

## Sermon – 19/04/2009 pm

### Children Obey Your Parents

Study Text: Ephesians 6:1-3

At creation God ordained for a man to leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. A man and a woman together for life is marriage. There is no such thing as homosexual marriage. It is called living in sin. Marriage is the fundamental relationship in human society. Destroy this relationship and you will destroy society. This is what the Bible teaches and what history proves.

The relationship that ranks second in human society is that between parent and child. At creation God said 'be fruitful, and multiply'. Adam and Eve had children – Cain and Abel. Children are a blessing from the Lord. *The fruit of the womb is his reward* (Psalm 127). Children will be the product of a marriage unless God decides otherwise, or the partners decide to be selfish. God designed for children to be born and raised in a home with a father and mother.

With the entrance of sin came death, so some children are left with one or no parent because of death. Many are left with one or no parent because of the sin of divorce. Sin led to our separation from God right from birth. Sin brought tensions to the marriage relationship and to the parent child relationship. But we dare not question nor lose sight of the perfection of God's creation. We dare not think that we can improve upon God's design, as the heathen do, by suggesting there are different marriage or family models.

In Jesus Christ we see the perfect Son of God. Jesus was both a human Son and a divine Son. As a child he was subject to his human parents and he was also obedient to his heavenly Father (Luke 2:51, Hebrews 5:8). In Jesus we have victory over sin. By his grace we can have relationships as God intended; husband and wife relationships, and parent and child relationships.

In this passage the apostle Paul continues to teach the saints in Ephesus how to live in these vital human relationships. They are to do so by being filled with the Spirit and heeding the commands of the Lord, the Lord who made them and redeemed them by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

*Children obey your parents.* The word obey is literally 'listen under'. Children are to 'listen up' we might say. They are to 'listen under' not speak over their parents. It is the mark of a failed family and an ungodly home when children live in a state of disobedience to their parents (Romans 1:30, II Timothy 3:2).

Another word that applies to children is 'submit' or 'be subject to'. This is used of Jesus submitting to his parents in Nazareth when he was twelve years old (Luke 2:51). It is the duty of a wife to submit to her husband. It is the duty of a child to submit to their parents. 'Submit' is used of rank in the military. In the Bible it is related to headship and authority. Parents have a God given authority over their child, along with a responsibility. The child must recognise this authority in the Lord. The husband is the head of the wife and they are head of the child. In too many homes this rank is reversed. In too many homes the child has taken charge.

'Honour' is the word used in the fifth commandment. *Honour your father and mother*. Honour means esteem, respect or reverence. A child will look up to their parent and treat them with respect in all they do and say. In the Old Testament a child who cursed his father or mother was to be put to death (Leviticus 20:9).

### **It Is Right**

Children obey your parents because 'nature claims it, Scripture enjoins it and the Son of God exemplified it' a preacher once said. Throughout creation offspring are cared for and raised by parents. The human baby requires more care and upbringing than any other creature – if you have seen a newborn baby lately you will agree.

A baby depends upon its parents not only to feed it but to teach it how to live. It learns from watching its parents and listening to them. This is the case in among the animals and among humans. A child that does not heed the call of its parent may perish. It is not natural, and it is not right for a child to disobey the call of its parent. To do so is to invite disaster.

### **It Is Pleasing To God**

If all children are to obey their parents because it is right, covenant children or children of Christian parents should do so for the added reason that it is *pleasing to the Lord* (Colossians 3:20). God is always pleased when we obey his commands. He is well pleased when children obey their parents.

Children are to obey their parents *in the Lord*. In obeying their parents children are obeying Christ. They learn to obey Christ by obeying their parents. Their human father is a model of their heavenly Father – or should be. Even young children can know and understand that God is great and God is good; God is holy and he is perfect. They know that to disobey their parents is not pleasing to God – their parents should teach them this.

Some people take this 'in the Lord' as meaning 'obey your parents when it does not conflict with obeying the Lord'. But Paul is writing to believers. This is not what he means. A child of unbelieving parents may find a conflict here but they must be very careful how they deal with it. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for giving to the Lord (Corban) and failing to honour their parents (Mark 7:11). In India believers have difficulty obeying their parents if they arrange marriage with an unbeliever. But they try to explain to their parents what they believe rather than openly defy them.

Jesus was born of Mary and, as was supposed, Joseph. He grew up in this home with brothers and sisters. He submitted to his parents even if they did not understand that he had to be about his Father's business. He was the perfect Son. We read that he obeyed them when he was twelve. And when he was dying on the cross he did not forget his mother but honoured her, telling John to care for her.

Jesus was also obedient to his Father in heaven. He tells us to call God 'our Father in heaven'. We are the children of God and as such we obey God. And God wants us to obey him in obeying our parents. There is a parallel here even though Paul does expand on it at this point in the way he did with Christ and the church.

In the book of Hebrews a parallel is drawn with regard to discipline. *As a human father disciplines his sons and we respect them for doing so, even so we submit ourselves to the discipline of our heavenly Father* (Hebrews 12:9). Children do not despise the discipline of

your parents. They correct you because they love you and want you to grow up walking in the way of the Lord.

### **It Is God's Command**

Just as Jesus reaffirmed the Ten Commandments in the Sermon on the Mount, so Paul was ready to reaffirm those same commandments. The commandment directed at children is positive, unlike the one about marriage. Paul quotes this command including the promise that is attached. He writes so 'you may live long on the earth', probably quoting from the LXX.

This is the first commandment with a promise he notes. Just what he meant by this 'first' is unclear for no other commandment appears to have a promise – apart from the second. Maybe 'first' means prime or first in importance. This command is addressed to children and if children learn to obey this command they will subsequently learn what the others mean, suggests Ferguson.

If children refuse to obey their parents their future is under a cloud according to the fifth commandment. By implication disobedience negates this promise. Look at those who grow up into troubled and even criminal lives and you will often find they were disobedient children. Of course their parents may well be at fault also. A recent report on teenage drinking showed that such children have a much greater probability of being alcoholics or sexually immoral as adults. This is not surprising to those who read the Bible.

Years ago I heard a story of a young man who died while working to repair power lines. A Christian man who worked with him was not surprised. He said the young man was always cursing his parents. Not long ago in New Zealand the parents of disobedient and incorrigible son asked the police to arrest him for some crime he had committed. They hoped this would make him change. In prison he was bashed to death. Honour your parents that your days may be long on the earth.

Although Paul is speaking to children as he quotes this commandment, the commandment is not age specific. It is addressed to all who have parents. Honour/respect/esteem you father and your mother. The commandment does not actually say 'love' or 'obey' but Paul has already told children to obey their parents. In honouring them you will obey them until your relationship changes. As Paul has already taught, wives will obey their husbands and husbands will love their wives in a newly created family unit.

Godly parents will not only insist on obedience from their children but will also be preparing them for the next stage in their earthly life. Unlike the marriage relationship, which remains essentially the same apart from growth in love and respect, the relationship of parent and child is ever changing as the child develops and matures. But the command to honour your mother and father is timeless. Do this that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth (6:3).

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