

The Duties Of Parents And Children.

Text: Eph 6:1-4

Suggested Hymns:

592, 265, 420, 171 R&S, 588

1) The Example of Jesus

2) The children's' obligations to their parents

3) The parents' obligation to their children

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Ephesians 6:1-4, ¹ *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* ² *“Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise:* ³ *“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”* ⁴ *And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today is Mother's Day when we especially remember our mothers. Today we take time out to especially thank them for all that they have done for us. However, we should not only thank our mothers but also God for giving us our mothers and fathers. This thanksgiving to God and our parents should not be a 'once a year' thing, but our lives should be one of constant thankfulness to God.

To get the greatest blessings for the family we need to study and follow God's Word. So let us today look at the roles and duties of parents and children.

1. The Example Of Jesus.

First, let us look at the example of Jesus as a Boy. The only episode from the boyhood days of Jesus recorded in the Bible is in Luke 2:41-51, ⁴¹ *His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.* ⁴² *And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.* ⁴³ *When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem.*

And Joseph and His mother did not know it; ⁴⁴ but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their

relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him.

⁴⁶ Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. ⁴⁸ So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.”

⁴⁹ And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” ⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. ⁵¹ Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them.

This is not merely a charming narrative but a most instructive lesson for all Christian children and parents. The story gives us a glimpse of the Holy Family at the time when Jesus was a boy of twelve years. Mary and Joseph, a devout Jewish couple, travelled a distance of about 112 km to attend the feast of the Passover at Jerusalem. This was an annual event, but this was the first time that they took Jesus with them to be instructed in the Temple and enrolled as a “son of the law,” similar to our confirmation.

We find the Boy Jesus sitting among the distinguished Rabbis earnestly discussing the truths of God’s holy Word, asking and answering questions. He astonishing them with His deep understanding of divine truth. But this was not His first lesson in religion. From an early childhood His parents had taught and trained Him in the knowledge and fear of God. Back in Nazareth the youthful Jesus conducts Himself as a dutiful Son, honouring and obeying His parents, assisting His mother in her domestic duties, and helping His father in the carpenter’s trade.

Jesus was obedient to his parents and this is the only commandment with a promise as we read in our text, ¹ *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* ² *“Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise:* ³ *“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”*

In the Boy Jesus and His parents we have living examples illustrating this commandment, in which we learn of the mutual obligations of children and parents.

2. The Children's Obligations Toward Their Parents.

In today's text there are two chief duties of children toward parents which are explained to us.

Firstly, every child should honour his father and mother. To honour means to hold another in high esteem, to treat them with respect and reverence. We honour those whom we look up to because we regard them as higher than ourselves.

King Solomon honoured his mother Bathsheba. Listen to how he treated his mother as we read in 1 Kings 2:19, ¹⁹ *Bathsheba therefore went to King Solomon, to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her and bowed down to her, and sat down on his throne and had a throne set for the king's mother; so she sat at his right hand.* King Solomon clearly honoured his mother.

Secondly, children owe their parents obedience. Parents have a divine right to command their children, and children are in duty bound to obey, not only when it suits them but in all things,¹ which are not contrary to the will of God.² This obedience should be rendered willingly and cheerfully, "with good will."³

Children who persistently disobeyed parents in Old Testament times were actually stoned to death as we read in Deuteronomy 21:18-21, ¹⁸ *If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them,* ¹⁹ *"then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city.*

²⁰ *"And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.'* ²¹ *"Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones.* What this text illustrates is the importance of children obeying their parents and also that parents should properly discipline their children and that God regards this with the utmost importance.

Children should not obey and honour their parents simply out of terror and fear but rather from the proper motives. There are three motives to be considered.

Firstly, ***“For this is right,”*** as stated in our text. This is what God requires of all children. Not Moses but God says to every child, which includes you and me, ***“Honour thy father and thy mother.”***⁴ By divine inspiration the Lord addresses this admonition to all children, ***“Children, obey your parents”***. It is God who gave you your parents. Through them He has given you life and being. God has placed them over you to care for you and to rule over you in His stead.

