

“A Charge to Parents – Part 1”
Colossians 3:20
(Preached at Trinity, November 11, 2018)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 3** has a high emphasis upon our union with Christ. This union changes everything. Our whole life is lived in the light of Christ.
Colossians 3:17 NAU - "Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."
2. The Christian life displays the reality of God's transforming grace.
Beginning with **Verse 18** Paul describes the practical effect of God's transforming grace upon the family – wives & husbands, children & parents, slaves & masters.
3. Paul begins with the institution of marriage – the relationship of husbands and wives, because this is where the family begins.
Paul's instruction to married couples:
"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as fitting in the Lord."
"Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them."
4. In **Verse 20** Paul turned his focus upon children. This teaching follows reasonably and logically after Paul's instruction on marriage. Children are the fruit of marriage.
Paul gives the command, "Children, be obedient" in the imperative.
Then he adds, "for this is well-pleasing to the Lord."
5. Children have a duty to honor their parents, but parents also have a high responsibility for their children. Both mothers and fathers bear this responsibility and children are commanded to honor and obey both parents.
The 5th Commandment stresses, "Honor thy father and thy mother."
But as we've seen, the man is the head of the home. This is reflected in the husband/wife relationship.
Ephesians 5:22-23 NAU - "Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church"
6. This headship is also reflected with the children. Mom has an incredible influence upon the children. Her impact upon the children can not be overstressed. She typically spends the most time with them.
But the father is responsible for setting the agenda of the home. He has a higher accountability.
This leadership is reflected as **Verse 21** is directed particularly to fathers.
"Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart."
7. While Paul's instruction is to fathers primarily, I'm going to direct this instruction to parents, moms and dads.
Paul's charge is in the imperative: "do not exasperate your children"
The word is ἐρεθίζω – it means "to stir up" implying stirring to anger.
The ESV translates it "provoke"

The KJV translates it - "provoke not your children *to anger*"

The parallel passage in Ephesians supports this meaning.

Ephesians 6:4 NAU - "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger"

8. Paul charges parents, "Do not exasperate your children" but he doesn't elaborate on how to carry out this charge.

During my years of ministry there have been few subjects that have generated as much interest as raising children. Successfully bringing a child from birth to adulthood is no easy task. Godly parents feel the weightiness of the task.

Paul is implying here that parents are always in danger of exasperating their children—of doing things that will discourage and frustrate their children.

It is the duty of pastors to make application of this charge to their congregation.

9. Children are wonderful pieces of clay that can be shaped and molded by the hands of faithful and skillful parents who train them in the ways of God. They can also be inflicted with wounds that will scar them for life. They are fragile little human beings with their own feelings and sense of self-worth.

10. This instruction is to parents primarily, but every one of you should take heed. What impact are you having upon the lives of children around you?

Childhood is a one-time experience. It is a wonderful time of adventure, and exploration. They are learning new things every day. They are developing as individuals. Everyone around them is having an effect upon this development.

My children are grown but I'm still surrounded by children. I try to interact with them, play with them, teach them, and at times, correct them. Children know instantly if you love them and care about them.

While you may not be a parent, you still can have a great impact upon the lives of children.

11. But Paul's primary teaching here is to parents. Paul admonishes and cautions with the phrase: "do not exasperate your children"

Paul is using this expression to describe bringing a child to exasperation or frustration. Such a condition will lead a child to discouragement that leads to anger. Lacking the ability to express themselves rationally they act out with misbehavior.

- A. Why is this? Because children are already full of wrath. They are by nature children of wrath.

We are all by nature filled with wrath, bitterness, hatred.

Romans 1:29 NAU - "being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,"

Galatians 5:19-20 NAU - "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,"

- B. Wrath is a part of our sinful nature. This is why Paul commands the believer to cast it away.

Colossians 3:8 NAU - "But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth."

14. But bad parenting can actually exacerbate the sinfulness of children. Most often the misbehavior of a child is a reflection of the failure of parents to heed the instruction of this verse. Your actions towards your children will have a huge impact upon how they develop.

John MacArthur spoke in one of his sermons:

"If a child lives with criticism he learns to condemn. If a child lives with hostility he learns to fight. If a child lives with ridicule he learns to be shy. If a child lives with shame he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance he learns to be patient. If a child lives with encouragement he learns confidence. If a child lives with praise he learns to appreciate. If a child lives with fairness he learns justice. If a child lives with security he learns to have faith. If a child lives with approval he learns to like himself. If a child lives with acceptance and friendship he learns to find love in the world."¹

15. I've taught on the subject of training children many times. When I preached through the Book of Ephesians I set before you 10 ways you can exasperate and frustrate our children. Of course, there are other ways, but these are significant. Last time I preached on the subject I divided it over 2 sermons. But there is much to say so this time I'm going to preach three sermons on applying this verse – What are ways we can exasperate our children?
 16. We need to understand something very important at the beginning. There are no perfect parents. You did not have perfect parents. You are not perfect parents. Your children will not be perfect parents.
 - a. We are all in much need of God's grace. Our parenting must be accompanied by much prayer. Oh God, bless my children in spite of my sin.
 - b. And sometimes, even with good parenting, children follow the sinful pursuits of their heart.
- I. You will exasperate your children by failing to maintain your position as parent
- A. Your responsibility is to love your children, to provide for them, to teach and train them, to raise them to adulthood under the authority of Christ.
 1. This is your priority. It is your duty
 2. This is what it means to be the parent. Sometimes it requires making hard decisions. Sometimes you will make demands upon your children that will not meet their approval.
 - B. Often parents reflect their own insecurities in how they raise their children
 1. Human beings have a great desire for acceptance and approval from others. Too often parents fear the disapproval of their children. For them, parenting is one long process of negotiation – with parent and child having equal standing, or worse, the child sets the parameters and voices loud disapproval if the parents don't conform.
 2. They give their children everything they demand because they believe this will make their children like them
 3. The sad consequence is while they are seeking the love and approval of their children their children will actually despise them. Your child will not respect your authority if he sees you as one of his peers.
 4. These parents will lose the hearts of their children thus provoking them to wrath. They need your leadership, your guidance, your godly example.

