

ROCK GROUP BIBLE STUDY

August 29, 2003

Walk in Wisdom [Part 4]

Ephesians 5:21 & 6:1-4

5:21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ....

6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. 4 And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Remember that Paul has been instructing the Ephesian believers how they should be living out their lives in light of their high calling. As we examined chapter 5, Paul instructed the Ephesian believers to walk in love, walk in light and to walk in wisdom. As we study Ephesians 6:1-4, Paul is still instructing the Ephesian believers how to walk in wisdom. Paul began in Ephesians 5:15 with the admonition to walk not as unwise men, but as wise. Paul further described walking in wisdom as making the most of your time. He supported this admonition with two prohibitions followed by contrasting positive commands. The first prohibition was "Do not be foolish!" Paul suggested that to walk in wisdom or make the most of your time required that the believer not lack understanding, but strive to understand the will of God. Paul's second prohibition was "Do not get drunk with wine!" Paul taught that the believer should not be controlled by physical substances such as alcohol, but instead should be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Paul then discussed the natural result of those who are controlled by the Spirit. Those who are controlled by the Spirit will manifest a worshipful attitude (vs. 19), a thankful attitude (vs. 20) and an attitude of submission (vs. 21).

Although verse 21 grammatically goes with what comes before, it is the attitude of submission that Paul then focuses on. He applies this attitude of submission to the lives of believers with three different illustrations. He first applies it to the husband/wife relationship; then the parent/child relationship and lastly to the master/servant relationship. This week we will move on by examining the parent/child relationship in Ephesians 6:1-4.

In Ephesians 6:1-4 Paul continues teaching on the mutual submission of believers to one another (5:21) by moving to the family. Verses 1-3 focus on the submission of children and verse 4 focuses on the submission of parents.

As Paul begins to focus on the idea of submission in the parent/child relationship, He first turns to the responsibility of the children and then moves on to focus on the responsibility of the parents (the fathers in particular).

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CHILDREN:

· Who in particular is Paul identifying by the use of the term children? Who is he specifically addressing?

He is likely addressing all children who are still dependent upon their parents. The term used is not the term for "little children," but a term for children in general. This term denotes relationship rather than age, and could on occasion refer to adult sons and daughters. It carries the idea of dependent rather than descendent. The context tied in to the previous instruction on marriage; suggests that it is

referring to those children who are still in the process of learning and growing, dependant upon their parents and living under the roof and authority of their parents.

· ***According to Ephesians 6:1-2, how are children to submit to their parents?***

Verse 1 is a command to obey their parents. It is a strong imperative emphasizing a clear command. Children are to obey their parents.

Verse 2 is also a command. A command to honor their parents. Children are to do more than just obey their parents they are to honor them as well. The process of obeying and honoring the parents is how children are to submit to their parents. Obey has to do with action, while honor has to do with attitude.

· ***What does it mean to obey one's parents?***

The term *obey* [HUPAKOUO] literally means "to hear under." It is the idea of listening to attentively and responding positively to what is heard. It speaks of one hearing under the authority of someone else. The verb therefore, comes to mean, "to hearken to a command, to obey, to be obedient to, to submit to." This is a present active imperative in the Greek. The present emphasizes that it is to be a continual action. It commands a habitual, constant obedience. The active emphasizes an absolute obedience, while the imperative mood emphasizes a command and here with unusual forcefulness. It is a hearing with submission, and yielded in obedience to parents.

· ***According to a parallel passage in Colossians 3:20, in what things are children to obey their parents?***

In All Things! It is not that children obey their parents when they want to, but that they obey their parents in all things! It is a complete obedience. This does not mean that they are to be disobedient to God's commands or His will, because their parents tell them too. Remember the context is that of a Christian home. Clearly this command must be tempered by the idea in Acts 5:29, "*we must obey God rather than men.*" Assuming that parents are following God's will, plan and role for them as parents, then the children should be able to freely obey them in all things.

· ***Why are children to obey their parents?***

1) Children are to obey their parents because they are believers in the Lord. This is noted by the phrase, "*in the Lord.*" "*In the Lord*" refers to the sphere of pleasing the Lord. It is obeying parents for the Lord's sake. Children obey their parents as reflective of their obedience to the Lord. Parents are to be obeyed and honored because to do so is to obey and honor the Lord. [MacArthur, p. 311]

2) Children are to obey their parents because it is right. Not because I said so, but because it is right! It is because God said so! The term refers to that which is correct, just or righteous. Children are to obey their parents because it is the right thing to do; because it is the righteous thing to do; because it is how God has designed it to be. It is God's plan! Psalm 19:8 says that the precepts of the Lord are right! Psalm 119:75, 128 tells us that the Judgments of the Lord are righteous! Hosea 4:19 informs us that the ways of the Lord are right! It is God's plan/design for children to be obedient to their parents. Because it is God's design, then it is right for children to follow through with consistent obedience to their parents!

· ***According to the parallel passage in Colossians 3:20, what additional reason does Paul give for children to obey their parents?***

Children are to obey their parents because it is well-pleasing to the Lord! This is very similar to the idea noted in the phrase "in the Lord" in Ephesians 6:1. It is not only right for children to obey their parents, but it pleases the Lord when children are obedient to their parents. God is pleased when children seek to submit themselves under the authority of their parents and obey them.

