

EPHESIANS - Ephesians 6:1-4

Message 91

Date: May 30/21

Words: 6153

Reading: Ephesians 5:28-33

INTRO: We are back in the book of Ephesians once more. The introduction to the letter is found in 1:1-2. The conclusion is 6:10-24. The two major sections in between are 1:3-3:21 and I titled that section as the worthy walk of the saved. The second section, and the one we are still working on is the worthy walk of the saved. It is found in 4:1-6:9. Here we are instructed in every day Christian living. We are to walk worthy of our calling, 4:1-16. Our calling is that of the saints of God and we should walk worthy of being called saints. Then in 4:17-32, we are not to walk like the unsaved. In 5:1-14, we are to walk in love and Paul spelled out what that meant.

And last, in 5:15-6:9 the Christian is to walk circumspectly. In general that means we are not to walk as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. To this day we see this all around us. The Christian is to know the will of the Lord is for his or her life. The Christian is not to be drunk with wine, but to be filled with God's Holy Spirit. If one is filled with God's Holy Spirit, one will walk a holy walk.

Specifically, walking circumspectly is especially crucial in the home and at work. The home life is dealt with in 5:22-6:4. It deals first with husband and wife relationship and we looked at that in 5:22-33.

That brings us to chapter 6. So let us read verses 1-4:

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

2 "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise:

3 "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

So in the circumspect walk, we have this teaching now on family related matters. The first point then relates to children.

III. THE WORTHY WALK OF THE SAVED

D. Walk Circumspectly

2. The specifics

a. Family related

2) Children (6:1-3)

We have then first the command.

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Here we have a direct command to children. It is this: obey your parents in the Lord. I want you to notice that it is children with Christian parents that are addressed here. We are talking about those who are under the care and government of their parents. Notice in verse 4 that these are children that are still being trained up.

There are those that teach you should always obey your parents, regardless of whether you are married and on your own or not. Verse 4 does not allow that interpretation here. I believe no parent should ever try to have such sway over their children. It should be the aim of the parent to have their children so trained that by the time they reach adulthood that they are capable of handling life.

Parents should teach them right and then allow them the freedom to spread their wings and live as they deem best. That does not mean you can give some advice but do not seek to run their lives as long as you live.

Now the word to obey in our text is *hupakouo*. It comes from the word meaning to hear, with the preposition 'under' attached to it. It means to hear under. It is a submissive hearing, a hearing that does

what is instructed. It is not a hearing that obeys the instruction outwardly while it rebels inside.

Note in this text that children have a free will and they are to exercise it by being obedient to their parents. Can a child choose? Children can choose and are to choose to obey. At a very young age they choose by nature. At a very young age a sin nature manifests itself in children in that which they choose. Obedience to parents is one of the first important areas where children should learn to choose right.

The well-being of the family depends on obedient children. The well-being of a church depends on it; yes the well-being of a nation depends on it. The home is the first institution God established, and it is a most important institution.

Now note that children are to obey their parents in the Lord. How do you obey in the Lord? Are they to obey insofar as their instruction is in the Lord? That is, if the parents require that which is not biblical, then they are not to obey? Or does it mean they are to obey because the Lord commands them to obey?

If one takes the first view, then if a parent requires something that is not biblical, the child ought not to obey it; they only obey if it is in the Lord. So we might say they are to be obedient in so far as what the parents instruct them in is right. That is if they are given instruction that is not biblical, then obedience is not required. Or the meaning is they are to obey because it is a command of the Lord. Or should they obey their parents because that is what God commands?

Well, in the context the parents of the children instructed here are Christian parents. And I tend to think they are to

learn to obey their parents because this is a divine principle. Here we have the first and most important institution given by God to mankind as relates to human relationships. And the first and most important principle children can learn is obedience to their parents. Learning this will have a good impact on the rest of life for the child.

You see, it says they are to obey their parents in the Lord because this is right. This is the beginning of righteousness in their lives. Disobedience is unrighteousness. Here a child learns the very first principle of living right. You see, God's commands are for our good and they are for His glory. When we do that which is right, we are doing that for which God made us. And in learning obedience, children take their first step in living right. To learn to obey is one of the most important things a child can learn. It will affect all the rest of life!

Now I recommend that the parents have a very important part in the lives of their children in teaching obedience. So a word to parents is in order. One of the most crucial things ever undertaken by anyone is parenting. When anyone undertakes parenting, into the hands of parents is committed the task of determining the eternal destiny of every child they bring into the world. I used to hear that the communist said, "Give me a child for the first five years, after that you can have them." Those first years of life are very crucial.

