

verb is only found here and Romans 10:19. The parallel passage in Colossians uses the verb meaning to "stimulate or stir up" (3:21). What is garnered from the truth is that God enjoins the father not to indulge in selfish rights. The right of the child must be maintained. The individuality of the child is to be considered. It is as if Paul said: when dealing with children, remember that they are persons! Authority in the home is not for selfish gratification but for the good of the children. Let fathers consider their roles as stewardships of trust from the Lord! Tyranny is utterly to be abhorred.

b. Positively.

Converse to "provocation" is the verb "bring up." This verb is rendered "nourish" earlier (5:29), but here it means to "educate." The idea is to develop all the powers of children. What an emphasis upon positive counsel over negative shouts! This "bringing up" is provided with two basic and helpful areas of concern:-

- 1) Instruction. The child-rearing practices of a Biblical father will provide training, instruction and learning in matters relating to the Lord (genitive case for "Lord"). All is concerned with Him. All that is conducive to growth and development will be centered in the Lord! Oh, for fathers to be exercised about this.
- 2) Exhortation. The noun used here means to "put in mind." The idea of exhortation and admonish are prime. Children are not to live unstructured lives, but those which bend to the will of God! The development of the mind is incomplete if it only has knowledge. Discipline from the Lord is a requirement! Both of these terms imply that God is the ultimate source of instruction!

Conclusion It is a grand experience to be a father, but with that blessing comes the responsibility of faithfulness to God. If you are a father, remember that God will hold you responsible for what He has allowed you to be (Luke 12:48). God give us children and fathers who respect the Word of God and demonstrate that Word in their personal relationships. Amen!

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

"Christian Fathers"

Ephesians 6:1-4

Introduction

1. Every relationship of eternal importance is given attention in the Word of God. It is not surprising, therefore, to find truth in the Word concerning fathers. They are given explicit instruction in many concerns.
2. Today's world has abdicated Biblical principles. The present society is not ordered by spiritual goals. This is the reason for many of our social problems. The absence of right interpersonal relations in homes is dastardly and devastating. It is high time that those of us who truly believe the Lord take time to study what God has to say. Check for yourself the following two items relating to fathers:

1. PAEDO-EXPECTATION BY FATHERS. vv. 1-3.

Every father who operates within the range of the Word of God may well expect from his children a couple of responses:-

a. Obedience. v. 1.

The noun used for "children" points to a birth relationship. Vital and personal thought are involved. This is also supported by the pronoun "your" to show that children are not given blanket duties, but directed ones. Those who are called their "parents" have a special grasp on them! The word used for "parents," incidentally, is also specifically employed of "fathers" in Hebrew and really should be rendered "begetter." God has tremendous issues at stake with the father or head of the home! Obedience is:-

- 1) Commanded. This is gained from the present active imperative of the verb. Obedience is a consistent and constant requirement. True, one must understand that this is stated within the God-given arrangement of personal development and the acknowledgement of personal modification. However, the basic truth is there: obey! This verb means to "hear under" and therefore means to "give the listening ear." When decibels play

such a heavy role in modern society, it is interesting that God says children are not to tune out their fathers or parents, but give them the ear (same verb in v. 5).

- 2) Confined. The obedience is "in the Lord." This is the sphere of its operation. No, it does not mean that spiritual and temporal matters are to be distinguished, but that a supernatural relationship does support the obedience! Unsaved folks have little to bank on here; the appeal advanced is for those who find themselves subjected to the truth of God! This is the highest appeal. It moves beyond that rendered by fear or sourced in natural affection.
- 3) Concerned. This is "right" says the Book. Most are unwilling to accept right and wrong categorically today, but this is God's Word. The term used here is more than that which is "befitting;" it is an extension of the phrase "in the Lord" for it means righteous or what is in keeping with God's will. Elsewhere Paul uses the verb meaning "well-pleasing" and obviously to God (Col. 3:20). The thought of a regulated scheme of things is at the very core of the matter. One reason a child is placed in a home is to set forth the rightfulness of the situation!

NOTE: Obedience is God's standard for children. To disobey is one of the marks of sinfulness and characteristic of the last days (cf. Rom. 1:30; 2 Tim. 3:2; Prov. 30:17). It is not old fashioned to obey, but it is Biblical!

b. Honor. vv. 2, 3.

Here is the disposition out of which the matter of obedience is born. Again the present active imperative points to constant concern. This is not a one shot effort, but a daily practice. The verb means both inward and outward feeling of respect toward parents. Three reasons are given to support it.

- 1) Primal. The idea that the command given here is incorporated in the New Testament injunctions of grace is tremendous. But it also is given here by the Spirit to show that a promise is associated with the duty. This responsibility of children stands out

above all other thoughts from the Lord for it bears a specific promise. That gives it a place or priority on the list. It is "first."

- 2) Personal. It may be "well with thee" if the injunction is heeded. Nothing needs to be advanced amongst the saints more than this today. Physical, mental, psychological, and total personal well being are related to the obedience of children of God to the Word of God. When one does what the Book says, prosperity and success are guaranteed (Josh. 1:8). Actually, the verb "be" is better given as "prove" and that makes a difference!
- 3) Practical. Longevity of life is part of the issue here. The Old Testament reference from which this is taken (Ex. 20:12) has the word "land" and here the word "earth" is given. The Old Testament focused on Canaan and here the emphasis is on terrestrial habitation without concern for geography. Love of life is directly related by the Spirit of God to love and honor of parents!

2. PATRO-PROVOCATION OF CHILDREN. v. 4.

Here is a direct word of instruction to fathers. Some have attempted to apply the noun "father" to both parents and in one sense this is acceptable. But God has made a distinction which should not be obliterated. As parents are one in the marriage bond, the application is to both. As each bears roles in the Lord, it applies to fathers! The context will dictate which is in view (cf. Heb. 11:23). The pendulum is in favor of "fathers" here due to their leadership in the home. God has appointed them over their wives and given them the awesome responsibility of home and church leadership. No amount of societal change will alter the Word of God! In this position, what are fathers asked to do? Look at the text:-

a. Negatively.

The present active imperative promotes continual responsibility. Fathers must be everlastingly at it in their thoughts: don't provoke! The verb here means to "irritate" and that is a genuine need. The