

Eph. 6:1-4 “Bringing Up in the Discipline”

For the Children: When children are “told off” or punished by their parents, they often feel it is unfair. They often become angry or resentful. They often feel they are in the worst place in the world. But everyone is under authority – fathers, mothers, as well as children. A boss at work may tell off your father. Your mother might get a speeding ticket! Parents also feel, at times, that they have been punished unfairly or given ridiculous instructions. We all have to learn to respect authority for the Lord’s sake- because He puts people in charge of other people. How we treat them will show what we think of Him. The Lord Jesus was humble and patient in dealing with authorities – even cruel ones – and we should be striving to be more like Him. **Questions:** How do we know that God treats the children of believers as His covenant children? Why should covenant children obey their parents? What is the promise to those who do obey “in the Lord”?

Introduction:

First Point: The Responsibilities of Covenant Children

- 1) Children in the Covenant: The apostle is addressing “saints” in this Book (1:1). He singles out a few groups to help them “put on the new self” – married couples; children and parents; and slaves and masters. All are appealed to on the basis of covenant promises and obligations. Clearly the children are being addressed as members of the covenant. However, the general principles apply to all of God’s people as we deal with all God-appointed authorities.
- 2) The Covenant-Obligation: The children are commanded to “obey” and “honour” their parents – literally, to put themselves under what they hear from their parents and to value and respect them. It applies to what the parents teach, to “house rules,” and to the way the children think of, and speak to, their parents.
- 3) Reasons to Obey: One reason for doing so is “Because it is right.” The Lord’s commands are always good and right. Another is indicated by the expression, “in the Lord.” Note the parallel “as to the Lord,” “for the Lord’s sake,” or “as to Christ” in other similar passages about authority figures (5:22, 6:5; 1 Pet. 2:13). For all authority is from God. To rebel against the authority of those appointed by God, is to rebel against Him (Rom. 13:1-2). Positively, we obey because we love God and are thankful for His mercy to us in Christ. The promise of long life in the land (from the 5th commandment) reminds us of our reason to be thankful: those who honour and obey authorities for the Lord’s sake will be graciously rewarded with peace and stability forever, in the New Creation.

Second Point: The Responsibilities of Covenant Parents

- 1) The Fear of Submitting: What if those in authority over us – parents, in this case – are inclined to abuse their authority? Children – and others – may fear to promise obedience in case such scenarios develop. The Lord therefore lays down instructions for those wielding authority (5:25, 6:9 and 6:4/Col. 3:21; 1 Pet. 3:7).
- 2) Against Provocative Parenting: Here, fathers are warned not to “provoke” their children to anger - the word used in Col. 3:21 is “exasperate.” Both words imply avoiding wrong behaviour that stirs others up to strong anger – such as by neglect, abuse, discouragement, unjust discipline or hypocrisy.
- 3) For Discipline and Instruction: Loving parenting – also “in the Lord,” just as the child’s obedience is to be “in the Lord” – means that parents should have a desire to teach their children the Lord’s ways, out of love for Him as well as for their children. Despite the pressure from the world to avoid it, both words here “discipline” and “instruction” imply a corrective element: training by deed and word, involving instruction, admonition and corporal correction. After all, the eternal life of the child -long life in the “Promised Land” is at stake!

Conclusion:

