

## **CHILDREN AND THE CHURCH**

### **Colossians 3:20**

A number of months ago we began a series of messages on the book of Colossians. In chapters 1-2 we looked at the supremacy of Christ above all things. And the essence of all that Paul says about Jesus is capsuled in ch. 2:9-10. Ladies and gentlemen, Jesus Christ is truly all that you need. All for eternal life in Heaven, and all for abundant life on earth.

Now, beginning in ch. 3 Paul moves on to discussing the practical side of our faith. Setting our minds on things above, putting off the old man and putting on the new, godly living in a godless world. And in our last two messages we began to look at relationships in the home, which is the surest proving ground for our faith that we have. We talked about the role of a Christian wife and what it means to graciously submit to her husband. We talked about how a Christian husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. And may I just remind all of you wives and husbands that these are commands in the Greek language, and they are supernatural commands. They are impossible to fulfill without the power of God at work in your life. That's the reason that Paul precedes his discussion of these things in Ephesians by commanding his readers to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Only by the power of the Holy Spirit can a wife and a husband ever fulfill their calling in marriage.

Well, today we move on to look at another family member's role in the home, that of the children and youth. I want to say to all of you children and young people today, you matter to God! You are an indispensable part of our society. Without you the human race is obviously one generation from extinction. Moreover, you and indispensable part of the church. You are our next generation of leaders, and also in your own homes. And right now you have the potential to provide much encouragement to the church and in your home as you grow in your faith in Jesus. So God does not want you to just sit back passively and do nothing and be nothing for Him until you reach adulthood. And for that reason we see that God has sprinkled verses in several places in the Bible that were written exclusively for children and youth. God said through Solomon, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth..." (Ecc. 12:1). He said in Proverbs 20:11, "Even a child is known by his deeds..." And so today we are going to look at another one of those verses. It is addressed specifically to children, but remember, young people, that God is talking to you, too.

Turn, please, to Colossians 3:20 (read). Children and young people, there's not a lot of room for discussion on that one, is there? "Children, obey your parents in all things". And I know what immediately comes to mind when you hear this. "Lord, do you really mean all things? What about things that I know are not morally right, or are just a plain waste of time and energy?"

For instance, your dad calls on your cell phone and tells you to stop by the grocery store on the way home and buy him a six pack of beer. But you don't believe in drinking. Or, you answer the door at home and someone wants to see your mom. You go to get her and she whispers to you to tell that person that she is in the shower or that she is asleep. And by the way, for your mother's information, those lines are just about as worn out as "The dog ate my homework". But you do not want to lie for your mom. And you don't want to buy beer for your dad. So what do you do? You pray in your heart in each instance, right on the spot. You ask God for wisdom. Sometimes God will say, "Obey". Sometimes He will say, "Do not obey". At one point when the Jews told Peter and the rest of the disciples to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, Peter responded by saying, "We must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). And sometimes it might come to that with your parents. But you must be certain that God is speaking and not your own rebellious heart.

But what about obeying in things that you know can be done a better or quicker way? For instance, your mom asks you to go by a certain store and pay a bill. And you say, "Mom, just let me get on line and pay it instead of driving all the way across town". And your mom says, "No, son, I don't trust those on-line payment systems. Go pay it in person". What do you do? You do it the old fashion way, just like Mom said. So 100% of the time when no moral

issue is involved, and if it is not a life or death situation, whatever mom and dad says, you are to obey.

But young people, God says that you are to do more than just obey your parents, you obey them with honor. And if you are in one of those situations where God says, “Disobey”, you still disobey with honor. Eph. 6:2 says, “Honor your father and mother...”, that is, respect them. You see, lots of young people and children obey their parents, but they obey with an attitude. They obey with disgust, even anger. But that kind of obedience is not what God is talking about. Obedience must be coupled with honor if it is well pleasing to God. You must obey without rolling your eyes and going “uuggghh!”, or stomping and screaming and slamming doors, or by clamming up and quarantining yourself in your room and trying to punish your parents with silence.

But honor goes further than just obeying with respect. First of all, it means that you give respect to your parents in the way you talk to them every day. You don't talk them as peers, because they are not your peers. You say, “Yes, ma'am” and “No ma'am”, and “Yes, sir”, and “No, sir”. And you always address them by whatever you learned to call them from toddlerhood, whether it be mama, or mother, or mom, and the same thing goes for your dad. I love my eldest child Rebekah more than life itself. She still honors me in the way she speaks to me, even though she has been out of the house and married over seven years now. But we did have a few testy moments in the teenage years. I remember walking into the room where Rebekah was one

day and speaking to her. I don't remember what I said, but I remember what she said. She said, "Dude". I looked around thinking, "Where's the dude?" Not really. I knew who she called a dude. And I thought, "Who do you think you are, child? Have you lost your mind? Do you wish to travel to the moon propelled by the power of a belt?" Now, to her credit, Rebekah wasn't disrespectful intentionally. She had just dropped her guard and let the culture of disrespect rub off on her at that point. But young people, God says to honor your parents by the way you speak to them. For they are your superiors in God's design of things. We'll talk more about that in a few minutes.

