



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Ephesians 6: 1-4

Ephesians

“Christian Home_Parents,Kids”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Thank you, Mr. Pryor, and good morning. We are continuing our study in the Book of Ephesians and in the section of Ephesians that deals with the Christian home, a Christian household and this morning we look at chapter 6, verses 1-4. So if you have your bibles open, follow along beginning with verse 1.

Paul writes, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” May the Lord bless this reading of His word and our time of study together. Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Gracious God and heavenly Father, we do thank you for the great privilege that we have to come together as your people, as a people who have been chosen by you from all eternity as Paul so clearly teaches us in the first chapter of this great epistle. And not only chosen from all eternity but purchased from eternity of the blood of the lamb.

We thank you for your Son who died on Calvary and for the life that we have as a result of His death. Thank you for the faith that you have given to all who believe. We thank you for baptizing us into the body of Christ and the life that we share with Him, His life that enables us to be men and women who live lives that are pleasing to you and who can and the power of the spirit, following the direction, the leading of the spirit in obedience to your word live lives that conform to your instruction.

Carry out the very duties that you have set before us in this portion of the Book of Ephesians. And so, Lord, as we look this morning at the responsibilities, the duties of parents and children that we might truly be instructed from you, from your spirit and that we would understand the truth that is set forth here and that we might apply it and live according to it in the power that you supply.

Now we do thank you so much, Father, for your grace and your faithfulness. We can consider the great responsibilities that are set before us and as we do, we must all confess that at every level we fail. We do not measure up to the kind of children we are to be or we were to be. We cannot measure up to the kind of parents that we are to be.

And yet we look to you and we see one who is absolutely faithful, a Father who is absolutely faithful and never fails us. And a Father who not stern and harsh but one who is loving and gentle and cares for us and nourishes us. And so Father, we thank you for that and pray that we might emulate you and that people might see that, our children might see that in us. The world might see that in us and in our children, they might see a good representation of Jesus Christ and His obedience to you as His Father.

And that Christians homes that are represented in this assembly might be good testimonies to the world of the saving grace of our great triune God. We thank you, Father, for the instruction that is in this portion of scripture and again pray that you might instruct us with it and in so doing build us up in the faith and move us to be men and women who truly live obedient lives, lives in which we walk by the spirit.

And so we pray, Father, to begin with for our spiritual needs which are great. We are also people with material, physical needs and we pray for those as well. We pray, Father, that you'd bless us in our employment. We thank you for it.

And the various ways in which the men of this church are employed, we thank you that you have given them work and pray that in that work they might – we all might be diligent and earnest and work in a way that brings honor and glory to you, redeeming the time that we have and be good fathers as well. Using our time well, that we might spend proper time with our families. We pray for those without employment, Father, pray that you might provide it and enable them to find fulfillment in the work that you give, give encouragement in the meantime.

We pray for the sick, pray for recovery for them. Pray for those that are recovering, that their recoveries from surgery or illness would be speedy and pray that you might bring them back to our fellowship very soon. We pray, Father, for our land. We pray for our government. We pray for our leaders, that you give them wisdom. We think particularly of the wisdom that is necessary at this time in which there's great debate in Congress.

We pray that you would bless those involved, bless the Congress, the President, bless all who are in a position to make important decisions. May they make wise decisions and may they do what is right and may you move them to do that.

And we pray for a stable nation and a nation that prospers, but most importantly, Father, we pray for a spiritual nation. We pray for many men and women throughout this man to come to faith in Jesus Christ. That is your work, Father, and yet you use us in that great work of evangelism. And so I pray that you would bless us, to make us evangelists and to give us a burden for that and the wisdom and the skill in presenting the gospel that we might be used of you.

May we do that this week. To that end, we pray that you prepare us with the time of study we have in this hour and prepare us as well this evening when we come back and celebrate the ordinances that you have given to the church. The Lord's supper, as we remember our Lord's death, His burial, His resurrection and His coming again, and as we observe baptism and observe young people expressing their faith in Jesus Christ, may that be a time of great edification for each of us.

We pray your blessing upon our meeting tonight, bless our meeting now. May it be edifying, enjoyable. Bless our time of singing. May our final hymn be good preparation of heart for the time of study together. We pray these things in the savior's name. Amen.

[Message] Weldon Hardenbrook is a pastor who wrote an article for the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood entitled *Where's Dad?* It begins by recounting a conversation that took place between the late Lucille Ball and Merv Griffin. Now Merv Griffin asked her a serious question, he said, "You've lived a long time, what's wrong with our children? Why are our families falling apart? What's missing?"

And she came back with a quick answer and her answer was, “Papa’s missing. Things are falling apart because papa’s gone. If papa were here, he would fix it.” There’s a lot of truth in that answer. It is the father who nourishes and protects the family. Families need faithful fathers to be strong.

Now God is gracious and He can bless a family that doesn’t have a faithful father or the father is missing and He had done that. And I know families where that is the case. God’s greatest grace or God’s grace is great. And He supplies where that need exists. But the norm is fathers are the head of the home and for a family to be strong, it needs to a faithful and it needs a strong father.

And that in part is Paul’s subject in our text, Ephesians 6:1-4. We are in a part of the bible that is sometimes referred to by the German word *haustafeln*. My wife informs me that’s about as good as my pronunciation is going to get of that word. But the word itself means house tables or household codes. Luther is thought to have been the first to use that expression for the codes or the list of duties required of each member of the Christian household.

But that’s what Ephesians 5, at least the second half of it and the first part of chapter 6 is about. Chapter 5, you’ll remember, Paul instructed husbands and wives in their duties within marriage and explained that their relationship as husband and wife is a great mystery. It is a picture of Christ and the church and so it is to be undertaken very seriously.

Now he turns to the relationships in the home and the responsibilities of parents and children. He begins with the children and there were probably many of them, young boys and girls, some in their teens sitting in the congregation listening as Paul’s letter was being read. They had heard how the parents were to behave toward one another and now they would learn how they were to behave toward their parents.

And Paul has two things to say to them. First, they are to obey their parents. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” A child’s obedience, Paul says, is right. Paul’s first justification for that command is it is right. It is the proper attitude and form of behavior and that, as most commenters point out, is recognized in all societies.

And so some speak of this as natural law, a reference to the law in which God has written on all human hearts. Both Greek and Roman philosophers taught this very principle. Confucius emphasized parental respect. We find it among all peoples of

the world down through history. But Paul isn't writing to all the peoples of the world; he isn't writing to all children.

His concern is Christian children. It's obedience in the Lord that he commands. And that means that this is a Christian child's spiritual duty. A child might obey his or her parents out of fear or out of affection, but the highest reason, the greatest motive for obedience is the conviction that obedience is the will of God.

That conviction brings the best response. It brings the quickest and the purest response and so obedience is to be done out of a desire to do what is pleasing to God. That's what makes obedience right. It is God's will.

But it is also wise – one of the greatest struggles young people have is listening to their parents and granting that they might be right about a certain decision that's to be made or they might be correct in their assessment about the certain friends that the child might have or his or her choice of entertainment.

God's arrangement of the family with the parents holding authority over children is not an arbitrary structure. Parents have a far wider experience of life and sometimes they've made the very mistakes that the children are desperately trying to make and they've been down that road, they've made those mistakes, they know the dangers and so they have a wisdom that just comes with age and comes with experience.

So it's right for Christian children to obey their parents, but it's also wise. And that applies to all Christian children, even those with non-Christian parents. And that can be a very hard situation. Because non-Christian parents generally are not sympathetic to a Christian child's spiritual interests and sometimes even opposes them.

Nevertheless, that is the family into which God has placed that child. We don't pick our parents, we don't pick our families, we don't pick our brothers and sisters. God does that and God does it right. And God is all-wise. God is perfect; He makes no mistakes. And Paul's instruction here applies to that situation.

Non-Christian parents lack spiritual knowledge. They lack spiritual understanding and perspective, but they may have been blessed with a great deal of natural wisdom and natural affection. They can give wise counsel to their children and God will use those parents in the lives of His children.

Well, the apostle doesn't develop this point, at least not as I'm developing it. But I'm applying his principles to it and I think that were he to have spoken on this point that he would have said just that. He would have said that the Christian child of non-Christian parents should obey those parents in all things in which the faith is not involved.

When instruction is given, contrary to the Christian faith, then a child, Christian child must obey God rather than men. Their obedience is to be in the Lord, Paul says. But when obedience is not possible, the refusal to obey must be done in a proper spirit. Must be done in a spirit of love. It must be done in a spirit of respect, not in defiance and not in self-assertion.

A child, every Christian child is to obey his or her parents in the Lord. That, Paul says, is right. And Paul reinforces this by quoting the Old Testament from the Ten Commandments. And here he makes his second point which is children are to respect their parents. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise. That even when we have ceased to be children and we are no longer under the authority of our parents we still owe them respect.

Obedience and respect as children, honor and respect as adults. And that does not mean that when we become adults we should not obey our parents. It may be that our parents have some suggestions for us, have some advice that is far wiser than our own counsel and so we should listen to that.

But certainly in all things we are continue to respect our parents. This is the fifth of the ten commandments and as you will remember, God wrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone and that may have some significance here. The first four commandments concern man's duty to God and the remaining six concerns man's duty to man and they are sometimes divided in that way so that the first four commandments are seen as being on the first tablet and the last six commandments are seen to be on the second tablet, but not always.

In fact, the Jews regularly taught that each of the law's two tablets contained five commandments. And with that arrangement, the honoring of our parents is to be put on the first tablet so that what that means is our duty to our parents is seen not as a duty to man but as a duty to God.

Now that has a very serious implication because as John Stott points out, in fact numerous commentators have pointed out, if that is the arrangement, seems likely

that it is, then parents represent God to their children. And in so doing, they mediate to the children both God’s authority and His love. Now I think that’s true. A child’s perception of the character of God is often picked up or at least certain aspects of it are picked up from the character and the conduct of his or her parents, and particularly from the father.

And I say that because God is represented in the bible as being male. He’s represented as being a father. I think over the past three months I have received at least three different articles from different newspapers and magazines about the politically correct bible that we now have available to us that seeks to be gender-free and not refer to God in the masculine gender.

The bible does that. Bible’s very clear and presents Him as male, it presents Him as a father. And the child learns obedience to God from the obedience that he learns for his father and his mother as well. But the father has a particular role to play in that regard in the family. He is represented as, in many ways, God in that family. Just as in the marriage relationship the husband is Christ’s representative in that relationship as well and so for the father but also for the mother as well.

This responsibility is very great. We are to seek to emulate God for our children, reflect His wisdom, reflect His love and enforce obedience to that because as I say, the obedience that a child learns in regards to his or her parents is a way of learning obedience to God Himself. So we are reminded by that of the importance of parents’ role in the family in regard to the children. But this also underscores the importance of children obeying their parents. It is an act of devotion to God.

In fact, under the old covenant, if children were incorrigible, if they were rebellious and I don’t mean simply disobeyed their parents periodically, but if they were of a rebellious character, they were to be put to death. Which shows how important God considers a child’s obedience to his or her parents.

To reinforce that, Paul describes this as the first commandment with a promise. Some have challenged Paul on that since the second commandment against making and worshipping idols concludes in Exodus 20:6 that God who is a jealous God shows loving kindness to thousands to those who love me and keep my commandments.

But that really isn’t a promise; that is an expression of God’s character. The promise, the first promise comes here with this fifth commandment and it is a promise

that comes out of God’s character, His loving kindness. And that promise is that God to the obedient child will give material prosperity and long life. Verse 3, “That it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.”

The fact that God commands children to obey and honor their parents is reason enough for obedience. As Paul has said, “It is right.” And that really settles the issue, but God’s further blessing of life and prosperity adds incentive for doing what is right. God blesses the obedient child.

There are exceptions to that. Some good kids die young. Last week a friend of mine sent a tape for my two daughters to listen to and it is a taped interview that Dr. James Dobson did with a young girl named Tory Cook who had suffered with Cystic Fibrosis. It’s a terrible disease, a disease in which the lungs fill up with mucus and every breath that the child takes is a breath in which he or she is fighting for air.

This young girl went through a great deal of suffering. She went through a double lung transplant, a lot of medical procedures, lots of shots and pain. Now all her life, it was just a struggle to breathe. And now in this interview she was asked about her prayer life. And she had a prayer life and yes, she did talk to God about her condition. But, she said, she didn’t ask God why. She said, “God has a plan and God’s plan is the best plan. Our plan is nothing compared to God’s.”

And so she accepted her condition as being from a good and wise God. She was an obedient child. She was very obviously a child who loved her parents, but she was not a child who’d been given a long life. She died a few weeks ago, did in October.

Now it’s not easy to explain why those things happen. But I think that little girl understood the truth of the matter and that is that God has a plan. And it is the best plan. In fact, as we will see someday when God puts it all together for us and He wipes every tear from our eyes, it is a glorious plan. And so she understood that.

But as we see here, God’s plan, His general purpose for obedient sons and daughters is a long and prosperous life. And for obvious reasons. An obedient child heeds warnings and stays out of harm’s way while the disobedient child doesn’t. Let me give you an example from my own life, from my early years and I emphasize that these are my early years.

When I was a child, I had an unusual love for pirates. I knew that when I grew up God had called me to be a pirate. I loved to read books about pirates, I loved to

see movies about pirates, I played pirates. I liked cowboys also, but pirates had neat things. They had swords and they had ships and buried treasure and rum, lots of rum. When I was in kindergarten my teacher told us to get our paper and our crayons out and draw a picture of your parents.

Well, parents sounded enough like pirates to me and so I drew a band of pirates. And I can remember she walked around the tables and admired the different pictures of parents and then she came to mine and looked down and didn't say anything, had this bemused look on her face. There were my parents, all ten of them with peg legs and patch eyes and swords and hooks drinking rum.

Well, one summer we went to Yellowstone National Park and there is there a waterfall and the water plunges hundreds of feet into this gorge. And there is a observation deck that overlooks it. And so we went out on the observation deck to take in the scenery. Now that time in my life I was about five so I'm very young. And I didn't see things the way other people say them and I didn't see an observation deck, I knew this was a pirate ship.

And so as I looked around I saw there was a large rock that was jutting out over this gorge and so I did the sensible thing. I climbed over the wall and I got onto this rock and started shouting, “Ship ahoy,” and things like that. Pirate talk. And that's when my mother noticed the precarious position I was in and she shrieked. And that did not settle well with me; it startled me and I rushed back, not toward her but toward the edge of the rock.

And she sought to get my attention and finally my father took command of the situation and he began to order me off the ship, called me back and I'm a little bit hazy on what happened after that. But I assumed I obeyed my father. Well, that's the kind of thing that children do. Children are careless; children do foolish things. Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child and that's why children need direction and why it's good and wise for children to obey. Keeps them out of harm's way and it gets them out of trouble when they do.

The problem is some children never stop playing pirate. They never really grow up, they don't take advice, they disobey their parents. And as a result, they develop bad habits early on, develop bad friendships, live careless lives that are exposed to danger, dissipation, disease. And as a result, they don't prosper, they don't live long, they sometimes go over the edge.

On the other hand, the obedient son or daughter develops a disciplined life, avoids bad habits, bad friends. Through a life of obedience develops character, develops a healthy pattern of life, a careful diligent life, stays out of harm's way and works hard. Proverbs speak to the very issue that Paul is speaking of here and both sides of it.

It addresses the problem of disobedience in Proverbs 30:17, it says, “The eye that mocks a father and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.” It also says that the son who obeys his parents will be blessed. His father's instruction and his mother's teaching will be ornaments about his neck. And there is no better example of that in the bible. In fact, no better example anywhere than our Lord Himself.

Luke records that incident that you'll remember that took place when our Lord was 12 years old and went up to Jerusalem with his parents to celebrate the Feast of Passover. He went up with them, but he did not return with them. And they're traveling back in the caravan and they noticed that their son is not with them. They naturally panicked and they went back to Jerusalem, spent three days looking for him.

Finally they discovered him in the temple sitting and discussing with the teachers. They scolded him, but he responded, “Did you not know that I had to be in my Father's house?” He was obedient to his heavenly Father. But also to his earthly parents because Luke then writes that he returned with them to Nazareth and continued in subjection to them increasing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men.

Now if there's anyone whom we would think did not need to be under the authority and the direction of His earthly parent, it is our Lord. He was the perfect man. His human nature was flawless, incorruptible. He was without sin and yet He continued in subjection to His earthly parents. And in that way grew and developed as a man.

Christ is our savior, but He is also our example. And He is an example here Christian children. This is their spiritual duty. Every child in the Lord is to obey his or her parents. But parents have their duty as well and that is to provide a father's instruction and a mother's teaching. That's the only way that a child will develop into an obedient respectful son or daughter.

Now that's not natural for a child; it's not natural for us to be submissive. It goes against our natural condition, our human nature. And so that takes time, it takes effort on the part of parents. It's an investment. And that's the instruction that Paul gives. And again, Paul makes two points, one negative and one positive. He writes, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger."

How does that happen? How can we provoke children to anger? Well, I think there are a variety of answers for that and I think that if we would simply think about it, we would probably come up a number of answers, maybe some from our own experience. I have a list here of ways in which that can be done. They're not original with me, but they are I think very helpful and true.

And one way to provoke a child to anger is to be unreasonable up in the demands that we put upon him or on her. We can expect too much of our children. We can expect them to excel beyond their capabilities in school or in sports, in music or whatever discipline we seek to have them excel in. A child can be provoked to anger through fault finding. Parents can do that. Constantly criticizing, never encouraging, never pointing out the good traits in the achievement of the child.

And I think that as parents we need to set high goals for our children and they need that direction from us. They need our perspective. We can see from our vantage point far better than they can what is valuable and what is good. And we need to direct them in that and that takes discipline and sometimes some children, perhaps most children, need to be pushed a bit.

But we need to be careful in that. We need to push them in a way in which we're not overly demanding. We need to be reasonable in light of who they are and their gifts and abilities. It's possible to be too strict with children, to be too controlling. I think that the greater danger is usually at the other extreme and being too lenient, but a child needs some freedom. A child needs to be in a position where he or she makes some decisions on his own and in that way learns to make those decision in preparation for when he or she is out on his own.

Another way of provoking a child is through inconsistency, making promises that we don't keep, through showing favoritism of one child over another or through simple neglect. And we can easily fall into any one of these problems. The bible gives us some examples of men who did, who failed as fathers and some of them were very good men. David, for example, the man after God's own heart has some

real scoundrels for sons. And in part it was because David was inconsistent and neglectful as a father.

He had a son named Amnon and a daughter named Tamar. And you know the story, how Amnon became infatuated with his sister Tamar and raped her. When David heard about it, the text says he was very angry. As well he should have been. But that was all. And rather than apply the strict discipline of the law to his son, he let the matter go. Now that was inconsistent behavior for a father. Sin calls for appropriate discipline and he didn't give it.

And it was neglectful which was perhaps a pattern in David's life. He was a busy man. He had many demands on his time and probably accounts to some extent for the undisciplined and wicked behavior of his son. But he was neglectful also to Tamar, his daughter. And this is when Absalom enters the picture. Tamar was Absalom's sister and David lacked the fatherly discipline and care that he should have given in that situation and that matter probably contributed, at least to some extent, to Absalom's rebellion, his treason and his attempted murder of his father.

There are many ways to provoke a child to anger. And Paul warns against that. That's what he lays some stress upon right here, which is a little unexpected. After instructing children to obey their parents, we might have expected the apostle to then instruct parents to exercise authority over their children, to exercise control over them, but he doesn't do that.

He first urges restraint. And that was probably just a bit surprising to some of the Ephesian fathers, this idea of not provoking children to anger because that was a day and a time when such concern for children was unusual. In fact, Leon Morris calls Paul's instruction revolutionary. Roman fathers in Paul's day had absolute authority over their children.

