

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

EPHESIANS 6:1-4

by

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Throughout His Word, God makes various direct statements concerning the process by which parents should raise and train their children. It is the author's purpose that through an in-depth study of Ephesians 6:1-4, a more perfect understanding of God's method for the proper training of children can be ascertained.

τέκνα, in Ephesians 6:1, are determined to be natural children as opposed to spiritual children or children of God. After the discussion concerning the age of children it was concluded that the relationship between parents and children is far more important than age. This relationship changes with marriage or possibly moving out from under the parents' care. The author spoke concerning the age of accountability. The Holy Scriptures clearly teach that we are born in sin and therefore are accountable for that sin.

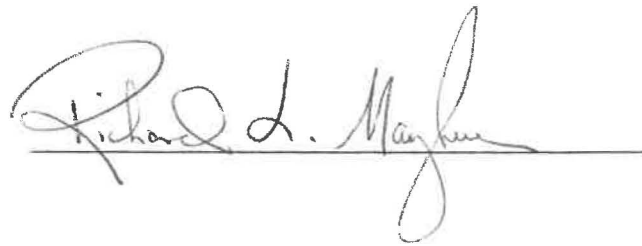
The key word for children in their relationship to parents is ὑπακούετε. ὑπακούετε is a volitional action on the part of the child. The root word could be defined "to hear." Proper reaction for the child is a hearing that motivates.

ἐν κυρίῳ, although not found in some texts, was concluded to be correct and discussed in great detail. The ideal motivation for obedience comes from being ἐν κυρίῳ and the special relationship which it implies. Children obey their parents because they are in the Lord and because τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι δίκαιον. Some of the problems concerning Paul's statement in verses 2 and 3 that this is the first commandment with promise are summed up in the evaluation that this, to the children to whom he is writing, would be the first, or premiere, commandment with promise.

The obedience is a proper response for children, so also training is the proper responsibility of parents. In verse four fathers receive clear instructions. The negative instruction involves what a father is not supposed to do, that is παροργίζετε. Two positive instructions are given; παιδεία, which refers to physical or corporal punishment for breaking the laws of the home, and νοθεσία, which is the positive training by word of mouth done by the father.

In conclusion it is important to understand that verses one through three cannot operate independently of verse four. The obedience of children is dependent specifically upon the proper administration of training by the parent.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary  
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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Richard L. Mayhew", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and extends slightly beyond the line on both sides.



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## ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND

At the time of the entrance of sin into the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, man rejected the clear and simple commands given to him by God. With the development of the sin nature, man chose frequently to disobey God. But as the population of the earth multiplied and sin increased, man realized that rules of conduct were necessary to control individual and group selfishness and to restrict individuals when their activities were harmful to others. Thus government for the orderly direction and control of affairs was instituted. The problem in government of a balance between freedom and authority has occupied the attention of every generation in every state down through history.

The basic, foundational unit of government in society is the home. The government of a nation will not succeed if the elemental, structural unit, the home, fails. God has given clear and simple commands regarding the government of our homes and the obedience of children.

The Scriptures explain that without proper training in the home one can expect rebellion. Many examples are given for our instruction. 1 Samuel 2:25 reveals the problem of Eli's sons. Improper training led them to rebellion against their own father, so wickedly that the Lord caused

them to be slain. Proverbs 30:11 states that rebellious children do exist, while Proverbs 15:5 tells that God considers children to be fools who despise their father's instruction. Proverbs 1:32-33 shows the result of the disobedient and then graciously God describes the rewards of the obedient. Proverbs 22:6 gives parents the most basic guidelines for proper training.

It is clear that there are two major parties in this matter of obedience, the parent and the child. This paper will demonstrate that according to Ephesians 6:1-4, God honoring obedience is only obtainable as a result of proper parental training.

In Ephesians 6:1-4 Paul deals with this subject. This paper will seek to analyze this passage. Four major questions from these verses will be discussed. The first comes from the command of verse one, "Children obey your parents." The second revolves around the proper understanding of, "In the Lord." The third could be asked in this way, "What is the proper training a Father should give to prevent provoking children to wrathful disobedience?" And, finally, "What is the relationship of training to obedience?"

Lest we look at this too simply, it is necessary to recognize that throughout all time the basic problem of God's people was not understanding what God wanted; but rather it was being obedient to God's known commands. If obedience is to become part of our way of life, we need to

learn it at home. If a child does not learn to be obedient at home, you cannot expect him to be obedient elsewhere, nor will he ever learn to obey God.

## CHAPTER I

### ΤΑ ΤΕΚΝΑ ΥΠΑΚΟΥΕΤΕ ΤΟΙΣ ΓΟΝΕΥΣΙΝ ΥΜΩΝ

God has given many commandments relating to the conduct of children. One of these is found in Ephesians 6:1. In order to understand this command, the understanding of the textual usage of τέκνα is necessary.

#### The Meaning of τέκνα in Scripture

There are three types of children mentioned in Holy Scripture. The first is natural children. Matthew 2:18 tells about a mother weeping for her children. In this account individuals of the age of two years and younger were referred to as children. This verse relates to the prophecy of Jeremiah and was fulfilled when Herod commanded all children of that age to be killed in order to slay the King of the Jews. Because of the Wisemen's inquiry, Herod found it necessary to annihilate many young children in order to eliminate this threat to his throne and power.

In Matthew 27:25 the Jews assumed the responsibility for the decision to crucify Jesus and whatever judgment might result from it, not only on themselves but also on their children. In this situation they were referring not

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only to their own children but also to generations to come. All of these, of course, would be natural children, one generation following another.

Acts 2:39 tells that God's promise of the gift of salvation and the Holy Spirit is not only for the parents but also for their children.

No person since Adam and Eve has entered this world without being a natural child through the God-ordained processes of reproduction. There is a second kind of child referred to in Holy Scripture. This is the spiritual child.

Throughout the Bible the same word (τέκνα) used to refer to natural children in the references which have already been discussed, is also used to refer to spiritual children.

Spiritual children often have no genealogical relationship to their spiritual parent. In 2 Timothy 1:2 Paul refers to Timothy as though he were his own son. Knowing that this is physically not true, we realize that Paul implied a strong spiritual relationship that existed between them similar to a filial kinship.