Here's another way to honor your parents. Go out of your way to do something nice or say something nice about your parents, other than buying them a birthday or Christmas present. Like cleaning up the whole house while your mom's out shopping. Or telling your dad in front of his buddies what a great dad he is and how much you love him. You don't think that will honor them and make them feel great? But let me give you a warning. Start out with little stuff. Because if your mom or dad has a weak heart the shock might give them the big one.

But what do you do if your dad is abusive, or even you mom? Do you still honor them? First of all, you make sure you know the difference between abuse and discipline. Young people, your parents do have a right to ground you. They do have a right to take away your phone and your Facebook privileges and your I-pod. Kids, your mom has the right to take away your Xbox. Hey, did you know that

God even gives parents the right to spank their children? He sure does. Book of Proverbs, chapter 24, verse 13. “Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die”. Do you see what God is saying here, Lucas, Chandler, Jonah? If you don’t mind you daddy he can keep on beating and beating the tar out of you just as long as he doesn’t kill you.

And let me just give you a quick piece of advice about spankings. Don’t ever try to make it any easier on yourself by snowing your parents. Someone told me not too long ago about the time he got in trouble and knew that when his daddy got home he was getting a whipping. So he goes to his room and puts on about six pair of underwear. Kids, your parents may not be able to tell you the name of a single rock group, but they weren’t born yesterday. And when you do stupid stuff like that you just make it harder on yourself.

Do you see this, kids? It is a handmade bottom buster made by a wood craftsman for my mother. But do you know why she got it? She got it because when I was a kid I stole her bolo paddle and threw it away. I thought I was so smart. But then she got this monster, and it hurt ten times worse than a bolo paddle. So remember, if a whipping is coming, you will not die. Just face the music, take your medicine, and don’t try to escape it. You’ll be a lot better off.

But let’s get serious again for just a few more minutes. What if your dad or you mom is truly abusive? It might be verbal, emotional, or even physical. What do you do? You

run to your Father in Heaven, for He is your greatest protector and provider. David says in Ps. 27:10: “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me”. So if you are being abused, fall down on your knees and cry out to the One Who loves you the most. He may handle the problem all alone, or He may lead you to go to your other parent. And if that doesn’t help He may lead you to tell another trusted adult who loves you. But remember, young people and children, you do not have to live in abuse. And also remember that no matter how bad it gets, God commands you to honor your mom and dad. Respect them, pray for them, and love them with Jesus’ love.

But I want to assume the best right now. Let’s assume that you do have parents who are not abusive. They may be good or not so good, but they do not abuse you. Why is it so important to obey your parents? First of all, you obey your parents **just because it is right**. Ephesians 6:1 says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right”. Young people, you live in a culture of tolerance. The world cries to you, “Do your own thing. Nobody has a right to tell you what is right for you”. And tragically that message is trumpeted by some of our highest religious leaders. Listen to what our new Pope, Pope Francis, said not too long ago: “If a homosexual person is of good will and is in search of God, I am no one to judge.” So if the Pope can’t even tell you that you are sinning, who can? Well, children, there is One Who certainly can, and He is God. Because God is in charge. God made this world, it’s His world, and He has

the right to make the rules. And here's the rulebook. And God tells us in His rulebook that there is right and there is wrong, and that when we do right we are blessed and when we do wrong we suffer. And God says that it is right to obey your parents. And now I'd like to tell you why.

You see, in every area of life God has established positions of authority and submission. For without authority and submission to authority it would be a world of total anarchy. In Creation, God is the authority, followed by angels, then by man. The Bible says in Psalm 8 that God has made mankind a little lower than the angels. And we read in Genesis 1 that God gave man the authority over all other living creatures in the world. In government God has commanded us to obey the governing authorities, those who are our elected leaders (Rom. 13:1). God has established authority in the workplace, giving instructions to employers as to how to treat their employees, and to employees as how they are to serve their employes (Col. 3:22-4:1). God has established authority in the church, calling on pastors to shepherd, or to be the leaders of God's people. And one of the NT titles for a pastor is overseer. God has established authority in the home, saying that the husband is the head of the wife. But you cannot find a single institution in life where God has not established authority. And so it is with parents and children. And kids, God's says that the parents are in charge.

