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Sermon Study on Eph. 6:1-9

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Sermon Study on Eph. 6:1-9**Eisenach Epistle Selection for the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity**

The purpose of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians is to present *in extenso* the doctrine of the one holy Christian and universal Church of Christ and its various practical implications for, and applications to, the Church at large and every individual member of this Church. The doctrine of the Church is laid down in the first three chapters, while in the remaining three chapters the readers are admonished to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called (4:1), worthy of their high calling as members of the Church of Christ, the communion of saints. As a congregation the readers were to guard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (4:1-16); as individuals they were to show the fruits of their calling in sanctification and good works (4:17-5:21), particularly in their family life (5:22-6:9), in the proper mutual relation of husband and wife (5:22-33), of children and parents (6:1-4), of servants and masters (6:5-9). The latter two sections constitute the Eisenach epistle selection for the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right," v. 1.

Following immediately the Apostle's admonition to husband and wife is this exhortation directed to children. Paul regards it as the normal state that in every marriage there are children, τέκνα, offspring, in keeping with the word of God spoken at the institution of holy wedlock, Gen. 1:28. Cp. also Gen. 3:16; Psalms 127, 128. The Apostle addresses these children as members of the Holy Christian Church. In a letter written to the saints which are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus (chap. 1:1), he inserts a paragraph intended particularly for children, Christian children of Christian parents, children no longer dead in trespasses and sin, no longer children of wrath (chap. 2:1, 3), but children born again of the water and of the spirit (John 3:3, 5; Eph. 2:5-10), united by Baptism with Christ, the Head of the Church, members of the communion of saints, to whom as well as to their parents apply all the honors and glories which the Apostle, speaking by divine inspiration, had enumerated in chap. 1-3. Like his Master, St. Paul had a high regard for Christian children, cp. Matt. 16:1-6, 10-14; 21:15, 16; Mark 9:33-37; 10:13-16.

This exhortation addressed to children is included in a letter to be read to the assembled congregation. Cp. Col. 3:20. Quite evidently St. Paul regarded the attendance of the public worship service by the children of the congregation as a matter of course, just as the children of the Old Testament people of God were

present at the public services. Cp. Deut. 31:12; Neh. 12:43; Matt. 21:15, etc.

St. Paul calls the children not *παῖδια*, a term which refers particularly to age. He uses a term which stresses the natural and physical relation of the child to his parents, *τέκνα*, from *τίκτω*, to bring forth, denoting something brought forth, something born, an offspring. This physical relation underlies also the Greek term for parents, *γονεῖς*, derived from a stem denoting begetting, hence begetters, like the Latin *parentes*, from *pario*, to beget. These very terms are very significant. A *παῖδιον* may grow up to be a man, for whom the term *παῖς*, and in a greater degree the term *παῖδιον*, would be unsuitable. But as long as a person lives, whether he is an infant, or an adolescent, or a mature man, or a nonagenarian, he is always the *τέκνον*, the offspring of his *γονεῖς*, his parents, his generators. That is an incontrovertible fact. That has been fixed and determined forever by the Ruler of the universe. It is not the individual, but God, who chooses for each human being the parents. And man cannot change the fact that he is the child of his parents. This divinely appointed and determined relation imposes certain duties and obligations on offspring and on parent which particularly neither the Christian child nor the Christian father and mother must forget or neglect.

The duty of the Christian child toward his parents is comprised by the Apostle in two words: *obedience* and *honor*. Children, obey! *ὑπακούω* means to listen from under, from a lower position, as one looking up to the speaker as one's superior, as one above, having authority, the right to command and to insist on the carrying out of the command. Such a listening to the parents is demanded here of the children. That is the natural order: the generator, by virtue of being that, is superior over the object generated by him. A child refusing to obey his parents, a child insisting on his own will over against the will of Mother or Father, subverts the order of nature. Such behavior is unnatural.

