

Col 3:21 "Since You've Been Raised with Christ – Don't Provoke Your Children" Sept 25, 2022
Deuteronomy 6
Psalm 34B

In Deuteronomy 6 we hear the *shema* –

Shema is the Hebrew word translated 'Hear'
Shema Yisrael, Yhvh Elohenu, Yhvh echad.

"Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.
And you shall love the LORD your God
with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

How can you remember the statutes and commands of the LORD?

"You shall teach them diligently to your children,
and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house,
and when you walk by the way,
and when you lie down and when you rise.
You shall bind them as a sign on your hand,
and they shall be as frontlets for your eyes.
You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

And as you are teaching these things to your children –
when they ask you what these things mean,
Moses tells parents to remind their children of the mighty deeds of the LORD.

We were slaves in Egypt – but with his mighty hand, God saved us.

Our Psalm of response is Psalm 34 –
a Psalm of David, as David rejoices because of God's salvation.

At the center of the Psalm David says,

"Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good?
Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.
Turn away from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it."

In other words, David is doing precisely what Moses urged the parents of Israel to do.

He is laying out the commands of the LORD –
and then at the end of the Psalm, he reminds them of the salvation of the LORD:

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.
He keeps all his bones – not one of them is broken." (v19-20)

That last line will be applied to our Lord Jesus Christ – the righteous one.

Sing TPH 34B

Read Colossians 3:1-21

Since you have been raised with Christ,
since you have died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God –
since you are a new man in him,
this should affect everything you do.

In verse 21 Paul turns to the parents--and particularly the fathers.

Why does he address only the fathers?

It's not because mothers don't ever provoke their children,
no, Paul knows the human heart too well to suppose that mothers are perfect!

Rather, in this statement, Paul addresses both fathers and mothers.

The husband is the head of the wife,
and so he should provide leadership in the parenting of the children.

This does not eliminate the responsibility of the mother,
rather this is a direct challenge to the tendency of fathers
to ignore their family responsibilities.

The whole of Scripture gives direct commands
for fathers to be involved in the training of children
--especially in their spiritual training.

You are to be a model of God the Father in your love and care for your children.

In other words, verse 21 is another application of the whole chapter!

So let's go through Colossians 3 with verse 21 in mind...

1. Who You Are in Christ (v1-11)

We need to start back in verses 1-4,
because if you don't wrap your mind around verses 1-4
you will not understand how to be a good parent!

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your^[a] life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

If you would be a good parent,
then you must be so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good!

Notice in verse 5 what Paul means by earthly:

⁵ *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:*^[b] *sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

If you are living in sexual immorality – impurity – passion – evil desire – or covetousness,
(which is idolatry) –
then you will not parent your children well.

Setting your mind and heart on things above
means turning away from these *earthly* things.

Christ – the Son of God – is the one who has entered into the heavenly places for us –
and because we have been joined to his life (Christ, who is your life) –
we too have been seated in the heavenlies with him.

As we saw last Sunday night from Leviticus –

this was the whole point of the burnt offering in the OT.

The burnt offering ascends in the smoke as a pleasing aroma to God.

Through the death of the burnt offering (or “ascension offering” to use its Hebrew name)
the worshiper ascends the hill of the LORD.

Of course, the difference is that the smoke of the burnt offering only symbolically reached God.

Jesus, the Son of God, has ascended to the right hand of the Father.

And in his death – in his resurrection – in his ascension to the right hand of God,
we have been seated with him in the heavenly places.

That’s who you *are* in Christ.

Your old man died – you have died – and you have been made alive in Christ!

So set your minds on things above – seek first the kingdom of Christ.

Don’t get distracted by your old desires for power.

Put to death those earthly patterns and practices!

After all...

⁶ *On account of these the wrath of God is coming.*^[c] ⁷ *In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.* ⁸ *But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.*

When I was a child, I had a fiery temper.

During my teenage years, I worked really hard to learn self-control.

By my early twenties, I thought that I had mastered it!

Then I got married – and it wasn't too bad...
and then I had children –
and I realized that my temper had only been on snooze.

What I had taken as “self-control” was actually just an ability to control my circumstances!
But once you have children, you cannot control your circumstances!

What does it mean to “put away” anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk?

It means the same thing as setting your heart and mind on things above.

When your heart and mind is set on things above –
when you recognize that your life is hidden with *Christ* in God –
then you realize that you are *not* in charge!
Your calling – as a father – is to be God's servant
in showing these children the way of Christ.

As Paul says in verse 9:

⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self^d with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave,^e free; but Christ is all, and in all.

If Christ is all – and in all –
then the order of the universe does not depend on you!

