

WHAT THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE LOOKS LIKE: TAKING A SECOND LOOK

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Let's Begin

As we have noted before, Paul often spends the first half of his letters establishing doctrinal truth, and the second half applying the doctrine to the believer's everyday life. After all, what good is doctrine if it is hopelessly ineffective in our lives? Even so, the first three chapters of Ephesians are decidedly doctrinal in scope and the latter three chapters focus specifically on applying these glorious truths.

Last week, we began to learn from chapter 5 what the Spirit-filled life is supposed to look like. It begins by complimenting our Father's image, remaining controlled by the Holy Spirit, and being firmly committed to the integrity of our family. And, bleeding over into the final chapter, Paul continues his theme on being filled with the Spirit, taking a further look into what the Spirit-filled life looks like.

Hence, as we wrap up our study of Ephesians, let's follow the outline below:

- I. **What Spirit-filled Parenting Looks Like (vv. 1-4)**
- II. **What Spirit-filled Laboring Looks Like (vv. 5-9)**
- III. **What Spirit-filled Warring Looks Like (vv. 10-24)**

I. What Spirit-filled Parenting Looks Like (vv. 1-4)

Earlier, Paul showed us what a Spirit-filled marriage looks like (5:22-33). Therefore, we are not surprised when he extends farther into family life and deals with precisely how the Spirit of God fills Christians to be great parents. He writes, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (vv. 1-4).

First, note God's commands for children: receive your parents (vv. 1-3). How does a godly couple who have established a godly marriage now deal with children as godly parents? Even more basic, how are children to respond to parenthood? Nothing is more fundamental than this: parents are God's gifts to children. From birth forward, children should be taught that parents are a gracious gift from the Lord.

With that in mind, there are two basic principles children should follow. The first principle is, *Obedience Remains the Only Proper Response*. The first words Paul gives us pertain to obedience as in, "Children, obey your parents, in the Lord." The term "obey" means "to hearken," or "to hear under." The one hearing is under the authority of the one speaking. Also, the tense of the verb "obey" denotes habitual, constant obedience.

In addition, it is an obedience "in the Lord." When a child obeys his or her parents, it is actually a spiritual decision. The child is placed under the spiritual discipline of the parents. And, even though there will be pressure to disobey, it does not matter. To obey is right in the sight of God. And, obedience to God is first learned in the home.

The second principle is, *honor remains the only proper respect*. Paul makes this clear, "Honour thy father and mother." Honor concerns one's attitude in the home. Honoring one's parents fixes the highest

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value to God's gifts to you. Honor is an inner attitude, holding in high esteem your godly parents.

Contrarily, disrespect is never right. Ugly words and hateful attitudes fill parents' eyes with tears of grief. In addition, one will later in life regret the dishonor bestowed upon one's parents.

Hence, the obligation of all children is to show parents respect and love. Caring for parents is the first duty outside one's duty to honor the Lord.

Second, note God's precept for parents: rear your children. Again, Paul writes that fathers are to "provoke not" their "children to wrath"; instead, they are to, "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (v. 4). Neither the government nor the church is responsible for the children; parents are. And, the quicker we stop passing the buck on this, the better.

Too many times we blame others for our children's insufficiencies. The number one job of every father is neither the president of a large company nor even a sacrificial deacon in one's church. Rather, his first job is to be a godly father and a faithful husband to the children's mother. If failure happens here, failure happens everywhere.

Paul begins with a *negative* command—"provoke not." The term "provoke" means "to arouse with wrath." One may paraphrase what Paul is saying, "don't make it difficult for children to obey." How fathers exercise their role as fathers makes all the difference. Elsewhere, Paul adds a consequence to provocation, "lest they be discouraged" (Col. 3:21). If we discipline our children harshly, we may actually scar them. And, no frustration is justified when discipline is administered to one's child. Discipline is not punishment; instead discipline is always redemptive in nature, and therefore, loving in result.

The Apostle goes on to state the *positive* command—"bring them up." Paul is calling for spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical nourishment for our children leading to a healthy life before God. In other words, he is foremost interested in character formation in his children. How is this accomplished? In two ways.

