

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

January 6, 2013
No. 3653

Obedience to Parents
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Dear fellow saints in the church of Jesus Christ,

The Word of God we study today addresses the children of the church. We find it in Ephesians 6:1:

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

This is an admonition of Jesus Christ directly to children of the church—not just young children, but also older children, including teenagers. For that reason we will be addressing in our broadcast today believing children.

Notice that. This Word of God is directed toward children of the church. That will be our emphasis today. Children are included by God in His church, not just adults. This verse is not addressing children who are unbelievers and who need to be converted to the faith. It addresses children born and raised in the sphere of the church. It addresses little children who themselves are believers. It knows nothing of the modern misconception of the conversion only of adults. The church is made up of believers and their children. There may be no artificial division made between adults and children as far as the church is concerned. This admonition is spoken to children of the church. That we bear in mind in the first place.

In the second place we bear in mind that this admonition is given to new believers. The Ephesian saints were Gentiles, newly grafted into this church in Ephesus. Perhaps there were some Jews in this congregation that knew of the duty and calling of children toward parents and had taught their children such. But, for the most part, this congregation was made up of parents who themselves were new to the faith, which in turn meant that their children were new to the faith too. The fifth commandment was new to these children, therefore. This is why Paul repeats that fifth commandment in verses 2 and 3 of this chapter. Assumed in this verse is that not only parents had just become a part of this church, but so did their children. And these children needed instruction in the proper calling of children toward their mothers and fathers. They may have known it from a natural point of view, but now they must learn it from a spiritual point of view, too. They, too, were new creatures in Christ. They, too, were believers. So the command: Children obey your parents in the Lord.

We ought to understand, dear reader, that the command given here in this verse is a command of God's covenant. Children of believing parents belong to the community of the church. They are not outsiders looking in. Their life, together with their parents, is intimately wrapped up in and embraced by the church, that is, the communion of saints. All of life, therefore, revolves around their place in the church. A Christian home and family does not stand alone as an entity independent of all else. On the contrary, a believing husband and wife and their children are united with and integrally related to other families as they reside together in the sphere of the church of Christ. The church is not just an add-on, that is, a place I make room for in my life along with all the other compartments of life. The church is the place where a man, his wife, and his children make their life together. This idea of the place of the family in the

church is foreign to contemporary Christianity. Perhaps this is true because of the horrible breakdown of the family we see in our society and church world.

You see, the church is important to the believer because life in the church is life within the sphere of the covenant that God establishes with His church. God's covenant is that relationship of fellowship that God dwells in together with His chosen people in Christ. God has chosen to establish His covenant with believers. He is their God and they are His people. He binds them to Himself in an unbreakable bond of love and friendship. He dwells with them and cares for them, and He guides and protects them. To believers, God is their refuge and strength, their ever-present help in time of trouble. Under the shadow of His wings we flee and hide ourselves when the storms of life beset us. He is our pavilion, who shelters us, and He is our rock, who makes our life sure and stable. That is God's covenant. That covenant is established in the church. That is where believers are found, after all. They are a part of the community and life of the church. They are so because it is in the church that God chooses to dwell with His people. The church, therefore, is not just another area of life. It is not just a part of our life that fits in one particular file. The church, for the believer, is his life. There is nothing more important for the child of God than to belong to the life and community of the church. This is true because life with God is not just a part of life. It is life. It motivates us in every move that we make. Communion with God dictates how I will live my life in the home, with my wife and children. All of life centers in and embraces God's covenant and my life in the church.

Church, therefore, is not simply a priority of my life; but fellowship with God in the church rules my life. It is not that I must make room for fellowship with God. But the covenant with God, the communal life I share with Him and Jesus Christ in the church, is the motivating factor of all of life. We will find out in a couple of weeks how this dictates our lives in the workplace. Marriage cannot be viewed apart from God's covenant and church. And now we see that neither can the relationship of parent and child. It is a relationship in the home that is affected by God's covenant established with believers.

The instruction given in verse 1 is based upon the place of the child within the covenant and church of Christ. Children are an intimate part of the church of Christ. God dwells with them, as well as with the adult believer. Jesus verifies this in Mark 10. Some mothers in Israel had taken their young children to Jesus to have Him hold and bless them. The disciples rebuked these women for bothering Jesus. But Jesus was displeased with His disciples and said in Mark 10:14:

Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God includes little children. The reason this is true is found in God's covenant. Our children, according to Paul here in Ephesians 6:1, are in the Lord. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord. Believing parents and their believing children are in the Lord Jesus Christ. They dwell in the sphere of Christ. Christ is the Lord of children as well as of adults. Children, too, are bound together with Christ in faith. And Christ, therefore, lives and reigns within them too. From their earliest days the children of the church are to know their Lord and connect their lives with Him, to live out of Him. Obedience to parents is the fruit of believing children's relationship with Christ. They have been placed in communion with God by God's grace. This, then, is the reason believing children are called to obey parents. It is not simply a natural law, but a highly spiritual rule of life for them, because they are children of the church.

How is it possible that the church world of today has departed so far from this truth of Scripture? Satan knows well that to destroy the truth of the place of children in the covenant will result in the destruction of the church. And Satan is bent on destroying the church of Jesus Christ in this world. He is bent on tearing apart the communion, the community, of the saints. He will keep the concept of the church alive while destroying the idea of the church as the family and household of God. Let the church continue, but make sure the church does not view itself any longer as a people called out from this world of unbelief and into a community of believers that live out of the principle of fellowship with God.

Children, young people, God includes you, too, in His church and covenant. I am speaking to elect children and, therefore, believing children. God promises to the church of Jesus Christ that He will preserve His church in the line of generations. We know that God does not promise to save every child born into the church. We also know that salvation does not come by virtue of being born to believing parents. Salvation is always and ever a miracle. It is of grace that God saves children, just as it was of grace that He saved us, their parents.

We do not deny that. But we do have a promise from God to which we cling and that is implied in the command before us. Our children, too, are in the Lord. And when parents of the church instruct and nurture their children and when they discipline them, they do this all in the Lord. Believing parents can truly say: "All of our instruction, the direction that we give you, children, the decisions we make concerning you, are all in relation to the Lord of the church. We are interested in your place of Jesus Christ and among the community of the saints. We will nurture you, instruct you, and discipline you for your place in the church." When this is done, then you, children and young people, must know what is your calling in the sphere of the church and the covenant: Obey your parents.