In a letter to Philemon, Paul writes that Onesimus was his son whom he had begotten in his bonds. Paul is not referring to a physical act of procreation but rather to the fact that his labors of love in their presence had resulted in the new birth of Onesimus whom he now calls his τέκνου.

Paul refers to the whole church at Galatia as his little children in Galatians 4:19. He explains to them that he has "ὥδινω" (birthpains) for them because of his desire to see them fulfilled in Christ.

The third type of children in the scriptures is known as τέκνα τοῦ Θεοῦ as 1 John 5:2 calls them. Romans 8:16 also explains that with the Holy Spirit instructing us we recognize that we are the τέκνα Θεοῦ. This, not unlike the second, involves a spiritual relationship rather than physical.

These, then, are the three types of children mentioned in the Holy Scriptures: physical or natural children, the biological offspring of their parents; spiritual children, whose parents have labored in love to lead them to a spiritual rebirth; and thirdly, the children of God. Lest these ideas be separated too far, it is necessary to recognize that all spiritual children first were natural children. The passage under consideration in Ephesians 6:1 speaks specifically to natural children. But for the sake of proper understanding, it is also necessary to see these natural children as spiritual children. Some might think this designation presumptuous, yet from the context of this passage and from evidence which will be considered later in this paper, we must recognize that certain requirements are made of these children which are impossible without God.

One might validly point out that children obey

their parents before they are saved. This is true. The child told to take out the trash before salvation may perform the very same act after coming to know the Lord as Savior. The fact of their obedience has not changed because of their salvation experience. The only thing which has changed is their motivation for obedience. Before salvation the motivation for obedience came chiefly from their parents. It was either in the form of reward or punishment. If obedient, they would be rewarded; if disobedient, they were correctly punished. As will be seen later in this paper this type of training is the parents' responsibility and is part of God's plan. After salvation, obedience should be learned and practiced through a higher motivation. Col. 3:20 states that it is well pleasing to the Lord that children are obedient. Many actions in our Christian life take on new meaning when we begin to realize that we should do them not for reward but for the Lord.

#### The Age of τέκνα

The word "τέκνα" in the passage is in the vocative case and therefore refers to a direct address. Understanding the use of the vocative case gives some information concerning the age of the children. Through the use of the vocative Paul communicates directly with the children themselves. This direct address by Paul indicates a certain degree of maturity. For a child to be part of the group



addressed by Paul he must be old enough to understand that Paul is speaking to him. He must also be intellectually advanced enough to grasp the meaning of the commands given. Infants recognize noise and sound but often do not comprehend where it comes from or to whom it is directed. Paul's words are not addressed to infants but to children who are old enough to comprehend and respond mentally, physically, spiritually and socially.

A theological problem which should be discussed when considering the responsibility of children is the problem of the "age of accountability."<sup>1</sup> At what age do children become responsible for their actions? Alexander Mack, one of the founders of the Church of the Brethren, taught many things concerning the age of accountability. He said,

Devout parents shall take their trust earnestly as they are given children from God, that they may become more and more planted in heaven as they come to the years of accountability.<sup>2</sup>

In his discussion concerning children before the age of accountability and their relationship to the church he said,

Christ died for them and has purchased them with His blood though they still do not know Him. While they are members of the invisible and true church of Christ, so also they belong without controversy to the visible church.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A. Mack, Sr., Rights And Ordinances, trans. by J. W. Miller (Berne, Ind.: Economy Printing Concern, Inc., 1975), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Most important is his discussion on the death of a minor child. He says,

If the Lord should call the innocent child in death during their innocent years, they are free through Christ to call unto Him and the faithful parents have the promise that they too may be with them after death.<sup>1</sup>

These quotations from Alexander Mack's teachings are very heartwarming and one would like to say, "Yes, that is the way things should be." Unfortunately, agreement cannot be reached with his conclusions. One of the arguments against this opinion comes from the silence of Scripture concerning this subject. There is nothing written in the Bible dealing with the subject of the "age of accountability" in children. It would be nice to think that God has made some special provision for young children; babies who are not old enough to understand the problem of their sin. Yet it cannot be stated as a fact because the Holy Scriptures are not explicit on the subject.

A problem passage on this subject occurs in 2 Sam. 12:23 when David states concerning the death of his son, "But now he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." This might seem to indicate that David knew that his son was saved but would be better understood as a reference to the fact that they both were going to die. This conclusion would be supported by Jacob's reaction to Joseph's

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<sup>1</sup>Mack, Rights and Ordinances, p. 22.

supposed death in Gen. 37:35 where he refuses to be comforted and looks toward his own death so that he might be with Joseph.

To teach that there is an age when all children are accountable before God is unacceptable. The Bible states clearly that we are born into sin. Romans 5 reveals that through Adam's sin all were made sinners, even to the smallest child. Romans 3:23 supports this view. David said in Psalm 51:5 that his mother conceived him in sin. He recognized that the fact of his sinful nature reverted to his very conception, even prior to his birth. To teach that children are innocent until old enough to understand their guilt certainly is wrong. The children to whom Paul is speaking in Ephesians 6:1 are old enough to understand and to comprehend that he is speaking to them.

Everyone recognizes that this age of understanding varies in each individual. Some may not understand at age four what others comprehend at age two. Retarded individuals may only reach the level of understanding of an infant and will be dealt with as such by God. The question about the destiny of children before they reach a level of being able to understand their sin and God's provision for it, rests solely in the hands of the Lord. As in the case of Jacob and Esau, Paul writes concerning their election before their birth. In Rom. 9:11-13 he states,

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God

according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth), It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

According to the Scriptures, only God knows whether God has chosen an infant to be saved or lost.

One interesting fact noted in the perusal of the reference material concerning the age of accountability is that no one ventures a guess as to what that age might be. The truth of the matter is that age has nothing to do with it. In God's sight we are always accountable for our sins. Because of our relationship to Adam, as stated in Rom. 5:12, we all, whether young or old, are condemned to death because of our sin. In infancy or old age God alone can turn this death to life. Even though there is no period of time when we are not considered sinners by God, there is a wide variation in the ability to respond to the gospel message according to the level of understanding of each individual.

