

Imago Dei: Obey Your Parents, Save the World – Eph 6:1-3

Imago Dei and the Battle for Humanity - #7

Introduction – For several generations our culture has been soaking in an enlightenment mentality, giving birth to rampant individualism, egalitarianism, and sentimentalism, all of which has destroyed a right understanding of what it is to be made in the image of God, male and female. There have been many results of these festering poisons not the least of which is a widespread disregard by children to obey and honor their parents.

Disobedience is a Big Deal – You might ask why I am bringing this up in this series. First, we need to understand that the honor required by the Fifth Commandment is no little deal; it is one of the Ten Commandments after all. Israel was warned in Moses' day that *"Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt"* (Deut 27:16) in a series of warnings of actions that would bring down an entire nation. Paul gives a list of sins in the last days, *"For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents..."* (see 2 Tim 3:1-5). In Romans 1, Paul describes the descent of a culture when they refuse to acknowledge God and suppress the truth they know about Him (Rom 1:18ff). Not only does God give them over to the folly of their sexual sins (1:24ff), but to all sorts of wickedness including, *"haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents..."* (1:30). Disobedience to parents is not the moral equivalent of a traffic violation. It is a big deal to God and has an enormous impact on the future of a nation. And so, second, these sins are connected to one another. They are familial and Imago Dei sins, destroying the fabric of marriage and family bonds. While these temptations always exist, the outward acceptance of these sins is accelerated by a secularized culture and is the judgment of God upon a rebellious culture.

Obedience with Promise (Eph 6:1-3) – The temptation for children, even Christian children, to disobey their parents is as common as springtime rain in Seattle – and so every child should take notice. In this letter, Paul is addressing covenant children who are to hear such commands *"in Jesus' name"* which means they are not simply to obey, they are to *"therefore obey"* based on the Spirit-filled life they have in Christ (Eph 1-3). Kids need the regenerating work of the Spirit of Christ in order to obey God's laws as much as anyone else does. This obedience comes with a promise that will work itself out on this earth in their lives individually and upon the culture in which they live. This was the promise to Israel; a promise which had catapulted out to all the Gentiles - all the world who trust and obey. Scripture gives us many examples of what this obedience and honor must look like.

Students of their Parents – *"My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother"* (Prov 1:8). Children are to be attentive to their parents (Prov 23:22), and they are to seek to please them (Prov 10:1, 19:26, 23:25).

Above Board with their Parents – Lying is, of course, a grievous sin. Related to that, children must respect the responsibility their parents have for their sexual purity (Deut 22:20-21). They must turn to their parents for protection, wisdom and instruction in this. And so of course it is your parent's business to know who you are texting, what you are looking at, listening to and watching.

No Physical or Verbal Dishonor – Children must never strike their parents (Ex 21:15). Children must never curse their parents (Ex 21:17). And one that is far too often allowed in our circles, children must never mock their parents (Prov 30:17).

Your Parents' Property is Their Property – Do you know how most ATM thefts occur? (Prov 28:24).

In Fact, Children are to Provide for their Parents – Grown children have a responsibility to honor their parents by repaying them in their need (1 Tim 5:4). This is how Jesus applied the Fifth Commandment (Mark 7:10). Parents are to *"lay up for the children"* (2 Cor 12:14) but honoring parents also includes financial commitments to them.

A Fundamental Priority – The primary point of obedience for children is for them to hear, believe, and grow in the gospel of Jesus Christ. While we must honor our parents, we must honor and love God more (Matt 10:37). No human authority is absolute and so these commands to obey authority are protected from misuse by a primary obedience to Christ. There is no place for parental sinfulness and family tyrannies in the church of Jesus Christ.

Who is Your Father? – Covenant child, are you born again? This is a question that can lead to two ditches we want to avoid. The first ditch is the idea that you must know the date and time of your regeneration, you must have a super-cool testimony about your conversion, and others must have witnessed a darkness/light-radical change in you in order for you to know that you are saved. Paul had a radical testimony, but he saw nothing wrong with Timothy's (2 Tim 1:5, 3:15). Here is the principle: you don't have to know what time the sun rose to know that it is up.

But there is a second ditch which is the error of the Pharisees in John 8:39ff. They said Abraham was their father but their deeds proved that their actual father was the devil. And so the question "are you born again," might be asked, "Who is your father?" We all have been generated by a father and we all need a new Father and this is not simply synonymous with a formal attachment to the Christian church.

Out of a heart that is transformed by Christ and empowered by the Spirit, obey your parents in the Lord, honor your father and mother and see the overflow of that in future marriages, families, nations – the world.

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