This is the simple command to children of the church: Obey your parents. Obedience to this command does not affect you only in your relationship to your mother and father. Obedience will affect your relationship to the church of which you are a member. And, ultimately, this will affect your relationship to God Himself.

Literally, the word "obey" means: to give oneself over to the rule and authority of another. This teaches us two things about obedience. First of all, we must recognize that God has placed over us, in different spheres of life, those who represent His authority. God gives certain men and women (in this case) to rule over us. They are God-ordained.

In the second place, this word obey speaks of willingness to obey the God-ordained authority. Children must willingly submit themselves to their parents' authority. Yes, you must obey whether you want to or not. This is the fifth commandment of God's law. It requires obedience to God by obeying parents. But the idea expressed here in this term is a willing obedience, not a forced obedience, but a willing and even a cheerful obedience. You do not obey your mom and dad because you are compelled to obey them but because you want to bow before their rule and authority. Believing children do this because God has given their parents this place in their lives. They do so, therefore, because of their relationship to God. They love Him. He is their God. He is their Friend. And He is so because Christ has worked in their hearts by His Spirit. Their hearts were at one time given over to stubbornness and rebellion. Sin has had its sway over them. But that is not true of them anymore, as children of God's church.

Christ, through His work on the cross, has conquered sin and unbelief. He has destroyed the power of Satan over us and set us free from the slavery of sin. That means that He has overcome our obdurate and rebellious attitude toward parents.

This passage of God's Word is not addressed to unbelievers. Paul writes it to the church in Ephesus where children were present in the worship service when this letter was read to them. He addresses believing children. Believing children want to give themselves to the rule and authority of their parents because this is pleasing to them. They want to because they understand the blessedness of having God as their Father. They know what it means to have a heavenly Father who loves them and cares for them and keeps them. The believer even knows that when God chastens him it is for his good in order to yield in him the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

Furthermore, the believer, whether young or old, loves God as his Father. The child of God has a profound love for, respect for, reverence for God. He honors God. He obeys God as his Father. Children in the church and covenant obey their parents because they are in the Lord. They obey their parents because they obey God.

And that brings us back to the matter we mentioned a few minutes ago. We obey parents because we recognize that God has placed them in authority or rule over us in the home. This is what Paul means here in Ephesians 6:1 when he writes: "Children, obey your parents...for this is right." It is the right thing to do. It is the righteous thing to do. It is in keeping with the commandment of God that says: "Honor your father and your mother." You see, all authority and rule belong to God alone. He reigns in the heavens over all the works of His hands. Romans 13:1 teaches us, "there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." There are various spheres in the life of a person where authority is exercised: government, labor, the church, the school, and the home. God reigns in all of these. He rules. His is the authority as Creator of all. But God delegates that authority to men in these various spheres of life. That means, children, that God has Himself placed our parents over us in the home.

Unbelieving children do not really care about that. They hate God and there is no fear of God before their eyes. Since they do not bow before God's authority, they do not bow before the authority of parents either. Neither will they do this in society in general. That is why our world is so lawless and is getting worse. We live in a violent and wicked world. This is true because the wicked are unrighteous. They do what is right in their own eyes.

But such is not true of believing children of the church and covenant who know and love God. They know there is an objective standard of right and wrong. God has revealed it to them. It is the standard of God's law. He gives us ten commandments, all of which tell us what is right and wrong. The child of God obeys these commandments. Why? Because they are right. The fifth commandment is: "Honor father and mother." So we do that, children. Why? Because this is right. Through them God rules over us in the home.

But notice, this commandment is not simply for the benefit of the family. Children of the church do not obey this command just because it is a matter of the home. It is a matter of the church too. This is the calling and commandment to children in the church. Children obey parents because they know and understand their place in the community of believers. Children of believing parents do not separate their lives in this world, much less in the home, from the church. They realize their obligation, their duty in the covenant. They understand that God has chosen to carry on His church in the generations of believers. They obey because they truly

desire to see this happen with them and the other children in the congregation and church. They are the next generation of believers. They will take the place of their parents who go on before them. They will “carry the torch,” so to speak, of the cause of Christ into the next generation. And they rejoice in that place in the church. God preserves His church by means of obedient children.

Neither ought we to overlook that this commandment is not limited to little children. It is easy for mom and dad to hold little children under their rule and authority, is it not? But this Word of God speaks to older children and youth in the church. Children who are still under the care and in the home of their godly parents must bow before the authority and rule of father and mother and not rebel. Young men and women of the church, you, too, must heed everything we have talked about. You must dwell with father and mother. God has placed you under their care and rule. He has given your instruction and guidance into their hands. They are responsible to God for you. They will give answer to God someday. But that means that you must bow before their rule and obey them and honor them for the place God has given them over you. You may not make the home of father and mother a place of rebellion and dishonor. You, too, just as your parents, will answer to God for your actions in the home and family.

There is a joy in the home and there is joy in the church when there are obedient children. The apostle John says it best for every parent, for every pastor, and for every elder, in III John 4: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” To that every parent will say, “Yea and Amen.” What a happy home and church when little children and youth keep this command. The home and family needs obedient children. We need them in the church. This is how God will make His church to grow and flourish in this world. This is the way God establishes His covenant in the line of generations.

May God bless our families, may God bless His church, with obedient children.

Let us pray together.

Our gracious heavenly Father, we are thankful that Thou art a God who dwells in the midst of Thy church and that Thou dost pour out upon believing parents and their believing children the blessings of Thy covenant fellowship. It is wonderful to know that Thou dost take us under Thy wing and protect us with Thy care. Now we pray that Thou wilt teach the children of the church obedience unto their parents. This is right in Thy sight. We pray, Father, that in all things we might serve Thee, not only as parents in what we do, but as children, too, in the church. And where we have sinned, Father, we pray that Thou wilt graciously forgive us of those sins. Give us strength to battle them and to go on in this life. We pray this, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

January 13, 2013
No. 3654

Nurturing Our Children
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Dear Radio Friends,

What we said of the children of the Ephesian church last week was true of their parents as well. These were Gentile believers. God had, through the labors of Paul, just grafted them into His church. These were adults, many of whom were parents that had just recently been called out of the darkness of unbelief to faith. Their ways had been in the world. They had been thoroughly imbibed with the worldview of unbelief.