Now He demands of you that you respect their dignity as His representatives. When they tell you what to do, you are to think, *God Himself is speaking to me through them, and I must listen to them as though the Lord Himself were commanding me.* If I despise and disobey my father or mother, I despise and disobey God. Even when you have come of age and your parents have grown old and feeble, yes, even if your parents have great faults and weaknesses, you should nevertheless give them honour, do all you can to help them, and hold them in love and esteem.

Secondly, an additional motive for honouring and obeying your parents is the promise which God has added to the Fourth Commandment, ² ***“Honour your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise:*** ³ ***“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”*** St. Paul calls it a “first commandment,” a commandment of the first rank, a commandment of supreme importance. So greatly is God concerned about having children keep this commandment that He has added a special promise of blessing and long life, not only in heaven but already here on earth. By this promise God wants you to be willing and eager to keep this commandment.

Children who do not respect and obey their parents can expect no blessing from God. We read in Deuteronomy 27:16, ¹⁶ ***‘Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.’*** Also in Proverbs 30:17, ¹⁷ ***The eye that mocks his father, And scorns obedience to his mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it.***

Consider the example of the two sons of David, Solomon and Absalom. Solomon lived in prosperity and peace all the days of his life, but Absalom, the rebellious son, died the death of a traitor.

Thirdly, our love for Jesus should move us to honour and obey our parents. *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord,”* In other words, for Jesus’ sake. These words are addressed to Christian children who believe that Jesus, the Son of God, came into the world to save them from their sins.

How often have you broken the Fourth Commandment! By every act of disrespect and disobedience we have deserved death and eternal punishment. But Jesus fulfilled the Fourth Commandment perfectly in our stead and suffered our punishment when He died on the cross. Surely we must love Him for doing all this for us? Now He says to you, *“Honour your father and mother.”* *“Children, obey your parents.”* We show our faith and our love for Jesus by honouring and obeying our parents even as the Boy Jesus did.

Today as always, there is the need of stressing these simple truths. Children see and hear many things which suggest the very opposite. Many movies and comics breathe the spirit of disrespect for parents. Fathers and mothers are made the butt of rough jokes; and when the youngsters succeed in outwitting the *“oldies,”* it is supposed to be enormously funny. The modern day attitude suggests, *“It is high time we rid ourselves of the idea that children are under obligation to their parents. It is the parents who are under obligation to their children.”*

Even the laws of the land are leading away from God’s commands by restricting parents from properly disciplining their children. Our current events programs show that many children get what they want, with the parents just giving in all the time. It is time that parents take stock of themselves because they are accountable to God.

In many homes we may observe children treating their parents not as superiors but as inferiors. Questions and requests by the parents are met with curt, discourteous, flippant answers. It is truly a sad home where children break the hearts of their parents by such disrespectful conduct and disgraceful behaviour!

Can you imagine a young man saying to his mother: “*Mother, you can go to hell. I’ll never come through this door again*”? There was one who did; and he left, slamming the door. Within three weeks his crushed and mangled body was brought from the coal mine through that same door. Surely, our children need to be reminded again and again of the sacred obligation laid upon them by God to honour and obey their parents.

3. The Parents’ Obligations Toward Their Children.

Now let us consider the parent’s obligations to their children. That, parents are in duty bound to provide to the best of their ability for the physical well-being and the education of their children is so self-evident, that St. Paul does not even mention it.

