

BELIEVING CHILDREN AND PARENTS ARE TO TO WALK UNDER GOD'S AUTHORITY

EPHESIANS 06:01-04

Introduction

This is an important passage, not only for the day of Paul, but for every generation. It is particularly crucial for our day and time. Our generation is a generation of *problem children and problem parents*, and one of the major causes of the tension is the failure to heed the instructions of God's Word. Children and parents are to walk together under God's authority.

- I. Believing children are to obey (vv. 1-3).
- II. Believing parents are not to exasperate their children, but to train them in the Lord (v. 4).

I. *Ephesians 06:01-03 Children – Obedience*

Children are to obey their parents. The word *obey* (hupakouo) means to submit to; to comply with; to hearken; to heed; to follow the directions or guidance of some instruction. When a parent guides and directs a child, the child is to obey the parent. But what about the problems that are so repulsively evident in society: the problems of parental abuse — the problems of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and mental abuse? Is a child to obey a parent when the parent is so devilishly wrong? No! A thousand times no!

1. First, to obey means to obey *in the Lord*. Note the command again: “Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*.” The phrase “in the Lord” means at least two things.
 - a. There is a limit to the child's obedience. When a parent is not acting in the Lord, he is not to be obeyed. The Lord has nothing whatsoever to do with the filth of unrighteousness and abuse of precious children. If a child can break away and free himself from such parental corruption, he has every right to be freed from his parent. The Lord came to set men free from the abuse and the filth of sin, not to enslave men to it, and especially not to enslave children to it.

One of the most severe warnings in all of history was issued by the Lord Jesus to adults who abuse children:

Mark 9:42-43, 45, 47-48 “*And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. If your hand causes you to sin [by abusing a child], cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin [by lusting after a child], cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the*

kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”

The abusing parent had better heed, for one of the things that God will not tolerate — absolutely not tolerate — is the abuse of a child. We must proclaim the Word of God: children are to obey their parents, but they are to obey only if the parents' desire and instructions are *in the Lord*. If a parent is beating a child black and blue or sexually abusing a child, the child should go to some other adult he feels close to and ask for his help. And we as ministers of the Lord — ministers who are called to proclaim Christ and to do what we can to bring His righteousness to earth — must teach the truth from the pulpits of the world.

- b. The phrase “in the Lord” also tells why the child is to obey his parents. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord” — obeying your parents is right; it is of the Lord; it pleases the Lord; therefore, obey them. When they guide and instruct you, follow them (see Col. 3:20).

Lehman Strauss points out that obedience is the first law of the universe — that the law of obedience regulates everything in the world: the stars, the planets, the seasons. Even man himself tries to govern the world by the law of obedience. He wants obedience in the state, at work, at play and at home. (*Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 212.) The point is simply this: the law of obedience is the very nature of things, at the very core of the universe and of man's life and behaviour upon earth. Therefore, it is to be expected that God would command children to obey their parents. Children are to obey — obey because it pleases the Lord and it is the right thing to do.

Note the emphasis here; it is striking. Children are not told to obey parents because it pleases the parent, but because it pleases the Lord. Pleasing one's parents is, of course, a reason for obeying them. But the *first* reason for obeying parents is that it pleases the Lord. The child is to know the Lord to such a degree that he is continually thinking about the Lord and about pleasing Him. The child is to walk so closely to the Lord that his mind is constantly upon the Lord — upon what he can do to please the Lord. When the child so knows the Lord, then obeying his parents will become an automatic response.

Mark 7:10 *For Moses said, ‘Honour your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’*

Eph 6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

Col 3:20 *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

Prov 1:8 *Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*

Prov 6:20 My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

Prov 7:1 My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you.

Prov 10:1 A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother.

Prov 20:11 Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.

Prov 23:22 Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Eccl 12:1 Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them."

2. Second, to obey parents means to honour one's father and mother. The word *honour* (*timao*) means to "esteem and value as precious" (The Amplified New Testament); to show respect, reverence, kindness, courtesy and obedience (Wuest. *Ephesians and Colossians*, Vol. 1, p. 136). Scripture is not speaking to any certain age child. It is speaking to all of us who are children with parents still living. We are to honour our fathers and mothers: *to esteem and value them as precious* — to respect and reverence them. Tragically, this is a rarity today. Too often a child's response to his parent is that of...