This was true as far as their parenting skills were concerned too. They had been taught by their sinful society an improper view of children and an improper view of raising children. The unbelieving professionals of their society had taught them wrongly, even sinfully.

Now they had been delivered out of their unbelief. They had become new creatures in Christ. They, together with their children, had been grafted into the church of Christ and had become of the same household of faith with the believers in the Old Testament. They with their children had been baptized into Jesus Christ.

Now Paul addresses godly parents. These parents had separated themselves from the wicked world and joined the church institute in Ephesus. They with their children had placed themselves under the rule of the elders of Ephesus and under the official preaching of the Word. So, once again, we cannot overlook the purpose of this letter to this congregation. In it Paul explains the boundless grace of God in including them within His church as Gentiles. He points out the beauty of belonging to that church in this world, and the safety and security found there. And now he instructs these new believers concerning proper conduct in the church. The calling of parents is given in a short, simple manner in Ephesians 6:4, the verse that we consider today:

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

This is not a long verse. It does not contain deep doctrinal truths. It is of a very practical nature. In seed-form, this verse contains the basic principles for all child-rearing. Not just to make them better children in the home, not to make them citizens of our country (though all this will follow if proper instruction is given by parents), but the point of this Word of God is that they might be better members of the church of Jesus Christ.

So, we consider the calling of believing parents in the church.

Paul, in this verse in Ephesians 6, addresses fathers. This is not to say that mothers are not included in the injunction of this verse. They are. But since the wife is viewed in the last chapter as being one flesh together with her husband, Paul does not find it necessary to mention both here. Besides, a fundamental principle of Scripture is that the husband and father is the head of the home and family. God has invested in him the rule over his household—not only over his wife, but his children as well. God will hold fathers responsible for the spiritual welfare and character of his children. Not that mothers are exempt from this before God. What is said to fathers here is also a command to mothers. Mothers do not escape the Word of God here. We

do not need to pursue the whole matter of the right and authority of father and mother to rule over the children. That is established already in God's command to children. And we considered that in detail in our last broadcast.

The verse before us today addresses the proper use of that authority God gives to parents. In other words, God gives authority to mother and father in order that they might exercise it righteously and therefore properly. This verse reveals to us as well exactly how a father and mother will use their authority in a righteous manner. This is revealed to us in the short phrase "of the Lord" used here in this verse: "bring them up in the nurture and admonition *of the Lord*." All proper training of children must be to this end: to lead them to the Lord. Christ must be the object of all our training, of our nurturing, and of our admonition. Any motive other than that which is rooted in Christ is not proper training. And that is what these new converts to Christianity in Ephesus had to learn, first of all. All parental instruction, care, admonition, and even discipline are for the purpose of leading our children to Jesus Christ.

I can anticipate the reaction that will be found in this world to such a contention. "What? Do you have your head stuck in the sand? We must train our children for success and for fortune. We must teach them how to get ahead in this world. We must teach them everything that will give them the proper self-discipline and knowledge in order that they might make their way in this world. Religious beliefs are of no practical use for making our way in this world."

That, dear reader, is unbelief speaking. Scripture is replete with passages that teach that the most important goal or end of our instruction is to teach our children their sin and their salvation in the cross of Jesus Christ alone. Yes, we must see to it that our children are trained in subjects that are necessary to make a living in this world. We must hone their unique talents and abilities in order that they might develop this creation God has given us. But all of this must be done *in the service of the Lord*. All things must be made subject to Christ. We must first and foremost, above all else, teach our children that our rank and position, our talent in time, our money and affluence are all subservient to Jesus Christ. He is Lord. He is ruler over all. God has placed all things in His hand unto the establishment of His kingdom. And we who are the subjects of His kingdom must, likewise, use everything we have and are to walk in obedience to our Lord and Savior.

Because this principle of Scripture is ignored, it has resulted in the abuse of children today. Not only is this true in the wicked, unbelieving world where it can be expected, but this is happening in the church of today as well. Why? Because parents have failed to see that believing parents must instruct their children from a whole different point of view. They must instruct their children in faith, train up a child in faith. They must use every means at their disposal to teach them the fear of God.

Neither may we compartmentalize our lives, as if religious instruction is just one part of our instruction as opposed to instruction, say, in academics or sports or labor or whatever. Instruction in every area of life must be permeated with Christ. He is the Lord of instruction in math, in science, in history. He is the Lord in the realm of academics and labor and so on. All instruction must be in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Bearing that in mind, we heed the Word of God in this verse: Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. This is how parents can abuse their authority while training their children—by provoking their children to wrath.

Now, this command is not referring here to playful banter of parents with their children. You see, there are certain ways of treating our children that will make them bitter, resentful, and in the end, rebellious. We provoke them to wrath, or anger. Not just that they suddenly burst out in anger against us and yell or strike out against us. But they begin to seethe below the surface. They begin to build up an emotional and even spiritual resentment between themselves and their parent or parents. They become so bitter inside that when they become of age and are able to strike out on their own, they will be fairly bursting to get away from parents. Because of the particular treatment of father or mother (or both), children learn to resent them so much that they will resent everything their parents represent. The child then will become angry, not simply at parents, but at God. The young person will begin to rebel against the cause of Jesus Christ in this world too.

So the command here in this verse in essence is this: Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath against God and against Jesus Christ. What possibly could parents do to provoke children to walk away in anger from their parents, the church, and God?

There are two scenarios against which wisdom dictates. The first is an overly harsh and critical attitude of our children. John Gill, an old commentator, states this sin of parents in this way:

By unjust and unreasonable demands, by reproachful language, by frequent and public chidings, by indiscrete and passionate expressions, and by severe and cruel blows and inhuman usage.

There are parents who, in their zeal for good parenting, go to this extreme. They do not allow their children freedom to live within the bounds of God's law. They criticize their children in everything the child does. They publicly humiliate their child, as if this will force him or her to change their behavior. They never speak a word of encouragement and tenderness. They do not spend time with their children other than always seeming to reprove them. They are inconsistent in their demands.