In this verse, we are dealing with Christian parents. Unsaved parents can direct their children as to their physical well-being. They will teach the child not to play on the highway, not to climb onto high places that are not safe and all such things. You do not have to be saved to

guide children as to their physical well-being. You do not have to be saved to seek to give your children a good education so that they might prosper in life. But a godly, Christian parent is better able to guide a child in their physical well-being than any unsaved parent can because godliness added to other parts of life will have a great impact on how you handle things in all those other areas of life.

But parents who are not Christians cannot guide their children right in their spiritual lives. If one is unsaved and one wants to raise children that live a moral and godly life, and one expects obedience to principles that are moral and godly, one most likely will raise a rebel. Christian parents who live in things that are not right but expect their children to live right will most likely also raise rebels. Children have very little respect for a parent who expects one thing from them when they themselves live another standard.

Years ago I was working with a logging crew. We went to work and back in a crew-cab. One of the men on the crew was not a Christian and he and I were discussing such things. And he said something like this, "Listen, I teach my children to make up their own mind what is right. I don't keep them from Christianity. They can choose for themselves." I said, "When your children learned to walk, did they ever try to put your shoes on and make their little feet try to walk in your big shoes?" Well, he agreed they had. I said, "Did you teach them to try to walk in your shoes?" And he agreed he had not. They had learned it from him without him trying to teach them to do that.

Somewhere I have heard this saying: More is caught than taught. A parent might not verbally teach their child things that are not right, but when the child sees them

live wrong, they catch it.

Our verse says, "Children, obey your parents." Children should be safely able to do what their parents teach them whether verbally or by how they live. How a parent lives is as important if not more important than what they teach verbally. If dad does not steal, from that children learn not to steal. If dad pulls shady deals, from that children learn to do the same.

Now parents, what is your responsibility in teaching your children to obey? Largely children obey or disobey by the way they are taught. Obedience must be taught. We will see this when we deal with the verse on fathers. Parents should teach their children to obey. Let me ask you parents of children: How many times do you tell your child to do something before they have to obey? Do they know that when your voice reaches a certain decibel now obedience better happen? If so, you are teaching them to disobey. You are teaching them that you can disobey until I get so or so loud. You have taught disobedience. Some day that may cost them their lives.

I found in our home we would slowly let things go and then all of a sudden we realized what was happening and then we turned things around. And then slowly we would make the same cycle again. I ask you parents, do you teach your children obedience? Or do you teach disobedience? Do you say *no* but it doesn't really mean *no*. Do you give instruction but you don't really expect it to happen? You say, "But it is a lot of work to teach obedience." I believe it takes more work when you allow disobedience.

In the early years one of the most important things parents can do is teach their children to obey. And if you do not, chances are very high that you will pay for

it later on. Our text says, "Children, obey your parents." Moms, do you expect obedience? Or do you get worn down and finally you just shrug and say, "Oh well, I'm just too tired to carry this thing through?" Moms, do you side with your child when Dad will punish for disobedience? It is most likely that you will pay for this as well.

Dads, do you expect your wife to do the disciplining? Can your wife say, "Johnny, or Sarah, when dad comes home I will inform Dad about this?" and when you come home, your child knows you will deal with it? If you do not discipline when it falls to dad to do so, you will likely pay for this later too.

Let me insert a note here I read the other day on church discipline by David Cloud, since we are on the subject of disciple. He quotes R. Albert Mohler in his book *The Compromised Church*, writes this: **"The decline of church discipline is perhaps the most visible failure of the contemporary church. No longer concerned with maintaining purity of confession or lifestyle, the contemporary church sees itself as a voluntary association of autonomous members, with minimal moral accountability to God, much less to each other. ... THE PRESENT GENERATION OF BOTH MINISTERS AND CHURCH MEMBERS IS VIRTUALLY WITHOUT EXPERIENCE OF BIBLICAL DISCIPLINE. ... By the 1960s, only a minority of churches even pretended to practice regulative church discipline. ... Consumed with pragmatic methods of church growth and congregational engineering, most churches leave moral matters to the domain of the individual conscience."**

When correction by discipline fails, it has consequences in the home and in the church and we are reaping them today.

Now, just a few aside things for parents. Teach your children respect for age. We worked with youth for a long time. We would go to someone else's house and then when we

met for devotions, the youth would sometimes take the best seating places. And we would ask them to give those to the youth leaders or parents of the home. Then I would highly recommend, teach them not to address older people by their first name. When you do that, you fail to teach respect for age. This holds true for positions of authority as well. Teach them to respect where respect is due.

