be taking care of. Won't be watched over. I'm going to be shown dignity. The one in authority. The pastor, the employer, the teacher, the the the the minister. The government, government official receives and exercises authority from God, whether they acknowledge it or not.

You see, we're all called to watch over those who we have been giving care for. Here's a warning for the parent, for the teachers, the one with the authority, as we saw in Ephesians chapter four verse six, where Paul talks about God being the father of all. Remember that. And we said, it actually means that abusive fathers are in some way a unique form of blasphemy.

You remember that. We can see how this now extends to all of those who are given authority. If you've been given authority, you've been given it by God. Whether you recognize it or not, it's still given to you by God. Remember, Paul says in Romans 13 that the Caesar has been given the power of the sword from the Lord.

Right. You remember the Caesar he's talking about is Nero. Nero doesn't recognize that that's where he got his authority, but it's where he got his authority. Doesn't matter. He'll still be held accountable by the living God who Paul just told us shows no partiality. Okay, in Hebrew, the way you say partiality is a lifting up of faces. Do you lift up as if someone who lifts up faces or not?

Does he say some are a little higher than others? Paul says, you don't understand. You can be Caesar or you can be the lowest ranking military official. You can be a servant in a pit and you will not be shown any partiality, one or the other before God. So therefore be careful. Be careful how you use that authority that you've been given.



So we've talked about the child, we talked about the parent. And then lastly and briefly, just a talk as the Westminster Larger Catechism does about this implied other group that is the equal that the person who has the same authority as you do, you might say, well, it's kind of arbitrary. What's the value of that? Well, let me put it into a couple of, practical contexts.

Parents. Do you ever put down the other spouse with the children? You tell them I'm the loving one. I'm the gentle one. I'm the one to let you go do that thing, remember? Not them. They're the mean ones. The meanies. Okay? Right. You know that temptation. If you haven't done it, you've been tempted to, I know. Okay.

Colleagues, have you ever looked at those who have the same authority? Maybe they're in a different department, but they have the same authority as you. And so you build little silos so that you can succeed in ways that they can't succeed, because that makes you look better to the boss. As a matter of fact, when we get into most fields and industries, it's the colleagues, it's the peers.

It's the ones who are equal in authority, where you find the greatest contention and conflict. You see, if we honor the authority that the Lord has put around us, that means we honor those who are at the same level of authority as we are. Here's the warning. If you don't honor those who are at the same level, who are equal to you in the authority structure, be careful.

You will not just be undermining their authority. You'll be ultimately undermining yours as well. You see, we are all called to honor the authority structures that the Lord has put in place unto his glory. Not number, not blindly, but always unto his glory. So as we consider these things the honoring of the father and the mother that Paul brings before us, we see those implications everywhere, how we live in the household, but also how we how we operate out there on the city's roads, how we operate in politics, how we operate in the church, how we operate at work.

There's implications everywhere we go, but we can't help but keep thinking back. As we talk about children and parents, we can't help but keep going back to the fact that we ourselves have been given a spirit of sonship before the father. We were once as servants, says Paul. But now you've been made like a son. It's a matter of fact, because we are in Christ, we come to the father, and we can actually truly call him ABBA father.

We can truly come before him and say, hear us, Lord, and he hears us as if he's hearing you. Believe this as if he's hearing the son himself, Jesus of Nazareth, come before him. He doesn't welcome you in and say, oh, here he comes again. That guy, that girl, he receives you in as if he's receiving in the son himself.

This should be a great hope for those of us who know of broken relationships with parents who have experienced toxic workplaces where there's a lot of wounding and there's a lot of hurt. This should give us hope that we know that we can find true healing. We can enjoy and

celebrate the true authority of our divine parent, our Heavenly Father, who doesn't only love us, but he came to find us so that he might restore with us a spirit of sonship, spirit of fatherhood, and we might be before him and be at peace.

Let's pray, heavenly Father, as we do come before you, I pray, Lord, that you would bless us, prepare our hearts for this table that we are about to participate in. I pray, Lord, that you would prepare us by letting us recognize as we come to this table. We do come as children to the father's table. So, Lord, as we come, we come in the Spirit of Christ nourish us.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen.