

Title: For Believers and Their Children

Text: Proverbs 6: 20-24

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Our subject is "For Believers and Their Children."

Proverbs 6: 20: My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: 21: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. 22: When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. 23: For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: 24: To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.

God our Father and Christ Jesus our Savior is the everlasting Father. Those he has called by his grace are his children. Scripture refers to the church as the mother. (Is 49: 17-23; 54: 13) Through the church Christ provides for his pastor so that he can give himself to the word and prayer to bring a word from our heavenly Father to his children. The gospel, including God's law as well as the gospel of Christ, is "the commandment and law" spoken of in our text. Therefore, every believer is wise to heed the word of our heavenly Father and every child with believing parents is wise to heed the command of their father and mother.

GOD IS ABLE

God is able to use faithful fathers and mothers to draw his children to hear the gospel of Christ our Redeemer. Therefore the wise man wrote, "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother." (Pro 6: 20)

King Solomon penned these words. Solomon himself was a chosen child of God our Father and a child of a believing father. King David was God's anointed, God's king, God's prophet. David was faithful to teach Solomon the gospel. By God's grace, giving him a new heart, Solomon believed the gospel his father taught him. Here is what it led Solomon to do.

1 Kings 3: 5: In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. 6: And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day. 7: And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I *am but* a little child: I know not *how* to go out or come in. 8: And thy servant *is* in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. 9: Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? 10: And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11: And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; 12: Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. 13: And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

So Solomon is a man speaking from experience. He heeded the commandment God delivered to him by his father. Through his father's word, God gave Solomon wisdom to heed his heavenly Father. So God increased Solomon in much wisdom so that there was none like him before him, neither after him. So Solomon is speaking by experience when he says to his son and to us, "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother." (Pro 6: 20)

The wisest thing for Solomon's children would be to obey their father's commands, that they might also believe the gospel. Likewise, the wisest thing for you who have godly fathers and mothers is to obey them, so that you might hear and believe the gospel they have taught you and brought you to sit under. And, believer, remember these are the words of King Jesus—God's King, the Wisdom of God—our Everlasting Father. The wisest thing for you and I who believe is to continue heeding the gospel delivered us by our Everlasting Father through his gospel.

GREAT ADVANTAGE

How God has blessed us to call us into his church where he has established his gospel! Likewise, children of believing parents have great advantage. They have parents saved by God's free grace who can teach the truth of God and who keep them coming to hear the gospel preached.

There are millions born into this world who do not have believing parents. Their parents hate God, hate his gospel and teach their children to do the same. Many children have parents who do not love them enough to put any restraint upon them, except for their own selfish pleasure. But children with believing parents have the advantage of having fathers and mothers to whom God has proven his promises in Christ.

Before the world was made, God ordered all things in the salvation of his people in Christ in his eternal council in his everlasting covenant of grace. But, like all sinners born of Adam, we were born dead in sin. We could not bow to God's word, we could not believe God's word and we had no interest in God's word. So a believing father and mother know what it is to be in unbelief like their children. We were once where you are. We walked according to the course of this world even as others. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace [we were] saved;)" (Eph 2:4-5) So when a believing father bears witness to his children that God is rich in mercy, that God quickens dead sinners by grace, their child has the advantage of hearing the gospel from someone who knows the power of God's grace by experience. So "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother."

Also, a believing father and mother, remember what it was like to think we were not as sinful as God said we were. We remember what it was like to think we could save ourselves by our works. We, too, were once without Christ, having no hope and without God in the world. "But now in Christ Jesus [we] who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For [Christ] is our peace, who hath made [us] one, [with God and our brethren] and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace" (Eph 2:13-15) So when a believing father and mother bears witness to their child of how Christ fulfilled the law for us, made peace for us with God and brought us to be reconciled to God, we are speaking by experience. What great advantage for a child to have parents who can relate to them and can speak by the experience of God's saving grace! So "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother."

Furthermore, God's children are kept by the power of God. For the sake of their parents, children of believers get to see first-hand how God preserves his children by his grace and power. One of our families moved to south Jersey away from the gospel. Their father meant the best for his family. Most of us have been in such a trial and made similar mistakes. We are sinners at best. We make mistakes. But the children of believing parents have the advantage of seeing God work in the lives of their father and mother to preserve us in spite of us. So it was with that believing father and mother. God shut up their way. God brought them back so they could be under the sound of the gospel of Christ and him crucified.

By that trial, God gave their children a great opportunity to see God's preserving grace at work. Their children got to see in their believing parents how trials work greater dependence upon God; how through patience, God proves his faithfulness; how in proving his faithfulness, God works greater hope in the believer; and how hope in God never leaves the believer ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts (Rom 5: 3-5)

It is by such experience of his grace that God has proven in the hearts of believing fathers and mothers that all God's promises are yes and amen in Christ. (2 Cor 1: 20) So when we speak the gospel to our children, we are speaking by painful and joyful experience. So "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother."

A child might ask, "But what about the everyday commands my parents give me?" In the everyday commands that believing parents give their children, we are teaching our children what we have learned. And we are trying to keep our children under the gospel because we know this is how God saves and continues to save his people.

When I was my son's age my dad and I had the closest bond a father and son could have. Then I became a teenager. I began to think I knew more than my father. By a single choice I made, I ended up living my whole life away from him. When all I wanted was for my children to have their grandparents close by like I had.

Now, my parents are so much wiser in my eyes. And as I see how my heavenly Father overruled my rebellion and all things in my life to save me, to use me to serve him and his church, I see how supremely wise my heavenly Father is. These are things believing fathers and mothers have learned and are trying to teach you, especially the gospel of Christ.