It is not a new thing for children to think they know better than their parents or than other older people or those in some position of authority. You cannot put an experienced mind into a child. As a child, it is not possible to have the experience of the parent or other older people. I agree, not all parents are always right. But all parents by nature of having children, exceed the experience of the child. And experience has taught them many things. Wise parents teach their children to respect age or authority.

Let me mention one other very important thing for parents. Teach your children to respect the property of others. When you go visit somewhere, teach your children to respect the property of others. Don't let them go into every room they please to go into. Make sure they take care of the toys that belong to others. Respect for property is a very important thing for children to learn.

If you teach children to obey in these areas when they are small, then you can watch them when they grow older to see how well they have learned to obey.

Children are to obey their parents in the Lord, but I believe parents ought to teach them how to obey. Learning to do right in this most crucial area of obedience will pay off in so many other areas of life. It will pay off throughout life. Disobedience

can be very costly.

We go now to verse 2:

2 "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise:

The most well-known commandments in the world are the 10 commandments. The first four relate to man's relationship to God and the last 6 relate to man's relationship to man. The first commandment that relates to man is what Paul gives in verse 2. It comes from Exodus 20:12 and this commandment says:

12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Paul gives support to his command for children to obey their parents from this fifth commandment. Here is the key way for children to honor their parents. It is to obey them. Now the NT word for *honor* is *timao*. We get our name, "Timothy" from this word. It means *to value*. Children are instructed to value their parents.

The context of children honoring parents in our text is that of children while they are still under the care of their parents. When children obey their parents, they honor them, they value them. Disobedience is dishonor.

But the command to honor one's parents goes beyond children. I believe this command to honor one's parents holds true for life. In Judaism, this command to honor one's parents lasted until the parents passed away. It meant that when the parents got old and needed to be cared for, the children had that responsibility. They did not have Senior's homes. This command to honor one's parents put the onus on children to look after them when they were

old. If the parents did not have enough money, the children paid for their care in old age, providing food and clothing, giving care for all their other needs.

About a year ago the Canadian Armed Forces were sent to check out some of the senior's homes in Ontario's worst hit homes with Covid. Listen to what they found:

"Cockroach and bug infestations, seniors calling out repeatedly for help, rotting food, COVID-19-infected patients put in the same room with those who are healthy, missed meals, seniors left in soiled diapers and linens - these are just some of the things Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) personnel have seen while helping in five long-term care homes in Ontario." End quote. And there are more horrifying stories.

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Now what does that tell you about the children of these seniors? For the sake of time I will leave out reading Matthew 15:1-6, but there you can read how the Jews found ways around honoring their parents in old age. In that passage Jesus teaches that the command to honor parents includes taking care of them in their old age. But the Jews, to get around this command could say their money or substance was dedicated to God and then it could not be used for their parents, and thus they violated the command to honor their parents. So when the aged parents were in need, they were told, "I'm sorry. It has been dedicated to God and it cannot be used for you."

Though this is not the subject in context, it raises the question of how to honor one's parents when they are unbelievers, and maybe ungodly. Or how to honor parents when they try to run the lives of their

children after they are grown. This puts children under huge stress.

In most cases children slowly progress to where they become grown up and move out and are on their own. As long as they are under their parent's roof, they need to respect and follow the guidelines of the parents. But when children are entirely on their own or they are married and have their own family parents need to respect their right to run their own families. How is honoring father and mother to be practiced when parents disrespect this right? I am not experienced enough to know the answers and the cases are so varied that it may be hard to answer in many situations.

But here I have a word for parents from my own perspective. Let me make this point from the command that wives are to be submissive to their own husbands. The Bible never says, "Husbands keep your wives submissive." That command is given to the woman. She is to submit herself. If she does not submit, she is in disobedience to God and will be judged for it. Now that is in general. Here too, situations vary so much it would be impossible to address all situations. There are men who demand things where a woman is put under great stress to know how to handle the command to submit. But here is the point I am stressing: the husband is not instructed to make his wife submissive. He should not hold the Bible over her head and say, "It says here you are to submit to me."

In the same way, when it says children are to honor their parents it is not a command to the parents to make their children honor them. It is a command to the children. The children must decide what they should do, and if they go wrong, they must give account for that.

And let me add here that just as many a

wife is put under great stress because she is commanded to be submissive and the husband's demands are beyond what they should be, just so many a parent has put his children under great stress because the children are to honor their parents and it is very hard to honor what the parents do, even professing Christian parents.

