

THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE OF CHILDREN

Ephesians 6.1-3: The daily battle of children to live according to God's will

Theme: Children are wicked and God commands them to obey and honor their parents.

Ephesians 6 is a chapter that deals with our daily spiritual warfare.

- (v12) When we hear “spiritual warfare,” we often think of Satan, demons, and scary things that happen in the spirit world (and we'll talk about all this later).
- But, the main focus of this chapter (the main focus of our spiritual battles) is on our *daily lives*—how we live day to day.
 - ✓ Why is that? Because *that* is where the battles are fought in our spiritual warfare (in our daily lives).
 - ✓ (v1-4) The spiritual battle begins in the family, when we are children, and then when we are parents.
 - ✓ (v5-9) The battle also encompasses the workplace (where we spend most of our waking hours).
 - ✓ (v10ff) It also, of course, includes our personal walk with the Lord in the Mission.
 - ✓ It is a spiritual battle (it's a fight) to live according to God's will daily... in our families, in our jobs, and in our personal walk with the Lord.
- So, don't be deceived into thinking about spiritual warfare as if it were like some Hollywood movie or a pop-Christian novel that reads like a sanitized Stephen King thriller.
 - ✓ Yes, there *is* a demon behind every bush. But, that is *not* your fight. (Sorry, no casting out demons.)
 - ✓ Your daily battles will be fought in your family, at work, and in your personal walk with the Lord. And your battles will deal with one thing: **The will of God** (will you live according to His will... or will you not...? Those are the daily battles you will fight in our “spiritual warfare”).

Spiritual warfare begins in the family: (v1-4) Children & Parents

- (v1-3) This morning we are going to speak about God's expectations for children (for those “young people” still living under their parents' roof... parents who still provide their children a roof).
- The spiritual battle (the battle in the mind and will) of a child centers around two things: **Actions** (v1: obey) and **attitude** (v2-3: honor).
- But, before we get to that, we need to first see what the Bible says about the nature of children...

I. (v1a) Anthropology: Children are wicked!

- This passage starts with one word, and we need to understand what Scripture says about this one word: *Children*.

A. Children are born in sin.

1. (Gen 1.26-27) God made man perfect and sinless, in His own image.
2. (Gen 2.16-17 cf. 3.6) However, sin entered and on the very *day* that man sinned, he died (that was God's promise). Note: he did not die physically. Therefore, the death God promised was spiritual.
3. (Gen 5.1-5) Because of this, everyone born in the line of Adam is born in *his* image (Adam's).
4. (Rom 5.12, 18) That means we are all born in sin, spiritually dead, separate from God, and under His condemnation. And that includes our children...

B. Children are born wicked, rebellious sinners.

1. (Ps 51.5) Every child is conceived in sin, shaped in iniquity inside his mother's womb. Why? Because he is a product of procreation, and we reproduce according to our kind (sinners).

2. (Ps 58.3) From the womb children sin (they disobey, rebel, lie, scream and holler to make the world revolve around them).

- No one has to teach a child to sin. Why? Because children are conceived by sinners, shaped in iniquity in the womb... and born wicked.

C. Children are held as innocent... for a time.

1. (Rom 5.13) God is good and kind and merciful. He does not impute sin to those who have no law, to those who cannot discern between right and wrong.

- a) For example, a baby that dies does not go to hell (even though he was born a wicked sinner).
- b) God does not hold the baby responsible because that baby cannot discern between right and wrong. God holds him legally innocent until the law enters.

2. When a child (young person) can distinguish between right and wrong (which is the function of the law), he becomes individually accountable before God for his actions and his attitudes.

- a) And this brings us to our next point of study in Ephesians 6.1-3.
- b) With this understanding of the nature of a child, let's see what God expects of him...

II. (v1b) Actions: Children, obey!

A. God expects children (young people still living under their parents' roof) to obey their parents.

1. To obey is do what you are told (very simple, very easy to understand).

2. (Col 3.20) Children are to obey their parents in all things.

- a) (Eph 6.1b) Obviously “all things” are all things “in the Lord.”
- b) A child is not expected to obey when the command goes against God's will.

3. The spiritual battle for children begins here, with their actions—with obedience. Why...?

- a) Firstly, because even children that are very young (just crawling) can be taught obedience.
- b) Secondly, because obedience to parental authority touches the idol of the child: “ME!”

B. The Principal Problem: Rebellion against authority (who will rule in the child's little world?)

1. Adam rebelled against God's authority; children are born in Adam's image.

- A child will naturally rebel against any authority that threatens his idol (his idol is himself).

2. This spiritual battle ground, then, becomes a training ground for our children (it forms a wonderful “laboratory environment” to train up a child in how to walk in the ways of God later in life).

a) Parents, by their God-given authority and responsibility, tell a child to do (or not do) something. It can be as simply as, “*Don't touch that!*”

b) The child, naturally, will desire to rebel and to disobey his parents (to tell a child to not touch something is to awaken his wicked little heart, and he will desire to touch it).

(1) In this moment, a spiritual battle begins in the mind and will of the child.

(a) He knows what is right: To obey (don't touch!).

(b) But he wants to do what is wrong: To disobey (touch!).

(2) And here is where we have the opportunity (and responsibility) to teach our children how to achieve victory in these spiritual battles (victory in spiritual warfare)...

c) The child will disobey (it's his nature) and God expects the parent to “reward” him accordingly.

