



# TRUTH

“. . . thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

May 2020

## WILL EVERY CHILD WHO HONORS HIS PARENTS LIVE A LONG LIFE?

The first words in Ephesians 6 are, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right*” (Ephesians 6:1). The question which serves as our article’s title is based on the next two verses: “*Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth*” (Ephesians 6:2,3).

The background to our inquiry concerning the message of Ephesians 6 is found in the law of Moses. A number of times, God through Moses promised the Israelites that if they would do certain things, He would prolong their days/lives in the land of Canaan. Under the old law, there were a number of material blessings associated with obedience. For instance, God promised to bless His people with rain, bountiful crops, an abundance of food, safety, and peace (Leviticus 26:3-6). God would bless them by causing their bodies to be fruitful and causing their animals to multiply (Deuteronomy 28:1-4). In addition, God promised longevity to the Israelites.

As part of the Ten Commandments, here is an Old Testament teaching about the lives of Israelites being prolonged: “*Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you*” (Deuteronomy 5:16).

Similar language about prolonged lives for the obedient is found in the same context, in Deuteronomy 5:33: “*You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess.*” The same promise, in essence, is found in Deuteronomy 4:40 – obey God and your life will be prolonged on the earth/in the land. Again, we find the same thoughts in Deuteronomy 6:1,2,18 – obey the Lord and you will possess the promised land and have prolonged lives.

It is easy to see the similarity between the language found in Ephesians 6:2,3 (quoted above) and what is written in the Deuteronomy verses we noted. To honor one’s parents was not the first command in the old law, but it was the first command in the Ten

Commandments which had a promise attached to it.

Under the new covenant, should we expect each well-behaved child who honors his parents to live a long time on the earth? Not necessarily. In principle, children who are reared to obey and honor their parents will develop good habits such as self-respect, self-control, obedience to law and authority figures, abstinence from things harmful to the body, and a general concern for taking care of their body (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). However, observation of what transpires in life reminds us that well-behaved kids also can get sick and die from a sickness. Children who love and honor their parents can be involved in accidents and lose their lives when they are young.

The promise for Israel under the law of Moses was plentiful crops which provided an abundance of food for the Israelites when they obeyed God. Under Jesus’ teaching, the promise is not of material *abundance*, but that God will supply what dedicated disciples *need* (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19).

Under the old law, God promised the Israelites that if they would obey Him, no diseases would come upon them like they had the Egyptians (Exodus 15:26). That promise no longer applies under the new covenant. We read that Timothy, a faithful servant of God, had frequent infirmities (1 Timothy 5:23). We should look at the reference to prolonged days for a child who honors his parents (Ephesians 6:2,3) in the same light: there is no literal fulfillment today.

The apostle James was imprisoned, but the Lord did not deliver him. James was put to death by Herod (Acts 12). On the other hand, Paul was imprisoned a number of times and the Lord *did* deliver him. Why the difference? Does this prove that Paul was more faithful to God? Not at all. It was God’s will to keep Paul alive in all of those instances . . . may the Lord’s will be done. In some cases, wicked men live much longer than the righteous do. We may not understand it totally, but one’s longevity proves nothing.

When it comes to explanations, we like to have things in a neat little package. We like cause and effect. We like having clear-cut reasons for the results we observe. Not everything in life is like that.

-- Roger D. Campbell

## SAMUEL AS A TYPE OF THE CHRIST

In his generation, Samuel was recognized as “*a man of God, and . . . an honourable man*” (1 Samuel 9:6). Mentioned in Hebrews 11 together with other Old Testament characters, Samuel was a man who lived by faith (Hebrews 11:32).

Have you ever considered the many ways in which Samuel’s life, role, and activities resembled matters in the life and work of our Lord Jesus? Let us look at some areas of similarity, thinking of Samuel as a type of the Messiah.

