

Text— Ephesians 6:1-4

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

This past Wednesday was Epiphany. Epiphany means “manifestation” or “appearance”. Consequently, on the day of Epiphany we especially recall Jesus’ appearance to wise men from the east who visited Him in His infancy. We also recall Jesus later manifesting forth His glory as He appeared on the scene to begin His public ministry in earnest.

Notably memorable are the events recorded in Matthew 3:13-17, where we read: “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Observe that Jesus’ first action as He was about to begin His public ministry was His being baptized by His forerunner, John the Baptist. Jesus did not personally need baptism for the remission of sins since He had no sin of His own. Nevertheless, Jesus fulfilled all righteousness for us, because He is “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” as John the Baptist declared, as recorded in John 1:29. It’s also interesting to note the Holy Spirit’s presence at Jesus’ baptism, and the fact that God the Father spoke from heaven declaring that Jesus is His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased.

Take it to heart that Jesus always did His Father’s will. Jesus never did anything contrary to His Father’s will. Jesus is the perfect Son of His Father, yea, “the only begotten of the Father, full of grace

and truth,” as John 1:14 reports. Additionally, Jesus always conducted Himself perfectly by subjecting Himself to His mother Mary and His foster-father Joseph.

Regarding Jesus Christ, we read in Hebrews 4:15 that He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Accordingly, it is sure that Jesus was the perfect child who rendered proper honor and obedience to His foster-father Joseph and His mother Mary, for Luke 2:46-52 informs us that when Jesus was twelve years old, “it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” Thus, Jesus was indeed the perfect Son in being about His Father’s business, and in subjecting Himself to His mother Mary and foster-father Joseph. Jesus is therefore a perfect example of right behavior for all people.

My friends, God in His Word has supplied us with specific instructions regarding how we are to conduct ourselves in different roles of life in this world. Our Scripture selection is a case in point, for there we are given:

“CHILDREN’S AND PARENTS’ DUTIES”

With that as our theme may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) What are children’s duties
- 2) What are parents’ duties

Verse 1, ----- (Ephesians 6:1)

Our God-inspired text opens with the following words: *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.* Observe that obedience of one's parents is NOT merely optional; rather, it is a clear command, and it is the right thing to do. However, note well that the command is: *Children, obey your parents in the Lord.* Thus, parents are to be obeyed only when their instructions are not at variance with the Lord's commandments, for if parents command that which is against God's commands, "We ought to obey God rather than men," declares Acts 5:29.

Some people mistakenly think they cease to be children once they reach the age of eighteen and are regarded in society as adults. My friends, if we have a mother and a father we are always their child who owes them obedience, as long as they do not command anything contrary to God's Word. For example, consider the following case of two adult sons as recorded in Genesis 28:6-9, "When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padan-aram; And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife." Hence, Jacob obeyed his father Isaac while Esau deliberately did the opposite of his father's wishes in that Esau took a pagan wife just to displease his father Isaac.

My friends, Colossians 3:20 instructs: "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." And, Proverbs 1:8-10 clearly states: "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head,

and chains about thy neck. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Proverbs 30:17 adds: "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." Thus, to please the Lord and to do right we are to be obedient to our parents unless they tell us to do something contrary to God's will as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

If we are honest we must all admit that we have not always obeyed our parents. Romans 3:23 is right on point in reporting: "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Consequently, we ALL need Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, for "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) Thankfully, Jesus Christ has paid for ALL of our sins of thought, word, and deed. Let us therefore sincerely repent of our sins; let us cling to Jesus Christ in heart-deep faith as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us go forward striving to keep God's commands in gratefulness to Him.

Verses 2 & 3, ----- (Ephesians 6:2-3)

We are commanded: *Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.* Looking at the original Greek wording we learn that to honor is to respect, to highly value, and to revere our father and mother. This commandment, which we Lutherans call the 4th, is the first commandment of the second table of God's Law and contains the promise that if we keep it, it shall be well with us and we may be blessed with long life on earth. We read in Deuteronomy 5:16 that Moses said to the children of Israel: "Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." So, our text confirms the commandment upon all people, in the New Testament sense.

