

## **"Children, Obey Your Parents ..."**

*"... in the Lord for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with promise); that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long upon the earth" (Eph. 6:1-3).*

The parallel passage from Colossians reads, *"Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing in the Lord"* (Col. 3:20). The statement, according to Colossians, *"obey in all things,"* must be modified by the Ephesians passage, *"Obey ... in the Lord."* The extent of a child's duty to obey his parents is *"in the Lord,"* essentially, as the Lord commands.

Much has been both said and written about the expression *"in the Lord,"* particularly where the phrase is found in 1 Corinthians 7:39 where widows are told they are *"free to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord."* Some conclude from this that a widow can only marry one who is a member of the church. We are persuaded that would be best, but are unconvinced that the phrase *"in the Lord"* means *"one who is a Christian, or who is a member of the church."* In the first place, there are many in the church who the widow is not free to marry. In the second place, we certainly cannot understand Paul to teach children they have obligation to obey their parents only if their parents are Christians. All children have obligation to obey their parents, whether their parents are Christians, atheists or idolaters. Children are not obligated to obey their parents should they command them to do something God has not enjoined. Admittedly, in some instances, the phrase *"in the Lord"* includes being a Christian for when John wrote, *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord,"* it is evident that such blessed people were (are) Christians. Yet even there the definition *"in the Lord"* = "according to God's will" holds. Once one reaches the age of accountability, he cannot be pleasing to God if he rejects the blood of Christ, which when applied to the sinner, makes him a Christian.

It is right that children obey their parents -- whose parents instruct their children in God's will. When children walk in the instructions his parents have given him, God is both pleased and honored. *"Honor thy father and mother"* which is the first commandment with promise. That promise was that their life would be extended upon the earth. There is no "cut off" time in which we may cease to honor our parents. Certainly, when we become adults and establish homes of our own, we do not sustain the same relationship as we did when we were under our parents rule and oversight. God has commanded, *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they twain shall become one flesh"* (Mt. 19:5). And, what is true of the husband is also true of the wife. Still the child, even the adult

child, must always honor his father and mother. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their hypocrisy when He said, *"Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your traditions. For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother, and he that speaketh evil of father and mother, let him die the death; but ye say. If a man should say to his father or mother, that whereby thou mightest have been profited by me is corban, that is to say, given to God; ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father or his mother"* (Mk. 7:9-12). When our parents are old, we are to honor them. We must provide for whatever needs they have, to the best of our ability, for we must never forget that the life we have we received from them. Thus, as long as we live, we sustain a debt of gratitude and honor to those who conceived us and cared for us when we could not care for ourselves.

It is a perverse generation which refuses to care for aged parents. We would do well to remember the story, true or false, of a father, who with his son was carrying his own father to put in an "old folks home." The young son's question was, "Is this where I'm going to carry you, when I get grown, Daddy?" Let us honor our father and mother, and when they are dead, let us not cease to honor their memory.

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