Parents who neglect to feed, clothe, protect, and educate their children sink below the level of animals, which by instinct care for their young. We read in 1 Timothy 5:8, that *if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

However, our text singles out the foremost duty of parents, which is the spiritual care of their children. “*4 And you, fathers, ... bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*” The apostle is addressing Christian fathers, who believe that their children have immortal souls tainted by sin and ignorant of their Saviour by nature. It is primarily the duty of parents to see to it that their children do not grow up in spiritual ignorance, unbelief, and sin, but to “*bring them up,*” that is to train them in the “*nurture,*” or discipline, and “*admonition,*” or reproof, “*of the Lord.*”

In other words, teach and train them that they know, trust, love, and serve the Lord, their God and Saviour. From the time the little ones are able to use their mental faculties and to speak their first words, Christian parents should in all simplicity teach them about their heavenly Father, who made them and all things. Teach them also about their dear Saviour, who came down from heaven to save them. Show them how to fold their little hands in prayer. Lead them in the ways of righteousness and correct them when they do wrong.

Do not expect the church and school, pastor and teachers, to do everything. Help the children with their lessons, reinforce the instruction and training given in church and school at home. See that the entire atmosphere of the home is

filled with the Word of God and prayer. The example that the father and mother set is a more powerful influence in moulding the child's character than many words. Live the religion which you teach your child. Be what you expect your child to be. You cannot expect your child to lead a truly Christian life unless you show by your own life how it is done.

Our text continues with the admonition, *fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath*. Even well-meaning Christian parents at times offend against this important principle of child-training by treating their children with needless severity instead of love and kindness. Sometimes parents issue many orders just to show their authority, beating them mercilessly for minor faults and mistakes, and continually nagging and telling them off without proper reasons.

Children are also offended and provoked to anger when parents curse and quarrel. The result is that the hearts of the children grow hard, bitter, and rebellious and lose their love and respect for their parents. Be firm, but also wise. Give only necessary and reasonable orders, and then insist that they be promptly and accurately executed. Above all, temper firmness with love and kindness.

Parents should be moved to exercise these duties faithfully for several reasons.

Firstly, because it is *The will of God*. This is God's command as our text states. We read in Deuteronomy 6:6-7, *6 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*

The children which God has given you are still His, by virtue of creation, redemption, and Baptism. He has merely committed them to your care as a sacred trust and therefore has a right to demand of you that you bring them up according to His will. He is also your Lord. Some day you will have to give an account of your stewardship. On the day of Judgement He will ask you, *"What have you done with the children I entrusted to you?"*

Secondly, your love for Christ should motivate you. St. Paul is addressing Christian fathers and mothers. You believe that Jesus died to save you as well as your children. If this is true, how can you help loving Him? But what does He

say? *“If you love Me, keep My commandments”*.⁵ One of these commandments reads, *“Feed My lambs,”*⁶ and another version of the same commandment we have in our text to *bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord*.

Thirdly, Love for your children. They are *“your children,”* your own flesh and blood. They are the most precious temporal gifts God has given to you. Their happiness means more to you than anything else in the world. But they will be truly and lastingly happy only if they know, trust, and serve Christ in this life and spend eternity with Him in heaven. Can you truthfully say that you love your children if you provide lavishly for their physical and temporal needs, yet neglect their immortal souls? Surely, your love to your children must move you to leave nothing undone that is needful for their eternal happiness.

The need of stressing this parental duty is very great. Today, more than half of the fathers and mothers in this country do not even claim to be Christians and are therefore neglecting these duties altogether. We have in this country many children growing up without any religious and moral training whatsoever. Many Christian parents are sadly indifferent to the religious training of their children. At home they do little or nothing for the religious instruction and training of their little ones.

The results of this deplorable neglect are tragic. Our jails, and prisons bulge with youthful law-breakers, and some of them are mere children.

We may ask, Why is this so? Chiefly because those responsible for their care were careless and negligent in the discharge of their foremost and holiest obligation, to *“bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*

Today we have a lesson for mothers, fathers and children. Only when each have reverence for God and follow His Word will true happiness abound. May we all give thanks to God for ‘God fearing’ mothers, fathers and children. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Colossians 3:20

² Acts 5:29

³ Eph 6:7

⁴ Exodus 20:12.

⁵ John 14:15

⁶ John 21:15