

## THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

### EPHESIANS 6:1-4, *WALKING IN WISDOM, PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SUBMISSION (Part 2)*

#### A. Notes on children and parents at the time of the Apostle Paul.

1. John Stott, *It was a radical change* (Jesus' teaching concerning children) *from the callous cruelty which prevailed in the Roman Empire, in which unwanted babies were abandoned, weak and deformed ones killed, and even healthy children were regarded by many as a partial nuisance because they inhibited sexual promiscuity and complicated easy divorce.*
2. William Barclay, *...a Roman father had absolute power over his family. He could sell them as slaves; he could make them work in his fields even in chains; he could punish as he liked and could even inflict the death penalty. Further, the power of the Roman father extended over a child's whole life, as long as the father lived...It was the custom that unwanted children were left in the Roman forum. There they became the property of anyone who cared to pick them up. They were collected at night by people who looked after them in order to sell them as slaves or to stock the brothels of Rome.*
3. Seneca, a Roman philosopher (died 65 A.D.), *We slaughter a fierce ox; we strangle a mad dog; we plunge the knife into sickly cattle lest they taint the herd; children who are born weakly and deformed we drown.*
4. Warren Wiersbe, *We have tried education, legislation, and every other approach, but nothing seems to work. Paul's solution to the antagonisms in the home and in society was regeneration - a new heart from God and a new submission to Christ and to one another.*

#### B. Children are to obey their parents (1-3)

1. Obedience to parents is correct Christian behavior (1), ***Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this right.***
  - a. *Child* means *offspring* without specific reference to sex or age.
  - b. *Obey* means *to do what one says*.
    - 1) *In the Lord* modifies *obey* not *parents*.
    - 2) Obey parents except when it goes against the commands of the Lord, not obey believing parents only.
    - 3) Obedience should continue as long as the child is living under the parents' authority but honor continues.
    - 4) Marriage would be a time when parents' authority is transferred to the new couple, *Genesis 2:24, There fore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*
  - c. *for this is right*
    - 1) Proverbs 6:20, *My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching.*
    - 2) Proverbs 23:22, *Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.*
    - 3) Colossians 3:20, *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*
    - 4) A general command on submission, Ephesians 5:1, *submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*
2. Honor father and mother which promises blessing (2-3), ***"Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."***
  - a. Paul's second command for children is to honor their parents.
    - 1) He quoted Exodus 20:12, *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.*
    - 2) *Honor* means *to show respect, to give recognition*, which often implies *action*.
    - 3) It involves attitude which does not end when a child becomes an adult.
  - b. Paul stated that honoring parents is the first commandment with a promise.
    - 1) Actually, the first command with a promise is the second commandment, Exodus 20:4ff, *...You shall not make for yourself a carved image...but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love men and keep my commandments.*
    - 2) Paul probably meant that is the first in the sense of being of primary importance (rank) for children.
    - 3) The particular promise was to Jewish children in the land of promise but Paul gives the general sense that obedience fosters self-discipline which promotes stability (material prosperity) and long-life.

- 4) Concerning the promises of stability and long-life.
  - a) John Stott emphasizes that honoring parents *sets* the groundwork for a stable society, *Probably we should interpret this in general rather than individual terms. Then what is promised is not so much long life to each child who obeys his parents, as social stability to any community in which children honor their parents. Certainly a healthy society is inconceivable without a strong family life.*
  - b) Warren Wiersbe on long-life, *...and he will live long on the earth. This does not mean that everyone who died young dishonored his parents. He was stating a principle: when children obey their parents in the Lord, they will escape a good deal of sin and danger and thus avoid the things that could threaten or shorten their lives. But life is not measured only by quantity of time. It is also measured by quality of experience. God enriches the life of the obedient child no matter how long he may live on the earth. Sin always robs us: obedience always enriches us.*
  - c) Max Anders, *The promise, that the obedient child would live long on the earth, is a general promise, not an absolute promise. Children who learn obedience tend to live better lives and tend to live longer. Drug addicts, criminals, foolish and careless people tend not to live as well or as long as well-disciplined people.*
  - d) The Book of Proverbs must be understood in the same way, declaring principles not iron-clad promises.

