

The Blessing of an Obedient Son
Ephesians 6:1–3 | 02.11.2018 | Ephesians @OBC

When I was a kid . . . I grew up in a home where my parents encouraged me to work hard in school and do the right thing in life . . .

From school projects to all kinds of sports . . . they were always there to cheer me on.

They took me all over the country for basketball . . . and put up with my moodiness when things didn't go my way . . .

As I look back . . . my parents loved me and did all they could to help me.

They weren't perfect . . . but they were a constant source of encouragement, help, and love.

Yet . . . for all they did . . . I regularly took them for granted, pushed against them, called them names, lied to them, and was as Romans 1 calls it . . . **“disobedient to my parents.”**

[PAUSE]

Not until I came to Christ . . . did my attitude toward my parents begin to change.

But when by God's grace . . . the Lord brought me into his family . . .

He gave me a new perspective towards my parents.

Instead of fighting them . . . I began to see their love.

Instead of fighting my brother . . . *THEIR* son . . . I attempted to treat him with love.

And instead doing everything on my own . . . I began to appreciate their counsel and oversight.

Indeed . . . this is what Paul is getting at in **Ephesians 6:1–3**.

When he applies Eph 5:21 . . . **submitting one to another out of reverence for Christ** to the whole church . . . and various relationships in the church . . . **He doesn't neglect children . . .**

For Paul . . . who had been studying the Scriptures since his childhood . . .

He knew believing, baptized children would be present to hear his letter.

In Ephesus . . . no children's church existed . . . and so he speaks to the children in the church.

And he addresses one of the greatest challenges believing children face . . . honoring and obeying their father and mother.

As we read from the Ten Commandments this morning, you know that honoring father and mother goes back to the beginning of the Bible.

Indeed, there are many who read **Exodus 20** and **Ephesians 6** as an unchanging moral law.

As Paul says, it is RIGHT for children to obey their parents . . .

And this is true in all ages and all places . . .

However, notice who he addresses in Ephesians . . . Children . . . who are in the Lord.

There is a world of difference between Exodus 20 with its promise of living in the land . . . and Ephesians 6 . . . where Paul has already told the believers repeatedly, the Spirit has guaranteed their inheritance in the kingdom of God (Ephesians 1:11–14 and Ephesians 5:5).

So . . . as we saw with Marriage . . . Paul gives us children more than moral code . . .

He calls children to obey the gospel . . . **and their parents**, by the power of the Spirit.

And this morning . . . we are going to see how that works . . . and how the gospel brings good news to children . . . and the challenge of obeying your parents.

To do that . . . we need to see two things.

1. I'm going to retell the story of sonship . . . found in the Bible.

From Gen. – Rev. . . there's a story that follows children through the Bible.

The story is about how God's children receive God's blessing and in dwell in God's presence.

If you've ever read the **Big Picture Story Bible**, you might be familiar with how this story goes.

And it's this story of sonship that is needed to understand how Ephesians 6 is more a moral command with a promise . . . it is promised fulfilled by Christ and given to God's children.

2. I'm going to begin to address share a few ways the gospel motivates obedience.

In a couple weeks, Lord willing, we'll come back to clarify some of the ways this verse is applied to broken homes, orphans, and adult children.

But today, we will read Paul on his own terms . . . as he focuses on children children living in the home . . . those as v. 4 indicates are still being brought up in a Christian home.

To be sure, there will be a lot of counter-examples to things I say today . . . I feel that.

I think I need about 3 weeks to preach this passage, but today we're going to get the big picture and come back in 3 weeks to deal with specific circumstances.

So . . . with that in mind . . . let's consider . . . **THE STORY OF SONSHIP**

In Ephesians 6:2–3 . . . quotes from Exodus 20:12 . . . which means we need to see why he does that.

And as we'll see . . . Exodus 20 is a commandment with a promise that stands in connection with earlier promises to Abraham and his sons.

And my hope is that by understanding this story of promise and commandment . . . we'll know our Bible's better . . . and how this promise of long life in the land motivates us to honor our parents . . . **So . . . that's my prayers. Let's get going.**

The story of sonship begins in the Garden of Eden and continues to the end of the Bible.