And for that matter – the order of *your home* does not depend on you!
You are not the one who maintains order in your home.
You are the one who serves Christ!
Yes, your children are supposed to obey you –
that's their calling!
And you are called to teach them and show them how to do that.

How?

By modeling it for them.
Because *you* are a child of God.
And so the way that you obey Christ
will show them how they should obey you!

2. Be Who You Are in Christ (v12-17)

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And

above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.* ¹⁶ *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* ¹⁷ *And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

When your children learn about who God is,
they will naturally think about the fatherhood of God
in terms of what you are like.
You will need to teach them that God is a much better Father than you are!
You will need to repent and ask them to forgive you
when you do not imitate your Father in Heaven.

So Parents, do not provoke your children
What does it look like to provoke your children?
Obvious examples would include
mocking them, ridiculing them, or yelling at them.
But these are all active provocations.
There are also passive provocations.
You can provoke your children by
ignoring them, neglecting to forgive them,
or just forgetting that you promised to play that game with them.

I'm sure that all of you are familiar with the good advice to be consistent in your discipline.
But the point is not consistency.
The point is *love* – “above all, put on love,
which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

If you are in Christ,
then you should be reflecting
the mercy, kindness, humility and forgiveness of Christ.
Now, this also means that if you are allowing your children to sin
without disciplining them,
then you are pushing them away from Christ.
If you will not rebuke them,
and gently lead them back to the way in which they should go,
then you are encouraging them to become rebels against God.

This doesn't mean that you should be a strict drill-sergeant.
Rather it means that you should rebuke sin and encourage obedience to Christ.
It means that you should seek to understand your child's heart.
Watch for the sinful patterns that are developing,
and wisely draw them away from the snare of sin and death,

leading them in the path of righteousness.

Why is this so important?

Paul says, "Lest they become discouraged"
What does this mean?

Think about God – our good Father:

God is a good Father who cares for his people.

There are six things that I would like to highlight here.

I wish I had put them in the bulletin –
but that just means that you need to write them down instead!

There are six things about God's fatherhood that we need to imitate.

1) He feeds his children
with manna in the wilderness,
he feeds us our daily bread –
but he especially feeds us with Christ--(I Cor 10)

Even so – you are to feed your children
and show them how this reflects God's care for us.

2) God clothes his children
When Adam and Eve sinned – all they could come up with was fig leaves,
but God clothed them with animal skins (the first sacrifice)
pointing forward to how he clothes us with Christ—
Col 3 uses this picture of taking off and putting on clothes...

Even so – you are to clothe your children
and use this to teach them about the clothing of Christ.

3) God disciplines his children.
You see this throughout the OT –
but Proverbs tells us that God disciplines the son that he loves.
Even our Lord Jesus *learned obedience from what he suffered* (Heb 5:8)

Even so your discipline is supposed to teach your children
about the cursedness of sin,
and the blessings of new life in Christ.

4) God forgives his children
Think back to the centuries of rebellion,
and how God did not treat their sin as it deserved –

but was patient, enduring their rebellion and murmuring!
But especially, now, God forgives us in Christ!

Even so you are to forgive your children,
because you have been forgiven in Christ (v13) –
and you want them to see what that looks like!

5) God gives his children good gifts.
Just as he gave Israel the Promised Land,
so also Jesus says that the heavenly Father gives good gifts –
and especially the HS – to those who ask (Luke 11:13)

Even so you are to give good gifts to your children,
showing them how great the Father's love is for them.

What is the inheritance that you will leave to your children?
My father came from a family where everyone had done very well
(financially).
Except him.
Divorce ruined him.

But he left an inheritance that his children all treasure to this day!
A treasure that no moth or rust can destroy!

And that's the sixth thing about parenting:

6) God spends time with his children.
As we are seeing in Leviticus, the problem at Mt. Sinai
is that man cannot come into the presence of a holy God.
How can sinful humanity dwell with God?
God provides a way.

And all of the sacrifices and the temple was all about the coming of the HS –
so that God might dwell with us – and bring us to himself!

Even so you are to spend time with your children
(as a living example of Christ's presence with us).

My dad was 55 when he realized that he had failed in this.
But he repented – and thus, he changed.

My dad had been pretty absent before –
but he did his best to make up for lost time.

It's never too late.
He made a point of being present –
of demonstrating the nearness of our heavenly Father
by being a present Father.

(And by the way, children,
here's something you may or may not realize:
your parents have never done this before!
They are still trying to figure this out.)

But parents, Paul's admonition is "do not provoke your children,
lest they become discouraged."

What are some ways that you provoke your children?
Obviously, if you don't feed or clothe them – that is discouraging to them!

But also – if you don't discipline them (or if you discipline them badly!).