One final problem concerning the age of the children in this passage might be how old they could be rather than how young. The question might be stated, "At what age do children cease to be children?" As has been pointed out earlier in this chapter, spiritual children and children of God may be of any age. Consequently, we realize that the word τέκνα as found in Ephesians 6:1 is used in many Scriptures to indicate children who are actually parents.

In reality, when we look at this word logically, children never really cease to be children. It must be admitted that this confuses the matter rather than clarifies it. If children are always children, who then is Paul addressing? The only possible explanation to this problem lies in the context rather than in the word τέκνα.

In the verses that immediately precede the passage Paul discusses the relationship of husband and wife. Directly following this discussion he begins writing to children. Therefore, we assume that the ones to whom he refers are the direct descendants of the husband and wife to whom he had been speaking. Also, we conclude that these children are still in their parents' care because of Paul's later admonition. The question might justifiably be asked, "At what point do these children cease to be in their parents' care?" From the passages of Scripture which are directly concerned with marriage comes the only answer to this problem. We read in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh." In Matthew 19:5 we read, ". . . for this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh?" These two verses intimate that it was God's original plan that a child remain with his parents until that relationship is changed by his own marriage and eventual parenthood. Consequently, for the sake

of this paper, all children living with their parents and having not yet entered into a marriage relationship of their own will be considered still responsible to heed Paul's admonition to children.

In reality, there is no point in time when a descendant ceases to be a child of his parents. The only thing that changes with marriage is relationship. Previous to marriage a child's primary earthly relationship is toward his parents. After marriage his most important relationship and responsibility is to his wife.

Also, when conditions are normal, until the time of marriage none loves these children more intensely than do their parents. And even after the parent-child relationship has been replaced by the (in a sense) even closer bond of husband-wife, the parents, if still alive, continue to love their children no less than before.<sup>1</sup>

It might be said here that a child moving out from the parental roof, even though not married, has in some sense changed the relationship toward his parents. Along with that change comes an increase in direct responsibility to God without the intermediary parental relationship. The single individual living at home remains in the original relationship with his parents and is therefore still responsible to them.

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<sup>1</sup>William Hendriksen, Exposition of Ephesians (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), p. 258.

The Meaning of ὑπακούετε

The key word in the entire passage of Ephesians 6:1-3 is unquestionably the verb ὑπακούετε (obedience). The verb in this passage is a compound verb. The prefix is best translated "under" and the root "to hear."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the verb should be translated "to hear under" or "to submit to." It might be understood to mean "to hearken to a command." Liddell and Scott give the definitions: "to listen, to hearken or to give an ear to."<sup>2</sup> "The frequent use of ὑπακούειν for שָׁמַע in the LXX shows how strongly the idea of hearing is still present for the translator in the Greek."<sup>3</sup> Yet the word שָׁמַע for the Hebrew translation meant more than just to hear.

Hence ὑπακούειν and ὑπακοή as terms for religious activity are always to be thought of within the sphere of religion which receives the divine Word by hearing and then translates it into action.<sup>4</sup>

This hearing action finds its fulfillment in ὑπακούετε.

The problem of hearing is also a contemporary issue. Many of the difficulties involved in a lack of communication

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth S. Wuest, Wuest's Word Studies, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950), p. 136.

<sup>2</sup>Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, Greek and English Lexicon, 7th edition (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884), p. 1604.

<sup>3</sup>Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. I, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 224.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

between parents and children come from poor hearing. A Christian parent might ask, "Don't my children hear what I say?" Certainly children hear what is said if their auditory apparatus is functioning properly. But they do not hear in the sense spoken about in this passage. Obedience not only involves hearing but a correct response to that hearing. Like the children of Israel in the wilderness who heard what Moses said, but responded in the wrong manner; so children hear what their parents say and yet are disobedient and therefore respond in the wrong manner. The hearing in this passage involves not only a correct response but a habitual one. The verb ὑπακούετε is in the present tense and the imperative mood. The imperative mood expresses a wide range of tones. The mere wish of a child can be expressed in the imperative mood while at the same time the mood can be used for the direct command of God.<sup>1</sup> Dana and Mantey say that, "Every time Jesus asked a person to follow him he used the verb ἀκολουθέω in the present imperative."<sup>2</sup> Jesus' desire for the men called to be his apostles through the use of the imperative mood is made very clear. The disciples were simply commanded to follow him. This following was not for a day or an hour, but for the rest of their

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<sup>1</sup>James Hope Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906), p. 172.

<sup>2</sup>H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (Toronto, Ontario: The Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 300.



lives. In the passage under consideration Paul commands that this obedience be part of their way of life, a continuous thing. Many children today obey because they recognize that many benefits come to them from their parents and they wish to stay in their good favor. Or they may obey because a reward has been promised, and not out of habitual practice. The habitual practice which Paul speaks about in using this verb ὑπακούετε must become incorporated into the child's life style for several reasons. These reasons will be made very clear in the next chapters.

#### The Qualifications of γονεῦσιν

An earlier discussion concerning the context has already revealed that the parents or γονεῦσιν to whom the children are to be obedient are their natural parents. Hendriksen says, "Under God these children owe their very existence to their parents."<sup>1</sup>

The singular of this noun γονεῦσιν could be defined, "the begetter."<sup>2</sup> But Arndt and Gingrich explain that γονεῦς and its forms are found only in the plural.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hendriksen, Exposition of Ephesians, p. 258.

<sup>2</sup>W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1940), p. 159.

<sup>3</sup>William F. Arndt and Wilbur F. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 164.

Consequently, the plural of this word as we have it in verse one suggests natural heritage, including both the father and the mother. In Matthew 10, Christ explains to the disciples what the preaching of the gospel will do among the people. In verse 21 he speaks of children rising up against their parents and causing them to be put to death. This horrible sin comes to its lowest degree of degradation when it is exercised within the confines of the immediate family unit. In describing the ungodliness and utter wickedness of man in Romans 1, Paul lists them as fornicators, full of envy, murder, deceit, haters of God and disobedient to parents. They are not merely disobedient to the government, but are disobedient to the people who brought them into this world and gave them life. Certainly Paul's estimation is correct when he states that men that do these things are inexcusable.

