

The Pearl of the Epistles – Ephesians

God's Design for the Family, Part IV

Ephesians 6:1-4

***Ephesians 6:1-4** Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. **2** Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) **3** That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. **4** And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

Introduction

Paul wrote an epistle to the Christian brethren which were at Colossi in much the same way that he has written to the congregation at Ephesus. In the third chapter of his letter he parallels this teaching:

***Colossians 3:20-21** Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. **21** Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.*

The Duty of Children

***Ephesians 6:1-4** Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. **2** Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) **3** That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.*

The Apostle now turns his attention to the next illustration of submission in the family relationship; children to their parents. Kids have it pretty easy today. For children of the Bible times, the Mosaic Law asserted that a child should be put to death for striking or cursing his father or mother (Exodus 21:15, 17; Leviticus 20:9). In New Testament times Paul lists “disobedient to parents” right along with “murderers, wickedness, haters of God, inventors of evil things” (Romans 1:29-30; 2 Timothy 3:2).

Children – The Greek word (*τεκνον*) *teknon* normally indicates the young, but is used here as young and still in the care and rule of their parents or of those who were not of age.

“...obey your parents” – Paul uses obedience instead of honor as is used in the fifth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12). Obedience of the child to the parent is the demonstration of honor to their parents. For the child, nothing is more difficult than trying out independence and being told to refrain from their individuality and conform to the wishes of their parents. For the teenager, their minds recoil at the idea of losing their individuality and being placed under authority of anyone, especially their own parents. How rare it is to find a child that practices obedience.

Why is it important for children to obey their parents?

1. First it is God’s design for the family. God is a God of order and He declares the order of the family (Ephesians 5:21-6:4)
2. Obedience is key to a happy and prosperous life. From the child’s obedience to their parents will come obedience to the laws of the land.
3. The child is not yet ready or competent to direct their own paths.
4. The parent, through their own experiences, will have lookout for the best things for their child.
5. God’s ultimate design for the family government is in place to protect the child and his welfare.

“...in the Lord: for this is right” – This is the qualifier of obedience. Children should obey their parents as they would obey God. Parents are not always right. Parents do not always live their lives as God designed. Some parents are more like children than parents. God made provision for this. He did not say “Children obey your perfect parents.” He qualified obedience as “in the Lord.” The honor we give parents is unto the Lord God of the universe. Our obedience comes from and to Him. When I obeyed my parents, I was pleasing God. Even when I didn’t think that my parents deserved my obedience, I was obedient to God’s word. “This is right!” “Right” δίκαιος (*dikaios*) is defined as “in character or act, innocent, holy, just.” In this context it means “being in accordance with God’s compelling standards” (Mt 1:19)¹

“Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” –

Honor thy father and thy mother – Honor, τιμάω (*timáō*) in the Greek means to show respect and give recognition. But the word goes deeper than just the actions of honoring the parents. It is a desire from the heart, a respect, acts of kindness, given to parents accompanied by love,. The parents are charged by God to raise the children as if in the place of God. God hates rebellion in any form. When

¹ Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

children rebel against their parents it is considered as rebellion against God. What would be considered “not honoring” parents? It would include irreverent, sassiness and impertinent speech aimed at the parents.

“That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” – This is a rephrasing of the fifth Commandment: “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” (Exodus 20:12). Of course the promise in Exodus concerned the “Land of Canaan”, promised to their fathers, was now including them.

How does this affect the children in Paul’s and in 2014 as well? This is still a promise from God given to the Apostle Paul to repeat to the church at Ephesus and Keys Valley Baptist Church. This command is just as fresh in 2014 as it was given in the dry and dusty wilderness at the base of Mt. Sinai.

The Duty of Parents

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

‘...ye fathers’ - The command is given specifically to fathers, as they are the head of the family. Many families today have the father as the disciplinarian. If children are required to be obedient, it makes sense that the parents should approach correction from a Biblical position...”fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.” The parent must show character in such a way that it is easy for the child to obey. I have heard parents, while correcting their children, “Don’t do as I do, do as I say.” I can tell you today that that is not what God has in mind. Let’s remember that everyone in the family unit is assigned their role in the family.

The writer of the book of Proverbs was teaching young men how they should become men. He told the young men to:

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

“...provoke not your children to wrath” – This means exactly what it says and implies. We all know what provoking is. It is inflammatory words that cause anger. In this case we are talking about going one step more; causing a child to move from mild anger to exasperation. A domineering and thoughtless actions of a fathers words and actions are particularly harmful and discouraging. Father’s, when you are correcting your children, there is no room for anger or provocation.

“...*but bring them up*” – Parents are to raise their children in such a way that they place them under the appropriate discipline, correction and training that they feel safe and become familiar and at ease with the Lord.

“...*in the nurture*” – nurture means instruction and training. Parents are to teach their children in all areas of the Word of God.

“...*admonition of the Lord*” – Father’s you are to put the thoughts and ideas of God into their life. Every aspect, such as, love, trust, faith, obedience, instruction and who God is.

Conclusion

Today we have looked at the third part of what God purpose is for the family: the child and the parent, especially the father.

Children obey and honor your father and mother.

Father’s do not provoke your child to anger.

Neither of these are possible without God in your life.

Children and parents need the love and salvation of God.

Robert C. Crowder