

The Church's Parents, Part 2

Ephesians 6:4

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Introduction:

In our sermon series on *The Christian in Every Stage of Life*, we have been looking at the church's married people.

- And last week, we began looking at the church's parents...

I showed you that the purpose of parenting, whether parents realise it or not, is to bring forth godly children to fill the earth.

- This was God's original purpose at creation.
 - He told them so in Genesis 1:26-28.
 - They were made in His image, and they were without sin, and they were to be fruitful and to multiply themselves—to fill the earth.
 - God instituted marriage to be soil out of which children would be not only conceived, but also nurtured up to godly adulthood.
- Sadly, Adam and Eve fell into sin and rebellion.
 - Now they could only bring children that were corrupt like they were.
 - They were sentenced to die as being unfit to be on the earth.
- Yet, even so, the Lord was still committed to fill the earth with godly people.
 - He promised Christ the redeemer and forgiveness by blood sacrifice.
 - All through history, God has called out a people to Christ to be redeemed.
 - He has promised that at the last day, He will raise them all up, having perfected them in Christ, and that they will inherit the earth.
 - Those not in Christ will be cast into the pit of Hell with Satan.
 - Then the earth will be filled with godly people forever—people who are only godly because of the work of Christ our redeemer.
 - All the praise will go to Him!
 - All our hope is in Him alone.

We saw that there are two ways that Christ gathers people into His kingdom.

- By evangelism where the church preaches to those who are outside the faith...
- Or by Christian parents where the church's parents bring up their children in the faith.
 - Once He redeems us, He promises to bless us and our children if we keep His covenant.
 - That means that redeemed people come not only through faithful preaching to the lost, but also through faithful parenting... in both cases by His grace alone.

Last week, I spoke to you about how redeemed children are brought up in the soil of redeemed marriages.

- Of course, these children must continue in the Lord Jesus, but we are to bring them up as part of the visible church that looks to the promises of God to our children.
- There will always be those in the church like Judas or like the apostates that John talks about who went out from us because they were not really of us,
 - but we have the privilege of bringing our children up in the Lord all the while looking to His Spirit to work in them just as He works in us.

Today we want to look at God's calling to Christian parents...

- Please turn to Ephesians 6.
- Our text is Ephesians 6:4, but I will begin with verse 1.
 - This is God's holy and infallible Word. Listen with care.

Eph 6:1-4: Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: ³ "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." ⁴ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

May the Lord bless the reading of His holy Word.

Quite a few weeks ago, we looked at the calling of Christian children to obey their father and their mother in the Lord which is the subject of the first three verses.

- You can see the promise to them; that if they do, they will live long on the earth.
- Indeed they will! For these are children with Christian parents... parents who will command them to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and to believe on His name.
 - If such children obey their parents, they will inherit the earth forever when Jesus returns and raises us from the dead, just as God promised to Abraham so long ago and as He still promises to us today.
 - The children need to do like Timothy and continue in the things they were taught from their childhood.

But with verse 4, we look at the other side of the relationship—at the Christian parents who are to be obeyed.

- This is what I want to focus on today.
 - Look at verse 4 again: **And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.**
- You will notice that the fathers are the ones who are addressed.
 - That is not because mothers don't matter.
 - It is because God has made fathers responsible for this as the head of their home.
 - Mothers are responsible to join their husbands and conform to them in all ways.
 - Certainly, that includes conforming to their husbands as they lead the way in bringing up their children in the training and admonition of the Lord.
- So let's consider what Christian fathers are told to do.

I. First of all, you need to bring your children up in their true identity.

A. I hardly need to tell you how confused people are in our society about identity!

1. Our society is so confused that we are at war with our own bodies.
 - It's like Kierkegaard on steroids.
 - a. He is the one who first fully accepted the notion that our faith (what we believe) can be divorced from the real world.
 - With this method, you could trust in Jesus as an idea even though you don't believe that He was actually born of a virgin or raised from the dead.

