

GOD'S WILL FOR CHILDREN

Ephesians 6:1-3

Intro: This is a continuation of what the Apostle Paul had been teaching various members of the family what their primary responsibilities were toward each other, but also toward the Lord. The Lord created us. And we must never listen to anyone who tells us otherwise. He made one man and one woman, and gave them the ability to have children. It was the Lord Who brought them together establishing the first home.

I am not absolutely sure about what I am about to tell you, but I believe that this passage in Ephesians 3:1-3, and the passage in Colossians 3:20, both of which say essentially the same thing, are the only passages in the New Testament which are specifically addressed to children by God, in which children are told what to do. In Colossians 3:20 this is what we read:

Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

There are many passages that speak of the children of God, and some which speak *about* children in families, but I don't know of any other verses which address children directly, telling them what to do. And when Paul spoke of children he had in mind children who were the offspring of a particular husband and wife. But I would assume that the same message applies in the case where a child has been adopted by a husband and wife. Whatever may be the truth, the Lord was indicating through Paul that the most important lesson for children to learn is obedience to their parents.

One thing that I find especially interesting about what Paul writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, had to say to wives, and then to husbands, and then to children, *he mainly had one thing to tell each of them that they were to do*. Today when men write about the family, they have a whole list of things to tell the wives, and another whole list for the husbands, and still another list for children. The result is that instead of having a part of a letter for each one of them, in most cases we find it takes at least a book to deal with the members of a family. I am sure that there were multiple problems that families had in those days, as we do today. But the Spirit of God in the Word of God points to one thing that a wife needs to be concerned about – that is submission to her husband; one thing that a husband needs to be concerned about – that is love for his wife; and one thing that a child in the family needs to be concerned about

– that is obedience to his or her parents. Of course with all of these there are problems we have to deal with. But if wives and husbands and children would be concerned about the one thing that Paul each of them to do, then the situation in our homes would be vastly different from what they are today. In our desire to have things go our way, we, for many years have been in the process of destroying our homes, and it is equally clear that we are doing the same thing to our nation. Disobedience to parents is one of the most damaging things that is going on in our nation today.

In Romans 1, toward the end of the chapter, when Paul was listing the sins which people fall into when they don't want to think about God or have anything to do with Him in their daily lives, "disobedience to parents" is one of the sins that is listed.

Earlier in this epistle to the Ephesians in chapter 2, verse 2, Paul said that the Devil is constantly working in "the children of disobedience," which is what we all were before we are saved. In Colossians 3:6 Paul said that because of our sins (and remember that sin is anything that is displeasing to God), "the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." If disobedience to God is not corrected in childhood, we carry that same label into adult life. ***America's greatest problem, which no politician can change, is disobedience to God.*** And yet if you tell people that today, they will either laugh at you, or want to drive you out of town. Only God can change our hearts so that we will give Him His rightful place in our lives. And the place where we need to work on the problem is with our children.

Now before I go any farther, there are some important things that I want to point out to you from our text. And the first is this:

I. THE BIBLE IS A BOOK FOR CHILDREN.

The Apostle Paul was not speaking here to the parents about their children; he was speaking to children about themselves. If Ephesians 6:1-3 means anything, it means that the Holy Spirit expected children either to be reading this, or that, if they couldn't read, they would be listening as someone, probably a parent, was reading it to them.

I can thank God that I was born into a home where my parents read the Bible. They not only read it to themselves, but they read it to us, their children. They not only read the Bible to us, but they talked about the

Bible to us. They encouraged us to read the Bible, and they encouraged us to memorize verses from the Bible.

More than that, they took us to a church where we were taught what the Bible said. I was in one department of the Sunday School, either the beginners or the primary department, where our superintendent would stand before us with large cards on which were the letters of the alphabet, A on the first card, B on the second card, and right on through the alphabet, and we would repeat a verse of Scripture which began with the letters of the alphabet – A - A soft answer turneth away wrath, B - Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; C - Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest; D - Draw nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto you; and so on to Z - Zealous toward God.

I didn't realize what she was doing, but she was getting us to hear the Word of God in the hope that God would write it on our hearts so it would affect our lives. We loved doing that. Children have a natural, God-given, interest in Scripture, and they will love it if you give it to them.

Let me repeat: the Bible is a book for children.

I want to give you a second point.

II. CHILDREN NEED TO BE TAUGHT TO OBEY THEIR PARENTS.

Children need to be taught obedience because this is God's way of giving children their first lessons in obeying God. A wife needs to be submissive to her husband because this is what God wants her to do. And a husband needs to love His wife as Christ loves the Church because this is what God wants him to do. And parents are to teach their children obedience to themselves, because that is what them to do. This is so that as children get older they will see that they need to respond to God in His Word like they have learned to respond to their parents. A child who does not learn to be obedient to parents, is going to have a tough time learning to be obedient to the Lord.

What did Paul mean by “children obey your parents in the Lord”? I don't think that he was saying that parents have to wait until they know they are

saved before they seek to teach them obedience. But he was saying, as he went on to say to the fathers in verse 4 of this chapter that they were to bring their children up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” The NASB translates this as “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” A godly parent will want to instruct his child in what is right, and what is wrong, in the Lord’s sight. “For this is right,” or righteous. We don’t need to speak of the Lord all of the time when we are teaching our children to obey us, but they need to know that the way we want them to live is the way we live, by seeking to do what is pleasing to the Lord. Our children will soon learn if how we are teaching them to live, is the way that we are seeking to live.

We all have a natural aversion to being told by others what we should do. But if parents are seeking to please the Lord in their lives, this is what will give power and conviction when they seek to establish their child, or children, in obedience. Children need to be taught obedience, and to know that they will be punished for disobedience. As children get older the tendency to have their own way gets stronger if they have not learned to obey. But as we get older, we thank the Lord for parents who loved us enough to say “no” when what we wanted to do was wrong. My mother died when I was thirty-three, and my Dad died when I was forty-four, but I still remember both of them with the deepest affection because of all they taught me and how they prayed for me. I didn’t always like what they told me to do, but I realized long ago how right they were, and to this day I regret those times when I didn’t do what they wanted me to do because I know now that they were right and that I was wrong. My text contains, as my last point:

III. THREE REASONS WHY CHILDREN NEED TO OBEY THEIR PARENTS.

There are three reasons given in this passage why children should obey their parents in the Lord.

First, because it is the right, or righteous, thing to do. We are all sinners by nature, and too often by choice. God has given each one of us a father and a mother who love us, and who want to keep us walking in the will of God. That is the way of happiness, the way of peace, and of blessing.

Second, because we are learning from our parents to be obedient to the Word of God. To show how extremely important this is, it was to this

commandment that the Lord attached a promise to encourage us to obey it. It was the fifth commandment in the Law given to Moses.

Third, because of the nature of the promise. The people who honor their parents by being obedient to them, are promised the blessing of the Lord, and a long life in which to enjoy the blessing of the Lord. It probably would amaze us to know how many children have had their lives cut short because they have lived in rebellion against their parents, rather than learning to obey their parents, which, in turn, led to a life of obedience to the Lord.

Concl: So even in cases where one, or even both, of the parents do not know the Lord, the Lord's blessing is upon obedience to parents so long as it does not violate the Word of God. God is sovereign. He has ordained the birth of each one of us. By recognizing His hand in our lives and His blessing upon us, and seeking to please Him in every circumstance of our lives, we can partake of blessing we never thought possible, and have our lives strengthened by the joy of the Lord.

Does learning to obey stop when we get beyond our youthful years? No, it goes on as long as we are here on earth, but the results of obedience to the Lord, and the benefits, will be seen through all eternity.