As it is natural for a child to obey his parents, so it is natural for a Christian child to obey his parents "in the Lord." Throughout this letter the term "Lord" denotes the Lord Jesus Christ as distinguished from the Father, chap. 1:2, 3, 17; 4:5, 6; 5:20, etc. This Lord Jesus is not only our Lawgiver, who has the right to command (4:19 ff.; 5:5, 6, 10, 17, 23, 24), before whose judgment throne we must render account (6:8, 9); He is not only our Example (5:1, 2); He is above all our Savior, as His very name indicates: Jesus Christ, the Anointed Savior, and as He is described in glowing language throughout our epistle. Believing in this Lord Jesus Christ, Christians, young and old, are united with Him into one body; He in us, and we in Him; He the Head, we

His body (1:21, 22), members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones (5:30); He, the Cornerstone, we the building (2:20, 21). United with Him, being in Him, we receive from Him our spiritual life. In Him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings; in Him we are chosen before the foundation of the world; in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins; in Him we have all wisdom and prudence, practical understanding, in Him an inheritance, and the sealing with that Holy Spirit of promise (Eph. 1:3-14); in Him we have been created unto good works (2:10); in Him we are endowed with strength from on high enabling us to withstand in the evil day and, having done all, to stand (6:10-13). In this Lord we as Christians, as spiritual men also, in a special sense, live and move and have our being, Acts 17:28. For a Christian to live is Christ, Phil. 1:21. And this Christ is united not only with mature Christians, but with all that have been baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27), young or old, infant or mature Christians. Being in Christ, living in Him as in their spiritual element, without whom they can do nothing (John 15:5), but through whose strength they can do all things (Phil. 4:13), it is only natural that they obey their parents, since such obedience is the will of Christ (Eph. 6:1); in such obedience Christ has given them an example, Luke 2:51; for such obedience the Christ in them supplies the necessary strength; unto such obedience Christ has redeemed them.

Yet even Christian children do not always do what is natural for regenerated children of God, and therefore the Apostle reminds them of this natural duty of all Christian children and adds to his admonition very weighty reasons.

The first reason is stated in the causal clause "For this is right." *Δίκαιον* denotes that which is in accord with *δίκη*, with right, with what God has laid down in His Holy Law as right and just; hence what is righteous, pleasing to God, in accordance with His will, demanded by Him as our duty and obligation. Neglect of such duty stamps one's actions as unrighteous, sinful, deserving punishment. A Christian child desiring to have his behavior toward his parents meet with the approval of his Lord and Savior Jesus, must live up to his obligation to obey his parents. It is not left to the choice of the child whether he would obey his parents or not, or under what circumstances he must obey or might refuse obedience. That is taken out of the child's hand by the universal demand throughout the revelation of God's will that children obey their parents. God's Law demands filial obedience; and God's Gospel, though a word of liberty, is so far from freeing the Christian child from this obligation, that it gives and supplies to him the necessary willingness and power to obey gladly and rejoicingly the will and command of his parents.

The only one who can release a child from the unvarying obligation to obey his parents is the Lawgiver Himself. The very injunction to obey one's parents in the Lord implies also that this obligation rests upon the offspring only as long as the Lord demands obedience. The Lord does not require unqualified obedience under all circumstances. When a parent's will clashes with that of the Lord, Christian children must know that the Lord alone is to be unreservedly obeyed. The parent's will dare not to be placed above that of the Lord, nor must any compromise be endeavored between the two contrasting wills. The plain and simple duty there is: Deut. 10:12, 13; Matt. 4:10; Acts 4:19; 5:29. In another respect the obedience of the offspring to the parent is not an absolute obligation. God Himself says that a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife, Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5. As the child matures into manhood, as he establishes his own household, as he sets out on his life's profession, he leaves his father and mother; and in so far as he does that, he is no longer subject to their authority, no longer under obligation to obey their will in matters which are his own personal affairs. He may consult with them, may solicit their advice, and consider it carefully, but, after all, he has the right and liberty and the duty and responsibility to make his own decisions in matters of personal obligations and rights. Filial love and filial honor are lifetime duties, filial obedience is demanded of him only for such a period and in such matters as the parents have been placed over him by the Lord.

"Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise," v. 2.

In order to prove his statement that it is right for children to obey, St. Paul quotes the Fourth Commandment of the basic law of Israel, the Decalog, "Honor thy father and mother." God wants children to give to their parents that honor and glory which God Himself has conferred upon them. Parents are the instruments and representatives of God. It is God who gives to each individual his life and personality, but He does this not by direct creation but through the instrumentality of the parents. A man would not be what he is, he would not even exist, were it not for his parents. Moreover God has entrusted the physical, material, and spiritual care of the child to his father and mother; cp. Eph. 6:4; Gen. 18:19; Ex. 12:24-26; 13:8-14; Deut. 4:9, 10; 6:7-9, 20 ff.; etc. Parents have been honored by the Lord to be His instruments in the generation and His representatives in the rearing of children, and Christian children are demanded to give this honor to their parents.