❶ Like the Christ’s, Samuel’s birth was announced in advance. After Hannah prayed to God to give her a son, Eli told her, “*Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him*” (1 Samuel 1:17). Mary was told, “*And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus*” (Luke 1:31).

❷ Both Samuel and our Lord spent time in the house of God at an early stage of their lives. Samuel’s mother “*brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh. And the child was young*” (1 Samuel 1:24). When Jesus was only a few weeks old, Joseph and Mary brought Him to God’s house in Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice and present Him to the Lord (Luke 2:22-24). At the age of twelve, the Christ also spent time in God’s house (Luke 2:46).

❸ Similar statements are made about the growth/development of Samuel and Jesus. In the case of Samuel, the Bible says, “*And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men*” (1 Samuel 2:26). What about twelve-year old Jesus? “*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*” (Luke 2:52).

❹ Like the Christ, Samuel was a messenger of God. Regarding Samuel, it is written, “*For the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD*” (1 Samuel 3:21). Samuel was called “*a man of God,*” with this observation: “*Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: ‘Come, let us go to the seer’; for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer*” (1 Samuel 9:9). Jesus is the One through whom God now speaks to mankind (Hebrews 1:1,2). He is identified plainly as the “Prophet” like Moses (Acts 3:22,23). As the Father’s messenger, Jesus said that His doctrine on earth was not His own, but rather it was the teaching of the One who sent Him (John 7:16).

❺ Both Samuel and the Lord Jesus were men of prayer. On one occasion, Samuel said, “*Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you*” (1 Samuel 7:5). At a later time, he told them, “*Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should*

*sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way*” (1 Samuel 12:23). And Jesus? He prayed at His baptism (Luke 3:21), He prayed before feeding multitudes, He prayed for His apostles and all who would believe on Him (John 17:6-26), and He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:42). He prayed alone (Mark 1:35) and He prayed from the cross in the view of all who passed by. There is no mistaking the importance that Samuel and Jesus assigned to prayer in their lives.

❻ Like the Christ did, Samuel trained others. “*And when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as leader over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied*” (1 Samuel 19:20). In some fashion, Samuel was leading and training men to serve among God’s people. When we consider the training that Jesus did, we think of the apostles: “*And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach . . .*” (Mark 3:13,14). Both Samuel and the Christ put in much effort to train others.

❼ Samuel served as a priest, and Jesus now does the same. Under the law of Moses, only male Levites who were the descendants of Aaron were allowed to function as priests. Samuel did that, as we see in his words to King Saul: “. . . and surely I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and make sacrifices of peace offerings . . .” (1 Samuel 10:8). Throughout the book of Hebrews, Jesus often is called the high priest of Christians. Yes, He is now high priest over God’s house, the church (Hebrews 10:21).

❽ Samuel is identified as a judge; so is our Lord. In summary fashion, it is stated, “*And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life*” (1 Samuel 3:15). In Israel’s history, Samuel was its last judge. To say that he was a judge meant he was a person whom Jehovah raised up to deliver His people from the oppression under which they were living. What about the Christ? In the future, He will be the One through Whom the Father will judge the world (Acts 17:31).

Whatever is recorded about Samuel, including the ways in which he and his activities resembled those of the Christ, was written for our learning (Romans 15:4).

-- Roger D. Campbell

Author’s note: The main points in this article came from notes which I wrote by hand in the margin of my Bible a few decades ago. I do not recall if I got those ideas from someone else or they are my original thoughts. Most likely, they are a mixture of both.

## GIVING OUR BEST TO THE LORD

Do you ever feel like you put forth your best effort to do something but you are disappointed in the outcome? That happens to all of us, does it not?

In serving God, as His children we never will reach a state of sinless perfection (1 John 1:8-10). The Lord's promised crown of life will not be granted to us based on our merit (James 1:12). Here is the marvelous news: Jesus makes us the best we can be, and God accepts us through His Son as we continue to walk in the light (1 John 1:7).

Do you think God's children should do their best for Him? If your answer is "Yes," let me further ask you: Which ones? Which of God's children should give Him their best? When? When should they do it?