¹ <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-69>

- C. Your purpose is not to become one of your children's pals – it is to be their parent
1. Two of my best friends in this world besides my wife are my adult children. But we don't become friends with our children by forsaking our duty as parents.
 2. Parenting is hard work and it is fulltime work
Sometimes you will have to make unpopular decisions. Are you willing to do the hard things?
- D. The Fifth Commandment commands the honor and respect of your children
1. Paul says in **Verse 20** – "Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord."
 2. Your job as parent is to demand that respect—to be the parent.
 3. As a family you can play and enjoy life together. Your home should be a happy, joyful place. But you must never cease to maintain your position as parent—not tyrant, but faithful leader—loving parent.
 4. I learned this years ago as an employer. Pat and I were employers before we were parents. I opened my first restaurant when I was 22. We were often close to our employees. We would sometimes have them to over to our house. But the distinction of employee/employer was always maintained. It is a fine line but essential for the proper operation of the workplace.
 5. This is also true in the home. Your children must have a proper respect for you as their parent. You are not their peer. God hasn't called you to be their peer. You must lead them, train them, teach them. If you fail to stand before them as their parents you will exasperate them. They may have many friends, but they need your leadership as parent.
- II. You will exasperate your children by over protection
- A. You are called to protect them – it is your duty as parent
1. Children need protection. They need your care.
 2. But over-protection can exasperate your children
- B. We can transfer our own fears to our children
1. It begins by keeping them away from every germ. If they sneeze, it's off to the doctor.
 2. As they get older you protect them from every perceived danger
Don't climb that, you might fall
Don't skate too fast, you might skin your knee – Don't forget the kneepads and elbow pads.
Don't go near that dog.
We need to protect our children from unnecessary risk, but we must also understand that life is filled with danger.
 3. While we watch over them, we need to be careful not to transfer our fears to them. If we become over-protective our children soon cease to try hard and difficult things. They are easily frustrated and angered by failure.
 4. This is the first generation where children aren't encouraged to go outside and be kids – with all the skinned knees, bruises and sprained ankles.

- C. Life is full of dangers and difficulties – you have to teach your children to face the scary things and overcome them.
1. This may begin by examining your own life. Are you robust or are you turned aside by every difficulty? Are you willing to step outside your comfort zone?
 2. Train up your children to be strong, robust, confident. Train them to attempt difficult things. We're not talking about foolish blunders, but confidently attempting hard things—stepping out of their comfort zone.
 3. And you have to teach them that they although they can do great things, they don't do them in their own strength. Teach them about our Savior and mighty God. Christianity is about attempting great things to the glory of Christ our Savior.
It was William Carey who said,
“Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.”
 4. If you over protect your children they will never attempt hard things nor achieve great things. When difficult, scary times arise they will flee in fear. This will be an unending source of frustration for them.

III. You will exasperate your children by showing favoritism

- A. Most often families will have more than one child. It is best if children have siblings
1. It is impossible to treat them exactly the same
 - a. Boys will be treated differently than girls
 - b. Older children will be treated differently than younger—first born different from the last.
 - c. Strong-willed children will be treated differently than compliant
 - d. A trustworthy child will be treated differently than one who continually breaks the trust.
Young person: If you lie to your parents and continually prove yourself untrustworthy; if you continually break the household rules, don't complain if you aren't given the same treatment as your siblings.
 2. But never should we arbitrarily treat one child differently than the others—to show preference or favoritism of one child over the other. I see it far too often.
We should guard against showing favoritism or having a greater regard for one child over another. And you must not compare one with the other saying, “Why can't you be more like your brother?”
- B. Favoritism is poison to a family
1. It creates resentment between siblings and division among families. Look at the lives of Jacob and Esau where Rebecca favored Jacob while Isaac favored Esau. Jacob loved Joseph more than his brothers resulting in their great hatred of Joseph.
 2. It creates frustration and anger within young hearts
 3. You will never win their heart if they think you have a greater regard for the other children in the home. It will prove a constant source of anger and frustration in your child's heart.

Conclusion:

1. As you can see, parenting can be a minefield of ways to frustrate and discourage our children. But my purpose is not to frustrate and discourage you.
2. It is simply a reminder of how much we need wisdom. We need God's grace as we train up our children. Godly parents pray continually. They recognize their insufficiency and weakness. They understand clearly the effect of sin in their own lives.
3. The successful raising of children to adulthood goes beyond the ability of their parents. Like the rest of our life, we find the balance between our personal responsibility for our actions, and God's grace as we seek to be faithful.
4. Our goal is to train up children equipped to face the obstacles and difficulties of life with boldness and confidence while faithfully discharging our responsibilities as their parents.
5. Our ultimate goal is to train up children who understand clearly the greatness of Christ and the great benefit of a life lived in submission to Him.
6. We'll continue next week.