This honor consists not merely in addressing them respect-

fully, in celebrating Mother's Day and Father's Day. To honor one's parents means above all to obey them. Paul proves his statement that it is right to obey by quoting the divine commandment to honor father and mother. Where obedience to the parents in all matters in which God has placed them over the child is lacking, the honor due the parents is lacking. A disobedient child refuses to acknowledge the God-given jurisdiction of the parents; he despises their divinely granted authority; he rebels against God's institution and will have to bear the baneful consequences of his insubmissiveness and disrespect. Scripture calls him that despises his father and mother a fool, Prov. 15:5, 20. Cp. Prov. 20:20; 23:22; 30:17.

Transgression of the Fourth Commandment, refusal to honor and obey one's parents, is a particularly wicked and heinous transgression of God's will; for the Fourth Commandment is one of the chief commandments of the Lord. "Which is the first commandment with promise." "Which," ἧς; the Greek word here retains its qualitative-casual force, "of such a nature," for quite evidently the writer means to add another reason why this commandment is to be observed by Christian children. It is not only one of the commandments of God, but it ranks high among them; it has the nature of a πρώτη; it is one of prime importance. "First" quite frequently refers not to number or time, but to rank and importance. Cp. Mark 6:21 (chief estates); Acts 13:50; etc., of persons; Luke 15:22; 1 Cor. 15:3; etc.; of things.*

The Fourth Commandment is called a commandment of prime importance because a promise is attached to it. "With promise," ἐν ἐπαγγελίᾳ. Ἐν denotes here close connection. The fact that the Fourth Commandment is a commandment closely connected with a promise distinguishes it from others, gives to it special importance, prime rank, and thus adds another reason for its conscientious and meticulous observance by all Christian children. Moreover, and that is a third reason why Christian children ought gladly to obey their parents, refusal of obedience deprives the child of God's blessings promised especially to obedient children.

"That it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth," v. 3. The Apostle changes by divine inspiration the

* On this meaning cp. Mark 12:28-31. The question of the scribe, Which is the first commandment of all? is answered by Jesus with a reference to Deut. 6:4, 5, certainly not first in time or order. Jesus goes on to name a second "first." "And a second one, a like one, this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." This "greater" proves beyond possibility of refutation what is evident from the whole conversation, that "first" was used by the scribe and by Jesus not in a numerical or temporal sense, but with reference to rank and importance. Cp. also Matt. 22:36-40.

wording of the Sinaitic Decalog to suit New Testament conditions. The Church of Christ is not confined to the Promised Land, but is found in all parts of the earth. Hence the term $\tau\eta\ \gamma\eta$ as used by the Apostle is correctly translated "the earth" and not as in Ex. 20:12 and Ex. 5:16 "land." God Himself changes the wording of His promise to suit changed conditions. The fact, however, cannot be denied that this promise is not always literally fulfilled in the New Testament, nor was it always fulfilled in the Old Covenant. Many children in both eras have died in infancy or before reaching a ripe old age. Meyrick in *The Bible Commentary* suggests that Paul's "purpose is simply to recall to his hearers' memory the promise originally attached to the Fifth Commandment, not to suggest that the same temporal blessing there promised or any analogous spiritual blessing is now attached to filial obedience. That good promise showed the great importance of the Fifth Commandment in God's eyes; and this is all that St. Paul cites it for." This does not solve the difficulty; for (1) already in the Old Testament the promise was not always literally fulfilled; (2) there would be no need of citing the promise if it would no longer apply to the times of the New Testament; (3) the very fact that Paul quotes the promise renders the commandment one of prime importance for New Testament children and adds a special motive for its fulfillment. Stoekhardt quotes Hofmann that this promise is fulfilled even if the "well-being" is of a nature far different from that which seems desirable to the children of this world, and when the length of life is cut short whenever it would be no real boon." (Stoekhardt, *Epheserbrieff*, p. 248.) We might compare Is. 57:1; 2 Kings 22:19, 20. After all, we must leave the exact fulfillment of divine promises and the reconciliation of seeming disagreement between these temporal promises and their fulfillment to the wisdom and understanding of God and never sit in judgment upon Him who is eternal Truth and Justice and Grace. Let the promise of blessing and long life attached to the Fourth Commandment prove to all Christian children that God is well pleased with children who obey and honor their parents, and let it be to them an added stimulus to joyful fulfillment of the will of their God and Savior.

