

EPHESIANS 6:1-3

HONOURING OUR PARENTS

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honour your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.’”¹

The last days are described in frightful detail in Paul’s final letter to Timothy. He wrote, “Understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth” [2 TIMOTHY 3:1-7].

The description echoes his observation of a culture that is given over to its own desires. “God gave [self-willed culture] up to dishonourable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

“And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them” [ROMANS 1:26-32].

Focus on only one dark characterisation listed in either of the dreadful lists just cited. First, we read that in the last days, “People will be ... disobedient to their parents.” When those words were written, the Apostle was looking forward to what would come. That day he foresaw may well be present today. Then, Paul wrote of life in a culture that has been given over to its own self-will, “God gave them up to a debased mind ... [and they are] disobedient to parents.” The statement reveals a major character flaw when a given society tolerates disobedience to parents. He saw the evil of such a society being played out before his watching eyes. What was described could well be applied to contemporary western culture.

Children are exalted in modern culture. We rationalise this exaltation by saying that children represent our future. Of course, that is true; however, if we fail to train children to act with discretion and respect, it will be a dark future, indeed! We say that children need time to be children; then, we sexualise them and rush them into situations certain to compromise their moral compass even as we excuse their lack of mental or emotional maturity. Consequently, we witness the strange phenomenon of babies producing babies and children with adult bodies demanding that they control their own lives before they are able to realise the consequences.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

EPHESIANS 6:1-3
HONOURING OUR PARENTS

All this leads to a situation where teenagers and those barely out of the teen years, imagining themselves superior in every respect to their elders. Youth are often rude to their elders, ignoring them or attempting to shove their elders aside. Christians must take to heart the Word of God that teaches, “You shall stand up before the gray head and Honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD” [LEVITICUS 19:32]. If we neglect to teach our children respect for those with experience, we deprive them of knowledge of what pleases God. Children need to learn early that the strength of youth does not equate to wisdom.

We witness infantile behaviour excused on college and university campuses, and even on secondary school campuses, as youth demand that administrations acquiesce to their demands. Mere children imagine that they are capable of shaping the world into something better than it is. Modern youth should know that a degree in “womyn’s studies” will qualify them to drive a cab and a degree in “gender studies” will enable them to ask, “Would you like fries with that?” Students with such detailed training can anticipate continuing to live in their parent’s basement. There is nothing like reality to drive the foolish imagination of superiority from a child’s mind. Youth is a wonderful period of life; it is a shame that it is wasted on the young.

My concern is that children who sit under the teaching of the Word will be taught to honour their elders. The Wise Man has said, “Gray hair is a crown of glory” [PROVERBS 16:31a]. Children who are taught well will respect their elders, not least of all because they realise that they can learn from their experience, perhaps avoiding some of the mistakes that their elders have already made. Of course, honouring the elders begins with honouring their parents. And this is training I urge upon every parent who will honour God. Children who are trained to honour their parents are well on the way to a successful life.

THE COMMANDMENT — “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honour your father and mother.’” The Apostle evidently believed this was vital instruction, for he provided similar instruction when he wrote the congregation serving Colossae. “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged” [COLOSSIANS 3:18-21].

Some points in what is written are so obvious that they can be overlooked. For instance, the fact that Paul addresses children indicates that the children of believers were in the services when this letter was read. It would have been most unusual for a child in the family not to be in the service with that child’s parents.

Moreover, it is apparent that the Apostle held the opinion that children raised in the home of believing parents would turn to Christ in faith at an early age. I must be careful at this point. There are fellow Christians who hold that children are made Christians through incantations and rites. For this reason, they apply water to their children as part of elaborate ecclesiastical rituals, thus giving a false hope that the children are saved. However, we understand that children are born sinful. The Psalmist confessed,

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

[PSALM 51:5]

Children must be taught of Christ so that they will turn to Him in faith. When children believe, then they are to identify with Christ as those who believe.

EPHESIANS 6:1-3
HONOURING OUR PARENTS

You may recall how the Apostle was reminding the pastor of the Ephesian congregation of his growth in spiritual truth. Paul wrote, “You, [Timothy], have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” [2 TIMOTHY 3:10-15].

Timothy was taught the Holy Scriptures, which writings were instrumental in making him understand his need for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus! It was not through rite or ritual that Timothy came to faith, but through the instruction in the Word provided in the home. Children who are taught will turn to Christ early and grow in this holy Faith. Children who depend upon rite and ritual, cant and creed, presume they are good, frequently living without thought of their accountability to the Lord God.

Thus, as Paul writes to the Christians in Rome, he addresses all who are in the assembly, including, no doubt, children of believing parents. He reminds them of their obedience—obedience demonstrated when they received the divine command for those who believe to identify through baptism. “What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification” [ROMANS 6:15-19].

Let me emphasise, then, the necessity to be righteous for all who name the Name of Christ; and righteousness means honouring God through obedience to His commands. Christians are expected to fulfil righteousness, and that means that parents are to be honoured. Children who are not taught to honour their parents are in serious jeopardy of violating the will of God. Among the dreadful warnings given to youth is one found in the Proverbs.

“The eye that mocks a father
and scorns to obey a mother
will be picked out by the ravens of the valley
and eaten by the vultures.”

[PROVERBS 30:17]

I have never made a secret of the fact that in some respects I had a rough childhood. My mother deserted her two sons when I was but five-years of age. I suppose some people would excuse me if I was to speak ill of my mother. However, my dad would never permit his sons to dishonour their mother. He frequently quoted this Proverb to my brother and me, warning us that God expected that we must respect our mother. He was undoubtedly hurt by her actions, but never did I hear him speak ill of her; and, assuredly, I would never speak ill of her.

EPHESIANS 6:1-3
HONOURING OUR PARENTS

Of course, in the text before us, the Apostle points to the fifth commandment, which, as he properly points out, is “the first commandment with a promise.” We will want to explore the promise, but for the moment I want us to remain focused on the commandment: “Honour your father and mother.” This fifth commandment listed among the Ten Words is more essential to a godly life than we may imagine.

The Ten Commandments are known only casually, if at all, in this day. Though they have occasioned multiple law suits in the United States, few people are able to name the Ten Commandments, much less live by them. Nevertheless, these commandments have never been rescinded; they are essential to a life that will please God. Let’s turn our minds again to those Ten Words as recorded in the Second Book of the Bible. God said, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

“You shall have no other gods before me.

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

“Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you” [EXODUS 20:2-12].

Perhaps you are not aware of how frequently this command is found throughout the New Testament. Consider a couple of instances. On one occasion, the religious leaders came to Jesus, accusing His disciples of ignoring the traditions they held so dear. “Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ‘Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat’” [MATTHEW 15:1, 2]. However, Jesus turned their accusations upside down when He responded, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, ‘Honour your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” he need not Honour his father.’ So, for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

““This people Honours me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.””

[MATTHEW 15:3-9]

EPHESIANS 6:1-3
HONOURING OUR PARENTS

Mark, in Peter's account of the earthly ministry of Jesus, provides an overview of this same incident [see **MARK 7:1-13**].

On another occasion, a man came up to Jesus, asking, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life" [**MATTHEW 19:16**]. Listen to Jesus' response: "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments" [**MATTHEW 19:17**]. When the man questioned Jesus, asking "Which ones?" Jesus responded, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honour your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself" [**MATTHEW 19:18, 19**]. Luke provides an account of the same event in **LUKE 18:18-21**.

Therefore, the commandment to honour one's parents is not incidental—it is integral to godliness. What is perhaps overlooked is that this commandment is not to be grudgingly held—it is to flow naturally out of reverence to the Lord Christ. This is the reason that the Apostle writes, "Children, obey your parents *in the Lord!*" If one is a Christian, obedience to parents reveals your relationship to the Lord Jesus.

An attitude of submission to those in authority reveals your understanding of the Trinity. Paul wrote, "I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God" [**1 CORINTHIANS 11:3**]. Christ Jesus has submitted Himself to the Father, and the Spirit of God is submitted to the Son. This reveals order in the Faith. The home reflects the order of the Triune God in that the husband is the head of the wife; the wife willingly and graciously submits herself to her own husband. Children in the home are submitted to—obedient to—the parents.

Our culture has become dysfunctional, which introduces incredible chaos into life. Women are told that they must assert themselves, struggling against the patriarchy in every facet of life. Yet, the Bible is quite clear that both husbands and wives have distinct responsibilities in the home. Listen to one passage of the Word that teaches this. The passage, found in the fifth chapter of the Ephesian Letter, begins, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ" [**EPHESIANS 5:15-21**].

Note how the passage continues. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. 'Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" [**EPHESIANS 5:22-33**].

