

**COLOSSIANS**  
The Christian Child  
Colossians 3:20, Ephesians 6:1-3

**INTRODUCTION**

A famous person said, "The younger generation no longer respects its elders; it tyrannizes its teachers, fails to rise when old people enter the room, and has atrocious manners." This quote did not come from the Letters to the Editor column in the Orlando Sentinel. It was the observation of a wise old gentleman who lived over 2000 years ago. His name was Socrates.

It is now 1987 and things have gone from bad to worse. Juvenile delinquency and juvenile crime are skyrocketing to heights never known before. Some of the most brutal crimes committed today are by children, not teenagers, children twelve years old and younger. Today children are into drugs and sex and it is not uncommon to find girls ages twelve and thirteen as unwed mothers. In our public schools, assaults on teachers have risen over 80% in the last ten years.

**Top Offenses In The Public Schools:**

1940

1. Talking
2. Chewing gum
3. Making noise
4. Running in the halls.
5. Getting out of turn in line.
6. Wearing improper clothing
7. Not putting paper in wastebaskets.

1987

1. Rape
2. Robbery
3. Assault
4. Burglary
5. Arson
6. Bombings
7. Murder
8. Suicide
9. Absenteeism
10. Vandalism
11. Extortion
12. Drug abuse
13. Alcohol abuse
14. Gang warfare
15. Pregnancies
16. Abortions
17. Venereal Disease
18. AIDS
19. Pornography

These staggering facts alone ought to cause us to see the absolute need for Christian schools for our children.

The words of Socrates do not see much different from those of a schoolteacher who recently resigned from her school system. She said, “The teachers are afraid of the principals, the principals are afraid of the parents, and the parents are afraid of the children. But the children are afraid of no one!”

The underlying problem is a breakdown in the home. The authority structure has been shattered. Relationships between parents and children are almost nonexistent. Children do not seem to have much discipline and there is little respect for parents. Children basically are not being taught obedience in the home. The permissive philosophy of discipline as taught by John Dewey forty years ago has created a whole generation of parents who do not know how to discipline kids and kids who have no respect for authority. We are told that this is a mark of the last days. ***“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.”*** (II Tim. 3:1-5).

Everywhere parents wring their hands, weep profusely and cry plaintively, “I can’t do anything with her (or him)!” They frantically turn to the schools for help, or social workers, or law enforcement or even to the church, but the real problem is the parents and the children themselves. When all else fails, read the directions. Men will never get the answers to the parent-child syndrome until they turn to scripture. However, it is not enough to say, “I’m a Christian; therefore, everything is going to work out O.K. for me and my children.” Statistics show us that between the ages of 12-20, approximately 2/3 of our young people are leaving their Protestant, evangelical churches. Someone in kidding frustration said. “If we could just bury our children at age 12 and resurrect them at age 20, all would be well.” It is not enough to be Christian; it is not enough to be in church. There must be earnest, heartfelt commitment to do what the Bible says. Then there will be blessing.

Today we take up the responsibility of Christian children to their parents.

COMMAND TO CHILDREN - OBEY (6:1a): ***Children, obey your parents in the Lord,***

Children, -- The Apostle Paul is not addressing children in general but a special kind of children. They are covenant children. Children born into a Christian home with special privileges. Some of these children may be truly converted. Others may not but this command is given to covenant children and if they do what God tells them, they will be greatly blessed.

One of the ways a child may effectively serve the Lord in his formative days is to obey his parents.

### ***Obey your parents in the Lord...***

The word “obey” means “to stand under.” It is a military term which means to be under another’s authority so as to comply with orders. To put it practically and plainly it means, “Do what your parents say.”

There are many instructions to children in the Book of proverbs and the underlying thought behind them all is obedience. ***“Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.”*** (Prove. 1:8). ***“A wise son heeds his father’s instruction.”*** (Prov. 13:1). ***“A fool spurns his father’s discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.”*** (Prov. 15:5). ***“A foolish son brings grief to his father and bitterness to the one who bore him.”*** (Prov. 17:25). ***“If a man curses his father or mother, his lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness.”*** (Prov. 20:20). ***“Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.”*** (Prov. 23:22).