From the child the Apostle turns to the parent. "*And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,*" v. 4. In pointing out the duties of the parents, the Apostle addresses the fathers, just as he addresses the male slaves and masters in vv. 5 and 9. This is in keeping with the Biblical view of the relation of man to woman as expressed in such passages as Gen. 2:18; 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3-12; 14:34; etc. That is not degrading motherhood or woman-

hood. No book gives greater honor to mothers than the Bible, and no religion exalts womanhood as highly as Biblical Christianity. In addressing chiefly the fathers, the mothers are included just as the female slaves and masters are included in vv. 5 and 9. That the mother has the right and duty of training the children is proved by such passages as Prov. 6:20; 31:1, 26, 28; Luke 2:21-24, 41-52; Acts 16:1-3; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15; Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20.

On the father, as the head of the family, primarily rests the obligation of the Christian training of his children. He will be held responsible if this duty is neglected. He must as a Christian father provide a Christian education for his family. This duty is described in two clauses, one emphasizing the negative, the other the positive side. Fathers are not to provoke their children to wrath, not rouse them to anger, or irritate, exasperate them. That may be done by undue harshness, needless severity, often caused by a strange fear that a free and open display of parental love will undermine the respect of the children. Or it may be done by injustice, by groundless suspicions, by imputing false motives to their actions, by regarding harmless pranks as willful disobedience and malice, by overtaxing their physical strength or mental capacity, by constantly changing one's mind and confusing the children, by yielding to every whim and desire of the darling child and suddenly insisting on strict obedience in a very minor matter. As the child grows up, the parent will respect the developing personality, the gifts and talents, the predilections and inclinations toward certain lines of activity, and endeavor to foster them and help the child to develop them rather than ridicule and suppress them and blindly, heedlessly, even ruthlessly insist on his own will, thus killing not only the affection of his son or daughter, but ruining the life career of his flesh and blood. As the child matures, the father will remember that his child must learn to stand on his own feet, form judgments of his own, and therefore will change his method of training in order not to hamper the free development of the abilities latent in his child. In later years he will not obtrude his advice, much less insist on his opinion in matters in which his son or daughter is manifestly better trained and therefore better equipped to judge intelligently than father. He will remember that, while it is the son's duty to love and honor his parents as long as they live, he owes his parents not an absolute submission, but obedience only in those things in which the Lord has placed the father over the child, and that these things change as the child grows into a man with a man's personal rights and duties and responsibilities.

"But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." *Ἐκτρέφω*, to nourish, feed, nurture; in general, to bring up,

to educate, occurs in the New Testament only here and chap. 5:29. The bringing up of Christian children by Christian parents is to be carried on in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. "In," ἐν, here denotes the sphere, or element, in which Christian children are to be reared. "Nurture," παιδεία, is used in classical Greek in the general sense of training or education, and some interpreters accept this meaning here and regard admonition as the special term, the reproof, aiming at amendment of evil traits. Yet in the entire New Testament both the noun παιδεία and the verb παιδεύω occur (the latter with one exception, Acts 7:22) only in the sense of discipline, instruction by correction, or chastening, and refer chiefly to measures or acts taken in the training of children, while "admonition," νοουθεσία, putting into the mind, is used particularly of "the training by word, by the word of encouragement, when no more than this is needed, but also by the word of remonstrance, of reproof, of blame, where these may be required." (Trench, *Synonyms*.) Thus "bring up" is the general term, nurture denoting the acts and measures of discipline taken, including corporal punishment, if needed (cp. Prov. 13:21; 22:15 [where the LXX reads "rod and correction" ῥάβδος δὲ καὶ παιδεία]), while admonition refers chiefly to verbal instruction. Under normal conditions, as children grow more and more mature, admonition will more and more take the place of disciplinary acts, though the need and duty of carrying out the latter may still arise. Note that in the original the article is not placed, because the writer intends to stress the *quality* of discipline and admonition. It is to be real discipline, admonition worthy of the name. And it is that when it is "a discipline and admonition of the Lord." The genitive "is best understood either as possessive or as the genitive of origin, 'the Lord's discipline and admonition,' i. e., Christian training, proceeding from Him and prescribed by Him." (*Expositor's Gr. Test.*) Children are Christ's gift to His brethren and sisters, the Christian parents, through whom largely He builds up His Church. Christ is not only the Donor, but the Creator and Redeemer of these children; they are and remain His own, in whose temporal and eternal welfare He takes the keenest interest. The parents are His representatives, His agents, in properly bringing up the children entrusted to their care, and Christian parents must exercise their stewardship of child training in the manner in which Christ Himself would carry out such training, in Christ's discipline and admonition. They will be willing to learn of Christ and to imitate His discipline and admonition with regard to its purpose, its content, and the spirit in which it was carried out by Him. While gladly availing themselves of the results of modern research in the field of child psychology, Christian parents will here particularly "prove all things and hold