A word to dads: Children want their dads to be proud of them and to respect them for who they are. How many a son has not wished to hear his dad say, "Well done son"? Dads, don't overdo praise either. Be honest. When you see something praiseworthy, say it.

Now, for the wife who is to be submissive, many times the husband lives in direct violation to the command that says, "Husbands love your wives." When a husband truly loves his wife, in general, the wife will have little difficulty being submissive. There are, of course, always exceptions. The wife who has difficulty being submissive to a loving husband is in the wrong.

I have observed some parents who have disrespected their grown children and then try, through things like difficult circumstances in life, to manipulate their children to honor them. In my view, this is one of the biggest family crimes parents can commit.

Parents who deal in anger with their children or they manage and manipulate their children to achieve their goals cause great stress on their children. I have seen Christian parents commit horrible things to their children, and very few know what is really happening.

A while ago I spoke of the revived life. It is a life lived in a glass house. As Nancy Leigh Demos puts it, the walls are down and the roof is off and others are allowed to

look in. Their life is open. But many people live with the walls up and the roof on. I recommend many families are like that. Nobody in the community really knows what it is like in the home. The home life is not an open and honest environment.

In how many a home is dad an angry man at home, but Sunday all are dressed nice and it all looks fine? But before they got on the road there was plenty of anger. And oh the stress those children are put under when such commands as honoring one's parents are brought up.

I have seen a woman's face look like she had been struck with an arrow when the subject of submission came up. How many a godly woman has suffered under the abuse of that command. So it is with honoring parents.

Here is my advice to parents: Live a life worthy of honor. Train your children up right and don't hold the command to be honored over their heads.

Well, that went a little beyond what Paul has in mind in this verse, but it did not go beyond what the command to honor one's parent's means.

We look at the rest of verse 2 now:

2 "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise:

Now note that Paul says this is the first commandment with promise. How so? Well, of the Ten Commandments this is not only the first, but the only commandment with promise. And the promise is in verse 3:

3 "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

First it says, "that it may be well with

you." Notice the words 'may be.' This is called a subjunctive verb. It does not say, "If you honor your father and mother it will be well with you." It says that it "may be" well with you. Consider any child now that does not learn obedience, how much more likely is it that such a child will fall into something that will cause things to no longer be well with them? The chances of this go up considerably.

So here is the clear implication: If you do not learn to obey father and mother, it may not be well with you. Here illustrations would abound. How many a parent has paid a very dear price for allowing disobedience in their child? Here is a word to parents.

Now there is a second part to this promise and that is, "and that you may live long on the earth." First, a disobedient child raises the risks of falling into the disaster that the parents see for them when they instruct them to do certain things and not to do others.

There are two major problems parents want to fall into. One is being overly disciplinarian and the other is a lack of discipline.

But let me raise now another problem that develops when parents raise disobedient children. It affects the church and the nation. And the long range cost for a country that has undisciplined children is that in the long run it won't be well with that country either. It begins to affect every area of life.

Consider now that the Lord Jesus Christ, though He was Creator of heaven and earth, became human. Turn to Luke chapter 2. When Jesus was 12 years old He found Himself engrossed in spiritual teaching. His parents left Jerusalem after a visit during the Passover season. As was the custom, a

number of families that were from the Galilee area set out to return.

We begin in verse 41:

41 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

42 And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.

43 When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it;

44 but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances.

45 So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him.

46 Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

47 And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.

48 So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."

49 And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

50 But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

This is an amazing account. I wonder sometimes, when did Jesus begin to

understand who He was? Did He know it all along? What was He like among His half brothers and sisters? But here at 12 years of age the Spirit of God is at work in His life.

Now look at verse 51:

51 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.

For all the children, consider this now, when Jesus was your age He was subject, He obeyed His father and mother. Now turn to Hebrews 5. We begin in verse 5:

5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You."

6 As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek";

7 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,

8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

It speaks here, no doubt, of His human nature. And in His humanity He learned obedience. We are to be conformed to Christ. Here children can learn to be conformed to Christ by being obedient.

Parents, teach your children to obey. Children, learn to obey your parents. It will affect your life for good as long as you live.

3) Fathers (6:4)

That brings us now to verse 4. It says:

4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Interesting, is it not, that it says, "Children honor your fathers and mothers." And then it leaves mothers out and says, "And you fathers..." When it comes to father child relationships, there is a dad problem that Paul feels he must address. Now the word "provoke" in our text does not occur here. Translated literally, I think it could well be translated, "And you, Fathers, don't anger your children..."

