

Sermon: Children and Parents      Ephesians 6:1-4

We are continuing to make our way through Paul's letter to the Ephesians and today we are in Ephesians 6:1-4. This section deals with the relationships between children and parents.

Now, by way of overview, Ephesians divides rather neatly into two sections.

In the first 3 and a half chapters, Paul deals mainly with doctrine.

There he talks about the necessity of salvation, being in Christ and the importance of faith.

But then in Chapter 4, Paul takes a definite turn toward the practical.

And in this second half, he deals with the implications of all of those doctrines.

In this we see Paul's desire for all of to think first theologically and then to live consistently with the doctrines.

The Christian life does not begin with the ethical, the practical and the moral.

Instead, the Christian life begins with faith, doctrine and having the right thoughts about everything.

Now that we are in this practical section, we will study today the implications the gospel has for our families.

And so, let us read Ephesians 6:1-4.

Paul writes:

**Ephesians 6:1** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **2** "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), **3** "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." **4** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

This is God's word.

The grass withers and the flower fades but the word of our God stands forever.

Now you don't have a sermon outline in your bulletins but there are three points listed for you.

And the first point is...

## I. A Great Assumption

In verse 1, notice that Paul addresses children directly. He writes:

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

The fact that Paul addresses children directly gives us a lot of information.

First, it tells us that children were in worship with their parents.

Now I don't want to make hard and fast points about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of children's church for certain age groups.

To do so is really beside the point.

My main point is that in this letter, which was intended to be read in the churches and studied by the churches, there is a direct address to the children.

And this brings us to an important point that needs to be made in our individualistic society.

In the Christian church, our children are part of the covenant community.

Sure we must evangelize our children.

Of course they need to be converted.

Yet in Christian churches and in families where the parents are believers, the children are to be a part of the worship.

The music, prayers and sermons are to be presented with the children also in mind.

One indispensable aspect of Christian worship is that it must be inter-generational.

It should of course be oriented primarily to adults but the children should also feel that they are included.

And this means that as much as possible, the worship should be **intelligible** to children.

I would feel that I had failed as pastor if my sermons were not at least a bit interesting to a 9 or 10 year old.

And as we read Ephesians 6:1, we can imagine that as this verse was alighted upon, the children were supposed to perk up.

Maybe the parents would nudge the children at this point and say, "Pay close attention. This part is especially for you."

Paul has no qualms addressing children directly in his letter and we should do the same in our worship.

In the Old Testament, you never found the Jews excluding their children from worship.

Worship was never just an adult thing.

It was for the entire covenant community and the children were, by default, included in that covenant community.

So, verse one tells us that the children of believers were to be part of worship.

The second thing that this verse assumes is that the children were being oriented towards faith in the church and in their homes.

Look at Paul's appeal.

He says: **1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord...**

The assumption here is this:

Your parents are raising you to know the Lord.

They are teaching you to understand the gospel and your need for Jesus.

They are teaching you the fear of the Lord, his commands and his promises.

And because of this, the children are to be raised knowing spiritual truth.

There is to be a resonance here with the children, as they are being directly spoken to, that they would want to live an act like Christians- just like their parents.

That's some of what Paul is assuming when he writes:

**Children, obey your parents in the Lord...**

Paul is assuming that the children will want to please God with their lives.

Even if they have never made a profession of faith.

Even if they have not formally joined the church.

Children of Christians should be so brought up that they desire to please the Lord.

Paul's direct appeal to children should get some traction with them- even if they have not formally joined the church.

These are the two great assumptions of this passage: That the children would be present on worship, and that would have at least some desire to live as a Christian.

So, Children, let me ask you, do you feel like you are part of the church?  
Or do you feel like the church and worship are things just for the adults.

And do you have a desire to live as a Christian?  
Is the Christian life attractive to you? Is it something you want to do?  
Do you ever ask yourself if you are really a Christian?  
And are you striving to become one?

Don't let anyone tel you that becoming a Christian is always easy.  
Sure it is easy in one sense to become a Christian.  
Yet there is another sense that becoming a Christian is a great struggle.  
It takes time to really let the gospel sink in so that you really get it.  
And so if you don't yet know if you are indeed a Christian, keep at it.  
Don't let up and don't let go.  
God is teaching you and working on you even now and he will bring you to a place where you can be sure you are a believer if that is what you really desire.

Paul is speaking to you directly in these verses and now we are going to dig a little deeper into what they mean.

And this brings us to our second point which is...

## II. Children, Obey Your Parents

Paul gives us three reasons for children to obey their parents.