- It was a way of divorcing faith from history.
 - It made faith a personal matter rather than an absolute truth claim.
 - It is something that works for you, but someone else can have something that works for them...
 - In the end it really doesn't matter if Jesus actually lived or not or if other people trust in Him or not—it is just your belief.
 - b. Well now people have taken this notion so far that they not only divorce themselves from history, but from their own bodies.
 - You know what I am talking about.
 - A man can come to believe that he is a woman even though he has a man's body.
 - His body does not matter because, it is thought, the real person is what he thinks and has nothing to do with his body.
 - Christian Professor Nancy Pearcey notes that a Princeton professor who gives a philosophical defense of transgenderism admits that it involves “disconnect,” “disjunction,” “self-alienation,” and “self-estrangement.”
2. At the root of our confusion is our refusal to recognise God's authority.
- a. In the context of upper story faith, people might speak of the image of God or of Jesus being important to them,
 - But then when it comes to deciding what to believe about Him or how to live, they simply attribute to their Jesus whatever they want.
 - b. The Lord tells us that we are fallen in Adam...
 - He tells us that we were made in God's image, but that now we are His image corrupted by sin.
 - Since most people in the church don't like that, they simply reject it and come up with a different narrative that is more appealing to them.
 - c. The result is that there is an identity crisis.
 - We do not accept our true identity as fallen creatures who were made in God's image.
 - We refuse to accept our true identity.
 - It doesn't matter what is true... it only matters what we want.
3. The fact is, that is precisely what the fall was all about.
- Satan told our first parents that if they rejected God, they could take His place.
 - They could live in their own reality instead of living in God's reality.
 - It doesn't matter what is true... all that matters is what you want.
 - What you deem to be good is good and what you deem to be bad is bad.
 - *True* becomes what is desirable to me—true to myself and not true in an absolute sense.

TRANS> That is the foundation of our confusion about our identity.

- We do not look at what is true, but rather at what we want to believe.
- And that brings us to our text.

B. God tells Christian fathers to bring up their children with a Christian identity rather than an alternate identity!

1. He says right here in our text, “Fathers... bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”
 - They are to be brought up as those who belong to Jesus our redeemer.
 - It is under His training and His admonition as their Lord who has made promises to them.
 - That is their true identity, their God-given identity, and we are to bring them up in that identity.
 - a. The Heidelberg Catechism is splendid on this.
 - 1) The very first question is this:

Q. 1. What is your only comfort in life and death?

A. That I, with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ; who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, wherefore by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him.

 - The identity of all of us—and of our children is that we belong to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.
 - 2) And then question 2 gets at identity even more because it talks about what you need to know about yourself—who you are—and it says that you need to know these things if you are to be eternally happy.

Q. 2. How many things are necessary for you to know, that you in this comfort may live and die happily?

A. Three; the first, how great my sins and misery are; the second, how I am delivered from my sins and misery; the third, how I am to be thankful to God for such deliverance.
 - b. This is extremely difficult for our society to accept.
 - How can you impose your beliefs on your children?
 - They are your beliefs, but you need to let your children decide....
 - Unless of course, it is the belief that everyone should decide what is true for them... you can impose *that* on others.
 - c. But we must not hesitate at all to tell our children what is true about them.
 - They are sinners who are destined for Hell but for Christ.
 - It is only through faith in Him who saves us that we can be blessed.
 - And we should show our gratitude by serving Him all the days of our lives.
2. God says that He is the God of us and of our children.
 - He tells us to baptise them to show that they are sinners who must be washed by Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit so that they can live for God.
 - In themselves, they are defiled and polluted, but in Christ, they are pardoned and righteous and sanctified.
 - They have the Spirit and the Word at work in them so that they can believe the truth and obey God.
 - They are sinners with an inheritance in God’s house, and they are to live with joy in the hope of that inheritance.