It's a story of **sonship not childhood** . . . B/C in the OT sons not daughters received **inheritance**.

And we look at this story, B/C Paul uses inheritance – **long life on the earth** – to motivate obed.

And so we consider SONSHIP . . . not to be man-centered . . . but to be biblical.

Firstborn sons received the inheritance . . . and this blessing from God was passed from one generation to the next, as fathers circumcised sons . . . as sons grew up and did the same.

That being said . . . this focus on SONS changes in the new covenant, where Paul in **Galatians 3** tells us that there is neither male nor female . . . but you are all heirs of promise.

In Christ, the blessings of God are no longer mediated by natural born sons . . . they are rather given to all who have trusted in the one Son of God, Jesus.

So . . . that explains why this is a story about sons . . . because ultimately . . . it leads to one truly obedient son . . . who received his inheritance in his resurrection!

So . . . there's a lot going on here . . . and instead of trying to give 10 points . . . I will instead try to retell the story of sonship . . . that will help children know Christ and honor and obey their parents.

Parents, this story is for you too,

as it will help you . . . help your children find forgiveness for their disobedience

and it will lead them to the one true son . . . who alone can teach them to obey from the heart.

So with introduction of out the way . . . let's turn to Genesis, the first few pages of the Bible.

And our story begins in Genesis 5, where we learn something about **God's family plan**.

When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ²Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. ³When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. (vv. 1–3)

Do you see what Moses is saying?

When God made Adam and Eve . . . he created them in his image and likeness . . . and it was his plan that all of their children would continue to reflect God's image . . .

As Gen. 5:3 explains, Seth bore Adam's image and likeness, which now included sin.

But while sin is passed on from Seth to Adam, so is sonship . . . and as Luke 3:38 tells us in Jesus' genealogy. . . Adam was created as **God's Son – Jesus we'll see is a better Adam, and a true Son.**

But in Gen 5 . . . we learn something important . . .

God made boys and girls to be his in beloved family . . .

You were created to know his love and to love one another . . . like a giant, loving family.

Tragically . . . sin interrupted this family plan . . . and has continued to hurt families ever since.

Thankfully, Jesus came to change this . . . and Ephesians 6 is written to those who are now in God's family . . . but still we're a long ways from experiencing the peace and love of God's family

The next chapter in this story is **Genesis 12** . . . where God chooses one man to start a new family.

This man's name is Abram . . . and God says something very special to him.

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

In these words, God promises an inheritance to Abraham . . .

Abram will have many children, . . . and these children will have a place to live in the very presence of God.

What was lost through Adam's sin . . . will now be returned to Abraham and his family . . .

And importantly . . . all of these promises . . . of people, land, and blessing . . . are given to Abraham's sons . . . in fact, this will become the inheritance they are promised.

We can see this in a passage like **Genesis 35:9–12**. Turn there.

In between Genesis 12–35 . . . we learn the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And we learn that the inheritance of land, children, and blessing is passed from father to son.

God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. ¹⁰ And God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” So he called his name Israel. ¹¹ And God said to him, “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. ¹² The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you.”

So . . . the promised inheritance is passed from father to son . . . to son . . . to son.

And God gives us this story in Genesis to produce in us . . . a desire to be a part of this blessed family.

Children young and old . . . one reason you should read the Bible . . . is because it tells you of God’s family . . . and how you can be a part of his family.

Genesis tells of how God started his family . . . and Exodus explains how he saved his family from Egypt.

In fact, . . . in Exodus . . . we learn that God treats Israel as his firstborn son. Exodus 4:22 . . .

You shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, ²³ and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’

From this verse, we learn that Exodus is a competition to see . . . who is the true son of God.

And in the Passover . . . which children were instructed to ask about every year in Israel . . . we learn how God saved firstborn sons . . . by killing a lamb in the place of the sons.

God’s love for his children is seen in the way God provides a substitute to die for his children.

That’s Exodus 4 and Exodus 12 . . . now we come to Exodus 20 . . .