A wayward child will never understand the heartbreak and sadness he will bring to his or her parents. If the child really ever understands, it may be when his or her own children grow up and become rebellious.

Does this mean a child is to obey absolutely? Yes and no. According to Colossians 3:20 which says, ***“Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord,”*** children are to obey parents in everything except if the parents ask them to do something immoral or inflict something on them which is contrary to the moral law of God. If a child is asked by a parent for sexual favors or is abused or unmercifully beaten, the child does not have to obey. But generally the child’s responsibility is to obey the commands, wisdom and wishes of the parents. What if the parents’ commands or wishes seem unfair, harsh and unreasonable? The child still must obey providing the parents are not violating the moral law of God. There is a special blessing for kids when they obey their parents.

When our children were younger, they would ask us if they could do some particular activity. Usually we said yes, but occasionally we said no. The children would say, “Why?” Our answer would be “We can’t give a logical answer, but out of our wisdom and insight, we just have a gut level feeling it is wrong. We ask you to respect our decision.

The key to this section is not, “Children obey your parents” but “Children, obey your parents in the Lord.” They are to obey their parents because this is what the Lord wants them to do. Their first obligation is not to please their parents but to please their Lord, and it pleases Christ when children obey their parents. Children, God will bless you in a very special way when you obey your parents because you love Christ even when your love for your parents seems shaky.

The concept of obeying “in the Lord” has to do with attitudes. We all know it is possible to obey with a heart seething with disobedience and hatred. It is possible to give the outward appearance of obedience in order to get the parents off the child’s back but inwardly the child is just waiting for the opportunity to revolt or break over the line.

We all remember the story of the little boy whose mother wanted him to sit down but he wouldn’t sit down. Finally she took hold of him and sat him down in the chair. He looked up at her with defiance in his eyes and said, “You may make me sit down outside, but I’m still standing up inside!”

The question may still be asked, “How long does a child obey his parents?” As long as a child is still under the roof or authority of the parents, the child is to obey. As long as the child is financially or economically dependent on parents, he is to obey. If a child is off at college but financially supported by parents, he is still obligated to obey. If a single person is financially independent but still under the roof of the parents, he or she is obligated to obey.

CHILDREN MUST OBEY BECAUSE IT IS RIGHT (6:1b): ***For this is right.***

A child might still say, “Why must I obey?” The answer is given in three parts and the first one is it is right to do so. It is generally recognized by all cultures in all times that it is right for children to be obedient to their parents. This is also the right thing to do in principle. No matter what other children may do, the right principle is to obey your parents. It is never right to do wrong. When a mother tells her child to do something, and the child says, “Why?” The mother may reply, “Because I say so!” It is just the right thing to do.

We live in a day of lawlessness on the part of children. Children usually do pretty much what they want. The average child is given too much freedom with little or no restraint. In many cases, the child tells the parents what to do and the parents tolerate it. However, children must remember it is right to obey parents.

Obedience to parents in the home sets the pattern for respect for authority later in life for teachers, for principles, for government authorities, for elders and for Sunday school teachers.

CHILDREN MUST OBEY BECAUSE THE OLD TESTAMENTS TEACHES IT (6:2a): ***Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise -***

The Old Testament law clearly taught parents are to be honored by children. ***“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”*** (Exo. 20:12). ***“Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”*** (Deut. 5:16).

It is clear that the Ten Commandments (as moral law) are still binding on Christians today. The Fifth Commandment is just as needed today as it was 4000 years ago. Children are bound by law to obey parents. However, there are some differences under the New Covenant. In the Old Testament, incorrigible children were stoned to death publicly by their parents ***“Anyone who attacks his father or his mother must be put to death.” “Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.”*** (Exo. 21:15,17). Obviously to kill our children for rank disobedience is not binding on Christian parents today, but it does show us how God views rebellious children - they are an abomination to Him. Children need to remember that if they are disobeying their parents, they are disobeying the Fifth Commandment which is just as serious as bowing down to an idol, lying, stealing, committing adultery or doing an act of murder.