Then there is also this extreme: physical abuse. This does not mean a parent ought not to spank a child when punishment is necessary. Neither does it mean that proper discipline ought not be administered when our children sin. But it does mean that screaming at our children or beating them until they are black-and-blue is definitely inappropriate and sinful.

And the result of such treatment of our children is that it causes anger to build up in them; bitterness begins to reign. And when the years of independence finally come on them, they reject the cause of Christ. No matter how much father might have preached to them God and His commandments, they reject those commandments. And they up and leave it all behind. Fathers, mothers, do not provoke your children to wrath.

The second way parents can provoke their children to wrath is to be soft and indifferent to the behavior and sin of their children. This is, of course, the opposite extreme, and we see this so much in the church today. In this instance the children rule and dishonor parents. And the parents run after every whim and wish of their children. When the child makes a demand, father and mother rush to satisfy the demand just to keep them quiet. They spoil their children, giving them everything their flesh craves. When it comes to discipline, there virtually is none. Admonition is not backed up by a harsher form of discipline.

Along with this improper mode of parenting comes careless indifference. The parent takes little notice of what the children are doing. They ignore them and let them go. The children get

into everything and, virtually, rip apart the house. Such parents, in order to avoid the upset of home allow the world to babysit their children by letting their children watch TV all day. When the children grow up to be teenagers, they are left to go anywhere and everywhere they want without having to give an account to their parents. This kind of parent will also always defend his children, no matter what trouble or disrespect they show toward others in authority in the church or school. They close their eyes to their teenagers partying, drunkenness, and fornication.

The result of such parenting is that their children develop a disdain for God's Word and law. They have never been led to see their sin and acknowledge it before God. They see no need for Christ, or for living a sanctified and holy life. And when they are finally hounded by the church for their wicked life they, in anger, blame the church—usually along with their parents—for discipline. And in anger they leave the church and forsake God and Jesus Christ. Fathers, mothers, provoke not your children to wrath!

But rather bring them up, raise them, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is the positive injunction of God's Word here. This is the way we teach our children to be good members of the church.

Nurture, here, refers to the actions of mother and father. They must in every way teach their children to lead a disciplined and godly life. This begins with a godly example. When father and mother are seen living in communion with God, then believing children seek to do the same. When I say this, dear readers, I mean that parents may not simply go through the motions, simply go through some outward check-list of things I ought to do as a parent. That is not enough. Our actions must come from a life that is spent in communion with God and with Jesus Christ. I dwell with my children at home. I spend time with them. I am with them in my rising up and in my lying down. I am there as a parent to answer the questions of life when my children are ready to ask them. I show a real interest in their life. When I send them off to school, then I am deeply aware that in this area of life, too, I must lead my children to Christ, lest they become discouraged. God must be taught in their studies. I desire that for them. I want that for them. I will seek out a place for them where they can receive such godly education and not cast my children as sheep before the wolves. This is bringing them up in the nurture of the Lord. Every action I take as a parent will have an impact on how my children will view life as a whole and, more specifically, view their place in the church.

As my children grow older, I will reason with them and direct them into making wise decisions in order to be a good member of the church where they are. All the while, in all of this, I will keep my eye focused on the spiritual goal: bring up my children to be good citizens in the kingdom of heaven. Encouragement, tenderness, care—but also chastisement, firmness, and steadfastness—all to shape and mold our children to be fruitful in Christ's kingdom. The children of believers are the church of the next generation, but only when nurtured in the fear of the Lord. Or they will walk away from the church when they are provoked to wrath.

Not only must we nurture our children in the fear of the Lord, but we must admonish them in that way.

The term “admonition” points us to the need of parents to teach and instruct their children in the ways of God and their place in the church. Instruction starts in little ways, when our children are very young. Already by two or three, children are able to sing a song or even memorize a simple Bible passage. Godly parents will also see to it that this instruction continues to develop

as our children develop. Parents ought not to be so quick to give the schooling of their little children to another. The home must shape and mold their spiritual values.

The church helps parents in this instruction, not only in the preaching on Sunday but also in the catechism room. This is what God's Word means when it speaks of bringing our children up in the admonition of the Lord. When our children are prepared to learn the math, history, sciences, and languages, parents will prepare them for their place in this world. This admonition, too, must be that of the Lord. This is why Christian schools are established—to teach our children that even in their various studies and academics God is Lord over all. Such instruction ought to lead our children to Jesus Christ and His sovereign rule at God's right hand.

Our admonition, too, must always serve to warn our children from ways of wickedness, displeasing to the Lord. They must be told of sin, *their* sin. They must be admonished for their sin and directed in the way of sorrow and repentance. They must be taught as well the beauty of belonging to the church. Every effort must be bent to direct our children in the ways of the Lord. The purpose, the goal, the desire of believing parents is so, so, so much different from that of unbelieving parents.

This then will be the fruit of such instruction of children. Obedience. I know that God does not work by His Spirit and grace in the heart of every one of the children of the church. I know that even when trained properly there will be children who rebel and who will walk away from the church and the cause of Christ in this world. Though this may happen to some of the children, nevertheless, God's promise to believing parents always remains true: He will save in our generations by using the means of godly parents.

That is why we say that obedience is the fruit of heeding the command of this verse. God will work in the hearts of our children obedience to father and mother. When parents do their job, then children will respond accordingly. And that makes for an orderly home and family.

But there is more. The fruit of proper training of children will result in faithfulness to the church of Jesus Christ. Children will take the place of their parents in the church and will carry on the cause of Christ in the generations to come. They will become good members and some of them good officebearers in the church. The church will grow from within unto the full stature of the fullness of Christ. We pray for that fruit in our homes and families.

Let us close in prayer.

Our Father and our God, we are thankful for our homes and families. And as parents, we are thankful for our children. We are thankful, Father, for the place that Thou hast given us together with our children in the church. Give unto us as parents the grace to train our children in the fear of Thy name. Forgive us in our weakness and our sins. Strengthen us that we might properly do our calling as parents. Wilt Thou bless us in this way and cause Thy church to grow and to prosper in this world. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

January 20, 2013
No. 3655

Authority in the Sphere of Labor
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Dear Radio Friends,

Life is multifaceted and varied. For a child at home it is so simple and uncomplicated. Not so for an adult. There are not only relationships in the home and in the church, but outside these spheres of life there are those of government and society as well. Every one of us who goes off to work according to God's command to labor is confronted with this sphere of life too. So the apostle Paul, in the passage before us, addresses another important area of our lives. We read in Ephesians 6:5-9:

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 eye-service, as men-pleasers; 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. 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.