EPHESIANS 6:1-3
HONOURING OUR PARENTS

Because we tend to argue and to promote ourselves, it is necessary to take time to point out what should be obvious. First, there is no injunction for women to submit to all men. The injunction is for wives to submit to their own husbands. Their submission is to be willingly offered, reflecting their understanding of the relationship of the church to Christ. If the church to which one belongs is dysfunctional, assertive, self-seeking and it fails to serve others, it is doubtful that the wives in that congregation (or any other member) will cultivate a submissive spirit. Let me say quite clearly that ***no man has a right to demand submission from his wife; it is the privilege of a wife lovingly and graciously to offer her submission to her own husband.***

Again, husbands are to cultivate a sacrificial spirit toward their wives. Husbands are to expend themselves for their wives, willingly and lovingly seeking the benefit of their wife. The model for such love is Christ and His love for the church. Few of us men have reached such an ideal in our love for our wives, but we are not excused from working to achieve the ideal. We are to consider how to reveal our love for our wives.

This position of submission and love is seen also in Peter's First Letter to Christians of the Diaspora. There, Peter writes, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

"Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" [1 PETER 3:1-7].

Wives are to cultivate an attitude of submission to their husbands and husbands are to be understanding toward their wives, honouring them. Each cultivates these attitudes because failure to do so hinders our prayer life. If we do not value our prayer life, it says more about our understanding of who we are and of our relationship (or lack thereof) with the Risen Saviour.

In the home where the wife respects her husband and cultivates a submissive spirit, and where the husband treasures his wife and considers her as first in his life, the children will witness the harmonious life God intended. Because they will see modelled submission as God's best in both the father and the mother, they will naturally adopt a model of gentle submission to authority. Where husband and wife are inconsiderate, where the couple jockey for dominance or life is marked by self-promotion, the children will quite naturally be focused on what is best for themselves rather than how they may foster continued harmony in the home. In the Christian home, the command stands if the members of the family will honour God—"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honour your father and mother'" [EPHESIANS 6:1, 2a].

Jesus learned obedience through His childhood. The concluding verse of the second chapter of Luke's Gospel speaks to this. "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man" [LUKE 2:52]. Again, the Letter to Hebrew Christians appears to speak of the Master's training—training that extended throughout the days of His flesh. "Although He was a son, [Jesus] learned obedience through what he suffered" [HEBREWS 5:8]. This verse echoes what the Apostle has written in the Letter to Philippian Christians. "Being found in human form, [Jesus] humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" [PHILIPPIANS 2:8]. If you would be great before the Lord, learn obedience early on in life.

THE PROMISE — “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honour your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.’” This part of the promise cites the commandment as given in **DEUTERONOMY 5:16**: “Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”

The original promise as recorded in the passage in Deuteronomy, is restricted to the land God was giving to Israel. Citing this passage, the Apostle omitted the concluding words, making the promise applicable to any Christian in any place. Obedient children are promised long life. We will see that this is especially true for children who come to faith in Christ Jesus.

Love for another person is revealed through obedience. The child who loves her parents is obedient to their expressed will for her. Likewise, when Christ was preparing His disciples for His exodus, He said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” [**JOHN 14:15**]. Shortly after stating this principle, the Master said, “Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me” [**JOHN 14:24**]. Underscore this principle in your mind—*love is revealed through obedience to the will of the one loved*. The wife who loves her husband will seek to honour him, as we have seen; and the husband who loves his wife will value her above all others. Each will seek to please the other in all things. The principle is expressed quite pointedly when Paul writes, “The married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided... The married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband” [**1 CORINTHIANS 7:33, 34**].

In similar fashion, the child that has been taught to love expresses love for his parents through obedience to the will of the parents. The child that is full of self-love will exalt his own will above that of the parents because he loves himself most of all. He will go to school if he wants, or stay away if that is what he wants—he loves himself. He will be combative to his parents, arguing and perhaps even rebelling against their will, because he loves himself. This is a very serious condition for a child to be in.

I do note that there are limits to the obedience that is to be rendered; the child is to obey his parents “in the Lord.” It should be obvious that the Apostle assumes this is a Christian home and that the children are themselves believers in the Risen Son of God. Children that are not Christians will grow to be rebellious because they have no interest in obedience to anything other than their own will; they cannot help but love themselves above all others. Unbelieving children will endeavour to do what they want to do rather than what their parents want them to do. Obedience to another is a supernatural trait; and unbelieving children are natural. This is the reason we are to teach our children, training them in the Lord.

Children that are trained in the Lord will have been taught to love God supremely, as is evident from the ancient command: “‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, 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. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” [**DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9**]. Children in the Christian home are to have been raised in an environment that is thoroughly immersed in the knowledge of God, with evident love for Him demonstrated through obedience to His will.

EPHESIANS 6:1-3
HONOURING OUR PARENTS

Honouring our parents ensures God's rich blessing as revealed through long life. Examples of children who did not obey their parents can be seen in Samson and Absalom; neither obeyed his parents and their lives were shortened. Each died far too young. Surely, these are examples of the cost of childish independence.

