

EPHESIANS 6

By Charles Dailey © 2014 Revised 1/17/2024 NLT CPS
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Introduction:

1. Paul has been demonstrating God's wisdom in creating a new society composed of Jews and Gentiles.
2. Paul sees an alienated humanity being *reconciled*, a fractured humanity being *united*, even a new humanity being *created*. It is a magnificent vision.
3. Because God has done all of this, He expects new standards of living, both as individuals and as groups of saints in the church.
4. Paul has just laid down some rules for conduct as believers:
 - a) Don't tell lies, but tell the truth.
 - b) Don't lose your temper but be sure your anger is righteous.
 - c) Don't steal, but work and give.
 - d) Don't use the gift of speech for evil, but for good.
 - e) Don't be unkind or bitter, but kind and loving.
We see that each positive command is coupled with a "don't."
5. Chapter 5 ranges over many subjects like:
 - a) Christian talk.
 - b) Doing what pleases the Lord; a radical idea.
 - c) Avoiding *beverage spirits*, but being filled with the *Holy Spirit*.
 - d) Giving thanks at all times.
 - e) Being subject to others.
6. Now Paul discusses children, slaves and masters in the light of subjection.

CHILDREN

6:1 Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do.

- In the new family of God, **children** were important and were in the church assembly because Paul was addressing them here. In the *Roman society*, they were of little value.
- The requirement is stronger for **children** than wives. Wives were to *submit* to their husbands – a voluntary choice. However, children are to **obey** their **parents**. It is not conditional.
- **Obey:**
 “used of one who upon the knock at the door comes to listen who it is . . .” - *Thayer* Commentator
Albert Barnes goes a step further:

No parent has a right to forbid a child to pray, to read the Bible, to worship God, or to make a profession of religion. (from Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by BibleSoft)

- **This is right.** The inspired Paul had a firm set of values of what is **right**. It was **right** based on the Scriptures of Moses (Deuteronomy 21:18-21) and **right based** on the example of Jesus of Nazareth. Luke 2:51. His example was becoming Scripture as Luke was becoming authority among the believers.
- **Children** are to **obey** first of all because it is **right**. Now we see reason #2:

(2) "Honor your father and mother." This is the first commandment with a promise: (3) If you honor your father and mother, "things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth."

- Westerners divide the law of Moses (Exodus 20:1-17) into two tables: The first four laws relate to God's authority and the last six relate to horizontal relationships. However, **honoring** parents, and consequently obeying them is part of the first table

because parents are God's authority in the lives of children. Exodus 20:12. See also Leviticus 19:1 - 3; 20:9.

- It is natural for children to believe they know more than their parents. The true revelation of this mistake takes time. Meanwhile, they are to **honor** their **father and mother** by obeying them. Who ever heard a young person say, "I'm in all of this trouble because I obeyed my parents?"
- The obedience toward parents is a fundamental part of God's system of authority. It was under the Law of Moses and failure was punishable by death.
- **Wilbur Fields** writes:

This promise also has a fulfillment in the present times. The child who obeys will probably have better health, safer habits, wiser ways, and certainly the blessing of God to lengthen and enrich his life.

- **A long life on the earth** is a general rule. Death by accident is obviously excluded. Both the LXX (Greek) and the Masoretic (Hebrew) text say "in the (or on the) land that the Lord thy God giveth thee" rather than "on the earth."
- It appears that hostility with parents leads to a troubled life. It is best to be reconciled with them wherever possible. As a responsible adult no longer living at home, it may not always be possible to obey them.

FATHERS

(4) Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.

- **Fathers** need to develop the skills of persuasion or diversion rather than constantly relying on force to obtain obedience.
- How are **children provoked to anger**? **John Stott:**

There is a place for discipline, as Paul goes on to say, but it must never be arbitrary (for children have a built-in sense of justice) or unkind. Otherwise, they will 'become discouraged'. Conversely, almost nothing causes a child's personality to blossom and gifts to develop like the positive encouragement of loving, understanding parents. Indeed, just as a husband's love for his wife is expressed in helping her develop her full potential, so parents' love for their children is expressed in helping them develop theirs."

- **Discipline. Francis Foulkes:**

"Discipline is essential in the home; but not unnecessary rules and regulations and endless petty correction by which children are discouraged."

- *The Living Bible:*

And now a word to you parents. Don't keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Rather, bring them up with the loving discipline the Lord himself approves, with suggestions and godly advice.

SLAVES

(5) Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ.

(6) Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart.

- Another class in the social structure of the times was the **slaves**. The practice of **slavery** was common when Paul wrote. They were not told to rebel against their **masters**

but to be **obedient**. This is the same word used for children in verse 1.