fast that which is good," 1 Thess. 5:21. They will remember that the Searcher of hearts (Jer. 17:9, 10; John 2:24, 25) is, after all, the great Psychologist, and His Bible the best book on psychology — revealing to us not only the true nature of man, but the will of God as well and, above all, Him who alone can effect and has effected a reconciliation between God and man and can teach us the way to salvation and how we ought to walk and to please God. On Christ's discipline and admonition as a model for all Christian parents with regard to content, purpose, and spirit of child training cp. Matt. 28:19, 20; 18:10-14; Mark 10:13-16; Ps. 118:18; Jer. 10:24; 30:11; 31:3; Heb. 12:5-11. So the chief concern of Christian parents will be lovingly, patiently, to teach, admonish, warn, comfort, train, their children that they may grow up to become in ever greater measure useful members of the Christian Church (Eph. 4:13-16), whose motto is: Phil. 1:21 a, and whose life's purpose is expressed Phil. 3:7-21.

Spouses (chap. 5:22-33), children (6:1-4), and slaves (5-8) form a triad that seems to our modern views a rather strange combination; yet in the day of the Apostle this was quite the common state. There was hardly a household without slaves. In fact, the Greek *οικία* and *οικος*, house, the Latin *familia*, family, included not only parents and children but all the servants, the employees in the home, the laborers on the farm, in the factory or business. Most of these servants were bondslaves, the property of the master, who had the power of life and death over them. Comparatively few were freedmen, former slaves, who had for some reason been granted their full or at least partial liberty. It might seem, therefore, that this admonition addressed to slaves no longer is applicable in our day and country, where slavery has been abolished. It has been said that one could not demand the employee of our day to conform to the requirements laid down for bondservants. The Apostle himself forestalls this conclusion by adding the brief remark that "whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free," v. 8. What the Apostle calls a good work, a work in keeping with God's will and command and worthy of reward, is just that irrespective of whether it is done by bond or free. Not only the bondservant but every employee, every servant in the home, every worker in the office, in the shop, on the farm, in the factory, here finds his instructions how to be a Christian employee, pleasing to God and a credit to the Church of Christ.

We read: "*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; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with*

good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men," vv. 5-7. We have adopted a punctuation differing from that of the Authorized Version and from that of Luther's translation. We place a semicolon at the end of v. 5; a comma after "menpleasers," a semicolon after "servants of Christ," v. 6; then, in chiasmic construction, we connect "from the heart" with the preceding "doing the will of God," as in the A. V., but place a comma after "heart," and connect "with good will" with the following and not, as Luther does, with the preceding clause. In this manner we have the reference to Christ in each of the three statements. We have two participial phrases, "with fear and trembling" and "in singleness of your heart," describing the nature of the obedience required, and a reference to Christ as the motive for such obedience (v. 5); an explanation of "singleness of heart" and its motive in the second clause, v. 6 a, b; while the third statement stresses the readiness of soul and mind to render obedience and adds a twofold motive: (a) such obedience is willed by God, and (b) thereby one serves the Lord, not men.

In addressing the slaves, the Apostle calls their masters *κύριοι*, not *δεσπόται*, the strict correlative of *δούλοις*, denoting absolute ownership and unrestricted power. *Κύριος* is a milder and nobler word. "The word *κύριος*, limited by the *κατὰ σάρκα* to the designation of a lordship which holds only for material interests and earthly relations, may perhaps have been selected here with a view to the contrast with the *κύριος* whose lordship is absolute, inclusive alike of master and of slave, of earthly and of heavenly relations." (*Expositor's Gr. Test.*, p. 378.) To these "lords" they were to render due obedience as they would to the Lord, and render this obedience irrespective of the nature of these lords, whether Christian or pagan, kind or harsh, considerate and just, or cruel and despotic. Realizing that daily labor in the service of an employer is a service of the Lord Christ, the Christian employee will obey his lord "in fear and trembling." His chief concern will be faithfulness in the discharge of his duty, "anxious care not to come short" (*Expositor's Gr. Test.*), 1 Cor. 4:2; Matt. 25:21, carefully and prayerfully watching his actions lest in any respect he might not do his full duty toward his earthly master and his heavenly Lord. Joseph's story, Gen. 39:1-23, well illustrates this fear and trembling, this solicitous zeal to serve his master on earth well, without becoming forgetful of his Master in heaven. At the same time it exemplifies the dangers and temptations to which a slave in the service of a cruel, lecherous master or mistress was exposed.