First, character formation is accomplished through *discipline*. That is what Paul means by "nurture." In fact, the same word is used in Scripture for chastisement (cp. Prov. 19:18; 22:15; Prov. 29:15, 17). Discipline must always be done in the right manner. It must be in love, not anger. Discipline must be in the spirit of prayer, and the punishment must fit the offense.

Second, character formation is accomplished through *direction*. Direction is what Paul has in mind when he speaks of "admonition." The term means "to put in mind." Hence, to admonish is to train by the use of words. And, words must come from the Lord (Deut. 6:6-7).

Honor is an inner attitude, holding in high esteem your godly parents.

Reflection Connection

Where should boundaries be set so far as governmental responsibilities for our children? Or, should government have any role? Explain.



As we can see, parenting is meant to be Spirit-filled. We are not left to ourselves to raise our children apart from God's help.

II. What Spirit-filled Laboring Looks Like (vv. 5-9)

Not only is the Lord active in our families through His wonderful Holy Spirit, but also God calls all believers to a higher standard in the workplace as well. Our labor, our chosen field of profession, should be a sphere of our lives which is Spirit-filled. Paul writes, "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: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free" (vv. 5-8).

First, we will observe *liberated labor*. Were we to accept what the Apostle writes on face value, all employment would change from drudgery to delight. The fact is many literally hate their jobs. Do you or I fall into that category? If so, perhaps there is a way to change that attitude found in this passage. After all, being a believer does not mean circumstances will change. Instead, it means we conquer the circumstances!

Liberating our labor begins with dealing with the *obligations* of our labor. According to Paul, we possess a four-fold obligation concerning our labor. Our labor is to be *obediently* pursued—"Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters..." (cp. v. 1). If one is saved, one is the Lord's freed man (cp. 1 Cor. 7:22; John 8:32, 36). That meant for first century slaves, one was elevated from slavery to sonship! Christ reached down to the slave and set his or her heart free in Jesus Christ. In addition, our labor is to be *responsibly* pursued. God will not honor irresponsible work. Hence, the Apostle says in order for our labor to bear the marks of a Spirit-filled life, there must exist a frame of mind, a "fear and trembling." In other words, whether or not one likes his or her boss, our obligation demands we show a definite respect for our superiors in the workplace.

Furthermore, our labor is to be *conscientiously* pursued. Paul's way of saying this is "singleness of heart...not eyeservice." If God is honored in our work, we must work without pretense. Therefore, focusing on what others expect — "eyeservice" — cannot lead to Spirit-filled labor. Working only when the boss is looking is, at best, hypocrisy.

Our labor is to be *wholeheartedly* pursued. We are to labor "with good will..." (cp. Col. 3:23; Ecc. 9:10). Working on the job or in the office this way remains a powerful witness to Jesus Christ. It also demonstrates the Spirit-filled life.

Not only do we possess *obligations* within our labor, we also have a specific *object* of our labor. Paul's expression is, "as unto Christ...as servants of Christ...as to the Lord." On the job, Christians have one goal—to obey one's employer as an expression of his or her commitment to Jesus. Of course, this does not mean believers follow immoral practices. However, it does mean doing one's job as



if working for Christ. Question: Do you perform your work as if you are performing for Jesus? Paul undeniably lifts labor to its highest level (cp. Col. 3:24).

Finally, while our *obligations* within our professional careers define and lead to the *object* and purpose of our labors, when we faithfully follow Christ, yielding to His Holy Spirit, our Spirit-filled labor bears fruit. In short, we have a God-approved *outcome* resulting from our chosen profession. Recall Paul says it like this, “Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free” (v. 8; cp. Col. 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:10). Just as we receive rewards for our both our Spirit-filled marriages as well as our Spirit-filled parenting (see above), we also have God’s intended outcome for faithfully making our daily living.

Second, Paul observes the employer as *sanctified supervision*. While it is true laborers have specific obligations to honor those for whom they work, it is no less true that employers who hire others possess ample responsibility from God. Paul briefly notes this when he writes, “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). Perhaps as many are in management positions—or, as it is sometimes referred to as, “white collar”—who are presently studying this lesson as are in “blue collar” positions. Paul addresses the “white collar” professions, though briefly, nevertheless in a straightforward manner.