C. Fathers are to train their children in righteousness (4)

1. Fathers are not to discourage their children by being unreasonable (4a), ***Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger,***

- a. Paul addressed fathers only in verse four after addressing parents, fathers and mothers in verse two.
  - 1) As noted earlier, in Greek and Roman societies, fathers had absolute authority over their children.
    - a) Fathers were called out by Paul in Colossians 3:21, *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*
    - b) Stephen Fowl, *The father in a Greco-Roman household would have held absolute authority to do with his children as he saw fit.*
    - c) Robert Jamieson, *Fathers are more prone to passion in relation to their children than mothers, whose fault is rather over-indulgence.*
    - d) Johann Bengel, *...mothers have kind of divine patience but fathers are more liable to be carried away by wrath.*
  - 2) Biblical instances of poor fatherly training.
    - a) David pampered Absalom who almost brought down David's rule, 2 Samuel 13-19.
    - b) Eli's failure to discipline his sons brought to defeat to Israel and death to Eli and his sons, 1 Samuel 2-4.
    - c) Jacob showed favoritism to Joseph which caused family discord, Genesis 37.
  - 3) *Fathers* could be translated as *parents*.
    - a) Both fathers and mothers are addressed in verses 1-3.
    - b) H. D. M. Spence, *"Fathers" is inclusive of mothers, to whom the practical administration of the household and training of the children so much belong.*
- b. Paul's command is that parents not exasperate their children.
  - 1) *Provoke*
    - a) It means *to exasperate, to inflame anger unnecessarily.*
    - b) It is only used here and in Romans 10:19, *...with a foolish nation I will make you angry.*
  - 2) It is a command to not make unreasonable demands on children.
    - a) Anger can flare up when a parent tells a child, *Do what I say, not what I do.*
    - b) Thomas Constable, *Studies indicate that the factor that causes rage in teenagers more than any other is having to face life without adequate direction from their parents.*
    - c) Harold Hoehner, *Fathers are not to exasperate their children by unreasonable demands, petty rules, or favoritism.*
    - d) John Stott, *...parents can easily misuse their authority either by making irritating or unreasonable demands which make no allowance for the inexperience and immaturity of children, or by harshness and cruelty at one extreme or by favoritism and over-indulgence at the other, or by humiliating or suppressing them, or by those two vindictive weapons sarcasm and ridicule. These are some of the parental attitudes which provoke resentment and anger in children.*

- e) Warren Wiersbe, *Fathers provoke their children and discourage them by saying one thing and doing another-by always blaming and never praising, by being inconsistent and unfair in discipline, and by showing favoritism in the home, by making promises and not keeping them, and by making light of problems that, to the children, are very important. Christian parents need the fulness of the Spirit so they can be sensitive to the needs and problems of their children.*

2. Fathers are to train their children (4b), ***but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.***

a. *bring them up*

- 1) It means *to raise a child to maturity by providing spiritual, physical and psychological support.*
- 2) It involves instruction and discipline.
- 3) Luke 4:16, *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.*
- 4) 1 Timothy 5:10, *and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.*
- 5) Ephesians 5:29, *For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,*
- 6) D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *If parents but gave as much thought to the rearing of their children as they do to the rearing of animals and flowers, the situation would be very different...The opposite of wrong discipline is not the absence of discipline, but right discipline, true discipline...The opposite of no discipline at all is not cruelty, it is balanced discipline, it is controlled discipline.*

b. The means of training is Godly discipline and instruction.

1) *Discipline*

- a) It means *to train someone according to proper rules of conduct and behavior; to nourish, feed.*
- b) Hebrews 12:11, *For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*
- c) The emphasis is on discipline not punishment.

2) *Instruction*

- a) It means *to teach correct behavior and belief through advice and encouragement.*
- b) 1 Corinthians 10:11, *Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*
- c) The emphasis is on verbal instruction.
- d) H. D. M. Spence, *Instilling sound principles of life, training to good habits, cautioning and protecting against moral dangers, encouraging prayer, Bible-reading, church-going..are among the matters included in this counsel.*

3) *of the Lord*

- a) The Lord is to be at the center of training and learning.
- b) Stephen Fowl, *In Ephesians, fathers are admonished to form their children to fulfill their proper ends as people of the Lord.*
- c) John Stott, *True education...is stimulation, in which parents and teachers act as a catalyst, and encourage the child to make his own responses. This they cannot do if they leave the child to flounder; they have to teach Christian values of truth and goodness, defend them, and recommend their acceptance, but at the same time abstain from any pressure, still more coercion.*

c. Thoughts concerning discipline.

- 1) Parents should not delegate training to others and take no personal responsibility.
- 2) A parent must be in control of his emotions when disciplining a child for being out of control.
- 3) A child needs direction which should come from a loving parent seeking God's best for his child.
- 4) A child needs enough freedom to move toward independence without undue harm.
- 5) John Stott, *Certainly the overriding concern of Christian parents is not just that their children will submit to their authority, but that through this they will come to know and obey the Lord.*

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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- A. The responsibility of children is to obey and honor their parents as directed by the Lord.
- B. Parents are not to discourage their children by being unreasonable.
- C. Parents are to train their children with the hope that they will place faith in Christ.