I realize that it may not seem as if this passage has much to do with our modern society, in which slavery has been abolished. It may seem as if Paul is addressing something that is time-dated and culturally-conditioned and, really, has nothing to do with us today. It is true, too, that instruction given to slaves and masters does not directly address itself to present circumstances in our society. But the instruction of this passage *is* the Word of God and is profitable for the instruction of God's people in every age. We will find that the master-slave relationship has been replaced by the employer-employee relationship in our modern society. How this has become true we will consider in a moment when explaining these verses. But certainly, we receive some all-important instruction as to a whole area of our lives that consumes many a waking hour. And it is good sound instruction, too.

Believers in the church are taught in this passage how to perform their earthly, secular labors in a godly way. This is the calling of men in the church. Even though the sphere of labor is not a church-related matter, the life of Christ has renewed our *whole* lives—all the relationships of life are affected by our salvation. Obedience to God plays an important role in every area of the believer's life.

We can be thankful that we live in a free society. We, too, in the beginnings of our country, saw our share of slavery and the horrible atrocities that it caused. That is what it was like in the Greek/Roman culture. Though there were also those servants that served in the capacity of hired help, Paul does not address them as such in these verses. He addresses servants who were slaves. These men and women were kept in bondage for life. They were owned by other people. The rule unbelieving masters exercised in that day was little different than in the early days of our own nation. They handled their slaves like brute beasts. They would abuse them, even kill them, with no fear that the law would hold them accountable for what they did. They beat them. They threw them in hold. They bred them as if they were not human beings at all but a piece of property right along with the rest of their livestock.

An additional problem was the number of slaves, especially that a rich man might have owned. He might have many of them to run his business or work in his fields. And for that reason he had to be careful. He often ruled his slaves with an iron hand, with a system of harsh punishments to hold his slaves in check and force them into submission.

The apostle Paul does not deal with the issue of slavery itself here. He only deals with a reality that was present in the culture in which the Ephesian believers found themselves. In my personal estimation, such slavery is sin. Yet God's Word here simply deals with the reality of slavery in Grecian society. He did so because it pleased God to save in Christ both masters and also slaves. God is no respecter of persons. Many slaves, as well as masters, were brought to conversion and were members of the church.

The sins involved in this type of system of labor become glaring. Masters, in an attempt to maintain their authority, treated their slaves in cruel and sinful ways. We read of their "threatening," in verse 9 of our text. We have already spoken of some of the ways that these threatening were administered. These were sin on the part of the master. But then, unbelief reveals itself in all manner of sin. Masters abused their authority. The authority God had given them in the realm of labor was used for their own sinful ends and to achieve their own greedy goals. So there was sin on the part of the masters.

But there was also sin on the part of the slaves or servants. Such conditions breed rebellion. And this happened, too, frequently. Unhappy slaves would abandon their work and flee like the slave Onesimus who fled from Philemon. Slaves would become lazy and unproductive. When the master or his paid overseer were not around, the slaves would sit down on the job and do very little in the way of work. Other slaves joined together in uprisings against their masters, killing those that the master had placed over them. And, if possible, even killing the master himself. In times of rebellion and hatred against their master they would rape and kill even the family of their master. In this whole realm of life, therefore, was to be found anger and hatred and rebellion.

As I mentioned earlier, we have much to be thankful for that such slavery is not a part of our society anymore. Slavery was abolished a long time ago. But there is a realm of life today that indeed relates to the problems and sins of this past culture. This is the sphere of labor. In our modern form of labor there are employers who hire people for a fee to perform various labors for them; and there are employees who are the people hired. Since the employer owns the company and does the hiring, he is in a position of authority in the workplace. This has not changed. God still ordains the powers that be. He has ordained them in the home, church, and government; and He has also ordained authority in the realm of labor, that is, the work-force. And many of the same abuses found in an unbelieving master-slave relationship can be found in the unbelieving sphere of employment today. The employer can abuse his position by paying his employees poor wages so that they are unable to support their own families. In the past, employers forced people to work in the poorest and most dangerous of work conditions. At one time in our country, small children were forced to work in order to earn enough for their families. These abuses were the reason for the rise of unions in our country. The employer can let his power go to his head and constantly rail upon his workers and treat them as if they are nothing more than animals or, at least, a lower class of citizenship.

So, all of these sins of the past can surface in the workplace of today, too. Or the same sins of the past can characterize the *employees* as well. In fact, employers today are often forced to give in to unjust demands of employees, much to the confusion of the order that God has

established in the workplace. Employees become lazy. And when their employer or their supervisor is not around, they will sit around and do very little productive work. They will steal from the employer. They will refuse to put in a good day's labor. And, especially, they will fail to do this cheerfully. They have rights, so they say! So much of the workforce has become like that in our modern society. The hands of the employer are tied by all kinds of labor laws that make profitable employment almost impossible. In many cases in our modern society, the wages and benefits demanded by employees are so out of line that companies are going bankrupt, unable to afford to pay their employees what they demand. And if employees do not get what they want, then, in rebellion, they walk off the job. They even stand in the way of those who still want to put in a good day's work.

Rebellion fills the workforce of today. And it is as glaring as was the sin of the slaves in the past. So, the Word of God before us today is, indeed, very timely. It is not simply conditioned for the culture then, but has much to say to you and me as members of the church today.

Because sin enters into this relationship of life, the Word of God here admonishes and instructs both masters and servants. There is one beautiful truth that shines through these admonitions. These masters and their slaves belonged to Christ. The end of verse 5 says to servants: "as unto Christ." Verse 6 instructs: "as the servants of Christ." Verse 7: "as to the Lord." Verse 9: "your Master also is in heaven." These are all references to Christ. It ought to be clear, then, that Paul is talking to believers. These were new believers, from among the Gentiles. They knew the culture. They were a part of the culture of master-slave relationships. There were slaves and masters together in the very congregation of Ephesus. But the point is, these slaves and masters in the past were guilty of the same sins that characterized other masters and slaves. But now they had been delivered from these sins. They must understand that their lives in every sphere of life had become renewed by means of their own salvation.