### Conclusion

The first part of verse one reveals Paul's deep concern for children. Some might think that children are too insignificant for Paul to deal with. Yet, that great apostle took time to speak directly to them. He commands of them a thing that is difficult even for adults. Throughout all the ages, the major problem between man and God has been disobedience. Paul's command of obedience to parents will help children to learn obedience to God.

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## CHAPTER II

### EN KYPIΩ

The obedience of children to their parents is surely a beautiful thing in the eyes of God, yet Paul in this passage puts qualifications on the motivation for obedience about which he is speaking. One of the major qualifications is pointed out by the phrase, "in the Lord." Before investigating exactly what this expression means in relationship to obedience, discussion will be made concerning the accuracy and reliability of this phrase being in the original text.

#### Textual Problems

The large majority of this text is totally without textual problems, however, in some manuscripts B, D\*, F, G, the phrase ἐν κυρίῳ has been omitted. But for the purposes of this paper we will include them because as Eadie explains, "These words are found in A, D\*<sup>3</sup>, E, I, K the major part of the mss., and the Greek fathers."<sup>1</sup> The United Bible Society text lists a large number of texts in which ἐν κυρίῳ is found. Among these are p<sup>46</sup> Ɀ A D<sup>C</sup> K P Ψ. They also list B, D\*, G it defg as some of those who omit

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<sup>1</sup>John Eadie, Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 434.

it; but as their text has shown, they favor inclusion. The Nestle Text also contains the phrase and therefore condones its inclusion. Yet, both the Nestle and the United Bible Society text put this phrase in brackets. Bruce Metzger explains the brackets this way:

The longer text was preferred on the basis of (a) preponderance of external evidence, and (b) the likelihood that if the phrase had been inserted from 5:22 it would have been ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ, or if from Col. 3:20 it would have stood after δυνάτον. Nevertheless, in order to reflect the weight of the witnesses that lack ἐν κυρίῳ, a majority of the Committee voted to enclose the words within square brackets.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the apparent controversy, the writer feels that inclusion is supported and therefore will deal with it in such a manner.

#### The Meaning and Usage

After documenting the reasons for the acceptance of the prepositional phrase, "in the Lord," its meaning will be considered. Many agree that ἐν κυρίῳ is best connected with ὑπακούετε and not with γονεῦσιν.<sup>2</sup> If this phrase were connected with parents, the conclusion might be drawn that children need only obey their parents when they are in the Lord. The conjecture might also be made that unsaved parents need not be obeyed. Consequently it

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<sup>1</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 609.

<sup>2</sup>G. G. Findlay, "Epistle to the Ephesians," in Vol. III of The Expositor's Bible, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, n.d.), p. 375.

is necessary to identify this prepositional phrase with the verb obey, referring to a type of obedience rather than a type of parent. It is understood from the context that Paul is speaking to Christian parents. It is therefore important to comprehend the inherent qualifications which the phrase "in the Lord" places upon the verb demanding obedience. Some feel as Dr. Wordsworth states,

Children are commanded to obey their parents in the Lord, that is as always being in the Lord's sight and therefore obeying their parents whether their parents are present or absent and as doing what they do to them as unto the Lord, who is the judge of all and therefore ever remembering if they are disobedient to their parents they will be punished by the Lord and if obedient they will be rewarded by the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Hendriksen would argue that "in the Lord" has very little to do with being in the Lord's sight, rather that a positional relationship of obedience with parents depends upon a spiritual relationship with the Lord. Lenski states,

Childhood obedience is to be the fruit of the child's entire relationship to the Lord. This evidently implies that those who are thus to obey 'in the Lord' have been placed in communion with him as his very own!<sup>2</sup>

Lenski's conclusion would agree with Holy Scripture in that the phrase ἐν κυρίῳ means more than just in the sight of

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<sup>1</sup>Christian Wordsworth, The New Testament with Introduction and Notes, Vol. II (London: Rivingtons, Waterloo Place, 1870), p. 306.

<sup>2</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians, Vol. VIII (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1931), p. 646.

the Lord but rather refers to a special relationship involving Jesus Christ. Romans 8:39 says, "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." The love of God spoken about in this verse cannot be confined to something which Christ recognizes or sees, but rather Christ is this love of God. God's love was manifest to us through Jesus Christ and without Christ we would not know it as such. Therefore, our special relationship to God as shown in His love to us can only be seen ἐν κυρίῳ. In 1 Corinthians 7:22 we read that a servant is changed to a free man and from a free man to a servant, in this special relationship when he is in Christ. This is recognized as truth because it is in Holy Scripture, but can only be understood completely by anyone who has this special relationship and is ἐν κυρίῳ. In that same chapter, verse 39, Paul instructs widows that they are free to marry whom they will but only in the Lord. The scriptural teaching concerning the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever clarifies any question which might exist regarding whom the widow is permitted to marry. It is obvious that widows are only allowed to marry those who are living in that spiritual relationship described as ἐν κυρίῳ.

Ephesians 5:8 states, "For ye were once darkness but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light."

The Christians to whom Paul is speaking in this passage certainly are not physical light. They have not set themselves on fire to draw attention. The reference is to a spiritual light, a light that comes from a special relationship, they are "in the Lord." Because they are "in the Lord," Paul expects them to act that way. He says, ". . . walk as children of light." In like manner to the expectancy which Paul has for the Christians in Ephesians 5:8, so also this relationship of being "in the Lord" in the Ephesians 6:1 passage allows him to expect obedience from children.

Albrecht Oepke in Kittel's Theological Dictionary explains many other passages where this type of expression is used; either ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ or ἐν κυρίῳ.<sup>1</sup> Many of these passages have small variations of meaning but all, in reality, refer to a special relationship involving Christ and the believer. Let it be sufficient to say, at this point, that obedience can be found in many forms and at many places. The armed forces of our country demand obedience and stress its necessity. The obedience commanded in Ephesians 6:1 is a special and different kind of obedience than is found in most situations. This kind of obedience can only be based on one thing, and that is that

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<sup>1</sup>Albrecht Oepke, "ἐν," in Vol. II of Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by Gerhard Kittel and trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 541.

those who are to be obedient are ἐν κυρίῳ. A child's relationship to Jesus Christ will have a direct bearing upon his relationship to his parents. It is commonplace for an unsaved parent to question the change in attitude and action relating to obedience on the part of a son or daughter after that child has become ἐν κυρίῳ. Utter amazement, sometimes leading to the parents' salvation, is the only reaction possible because of the special quality of obedience only achieved through Jesus Christ. It is valid at this point to ask the question, "What, then, is the reason for this obedience or the motivation behind it?" Sufficient motivation comes from the verse in the fact that it states, "it is right."

τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι δίκαιον

From a parallel passage in Colossians 3:20 we understand that obedience of the child to the parents is well pleasing not only to the parents but most importantly to the Lord. This passage in Colossians was written approximately the same time as the one in Ephesians. Paul must have seen a need for this topical discussion in both of these churches. Even though the words may be slightly changed, the message is the same. What types of things fall under the designation of being "well pleasing to the Lord?" Obedience is obviously one answer, but certainly not the only one. Anything that is righteous and good is well pleasing to the Lord and conversely, anything sinful



and evil is displeasing to God. God has made it perfectly clear in His Holy Word what things He delights in and what things are an abomination to Him. Looking back at the passage under consideration, Paul states that obedience to parents is right. The reason it is right is because God has commanded it and obedience is well pleasing to the Lord.

Gottlob Schrenk states, "In Ephesians 6:1 . . . the phrase 'τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι δέκαλον' in relation to the obedience of children does not mean only right and fitting of natural law, it means that which corresponds to righteous, divine order and joined by the commandment."<sup>1</sup> The special relationship to Christ which was spoken about previously, constrains children to do that which is right. Nicoll explains that to do the thing that is right or to work righteousness, one must do what is required by law, that is God's law.

### Conclusion

Through the remainder of verse one, it has been clearly shown by Paul that the ideal motivation for obedience comes from a special relationship with Jesus Christ. In this special relationship Christians should do what God desires of them in order to please Him and because the

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<sup>1</sup>Gottlob Schrenk, "δέκαλος," in Vol. II of Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by Gerhard Kittel and trans. by Geo-frey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 188.

Scriptures teach that it is right. This ideal motivation, in order for a Christian to become mature, should supplant all thoughts of reward or punishment in the mind of the child.

### CHAPTER III

#### QUOTATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Paul, in order to further explain why it is right to be obedient to parents, recites for the Ephesians the Law of Moses in verses two and three. Not unlike a present-day lawyer who calls forth witnesses to support his case, Paul, the apostle, in these verses uses the strongest support he can find, that of the Old Testament. This particular quotation could be from two different passages where the Decalogue is enumerated. Exodus 20:12 is one of these passages while Deuteronomy 5:16 is the other. Why did Paul include a quotation from the Old Testament when the responsibilities of children had already been made clear? Paul's background in education under God's preparatory direction was in the Old Testament at the feet of Gamaliel. This background and training taught him to have a great respect for the Old Testament. This was not invalidated by his conversion, but rather fulfilled.

#### τίμα

The quotation in verse two begins by explaining to children that they are to honor their father and mother. Surely the word τίμα involves more than simple obedience.

It also carries with it the idea of esteeming with respect.

Lenski puts it this way, "God rightly put the word honor into this commandment and not merely love, for it is love plus respect, reverence and corresponding obedience."<sup>1</sup> Others have said, "Honor is the disposition of which the obedience is born,"<sup>2</sup> and,

It is the entire attitude of the child toward his parents that comes to the fore in the requirement that he honor them. All selfish obedience or reluctant obedience or obedience under terror is immediately ruled out.<sup>3</sup>

It is sufficient to conclude that a child should honor his parents as God commands and obedience is certainly a part of that honor. According to this context no division of the sexes is to be made. Both father and mother are to be equally honored by their children. The problem of partiality in the area of obedience toward one parent and not the other has occurred in many homes. The basic root of this problem revolves around disobedience to God's command as presented in these verses. One parent may fail to take the responsibility for punishment in cases of disobedience. One of the classic lines heard throughout our country is, "Wait 'til your father gets home!" Then mothers wonder why children are disobedient to them. Another problem resulting

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<sup>1</sup>Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians, VIII, p. 647.

<sup>2</sup>Findlay, "Epistle to the Ephesians," p. 375.

<sup>3</sup>Hendriksen, Exposition of Ephesians, p. 259.

in unequal obedience toward parents is that the parents may not be in agreement as to the type and severity of punishment to be meted out for each disobedient act. A child soon learns to maneuver one parent against the other in such cases and thus gain advantage for himself. In order for children to learn to respond to and treat each parent equally they must experience unity in parental control.

#### The First Commandment?

Paul states that the commandment to honor father and mother is the first commandment with promise. Throughout the ages many have wondered how he came to that conclusion. Some have speculated that this is probably the first commandment on the second table of two tables of stone received by Moses. Hendriksen points out that there is much to be said on the possibility that this commandment belongs to the first table rather than the second.<sup>1</sup> Also, there is no such dichotomy between the tables in Scripture which would allow the fifth or the sixth commandment to be considered as part of the second group of commandments.

Another idea forwarded by Eadie is that this passage ranks first in importance rather than in specific position.<sup>2</sup> Hendriksen counters this conclusion by pointing

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<sup>1</sup>Hendriksen, Exposition of Ephesians, p. 260.

<sup>2</sup>Eadie, Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, p. 439.

out that Christ, when asked what was the most important commandment, recited the one concerning love toward God.<sup>1</sup>

What, then, is the answer to this difficult problem? Hendriksen explains that this word can be used as number one in one, two, three, four, five sequence or as premiere or first in rank. Neither of these two possible explanations seem to fit the case in question. It is easy to recognize that the fifth commandment is not the first in numerical sequence. Likewise, Christ's statement giving the first commandment as the most important or premiere in rank cannot be changed. Some have speculated that this might be the first commandment with a promise added to it. However, the second commandment carries with it a negative and positive promise from God. Exodus 20:5,6 states,

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me. And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

This negates the possibility of any later commandments being the "first commandment with promise." It is therefore necessary to look for another meaning.

