

HONORING GOD AND PARENTS

By Terry Jones, June 15, 2008
Christ's Church at Tiffin, Ohio

Ephesians 6:1-3

CENTRAL SERMON THEME – Christian children honor their parents and God with their obedience.

INTRO. - Parenting is so demanding financially, emotionally, and mentally parents feel overstressed. The stress starts early with most parents. Three expectant fathers sat in a hospital waiting room, while their wives were in the process of delivering babies. A nurse came in announcing to one man that his wife had just given birth to twins. "That's quite a coincidence" he responded, "I play for the Minnesota Twins!" A few minutes later another nurse came in and announced to another man that he was the father of triplets. "That's amazing," he exclaimed, "I work for the 3M Company." At that point, a third man slipped off his chair and fell on the floor. Somebody asked him if he was okay. "No," he responded, "I just happen to work for the 7-Up company."

Robert Orben wrote, "Who can ever forget Winston Churchill's immortal words: 'We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills.' It sounds exactly like our family vacation." Robert Orben.

If the Christian faith did much for women, it did even more for children. In Roman civilization during Paul's time life was difficult for children. A Roman father had absolute power over his family. He could sell them as slaves. He could make them work in his fields even in chains. He could punish as he liked and could even inflict the death penalty.

In the Roman world the marriage bond had collapsed as men and women changed their partners with bewildering rapidity. Under such circumstances a child was a misfortune. Unwanted children were commonly left in the Roman forum. There they became the property of anyone who cared to pick them up. They were collected during the night by people who nourished them in order to sell them as slaves or to stock the brothels of Rome.

Ancient civilization held no mercy for the sickly or deformed child. The Roman Seneca writes, "We slaughter a fierce ox; we strangle a mad dog; we plunge the knife into sickly cattle lest they taint the herd; children who are born weakly and deformed we drown." The child who was a weakling or imperfectly formed had little hope of survival. It was against this situation

that Paul wrote his advice to children and parents. The message of the Bible to our children is:

I. CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS.

- A. 'Children' in this text refers not to a particular age but to the offspring of parents at any age.
 - 1. When children live in the house of their parents, they are to obey their parents.
 - a. This principle includes preschoolers, school age children, Junior Hi, Senior Hi, and college age.
 - b. Though we be adults living in our parents' home their house rules are to be respected.
 - 2. Illus. - When I was a young minister with answers for everyone a teenage girl asked me about a problem with her parents. She was fifteen years old but her parents would not let her go out with her friends or on a date. I asked her why her parents always said no. She said they accused her of being immature. I asked how she responded to her parents telling her she was immature. She answered, "I get mad, yell at them, and go to my room crying." I asked, "Is that mature behavior?" She said, "Well, my friends act this way." I suggested, "Why not tell your parents, 'You are my parents and I respect your decision.'" She reacted, "Are you kidding?" I explained, "Whenever you get angry, yell, and throw a fit, you are proving your parents are right. Convince them you are mature by accepting their decision."

- B. Obey your parents "in the Lord."
 - 1. "In the Lord" refers to children starting early to glorify God with their obedience to their parents.
 - 2. Jesus is an example. Luke 2:51 - Jesus went down with them and came to Nazareth and He continued in subjection to them.
 - a. Jesus really could claim He was smarter than His parents.
 - b. He was in subjection to Joseph and Mary.
 - c. Why? It is right.

- B. The word for right means just, divine law, and righteous.
 - 1. God decided children are to obey their parents.

2. Applic. - Children reach a stage in life when they ask, "Why?"
There are good reasons for children to obey their parents. Property Laws of a Toddler:
 - a. If I like it, it's mine.
 - b. If it's in my hand, it's mine.
 - c. If I can take it from you, it's mine.
 - d. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
 - e. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way.
 - f. If I'm doing or building something, all the pieces are mine.
 - g. If it looks just like mine, it's mine.
 - h. If I saw it first, it's mine.
 - i. If you are playing with something and you put it down, it automatically becomes mine.
 - j. If it's broken, it's yours.
3. Children do not know what is right and wrong without guidance.
 - a. If parents do not guide their children, someone else with a different set of values or no values will guide them.
 - b. Children are born with the potential to do evil.
4. Life is difficult for our children.
 - a. Ex. - Researchers at Johns Hopkins University reported that 30 years ago, the greatest fears of grade school children were: 1) Animals, 2) Being in a dark room, 3) High places, 4) Strangers, 5) Loud noises. Today, kids are afraid of the following: 1) Divorce, 2) Nuclear war, 3) Cancer, 4) Pollution, 5) Being mugged. Back to the Bible Today, Summer, 1990, p. 5.
 - b. Our expectations can be unreasonable.

