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Sermon Notes

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## **Parents and Children: Living to Please the Lord**

### **Colossians 3:20-21**

Charles Spurgeon, story in his autobiography: “I remember well, in my early days, seeing upon my grandmother’s mantelshelf an apple contained in a bottle. This was a great wonder to me and I tried to investigate it.. My question was, ‘How came the apple to get inside so small a bottle?’ The apple was quite as big around as the bottle; by what means was it placed within it? Though it was treason to touch the treasures on the mantelpiece, I took down the bottle, and convinced my youthful mind that the apple never passed through the neck; and by means of an attempt to unscrew the bottom, I became equally certain the apple did not enter from below. I held to the notion that by occult means the bottle had been made in two pieces and afterward united in so careful a manner that no trace of the joint remained. I was hardly satisfied with the theory, but as no philosopher was at hand to suggest any other hypothesis, I let the matter rest.”

The next summer, however, the mystery was solved. Young Spurgeon was walking through his grandfather’s apple orchard and saw on a branch of an apple tree a bottle just like the one on the mantelpiece. The branch was growing **INSIDE** the bottle, and at once the blinding insight came to him: the apple hadn’t been **PLACED** inside the bottle; it had **GROWN UP INSIDE** the bottle from the start.

Spurgeon’s application to the Christian life was plain: bring children to Christ from the moment they come into the family... they must **GROW UP INTO** a solid faith in Christ from infancy

This is the awesome responsibility of parents... to take a tiny helpless baby and so saturate their worlds with the love of God, expressed most clearly in the gospel of Jesus Christ that they come into a vibrant living faith and serve God fruitfully in this world and live forever in the next

## **I. Setting Families in Context**

### **A. A New Life “In the Lord”**

1. Paul has been laying out the power of the new life we have in Christ
2. This new life he began to describe in Colossians 1

***Colossians 1:10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,***

But now most fully in Colossians 3

### B. Colossians 3: Describing the Fruitful New Life

1. Setting our minds on things above
2. Putting sin to death by the power of the Spirit
3. Learning to live in harmony in the Church with people from all backgrounds
4. Saturating our hearts with Christ
  - a. The peace of God ruling in our hearts
  - b. The word of Christ dwelling richly in our hearts
  - c. The name of Christ motivating everything we do
  - d. Thankfulness to Christ for everything

NOW: the arena in which this new life must be lived: the CHRISTIAN HOME

### C. The Christian Home: The Most Strategic Arena for the New Life

***Colossians 3:18-21 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. <sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. <sup>20</sup> Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.***

## II. Two Basic Commands to Children: Honor and Obey

***Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.***

***Ephesians 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> "Honor your father and mother"-- which is the first commandment with a promise-- <sup>3</sup> "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."***

### A. Straight from the Mouth of God: Honor Your Parents

1. God speaks from Sinai... mountain billowing with smoke, earth quaking, God descended in FIRE and spoke with the LOUDEST VOICE ever heard... the TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Fourth Commandment:

***Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.***

2. Promise connected with it: long life and prosperity

***Ephesians 6:2-3 which is the first commandment with a promise-- <sup>3</sup> "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."***

3. Major warnings about this in Scripture

***Exodus 21:15, 17 "Anyone who attacks or curses his father or his mother must be put to death.***

***Deuteronomy 21:18-21 If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, <sup>19</sup> his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. <sup>20</sup> They shall say to the elders, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard." <sup>21</sup> Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid.***

***Proverbs 30:17 "The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures.***

4. This issue is so significant that disobedience to parents is one of the major sins listed in the New Testament:

***Romans 1:29-32 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ... those who do such things deserve death,***

5. For this reason, parents were charged with the responsibility of training their children diligently... so they would not have to experience capital punishment later in life

***Proverbs 23:13-14 Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. <sup>14</sup> Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.***

***Proverbs 13:24 He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.***

6. What does "Honor" mean?

- a. It is an internal heart attitude from which outward actions flow
- b. Without the heart attitude, there is no genuine honor
- c. Honor extends to many different figures in life... we are to honor