The author of this paper is of the opinion that the meaning of Paul's use of the adjective "first" in describing this commandment comes from the context. As has been previously explained, in these first three verses of Ephesians, chapter 6, Paul is speaking directly to children.

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<sup>1</sup>Hendriksen, Exposition of Ephesians, p. 260.

What, then, would be more natural than to understand this commandment as first or premiere in importance specifically to children. "The child that has never learned to obey parents in the home will not find it easy to obey the laws of his government or the commands of his God."<sup>1</sup> It is a logical progression in the life of a child to learn obedience to parents before obedience to God. The failure to obey all the other commandments comes initially from an attitude of heart and mind developed from failure to obey this commandment. If a child learns at home to obey his parents and his God he will not be motivated to kill, lie and steal. To the child whom Paul is addressing this is the first commandment and not only that, but it is also the first commandment with promise. Godly parents in loving concern for their children will try to guide them away from things that would be injurious to their health or age them prematurely, such as smoking, drinking or loose living. If their direction is followed in obedience, one can expect this promise to be fulfilled in the possibility of a longer, better life here on earth.

A key to this entire promise is the phrase, "it will be well with him." Truly life on this earth, no matter how long or short it is, is not worth living at all if it is not a happy life, a life that is "well." Every

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<sup>1</sup>Ruth Paxson, The Wealth, Walk and Warfare of the Christian (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1939), p. 152.

day men strive to find things that will make them happy, that will give them the peace and joy they desire. Many search through an endless array of experiences to find satisfaction only to discover as Solomon did so long ago that earthly things are vanity, without permanent value and lead to frustration. The peace and joy desired can only be obtained through the promise of God which comes from obedience to parents and through that obedience to the Lord. God's promise is true; if we are obedient to Him, it will be well with us and we will live in joy and peace.

#### Conclusion

The Apostle Paul, through his use of the Old Testament scripture, seeks to confirm in the mind of his readers the importance of obedience. When looking at this passage through the eyes of children, we would have to agree that for them this is the first commandment with promise. It is not necessary for God to state truths more than once for them to become a guiding principle in our lives. God has seen this principle to be of such importance that he reveals it in both the Old and New Testaments. As Hebrews 2:1 states, "Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."



## CHAPTER IV

### PROPER TRAINING

In order to properly understand verse four, which is of great importance to the rest of this passage, it is necessary to resolve several problems which occur in this verse.

#### πατέρες Versus γονεῦσιν

There is a difference of opinion concerning the understanding of the word πατέρες. Anyone familiar with the Greek language will readily agree that this means father. The problem arises with those who wish this address in verse four to mean both father and mother or parents. If the position were taken that this word means only fathers, then the ultimate responsibility for the raising of the child, particularly in the areas of discipline and instruction, would rest squarely on the shoulders of the father. But, certainly, the mother has her responsibilities in the home and must instruct and keep discipline while the father is absent. Those who advocate this reasoning use Hebrews 11:23 to support their position. Hebrews 11:23 would, of course, substantiate this argument because Moses was not hidden solely by his father, but was saved mainly

by his mother under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the passage in Ephesians 6:4 does not lend itself well to that type of argument simply because of the author's use of γονεῦσιν (parents) in verse one and also the use of πατέρα (father) in verse two.

Eadie has properly analyzed, "The word for father should not change its meaning between verses two and four."<sup>1</sup> The word for parents is properly used in verse one, which one might suppose would have been used in verse four if the author, the apostle Paul, had meant parents rather than fathers as the addressee. If indeed, then, the father is singled out in this passage, it is necessary to ascertain the reason. In the parallel passage of Colossians 3:21, fathers are also here given instruction concerning their children. Probably the most logical explanation of why this instruction is directed only to the fathers is a proper understanding of the order of headship. If mothers heed the admonition given by Paul and regard their husbands as their "head" and are obedient to them, then the fathers would be totally responsible for the actions of the entire family. The father would be accountable to his "head," who is God. In contemporary church organization, committees may be a very functional way to disperse the responsibilities and facilitate the program, but it is apparent that God did

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<sup>1</sup>Eadie, Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, p. 443.

not intend the home to be organized this way.

Another way to understand the concept of headship is to describe it as a chain of command. Bill Gothard, in his course on Basic Youth Conflicts, defines the home type of government as a chain of command. This chain of command, although not specifically called that in Holy Scripture, is probably most accurately defined as the way God expects the home to operate. God places the father as the head of the home and the mother is responsible to him. The New Testament elaborates on this subject in 1 Corinthians 11. Verse 3 points out man's position to Christ and woman's position to man, "But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man; . . ." The father, therefore, as head of the home is responsible to see that every member of the family, mother and children, does their part to make the home function smoothly in a Godly, orderly fashion. The mother's responsibility can be seen clearly from Scripture where the husband-wife relationship is discussed as in Ephesians 5:22-24. The wife's clear duty is to be in submission to her husband. In the present day when so much emphasis is placed upon the "rights" of women, this idea of complete submission and obedience to the husband may seem like a dreadful task. In reality, it should be the most pleasant of tasks. The kindness, goodness and love which the husband should display in his position in the home can only

come from living a Christ-like life. Unfortunately, there are few examples of this in our day. Gothard, then, of course, agrees with verse two which states that children should honor their parents; both parents, not just father or mother.

In summation of this problem, the reason that Paul's address is directed to fathers alone here is because the father as head of the household is ultimately responsible or accountable to God for what goes on in his household.

#### Negative Instruction - Measures

##### That Cause παροργίζετε

Having now identified God's agent for training in the home, it is necessary to see what God's instructions to the fathers involve. These instructions as seen in verse four are three in number. The first of these is a negative command, while the last two are positive instructions. What, then, is the father not supposed to do regarding his children? It is common practice for a father, when speculating on why his children have strayed from the straight and narrow path and fallen into sin to ask, "What have I done wrong?" Many secular and Christian oriented books have been written on this subject. One of the opinions would seem to be exactly what God directs here in one word. He instructs to not παροργίζετε their children.