3. That is their true identity as the children of a believing family.
 - There are things in this that we do not like—
 - that we are condemned sinners but for God’s mercy in Christ,
 - but our not liking them does not make them untrue.
 - And there are things that we do like—
 - that Christ came and died to save us and that He has given us His Spirit to work in us...
 - but we do not make them true simply by liking them...
 - it is just that they are true because God is gracious.
 - Children are to be brought up with this identity,
 - and they must accept this identity else they will be apostates who die in their sin without Jesus Christ.

TRANS> What a liberating thing it is for our children to know who they are!

- It is not left up to them to decide.
 - God has told them.
 - He has given them the truth that is hidden from unbelievers.
 - This is a marvellous thing!
 - They will not be left to divorce themselves from history and reality!
 - Anyone who tries to make up their own reality will crash up against the Lord of glory when He returns on the great day.
 - Then they will see that they do not have the power to decide what is true...that belongs only to LORD of glory who created things the way He did without consulting us.
 - We do not have the power to create, but are meant rather to live in God’s creation.
- Now let’s look at the means that fathers are to use to bring their children up with this identity according to Ephesians 6:4.

II. There are two components to child rearing—training and admonition.

- Let’s look at each of them.
- A. Training is from the Greek word *paideia*.
- This is a very comprehensive word.
1. The overall meaning is, as it is translated in the NKJ, *training*.
 - It involves putting someone to work for a purpose... such as training someone to be a swimmer or training them to play the clarinet.
 - Training involves many things...
 - You have to show them how to do it.
 - You have to get them to practice.
 - You have to show them when they go wrong.
 - You have to prepare them for events like meets or recitals.
 - You have to encourage them and spur them on and give them hope.
 - Very often it involves leading by example—showing them what to do or teaching them to follow the example of others.

2. Inherent in this particular word is also the idea of *chastisement*.
 - *Paideia* is translated by the word *chastisement* in Hebrews 12.
 - Turn there and we can get an idea of what chastisement involves.
 - Start with Hebrews 12:5: **And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶ for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”**
 - You can see that it is associated with correction—both rebuke and scourging or the infliction of pain.
 - We are stubborn in our sins, and sometimes pain is required to bring us to repentance.
 - Sometimes it is needed to build muscle—as with the training of an athlete who has to work harder than a slave if he wants to win the prize.
 - Sometimes it is very painful, as when David had to experience apostasy and disorder in his home because of his adultery.
 - One of his sons raped his half-sister, and another of his sons slept openly with David’s wives as an act of defiance, just as God said would happen.
 - The passage continues... vs. 7:
 - **⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.**
 - Chastisement is a good thing... it shows that we are sons.
 - If someone in the church can live in rebellion against God and not receive chastisement, it shows that he is not a true son.
 - If he were, God would chastise him to correct him.
 - The worst thing of all is to be left to your sin and rebellion.

TRANS> So *paideia* includes training as well as chastisement in a corrective way.

B. The second word is *admonition*.

1. This word literally means “to put in mind.”
 - We can too easily live our lives without really thinking about what we need to think about or what we are doing.
 - We can just drift along from one thing to another, entertaining ourselves, and just living from day to day without even thinking about the Lord.
 - Living the Christian life needs to be deliberate and intentional.
 - We need to be reminded about what we should believe and about how we should live and about the importance of trusting God and serving Him.
 - We need to be admonished to pray and to read the Bible and to obey it.
2. Admonition includes a father leading his family in daily family worship.
 - Getting out the scriptures and not only reading them, but admonishing his wife and children from them.
 - Putting them in mind of what they should be living for.
 - Comforting them with the promises of God and the hope of Christ’s return.

- Remember how we saw in Genesis 18:19 that God chose Abraham to command his household to keep the way of the Lord after him that God might bring the blessing promised to them?
3. It would involve keeping your children in mind that God is at work in us.
 - To see His grace and look to Him for help when we are weak or struggling.
 - That we ought to seek Him and pray for His daily help in our time of need—for His protection and provision.
 - To remember that when we have sinned, we have an advocate in Jesus whose blood cleanses us from all our sin.
 - To remember that when trouble comes, God has sent it and will use it as we look to Him in faith.
 4. Like paideia, there is also a corrective element in admonition.
 - It also involves confronting our children about specific things.
 - Calling them to repentance for specific sins
 - Calling them to take up particular duties that they have neglected, such as helping their mother bring the groceries in or picking up the slack when she is busy.
 - Getting on with the yard work we have given them to do... whatever.

