

Ephesians 6:1-9 (NIV)

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

²“Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—

³“that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

⁴Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

⁵Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.

⁶Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

⁷Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men,

⁸because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

⁹And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

49-06-01-Duties, Debts and Deliverance

relationships, obligations, failure, forgiveness, healing

Ephesians 6:1-9

Relationships need Christ’s help, but failure in them needs His healing.

INTRODUCTION: Text as Scripture Reading.

–Time *doesn’t heal all wounds*; God does. Neither can time erase old relational debts, but forgiveness can. Old wounds will stay alive in our *subconscious memories* until they are *healed*. Past painful relational events, and the emotions accompanying them, can surface in unhealthy ways in present life until they are dealt with.

–**Title**, because our **text** is about *duties in various relationships*. Failure in *duties* create *debts*. All **HOM.idea**. Lets first look at how...

- I. Relationships Bring Duties with Them– v.1-3.** *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—“that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”*
- A. The 1st relational obligation we learn is with *parents*, and the help Jesus offers in all relationships is always His “*Follow Me*.”
1. As a child, Jesus “learned obedience” to His parents (After getting a bit ahead of God’s timing for Himself by staying in the temple without their knowledge or permission, it says in Luke 2:51a that He, went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them....)
 2. As a man, He obeyed God His Father in all He did or said. (His demonstration of *parental honor*, both as a *child* and as a *grown man*, made His “*Follow Me*” the basis of His offer of help to us.)
- B. There’s also a duty to be good parents– v.4, *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.* (Jesus revealed the Father’s heart in Luke 18:16. But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Again, His example of *godly parenthood* was the basis of His “*Follow Me*.”)
- C. The listed *duties* of “*slaves*” and “*masters*” apply to all forms of work involving *obligations* in a *hierarchy* [e.g. employees & employer].
1. v.5-8 lists the employee-side of the relationship: *Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve*

wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. (Jesus knew life in the work force [Mark 6:3a, Isn't this the carpenter?]) He exemplified *worker-integrity*, before saying His "Follow Me" as a help to workers.)

2. v.9 is the employer-side of the relationship: 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 is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. (Jesus, went beyond this, actually serving His disciples as an example for all relationships— John 13:13-14, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." [When VCC's LaRue Daulton retired, she gave her 30+ beauty salons to the respective managers of each. *What an act of kindness to them!*])

TRANS: God built a universe where all relationships come with duties. Jesus showed how to meet them, saying, "Follow Me." This list grows in Scripture to include *spouses, siblings, coworkers, neighbors, managers, officials* with duties obligated in both directions but...

II. Failure in Duties Bring Us into Debt

- A. Debts are created toward parents or guardians by failing to honor them, even if they failed in their own responsibilities.
- B. Debts are created by failing to protect and nurture the children God placed under our charge. [A family/social debt is implied in the familiar saying: "You don't pay for your keep till you've raised your own."]
- C. Debts are created by failure to do our best work for those over us, even if they didn't deserve it— 1 Pet 2:18, ...submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. (We can know if we failed by measuring our service by the standard in v.5: "just as you would obey Christ.")
- D. Debts are created by failing to treat those under us fairly, and it can have a ripple effect that affects an entire work environment.)

TRANS: Debts created by failure in relational duties affect *marriages, families, places of work, neighborhoods, churches*. *Self-centeredness* is usually behind these debts, but the solution for our own indebtedness is to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." The last part of that prayer may be hard to pray honestly, but....

III. Forgiveness of Debts Begins the Healing of Relationships

- A. "How can I know that there are others indebted to me?"
1. Do we often go over and over in our mind the hurts we received?
 2. Do we have any broken relationships that haven't been healed?
- B. *Unforgiveness* leaves NO ROOM for receiving *God's forgiveness*. (Jesus made only one commentary on the prayer He taught us— Mat 6:14-15 (NKJV), "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.")
- C. *How can we forgive those who've hurt us, when they're no longer in our lives* [dead, moved away, lost contact]? Pray as Jesus did in Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them, for they do not [or didn't] know what they are [or were] doing." Even without hearing Him pray, they were forgiven.)

CONCLUSION:

–**Relationships need Christ's help, but failure in them needs His healing.** Jesus helps us prevent *debt accumulation* through Rom 13:8. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another. That works in all relationships. But if *we've failed to love* and have hurt others, or *others have failed* and hurt us, the debts created can be carried a lifetime, gaining destructive interest, *until forgiven*.
–As we close, let's pause in silent prayer, asking God to put His finger on any debts we've accrued or any we've held against others in our *mental accounting books....* (pause).... now let's *release our debtors* as we *ask God to release us from our debts....* (pause).... This little process was never meant to be a one time deal, or Jesus wouldn't have taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."