We are to honor: the king; Church leaders who govern well; Employers; The elderly; Widows; people who risk their lives for the gospel

Above all, we are to honor GOD, who alone rules over all:

***1 Timothy 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.***

7. Outward displays of honor involve

- a. a husband speaking words of praise for a faithful and fruitful wife: as Leah expected when she bore Jacob six sons
- b. bowing low before a mighty governor or ruler: as Joseph's brothers did before him when they returned to Egypt with Benjamin, and as Joab did before King David when he granted him a request
- c. richly ornamented priestly robes made for Aaron, the high priest, to give him honor in the eyes of the people
- d. seats of honor at a banquet... which Jesus said would be given to those who are humble... they are then invited up to a higher place
- e. being clothed with a kingly robe, seated on the king's horse and given a parade in front of the people: as Xerxes ordered done for Mordecai for saving his life from assassins
- f. public recognition and respect for David's mighty men, who fought so valiantly for him on the battlefield
- g. a seat of honor given to Jehoiachin, formerly king of Judah, by the King of Babylon during the exile... he gave him a seat of honor higher than the other kings there

In other words, children ought to honor their parents in their hearts... and then let that honor flow into specific actions of honor in daily life

Positively:

- Step back when both come to a door... let the parent go first
- Speak respectfully... "Yes, sir" or "Yes, Daddy"... not just "Yeah"
- Letting Dad lead the family spiritually, and supporting his leadership
- Opening the door for Mom in a respectful way
- Waiting for the parents to begin eating before they eat
- Not murmuring against decisions made, but speaking respectfully about them

- Not talking back to parents or being sassy or disrespectful
- Not slandering parents behind their backs or rolling eyes when parents speak

#### B. A Culture of Dishonor

1. Post-sixties, our culture delights in dishonoring God-ordained authority
2. “Question authority” was the mantra then... and it really began in the home
3. Teen rebellion became an expected, almost normal phenomenon... parents that trained their children to respect their authority were seen as too strict, too authoritarian
4. Once honor fell apart in the home, it fell apart everywhere in society
5. Now, on the internet, you can see blogs and websites and YouTube video clips all designed to assassinate the character of key leaders and strip them of honor

#### C. A Subset of Honor: Comprehensive Obedience

***Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.***

1. Submission to God-ordained authority begins with this relationship
  - a. If a child is not trained to submit gladly to parental authority, he/she will struggle with submission to all authority the rest of his/her life
  - b. Especially they will struggle with submitting to God
2. So children are commanded to obey their parents IN EVERYTHING
  - a. Obviously this does not mean an unbelieving father can command his almost grown son not to believe in Christ

***Matthew 10:37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me"***

- b. But in everything in which a father or mother does not command something contrary to the scripture, obedience must be complete
3. Disobedience is inherent in the sin we inherited from Adam
4. We are saved back into an obedient lifestyle

***John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command."***

Children who are trained in comprehensive obedience to their parents will readily submit to Christ's kingly yoke later in life

## 5. Practical daily life

- a. Daily chores: cleaning the bedroom, helping with the kitchen chores after dinner, daily and weekly responsibilities... more and more as the young people grow older and more capable
- b. Special commands: "Son, could you help me with this for a minute?"  
"Sure, Dad... I'd be happy to" and he comes right away
- c. Standard is up on the wall downstairs: **ALL THE WAY, RIGHT AWAY, WITH A HAPPY SPIRIT**
  - i) "All the way" = complete obedience... not partial obedience; if the standard or cleaning a bedroom is established—bed made neatly, pillows arranged, toys put in their proper place, books on the shelf, etc., and the child only makes the bed and puts half the toys away, they have disobeyed
  - ii) "Right away" = prompt obedience; "To delay is to disobey"... not "I'll get to it when I feel like it"... that means the child has taken over leadership in the relationship
  - iii) "With a happy spirit" = joyfully, as unto the Lord... glad to serve in this way; grumbling and complaining mean that the child is not really obeying... best way to tell attitude is the verbal response given

***Matthew 12:34 out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.***

So a sullen, defiant attitude can be discerned by the way they answer—or don't answer