- talking back
- grumbling
- speaking disrespectfully
- calling the parent a cute, *but* disrespectful *name*
- putting off the instruction
- cutting the parent
- disregarding the instruction
- not listening
- acting like a "know it all"

In addition to these, there is the dishonour of delinquency, crime, drugs, alcohol and the abuse of property; and the list could go on and on. And when it comes to adult children with aged parents, there is the dishonour of neglect, the ignoring of their needs and the shuffling of them to the side and failing to adequately care for them. Too many adult children forget how much their parents have done for them — bringing them into the world and taking care of them for years. Too many children forget the rich experience and knowledge that their parents have gained through the years and that could be put to great use in meeting community and world needs. And even if the parents failed to be and to do all they should have, we as Christian children are instructed to honour them as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

1 Tim 5:4, 8 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. If anyone does not provide

for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Prov 20:20 *If a man curses his father or mother, his lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness.*

Prov 30:17 *“The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures.*

Exo 20:12 *“Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”*

Lev 19:3 *“Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God.”*

Lev 19:32 *“Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.”*

Deu 27:16 *“Cursed is the man who dishonours his father or his mother.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”*

Note the two promises made to children who honour their parents.

- => Things will go well for the child. Does this mean that the child will never have problems or have to suffer? No! This is not what the Scripture means. God means that He will be with the child, strengthen and take care of him so that he can *walk through* the trials of life victoriously. The child will be strengthened and made strong *where it counts — in the inner man*. He will be enabled to conquer and be victorious over whatever confronts him as he journeys through life.
- => The child is assured that he will live a long life on earth. Frankly, there is little question but that Paul meant this and that we should take it for what it says. If a child honestly obeys and honours his parents faithfully — really obeys and honours from the depths of his heart — God will give him a long life on earth.

Is there ever an exception to this? And what about small babies and children who are taken on to heaven? Does this violate the promise? No! If a child was really obedient, then all we can say is that God knows what is best, and for some reason, God wanted the precious little life with Him now. God just could not wait for the fellowship and joy which the precious little life would bring Him.

II. Ephesians 06:04 Parents – Children

Parents are not to exasperate their children. Parents are bound to upset and irritate their children sometimes; we all upset and irritate people sometimes. Discipline, correction, and reproof are seldom enjoyable experiences. Their very nature is that of disturbance and

irritation. This is not what this instruction means. The word *exasperate* (*parorgizo*) means to arouse to wrath or anger, to provoke to the point of utter exasperation and resentment. Note two significant discussions.

1. Four things will exasperate a child.
 - a. Failing to accept the fact that things do change. Time and generations do change. This does not mean that a child should participate nor be allowed to do everything that his generation does. But it does mean that parents need to be alert to the changes between generations and allow the child to be a part of his own generation instead of trying to conform the child to the parent's childhood generation. The parent's childhood generation does not exist nor will it ever exist again.

What changes should and should not be allowed by a Christian parent? Three words provide a good guideline: *rebellion*, *immorality*, and *injustice*. Open defiance or resistance to authority and immorality and injustice are contrary to God's Word. Any change that involves rebellion, immorality or injustice needs to be dealt with and controlled by the parent. We are probably safe to say that any change not involving one of these areas should be allowed. Whether true or not, these three areas provide a good practical guideline.

The point is this: a parent must not resist normal and natural change that takes place between generations. If he resists and forbids his child to grow up in his own generation, the parent is asking for trouble. Most likely the child will be exasperated — to react.

- b. Over controlling a child will also exasperate a child. Over control ranges all the way from stern restriction and discipline to child abuse (dealt with above in footnote two, point one). Disciplining and restricting a child *too much* will either stifle the growth of a child or stir him to react and rebel, causing the child to flee from the parent. What is too much discipline? How much should a child be restricted? Should he be allowed to do everything he wants? No! There is a limit, and the limit must be placed upon the child and discipline must be exercised when the limit is crossed over. What Christian parents need to remember is this:

=> *Some parents allow their children* to participate in every function and activity offered to the child. They are usually the ones without *proper parental* guidance.

The point is this: there must be a balance between family life and the child's community life. The child should be allowed to do his own thing sometime, and should be required to share with the family at other times. As he grows older, he should, of course, be allowed to break away from the family more and more in order to prepare him for the day when he will step out into the world on his own. A child needs free time away from the parent and family as well as some family time in order to grow into a healthy person.