William Barclay writes that a Roman father could sell them as slaves, he could make them work in his fields, even in chains. He could take the law into his own hands, for the law was in his own hands and punished as he liked. He could even inflict the death penalty on his child. That's the kind of authority that a father had. It was a very hard time for children and for infants.

There's a well-known papyrus that dates to around 1 B.C. in which a man named Hilarion, who was working in Alexandria wrote to his pregnant wife, letting her know that he would be in Alexandria for some time, and since the baby might be

born before he got home he gave her some instruction. And the instruction was that if the baby was a boy, she should keep it. If a girl, she should throw it away.

The ancients would do that. If it was a deformed or unwanted child, they would expose it. They would leave it in a field or on a hillside to die by exposure to the elements or animals. So in the First Century the father had absolute authority over his children. But I think this also gives us also a sense of the mighty power of the gospel because the gospel not only changes lives, it changes societies.

And it had its influence on lives and society in that day and this is one of the ways in which it had that influence and brought about changes. Paul urges fathers to exercise restraint and reason, to not provoke your children to anger. Then he makes a second point with the positive instruction, “Bring them up in the discipline and in instruction of the Lord.” Now that applies to both parents, but it is addressed to fathers.

Because as the head of the home, the father’s chiefly responsible for disciplining and instructing the children. Mothers have their place in that as well, but Paul addresses this to the fathers and it is principally their responsibility. There are three aspects to this command. The first is, bring them up. Now that’s the same word that was used earlier in 5:29 of nourishing our own bodies and so there’s the idea of nourishing your children.

And so it refers to providing a child with the physical and his spiritual or her spiritual needs, to provide for them, to bring them up with great care. Calvin translates this, “Let them be kindly cherished.” It’s not hard for an adult to crush a child physically or emotionally. And Paul is seeking to guard against that. Parents are to use their power and use their authority with wisdom and gentleness.

Now that doesn’t exclude firmness. Because it is through the second two aspects that we nourish or care or bring up our children. It’s through discipline and instruction. Now if there’s a difference between those two words, it is that discipline refers to deeds and instruction refers to words.

As Proverbs 22:15 states in regards to discipline, “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.” And that’s the point is to drive folly far from him. And that involves a painful process. It’s never easy to be disciplined. Author of Hebrews tells us that, that it’s very uncomfortable and

unpleasant for a time but has a perfect and a good result and that is to drive out folly from the heart of a child.

And so that calls for the rod. It's what Solomon says. Folly is bound up in the heart of a child but the rod of discipline drives it far from him. And there are all kinds of rods, literal rods, switches, wooden spoons. They're to be used. They're to be used with wisdom. They're to be used with care, not to be used in a fit of anger but carefully and properly for a good purpose.

But there are also non-literal rod such as punitive restrictions, grounding, for example. But there must be a form of discipline and it should be applied at an early age. Instruction or admonition refers to what is spoken, refers to correction, it refers to teaching, exhortation and it is instruction of the Lord. And so this is instruction in the word of God. It refers to imparting to that child the full counsel of God, teaching that child God's word.

That is a great Jewish tradition and not a tradition that grows out of their traditions but one that goes back to Deuteronomy 6:4, it's a famous passage. It is a passage where we have the Samah which begins in verse 4 of chapter 6. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

And then Moses goes on write, “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might and these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart 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.

And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates.” In other words, fathers are to be constantly putting God's truth before the minds of their children. And when fathers fail to do that, fail to give instruction, fail to give warnings, tragedy followed.

We have examples of that in the bible as well, maybe one of the best examples of that is Eli. He was the high priest of Israel in the days of the judges. His child Samuel had been placed under his care and brought up there in the tabernacle. Eli may have been a kindly man but he was a complete failure as a father. His sons, Hophni and Phinehas abused the people when they served as priests. The bible calls

them worthless men. They stole from the men, they fornicated with the women at the tabernacle.

Finally God had had enough of them and He spoke to Samuel and He said to Samuel, “I am about to do something in Israel that make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family from beginning to end for I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about.” His sons made themselves contemptible and he failed to restrain them.

