



Gospel Children

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Ephesians 6:1-3

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Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise),³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

(Pastor prays)

We have been working through the book of Genesis for about a year-and-a-half now, and we've seen that, from the beginning, our Creator established order. In Genesis 1 and 2, the Bible says God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was formless, and void and God gave form to the formlessness. He filled the emptiness. He gives order and functionality. And in the New Testament, we find out that, in Christ, God gives us Gospel freedom so that His people might flourish.

We've been looking at fathers and mothers in Ephesians 5 and 6, and there we see with great clarity the order that God gives Christian homes so that in Christian homes, there will be joy and strength and stability and health and hope. And it helps us. God has given us directives, not just for husbands and wives but also for sons and daughters.

This passage speaks to attitudes, actions, and tone of voice. Mom and Dad, there is a reason why it flies all over you when your child is disrespectful or displays a bad attitude toward you. It is a violation of God's creation order, and if you're a Christian, it is a breach of Gospel living.

In the text we have before us, there is a very clear directive from the Apostle Paul. In 6:1 Paul starts out with Children. *Tekvov* is the word Paul uses, and that's not just little children; it's anyone who has a parent. And the next word – *obey* – means to hear and then stand under what you heard. It means to listen attentively and respond positively to what you have heard. In short, it means to *hear* it and then to *do* it. In other words, those with parents are to put themselves under the words, under the authority of their parents.

Now, you might be thinking, “Is this really worth a whole sermon?” and that's a fair question. I've been thinking about Romans lately. I turn 50 next year, and I might preach through it. In Romans, Paul lists all manner of terrible sins – gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil—and those sins result in God giving them over. On that list is the sin of disobedience to parents. So let me say it for all of us to grasp:

Your Christianity is Seen in How You Treat Your Parents

Obedience to parents shows several things.

Responsibility

In verse 1, the word “children” really does have a universal application to anyone with parents. By God's grace, when you are a son or a daughter, you are a real reflection of your parents the way that Jesus – the Son of God – is a reflection of God the Father. Jesus said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” Now, as a child of your parents, the way you live either brings them honor or it brings them shame.

Some of you are parents of adult children who are wayward and can speak to this. You've done your best to bring her up in the fear and the adoration of the Lord, and despite your best efforts and all the love you could muster, you have felt shame and disappointment of a child that is in a far country. Listen, by God's grace, don't give up putting that child before the Lord. Give her over to the Lord. Don't stop praying and pleading with a good God to break in with the power of the Gospel to your Christian children of all ages. Don't forget that your responsibility is to a God who has purchased you with the

blood of Jesus. You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Honor God with your bodies. Your Christianity is seen in how you treat your parents. Responsibility.

Respect

Let me show you where I get that. The word Paul uses to describe the relationship between a parent and a child is different from the word he uses to describe the relationship between a husband and a wife. The word there is “submission.” Submission is the willing giving over of one equal to another equal. (By the way, husbands, don’t mix these up. If you try to make your wife obey, you might just run right into a buzzsaw.)

But a child, a child is different. A child is to *obey* and to stand under what the parent has said. This shows Godly respect and adorns the Gospel. I really do believe that one of the virtues we have lost along the way is the grasp on respect, and the number one place that is learned is in the home. Personally, I think one of the most degrading and really infuriating things is to see a child speak with outright and blatant disrespect to his or her parents. Now I know that the teenage years bring some trying times, some real growing pains. But, students, you can’t be a consistently disobedient and rebelling teenager to your parents and also be a solid and growing Christian. When you lack respect, the problem is that you are filled with pride. You have a love for self and a determination to do what *you* want to do. A lack of respect actually shows a worship of self and an idolatry that is a dangerous disregard for God’s good gifts in your life. Furthermore, if you can live with contempt against your father or mother, it shows that you don’t have a solid and Biblical grasp on the concept of God as Father. In fact, sustained disrespect indicates that you haven’t been to the cross and laid down your ego.

You can’t say (like Paul), “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me.” You can’t say that because the only crucifying going on in your life is of your parents’ good name. In short, you can’t claim to love Christ and also disrespect your parents. Parents are a gift from the Lord given to provide love, guidance, and direction until you reach

real adulthood. To be hateful and rebelling and talking ugly to a parent is of the highest offense to the Lord. This brings me to the third word.

Responsibility. Respect.

Testimony

Let me show you what I mean by *testimony*. Verse 1 says “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord.*” Paul also wrote Colossians, and in the little letter he says in Colossians 3:20, *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.* What Paul is saying is that your response to your parents is a real picture of your Christian testimony. Your obedience to your Mom and Dad is a direct reflection of how obedient you are to the Lord. You can’t be a continuously disobedient child to your parents and also be a follower of Jesus. When you obey and honor your parents, you obey and honor God. See what verse 1 says. *Children, obey your parents in the Lord,* Your treatment of your mom and dad is a reflection of your testimony all through life. If your parents want you to do something ungodly, of course you don’t do it. It wouldn’t be “in the Lord.” Your Christianity is seen in how you treat your parents.

Responsibility. Respect. Testimony.

Rightness

Look again at verse 1. *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* Then Paul brings in the 5th Commandment in verse 2. “*Honor your father and mother*” (*this is the first commandment with a promise*). Obeying parents is right in two ways:

Natural law. There is an order in creation ordained by God and put into the hearts of all people. Any culture you go to in the world over, whether they are Christian or not, it is good and right to honor your parents. It’s natural law. But not *just* natural law.

Revealed law. In verses 2 and 3, Paul is quoting the fifth commandment. It’s really interesting that when God introduced the 10 commandments, the first law relating to human relations was: Honor your Father and Mother. In the New City Catechism, “To love and honor your Father and Mother, submitting to their godly discipline and direction.” “Honor” is to hold in the highest

regard and highest value and highest respect, and it carries a reward. Verse 3 says “that it may go well with you and you may live long in the land.”

These brief directions by Paul were given to families like ours living in a society like ours that was hostile to the Gospel, a Gospel that says God the creator is holy and just. Man in creation is sinful and in need of a Savior. We are orphans. In this same little letter Paul writes in Ephesians 1:7, *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace*, He chose us. He predestined us to adoption.

In Christ, you can be a son or daughter of God if you turn from your sin and turn to Christ, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead so that you can be saved. Come to Christ. Family is a picture of God the Father through Jesus the Son. He calls us by the Holy Spirit to come and be loved.

(Pastor prays)