

Parenting, SS, 2023, Rod, part 2; Not Provoking our Children

9/3/23

Eph. 6:1-4 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* ² *“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise),* ³ *“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”* ⁴ *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

INTRODUCTION & REVIEW: We noted last week that this passage is THE apostolic word to parents (along with its abbreviated parallel in **Col. 3:21**). This is the one NT directive in which parents (more specifically, “Fathers”) are directly addressed as parents. This passage is thus central to understanding and working out our mission as Christian parents.

We will soon move to the subject of not provoking our children to anger. We have begun, however, with the summons to *“bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”*. Two weeks ago, the focus was upon our duty to teach our children. Jack Dix drew our attention to the pivotal passage in **Deut. 6**, which urges God’s people to teach their children the ways of God.

Last week, we focused our attention on *“bringing (our children) up in the DISCIPLINE of the Lord”*. We saw that God both as the Creator Father and as the Redeemer Father has been committed to the use of pain in chastening his children. Even as the forgiven, accepted, and adopted ones, we still face our Creator’s rod in the experience of death and all the decay that precedes it. In Christ, we know God now as our heavenly Father. As Father, he demonstrates his love for his children by using the paddle on them. His rod is a key instrument in our becoming partakers of his holiness (**Heb. 12:5f**).

We considered six passages from Proverbs that draw attention to the use of corporal punishment in the training of children. By way of review, the last of the six mentioned was **Prov. 13:24**: *“Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.”* That text urges parents to **use the paddle on your child, because of your determination to love them truly and well.**

Like some of the other texts, this verse acknowledges the strong temptation parents face to “*spare the rod*”. We are tempted to “spare the rod”, because we love our children dearly and do not want to cause suffering. We are also tempted to “spare the rod”, because the practice is time-consuming and inconvenient. It may appear to be ineffective. It may become the occasion of more issues, such as temper tantrums. Parents may find that there are issues going on in their own hearts that incline them to “spare the rod”.

Proverbs 13:24 speaks very frankly. *“Whoever spares the rod HATES his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.”* The paddle is instrumental in training a child to govern himself. She must learn self-control. Feelings and desires are a vital dimension of our humanity. In this sinful world, however, they readily mislead us. “What do I feel like doing?” is NOT the great question of life. Some of us adults are too oriented in that direction. Our feelings many times DO NOT help us in being Christ-like. It is a priceless gift to children to teach them while their hearts are tender to be PRINCIPLED.

TRANSITION: The use of the paddle is instrumental in teaching our children submission to God-given authority. That brings us to our next major point.

I. THE APOSTOLIC WORD TO CHILDREN

Eph. 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

Col. 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

- This is the only commandment in the NT that addresses children as children. (As humans and sinners, numerous imperatives are relevant to them, but these two texts are the only ones that address them specifically as children.)
- The duty of submission to God-given authority is a HUGE part of the NT’s ethical instruction. **Ephesians 5:22-24; 6:1-3; 6:5-8** (wives, children, bondservants); **Colossians 3:18; 20; 22-25** (wives, children, bondservants); **1 Peter 2:13-17; 18-25; 3:1-6** (all in relation to the emperor; servants; wives)
- In each of these relationships: subject/ruler; wife/husband; child/parent; and servant/master, SUBMISSION is central. It is set forth as THE foundational duty of those under God-given authority in the state, in the home, and in the workplace.
- The duty of children to submit to their parents is the most basic of these relationships.

QUESTION: What OT text underscores that the child/parent relationship is the most basic of relationships in which submission is called for?

ANSWER: The 5th Commandment. Exodus 20:12; Deut. 5:16; Eph. 6:1-3

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother” (**this is the first commandment with a promise**), ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

QUESTION: What kind of obedience should parents expect from their children? (What are one word adverbs that modify the verb “obey” in a way that reflects what the Lord requires?)

ANSWER:

1. Obey QUICKLY (the first time, not the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th time)- ex. of Abraham
2. Obey COMPLETELY (not picking up some of the toys)- ex. of King Saul
3. Obey SWEETLY (not complaining or sulking)- ex. of Jesus
4. Obey BELIEVINGLY (we cannot produce this but we aim for it constantly)

*Obedience is the very best way to show that **you believe***

Doing exactly as the Lord commands, doing it happily

Action is the key, do it immediately, joy you will receive

*Obedience is the very best way to show that **you believe***

O-B-E-D-I-E-N-C-E

*Obedience is the very best way to show that **you believe** --PATCH THE PIRATE song*

CONCLUSION OF MATERIAL ON THE ROD: The paddle, according to Proverbs, is a necessary instrument in teaching young children submission to God-given authority. Parents, take this good and wise word of God to heart! Take God’s side on this matter. Do not be squeezed into the mold of this world! Don’t be more sensitive to what your children think than to what God thinks!

Prov. 29:15: *The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.* According to Proverbs and the Bible, true wisdom “*begins in the fear of the Lord*” (9:10; 1:17; 14:27; 15:33). The “*rod and reproof*” are primary, God-given tools.