TRANS> All in all, admonition is keeping your children to fear God—to remember their creator in the days of their youth—His promises, His calling, His commandments, His judgments, His grace... everything about Him.

III. There are some important things for fathers to remember with both training and admonition.

- A. First, it is important to keep the goal in mind when you train and admonish.
 1. The goal of parenting is the bringing forth of godly children.
 - It is receiving the promise of sanctification until holiness.
 - It is receiving the inheritance that God has given us in Christ.
 - It is growing in our knowledge of the Lord and our love for Him.
 2. When the goal is kept in mind it changes everything.
 - When you train and admonish without the goal, the hard things of training and admonition are just painful... that is all...
 - But when you have the goal of holiness, hardship is transformed into grace to help you... it is still hard...
 - but now the pain has a purpose that is understood and appreciated.
 - A chap who wants to win a gold medal finds a trainer that will push him.
 - He doesn't want someone that will be easy on him.
 - He welcomes the toil of practice, he wants to be driven to the point of pain, and he wants to be corrected for his faults...
 - But if there is no goal, he would rather avoid these things.
 - If you have your children spending time in prayer and Bible study just as a raw duty—without the goal of godliness in mind...
 - It will be something that they want to avoid... it is just a pain.

3. You do well to keep the goal before yourself and your children.
 - It will change their attitude as well as yours about things like chastisement.
 - I used to do this with my children when they were very little—when they had a sour face—I would say something like,
 - “Do you want to be stuck like that all day?” Then I would make a face like they had. “That would terrible!
 - “Why don’t we ask the Lord to help you so you can be free to serve Him?”
- B. A second thing to remember is that bringing up your child in the training and admonition of the Lord is both passive and active.
1. By active, I mean that you there is training and admonition that you fathers administer—by your own hand or mouth.
 - For example, when your child needs to be chastened,
 - you are the agent of the Lord who actually inflicts the pain on the back side of your disobedient son...
 - And you are the one who speaks to him about his neglected duties and who admonishes him to get on with it.
 - God has appointed you to be active and consistent in doing these things.
 2. By passive, I mean that you help your son or daughter to receive training and admonition of the Lord that comes from other agencies that are not your own.
 - For example, your son is neglecting his responsibilities because he is spending too much time on his computer and his computer crashes.
 - You did not crash his computer or take it away, but as his father you are to bring him up in the discipline of the Lord... you are help him respond to God in such matters.
 - To use another example, your children receive admonition that does not come through your mouth every time you go to church.
 - The Lord admonishes you through the preaching of the word.
 - We are there with our children, receiving the admonition, and the Spirit is working in us and in them.
 - We need to teach them that, and teach them the importance of responding to the word that is preached, of being attentive to it.
 - You should show them an eagerness to receive the word.
 - Parents who skip church for no good reason are a terrible example to their children.
 - Satan is always trying to hinder us from hearing God’s Word and he uses every means at his disposal.
 - Don’t tell them it’s important if you don’t make it a priority.

TRANS> So you see the difference... you are to train and admonish them and you are also to teach them how to receive training and admonition that comes from the Lord apart from your agency.

- Both of these are part of *bringing them up* in the training and admonition of the Lord.

C. A third thing to remember is that the training and admonition you are to bring them up in is indeed *that of the Lord*. You are acting as His agent.