- **Slaves** of that time often were prisoners of war. They were professional people as well as laborers. Sometimes they were better educated than their **masters**. They were frequently considered possessions and no longer people. In **Christ**, they were *people* and had standing.
- **Deep respect and fear** is the opposite of being haughty and rebellious. Compare its use in Philippians 2:12.
- They were not only to *appear* to be **sincere** in serving, they *were* to be **sincere**. No games please.
- Even with a difficult **master**, they were to consider themselves as servants of **Christ** and serve from the **heart**.
- Most of the instructions fit well for employees today. Instead of telling the boss how we will earn our pay, we should follow their instructions (even if they are wrong.) Most of us know people who go on a new job and try to correct the moss-backed boss. In a few days they are looking for work again. They just can't find a company that will appreciate their superior knowledge!

(7) Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. (8) Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.

- We should **work** whether being observed or not. **Barclay** says,

“The conviction of the Christian workman is that every piece of work he produces must be good enough to show God.”

- The ultimate bonus comes from the **Lord**. This applies to **slaves** as well as **free** men. **The Lord** observes all that transpires.

- In Christ, **slaves** had equal standing before God with their masters. They were in the same family and brotherhood as their masters. The leveling of the relationships in the church assembly must have had profound effects on both **slaves** and **free**. Perhaps a **slave** was an elder while his master was a deacon.
- No doubt, when a **slave** became a Christian, and began to serve his unbelieving master more faithfully, more cheerfully, more dependably, and more graciously, the master would wonder why. What an opportunity this would be for the slave to testify to the master concerning what Christ had done for him.

MASTERS

(9) Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and He has no favorites.

- **Masters** have obligations under the law of Christ to treat their workers properly. Evidently Christian **masters threatened** their **slaves**. Others did far worse.
- Some employers believe the only way to stay in charge is to constantly threaten their employees. This is against the will of the Lord.
- The Lord has the same conduct rules for **masters** and **slaves**. He is not pro-business or anti-business.
- By following these directives, **slavery** would slowly be eliminated from the church.

(10) A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.

- The battle is in full swing. Our new citizenship is not a reason to relax. Becoming a believer is for people willing to fight.
- **Be strong.** The word is related to dynamite. Paul was being **strong** as he stood for the Lord in confinement.

He was an example of how to perform. And he was performing mightily.

- As throughout the Book of Ephesians, we are **in the Lord**. So this applies to those baptized into Christ because that is how we get to be **in the Lord**. No exceptions are recorded following Acts 2.

And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. Galatians 3:27

- Our own gifts, skills and insights are not enough to bring victory in the battle that we have with our enemy the devil.
- But we are not without help. Our Commander supplies both strength and equipment for the battles, as we see next.

SUIT UP FOR BATTLE

(11) Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.

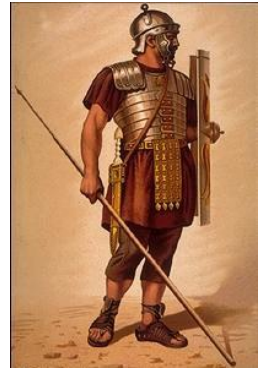
- Paul was chained to a Roman soldier. He could get lots of help with this great extended figure of speech if he lacked information although the soldier would not have been in full military dress. If the soldier-guard had not been able to understand some parts of the Ephesian letter, he can certainly relate to this one.
- The enemy was not and is not Rome, but the **devil**, Satan. Paul does not give us Satan's background, but assures his existence.
- The **devil** has many schemes for our destruction and we need all of the help that the Lord has to offer.
- To deny the existence of the **devil** changes our religious outlook. Popular psychology (street psychology) is brought in to explain away all evil conduct.

(12) For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

- Paul is clear: this is not a typical field battle against a human army of **flesh and blood**. Our battle is against the forces that **rule** in the **spiritual** and religious arenas. Ephesus was a world center of swarming Satanic squadrons. Read Acts 19: 13-20.
- We each face hand-to-hand combat with Satan and his representatives. Like Israel of old, we have been assured the Promised Land, but not without a **fight**. They took the Promised Land from its inhabitants city by city. When Israel obeyed God, they did not lose a man.

13) Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

- Partial **armor** will not do. A shield without the other items will lead to a quick death. Take up the whole **armor** of a heavily-armed Roman soldier prepared for **battle** against his enemy.
- At this juncture, Paul is not encouraging attack or retreat, but to **stand firm** right where the Christian soldier is located.
- **Wilbur Fields** writes:



The historian Polybius (about 200 B.C.) wrote a description of Roman armor in his time. His description indicates that the Roman armor at that time was much more like the armor of the Greeks than that used near the time of the apostles. Polybius said that the Roman panoply consisted, in

the first place, of a shield, and that along with the shield was a sword. Then next came two javelins and a helmet and a greave. The majority, when they had further put on a bronze plate, measuring a span every way, which they wore on their breasts, and called a heart guard, are completely armed.

