

GOD’S WILL FOR THE FAMILY

Colossians 3:20-21

Intro: I looked up the definition of a family in the latest edition that I have of *The American Heritage Dictionary*. It says that a family is “a fundamental social group in society consisting esp. of a man and a woman and their offspring” (p. 488). There were various other definitions given such as “a group of persons sharing a common heritage,” such as uncles and aunts and cousins. We are all members of the family of our fathers, and the family of our mothers. But the dictionary did not say anything about two men making a family, or two women making a family. I suppose, with the rapid deterioration of our society, that the day will come when our dictionaries will tell us that the word “family” includes homosexual couples, and children they have adopted. But the Bible does not change, and what God wants us to understand about a family does not change. In the beginning God created Adam. Then from one of Adam’s ribs God made Eve. He brought them together, and that relationship produced Cain and Abel, and later, Seth. They were told to “be fruitful, and multiply.” And that is exactly what we did. If you and I could trace our lineage back to the beginning, we would find that we are all descendants of Adam and Eve. But two men never produced a child, nor can two women produce a child. So it really never will be right to call a homosexual couple a family. The dictionaries may some day give them that title, but God never has and God never will! The basic family is a man and a woman and their children – PERIOD! When we meet a man or a woman, and we find out that he or she is married, it is very natural to ask them, “Do you have a family?” And we mean by that, “Do you have children?” Children may be adopted into a family in case a couple cannot have children, but the basic definition of a family remains: a man and a woman with their own children, or with children they have adopted. Two men or two women could adopt any number of children, but that would not make them a family according to God’s Word. “Children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward,” according to Psalm 127:3, but homosexuality is a judgment from the Lord. If you don’t believe that, read Romans, chapter 1.

Let me mention another thing that applies to what we are talking about today from the Word of God.

Yesterday we got our latest copy of the *World* magazine. On page it had a section entitled “Quick Takes,” abbreviated news items which they felt

would be of interest to their readers. The heading they gave it was “UNfit Parents.” The U and the N of UNfit were capitalized because it was about the United Nations and action that they had taken about parents being able to spank their children. This is what the article said:

The United Nations this month slapped the Canadian government with demands that it ban spanking. The UN’s Committee on the Rights of the Child says Canada should make even light slaps illegal.

Unlike the United States, Canada signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Canadian officials must regularly report to Geneva-based bureaucrats. This month’s ruling comes as Canada’s Supreme Court considers a law that lets parents and teachers apply “reasonable force” to discipline children. A recent poll shows most Canadians oppose corporal punishment by teachers, but they are evenly split on parental spanking.

That is the end of the article.

Let me ask you: “What in the world does the UN know about raising children?” What right does the UN have to tell any nation how their children are to be raised? They can’t handle the business that they are supposed to be doing; why would any nation submit to their rules about family life?

Again let us turn to the Word of God. What does it say about spanking children? I am reading these verses from the NKJV.

- 1) Prov. 13:24: “He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly. “
- 2) Prov. 22:15: “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him. “
- 3) Prov. 23:13-14: “Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell.
- 4) Prov. 29:15: The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

Solomon was not advocating that parents be merciless with their children. But he was saying that if you are not disciplining your child with spankings, you don’t really love your child, and you are setting the stage for disaster. The best book that was ever written on how to raise children, is the book of Proverbs. It makes it clear that we are to teach our children the Word of God. That we are to pray for our children. That we are to be

an example to our children. The book of Proverbs makes it very clear that parents are not to leave the teaching and training of their children to anyone else, but parents are to be directly and constantly involved in raising their children in the ways of the Lord. As soon as our children are capable of understanding, we are to begin to fill their minds and hearts with the Word of God, trusting the Lord to use that Word to draw them to Himself, and then to guide them in the way they live every day.

How does the Lord deal with us as children in His family? I think most of you know, but let me read what is recorded for us in Heb. 12, beginning with verse 5, and going down through verse 12. And I want you to notice that the writer of Hebrews quoted from Prov. 3:11 and 12 as he began what he said about how God disciplines us.

(Read Heb. 12:5-12.)

You see, because our first parents disobeyed God, all of us are born into this world as sinners. That means, among other things, that we have nothing but natural inclinations to do what is wrong. And if something doesn't happen to change us, we are going straight to hell. Many parents today don't know why even small children can be such a problem because no one ever told them. How thankful we can be if we had parents who knew the Lord, and taught us so that we would know Him too.

My Dad wasn't raised as a Christian, but through a lot of trials and difficult circumstances, my Dad, before I was born, decided (and this was evidence that God was working in his heart) that he didn't want his children to be raised like he was. He had no idea what to do. But do you know where he started? *He quit smoking cigars.* He wanted to be able to tell his sons that they couldn't smoke, so he quit before any of us were born.

Now that didn't bring him peace. His next idea was to go to church. He had never been a church goer. He didn't know one church from another. He could have gone to a Catholic church, or a Mormon church, or any other kind of a church. But providentially he went to a Baptist church where he heard the Gospel, and was saved. My mother had been a Methodist in the days when the Methodists preached the Gospel. But that is why I had a Christian father and a Christian mother, and why I was raised on the Gospel. My Dad didn't hesitate to use a strap or a paddle or whatever was at hand if we did what he believed was wrong. But most of

all he prayed, and taught us according to what he understood of the truth of God's Word. He became a life-long deacon, and taught Bible classes for years. But he knew both of these verses that I have taken as my text for today. And my mother knew them too. I'm not saying that my Dad had an easy time as a parent. With six sons he had his hands full. But I am saying that he knew how to guide us, and he got his guidance from the Bible.

