

“Christ is All and In All”
Paul’s Call to a Christ-centered Home
(Parents and Children)

Intro: Our calling as followers of Christ affects every aspect of our lives. Paul’s call to be renewed in Christ and controlled by Christ has implications for our homes. In the Greco-Roman world the household was made up of husbands, wives, children, and slaves. Household codes were common in the ancient world suggesting how people should conduct themselves in these relationships. Likewise Paul’s exhortations to the Colossians reveal how disciples should conduct themselves as followers of Christ in each of these relationships. Last week we learned that a Christ-centered home has:

A submissive wife
A loving husband

Now Paul gives directions to parents and children.

A Christ-centered home has obedient children.

Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. (Colossians 3:20)

Paul uses the Greek term “hupakouw” which is derived from the simple Greek verb meaning “I hear”. I remember as a child my mom, for example, would ask me to do something and in typical childish evasiveness I might continue what I was doing. Then she’d say, “Did you hear me?” I don’t think she was asking if the sounds had made my ears; instead she was raising the issue of my obedience to what I heard. That is the idea of the word—to listen and obey.

The measure of this obedience—“in all things”. This suggests that obedience is not an option or something children do according to their own desires or whims. Instead their obedience is to be complete.

The motive for this obedience—“this is well-pleasing to the Lord”. The child who is a disciple and the one who is being taught the principles of discipleship will obey his parents simply because he wants to please God.

I fear in our culture that many have surrendered the parental authority God gave us. There may be various reasons:

It may be guilt that causes some parents to demand less of their children because of the feeling that they are absent from them too much.

It may be the desire to avoid inconvenience. It is easier sometimes to tolerate disobedience for a while than to enforce it promptly.

It may be that they have been influenced by political correctness to accept the idea that being firm and even punishing children by spanking is inappropriate and that with indulgence children will eventually do better.

Yet all these habits of parenting will eventually come back to haunt the parents who practice them. It is far better from the beginning to

accept responsibility to discipline our children and bring about their obedient cooperation.

But of course the onus of this text is really not on the parents but upon the children. And it may be presumed that Paul is thinking of and addressing his remarks to children who are also believers and/or who are simply in the assembly when the letter is read and who need to understand their responsibility to their parents.

The Law had placed particular emphasis upon respect for parents:

'Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with you on the land which the Lord your God gives you. (Deuteronomy 5:16)

Later Moses would give God's judgment upon the rebellious youth who would not cooperate and whose lifestyle became immoral.

If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his home town. And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear of it and fear. (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)

Of course this example concerns a child of considerable age whose persistence in disobedience has made him virtually uncorrectable and intractable.

But notice in contrast the wonderful example of Jesus Himself in His teenage years:

And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. (Luke 2:51)

A Christ-centered home has encouraging parents.

Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart. (Colossians 3:21)

The Greek term is derived from the male parent; but may be translated "parents".

The verb translated "do not exasperate" (present imperative, "never") means to arouse or provoke to anger or bitterness, to irritate.

"That they may not lose heart" suggests the reason for the action, namely, that they will not become discouraged and quit attempting to do the right thing. It suggests that children seek their parents' approval and affirmation; but when they don't receive it they may rebel in resentment.

But how does a parent put this negative command into practice. What are the things that cause children to become angry or rebel?

Refusal to give a fair evaluation of requests; instead just saying "no" to everything

Being inconsistent, vacillating from extreme permissiveness to strict legalism

*By being partial or showing favoritism to other children
By demanding more than the child is capable of doing
Using them as pawns in marital conflict*

How can we encourage our children instead?

By teaching them the importance and necessity of listening to and obeying their parents

By living the truth before them so that they see sincere godliness

By apologizing for mistakes in judgment and asking for forgiveness

By giving them our time (listen to problems, to play with them, to help with schoolwork)

By giving words of appreciation and approval for good behavior and good character

By helping them find areas of accomplishment that give them good self-esteem or ego-strength to resist encouragement to do wrong things

If a home is truly Christian, it is a place of encouragement. In such a home, the child finds refuge from battles, and yet strength to fight the battles and carry the burdens of growing maturity. He finds a loving heart, a watching eye, a listening ear, and a helping hand. He does not want any other place—home meets his needs. In this kind of a home, it is natural for the child to trust Christ and want to live for Him. (Wiersbe, Be Series: Colossians).

Conclusion: Paul's exhortations to parents reveal the wisdom of God and validate the experience of millennia. Wise parents and children today will take Paul's words seriously and will enjoy the wonderful practical benefits of this teaching. Nothing can be more miserable than a home where there is constant fighting and conflict between parents and children. Solomon undoubtedly in his many court rulings had seen the consequences of parental neglect or child rebellion. Perhaps these motivated proverbs like these:

*A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother.
(Proverbs 10:1)*

*Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; He will also delight your soul.
(Proverbs 29:17)*

I wish for you as a parent and child a happy relationship that grows closer every passing year.