There is an old spiritual song entitled "Give of Your Best to the Master." The sentiments of that title harmonize with the teaching of the Bible . . . Yes, each Christian should give their very best to the Lord.

Why should we? Why should you and I give God the best that we have? First, we should do it because He deserves it. He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He deserves our praise, honor, and glory, and He also deserves our very best effort.

Second, you and I should give God our best because He demands it. Yes, He *deserves* our best, but He *demand*s it, too. Under the old law, God set forth this high standard for any animal sacrificed to Him: ". . . it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it" (Leviticus 22:21). Jehovah wanted the best His people had to offer. The Israelites were to love the Lord with their whole being, as are we (Mark 12:30). When it comes to our spiritual development, God's instruction is for us to "*give all diligence*" (2 Peter 1:5,10). Giving less than that is unacceptable.

Third, we should give our best to the Lord because the church deserves it. We all know how it upsets us when we are on some type of team and one or more members of the team do not pull their weight. For the good of the Christ's body, all members need to put forth their best effort (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

Another motivating factor is the influence we have on others. The prophet Ezekiel quoted this short proverb: "*Like mother, like daughter*" (Ezekiel 16:44). In many cases, a little girl will try to imitate her mother. When she is a teenager and even later in her life, she probably will turn out to be like her mom in a number of ways. What if Mom is a Christian but she does not take it seriously, so she fails to give her best to God? Chances are, her daughter will be just like her. On the other hand, being reared in a home where both parents put God and His kingdom first has a much higher probability of seeing the children grow

up to give the Lord their very best like dad and mom did. Yes, being an encouragement to others by giving our best to the Lord can be very contagious.

Although it is possible to be deceived, in many cases we can tell whether or not a person is putting his best into a particular task. Have you ever watched or read about the competitions known as "Special Olympics?" It is so touching to see the effort that the participants put forth, as they really are doing the very best they can. If they can give that kind of effort in *their* activities, should not God's people be able to do the same thing when we live and work for *Him*?

Do not allow the devil to mislead you into thinking that there never has been a person who lived up to God's lofty standard of giving their best to Him. There have been such people, and there still are some children of God who continue to do that very thing!

Consider a few Bible examples of folks who gave the Lord the best they had: (1) a poor widow gave all of her money (Luke 21:1-4), (2) some risked their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 15:25,26), (3) the Macedonian saints gave sacrificially even though they were living in deep poverty (2 Corinthians 8:1-5), and (4) Paul gladly spent and was spent for the benefit of others, even those who did not return his love (2 Corinthians 12:15). It is uplifting and exciting to see brothers and sisters of *our* generation giving themselves completely to God!

What are some areas in which you and I can give our best? We can put forth our best effort:

- In our example (1 Timothy 4:12)
- In how we love others (John 13:34,35)
- In forgiving others (Ephesians 4:32)
- In our prayer life (Philippians 4:6,7)
- In studying God's word (Acts 17:11)
- In encouraging others (Acts 11:23)
- In teaching the gospel (Romans 1:15)
- In being a friend (John 15:12)
- In our role in our family (Eph. 5:22-6:4)
- In our efforts on the job or in our studies
- In our life as a citizen (1 Peter 2:13,14)
- In giving ourselves as a sacrifice (Romans 12:1,2)
- In whatever task we undertake (Colossians 3:23)

It is not enough to give *something* to the Lord. He desires and deserves our very best . . . every day in every circumstance. The old slogan of Zenith Electronics was, "The quality goes in before the name goes on." That statement should describe every effort we make for God . . . quality . . . the best we can do.

-- Roger D. Campbell

## Ephesians 2:8-10 — “FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED”

The saints of God in Ephesus to whom Paul wrote a letter were changed people. They had a changed attitude, changed conduct, and most importantly, a changed relationship with the Lord.