"In singleness of your heart." A Christian strives to obey the Lord, and Him alone, at the cost of his personal comfort and convenience, even to the point of self-denial. Just as unselfishly he

is to obey his master on earth, disregarding his own advantage, having only the interest and welfare of his employer at heart.

Realizing that they are bondservants of Christ, Christian servants will obey their employers "not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers." They will not be satisfied with working only while being watched and drop their work as soon as the inspector is gone. They will not be faithful only in matters that attract attention, and slovenly in details usually overlooked. Their life's aim is not to please men only, but to please Christ, who looketh not on the outward appearance, but on the heart, 1 Sam. 16:7; cp. 1 Cor. 4:3-5.

The assurance that in their daily work they are "doing the will of God" will enable them to look at the monotonous routine of their daily duties in an entirely different light, as an act of worship, of doing God's will, and therefore to do their work "from the heart," from the soul. In heartfelt gratitude and worship of the great and loving God (Ps. 116:12) they will be heart and soul in their daily labor.

The assurance, finally, that they are not really serving men, but the Lord will cause them to slave "with good will." *Εὖνοια* describes the state of mind that wishes well, that is kindly disposed to another. This state of mind, superinduced by the conviction that they are slaving for the Lord, will take the drudgery and slavery out of their work and make it a source of joy, a means of showing one's good will to one's employer. Looking away from the outer form, looking away from the men who have employed them, forgetting their harshness, their injustice, the Christian laborer sees only Christ, the Lord who slaved for him and loved him unto death; and this Lord he serves in his daily work and serves Him with good will.

A servant with this clause
 Makes drudgery divine;
 Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
 Makes that and the action fine.

(George Herbert)

What has been stated again proves the applicability of this admonition, originally addressed to slaves, to every kind of service rendered by any employee. Or shall we recognize the Lord Christ only when He comes in the person of a harsh and cruel pagan slave driver and fail to recognize Him when He comes in the person of kind and considerate and Christian employers?

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

That is a final incentive for faithful service. The Lord regards the service rendered by his believing servants, be they ever so

humble, as "good." Faithfulness in one's daily work is good and acceptable in the eyes of our Lord Jesus. And while we owe all we can accomplish to Him, our Creator and Redeemer, the Author and Finisher of our faith, though He owes us nothing in return for our good works, yet in the superabundance of His grace and mercy He will reward whatsoever good things any man doeth, be he bond or free. "Receive"—receive back, be requited, and receive back in a measure as only the Lord, able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, Eph. 3:20, can repay His own. And He will repay without regard to man's social standing, whether bond or free. The poor slave's faithful service often went unrewarded; the Christian slave often reaped threats, punishment, death, as the fruit of serving in the manner described in vv. 5-7. Yet his Lord and Savior, whose faithful bondsman he was, would graciously reward him whatsoever good thing he had done. Paul does not state in what manner, at what time, in what measure the Lord would repay the faithful service. He simply states the fact that the Christian servant will receive a reward. The Christian servant, knowing that the Lord is Truth, will gladly leave time and manner and measure of the reward to His gracious Lord.

"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," v. 9. The final admonition is addressed to the masters, the lords, the *κύριοι*; of course Christian masters, who undoubtedly recognized in the very title employed by the Apostle a reference to the Lord Jesus and a reminder that they should strive to follow the example of this Lord in their lordship over their servants. As the exhortation addressed to the fathers is shorter than that to the children, so the admonition directed to masters is shorter than that to the slaves. Yet in spite of its brevity it is as comprehensive as that to the fathers. Like the latter, it has a negative and a positive side. The positive: "Do the same things unto them"; i. e., in dealing with your slaves, look upon them as persons through whom the Lord Jesus gives you an opportunity to serve Him, to render bondservice to Him, to be His slaves who is their Lord, and to do the will of their Father; in other words, to manifest the remarkable change they experienced upon becoming members of Christ's holy Church (cp. Eph. 2:1-22), to prove their regenerate nature, their Christian spirit. In dealing with Christian slaves the unity of the Spirit was to be manifested in the bond of peace, and that mutual submission was to be practiced (5:21) which was the basic requirement introducing the three sets of admonitions in 5:22 to 6:9. Though socially occupying different spheres, both Christian masters and their Christian slaves were spiritual brethren, one in Christ.