Sadly, it's not uncommon to see guys and gals treat their parents disrespectfully, and then those same guys and gals end up having all sorts of problems and they die at an early age. Proverbs 23:19-22 says in no uncertain terms: "Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags. Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." Leviticus 19:32 adds: "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head [that is, the grey-haired head], and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD." Furthermore, when speaking of local congregations helping widows, 1 Timothy 5:3-4 says: "Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God." Thus, we see that caring for our parents when they are old is part of our duty in honoring them.

Consider Jesus' example in caring for His mother Mary, for even while Jesus was suffering and dying on the cross He thought about providing proper care for His mother, for we read in John 19:25-27, "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." Jesus entrusted His mother's care to the disciple John because John could properly provide for her spiritual well-being as well as her physical well-being.

Another example of God-pleasing behavior of a child for his parent is that of Joseph in caring for his father, for when the land of Canaan was experiencing severe famine Joseph sent for his father, "And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his

neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families." (Genesis 46:29; 47:11-12)

Do we and have we always honored our mother and father as we should? In honesty we must ALL admit we've blown it, "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not," declares Ecclesiastes 7:20. Hence, we surely need the forgiveness of sins Jesus Christ provides, for He is the only Way to God and heaven.

Accordingly, let us take it to heart that children's duties are to obey and honor their parents. Our duty is to obey and honor our parents. Let us also thank the Lord if we have, or have had, God-fearing parents who saw to it that we were taught the Holy Scriptures from infancy on, for such parents are truly a blessing.

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As we ponder the remaining verse of our text, let us see what are parents' duties.

Verse 4, ----- (Ephesians 6:4)

Despite modern society's sayings, the truth remains that the father is the head of the home. We read in Ephesians 5:22-23, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." Thus, the father bears the higher responsibility in raising children, although the mother is also responsible since she is to work with her husband in raising their young. Parents have God-given responsibilities in raising their offspring.

The closing verse of our text issues commands when it says: *ye fathers, provoke not your children*

to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Fathers are NOT to go beyond the dictates of the Holy Bible and lay harsh and unrealistic demands upon their children to the point where they provoke them to exasperation and violent anger. And, that includes mothers who assist the fathers in rearing the children. Colossians 3:21 says: "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." A child who is pressed too hard can finally give up on trying to do anything to please his or her folks.

For example, think about Jonathan the son of King Saul, and their relationship as son and father, for Jonathan had faithful David for his friend, and we read in 1 Samuel 19:4-7, "Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good: For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause? And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain. And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past."

However, a short time later Saul was again seeking David's life for no valid reason, and Jonathan would not help his father kill innocent David; and so, we read in 1 Samuel 20:30-34, "Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die. And Jonathan answered Saul his

father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done? And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame." King Saul surely provoked his son Jonathan to anger.

Rather than parents provoking children to wrath, they are to *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

Think about it. It's the duty of fathers, and mothers working with them, to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord— to bring up their children in the education, training, and discipline of the Lord as found in the Holy Bible. Children are to be taught God's Law so they know their sinfulness, and the Gospel of Christ so they know their Savior from sin. Children need to be taught from the Holy Scriptures what is right and what is wrong because sinful-society has very little regard for the truth and commonly calls good evil and evil good.

It's as 2 Timothy 3:15-17 informs us: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

There is no greater thing that fathers and mothers can do for their children than to see that they come to know the Holy Bible and its teachings, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin. [And] the gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not

perish, but have everlasting life.” (Romans 3:20; 1:16-17; John 3:16)

Another thing to be remembered is the duty of parents to admonish their children by spanking them when necessary since God commands it in His Word. Proverbs 13:24 states: “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” Proverbs 19:18 adds: “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.”

Let us take to heart from our text what we’ve considered concerning children’s and parents’ duties. Let us thank God if we have, or have had, Christian parents who saw to it that we were brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Let us honor our parents.

Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins. Let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord, for He is our Rescuer from never-ending ruin. Amen.

m.e.l.