Believers are different. And they act differently than unbelievers. This was true as husbands and wives and parents and children in the home. But this was likewise true of their place in society at large. These saints, all of them, had now become subject to their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. He ruled in their hearts. He delivered them from the clutches of sin and unbelief and put a new heart in them—a heart that was subject to Christ. They had become His willing slaves. Now Christ, through His Spirit, ruled in their hearts, leading them in a different direction than they were used to in the past. Paul says to them in verse 6: "you are the servants or slaves of Christ." In verse 7 he tells them again that they with good will did service as to the Lord and not to men. All this because, by means of salvation, their whole life had been changed. They were now to view their place in labor in an altogether different way.

Again, it is no different today. What is it that motivates us as believers now in the whole realm of labor? Selfishness and greed, self-seeking and self-satisfaction, thinking of me and my rights as an employer or an employee? Is that truly the spirit that governs believers in today's society? Of course not. God's people seek to do the will of Christ with obedience and cheerfulness. We view authority differently than does the unbeliever. All authority and power is given by God. He is the Master. He places some in authority and others under that authority. He creates employment and sets up in that sphere employers and employees. We understand that all of this is from God. Such knowledge definitely affects what we do as employers and those who are given a position of employment. Faith in Jesus Christ will make us good employers, who treat our help fairly and honestly, with gentle firmness. And Christians,

believers, will be the hardest workers found in our society. Believers will work hard and give their all to their employer. Laziness? That is a sign of unbelief. But the point is, before we move along, everything we do, we do for Christ. We seek to please Him who is our Master.

By and large, these verses are addressed to slaves or servants. This is probably true because the ratio of servants to masters in the church was greater than the other way around. The same is true in the church today. The admonition to employees is very simple: obey. God has placed employers over you in the workforce, so obey. Submit yourselves to their will.

What if this employer is unfair and even wicked? Peter tells us in I Peter 2:18 and 19 (and maybe we should all read that chapter sometime), submit even to the froward, that is, to the wicked. Employees are commanded to obey their employer, not so much for his sake, but for Christ's sake. Paul adds these qualifiers to such obedience: 1) with fear and trembling; 2) in singleness of your heart; 3) not with eye-service as men-pleasers; 4) with good will.

With fear and trembling is the first qualifier. This does not mean that employees must cower in fright beneath their bosses. But rather, they must, with lowliness and reverence, bow before the authority of those whom God has placed over them. They may not rise up in pride and haughtiness and disrespect against their employer or those placed in supervision over them.

On the other hand, they must obey with singleness of heart, that is to say, they must obey in simplicity, not connive and plot and wiggle out of things, not try through deceit to get away with as much as possible. When working for another we must exert all that is within us to do what we are told to do and do it to the best of our ability. That ought to be our one single motive.

Not with eye-service as men-pleasers. The workplace is filled with this type of people. We live in a dog-eat-dog world. Everyone is willing to trample on another in order to gain more power or prestige in the company's eye. Men will try to make others look bad in order to be more pleasing to their employer, or do things extra, not because they are simply doing an honest day's labor, but because they want to look good in order to get promoted. They are men-pleasers. No, Paul says, you work because you wish to please Christ, your Lord and Master.

Then, finally, we labor with good will. Of course. We seek to do our master or employer good. We do not seek to do him evil. A believing employee must always seek the good of his employer. When we work for someone, we always seek what is best for the company and what will help the whole succeed. That is letting our light shine in the midst of a world of the darkness of sin. That is how we witness to others—by our actions.

There is one here in Ephesians 6 dedicated to masters or employers. This injunction comes to employers who are in Christ, remember. What must a godly master do with those who work for him? On the one hand he must forbear threatening. He must not be a harsh, cruel man, who is always placing unjust demands on his employees and then threatens to fire them if they do not meet his expectations. He must not constantly be railing on his employees and treating them as if they were a lower class of people. Masters or employers, beware. Your Master in heaven is watching over you! And you must give an account to Him. Your Master in heaven sees how you deal with those who work for you. An employer must be kind and gentle toward his help—not soft, mind you, so that the help runs all over the top of him. He is the authority in his business. No doubt about that! But he must deal with his employees in a fair way and in a friendly way, being honest with them in his demands and paying them according to their needs. This is the calling of a believing employer or master.

And this, too, is a witness to those who work for him. Actions in the workplace speak louder than words.

The reward is also spoken of in connection with slaves. We read in verse 8: “Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.” When we do good in the work to which we are called, we receive good of the Lord. Oh, it may be that employees will not get rich because of such obedience. But the good we receive is in the life to come, and that from our Master who is in heaven.

Neither does God give us the reward of heaven *because* we have done these good things. The reward we receive of our Master is for the work He has performed in us by His grace. Nevertheless, this does not make the reward less rewarding. When an employee serves his employer well, then his reward is great. When an employer treats his employee well, then great is his reward, too. Whether a person is bond or free, it does not make any difference. Great will be our reward in heaven.

We see what wonderful encouragement these verses give to us in a major area of our lives. It serves to bring the employer down from his lofty place and it serves to bring the employee up in his position. They are on a par in the church and in faith. They recognize that in the church, too. And they live at peace with each other there, honoring each other in the place that God has given them in the workforce. In every area of life we are directed by this life of Christ, inside the church, inside our homes and families, but outside of it, too. We thank Him for His grace shown us in our lives, transforming them that we might live for Him.

Let us come before God in prayer.

Our Father who art in heaven, we are thankful that Thou hast redeemed us from sin and that Thou art a God who has worked within us by Thy Spirit that we might walk in holiness before Thee. May we be holy in our homes and families. May we be holy in the church as we live together with our fellow saints. But may this holiness extend outside of these spheres, too, so that it might reveal itself in the way that we work. Whether we are an employer or an employee, may we work unto Thee and may we give a good account of ourselves before our Master who is in heaven. Bless us, therefore, in Thy grace. We pray this for Christ’s sake, Amen.

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No. 3656

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR
Taking the Whole Armor of God
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Dear Radio Friends,

We have received in our last several broadcasts important instruction concerning various relationships of life—that of husbands and wives, children and parents, and servants and masters. We have found that, as believers, our conduct in these relationships must be radically different from that of those who are still lost in unbelief. There is a horrible breakdown of our society because unbelief has ruined these relationships. Believers in the church, however, are those in whom the Spirit of Christ works and who, therefore, must lead godly, sanctified lives in these relationships. In other words, the holy life of the child of God will reveal itself by the way he lives both in his home and in society. He will not walk as others. His life will reveal itself to others in his marriage, in the way he raises his children, and in the workplace.