Negatively, the masters were to forbear, literally, send back, dismiss, give up, their threatening, called by Ellicott "the prevailing vice and most customary exhibition of bad feeling on the part of the master." The absolute power that custom and law granted to the slaveholder was a constant temptation even for Christian masters to use harsh, unjust, even cruel means to keep their helpless slaves within their proper sphere, rather than to make justice and equity, not to say Christian love and consideration, the norm of their rule. Briefly but decidedly the Apostle censures threatenings, all forms of harshness. And as he had reminded the slaves of their Christ-given knowledge of the impartial Judge who will reward every good deed, so the Apostle tells the masters, the lords, who were in danger of abusing their right, "knowing that your Master, your Lord, also is in heaven." A better reading is "their Master and yours." There is for both slave and master one Master, one Lord in heaven, infinitely superior to all petty masters and mighty lords on earth, that is, Christ sitting at the right hand of God and filling all in all, the Head of the Church (Eph. 1:20-23), to whom both Christian slaves and Christian masters bow in humble and grateful adoration and service as their Lord and Savior. "And there is no respect of persons with Him." Note the emphatic position of "Him" at the end of the sentence. "He," Christ, is the One whom they should keep in memory, and He will treat master and slave alike, reward or punish not because one is a servant, the other a lord, but according to their works, whether they have done good or evil. Before the civil courts the slave was often outlawed, while the rich master was all-powerful. Before the judgment throne of the Lord there is one law, one justice for all.

Christ, the Head of the Church, is the center of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. No fewer than 63 times are the names Jesus, Christ, Lord, or a combination of two or three of these names found in the letter and seven times in our passage. It is Christ Jesus who furnishes whatever dynamic power the Church possesses. He, the Head, supplies to the members of His body life and strength and joyous willingness to serve Him and to manifest in their lives the regenerating power of His Gospel, which has changed the direction of their life, given them a new outlook on its purpose, supplied them with new motives, holds before them new standards, opens up new prospects, makes them new-born men, children of God and heirs of eternal life. In today's lesson the Apostle touches upon two important phases of Christian life, the interrelation between children and parents and that between servants and their masters. The four classes are shown their *Duties*

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as Members of the Church of Christ. Christian children are to obey their parents; Christian parents are to give their children a Christian training; Christian servants are to serve their masters faithfully; Christian masters are to be considerate toward their employees. — Taking v. 21 as the starting point, one may speak on *Christian Submissiveness* as shown 1. in the home, vv. 1-4; 2. at work, vv. 5-9; or 1. by children; 2. by parents; 3. by employees; 4. by employers. — *The Blessing of Bringing Up Children in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord.* This training will produce obedient children, pious parents, faithful servants, considerate employers. — There is sufficient material for a series of four sermons on the duties of Christian parents, Christian children, Christian employees, Christian employers. — On vv. 1-4. *The Christian Home a Church of Christ.* There Christ is the Ruler. There parents and children serve Him. — Before preaching on this text, the pastor should read Luther's explanation of the Fourth Commandment in his Large Catechism, *Triglotta*, pp. 611-631.

THEO. LAETSCH

**Outlines on Old Testament Texts
(Synodical Conference)**

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

Ex. 34:29-35

The outstanding character of the Old Testament is without question Moses, the servant of Jehovah. It was he who was privileged to lead Israel out of the house of bondage, Egypt, to the edge of the promised home in Palestine. By Moses' hand God performed many of the most striking miracles recorded in the Sacred Record, and on Moses God bestowed honors such as were shared by no other human being. One such instance is related in our text for today. We dwell on the theme

The Supernatural Brilliance of Moses' Face

1. *A sign of God-given authority*
2. *A source of terror for the children of Israel*
3. *A symbol of the transitory glory of the ministry of the letter*

1

Moses' return after his first stay on Mount Sinai to receive the Law from Jehovah was marred by Israel's idolatry. After the people had repented, Moses ascended the mountain again. Moses had fashioned new tablets, 34:1, and God Himself once more wrote