Prior to obeying the gospel, they were dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). At that time, they were children of disobedience who fulfilled their fleshly desires and stood deserving of God’s wrath (2:2,3). As a result, they were without God, without the Christ, and without hope (2:12). That all changed, as we read in verses eight through ten:

(8) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, (9) not of works, lest anyone should boast.

(10) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

They went from being *hopeless* to *hope-filled*, from children of *wrath* to children of *God*, and in simple, bottom-line terms, from being *lost* to being *saved*.

**They were saved by grace** (2:8). Their salvation from sin was undeniable, as Paul twice affirmed to them, “*by grace you have been saved*” (2:5,8). How were they saved? By grace. “Grace” is from the Greek word “*χάρις/charis*,” which means good will, loving-kindness, or favor [Thayer, word no. 5485]. Humans are able to show and speak with grace. Thank God that He shows grace, too. In fact, in the context of Ephesians 2, we see that our salvation is due to God’s mercy (2:4), love (2:4), kindness (2:7), and grace (2:8). As we contemplate the amazingness of God’s grace, let us not forget that we cannot earn it and certainly do not deserve it.

**They were saved through personal faith and the faith.** Read again this truth from Ephesians 2:8: “*For by grace you have been saved through faith.*” When a lost person hears the gospel, the proper response, which is the only response which results in a person’s soul being saved, is faith. Remission of sins is only for those who believe/have a personal faith in the Christ (Acts 10:43). At the same time, salvation is by means of “the faith,” which is the gospel. Jewish priests in Jerusalem were saved when they were “*obedient to the faith*” (Acts 6:7). This example shows clearly that salvation comes by an *obedient* faith . . . and it is by means of *the* faith.

**They were not saved of themselves** (2:8). There was no way possible for them to use their brains to devise a scheme, that is, a man-made plan, which could provide a remedy for their sins. There is a clear distinction between *man’s* righteousness and *God’s* righteousness (Romans 10:3). God’s righteousness is

the means by which He makes humans righteous. Man’s “righteousness” is his effort to procure salvation on his own and not through God’s arrangement. When it comes to salvation, man-made ideas and efforts will not get the job done.

**Their salvation was a gift from God.** What was the gift which the Lord bestowed on them: was it their faith, or their salvation? (2:8). It was up to them to possess their own personal faith. God provided the evidence that produced faith, but He also gave them salvation. We read similar language in Romans 6:23, where it is written that the gift of God is eternal life. “Well, if salvation is a gift, would that not mean there is nothing humans can do to receive it?” Some of God’s gifts are unconditional (like the sunshine and rain, Matthew 5:45), but other gifts from Him are conditional. For instance, God gave the Israelites the city of Jericho along with its king (Joshua 6:1,2). However, He also laid out the conditions under which they would receive the city as a gift. When did the walls of Jericho fall down? After Israel by faith obeyed God’s instructions (Hebrews 11:30). Just as Jericho was a conditional gift (“You must do something to get it”), so is our salvation from sin.

**They were saved, but not of works** (2:9). The Bible speaks of various kinds of works. They surely were not saved by works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11), by works of the old law (Galatians 2:16), or by their own human-imagined works (Romans 10:3). Jesus affirmed that believing in Him is “*the work of God*” (John 6:29). If faith is a work, then not all works are eliminated from God’s plan to save sinners.

**They were saved, but had nothing about which to boast** (2:9). There is no room for saved people to pound their chest and praise themselves. No, if anyone is going to boast, let him have the mindset of the apostle Paul and boast not in one’s intellect or activity, but in the cross of the Christ (Galatians 6:14).

**They were saved to do good works in the Christ** (2:10). Saved people are in the Christ (Ephesians 1:7). In Him, every child of God is expected to be involved in good works, yes, to be *zealous* of good works (Titus 2:14). Please understand that the point in Ephesians 2:10 is not that we do good works *in order to get into* the Lord, but rather, once we already are in Him, our life is to be filled with good works.

-- Roger D. Campbell

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