The first we have already considered as he says:

**Children, obey your parents in the Lord**

He is telling the children that this is what is they should do as they are "in the Lord."

In other words, he's saying, if you want to really serve Christ, then do so by obeying your parents.

And yet he adds still two more reasons to this command. The first is an appeal to nature.  
He says quite simply: for this is right.

Have you ever seen a child yell at their parents?

Have you ever heard a child tell their parents "No." when asked to do something?  
Perhaps you have been the one doing those things.  
And surely you recognize how wrong it is to do that- to disobey your parents.

Imagine if you lived in a household where everything revolved around you.  
Where you were the center of attention and your parents existed just to serve you.  
In such a case, you would really be in charge.  
You, the child would be the authority.

And what kind of household would that be?  
It certainly isn't the type of household that reflects well upon Christ.  
And even more, the world would look at your family and think that it was out of order.  
You neighbors, wh are not even Christians themselves would think, "My what a disordered household that is. The little child in that home runs everything. Everything centers on that child's needs and wants and desires."

And the result would be that the child in such a home would be spoiled.  
The child would grow up with a false sense of how the world actually works.  
They would think that the world and other people ought to change for them because they are the true authority.  
And yet the world does not work that way- and all the world knows this.

This is why Paul says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, **for this is right.**"  
Everyone knows that children cannot be the authorities in a household.  
The parents must be.

And think of the rightness of the command to obey your parents.  
Whenever they tell you to go to bed, or to eat your vegetables or to turn off the TV or computer and do your homework, they are doing so because they know what is best for you.  
God has given your parents many more years of life that he has given to you this far.  
And in those years, they have learned a great deal about how life works.

Therefore, when ever they command you to do something, as long as it is not sin, you should do it.  
This is not to say that your parents will never be wrong. Quite the contrary.  
They will often be wrong.  
And yet even so, it is right for you to obey your parents because the is how God has organized the world and the family.  
The parents are in charge.  
They are the authority and you are still the child.

The final reason that Paul commands children to obey their parents is in verses 2 and 3.

In these verses he refers to the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment.

He says:

2 “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

Imagine how important a command it must be to obey your parents if it made God’s top 10!

This must mean that there is something extremely important about this command.

In our home, whenever our children are struggling to obey, my wife and I sometimes like to say: “If you cannot manage to obey me, your parent whom you can see, then how are you ever going to learn to obey God, whom you cannot see?”

And if you cannot learn to obey God, then the price you will pay will be very high.

Because imagine that you have no fear or respect for God.

In that case, God himself can command something of you and if you don’t like it, you will just say “No.”

This could have disastrous effects for your eternal life.

It could cause you to lose your soul.

And so, we must all learn to obey God and the best place to begin learning that is in the home with our parents.

God is a parent too you know.

He is the father to all of his children.

And his very first children were who?

Adam and Eve.

And to his first children, when they were in the garden, he gave them a very specific command which, at the time, probably made no sense to them.

What was the command?

The command was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil.

Have you ever thought about how strange a command that was?

It seemed to make no sense?

Why would God create one specific tree and then command humans not to eat of the tree?

Certainly he could have given other commands that made more sense, like:

“Don’t burn down the Garden” or “Don’t kill all the animals.”

Those commands would have made more sense.

But the command not to eat of the tree made little sense to them.

And therein is the point.

The one command that God gave to Adam and Eve was a test.

And the test was this: “Will you obey me simply because I said so?”

If they had obeyed, it would have gone very well for them.

They would have lived a long time in the Garden and perhaps at some point, God would have come and lived among them in an even fuller and more personal way.

Yet they did not obey and because of that, they were sentenced to death.

The reason we die is because our first parents did not obey their heavenly father.

They did not live long in the land.

Instead they were kicked out of the garden, never to return.

And some years later, they died.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> command, which states, 2 “Honor your father and mother”, there is a promise attached to it.

The promise is: 3 **“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”**

The promise is not automatically guaranteeing you a long life if you obey your parents.

For there are many obedient children who die in Childhood and certainly Moses and Paul knew this.

As a matter of fact, when Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians nearly 2000 years ago, nearly half of all children died before they turned 12.

So what does it mean **“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”**?

This must be a general rule that if you obey your parents, then your life will be blessed.

Think of all the things that your parents commands save you from.

They might tell you not to spend time with certain types of people.

They might tell you to turn off the screen and go outside or read a book or write a letter.

They might insist that you clean the kitchen or your room.

When we listen to our parents, we become good at life, as a general rule.

And as we become good at life, we are saved from many of the things that can ruin our lives- like criminal behavior, fighting, addiction to drugs and laziness.