What does verse 20 of Colossians 3 say? It is addressed:

I. FOR CHILDREN (Col. 3:20).

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

The Greek word for children includes both boys and girls. It includes all who are children of any particular father. Some say that the Greek, τὰ τέκνα, means *born ones*.

“Obey” is a present tense which suggests *a way of life*. But the word “obey” in Greek is like so many Greek words, very interesting. It is made up of the verb for hearing, with the preposition for *under* attached to the front of it: ὑπακούετε. That is, it means *to hear under*, or *to listen as one under authority*. It means to hear with the idea of doing what you are told to do. And this is a safety measure that God has given to every child. Our parents are wiser than we are. They know the pitfalls of life. And we need to do what they say so we will not make the mistakes that we otherwise would make. God has planned it this way, and so Paul added, “for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.” Children are not to run the home. We are all born under the authority of our parents, and that carries with it the right to punish us if we are disobedient. “Children, obey your parents in all things.”

Of course Paul was addressing the children of Christian parents, parents who know the Lord, and know the Word, so they can guide their children in the ways of the Lord. If only I could get across to you children who are here this morning, and even to you young people, our time today would be most valuable. This did not originate with Paul. I am sure he believed this. But what he has told us here is God's Word, and it has never been changed from that day to this, and it never will be changed. “Children, obey your parents in all things.” Why? “For this is well pleasing unto the

Lord.” We need to learn obedience to our parents while we are young, so that as we grow older we will turn that obedience to the Lord. The safest and happiest place for all of us is in doing God’s will from our hearts. As children you can’t be pleasing to the Lord if you are in rebellion against your parents. You may not be able to understand now why they tell you to do certain things, and not to do other things, but you will understand as you get older.

The Colossians were probably familiar with the Ephesian letter. There Paul said again that it was right for children to obey their parents, but then he went on to remind them that blessings were promised to those who pleased, or honored their parents. By the way, the quotation in Eph. 6:2 is from Ex. 20:12, showing that Paul was preaching exactly what Moses told the children of Israel fifteen hundred years before Paul’s day.

But now this is only half of the story. Paul immediately moved on to speak:

II. TO FATHERS (Col. 3:21).

Children are under the authority of their parents, but their parents, and in this instance, their fathers, are under the authority of the Lord.

Authority is a word that is hated by many people today. Rebellion against the authorities which God has placed over us will ruin our lives and destroy our nation. The Bible teaches us that when nations rebel against God, or when individuals rebel against God, there is a great price to pay.

Fathers, and mothers who are their helpers, have a very important responsibility to their children, but it must be exercised in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. Here the Spirit of God through Paul told us who are fathers that we are not to provoke our children to anger.

Every father has a responsibility to his children, and that is to teach them like Solomon taught his children in the book of Proverbs how to live so as to please the Lord. And every mother is to support her husband in teaching the children, and in encouraging the children to be obedient to the will of God. But he needs to be careful not to discourage his children. And John Eadie in his commentary on Colossians says that this is in particular the sin of fathers, not of mothers. How do we as fathers discourage our children?

We discourage them if we are inconsistent in our discipline, if sometimes we are strict, and at other times seem not to care what they do. We discourage them by expecting too much of them too soon, or by not making allowance for the times when they will fail. We can discourage them by not giving them encouragement when they obey us. We can discourage them if they feel that we are too severe, or that we punish them because we are angry with them instead of wanting to help them. We have to recognize that it is possible for us to seek the right results, but use the wrong methods. They need to know that we are sympathetic with their problems, and want to help them. If a spanking is necessary, a father should not wait too long before he takes that child in his arms and tells him or her of his love. We need to treat our children like our heavenly Father treats us. Sometimes it is good to overlook a failure. I can't overemphasize how important it is for fathers and mothers and children, all of us, to be reading the book of Proverbs. And a Psalm a day will be very profitable too.

How can we encourage our children? By bringing them up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. What do these words, “nurture” and “admonition” mean?

It means that the father is to bring his children up on the teaching of Scripture. And he is always to make clear to his children that these teachings are the Lord's. “Admonition” means the application of the teaching, guiding where the child's understanding is not clear, warning against disobedience, and encouraging the child when he or she responds correctly to the teaching of the Word.

Concl: We need to keep in mind that Paul is writing to Christian families. We must not expect unbelieving parents to be able to raise their children in the truth of the Word, or even that they would desire such a life for themselves or for their children. Therefore, in dealing with family problems, we must make the Gospel clear first, along with the enabling grace of God. In some cases (many, in fact) families are in trouble because they don't know the Lord. But there are those cases where the members of a family know the Lord, but the father is not accepting the leadership of his family, and even he may not be walking with the Lord.

In coming to these verses which have to do with the family, we all need to ask ourselves how we measure up to what the Apostle Paul has written.

Col. 3:20-21 (7)

His words are just as binding upon us as they were for the church at Colosse in the first century. If we have not been reading the Word, and have not been careful about our obedience to the Lord, we need to make some changes, and make them right now! But let us remember how dependent upon the Lord Himself we are to be able to do what He wants us to do, and to be what He wants us to be. The only place of safety and the only place of blessing, is in the will of God. May the Lord enable us to believe that, really believe it, and take steps to be toward each other at home the way the Word teaches us that we need to be.