II. CHILDREN, HONOR YOUR PARENTS.

- A. To honor parents is to have an attitude of respect.
 1. Ex. - The purpose of Mother's Day and Father's Day is to show respect for our parents. If honoring our parents is an attempt to make up for neglect and disrespect our honor is empty. If our honor is to highlight our respect it is worthwhile.
 2. Ex. - I have visited people in nursing homes whose children and grandchildren never visit them. The answer some people give for this neglect is they are so senile they would not know me if I came. If that be true, we honor our parents because God instructs us.
 3. Ex. - We can excuse our neglect of our parents saying we are too busy doing God's work. Jesus addressed this issue in Matthew 15.

Some Pharisees and scribes criticized Jesus for His disciples eating food before they ceremonially washed their hands. Jesus cited one of their gross violations of the commands of God. A tradition existed which they neglected the basic needs of their poor and hungry parents by saying, "What I would have given to help you has been given to God." They gave their money to the temple offering as a substitute for helping their parents. Jesus warned them, "And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition."

4. Illus. - In Bill Cosby's book, *Fatherhood*, he writes, "Now that my father is a grandfather, he just can't wait to give money to my kids. But when I was his kid and I asked him for fifty cents, he would tell me the story of his life. How he got up at 5 A.M. when he was seven years old and walked twenty-three miles to milk ninety cows. And the farmer for whom he worked had no bucket, so he had to squirt the milk into his little hand and then walk eight miles to the nearest bucket. All for 5 cents a month. The result was that I never got my 50 cents. But now he tells my children every time he comes into the house: 'Well, let's see how much money old Granddad has got for his wonderful kids.' And the minute they take money out of his hands I call them over to me and I snatch it away from them because that is MY money."

B. Honoring parents is a major law in God's plan.

1. This is the first commandment with a promise.
 - a. This command is not the first commandment with an attached promise.
 - b. It means the command is primary or first.
2. Applic. - We hear these words, "I do not want to direct my children about God or the Bible. I want them to grow up and make up their own minds." The truth is they will make up their minds later about whether to accept our teachings or not. Obedience is necessary for life. You parents are better equipped to guide your children than anyone else.

C. Honoring parents is a command with a promise.

1. God promises quality of life.
 - a. Life may be well with you.
 - b. God is not promising we will not have trouble in life.

- c. God promises we can learn the disciplines early in life to avoid the disasters of being out of control.
 - d. Illus. - A lady brought her pet dog to a veterinarian. The vet examined him with this advice, "I think you should take your dog to obedience school." She asked, "Why?" The veterinarian said, "He will live longer." The time may come when our society develops obedience schools for our children. God intended for the home to be our obedience school.
 - e. Some of the anger in adults today is from the lack of discipline they received in their formative years.
 - f. Illus. - One evening a minister preached with great zeal on the text, "You shall not steal." He impressed upon his listeners the necessity of absolute integrity in everything. The next morning he boarded a bus and gave the driver a dollar bill for his fare. Counting his change, he found that he received too much change, an extra quarter. Without hesitation he approached the driver, "You accidentally gave me too much change." "It wasn't an accident," the driver replied. "I did it on purpose to see what you would do. Last night I was in your audience and wondered if you practiced what you preached. I made up my mind if you returned the quarter I'd come and hear you tonight." --Moody
2. God promises a quantity of life.
- a. You may live long on the earth.
 - b. God does not promise us a long life if we obey Him.
 - c. He promises us we will live longer if we learn to obey Him.

CONCLUSION - Arabian horses go through rigorous training in the deserts of the Middle East. The trainers require absolute obedience from the horses, and test them to see if they are completely trained. The final test is almost beyond the endurance of any living thing. The trainers force the horses to do without water for many days. Then he turns them loose and of course they start running toward the water, but just as they get to the edge, ready to plunge in and drink, the trainer blows his whistle. The horses who have been completely trained and who have learned perfect obedience, stop. They turn around and come pacing back to the trainer. They stand there quivering, wanting water, but they wait in perfect obedience. When the trainer is sure that he has their obedience he gives them a signal to go back to drink.

Jesus practiced obedience to His Father when He lived on earth with us. We can see Him praying near the trees in Gethsemane wanting to live but

knowing obedience means the cross. Jesus obeyed. He asks us to give up our wants to obey Him.