To honor father and mother means to respect, revere, and esteem them. The Hebrew word means “heavy” or “to value as very precious.” To honor parents is a lifetime attitude. We are to honor parents when we are under the roof of our parents by obeying them. We are to honor our parents when we leave home by consulting them as counselors and guides in life. We do not have to do what they say but we need to include them in our life so as to make them feel needed and wanted. Parents have much wisdom and insight to give their children at any age simply because they have lived longer. We are to honor our parents by helping them. In ancient days when the elderly got to the place that they were unproductive and not useful to society, the pagans would put them out of the home so they would die of exposure or be eaten by wild beasts. Civilization took a mighty leap forward when God gave the Fifth Commandment. Christian children are to take care of the needs of their aging parents in their sunset years. This may involve keeping them in the home (which is an inconvenience) or putting them in a nursing home. It is our God-given responsibility. This responsibility does not belong to the state or the church but the children. ***“If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*** (I Tim. 5:8).

There is, however, another side of the coin to the command for children to honor their parents. Parents must live in such a Christ like way that they give their children something to honor and respect. Many parents set such a bad example for their kids that the children don’t want anything to do with the attitudes and lifestyles of the parents.

**CHILDREN MUST OBEY BECAUSE IT IS ESSENTIAL TO RECEIVE THE PROMISE (6:2b-3): *That it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.***

Quality of Life. The child who treats his parents with honor and respect is promised a positive quality of life. It will “go well with you.” God will bless and prosper the man or woman who has esteemed parents highly and sought to obey them when younger. Rebellious children don’t have a promising adulthood. The obedient child will be rewarded with satisfaction and contentment in his adult years. An obedient child will be an adjusted child and an adjusted child will do well all through life because he or she has learned discipline at home.

Quantity of Life. The child who honors his parents is promised length of life. Longevity is part of the promise to obedient children. Glad and willing obedience is a boon to the children who obey. But disobedient children will not live long. Notice carefully that the Fifth Commandment says, “...*that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land...*” But this verse says “on the earth.” Under the New Covenant, the Christian no longer gets the blessings of the land, but gets the blessings of the earth. Paul changed the promise of the Fifth Commandment to fit the New Covenant age.

There are two types of disobedience a child may show. There is open rebellion. If a parent tells a child not to drive recklessly and the child rebels, he or she may end up dead, wrapped around a pole like a bent sardine can. If a parent says, “Don’t take drugs” and the child rebels against parental authority, he or she may well shorten the physical life. Statistically the child who obeys the wisdom of parents is probably going to live longer than the child who does not obey his parents. There is also sullen obedience, which is subversive, reluctant obedience, which can also shorten one’s life. Sullen obedience is really resentment and bitterness which is very destructive to the life of the person. Doctors and psychologists agree that a bitter and resentful spirit produces acne, causes loss of appetite, causes ulcers, upsets digestion, impairs the use of the mind, causes allergic reactions, causes fainting spells, makes the skin break out in hives and blisters and causes such trauma so as to shorten one’s life.

When an obedient child is promised quality and quantity of life this is not an absolute guarantee. This is a maxim or a general rule. God may call a child home early in his life and that because He has some overriding purpose for that child-some higher plan. However, generally speaking obedient children will have a more prosperous and long adult life.

## CONCLUSION

Saved. Covenant children, obey your parents and you will live long and be prosperous on this earth. That is God’s promise to you. Christian parents, set an example before your children so they will have someone to respect and honor.

Socrates said, “Could I climb to the highest place in Athens, I would lift my voice and proclaim - fellow-citizens, why do you turn and scrape every stone to gather wealth, and take so little care of your children, to whom one day you must relinquish it all?”

## Unsaved

God’s promises are not only to children. God has promises for the non-Christian world. His promises are true and you can trust Him.

If you are without Christ, God makes this promise to you: “***Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other***” (Isa. 45:22).