God is telling us that obedience makes our life better.

Yet the most important blessing is comes from honoring our fathers and mothers is that it prepares us to honor God as our heavenly Father.

When we honor God, we listen to him.

We take him at his word.

And in His word, He tells us that we are sinners and that we have a desperate need for a Savior.

Jesus Christ is that savior and he came to earth to die upon the cross so that our sins might be paid for.

And he rose again so that we too could live with him forever.

Our souls’ salvation depends upon our willingness to honor God and take him at his word.

This is the key to the longest life possible which is eternal life.

So, let me ask you, do you honor your parents?  
To honor someone is to hold them in high regard?  
It means that you have a very high place for them in your heart and mind.

When the commandment tells us to honor our father and mother, it means that we ought to have a high estimation of our parents...just because they are our parents.

So do you honor your parents?  
Do you listen to them and obey them?  
And most importantly, do you honor God?  
Do you have the highest estimation of him?  
Does his word carry weight with you and do you obey it as the truth?

This is how our relationship with God grows.  
The writer of proverbs said this:

**Proverbs 6:20** My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. **21** Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. **22** When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you. **23** For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,

Isn't that winsome and positive?

Yet the writer also can be negative:

**Proverbs 30:17** The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures.

So, by all means, Children obey your parents in the Lord!

Now, I had originally intended to cover verse 4 which deals with parenting.  
However, that will have to wait until next week.  
And so, because it is a worship service where we are partaking of the Lord's Supper, I want to share with you a little bit about the Sacraments and why we partake of the Lord's Supper.

This is our final point which is...

### III. A Word about the Sacraments

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament.  
And there are 3 things I want us two know about the Sacraments.

The first is that the sacraments are signs.

#### A. Signs

**Signs are things that points to a realities that are bigger than the signs themselves.**

Sometimes when you see signs on the road, they are telling you about a reality that you may not yet see.

For instance, they may tell you that there is a step hill ahead or a sharp turn or some rail-road tracks.  
The sign tells us about a reality that we may not yet see.

Now, the sign itself is not the reality.

It only points to the reality.

And the same is true with the sacraments.  
The two sacraments that we celebrate in the church are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.  
Baptism signifies our being part of Christ.  
And the Lord's Supper signifies our continual need of Christ.

How often do we need to be washed from our sins?  
Only once.  
And therefore we only need to be baptized once in our lives.

Now, how often do we need to eat?  
Everyday!  
We need to eat multiple times a day.  
And therefore the Lord's supper is a sign that Jesus gave us so that we would remember that we need him all the time.  
We need his food and his drink.

Now, what do the bread and the wine represent?  
They represent the body and blood of Christ.

His body was broken so that ours would not have to be.  
And so we break the bread.

And Christ's blood was shed so that ours would not have to be.  
It should have been our bodies that were broken on the cross.  
It should have been our blood that was shed.

Yet Jesus is our sacrifice.  
He shed his blood so that we wouldn't have to.  
And his blood covers over all our sins.

This is the most important truth of the Gospel and we need to be reminded of it frequently.  
This is why we partake of the Lord's supper every month.  
We could do it more.  
Some churches do it every week.  
Some do it everyday and there is nothing wrong with this.  
As a matter of fact, there is a lot right with this!

But there are two other details about the sacraments that I don't want us to miss.

#### B. Seals

The Second detail about sacraments is that they are seals.

Seals are not just furry ocean animals.  
They are also used to mark something as genuine- like a birth certificate or a college diploma.

The Sacraments are Seals that tell us about the genuineness of the Gospel.  
The Gospel is true and the sacraments back this up.  
They are God's message to us that Christ has indeed died for us.

And so, we can taste the bread and the wine and know,  
by faith, that Christ has truly paid for all our sins.  
They tell us Christ's death is genuine.

### **C. Means of Grace**

The final detail about the sacraments is that they are a  
means of grace.

And this means that God actually shows his grace to us  
in them as we partake of them in faith.

The Holy Spirit uses the sacraments to communicate and  
strengthen our faith.

It's like he is saying to us: You can know that your  
salvation is real just as sure as this bread and wine is real.

And this he does when we partake of them in faith.

The sacraments are for those who have been baptized,  
made public profession of their faith in Christ, and have  
been received into membership in a church.

And this is why many of our children our children  
cannot come to the table and partake of the Lord's  
supper.

As a church, we want to make sure that you really  
understand the Gospel and are trusting in Christ.

This we do because of God's word and because we love  
you and want God's best for you.

So, let me close in prayer and then we will partake of the  
Lord's Supper.