Eph 6:4 *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

Col 3:21 *Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*

c. Under controlling a child can exasperate a child. It should be noted that this is the most prevalent problem in an industrialized society. There is a tendency for those with plenty or with wealth to pamper, indulge and give a child everything imaginable — well beyond what a child needs and what is really best for him. Parents pamper and indulge children for five reasons.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to the child — in order to escape responsibility for the child: to keep a child from interrupting the parents' time or schedule or desires; to get a child out from under the parents feet. The parent, of course, needs some free time; but too many parents live selfishly, wanting nothing interfering with their own desires and needs. Too many parents push their children out and away and allow their children to run around too much. Too few sacrifice their own time and desires to look after their children as much as they should.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to a child — in order to gain social standing or to relive his own childhood. The parent did not have and was not allowed to do what he wanted as a child; therefore, he sees to it that his child has everything and does everything that everyone else does. He is determined that his child will have everything no matter what it costs.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to a child — because he has a false understanding or philosophy of child-rearing. He gives in to ill behaviour, whining, pouting, sulkiness and temper tantrums just to secure peace and quiet.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to a child — because of misguided devotion and love: to keep from losing the loyalty, quietness, cooperativeness and affection of the child.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to a child — because of insecurity and lack of purpose. For example, some pamper and cling to a child because they (the parents) are insecure in the world. Others cling and pamper because they lack any other purpose. The child fills the need for security and purpose. *Playing house* is lived to the limit: the parent plays house with his child, clinging and pampering to the limit.

Prov 13:24 *He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.*

Prov 19:18 *Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.*

Prov 22:15 *Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.*

Prov 23:13 *Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die.*

Prov 29:15 *The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.*

1 Sam 3:13 *For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them.*

- d. Living an inconsistent life before a child can exasperate a child. A parent who tells a child one thing and then turns around and does the opposite thing himself is full of hypocrisy and false profession. Yet, how common! How many children are doing things because their parents do them:

=> drinking alcohol

=> taking drugs

=> watching sexual scenes on television or movies

=> reading immoral stories

=> looking at magazines exposing the human body

=> eating too much

=> wasting time

=> dressing or exposing the body to attract attention

=> attending socials or parties that are loose on decency, morality, marital faithfulness, and on and on

Seeing an inconsistent life in a parent can exasperate children.

1 Kng 22:52 *He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, because he walked in the ways of his father and mother and in the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin.*

2 Chr 22:3 *He too walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother encouraged him in doing wrong.*

Jer 9:14 *Instead, they have followed the stubbornness of their hearts; they have followed the Baals, as their fathers taught them."*

Mat 14:8 *Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist."*

2. A parent is to bring up a child in the ways of the Lord, in the training and instruction of the Lord.

=> The word *training* (paideia) means “the whole training and education of children which [involves]... the cultivation of mind and morals... commands and admonitions...reproof and punishment...correcting mistakes and curbing the passions...the increase of virtue” (Thayers Greek-English Lexicon).

=> The word *instruction* (nouthesia) means counsel, exhortation, correction.

Note that the parent is not to rear the child after his own ideas and notions of what is best for the child, but after the training and instruction *of the Lord*. The Lord's Word is to be the guide for Christian parents in rearing their child. The benefits in bringing up a child in the Lord are innumerable. Just a few are as follows:

- a. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning love: that he is loved by God and by all who trust God. He grows no matter how evil some may act, knowing that he is to love even those who do wrong.
- b. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning power and triumph: that God will help His followers through all; that there is a supernatural power available to help, a power to help when mother and dad and loved ones have done all they can.
- c. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning hope and faith: that no matter what happens, no matter how' great a trial, we can still trust God and hope in Him. He has provided a very special strength to carry us through the trials of this life (no matter how painful); that He has provided a very special place called heaven where He will carry us and our loved ones when we face death.
- d. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning the truth of life and endurance (service): that God has given us the privilege of life and of living in a beautiful earth and universe; that the evil and bad which exists in the world is caused by evil and bad people; that despite such evil, we are to serve in appreciation for life and the beautiful earth upon which God has placed us. We are to work and work diligently, making the greatest contribution *we* can.
- e. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning trust and endurance: that life is full of temptations and pitfalls which can easily rob us of joy and destroy our lives and the fulfilment of our purposes; that the way to escape the temptations and pitfalls is to follow Christ and endure in our work and purpose.
- f. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning peace: that there is an inner peace despite the turbulent waters of this world; that peace is knowing and trusting Christ.

Eph 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Col 3:21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

1 Tim 3:4 *He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.*

1 Tim 3:12 *A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.*

Titus 2:4 *Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children.*

Deu 4:9 *Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.*

Deu 6:6-7 *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Prov 22:6 *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

Isa 28:9 *“Who is it he is trying to teach? To whom is he explaining his message? To children weaned from their milk, to those just taken from the breast?”*

Isa 38:19 *The living, the living — they praise you, as I am doing today; fathers tell their children about your faithfulness.*

Lam 2:19 *Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street. ■*