παροργίζετε is a rare compound found only two places in the New Testament. The first is in Romans 10:14 and the second in Eph. 6:4. Both of these places use παροργίζετε in the active and therefore causitive sense.<sup>1</sup> Some say it should be translated, "to be made angry at,"<sup>2</sup> or "to provoke to anger."<sup>3</sup> This, then, is something which fathers cause children to feel.

Later in this paper the explanation will be made that this cannot possibly mean that fathers are not to discipline their children. Verses like Proverbs 13:24, 22:15 and 29:15 give ample proof of this. What could the apostle be referring to when he instructs fathers not to provoke their children to wrath? The type of action that provokes to wrath could consist of hasty, rough, moody treatment, sometimes overly painful. It might result from arbitrary actions not based on fact but rather on the feelings of the father.<sup>4</sup> His punishment might be unjust or

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<sup>1</sup>Archibald Thomas Robertson, "The Epistles of Paul," in Vol. IV of Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville: Broadmen Press, 1931), p. 548.

<sup>2</sup>Liddell and Scott, Greek and English Lexicon, p. 1158.

<sup>3</sup>George Milligan and James Hope Moulton, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 496.

<sup>4</sup>Karl Braune, "The Epistle of Paul To The Ephesians," trans. and additions by M. B. Riddle, In Vol. XXI of A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures by John Peter Lange, trans., revised, edited by Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1870), p. 212.

administered with a grumbling attitude. One of the greatest crimes is inconsistency. One day a child may be allowed to do certain actions, and the next day he is punished for the same thing. Rather than contributing to proper training, this merely confuses the child. A father who is trying to do what is right will guard himself against these errors. There are other faults which are more covert and insidious. One of these is the problem of overprotection of the child on the part of the father. Fathers need not fear the enticements and encroachment of the world systems upon his child if he has diligently trained that child. Proverbs 22:6 promises that if children are properly trained in youth, as they grow older they will not depart from the precepts and training that have been given them. Only the parent who has not given proper attention to the nurture and discipline of his child has cause for anxiety about what the world might do to him. Neglect is an obvious error which befalls many fathers. Neglect can appear in many forms. Business and financial pressures may so captivate the father's time and attention that there is insufficient time left for proper guidance and training of children. Neglect may appear in seemingly small experiences. A father may be constantly diligent in teaching his child the Word in family devotions, in prayer, in regular church attendance and yet fail to attend a little league game as he had promised his son. A broken promise

may register as disinterest or possibly even an unloving attitude on the part of the father in the mind of a child. Neglect of this type may negate many hours of proper training from the Scriptures.

The last of the faults to be mentioned that may cause wrath in a child is favoritism. In Genesis 25:28, Isaac favored his son Esau while Rebecca favored Jacob. The Old Testament devotes numerous chapters to recording the disaster that resulted in this family as a result of favoritism on the part of the parents.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that some of these faults may occasionally be evident in the conduct of a father. But what the apostle Paul implies here is that fathers should not consistently do things that provoke their children to wrath. They should not make them live under tyranny. They should not be recipients of cruel pain. They should not be subject to hasty and rough treatment constantly. Hodge states, "They are not to excite the bad passions of their children by severity in justice, partiality, or unreasoning exercise of authority."<sup>2</sup> Children will recognize whether they are being treated fairly or not. Sometimes their will needs to be broken but their spirit left intact. All discipline must be surrounded with love and the child made to feel

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<sup>1</sup>Hendriksen, Exposition of Ephesians, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Hodges, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1856), p. 359.

his worth and importance in the family unit.

### Positive Instructions

The next two instructions to fathers are positive admonitions that go hand in hand, the one with the other. The fact that these two positive injunctions are supposed to be *κρίου* rules out any possibility of false instruction. Consequently, a righteous father would not command his child to obey him in something that would be disobedient to the Lord. "No father who wisely loved his child would nurture him in willfulness."<sup>1</sup>

The positive side of God's instruction which parents are to administer comes from the word *ἐκτρέφετε*. The King James Version translates this word as "bring them up." Hendriksen says, "rear them tenderly."<sup>2</sup> Lenski says, "nourish them."<sup>3</sup> Findlay says, "nurture them."<sup>4</sup> This word reveals one important fact, and this is that it is a call to action. Many parents think they can sit idly by and allow their children to grow up on their own. This is a false and disastrous conclusion. Some parents are so afraid of provoking their children to wrath that they do

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Pridham, Notes and Reflections on the Epistle to the Ephesians (London: Binns & Goodwin, 1854), p. 300.

<sup>2</sup>Hendriksen, Exposition of Ephesians, p. 262.

<sup>3</sup>Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians, VIII, p. 650.

<sup>4</sup>Findlay, "Epistle to the Ephesians," p. 377.



nothing. There has been a teaching abroad in our country that if we punish little Johnny, we will break his spirit. Consequently, nothing is done until Big Bad John is older and the state must do something about him. Paul's instruction to parents in verse 4 is totally opposite to this idea. He tells parents to get involved with their children. They are to bring them up, nurture and nourish them, and rear them with love.

### παιδεία

The first of these instructions revolves around the word παιδεία. Vincent says that in classical usage, the word means, "that which is applied to train and educate a child," and then he goes on to quote from Plato, "Education is the constraining, directing of youth toward the right reason which the Law affirms and which the experience of the best of our elders has agreed to be truly right."<sup>1</sup> He goes on to explain that παιδεία takes on a further meaning in Holy Scripture, that of, "Correction or chastisement through discipline."<sup>2</sup> Turner believes that, "παιδεία means discipline but not in the limited sense of chastisement."<sup>3</sup> Trench, in his wonderful discussion concerning these two

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<sup>1</sup>Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. III (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 404.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Samuel H. Turner, The Epistle to the Ephesians (New York: Dana & Company, 1856), p. 177.

words παιδεία and νοουθεσία also points out that,

παιδεία in classical Greek meant only education, but holy scripture has given it a deeper and more complete meaning. Instead of nurture in Ephesians 6:4 which is too weak of a word, discipline might be substituted with advantage--the laws and ordinances of the Christian household, the transgression of which will induce correction being indicated by παιδεία there.<sup>1</sup>

The word itself, therefore, indicates physical or corporal punishment for trespasses of the laws of God and the laws of the Christian home. This physical or corporal punishment should be administered by the father or the mother when that responsibility is given to her. In either case it should be carried out in a manner not conducive to provoking the child to wrath. A properly trained child will understand that there are attitudes and actions that are pleasing to God and his parents and that there are also those of which they do not approve. He will understand that limits are placed upon him for his own good and if he does what is forbidden, he will expect to be punished. A child who is punished for what he knows is wrong certainly will be hurt by the punishment, but an angry and wrathful spirit will not result. The result should be a repentent and contrite heart. If the child has been instructed properly, he will recognize that an offense against father and mother is equally an offense against God.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Chenevix Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1880), p. 111.