Look at the contrast between two states! Obedience receives a divine promise. The Psalmist, communicating God's mind to His people, testifies of the one whom God loves,

“Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him;
I will protect him, because he knows my name.
When he calls to me, I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.
With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.”

[PSALM 91:14-16]

Contrast this felicitous condition with the warning given to the rebellious child who refuses to honour his father or his mother. In the Law, Moses has given warning when he writes, “Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death” [EXODUS 21:15]. Again, he warns, “Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death” [EXODUS 21:17].

Then, in a more detailed warning still, the great Law-giver wrote, “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, and they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear” [DEUTERONOMY 21:18-21].

Ultimately, the command before us flows from a more fundamental requirement for those who would honour God. “Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, you shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” [LEVITICUS 19:2]. We don't hear much about being holy in this day. We are more likely to be cautioned against becoming fanatical than we are to be cautioned to be holy. Nevertheless, God expects His people to so live that they honour Him; and love for God is seen through obedience within the orderliness He has provided.

Why do we teach that a home is to be built around a husband and a wife? Because it ensures the order that God provided in creation. Why is a wife to offer loving submission to her husband? Because it reflects the order given in creation. And why would we expect that children should be obedient to parents? Because it reflects the order first established in creation. In the Corinthian Letter, we are taught that “God is not characterised by disorder, but by peace” [1 CORINTHIANS 14:33 NET BIBLE]. The Living God values order, for He is the Author of order.

A FATHER'S RESPONSIBILITY — We do need to instruct fathers as to their responsibility. “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” [EPHESIANS 6:4]. Paul instructs fathers as he does for their own sakes, and for the sake of the children under control of the father. The father who mismanages his child stunts the child, robbing the child of the blessing God has promised for obedience.

EPHESIANS 6:1-3
HONOURING OUR PARENTS

Few people can wound a parent as deeply as can a disobedient child. Few people can give such joy as does an obedient child. What an awesome responsibility weighs upon a father. And how different is the instruction Paul gives than would have been practised in Roman homes. Under the Roman concept of *patria potestas*, a father had absolute power over his family. A father could sell his family as slaves, he could punish them as he wished, he could even kill them, if he so wished. A father's power over a child continued so long as the father lived. A Roman son never came of age.

The threat of paternal power was always hanging over the child. We have access to a letter from a man named Hilarion to his wife, Alis. This man had gone to Alexandria, and while there he wrote home to provide instruction on domestic affairs. The date of this letter was 1 B.C. "Hilarion to Alis his wife heartiest greetings, and to my dear Berous and Apollonarion. Know that we are still even now in Alexandria. Do not worry if when all others return I remain in Alexandria. I beg and beseech of you to take care of the little child, and, as soon as we receive wages, I will send them to you. If—good luck to you!—you have a child, if it is a boy, let it live; if it is a girl, throw it out. You told Aphrodisias to tell me: 'Do not forget me.' How can I forget you? I beg you therefore not to worry."²

There was tenderness of this man toward his wife, and callused indifference toward the child she was carrying. This man reflected the Roman attitude toward children. Seneca, a Roman philosopher, said, "We slaughter a fierce ox, we strangle a mad dog, we plunge a knife into a sick cow and children who are born weakly and deformed, we drown."³ A child characterised as weak or imperfect had little hope of survival. Perhaps we are moving toward such brutality in this day.

In this cruel environment, Christian fathers were taught to be different. Fathers were not to provoke their children to anger. Rather, fathers were responsible to bring up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Fathers are to be encouragers. They are to model righteousness for their children. They are to instruct their children in the things of God. By this criterion, many fathers are failing their children today. The evidence is witnessed far too frequently as children exert their will against their parents and parents surrender to the will of the children. I am fully aware that the experts know better than any parent how to raise children. However, the experts do not have to deal with the broken lives of children who are untaught and they do not have to address the grieving hearts of parents when their children have ruined their lives.

A final word should be sufficient for fathers and for grandfather—be men. Take responsibility to teach your children, bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honour your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.'" Amen.

² Jeffrey Henderson and G. P. Goold, eds., **Select Papyri: Private Affairs**, trans. A. S. Hunt and C. C. Edgar, **vol. 1, The Loeb Classical Library** (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA; London; England 1932) 295, P. Oxy. **The Oxyrhynchus Papyri**, vols. i.–xvii., by B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt; the contemporary translation provided in William Barclay, ed., **The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, The Daily Study Bible Series** (The Westminster John Knox Press, Philadelphia, PA 1976), 175–176

³ Barclay, *ibid.*