**CHRISTIAN FAMILIES AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Ephesians 6:1-9

Key Verse: 4

 “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

**Introduction**



 It is of paramount importance that a divine order or chain of relationship, be maintained in a home. The head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband and the head of Christ is God (1Cor. 11:3) Children obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord (Eph. 6:1-3, Col 3:20)

 Last week we learned about the relationship between husbands and wives. Today’s passage is about the relationships between parents and children, masters and slaves in the Lord. Since Adam and Eve broke right relationship with God, we have been hard time in getting along each other. However when we delve into God’s words through His servant, apostle Paul, we have a silver lining to restore any broken relationship for God’s glory. May the Lord help us to build up healthy relationship in family as well as in society so that each of us may be a source of blessing.

1. Read verses 1-3. What should children do in their relationship towards their parents? (1-2) What does God promise for children who honor their parents? (3)

1-1, Read verses 1-3.

 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **2** “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— **3** “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

 1-2, What should children do in their relationship towards their parents? (1-2)

***Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—***

* Here Paul has in mind children who are still in their parents’ household and under their authority.
* When a child is grown and out of their parents’ household, they are no longer under the same obligation of obedience, but the obligation to honor your father and mother remains.
* In general everyone does not like to obey others. In our sinful nature, disobedience and rebellion are circulating in our spirit.
* Today, many people show an allergic response to the word “obey” insisting to follow their own judgment and right.
* Here the words “this is right” means that this is the perpetual law of nature, built in our constitution.
* So, if they disobey their parents, they are against the law of nature and against God’s authority.
* No doubt, obedience to parents is not easy at all, for we are born with sin and obedience does not come naturally to us.
* Naturally we are rebellious and disobedient. So, one of the first words that little kids say to their parents is “No.”
* But as we are Christ followers, we must follow Christ’s example. Christ the Son of God obeyed first his Father God and came to this world, renouncing his privileges and authorities in heaven. He obeyed God’s will to the point of death.

Philippians 2:8b says,

**“…he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!”**

* In order to obey his heavenly Father, he denied his own will and desire through his Gethsemane prayer and self-denial.
* Even on earth Jesus obeyed his human parents, Joseph and Mary, although he was originally the Son of God.
* If we look at Luke 2:51, the boy Jesus was obedient to his parents. We know that Joseph and Mary were just human with sins and faults.
* Yet Jesus obeyed them to the end. The scripture reveals how Jesus became obedient.

Hebrews 5:8 says,

 **“Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered.”**

* Jesus learned obedience through his actual suffering, sacrifice and self-denial. How much more, should we struggle actually with suffering, sacrifice and self-denial to learn obedience! We must learn to obey our parents.
* “Children, obey your parents in the Lord…” It is not simply “obey your parents,” but “obey your parents in the Lord.”
* In a similar way to the wife's command to submit to her husband *as to the Lord* (5:22), it is simply **right** for a child to obey their parent in the Lord.
* Paul was not giving exhortation from a secular point of view, but from a godly point. He meant that children should obey their parents for Christ’s sake.
* In other words, they obey, not because this is what their parents want, but because it is what the Lord Jesus wants.
* Obedience is their responsibility first to Christ and then to their parents.

Colossians 3:20 reads,

“Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.”

* For this is well pleasing to the Lord: This is one of the important reasons for a child’s obedience. When a child respects their parent’s authority, they are respect God’s order of authority in other areas of life.
* This idea of an order of authority and submission to an order of authority are so important to God that they are part of His very being.
* The First Person of the Holy Trinity is called the Father; the Second Person of the Holy Trinity is called the Son. Inherent in those titles is a relationship of authority and submission to authority.
* The Father exercises authority over the Son, and the Son submits to the Father’s authority - and this is in the very nature and being of God!
* Our failure to exercise Biblical authority, and our failure to submit to Biblical authority, isn’t just wrong and sad - it sins against the very nature of God.
* “In everything” indicates our full trust in the Lord. Although our parents are not perfect, our attitude is toward our Heavenly Father who set this authority on them.

1-3, What does God promise for children who honor their parents? (3)



***“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”***

* Paul referred to Deuteronomy 5:16, where God promised to bless the obedient child. “Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”
* Honoring your father and mother is a duty towards God than a mere duty towards man.
* That is why Paul pointed out, Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise. Although it is 5th commandment, it is the unique and first commandment with a promise.
* It may be possible that children can obey their parents with icy coldness, bitterness, complaining and rebelliousness in their hearts.
* Some children can see their parents’ weaknesses and faults and think that their parents are not worthy of honour.
* But, there is no perfect parent in this world. Yet honoring our parents does not depend on whether our parents are particularly worthy or not.
* We are responsible to honour our parents because that is what God wants us to keep. Moreover, God promises to bless us when we do so.
* But the opposite is true. Especially in the last days, children are disobedient and many families become dysfunctional.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 reads,

 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. **2** People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, **3** without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, **4** treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— **5** having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

* We should seek to honour our father and mother in the same way we seek to honour our God in our thoughts, words and actions.
* Honouring is not easy. It is not always fun. So we really need God’s help and strength.
* A Chinese proverb says, “When you have children, you understand what you owe your parents.” By the same token, when we honour our physical parents whom God has placed over us, we will understand the true meaning of honouring our heavenly Father God.
* And we know that our relationship starts first with our parents. Let us honour and obey our parents and establish and enjoy a healthy relationship with our parents in the Lord and then expand our relationship with others in the Lord. Amen!

2. Read verse 4. What should fathers avoid? (4a) Instead, how should fathers raise up their children? (4b)

2-1, Read verse 4.

