

CHILDREN AND PARENTS AS PRIESTS

EPHESIANS 6:1-4

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INTRODUCTION

As we meditate on the way of the cross, following Jesus to Jerusalem during these weeks leading up to Easter, we have particularly considered our calling to be priests in our families. Today, we apply this to the relationship between children and parents. Paul's instructions are first to children and then to fathers: Children honor; fathers nurture. These are priestly callings and ministries.

TO CHILDREN OF THE COVENANT:

Paul begins by exhorting children to obey. For support he cites Deuteronomy 5:16, where Moses has re-given the law and given a promise with it. The promises are long life and a good life in the land. Notice that Paul equates honor and obedience. Children are to obey by honoring and honor by obeying. We know from Scripture that first born sons received a double portion of their father's inheritance because that "honor" would later become support for their parents (cf. Mk. 7:11-13). This establishes the principle that honor is always required but it can and does look differently throughout a lifetime. Children must grow up understanding this; and parents must not put obstacles in the way of children fulfilling this calling. And Paul says that this obedience is "right/just/righteous."

The second promise is a good life in the land that God is giving us. This promise is empty if you do not believe that we are being given this land or if you don't think the land is worth inheriting. This is directly related to eschatology, your expectations of what the world is going to come to look like over the next centuries and millennia. And this entails recognizing the emptiness of much of modern culture. Covenant children, we are being given this land (Mt. 28:18-20, Rom 4:13-16, I Cor. 15:24-25). That is why we gather here for worship. That is why we celebrate the Eucharist; that is why you were baptized. We truly believe that we are being brought through another great Exodus in Jesus Christ.

TO PARENTS:

Paul exhorts fathers in particular here not because mothers do not have an important role to play in the raising of faithful children but because fathers are held responsible for their families. This means that fathers must recognize this responsibility. This does not mean that fathers are held liable for the *guilt* of their children's sin, but it does mean that father's are held responsible for it (Ez. 18:20, Ex. 34:6-7). This means that fathers must be sin confessing warriors. You must confess your own sins and the sins of your household. You must do this not as nit-picking cranks, but as honest, faithful fathers and husbands following the example of faithful Job (cf. Job 1:5).

Further, you are called to raise your children up not provoking them or making them angry, but in the nurture/culture/lifestyle and instruction/warning/admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). This means that you must raise your children up in the spoken and unspoken ways of the faith. You must show them and tell them. Proverbs 22:6 says that the training of a child stays with him even when he is old. The proverb is intentionally ambiguous referring both to the specific “instruction” and the “way”. But the point is that there is a “way of life” and a “way of the mouth” that make up the training.

APPLICATION & CONCLUSION

Fathers, rather than angering your children, imitate God the Father in delighting in your children (e.g. Mk. 1:11, 9:7). This means that you must imitate the Father by saying this out loud. And teach them how to honor by how you honor their mother.

In our text, the word Paul uses for “bring up” or “raise” primarily means to “feed” or “nourish” (e.g. Eph. 5:29, Rev. 12:6). Are you *feeding* your children with the nurture and admonition of the Lord or are you starving them? Are you *feeding* them or are you stuffing it down their throats?

Covenant children, you are called to be priests too. Regardless of how your parents are doing or will do, your calling is to joyful obedience in the Lord that you might inherit the land and take possession of the spoils of our King.



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