In concluding this letter to the Ephesian church, Paul gives one final admonition. We read of that in Ephesians 6:13:

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

This is the verse that we consider today.

There is a reason why Paul gives this final admonition to the church of Ephesus. All along Paul had made the Ephesian church deeply aware of the principal difference between believers in the church and the unbelieving wicked world. God had shown these Gentile believers the beauty of His grace in grafting them into His family and household together with the saints of the Old Testament. But that is no little thing. The work of salvation creates a spiritual gulf between those who are in Christ and those who are yet lost in sin. The wicked are children of darkness; believers are children of the light. This difference is noticeable. It is seen. It is apparent to everyone. It is evident in the way the believer lives in his home and in society.

Such a difference creates tension, even animosity at times toward the church and her members. And the result is spiritual warfare. The Devil and his angels seek to overthrow the church. And since Satan is the prince of this world, he uses the wicked world in an attempt to destroy the church. For that reason, there is a spiritual battle going on. And in that battle we are called to take unto ourselves the whole armor of God in order to withstand Satan and our enemies.

The church of Christ lives in the evil day. Those four words “in the evil day,” found in the verse we consider, present us with the reason we need to take to ourselves the whole armor of God. We live in the evil day.

There are those who contend that there comes a certain day in the future—an evil day—in which the church will be called to fight a horrible earthly battle against her enemies. In that day the foes of Christ and His church will gather together to launch a ferocious attack on the church in order to destroy it. We will be called by God in that day to fight an earthly warfare in an attempt to defend the church from harm and destruction. The church, it is said, will win that

earthly battle. The evil day, according to such a view, is a day that is still coming. It is a future event.

But that is not the idea of the term “day” here in this verse. The verses surrounding our text speak of a battle that is taking place right now, not in the future. Right now we wrestle with our enemies. Further, we learn that we do not fight with flesh and blood. The battle we wage presently is a highly spiritual battle that is fought against powers in high places. So Paul does not refer by the term “day” here to some future time or some earthly battle that we are going to fight. Rather, he refers to certain days or times in the life of a child of God when he is called to confront temptations and trials. There are moments, there are seasons, there are days in which the spiritual battle we fight is fierce. When that day comes, Paul says, we must be able to take up the armor of God to do battle with our enemies.

The key here lies in that word “evil.” That word literally means “full of trouble and hardships.” One cannot help but be reminded of what Paul writes to Timothy: “In the last days, perilous times shall come.” We live during those days, days that are evil. During these last days, there are times in our lives as saints that we are called to fight tough spiritual battles. We are tempted by Satan and the world. The wickedness of this world bombards us from every direction. In that day, we are called to fight. It is an evil day. It is a day of battle. And for that reason we are called to equip ourselves with the whole armor of God.

The question is, of course, what is it that makes these days so hard and troublesome? We realize there are various reasons that can make a day evil for us. It might be sickness, or physical affliction. It may be that an accident has caused grief and hurt or that financially we are wanting. There are many different calamities that may befall us that would result in an evil day. But this is not what Paul refers to in this passage.

We face the evil day, hardships and troubles when Satan and his wicked henchmen assail us in our lives. Notice at the beginning of this verse we consider, the term “wherefore.” We are called to put on the armor of God because of what Paul has just described for us in verse 12. And this is what he has described: “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.” Wherefore, that is, on account of *that*, we put on the armor of God.

We put on the armor in order that we might withstand the wiles of the devil. The battle we fight against principalities and powers definitely is what makes the day evil. We fight against the rulers of darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Satan and his massive force of fallen angels make up a formidable foe. Together they form a powerful, well-organized army. We sometimes have a far too simplistic picture in our minds of how Satan works. Verse 12 of this chapter reminds us that Satan and his angels are a trained military force. Satan stands at its head with principalities and powers under him. These all lead the forces of evil in this world.

Imagine that, if you can! The army of devils against which we fight—that is frightening! Satan has been cast into this world and he is angry with the woman, the church. He seeks to destroy her. And he uses the wicked world around us to accomplish his wicked ends. The wicked world closes in around the church. The sins of society and its humanistic philosophy press in upon the church. Because we are members of our society and world, the child of God can easily fall prey to their sins—abortion, gambling, drunkenness, adultery, sodomy, just to name a few, are issues that have become non-issues with the wicked

world. These sins are no longer even viewed as sin. And the person who stands up against them is mocked and ridiculed.

Not only are these sins accepted in society, but the governments of this world are attempting to force the believer to give his approval to them. Paul is right. We live in perilous times. The days are evil. Who is able to avoid that evil day? Believers face that evil day time and time again.

Then, to make matters all the harder, we find not a few Christian churches going along with many of the sins of this world. Not only are many churches today filled with apostasy, but God's commandments are scorned. The Christian church world, it seems, has as a whole turned its back on the truth of God's Word. The lie is passed off as truth. What a generation or two ago the churches in general maintained as godly living has now fallen by the wayside. Instead, if a church abides uncompromising by God's Word and commandments, it is now labeled as legalistic and judgmental. Anything may go today. In the church!

Have you been called to stand in the evil day? I have. Many times over. Who can avoid it in this world? Neither must we be deceived into thinking that the battle we wage is not all that evil, that is, not all that hard and troublesome. How easy it becomes for us to coast and think everything is going well. But the battle we fight involves our souls. Satan is not interested in our bodies. He is interested in destroying the life of Christ that is in us. And that, because his battle is ultimately aimed at destroying the cause and kingdom of Christ. Satan wants to be God. He wants to rule the nations. He wants to destroy the name of Jehovah in this earth. He desires to destroy those who belong to God and to Jesus Christ.

But this destruction is not a physical destruction. Although there are times Satan levels persecution against the church, his most effective weapon is prosperity and the many temptations such prosperity places before you and me. He uses the ease in which we live, when it seems we get along well with the wicked of this world in our comforts. He uses the media, politics, art and culture, technology, the apostate church, and whatever else you might think of to change the values and priorities of God's people. Slowly, ever so slowly, he works. He does not do his work in one generation, but over the course of several generations. He is shrewd. He slowly changes the thinking of the church and its members.