In Exodus 20 . . . we see that God teaches his children to teach their children to honor their parents.

In Exodus 20:12 . . . God says, **“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”**

Do you see what it is saying?? . . . God has promised his people a blessed place in his land.

That’s why he saved Israel out of Egypt . . .

Yet, for future generations to enjoy this blessed inheritance . . . they must honor their parents.

And what happens if they don't?

Well, the law is clear . . . children who do not obey their parents won't live very long.

Exodus 21:15 – **Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death.**

Exodus 21:17 – **Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death.**

Children . . . have you ever done this? I know I have. I can remember when and where I called my mother names.

If a long and good life depends upon honoring father and mother, as Exodus 20 says, I failed. How about you? . . .

It's tempting to blow this off as extreme . . . but consider why these commands exist.

The reason . . . is because how one treats their earthly parents reflects what they think of God.

To borrow the logic of 1 John: **If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his [father], he is a liar."**

Vertical love to God is always proven in horizontal love to others, esp. family.

And that's why **Deuteronomy 21** can call the stoning of a rebellious son.

Listen to Deuteronomy 21:18–21 . . . Just after vv. 15–17 talk about inheritance for firstborn sons, Moses issues a warning to sons who do not deserve to inherit the land.

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,¹⁹ 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,²⁰ 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.'²¹ 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.

Do you see how the Law of God connects obedience to parents to long life in the land?

Under the law . . . inheritance was not automatic; it required that sons of Israel obey God by obeying their parents.

In fact, Proverbs is given to sons . . . so they might walk in righteousness and receive their inheritance.

19:26 – He who does violence to his father and chases away his mother is a son who brings shame and reproach.

20:20 – If one curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in utter darkness.

4:1–4 – Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching.

When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live."

Do you see the pattern?

Under the old covenant . . . sons enjoyed God's blessing when and only when they kept the law

And this law-keeping put a premium on honoring parents.

Just the same, such honor also applied to the nation as a whole.

When Israel as God's firstborn son honored its Father, they enjoyed seasons of great blessing.

However, in time . . . the nation proved to be a rebellious son, one who refused to honor God . . .

They broke his commands and disgraced his name, and God rightly disciplined his son and exiled Israel from the land.

Thus the Old Testament ends on a sad note . . .

Just as Adam proved to be a false son . . . who couldn't keep God's command.

So Israel also proved to be a rebellious son . . . who couldn't keep God's inheritance B/C of sin.

And this story is not just for Israel . . . it is for every child in this room . . . every son or daughter of Adam and Eve . . .

We all enter the world as enemies of God . . . cut off from the eternal life that our hearts crave.

And the struggles you have in your homes . . . and with your parents . . . and parents with your kids . . . are only evidence that all is not well in our hearts . . . or in our relationship with God.

So . . . we retell this story . . . to protect ourselves from this lie . . .

IF I JUST BEHAVE BETTER . . . DO MORE . . . AND WORK TO HONOR MY PARENTS

. . . I WILL SOMEHOW SECURE A GOOD AND LONG LIFE!! **NO . . . THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL.**

The Old Testament teaches us . . . we can't obey our way into the Promised Land.

And Ephesians 6 is not saying . . . if you just work harder to obey your parents, you will be blessed.

Remember . . . Paul applies Exodus 20:12 to children who are *IN THE LORD*.

The blessing has already come to these children . . . B/C of their faith in the **truly obedient son**

This we must remember . . . Jesus is the only one who kept the fifth commandment and
/: He alone receives the promise of a good, long life in the land.

Consider just two passages that highlight Jesus' obedience.

First, there's **Luke 2:51** . . . which records how he submitted to his parents.

After Mary and Joseph find Jesus in the temple, Luke writes,

"And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them."

Luke adds the note about "submission" to make sure we know, Jesus who was God in the flesh honored his earthly parents.

That's **one** instance of Jesus obedience, but there is another.

In John's Gospel . . . we see that Jesus is constantly doing what the Father is doing.

He says in **John 5:19**, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise."

Or again in **John 8:49**, "I honor my Father, and you dishonor me."