### D. Reasons Given for Obedience

***Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.***

***Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.***

1. Implication: this is the only kind of life the Lord will bless... a life with HONOR at the center, displayed in comprehensive glad obedience to God-ordained authority

### III. Fuller Instructions to Parents

***Colossians 3:21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.***

***Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.***

#### A. Negative Command: What NOT to do

1. Greek word is “fathers” but it can refer more generally to both parents
  - a. However, the father bears primary responsibility for the training of the children
2. Negatively:

#### ***Do not exasperate your children***

- a. Word literally means to provoke them, to stir them up to passion... especially to anger or bitterness
  - b. Word is used of a bellows fanning a spark into a flame... that influence kindling a smoldering sin nature to flame up into anger and eventually into rebellion
  - c. Sometimes the word just refers to IRRITATION... like a stone in the shoe or a burr under the saddle
3. In Ephesians 6, the negative command focuses directly on ANGER
    - a. Literally do not kindle their anger
  4. Reason given:

#### ***Or they will become discouraged***

- a. Greek word refers to the heart or spirit of a person...

Photos of the Great Depression: See families beaten down by circumstances... their eyes were hollow, their body positions listless and devoid of energy; their spirits had been crushed by the economic catastrophe

Or again, in the recent movie *Amazing Grace*, about William Wilberforce, horse lying in the mud being beaten... but not even twitching

- b. Parents can strip their children of hope, leaving them bitter, sullen, despairing, without courage

## B. Ways Parents Can Cause Children to Lose Heart

John MacArthur:

- 1) Overprotection: never allowing children any liberty; strict rules about everything, because you do not trust your children with anything; it can lead to rebellion, trying to break free from the noose they feel is around their necks
- 2) Favoritism: favoring one child over another, praising one more than the other, giving one more advantages and blessings than the other
- 3) Depreciating their worth: tearing them down with your words... “You’re worthless; you’ll never amount to anything; everything you do ends in failure” Or depreciating their worth by failing to listen to them, or being too busy to spend time with them
- 4) Setting unrealistic goals: never rewarding or praising your children, making them feel as though they have to be perfect to gain your approval
- 5) Failing to show affection: Parents must show their children affection, loving words of approval, physical affection (hugs, pats on the back, even in their late teen years)
- 6) Not providing for their needs: they need food, clothing, shelter, also a healthy relationship with their Creator through Christ; they also need privacy, respect, encouragement, and other psychological things
- 7) Lack of standards: Opposite side of overprotection and strictness... being too loose, never interfering, giving no moral guidelines, tolerating sin
- 8) Criticism: Some parents are so harsh with their children, using their words like some kind of acid bath that supposedly will scour the sin from their dirty hearts; instead a constant stream of criticism embitters the children; children learn to expect to fail, to expect that their father or mother will be in some way displeased with them
- 9) Neglect: Classic example... Absalom; David, unwilling to face his own failures as a father, neglected Absalom and contributed to him becoming a violent rebel... he had to burn Joab’s field in order to get David to see him
- 10) Excessive Discipline: A parent who abuses his/her children, either verbally, emotionally, physically... saying things to their children they would never say to anyone else

## C. Positive Commands from Ephesians

1. Colossians only gives the negative side; The fuller command is found in Ephesians

*<sup>ESV</sup> Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

## 2. “Bring them up”

- a. Greek word means to nourish, to feed... but the context is spiritual... so the idea is to FEED their souls with the word of God, causing them to come to faith in Christ and then grow up to maturity
- b. Fathers are to set a delicious meal of spiritual truth before their children constantly to feed their souls on CHRIST

***2 Timothy 3:15 how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.***

- c. The idea is to bring them up from lostness, ignorance, spiritual darkness to a full mature faith in Jesus Christ

## 3. “In the discipline” of the Lord

- a. “paideia”... very important Greek word having to do with the instruction of children... the training of their bodies, minds, characters
- b. Whole life instruction... addressing every area of development