1. This is also a game changer for parents.
 - You realise that you are acting for the LORD, representing Him to your children.
 - You are not to act for yourself, but as His loyal servant.
 - There is a great temptation that comes with authority.
 - The temptation is to use the power you have over others in a selfish way.
 - Every parent, Christian or not, has God-given authority.
 - It is supposed to be God's commandments that are enforced and God's punishment that is employed.
 - But too often, parents in their selfishness have a bad day and then take it out on their children.
 - They rebuke them and yell at them, just because they are irritated and not because they are interested in helping the kids to be godly.
 - That is why on Monday you can lose it when your child walks through the room and accidentally bumps your easy chair,
 - but on Thursday when you just got a raise, your child can yell at her mother and you take no notice of it.
2. Forgetting that you are the Lord's agent puts you in the place where you will provoke your children to anger...
 - a. The inconsistency I just spoke about will provoke them...
 - they will see that it is not about God but about you that you discipline and admonish them.
 - You are not training them up in the Lord, but in your own ways.
 - b. Long term inconsistency is also a problem...
 - where you are on and off with your discipleship.
 - You have been neglecting family worship, but all of the sudden you decide to do it again—only to drop off again in another week.
 - Don't be surprised if your kids resist when you try to get it going again.
 - Just as they get into a routine, you change on them again.
 - c. You can provoke them with hypocrisy.
 - When your goal is to make a good impression on other Christians, don't expect your children to have much interest in playing your games.
 - Your admonitions are not about the Lord—they are about you.
 - You will come off that way if you have secret sins in your life too.
 - Your admonition and the training will lack sincerity and it will affect the quality of it.
 - You think you are getting away with your porn habit or whatever, but you aren't, even if you never get caught. It makes your training and admonition all wrong.
 - d. You can provoke them by harshness—that happens when you lose control of yourself and start railing on them.
 - It's not about the Lord then—it's your own chastisement.
 - One of the reasons that the world is opposed to the use of the rod of correction is because most of them have never seen it used for the Lord.

- They have not seen it used to give wisdom and beauty to a child by correcting Him in the LORD.
 - They have only seen a parent “having it up to here” and lashing out at their poor terrified child.
 - That is not biblical chastisement—that is child abuse.
- e. You can provoke your children to wrath by leniency.
- Does that seem hard to understand?
 - Well, a child has a conscience.
 - When they do wrong and you don’t correct them and lead them to repentance, they become agitated within.
 - And they lose self-control so that they are subject to temper tantrums and depression and the like.
 - The happy, gentle, and loving child is the one who is lovingly and promptly corrected by his father for his own good.
 - He is corrected quickly with the rod of the Lord.
 - He is firmly called upon to face his sin for what it is...
 - to confess it to the Lord and to seek the Lord’s forgiveness and grace.
- f. You can provoke your child to wrath by failure to point them to Christ and give them hope in His grace.
- It is so easy to discourage them in this way.
 - If you don’t point them to only one who can save them and transform them, and make sure they understand His forgiveness...
 - You are setting them up for despair and hopelessness.
- g. You can provoke your children by failing to understand them.
- Training involves helping them learn to work through struggles.
 - If you are just a rule enforcer, you are only doing part of what you are called to do.
 - You are not teaching them to call on the Lord, to look to Him for help and grace.
- h. We could mention negligence, favouritism, legalism, and many others, but the point is,
- You are to be there for the Lord—as His agent training and admonishing your children with His training and admonition.
 - All for God’s glory and for the good of your child.
 - You are helping them to reach the goal of godliness for the Lord, as we saw previously.
 - That is when you are acting as a father ought to act... as a true helper of their faith.
3. Because it is the Lord’s training and admonition, you can count on Him to help you and to make it effective... and to forgive you when you come short.
- You will come short—of course you will.

- But that is why we have a redeemer—we are sinners who need forgiveness and help to change.
- He will help you.

Conclusion: So, fathers and mothers, the grand purpose of parenting is fruitfulness for God—to raise godly children in your home.

- If you do not use the means that God has given you as a parent,
 - you have no reason to think you will succeed.
- But if you, by His enablement, bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord, you can expect a godly harvest.
 - Brothers and sisters, pray for the parents and our church and encourage them.
 - They have a great task, but remind them there is also a great reward!