Jesus' obedience to his Father shows he is a Son who deserves to receive all the promises to Israel.

Even though . . . many in Israel accuse him of being a rebellious son, one who is a glutton and drunkard and friend of sinners . . . wisdom is proven in his death and resurrection. (Matt. 11:19)

In his resurrection, the Father bears witness . . . that this is his Son.

And because of his obedience . . . he receives a name above all names . . . and the right to rule over all creation.

Indeed, he is given the inheritance promised to Israel . . . because he is an obedient son.

And now he shares that inheritance with all those who trust in him.

And that's what we find in Ephesians.

In **Paul's letter**, this theme of inheritance has come throughout the letter.

In **Ephesians 1:11–14**, Paul says those who believed the gospel have received the Spirit as a seal and down payment of this inheritance.

While the children of God do not yet have a permanent home in the new heavens and new earth, the Holy Spirit bears witness to the inheritance we will receive when Christ comes again.

And now in **Ephesians 6:2–3** . . . Paul comes to the conclusion of this story.

And instead of saying . . . “children, get your act together and honor your parents.”

OR “Obey your parents . . . or else you will reap God’s judgment and lose your place in the land.”

Rather . . . he speaks to the children who have found a place in Christ’s kingdom.

And to them, he says your obedience is not a work you do to earn a good and long life.

Your desire to honor your parents is a gift from God that confirms you are a child of God.

That switch is so important . . . let me say it again.

Children	Your attitude and actions towards your parents will not earn you long life. Rather, your honor and obedience reveals whether or not you have eternal life.
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So let me ask . . . Is the life of Christ living in you?

Are you a child of God? If so . . . it will be evident in the way you seek to honor your parents.

Are you continually disobedient, disrespectful, dismissive of your parents? . . .

It warns you . . . you are not a child of God.

Or if you are . . . you are acting out of step with the Lord who bought you.

If you have trusted Christ . . . it will change your relationship with authority.

Parents are given to you to teach you how to respect authority . . .

And if you are in Christ . . . your submission to him is lived out by obeying your parents.

Of course . . . there are examples where parents are abusive . . . even dangerous.

But in general . . . this call to obey and honor is the proving ground for childhood faith.

And child of God . . . if you are struggling to honor and obey your parents . . . look to Christ.

See his perfect obedience . . . trust in his death for your disobedience . . . and pray.

Pray for the Spirit to enable you to obey and honor your parents.

Which brings us to the myriad of ways we must apply this passage . . .

In short order, let me share . . .

Five Motivations for Children in the Lord to Honor and Obey Their Parents.

1. Righteousness is the first motivation.

In v 1, Paul encourages children to obey your parents *in the Lord*, for this is right.

Literally, his word could be translated as **righteous**.

For children who have been saved from sin and clothed with Christ's righteousness, there is new spiritual desire to walk in righteousness . . . and this should motivate you to obey your parents.

If this desire for righteousness is lacking . . . then the trouble stands between you & God . . . not if this desire for righteousness is present . . . then take heart, that will motivate you.

2. Inheritance is the second motivation.

In verses 2–3, Paul reminds us obedience to parents comes with a promise.

Only in Christ, it is not just a conditional promise; it is a fulfilled promise.

And because it has been fulfilled . . . Children *in the Lord* should long to live according to their future inheritance = **The same Spirit who seals your future, empowers your present.**

And the Lord who promises you eternal life . . . calls you to walk in the newness of life, by doing his commands . . . including honoring your parents. **Let your position in Christ motivate you . . .**

3. Christlikeness is the third motivation.

This can and should motivate us to do all kinds of difficult and risky things . . . honestly, telling the truth, admitting wrong, apologizing, listening are all ways to carry the cross.

These are also exactly what children need to honor and obey their parents.

Therefore, children look to Christ, long to be like him, and let that impel you to obey your parents

4. Family is a fourth motivation.

The command to honor and obey your parents draws you closer to God and to them—this creates a loving and even spiritual environment.

Children, Christian parents are a gift from the Lord. And that is what Paul is addressing here.

To be sure, there are many families where sin is rampant and Christ is absent.