## 4. “Admonition” of the Lord

- a. “admonition” = nouthesia (nouthetic), NANC
- b. Parents are to be wise counselors to their children, especially WARNING them about the dangers of sin

Proverbs 1-6: WATCH OUT for bad friends who want to lead you into crime; watch out for the adulteress whose lips drip honey but whose bed is a highway to hell; WATCH OUT for bad business deals; above all, GUARD YOUR HEART, for from it flows the wellsprings of life

**Summary: parents are to avoid embittering or provoking their children to anger... instead parents are to stoke the fires of their souls to passion for Christ**

## IV. Practical Exhortations for Parents

## A. See the Family as a Little Church

“For every house is as it were a little parish, every governor (as was before observed), a priest, every family a flock; and if any of them perish through the governors neglect, their blood will God required at their hands.” *George Whitfield*

“Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by his rules...If these fail, all other means are likely to prove ineffectual. If these are duly maintained, all the means of grace will be likely to prosper and be successful.” *Jonathan Edwards*

## B. Family Devotions

### 1. I was making excuses... too many times not making this a priority

Some of you perhaps have a church in your House, but it is not a flourishing Church; tis like the Church of Laodicea, neither cold nor hot, or like the church of Sardis, in which the Things that remain are ready to die. So that it hath little more than a Name..." *Matthew Henry*

### 2. God used some incredible quotes from giants of church history to jar me out of my pattern of excuse making

"I beseech you, Sirs, make a Business of your Family-Religion, and not a by-business. Let it be your Pleasure and Delight, and not a Task and Drudgery. Contrive your Affairs so as that the most convenient Time may be allotted both Morning and Evening for your Family-Worship, so as that you may not be unfit for it, or distrub'd and straitened in it..." *Matthew Henry*

**Matthew Henry's incredible commentary on the entire Bible was actually composed of NOTES he took from his own father while his father taught verse by verse through the bible in family devotions!!!**

"To what greater degree of apostasy must he have arrived, who takes no thought to provide for the spiritual welfare of his family." *George Whitfield*

"On the whole, God only knows what a Church may arise from one godly family, what a Harvest may spring up from a single Seed; and on the other Hand, it is impossible to say how many Souls may at length perish by the treacherous neglect of a single person, and to speak plainly by your own." *Phillip Dodderidge*

If we neglect family devotions and discipleship:

"...[your children] will think themselves authorized by your Example to a like negligence, and so you may entail Heathenism under disregarded Christian forms, on your Descendants and theirs in Ages to come." *Phillip Dodderidge*

### 3. What are family devotions?

- a. Father leads... opens the Bible and reads, engaging the wife and children
- b. Family should also sing together in obedience to Colossians 3... "psalms, hymns, spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts"
- c. Morning and evening is a good pattern... discipline is not legalism
- d. Read through books of the Bible
- e. Pray together

### C. Role Modeling

1. Parents are to display a daily godliness
2. Go back to Colossians 3:1-19
  - a. Set your hearts on things above
  - b. Put sin to death by the power of the Spirit
  - c. Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience
  - d. Deal well with the Body of Christ, the church
  - e. Let the peace of Christ rule in you daily
  - f. Let the word of Christ dwell richly in your hearts
  - g. Do everything in the name of Christ
  - h. Be deeply thankful
  - i. WORK ON YOUR MARRIAGE
3. Your children will see this example lived out before their eyes and they will grow following your example

### D. Intentional Discipleship

1. Deuteronomy 6 saturation: same method, better message

***Deuteronomy 6:7-9 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.***

The methodology was one of super saturation by Jewish fathers...

The methodology is the same, but the New Covenant of salvation through faith in Christ is immeasurably BETTER

***Hebrews 8:6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.***

**SATURATE YOUR HOME WITH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST**

**TALK ABOUT HIM WHEN YOU SIT AT HOME AND WHEN YOU WALK ALONG THE ROAD, WHEN YOU LIE DOWN AND WHEN YOU GET UP**

2. Train your children theologically

- a. Read through Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology with your teens
  - b. Catechize your younger children
3. Set spiritual goals with your children and help them meet them