Three guidelines for “white collar” management are revealed. First, Paul gives the principle of *fairness*. He speaks of doing the “same things.” Management is to apply the “golden rule” toward employees no less than in any other context. Recall the mutual subjection Paul discussed concerning the church, an apt application for the context of work (5:21; cp. also Col. 4:1).

Second, the Apostle lays out the principle of *kindness*. He exhorts management to “forbear threatening.” Management simply cannot abuse its power over others. Today’s headlines are filled with scandals concerning executives who have abused their power over others. Whether it is sexual harassment, embezzlement, conspiracy to defraud stockholders, or whatever, no executive is beyond responsibility of kindness, fairness, and truthfulness toward those over whom they supervise.

Third, Paul establishes the principle of *awareness*. “Your Master,” Paul exclaims, “is in heaven.” Though executives wield authority, they are nonetheless under a much higher authority, an authority which will one day call them to stand before Him (cp. Matt. 25:21; Col. 4:1).

Recall the mutual subjection Paul discussed concerning the church, an apt application for the context of work.

Reflection Connection

Reflect upon your own line of work, the supervisor to whom you report, and the way your establishment treats its employment. Do you think your employer honors Paul’s words about its responsibility to be fair, kind, and aware? Why or why not? Be extra careful in open discussion to assure the conversation does not become a “bashing” of certain companies, firms, etc.



III. What Spirit-filled Warring Looks Like (vv. 10-24)

Paul has thus far spoken about imitating the heavenly Father in one's daily walk by yielding to the Holy Spirit's control in both family and workplace. He now drastically changes his focus though he remains committed in establishing what the believer's Spirit-filled life looks like. However, Paul's chief concern toward summing up this fundamental truth reveals itself in his discussion on spiritual warfare.

There is no way to avoid the stark reality of actually living the Spirit-filled life. *Those who do so must commit themselves to the invisible battle raging this very moment.* Hence, Paul gives us some fundamental rules for engaging in the unseen war.

First, we are introduced to our adversary. The Apostle writes, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (vv. 10-12). Unfortunately, Methodists think Baptists are their enemy while Baptists appear to think their enemy is the Presbyterian. The Presbyterian on the other hand thinks Catholics qualify as enemies while Catholics condemn all of the above. The truth is, however, Christians have a common enemy; he exists, and he is the devil (1 Pet. 5:8). I am being somewhat facetious, but I hope the point is made.

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The devil is the sworn enemy of the church. He is described as *subtle*, which is what Paul means by "wiles." The term basically means "strategies" and/or "methods." His craftiness is on full display in the Garden of God (Gen. 3). Accordingly, the devil attacks us *mentally* (John 8:44), *morally* (1 Pet. 5:8), and *motivationally* (2 Tim. 2:26). Nor does he respect anyone in his craft (Matt. 4:1-11).

The devil is also *spiritual*. Though he is just as tangibly real as you or I, he nevertheless is a spiritual being. No red suits, pitch forks, or pointed tails may accurately describe him. Hence, Paul would explicitly state that we "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities...powers...rulers...spiritual wickedness in high places (cp. 2Kings 22:31).

The devil is also *sinister*. Darkness rules in his domain, and he is intent on keeping it that way. Deception is his main operative. A well-organized host of demonic forces carry out his strategy, his "wiles" (cp. Isa. 14:14:13-14; Rev. 2:13; 12:4; see also John 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4).

Paul lists several spheres of his influence:



- *Principalities*: This is the hierarchy of hell itself.
- *Powers*: Literally, this word translates, “powerful ones.” These are demons who possess and harass human beings.
- *World Rulers*: The devil places those whom he controls in key areas on the globe (cp. Dan. 10:13-20). His realm and theirs is always “darkness.”
- *Spiritual Wickedness*: An army of wicked spirits committed to anarchy, debauchery, and apostasy.

How do we *defeat* the devil if he remains so powerful? As with our salvation when we first came to Christ, we possess good news in the spiritual warfare against our enemy even though he remains a powerful, influential force in this age. Indeed the Bible predicts his dethronement, his defeat, and his ultimate destruction (Rev. 20:1-10).