II. DO NOT PROVOKE YOUR CHILDREN TO ANGER

Eph. 6:4a *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger,*

Col. 3:21 *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*

(This is the only instruction given in the apostolic word to parents in Colossians.)

1. **Parents can provoke their children by using “*the rod and reproof*” diligently but failing to exemplify the affection, generosity, thoughtfulness, and kindness that so characterizes true love and God himself, who is love.**
 - In the beginning, God’s authoritative law was revealed in the context of astounding generosity
 - In the beginning, when the Lord first punished, he did so in the context of graciously seeking his rebellious subjects and promising deliverance.
 - God treats even his enemies with goodness and generosity, giving them sunshine, rain, and food that makes their hearts glad. HOW MUCH MORE does he show generosity to his children, who have been “*blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*” (Eph. 1:3).
 - When our children think of us, they should not think first of our rod and our reproof.
2. **Parents can provoke their children by expecting obedience in a manner that fails to appreciate how much we all (parent and child) NEED JESUS.**

QUESTION: What is the most basic function of the Law?

ANSWER: The Law exposes our sinfulness. **Romans 3:20** *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

- 1) Parents must exemplify that “poverty of spirit” which is the hallmark of Christian character. We should be in touch with our own native bankruptcy and that of our children.
- 2) Related, we should pity our children’s sinful condition, not condemn it as if we are superior and expect superiority from them. If we tend to be Pharisees, we should not be surprised if we see them follow in our steps.

3. Parents can provoke their children by expecting obedience in a manner that fails to appreciate all that God freely offers us in JESUS.

- The Good News is not that we need Jesus but that Jesus came in grace and mercy to meet our profound need.
- Our parenting in general and our discipline in particular should reflect the good news that Jesus came for sinners like us. *“Ask the Savior to help you, comfort, strengthen and keep you, HE IS WILLING TO AID YOU, he will carry you through.”* From hymn, “Yield Not to Temptation”—*“Look ever to Jesus, he will carry you through.”*
- Both parent and child will end up weighed down by a sense of sin, guilt, and inability if you take the Law seriously but fail to keep Jesus Christ central.

QUALIFICATION (call for balance): Quote back of book, Give Them Grace: Dazzling Your Kids with the Love of Jesus, by Elyse Fitzpatrick & Jessica Thompson

“All of want to raise good kids. And we want to be good parents. But what exactly do we mean by ‘good’? And is ‘being good’ really the point? Mother-daughter team EF and JT contend that every way we try to make our kids ‘good’ is simply an extension of OT Law—a set of standards that is not only unable to save our children, but also powerless to change them. No, rules are not the answer. What they need is GRACE. We must tell our kids of the grace-giving God who

freely adopts rebels and transforms them into loving sons and daughters. If this is not the message your children hear, if you are just telling them to 'be good', then the gospel needs to transform your parenting too. GIVE THEM GRACE is a revolutionary perspective on parenting that shows us how to receive the gospel afresh and give grace in abundance, helping our children know the dazzling love of Jesus and respond with heartfelt obedience."

"No, rules are not the answer. What they need is GRACE."

What is the apostolic word to children? **A rule**: "Obey your parents".

What is the overall apostolic word to all of us? What we need (and have been freely offered in Jesus) is grace.

4. Parents can provoke their children by failing to exemplify the basic Christian attitudes that should dominate every human relationship.

Eph. 4:1-3 *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Col. 3:12-15 *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, **compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,** ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.*

5. Parents can provoke their children by failing to control sinful anger.

Eph. 4:26-27 *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil.*

Eph. 4:31-32 *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

- Parents may be peculiarly vulnerable to anger when dealing with disobedient children
- Why does unrighteous anger provoke our children to anger and discouragement?
 - 1) We each have a deep, innate sense of justice. We sense when others are violating us.
 - 2) It is already painful for children to deal with failure and the consequences; unjust anger aggravates their pain.
 - 3) When we have failed someone, we often want to resolve conflict and please the one we have displeased. Their unjust anger thus discourages us.
- 6. Parents can provoke their children by demanding hypocritically what they do not practice themselves.**
- 7. Parents can provoke their children by demanding what is unreasonable or excessive.**
- 8. Parents can provoke their children by being more concerned with their reputation before people than with pleasing God.**

Matt. 23:1-7 *Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ² “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, ³ so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. ⁴ They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. ⁵ They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad*

and their fringes long, ⁶ and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues ⁷ and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.

QUESTION: What are other ways in which parents are vulnerable to provoking and discouraging their children?

ANSWER: Favoritism (Jacob);

CONCLUSION: Corporal punishment is necessary for young children, because their sin runs deep. Yet, parents' sin runs deep as well. We are susceptible to provoking our children unnecessarily. This is why both they and we so need a Savior. The Good News is that the Savior has come! He came, not with a rod, but with a cross. He has never been harsh with us. He is gentle and lowly. He is majestic in authority yet full of grace and truth.