But if you have Christ . . . and your parents do . . . or one parent does, there is blessing in that.

So the fourth motivation comes from the goodness of a family that seeks to put Christ at the center . . . and the fruit of the spirit that blossom when children seek to honor and obey . . .

One last thing to say . . .

5. Church community is a fifth motivation . . .

If you love Christ . . . you will love his bride.

And in the church . . . you both find a Spirit-filled family to lean on and learn from.

And this means you find mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters to help you know how to honor and obey earthly parents.

Jesus was very clear . . . to follow him means that he will at times divide families.

That being said, he also leads families to Christ . . . and often this happens as disobedient children are changed by the Spirit and become living models of Christ to their unbelieving parent.

So child of God . . . do not grow weary of honoring and obeying your parent.

Look to Christ . . . and learn how to walk like him.

Look to your brothers and sisters in Christ . . . to find wisdom and encouragement.

Look to future . . . when all of God's children will be grown up and united to him.

From this certain hope . . . let it empower you to live as children of God today.

4 Observations

1. As the **story of sonship** told us . . . Eph 6:1–3 must be applied in light of all that has come before it.

Specifically, we must apply Ephesians 1–5 to this command.

Which means . . . long life in the land is NOT achieved through works of the law.

Rather, as Ephesians taught us eternal life comes by faith in Christ alone . . . but those who have been made alive . . . will honor and obey their parents.

2. **Paul addresses children in the home.**

While these verses have indirect application to adult children . . . they are targeting children not yet married but still being raised in the home – this is why Paul uses the word **OBEY**

While honor should be given to parents in every season of life, **obedience** is what honor looks like when a child is being raised in the home.

This observation helps us to see who he has in mind . . . and how this instruction of obedience is best applied in Christian homes, where parents and children are in the church together.

Again, it can and should be applied beyond that . . . but it is best applied in the Christian home.

3. **Paul is addressing Christian children.**

Notice again . . . **Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this right.**

The **in the Lord** indicates the kind of children he has in mind . . . those who have been saved from sin, who have trusted in Christ and identified themselves with Christ through baptism.

In the NT, “in the Lord” was a public reality, not a private one. And thus, he is calling children known to be Christians to model obedience to their parents.

Today . . . this has the same application for children . . . if you are in Christ, God has given you a new heart and a new Spirit . . . to do in Christ what you couldn’t before . . .

4. **Your obedience is not based on your strength or circumstance . . .** it is a product of the Spirit and the Word working in you. . . . which brings us to four biblical motivations for honoring parents.

5 Applications – Moving from young children to adults

1. **Obey Them** . . . children . . . if you are in Christ, and you are living at home, God calls you to trust the goodness and wisdom of your parents . . . and to obey them.

If this is hard . . . and it will be hard . . . it's meant to lead you to Christ, so he can teach you how.

2. **Honor Them** . . . this goes for children young and old.

The word for honor has the sense of give them their due, or their weight.

Obviously, giving honor is going to depend on the honor that they are due, but you should use your words and actions to esteem them and not to tear your parents down.

3. **Forgive Them** . . . if you are in the Lord, it's because you've been forgiven. Therefore, you should forgive your parents.

They will not be perfect. If they are Christian, they should be seeking Christ. They will succeed at times, and they will fail. Your calling is not to be their Holy Spirit, but to thank God for his grace in them . . . and to forgive them . . . as they confess their sin.

4. **Seek Their Counsel** . . . God has given you parents with knowledge and wisdom.

Sure they may not know the newest band or the coolest thing . . . but they know about life.

And if you have been given parents who know the Lord . . . you have an incredible resource for walking wisely in this life.

5. **Provide for Them** . . . This is a word for older children.

Just as parents are called to provide for their children . . . so on the other end of life, children should care for, provide for, and look after the needs of their parents.

This is a commonplace teaching in Scripture and an application of honor.

5 Clarifications – Applying Ephesians 6 in Broken Homes

1. Honor vs. Obedience
2. Person vs. Positions
3. Honor vs. Relationship
4. Honor vs. Agreement
5. Honor vs. Enabling