The point of discipline is about *restoring* your child.
Discipline is NOT primarily about their behavior!
There is a parallel with church discipline.
Church discipline is about restoring a sinning brother or sister.
Family discipline is EXACTLY the same thing.
You are not merely trying to get them to behave,
you are trying to show them the path of life.

This is hard.
Why?
Because YOU are a sinner, too.
Often you don't care about their heart.
All you want is for that child to simply shut up and get out of your hair.

Brothers and sisters,
THAT is provoking your child to discouragement.
You have been made a new creature in Christ.
You have died with HIM, and you are no longer the old sinner that you used to be!
So now Christ calls you to be who he has remade you to be.
When you discipline your child,
DON'T emphasize the behavior.
Emphasize the heart.

I remember an example from a friend of mine:
One day two of his boys were fighting over a toy.
Their father walked into the room,

knelt down beside them,
and asked,...

What would you have asked?
"Who had it first?"
That's the obvious question, right?

But no, he didn't ask that question.
Luke may have had the toy first,
but when John grabbed it,
what was Luke thinking?
Was Luke more interested in his own selfish interests,
or was he looking out for the interests of others
--in this case his three year old brother.

So Dad knelt down and asked the boys,
"why are you fighting?"
Over the next couple minutes he untangled the web of sin and bitterness
that had crept into the boys hearts.
John was saying "me, me, me!"
and was grabbing from Luke;
but Luke wasn't innocent either.
Luke was also saying, "me, me, me!"
and was fighting back,
rather than turning the other cheek.

You may think that neither four year old Luke
nor three year old John was capable of understanding sin and selfishness
--but I can assure you that they understood
that the attitude of "me, me, me!" was not pleasing to God!

But Dad didn't stop there.
He then showed Luke and John how they could share,
how they could look for ways to give to each other,
rather than take from each other.
And he grounded all of it in what Jesus Christ had done for them on the cross.

Every child can understand what sin is.
Every child can understand what grace is.

Your task as parents is to teach them,
by word and by example,
what the gospel is all about.
If you fail to put into practice what you have learned,
then

they will become discouraged;
they will think that Christianity is a bunch of hogwash,
because they have never seen in you what they KNOW to be right.

What are some practical things that you can use in your family?

- 1) Forgive one another as Christ forgave you. (v13)
When you have sinned against your kids –
or against your parents (it goes both ways) –
repent!
Acknowledge your sin for what it is.

When they have sinned against you,
be ready and eager to forgive,
and seek godly reconciliation.

This may sound simple, but I guarantee you that if you do this from the heart,
it will change YOU.

It may not change them (you cannot change their hearts!),
but it will change you!

- 2) "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,
teaching and admonishing one another
in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

The Word of God needs to be central in your family.

Read the Bible together at dinner time,
before you go to bed,
or some other regular time during the day.

And SING!

Get a couple hymnals or songbooks,
and sing together!

It doesn't matter whether you have a good voice,
but sing while you're working together,
playing together,

or when you are doing your family worship time.

But let me warn you:

if family worship becomes simply another thing to do,
it will fail.

The Word of Christ is not something that you do once a day
--like flossing your teeth.

The Word of Christ is to be a part of everyday life.
It must dwell in you.

When you are talking about what's going on at work,
search the Scriptures to find out how God would have you handle difficulty.

When you are excited about some accomplishment,
read a Psalm of thanksgiving, like Psalm 100,
and then get out your hymnal and sing,
"All Creatures that on Earth Do Dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice!"
(It can be tone-deaf as long as it's cheerful!)
Who cares how weird you feel,
if it's right, do it!

My friend, David Covington, has a habit of praying an awful lot.
Whenever he's talking with you about a difficult situation,
he will stop and say, "Well, let's pray about it!"
When you tell him how you've had victory over a certain sin,
he'll spontaneously break out into praise!

And it's not forced,
it's a habit.
it's a discipline of prayer.

This is the same man who has disciplined himself
to constantly be looking out for the best interests of his wife and kids.
It all fits together.
Putting sin to death is not easy.
It takes hard work.
It takes discipline.
But those who are called "the elect of God, holy and beloved," (in v12)
are also called in one body to let the peace of God RULE their hearts (v15).
We are not to rule ourselves,
but we are to let the peace of God rule us.

3. **Fathers, Do Not Provoke Your Children (v21)**

¹⁸ *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.* ¹⁹ *Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.* ²⁰ *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*
²¹ *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*

Since you have died with Christ, and been raised to newness of life in him,
live like it!
Parents, do not provoke your children,
but teach them about their heavenly Father,
through your words and deeds,
shepherding their hearts even as Christ, the Good Shepherd,
leads you.