You see, God has given you to your parents to **provide for you**, to **protect you**, and to **instruct you**. They are God's ministers to you. And when you disobey your

parents you actually rebel against the provision and protection and instruction from Him. But when you willingly, graciously submit to your parents you are actually submitting to God. And Col. 3:20 says that this is well pleasing to God. So you are to obey your parents because it is right and also because it pleases God.

But there is another reason that you are to obey your parents. Not only is it right, and well pleasing to God, but also when you do you are blessed by God. Look at Eph. 6: 2-3a (read). First of all, God says that if you honor your parents it will be well with you. Now, what does that mean? That you'll always make good grades? That you'll always have a boyfriend that actually treats you decent? That you'll get that truck with four wheel drive and oversized tires you've been wanting? Nope. But here's what it does mean. It means that God will bless you through the wise counsel that your parents will give you, counsel that will shield you from much heartache in life **if** you will listen. Listen to Proverbs 3:1 – "My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands.....and peace they will add to you". We're do not know which of his sons Solomon was speaking to, but tell me, is anything greater in this world than what he promised him if he obeyed him - true peace, deep in his soul? That's what God promises for children who obey their parents.

You see, young people, times have indeed changed, and your parents may be way below the curve when it comes to iphones and ipads. But let me tell you something. When it comes to knowing what can destroy your life in a

heartbeat, you are below the curve. There is not a week that goes by that you do not read in the newspaper of some young adult that has messed up their life big time by doing something really dumb. And now they are on the way to prison when they should be having a blast raising a family for the glory of God. But it started for many of them when they rejected the wise counsel of their parents.

Children, your parents have been there, they've done that, and they've gotten many tee shirts. Some tee shirts they wear with pride, but some they are ashamed of. And with all of their hearts they want to keep the devil from coming up to you one day, throwing a nasty tee shirt in your face and saying, "Congratulations, chump! Wear it with pride". So if they give you counsel about your entertainment, about your friends, about your Facebook etiquette, listen and obey. For God says that if you do it will go well for you. But the opposite is also true. If you don't listen and obey, things will go badly for you. That is not to say that God is not a forgiving, loving God who restores us when we repent of our sin, because He is! But it is still true, God blesses those who obey their parents and who obey His Word, and the disobedient will suffer. For God says, "Whatever a man sows, that will he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

But there is another way that you will be blessed if you obey your parents. Look at Eph. 6:3 again. God promises that if you obey your parents you will live longer. That's a pretty cool promise, isn't it? Now, we all know of godly young people or young adults who are now in heaven. They did not live a long life compared to the rest of us. The

one that comes to all of our minds immediately is Olivia Mills. She certainly obeyed her parents. So what happened?

Beloved, there are some things in life that are simply above our ability to understand. God is a sovereign God, God is a perfect God, but at times God's ways just don't make sense to us. And at times it is God's sovereign plan to temporarily suspend a law that He has made. But God has every right to do this. Let me illustrate. Suppose that when my girls were young that Janice and I got in the car with them headed for Panama City. And I make the announcement, "OK, girls, no stopping until we get to Montgomery. Don't even ask for a pit stop. We're not stopping for any reason".

So we start out and everything is going just great. And then we cross over into Chilton County and come up on a peach stand. And the big sign on the road said, "Peaches are on sale, \$6 a basket". So I begin to think, "We would really enjoy some fresh peaches on our cereal at the beach". So I make an executive decision and stop at the peach stand. And then the girls start protesting, "But Dad, you said no stopping". But the fact is, I am the one driving the car and I can break the rule if I think it is best, even if sometimes I blow it. And so it is with God, except His decisions are perfect. And God says that if you obey your parents you will live long on the earth, and most of you, and maybe all of you will. But there are times when God takes a precious child or young person home to be with Him for

His glory and honor. And He has every right to do so, for He is God.

Before we close, children and young people, I want to remind you of what I said in the beginning of the message. **You matter to God.** These years before adulthood are not for you just to flit away having a good time. Certainly enjoy your childhood and youth, but make your life count for Jesus Christ! Samuel was just a child when he was a great spokesman for God to the old prophet Eli. On the other hand, Jesus cast out a demon of a young man who had been demon possessed since he was a child. Even at your age, you can be used by God or you can be used by the devil. And if you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, if you know right from wrong and He is speaking to you, you are old enough to do so. Do you want to know that Jesus has washed your sins away and that you are going to Heaven? If you do, you can come and find out how to be saved when we stand to sing in just a few moments. And if you are already saved, then I pray that you will honor Jesus today by pledging to obey and honor your parents. Will you do it for Jesus' sake?