Now, in the language of the NT, when an imperative verb is negated by the negative *mee*, it means to stop doing something. It does not mean, "Don't do it." It means, "Stop doing it." Usually when this is used it means you have a very common problem. So we could now translate like this: "And you, Fathers, stop angering your children..."

A father who angers his children will be hard to honor. It causes great stress for the children to be put under the burden of honoring fathers who anger their children. I might say further that it is a major problem for dads to become angry with their children. That is why Paul addresses this and why he says, "Stop doing it!" A father may anger his children with anger. This is a major problem in many, many homes.

From what I have seen of life, true honor is won; not bought, not finagled, nor coerced. And from my life's experience I would say that the dad who seeks to be honored will go wrong. If instead a father will seek in all honesty to please God, if he will seek first the kingdom of God, and the welfare of his children, he will generally be honored.

So what we have seen is the one negative. True honor will come if a father obeys the two positives of this passage. The word "but" ties the negative and positive together with a contrasting conjunction. It goes like this: And you fathers stop angering your children, but train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Consider then the word translated 'to train.' Our words 'to bring up children' give the idea of the word used here.

We used to teach a course called, "Growing Kids God's Way." I didn't like the word "kids" in the title. But growing children God's way is the idea of our passage. Now there are two very key things in doing this. The text says: "but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

For the word "training" the KJV says "nurture." This word is generally used for discipline. In 2 Timothy 3:16 it is translated "instruction." It says:

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction <3809> in righteousness,

The word translated "instruction" is our word. In this text, in the word "instruction" is the idea of practical training.

But practical training has other applications. For example, if you will teach them to build something you have to instruct here and there. Sometimes you have to show them and then they learn to do things themselves. It is a lot of work to train, but remember this; not training will end up being a lot of work too, and it won't be as fulfilling.

So first then, is practical training,

whether by discipline or practical helping them learn to do something.

So with regard to chastening, here is a word to dads, be very careful how you let anger get involved in disciplining. Discipline before you get angry. This is a place many dads fail. It is amazing what a well applied spanking will do. I watch a younger parent sometimes and I say to myself, "You just don't seem to understand. You would remove that bug your child has with a spanking very quickly." With regard to instruction, give clear instruction.

The second word is "admonition." Children are to be brought up in practical ways and by way of admonition. Here the word is *nouthesia*. This word comes from the word *nous*, the storage part of the mind and *titheemi*, to set or place. It means to set or place things in their mind.

We find this word in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 11. I think Pastor Daryl pointed this word out some time ago. It says:

11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition <3559>, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

The things that happened in the wilderness wanderings of Israel are written down for our learning, or for our instruction. They are meant to be placed in our minds so that we will not fall into the same things they fell into. Many of you read through the Bible and then start over again. This is one of the best habits you can get into.

So when you are training children you might show them how to do something, and then you say; follow these instructions now. And then you give say three steps and they follow that and do it themselves.

So in this verse we have the book learning and the practical. Here we have two key areas in child raising. Both of these are set over against angering your child. A father who will be honored will want to be diligent in practical training and in verbal instruction.

CONCL: Well, that is a lot of instruction for one message.

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Parents, in my view, two big things you can teach your children when they are little that will help them to learn to obey is to teach them not to whine. Let your yes be yes, and your no, no. If you don't do this, you will be helping them to disobey. Then do not let them get away with a tantrum. I think I have told you the story of the boy who threw a tantrum and beat his head against the floor. The dad came along and said, "I see you need a little help." Later this boy's younger brother threw a tantrum and beat his head against the floor, and older brother said, "It won't work."

Then the next instruction is to children as well. It says:

2 *"Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise:*

3 *"that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."*

Children, you will hardly honor your parents more than by obeying them. But this command goes beyond children, that that is not Paul's intent. But let me tell you a little story. I have a daughter. I won't tell you which one, but she plays piano. And years ago churches in town had a praise and worship hour for youth. They dimmed the lights and then had music night. And they wanted my daughter to play the piano for them. And we disapproved. Then she grew up and left home and they said, "Ah, now she's out from under her dad's thumb. Now she'll come play for us." So they asked her and she said, "That would not honor my parents." From our perspective she could now choose as she wished. It was now her choice. But she chose to honor us.

Verse 4:

4 *And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but*

bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Oh, what instruction is here! He is saying, "Fathers, stop angering your children! You will never gain what you want. No, that is not the way to train up children. Here is how you do it: bring them up in practical training. Teach them how to live in ways they can learn from. Then give them instruction they can understand and that will help them make their way in life!"