- Paul now becomes specific about six items of armor.

BATTLE EQUIPMENT

(14) Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. (15) For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. (16) In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. (17) Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1. **Putting on the belt of truth.** The military **belt** was usually made of leather. It kept the soldier's clothes in place and held the sword. He was to prepare for action. It is tragic that some of the Lord's soldiers have girded themselves with broad-mindedness rather than the **truth**. The battle is sure to be lost.
2. **Body armor of God's righteousness.** This level of **righteousness** is something the soldier can control, so it refers to his character and good conduct. Many translations speak of *breastplate* here.
3. **Shoes** come next. The Roman half-boot had studded soles. They provided firm footing for the fight. A slip could have meant death.
4. The **shield** was the short **shield**. **Arrows** were dipped in pitch and fired at the enemy. The **shield** kept these missiles at a comfortable distance from the body. Though made of wood, the shield was

covered with leather. Our **faith** forms a **shield** against the Devil's **fiery arrows**.

5. The **helmet** had hinged ear pieces and a hinged visor. Goliath had left his visor open because he had contempt for the kid that came to fight him. Some **helmets** had distinctive plumes to identify the soldier under them. It also protected the head of the soldier. **Salvation** protects our heads.
 6. The **sword** is the only attack item. The Greek word used designated the Roman short **sword**, a reminder that the battle is hand-to-hand combat. Jesus used the Word of God from Deuteronomy to ward off the devil's three, formal temptations. Matthew 4:1-10.
- **John Stott** summarizes:

Here, then, are the six pieces which together make up the whole armor of God: the girdle of truth and the breastplate of righteousness, the gospel boots and the faith shield, salvation's helmet and the Spirit's sword. They constitute God's armor, as we have seen, for he supplies it. Yet it is our responsibility to take it up, to put it on and to use it confidently against the powers of evil. Moreover, we must be sure to avail ourselves of every item of equipment provided and not omit any. 'Our enemies are on every side, and so must our armor be, on the right hand and on the left.'

TAP INTO HEAVENLY INTELLIGENCE

(18) Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. (19) And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. (20) I am in chains now, still

preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for Him, as I should.

- Besides the mechanical equipment for this warfare, it is necessary to **pray** and be alert. We need constant field communications with our Commander. It needs to be in all kinds of “weather.”
- The disciples of Jesus once had trouble staying awake and **praying** in the heat of battle. Luke 22:46. They were not on the **alert**.
- **Prayer** should include all **believers** and Paul requested **prayer** for himself in the verse 20. One might be tempted just to **pray** for “our kind” of people. (Maybe Jews or Gentiles?)
- Paul needed skill in speaking. (Verse 19) He wanted to be clear and forceful in what he said. It is possible for public speakers to be hazy in their presentations.
- Paul needed **boldness** directly from the Lord. It is possible for public speakers to soften down the claims of Jesus. Perhaps Paul could be freed if he would just “calm down” a bit and quit insisting on a resurrection and proclaiming to Gentiles.
- He was an **ambassador** for the Lord – with **chains**. He was duly accredited to represent the Lord at the Imperial Court in Rome.
- We do not have a direct statement of Scripture that he spoke to Caesar, but he was sent to Rome for that purpose and the Lord always gets His way.
- We know that he spoke every day where Caesar’s special guards could hear. They would have told Caesar.

CONCLUSION

(21) To bring you up to date, Tychicus will give you a full report about what I am doing and how I am getting along. He is a beloved brother and faithful helper in the Lord's work. (22) I have sent him to you for this very

purpose -- to let you know how we are doing and to encourage you.

- Paul did not include his own condition in the letter, but sent **Tychicus** to fill them in. This is another indication that the letter was intended for more than one church.
- An additional reason for sending **Tychicus** was to **encourage** those who read his letter. The written page was not enough.
- A very legitimate purpose in the church gathering is to encourage each other to continue in the Faith. Preachers have been known to harangue the church rather than **encouraging** them.

(23) Peace be with you, dear brothers and sisters, and may God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you love with faithfulness. (24) May God's grace be eternally upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

- As Paul opened the letter with the twin themes of **grace** and peace, so he includes **grace** in the final sentences of the letter.
- The **love** of the **Lord** is key to serving our **God**.