Evil days are upon us, dear reader. God's people must be able to stand when confronted with the evil day. This is why we must take to us the whole armor of God. That is the requirement of every believer. Take unto you the whole armor of God, Paul says.

We all know what armor is. In Paul's day, long before and even long after Paul's day, wars were not fought with bullets and canons, with aircraft and bombs, and so on. Wars were fought in hand-to-hand combat. Soldiers would use swords or axes or bludgeons. The only weapon not used in hand-to-hand combat were arrows shot into the rank and file of armies to kill them from a distance. In order to withstand these weapons of the enemy, soldiers dressed themselves in a metal suit from head to foot and carried with them a shield together with their weapon.

The armor the Christian is called to put on in this spiritual battle is the armor of God. This armor, quite obviously, was not made of metal. It is a spiritual armor designed by God Himself to protect and defend the child of God from the attacks of a spiritual enemy. Paul goes into detail in the verses following our text, describing the various pieces of spiritual armor we are called to wear. Now, we do not intend to describe that armor in detail. But we do need to take a brief look at it to understand the verse that we consider today.

In verses 14-17 Paul lists for us, first of all, the defensive parts of the armor: the mail girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sabaton or foot guard of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation. Obviously, much of the battle against Satan in this world is defensive. Believers are constantly, relentlessly under attack and must protect themselves from the temptation to turn away from the cross of Christ. To do this, we must be equipped with truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, and salvation. With these the Christian soldier is able to stand against the spiritual attacks of Satan and the temptations of this wicked world.

The only piece of armor listed here that the believer uses to attack Satan in this world is the sword of the Spirit. This sword is the Word of God. The Word of God goes forth conquering and to conquer. Through the preaching of that Word the Spirit has broken down kingdoms and nations and brought people unto submission to Jesus Christ. With the Word, the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of Christ. We arm ourselves, therefore, with the Word of God. And through the study of God's Word, we must keep on sharpening the edge of that sword. This is the spiritual armor that will defend us against Satan in the evil day.

In that day of temptation, we will be able to resist Satan only if we are equipped with this armor. Otherwise we will fall. If we, in our pride, think we are able to stand against him in our own strength, we will fall before him. We will give in to temptation and sin. That comes as a warning to the members of the church. When we, in pride, fail to read God's Word and pray, when we fail to sit under the preaching of the gospel, then we cast aside that armor.

And when we scorn that armor, as if it is useless, we will walk in the ways of sin. We are not some spiritual superman or superwoman who has the strength to withstand Satan on our own. Let us not be so proud to think we can do it. When we expose ourselves to the sins of this world, we are taunting Satan and he will pounce on us and rip us to shreds. He is much stronger than we are.

We must be clothed with the armor of God because it is God's armor. And, therefore, the command of our text: "Take unto you," or, in verse 11: "Put on the whole armour." The child of God must take this armor of God to himself and put it on. Yes, this does take conscious activity. We must pick it up and put it on. Believers are the redeemed children of God, after all. Christ works in their hearts by His Spirit. They have been renewed in the image of God, in righteousness, holiness, and the true knowledge of God. The reprobate, unbelieving man surely would not be able to heed this command of Scripture. But Paul is addressing those who are redeemed in the blood of Christ, those who are cleansed and made holy. The command comes to those who are saved. And it says to us: "Take to yourselves this armor." We must consciously appropriate to ourselves the spiritual blessings of salvation. We must hold dear to ourselves the truth. We must value righteousness and peace. We must go forth in faith. We must know our Bibles. We must take up this armor and wear it. Then we will be able to withstand the fiery darts of the devil.

We must constantly be putting on this armor. Many are the evil days when Satan attacks us. Each time we must defend ourselves by wearing that armor. And we must wear all of it. "Take unto you the whole armor of God," we are told in this verse. If we were to leave just one piece on the ground, then we will not be able to stand against the attacks of Satan. Each piece is vital for our warfare. If you find you are losing the fight, well, check your gear. When fully equipped with all the pieces of the armor, we are able to withstand the attacks of Satan

because it is, after all, the armor of God. He has chosen it for us. He has tempered it in the furnace of the cross. He has beaten it and shaped it by the work of the Spirit.

We must be wise and take it to ourselves by understanding its value. It is worth more than its weight in gold to a soldier of Christ because the price Christ paid to temper it is eternal.

That, then, is the armor of God. That means that it will accomplish God's purpose for us in our lives. This we find at the end of the verse we consider. We will be able to withstand in the evil, and having done all, to stand.

We receive such great assurance in these words. When we take up that armor, we will be able to withstand our enemies. We will be able to stand over against the spiritual attacks of the mightiest of our foes—even Satan himself. We will be able to defend ourselves.

Does this make the battle any easier or less fierce? Not at all. It is hard to stand firm in the faith always and ever. And it is so easy to grow weary in the battle and wander out into the battlefield unprotected. But, equipped with Christ's righteousness and with truth and faith, we can withstand the temptations of this wicked world. We are given the strength of Christ Himself to do this. There is the power and the strength we find in the battle—Christ's strength. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

Then there is added: "and having done all, to stand." This makes reference to the end of our battle. The evil day we confront is every day. But in the end, when our earthly battle is over, we will receive the victory. We will look over the battleground of our lives trembling, weary, ready to lay down our armor. But we will see the armies of Jesus Christ standing victorious by our side. And a shout will go up. The bodies of the slain enemies will be found at our feet. Having done all, we will be standing.

We have been protected by the armor of God. What incentive to put on that armor. What a victory will be ours. Christ will come and defeat our foes in the final day, and we will stand in that day. And then we will hear the cry of Isaiah 40:2: "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." What a blessed day that will be when we can take off that armor at last. And we will live in peace in that eternal land of rest called Beulah.

Let us pray.

Father in heaven, we thank Thee for Thy Word today. And we thank Thee for the opportunity of studying that Word also as we received it throughout the letter of Paul to the Ephesians. Wilt Thou bless this Word now unto our hearts, too, that we might truly be soldiers of Jesus Christ who fight the good fight of faith. Keep us now in Thy grace, for Jesus' sake. Amen.