(1) The child is to be disciplined with a rod of correction.

(2) As a result of his rebellious, selfish, wicked disobedience, he is to experience a bit of pain on his bottom (there is to be “weeping and gnashing of teeth”... because that is what awaits him in hell if he does not learn the lesson from childhood).

3. God's simple command to obey (to just *do* what you are told) is a *world* of spiritual warfare in the mind and will of a child because it addresses his principal problem: Rebellion (self-will vs. God's).

C. (v1c) A child's obedience to his parents is “right.”

1. A child's obedience to his parents is good and and correct... it's right because it is God's will.
2. The opposite (rebellion, disobedience, self-will) is *wrong* and *wicked*, and God hates it.
3. And as if that were not enough for the “poor, little angel”... God's will for children goes even farther than their actions. God expects children to have a *proper attitude* toward their parents, too...

III. (v2-3) **Attitude: Children, honor!**

A. (v2) God expects and commands children to honor their parents.

1. Again, understand that God is touching the idol of the child (just as He does with us as adults).
 - a) Children *naturally* think that they know best and that their parents are ignorant louts.
 - b) So once again, we see the daily spiritual warfare that a child must fight in his mind and will:
Honor your parents!
2. To honor your parents means to *respect* them, *appreciate* them, and *value* them.
 - a) The opposite of honoring your parents is to dishonor them by *despising* them, *disrespecting* them, *not valuing* them, and *not appreciating* them.
 - b) The child, of course, will naturally say something like, “*But, my parents haven't earned my respect and honor.*”
 - (1) And there is the problem: **YOU** (the child). You're haughty, high-minded, arrogant, proud, self-centered, and egotistical.
 - (2) You actually think you're better (that you have greater knowledge, insight, and wisdom!) than your parents. When the truth is... we are *all just the same* (sinners).
 - (3) And since *God* established the authority structure (sinful parents are placed in authority over sinful children), to disrespect and not honor your parents is to *sin against God*.
3. (v2b) And that is why the Bible says that this commandment to children comes with a promise...

B. (v3) God's Promises to Children

1. First Promise: It will be well with you...
 - a) (Prov 8.32 cf. 3.1-2) There is always general benefit in obeying God; it generally goes well when we obey God.
 - b) James says that God resists the proud (rebellious) and give grace to the humble (obedient). God will chastise the disobedient, and that is never enjoyable.
 - c) And so it is with children and their attitude: It generally goes better for a child that honors his father and mother, than for a mouthy twerp that needs an “attitude adjustment.”
2. Second Promise: You won't die early...
 - a) God takes the attitude of children toward their parents very seriously, and we should also.
 - (1) Because this command is one of the Ten Commandments, Paul brings out the promise that was attached to this commandment under the Law.
 - (2) I like how Paul made the promise “positive” since we're living in the Age of Grace, but...
 - b) (Mat 15.4) The same commandment, the same promise: Under the Law, the disrespectful, disobedient child was to be put death (that would be the “negative” side of the promise).
 - (1) This is why Paul says that the child that honors his parents “mayest live long on the earth.”
 - (2) He is reminding the Christians of the penalty for *not* doing so under the Law.

- c) (Lev 20.9) Under the Law, to even “talk back” to your parents was punishable by death.
- d) (Deut 21.18-21) The disobedient, lazy, stubborn, gluttonous, rebellious child was to be stoned to death if he refused to respond to the chastisement and discipline of his parents.
- e) (Deut 27.16) Therefore, don't treat your attitude and actions toward your parents “lightly.”
 - (1) Because God doesn't.
 - (2) It is not a frivolous thing.
 - (3) It is a very real spiritual battle (in your mind and will), and it is a battle that God expects you to fight every day. He expects you to fight against your sin nature and obey Him.

Conclusion:

Ephesians 6 is a chapter about our spiritual warfare in this world.

- (v12) It is not so much a physical battle, even though it is played out in the physical world.
- The spiritual warfare we have to fight each and every day takes place in our minds and in our will.
 - ✓ God tells us what He expects of us (through Scripture).
 - ✓ And once we know what God's will is, the battle begins!
 - ✓ Will we chose to live according to God's will, or will we chose to rebel, disobey, and live according that which is right in our own eyes.

This spiritual warfare starts in the family, when we are children.

- God commands children to obey and to honor their parents.
 - ✓ Actions: Children are commanded to do as they are told.
 - ✓ Attitudes: Children are commanded to honor (respect, value, appreciate) their parents.
 - ✓ Children are wicked and will not want to obey, much less honor, their parents. So...
- Both of these spiritual battle grounds provide wonderful opportunities to teach the child just how wicked and rebellious he is... a very valuable lesson for him in light of eternity and God's coming Judgment.
- But don't underestimate the struggle in these two areas for a child...
 - ✓ To obey and honor his parents presents a world of raging battles each and every day in the mind and will of a child.
 - ✓ But this is good and healthy because he will only have to face bigger and more intense battles in the future... battles that have a much weightier consequence than a scolding or a spank on the bottom.
 - ✓ So, it's best to start training early so that we are not sending our children out to battle unprepared.
- That means that parents have a tremendous responsibility before God to teach and train their children.
 - ✓ And that is what we'll be talking about next week: (v4) The spiritual battle we face as parents.