· ***What does it mean to honor one's parents?***

The term *honor* [TIMA] comes from a root, which means, "to estimate, or fix the value of." To honor someone therefore, is to evaluate that person accurately and honestly, and treat him with deference, respect, reverence, kindness, courtesy, and obedience. It is to respect and esteem another. This is the right attitude behind the right act of obedience. It is to value highly, or to hold in the highest regard. Children are to highly value, respect and esteem their parents!!! In fact we find this command repeated 5 other times in the New Testament (Matthew 15:4; 19:19; Mark 7:10; 10:19; Luke 18:20).

· ***What reasons does Paul give for honoring one's parents?***

1) It is commanded! Verse 2 says, " *which is the first commandment with a promise.*" This is referring back to Exodus 20:12, and the fifth commandment. The Old Testament Law was summed up in the 10 commandments. The idea of honoring one's Father and Mother was one of the 10 commandments. This respectful attitude in family relationships was an essential part of the Old Testament Law. In fact in the Old Testament, parents were to be held in such high regard that the death penalty was assigned to anyone who physically or verbally abused a parent (cf. Exodus 21:15, 17; Leviticus 20:9). Paul applies this Old Testament commandment to believers today. Children are to highly value and respect their parents, because it is commanded.

2) It brings blessing! It is an Old Testament command with a promise. As children strive to obey and honor their parents, it will result in blessing. Keep in mind that this promise is a general truth or principle, not a specific guarantee. So what is the two fold blessing that honoring one's parents brings:

1-So that it may be well with you! This part of the promise attached to the Old Testament Commandment has to do with the quality of life. Paul's quotation of this commandment and the attached promise indicates that it applies to believers today. This original promise was to Israel and involved many tangible, physical and earthly blessings. As it applies to the believer today, it suggests that a family where children and parents live in mutual love and submission will have rich, God given harmony and satisfaction that other families can never know. [MacArthur, p. 315] It really suggests a certain peace and harmony in the parent/child relationship, because the child is obeying and honoring their parents.

2-So that you may live long on the earth! This is a direct promise to Israel in Exodus 20:12 in relation to their living long in the promise land. Paul applies it here to the believer. This phrase more aptly relates to the quantity of life promised. The idea of the Greek is that they would be long-lived. The believer who honors his parents can know that his lifetime will be the full measure God intends, rather than cut short like those of Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:5-10) and certain members of the Corinthian Church (1 Corinthians 11:30). This by no means implies that all who honor their parents will have a long life on the earth, but that those who honor their parents will live as long as God has intended them to live. The idea here is a general one and certainly leaves open the door for exceptions.

· ***How can you honor your parents? What are some things that you can do personally to demonstrate that you are honoring your parents?***

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS

Paul now moves on in verse 4 with a change of audience in mind. He no longer focuses his attention on the children, but now addresses the responsibility of the parents by explaining how they are to submit within the parent/child relationship.

· *Who does Paul directly address here in verse 4 and why?*

Paul now addresses the parents here by using the term Father [PATERES]. In its strictest sense the term means "fathers." However it occasionally takes on a more general sense referring to both parents. Since both parents are mentioned in the previous three verses and since the previous context dealt with husbands and wives, then it likely refers to both parents here. Paul likely chose the particular term translated *fathers* to emphasize the role of the husband/father as leader within the household and thus responsible for the family.

Paul addresses the responsibility of the parents by giving both a negative and positive command.

· *What is the negative command that Paul gives to parents and what does it mean?*

The negative instruction is that parents are not to provoke their children to anger. The verb means, "to rouse to wrath, to provoke, to exasperate, or to anger." The use of the present imperative emphasizes a perpetual state of provoking. It deals with an ongoing action of provoking, not a one time event. It focuses on the everyday tensions in the family. A long list of parental faults could be drawn up under Paul's summary here. These may include:

1-Overprotection, where parents smother their children, and overly restrict them, nor trust them to do things on their own.

2-Favoritism, where one child is preferred and it angers the other (i.e. Jacob & Esau).

3-Overachievement, where a parent pushes achievement beyond what is reasonable and it unnecessarily pressures the child.

4-Discouragement, where a child is never complimented or encouraged by his parents.

5-A Failure to Sacrifice, where parents fail to make sacrifices for their children, thereby making them feel like an intrusion or an interference to the parent's comfort and happiness..

6-Not allowing a child to be a child, where a parent consistently chides and corrects a child for normal childlike behavior.

7-Using love as a tool of reward, where a parent withholds love when is bad and grants it when a child is good.

8-Physical & Verbal Abuse, where a child is continually spanked aggressively and unnecessarily and screamed at in a consistent and unreasonable manner.

These among many other inappropriate behaviors by parents could fall under the idea of provoking a child to anger/exasperating a child. Paul is helping to show parents that they need to deal with their children in a loving and consistent way.

· *What is the positive command that Paul gives to parents and what does it mean?*

"The positive command to parents is for them to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. *Discipline* [PAIDEIA] comes from the word child and refers to the systematic training of children. It also includes the idea of correction for wrongdoing (i.e. Proverbs 13:24). Discipline has to do with the overall training of children including punishment."

[MacArthur, p. 319]

Instruction [NOUTHESIA] is literally a "putting in the mind" and also includes the connotation of correction. It refers to the type of instruction found in the book of Proverbs, where the primary focus is on the training and teaching of children. It does not have as much to do with factual information as it does with right attitudes and principles of behavior. Parents are responsible to train their children according to the teaching of God's Word, by the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ and to His glory and honor. [MacArthur]. Deuteronomy 6:7 seems to highlight the consistency and diligence needed in communicating the principles of God's Word to our children, "*and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.*"

SMALL GROUPS:

- *How are you doing in submitting to your parents through obedience?*
- *Do you make a conscious effort to honor your parents? If so how?*
- *What can you do to better demonstrate honor to your parents?*