Our strategy, therefore, both matches and maneuvers us beyond the “wiles” of the evil one. First, we must claim *God’s power*. Paul says, “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (v. 10). We must be clothed with His strength not our own. If we attempt to do battle with the adversary apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit, we threaten our very lives. On earth the devil has no equal. However, all authority is given to the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18).

Second, we must choose *God’s provision*. Paul tells us we are to, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (v. 11). Note, again we must not think the battle may be won with a piece-meal approach; that is, picking what we like and ignoring what we dislike. To the contrary, Paul implores us to put on God’s “whole” armor, the Christian’s full dress for the battlefield. Only then will victory be ours (cp. 1 Pet. 5:8-9; James 4:7).

Now that the adversary is introduced, Paul explains the second fundamental rule of spiritual warfare by displaying the weaponry indicative of the Christian’s arsenal (vv. 13-18).

Once again in catalog fashion, Paul lists the advantages the Spirit-filled believer has in battle against the enemy:

- *Whole Armour*: Paul insists on an all or nothing proposition. If Christians win against Satan in the “evil day”—the time of the devil’s fiercest attack—it will be as they are fully clothed in battle array.
- *Belt*: Around the mid-section of the Christian warrior is a “belt of truth.” Truth serves as the central point of the battle at hand. If truth is lost, the battle is lost.
- *Breastplate*: Righteousness characterizes the Christian soldier, covering his or her entire body. Hence, the vital organs are sufficiently protected (cp. 2 Cor. 6:7). Moral purity is a must.
- *Shoes*: As paradoxical as it may sound, the Christian soldier is a soldier of peace. Our feet are protected at all times. Plus the studded sandals of a soldier give him sure footing when battling toe-to-toe. No greater peace is attainable than the Gospel of peace.
- *Shield*: Certainty must characterize the warrior for the Lord. Hence, faith is the shield which protects us from all flaming darts shot by Satan.

Reflection Connection

Do you often think of yourself in battle? Explain. Do you think the church prepares believers to do spiritual warfare? Why or why not?



Golden Greek Nugget

Paul exhorts the Christian warrior to take his “shield of faith” through which he or she may be able to “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (v. 16). The enemy’s weapons include being able to fling “fiery darts” toward God’s soldier. The term translated “fiery” is *pyroō* which means “to set on fire.” In addition the term translated “darts” is the Greek word *belos* which means “missile” or “spear.” In ancient warfare, a notable weapon was the flaming arrows which were shot at tremendous torque. Sometimes the flaming arrows could pierce the strongest armor. However, the believer’s faith could not be penetrated. He walks by faith and lives by faith. Indeed his faith overcomes the world (1 John 5:4).

- ✦ *Helmet:* The head is most vulnerable in battle. Therefore, unless our salvation is certain in Him, we will never stand against the devil. We will fall in battle. We will run. We will defect to the enemy. In fact, that is where one belongs in the battle if he or she is not saved—fighting as a soldier of Satan. Hence, our helmet is made of the strongest substance in battle: our unalterable position in Jesus Christ as born again children of God.
- ✦ *Sword:* This is the first of two offensive weapons the believer owns. The two-edged sword will cut through the enemy’s front guard and will hold the line for the Lord of hosts. The Bible is the very Word of God. No wonder the Lord Jesus met Satan head-on with the Word of God when He was accosted in the desert (Matt. 4:1-11).
- ✦ *Prayer:* This constitutes the second offensive weapon the Christian soldier possesses. Paul says, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (v. 18). The greatest of Christian warriors is measured not by scars on his back but bruises on his knees. The best warrior is a kneeling warrior, calling out to his Grand General to be glorified at all costs. Prayer is an indispensable weapon in spiritual warfare.

Wrap Up

In this study, we have concluded that Satan nor any of his many demons can stand against the Spirit-filled child of God. Believers imitate their heavenly Father as they submit to His Spirit to fill them for service every day, whether at home or at work. In addition, little doubt exists when Spirit-filled believers make such an impact that the devil will come against them with all his force and influence. Nonetheless, we have both God’s power and provision at our disposal. And, in the end, we know our victory is sure and our rest will be complete (vv. 19-22).

As we end our study of Ephesians, there is no better place to end it than Paul’s closing benediction: “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen” (vv. 23-24).