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

2-2, What should fathers avoid? (4a)

***Fathers, do not exasperate your children;***

* The word of God was not just given to children, but also to parents, in particular fathers.
* In terms of establishing a meaningful and sound relationship both parties must subject themselves to one another.
* God has given children to their parents as His gifts to them. At the same time, they have parental responsibilities.
* They should not exasperate their children. The word, “exasperate” means “to irritate intensely or to cause extreme annoyance to.”
* Children become exasperated when parents abuse their authority over their children.
* Fathers must not be too bossy by demanding their children unreasonably and excessively.
* Someone proposed 5 tips(don’ts) for parents not to exasperate their children. 1) don’t train your children when you are angry, 2) don’t say your child is a burden you wish you didn’t have, 3) don’t compare your child with others, 4) don’t treat your child like a fool, saying “How old are you?” 5) don’t’ say, “Don’t bother me.”
* All parents have their expectation for their children. So they can easily demand their children with a long list of items to do that parents themselves can hardly do and suffocate their children.
* Children are not mature and they need some room for their inexperience and immaturity. Then they will mature at due time.
* Fundamentally parents must have love and patience for their children. They must not exasperate their children.

2-3, Instead, how should fathers raise up their children? (4b)

***instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.***

* Parents have the primary responsibility to raise their children in the Lord. Both training and instruction are necessary. Training is discipline. Especially it is father’s primary job. It should not be left with mothers.
* Lack of discipline will make a child insecure, self-centered and miserable. We call this “a spoiled child’ who grows up to expect to have his way in everything.
* Disciplining children is the sign of love. According to Hebrews chapter 12, God’s discipline for us is a sign of his love for us.

Hebrews 12:7-11 reads,

 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? **8** If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. **9** Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! **10** They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. **11** No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

* Disciplining children must go together with instruction of the Lord. Instruction of the Lord means God’s words and teachings. It is admonition which is authoritative counseling in accordance with the words of God.

2 Timothy 3:14-17 reads,

 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, **15** and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17** so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

* Through disciplining and instruction of the Lord children can know Christ and grow in a personal relationship with him.
* No doubt, we cannot make our children Christians. Only God can. So parents must make the best environment for their children to meet God personally by disciplining them and instructing them in the Lord and by praying for them continually.

3. Read verses 5-9. With what attitudes should slaves obey their masters? (5-7) Why should we obey our human masters? (8) How should masters treat their slaves? (9a) Why should masters not threaten their slaves? (9b)

3-1, Read verses 5-9.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. **6** Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. **7** Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, **8** because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

**9** And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

3-2, With what attitudes should slaves obey their masters? (5-7)

***5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people,***

* In our times, there are no slaves. Everyone is equally precious in the sight of God. But in essence, the relationship between employees and employers is similar to the relationship between slaves and masters.
* Here Paul commands slaves to obey their earthly masters with respect, fear and sincerity. Slaves tend to work hard when their master watches.
* We cannot fully understand a slave’s life. In Paul’s time, slaves were treated like little better than livestock.
* The only difference between livestock and slaves was that slaves could speak. They were beaten at random. They had to live and die as slaves.

 ***doing the will of God from your heart.***

* In Greek culture, manual work was despised and the goal of being successful was getting to the point where you never had to do any work. This isn't how it is in God's kingdom, where hard work and manual labor are honorable. Every Christian is a hard worker.

***Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you,***

* In their hopelessness in those atmosphere, they must have lived in deep despair and done only “eye-service.”
* We are not to work with eyeservice (working only when the boss is looking) or as men-pleasers (those who only care about pleasing man), but with good will (a good attitude, not complaining) doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.
* All our work is really done unto the Lord, not unto man.
* In the same way we can avoid hard work and work before our bosses’ eyes. But Christians need to have a godly work ethic. Whether our bosses keep an eye on us or not, we must work in the sight of God.
* When they received Christ as their Lord, they became the children of God and now Christ was their master.
* Putting their hope in Christ, them they could live and worked for Christ with the hope of God’s kingdom.

3-3, Why should we obey our human masters? (8)

 ***because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free***

* Paul reasoned for working hard for the Lord. God will return to us in the measure that we have worked hard for others; God will not allow our hard work to go without reward.
* When people are born again, their life changes and they become harder workers and less wasteful, and they are blessed thereby and become fruitful and prosperous.
* But after becoming prosperous, we often allow our hearts to grow far from God, then God disciplines us with hard times, and then we repent.
* ***Joseph*** in Genesis, however, worked faithfully in the sight of God in his father's house, in Potiphar's house, in prison and in the palace, putting his hope in God. God raised him in his right time with great blessings/rewards.

3-4, How should masters treat their slaves? (9a)

***9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way.***

* Masters are told to do the same things to them (their employees). The same things are hard and honest work that employers are to do on behalf of their employees.
* In view of this teaching those who are in the position of manager or employer should have basic respect for their employees because Christ is overall our master and we are his servants.
* We must treat and deal with employees or with the weak and oppressed with the spirit of Christ.
* We must be fair and mindful of them. In this way we must respect one another out of reverence for Christ. (5:21)

3-5, Why should masters not threaten their slaves? (9b)

***Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.***

* Employers are also to give up threatening and other forms of harsh treatment. They do this knowing that they are employees of their Master in heaven - and He judges without regard to wealth or position.

**Conclusion**

 Jesus Christ is our hope and in him we can have godly and meaningful relationships. Again only in Christ can we have this fair and respect relationship. When we build relationship in the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be true unity and loving and beautiful relationships. May we recognize our position in life, and obey our parents and bosses in the Lord and love and care for our children and others in the home and at the workplace.

**One word: In the Lord!**