Likewise, for us who are believing fathers and mothers, forsake not the commandment of Christ our Everlasting Father. Every time I find myself burdened over my children, God uses it to remind me that the things that grieve me about my children are the things wherein I grieve my heavenly Father. I hear my heavenly Father speaking to me the very words I speak to my children, "My son, keep thy father's commandment."

THE HEART

Next, we are told what to do with the command, "Bind them continually upon thine heart." (Pr 6:21) God looks on the heart. A person can clean up the outside but be rebelling on the inside. God hates hypocrisy! Christ said to the outwardly religious children in Israel, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me." (Mt 15:7-8) He said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. *Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." (Mt 23:25-26) So God our Father commands his child to bind his word continually "upon thine heart." (Pro 6: 21)

First, bind the law of God upon your heart. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom 3: 19-20) In our heart, God shut our mouths; in our heart, God declare us guilty; in our heart, God teach us we can never be justified by the deeds of the law; in our heart, God make us understand the law is to give us a knowledge of our sin and give us a knowledge of our sin. My prayer for my children and for each of you here is that from the heart, God would bring us to cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Ro 7:24)

Then bind his gospel upon your hearts. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Ro 3:21-26) In our heart, God make us know your righteousness; in our heart, God make us know your righteousness is manifest apart from our works; in our heart, make us know your righteousness is that we are justified freely by your grace; in our heart, God make us know redemption from the curse of the law is in Christ Jesus; in our heart, God make us know you set forth Christ the propitiation, the seat of mercy, the place

where you will meet with us; in our heart, God give us faith to believe on Christ because your righteousness is given only through faith in your Son; in our heart, God make us behold your righteousness, that by Christ you are just and by Christ you are the justifier of every true believer.

I find myself praying more than anything else, “God keep my heart!” I promise you if God give us a new heart, making us bind his law and gospel upon our hearts then the outside of the cup will surely follow.

THE NECK

Notice also our text says, “Tie them about thy neck.” (Pro 6: 21)

Right now, you who do not believe the gospel consider everything about the gospel to be a heavy yoke which you despise upon your neck: coming to hear the gospel, God declaring you guilty, God declaring none of your works shall make you accepted, constantly hearing the person and works of Christ Jesus, God’s Son. You have no heart to read or heed his word. Everything concerning God burdens you.

That is the reason the commandments of your father and mother are a burden to you. While a sinner despises God’s authority, he despises the authority God puts over him: religious, civil, and household. Man in his natural state is a rebel against all authority because his heart is enmity against God the ultimate Authority. He cannot make himself submit to God’s authority or any authority. That’s the problem with the heart that has not been made broken and contrite by God’s grace. He will not have Christ reign over him.

Therefore, the life of rebellion is hard. When Christ brought Paul down into the dust, Christ said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” (Acts 26: 14) When we reject our parents, we reject Christ who put them over us; when we reject Christ’s preacher, we reject Christ who gave him; when we reject Christ’s people, we reject Christ who gathered them; when we reject those in authority, we reject Christ who put them in office. Imagine rebelling by kicking against a cactus. Kicking against Christ and those he put in authority makes life hard, bitter, full of envy, strife, division, pain and sorrow and sin of every kind.

But after God binds his word in the new heart, after God breaks the heart of his child (and God breaks the believers heart over and over again by his chastening hand) his gospel becomes an ornament about our neck. Christ said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.” (Mt 11:28-30) Child, submit to your father’s command next time and see if you do not find rest. So it is with Christ. When Christ is Lord of our heart and his yoke is tied upon our neck, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” (Ga 5:19-23)

A faithful father and mother will not allow their child to rebel without chastening them. It may be hard for the child but it is meant to be. It is how our heavenly Father broke our hearts. We pray God might do the same in the hearts of our children. When a child is being chastened by their earthly father, the best thing for the child is to hug up close to their father. So it is when we are chastened of God our Father. Instead of kicking against the cactus, submit and hug up close to Christ in repentance and faith.

THE SURE EFFECT

After, God binds his gospel upon our hearts and puts his yoke upon our neck, the sure effect of his word is, “When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and *when* thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.” (Pr 6:22)

The purpose of life, of every trial and every joy is only known through faith in Christ. Unbelievers never know it. In scripture, every unbeliever served one purpose. God used them to show his true child the way of destruction. Do

you want that to be the only purpose of your life? Life is hard. Then you must face eternity. The preparation for both is Christ.

When God gives us a heart to hear his word, to submit and heed his word, “when you go, it shall lead thee.” There is no better guide to lead us than Christ through his word. (Read Psalm 23)

“When thou sleepest, it shall keep thee.” The rebel who has made a covenant with death and hell never has rest, “for the bed is shorter than that *a man* can stretch himself *on it*: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself *in it*.” (Isa 28:20) But there is no better sleep than a believer stretching out on the bed of God’s free and sovereign grace. The best lock on the door, the best peace in the dark night is to know we have forgiveness through the precious blood of Christ and are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Nothing shall separate the believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus. The worst anyone can do to us in this life is open the door for us to enter into our heavenly inheritance with Christ.

“And *when* thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.” When you awake and face the day full of heavy burdens, how it lightens the burden to awake with Christ communing in our hearts! I have no idea how people face this world without Christ. How do they face death?

Therefore, for us parents who believe, I pray Christ use the burdens we have for our children, to teach us to obey our heavenly Father, to seek and obey his word.

For you who are children of believers, know this. The peace of God which comes with believing on the Lord Jesus is what your parents desire more than anything for you. Obey them. Submit to them. Attend the preaching of the gospel eager to hear God’s word. Listen, not to find a reason to doubt God’s word, but to believe the Lord Jesus.

“For the commandment *is* a lamp; and the law *is* light; and reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life: To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman”, from the harlot of Babylon with her false religion and her every false way. (Pr 6:22-24; Rev 17: 5)

Amen!