Eli knew about the sin of his sons. He knew about their failures and he did not restrain them. So judgment came. It came not along after this at the Battle of Aphek where battle in which the Philistines defeated Israel, captured the Ark of the Covenant, slew Hophni and Phinehas. When Eli received word, he fell over dead.

Instruction and restraint are important. They are for the child’s good and for our blessing. They are the instruction, the duty that God has laid upon the parents and they are important because those aspects build character in the child.

B.B. Warfield tells a story that I have repeated more than once. So if you’ve heard this I apologize, but it’s a good story so I’m going to repeat it again. Warfield was a great believer in training children on the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the Catechism that Robert Louis Stevenson said begins by striking at the very roots of life with what is the achievement of man and answers nobly to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

Warfield tells a story of an army officer in the United States Army who was in what he calls a great western city during a time of violent rioting. The street, he says, were overrun daily by a dangerous crowd. And one day this officer saw a man walking down the street, walking through all of this chaos surrounded by violence and yet he saw in this man a certain bearing, a calmness, a firmness that set him apart.

And as the man passed by, the officer couldn’t help but turn to look at him, and as he did, he noticed that the man, the stranger had stopped and was looking back at the officer. And when he saw that the officer was looking at him, he came back to him and touching the officer’s chest with his forefinger demanded, “What is the achievement of man?”

The officer answered, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” The stranger said, “Ah, I knew you were a Shorter Catechism boy from

your looks.” “Why that was just what I was thinking of you,” said the officer. Warfield writes, “It is worthwhile to be a Shorter Catechism boy. They grow up to be men, and better than that, they are exceedingly apt to grow up to be men of God.”

Fathers are charged with the responsibility of training up their children in the truth. Doesn't have to be with the Shorter Catechism. That's a helpful catechism. I don't agree with everything in it, but I find it very helpful. But principally we are to train up our children in the word of God and the whole counsel of God and the truth of God. And to do that, we are to be at home and we are to be attentive to them.

We really have very little time to do that. Earlier in 15:16 Paul exhorts us to redeem the time, make good use of our time. Because time flies. And before long, the children are grown and gone and so with the short time that God has given to us, we are to invest it in our children. The rewards for them and for us are great. They are apt to grow up to be men and women of God.

And we have that great responsibility because they are the future of the church and we are to be training them up to be that, to be the leaders of the church to come. So we are to be applying ourselves, redeeming our time, using it in that way. Now, there are no guarantees in parenting. Ultimately these things rest with the Lord, Psalm 127 says, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.” But our duties as parents and children are clear and Paul makes them very clear. And God is most apt to bless as we obey.

But these duties, as set forth by Paul, are for those who are in the Lord, who are Christians, believers in Jesus Christ. There is no ultimate blessing, there is no ultimate happiness apart from him, apart from being in the Lord. And so the question we must close with this morning is: are you in the Lord? Do you know Christ as personal savior? If not, then look to him. Realize that you are a sinner and that He is the only savior.

Believe in Him who died in the place of sinners so that all who believe in Him, all who trust in Him and Him for salvation will be saved, will be received and not cast out. May God help you to do that. And may God help each of us to recognize our responsibilities and undertake them in the power of God, power of the spirit, and in the wisdom that the spirit gives and seek to be men and women and children who honor Him and present before the world a great testimony of the Christian home which should reflect the grace of God. Shall we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we do thank you for the truth that is set before us. We see in this our responsibilities. And they're great responsibilities. In fact, we cannot think of them seriously without realizing how far short we fall and will continue to fall. It's difficult to match up to these and yet in the power that you give as we seek to be obedient men and women and children. We can do what you have instructed us to do. And so we ask you to bless us with that. Give us power to do so. Give us an earnest desire to do so.

And yet, Father, as we realize our failure we must also realize your perfection, that you are a father and you never fail us. You're never absent, you never leave us or forsake us. You are our perfect model and provider. We thank you for that. We thank you most of all for the gift of life that you have given us in your Son. Pray that our lives will be lived to His honor and glory. It's in His name we pray. Amen.