νουθεσία

The second part of this positive training to be done by fathers is called νουθεσία. Trench calls it, "admonition or training by word of mouth."<sup>1</sup> It is very possible that this type of training could be words of encouragement or words of reproof if that is all that is needed to correct a child. Too often in this day and age fathers seem to find it easier to express words of reproof than words of praise and encouragement. Here in verse four, God, through the writer of Ephesians, instructs fathers to discourage that which is wrong and also encourage what is right.

The Relationship Between παιδεία  
and νουθεσία

A new Christian might question what type of instruction he should give his children. The word κυρίου makes it clear. If the instruction is a word of admonition from the Lord, then it is about the Lord. If it is about the Lord, then it is from the Scriptures. God expects parents to verbally instruct their children from the Scriptures so they will know what is right and wrong. God expects parents to punish their children when they do what is wrong. God expects them to praise their children.

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<sup>1</sup>Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament, p. 112.

### Conclusion

In verse four Paul has considered it necessary to inform fathers of their responsibility. When realizing that the success of the entire family unit hangs in the balances, fathers should pay strict attention here. In a very few words the Apostle warns fathers against unjust treatment of their children. This negative warning has with it the positive instruction. If anything has been learned from this passage, it is that fathers cannot sit idly by. They have the ultimate responsibility for the training.

## CHAPTER V

### THE RELATIONSHIP OF TRAINING TO OBEDIENCE

#### Which Comes First?

In looking back at these four verses in the sixth chapter of Ephesians, we conclude that certainly there is an interrelationship between training and obedience. At a glance one might say that this is the old chicken and egg problem about which came first. On closer scrutiny it becomes clear that consistent obedience is impossible without proper training first and then as the child grows and matures, obedience and training walk hand in hand. The entire process is a continuous daily relationship between children and their parents, children and their God and the parents and their God. For example, a father instructs his child on how to perform a certain task. The child agrees to do it but does not carry out the father's request. In this instance the first phase of the father's responsibility has been completed. He has instructed the child concerning what is right to do. The child's responsibility is incomplete. The child has not been obedient; consequently, the second phase of the father's responsibility is necessary. Now the father is responsible to point out to the child where he has been disobedient and how to correct

that situation. The father must train the child in that which is right and point out his error when he commits a wrong action or fails to perform a right one. This responsibility continues until the child begins to carry out his portion of responsibility, to obey. As long as the child continues to be obedient, the father need only maintain the first phase of his responsibility, to instruct in that which is right. This instruction can only come from the Scriptures as they are the only perfect guide for conduct in life. The rules, laws and principles laid down in Scripture will definitely apply to day by day situations and experiences.

Some might say, "My children are already teenagers and I have failed to instruct them in God's rules and laws as set forth in Scripture. What am I to do? Should I start to instruct them now?" The answer to this is, as someone has wisely said, "There is no time like the present." Too many Christians give up on Scriptural instruction because they feel that it is too late, at least for them. This is not God's desire, nor His will. God's desire is that we, from our present point in time and experience, begin immediately to do what He asks us to do.

#### Who Is To Blame For Disobedience?

Who, then, is to blame for disobedience? Will parents be held responsible for the disobedience of their

children? The truth of this matter is that everyone will be accountable for his own mistakes before God. As Rom. 14:12 states, "So then, everyone of us shall give account of himself to God." Fathers who err in not training their children properly will be held responsible before God for that improper training. Disobedient children will be held accountable to God for their failure to obey.

If a child grows up to be hateful, malicious and disobedient to the laws of his country and his God, obviously there is a reason for it. The parents of that child will not be held accountable for his sins but for the lack of instruction which that child should have received at home through the Scriptures and through the chastening of his parents. If a parent maintains that he did all the things which God commands in these verses in Ephesians in regard to bringing up his children and still they turned out to be willful and disobedient, the correct response should be as the apostle Paul's in Romans 3:4; "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE WRITER

In studying these verses one important fact should be learned. That fact is that God has planned to govern all parts of our lives and if we follow His plan we will be happier and enjoy life more than if we did not follow His way. Contentment and peace despite circumstances are the direct result of obedience to His instructions as set forth in Scripture. Some may conclude that His plans, with all their attendant laws and commands, are difficult to follow. It is the opinion of this author that these plans are impossible to follow unless one is firmly grounded in that relationship we spoke about in chapter one. The Bible says that without faith in Christ it is impossible to please God and unless we have that special relationship of being in the Lord it is impossible to do the things commanded in these four verses. Man is by nature sinful. The natural reaction of his spirit is to be disobedient. How, then, without Christ, can he accomplish obedience? Any honest parent will affirm that children are naturally disobedient and yet obedience is commanded. Only the special relationship of being in Christ can possibly transform natural tendencies and change disobedience to obedience. Fathers who are to teach their children in the Lord and of

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the Lord cannot possibly do this unless they know the Lord. It is easy to see why there are problems in homes throughout our country. Christ is not the ruler of that home. He does not have first place. Christ is not taught. No consideration is given to His laws or commands. The corner stone for any discussion concerning guidelines for parents can be only one thing. What is their relationship with Jesus Christ? Fathers who do not know Jesus Christ cannot be expected to teach their children about Him. Children not taught about Christ and the Scriptures cannot be expected to be consistently obedient. Perhaps the greatest problem in our country concerning the rearing of children is that parents are seeking ways to change their children without getting to the rudiment of the problem. They need a change in themselves through the presence of Christ living within. His Holy Spirit will make impossible things a reality. God's methods are guaranteed. He honors His promises when we walk in His way.

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