

BUILDING A GODLY HOME

5. FATHERS, PROVOKE NOT YOUR CHILDREN TO WRATH

I.

Introduction

In the past I spoke on the subject of home. I said that God has His own recipe for godly home that we need to follow. The ingredients it calls for are:

Eph 5:1 ¶ Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

Eph 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Eph 6:1 ¶ Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

Eph 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Today I would like to continue to speak on the subject of godly home and deal in detail with the fifth ingredient:

II.

Building a godly home

5 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

This is continuation of Ephesians 6:1. The whole simplified argument is: Children do this and fathers do not do this, but this. Both, children and fathers must do what is right and avoid doing that which is wrong in God's eyes. I dealt with children the last time. Today, I will address the parents.

Although Ephesians 6:4 addresses fathers, we can say with good conscience that its message applies to mothers as well. I believe that the fathers are singled out here for the simple reason of being spiritual leaders of their families and thus being responsible to God on the first place for spiritual leadership, education and training of their children.

In wider context we deal with submission and obedience. Submission and obedience of parents to God on the first place, submission and obedience of wife to her husband on the second place, submission and obedience of children to their parents on the third place. Not only that God requires that children are submitted and obey their parents, He made it part of our nature. Even unbelieving parents want their children to be submitted to them and obey them. And even their rebellious children know that they should be submitted to their parents and obey them. We as parents often subconsciously require our children's submission and obedience. We do not even have to think much about it. Often we do not have to give ourselves reasons or justify for ourselves why do we want our children to obey us and do what we told them. Simply it ought to be so and it must be so.

Now, the first part of the argument in Ephesians 6:5 tells us, **what we must avoid when bringing our children up** in order that they would be submitted to us and would obey us. We must avoid provoking our children to wrath. How do parents provoke their children to wrath? By acting **unrighteously** toward their children.

Let's consider example of father Saul and his son Jonathan - 1Sa 20:30-34:

v. 30 Then Saul's anger was aroused against Jonathan, and he said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?"

v. 31 "For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom. Now therefore, send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die."

v. 32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said to him, "Why should he be killed? What has he done?"

v. 33 Then Saul cast a spear at him to kill him, by which Jonathan knew that it was determined by his father to kill David.

v. 34 So Jonathan arose from the table in **fierce anger**, and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had treated him shamefully.

To sum it up, Saul was determined to murder David after all good things that David did for Saul and his kingdom. Saul treated David shamefully. This grieved Jonathan who loved David as his own soul.

Moreover, Saul was angry with Jonathan. He publicly disgraced Jonathan and his mother and tried to kill him. The reason was that Jonathan did not submit to and did not obey his father in his plan to murder David.

All this unrighteousness on his father's part made Jonathan very angry.

This example is extreme, because Saul required Jonathan's submission and obedience for something evil, but all I want to demonstrate by this extreme example is that unrighteous actions of parents toward their children provoke children to wrath.

How, can parents provoke their children to wrath?

1] By anger.

Imagine a sealed teapot full of boiling water on the hot stove. Due to the outside influence the pressure builds inside the teapot until finally the teapot explodes and causes damage to anyone nearby.

Some parents are like sealed teapots. What's boiling inside of them are their emotions and unfulfilled desires or needs. Hot stove represents outside influences which cause stress to them, e.g. pressure in work place (too much work, long hours, inadequate pay, bad organisation of work, fear of losing job, no security), pressure in church (disagreements and tensions among church members), pressure in home (fear to meet ends needs, fear of losing home, not ideal relationship between husband and wife, disobedient children). Often different outside pressures combine together, add to one another and cause building up the inner pressure in parents. If the inner pressure is not released in controlled way, parents will explode in anger and ventilate their anger on one another or often on their ill-behaved children by disciplining their children in anger for their lack of submission and obedience.

Since, I deal with children today, I would like to focus what message children get when disciplined in anger.

The first message that children receive (if disciplined in anger) is that they can disobey, until parents reach certain state of anger, typical signs of which are red face, hard breathing, fierce

look in their eyes, raised voice, etc. When mommy and daddy reach this phase after many ignored no no, repeated threats of spanking, graduated punishments threats, children know it is time to comply for a while to avoid parent's explosion and punishment.

Why children do such things to their parents? Well, children have their own strong desires they want to fulfill and they seek for borders in which they can do so. Challenging parent's authority and parent's response to it is the way, how children can they clarify for themselves the borders in which they can fulfill their needs.

The second message that children receive (if disciplined in anger) is that discipline is result of anger and superior physical force possessed at this time by bigger and stronger parents and executed on smaller and weaker children.

Children can feel the inconsistency in their disciplining. They disobeyed 3 times when parent told them e.g. to quit jumping from the bed and were not punished, yet upon 4th disobedience to the same command, they get spanking. Is the selective punishment just? Even child can feel there is something wrong with it. Further, parent punishing in anger accumulated due to the previous several disobediences by his children tends to punish children with harder punishment (for all the previous offences) that is inadequate to their last offence. Is punishment inadequate to the offence just? Even child can feel there is something wrong with it. To such injustice may child respond with an anger.

Another way parents can provoke their children to wrath is:

2] By violence.

Discipline motivated by anger can lead to violence, both physical and emotional. By physical violence I mean fierce punishment not just for the preceding offence, but for all offences committed by the children in recent past (combining physical violence with injustice). By emotional violence I mean rejection of children in sense of depriving them of love, attention, etc.

After receiving fierce punishment in anger, children want to be hugged by their parents because they are hurting physically. If parents do not hug them (thus showing their love to children despite of punishment) because children acted ugly, children feel rejected by their parents. They may interpret it as parents do not love them and this may provoke them to anger.

Other forms of emotional punishment are e.g. telling child that he is bad, instead of what he did was bad, calling child names like stupid, ugly, yelling at child, laughing at child, mocking him.

Another way parents can provoke their children to wrath is:

3] By negativism.

Excessive criticism of children, little or no praising their good efforts and achievements can persuade the child that he is not good and provoke him to anger.

What is the cause of all of it? Failure of the parents to train up children properly on the first place. In other words, failure to **bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.**

(Eph. 6:4) If children were trained up properly, it would prevent them from adding to the external pressures that affect parents.

Failure to train up children properly is a training as well, but it is a bad training. Children who were trained up by their parents to disobey them at home, will later on disobey teachers at schools, superiors at work etc. Further on, they are trained not to control their anger, but to explode in anger and ventilate their anger on smaller and physically weaker children. They are trained to be violent and negative.

III. Conclusion

The best way how to deal with external pressures is to minimize them by preventing them – by training up children correctly, by straitening up the problems in marriage relationship, by discussing the problems with the employer in effort to improve relationship and sometimes by simple relaying on God's help in situation that are beyond our influence.

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