

When the Spirit Governs a Child

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[0 : 00] While the orchestra and the musicians are going down, I want you to take your Bible and turn!

Let me read the passage and have you follow along in your copy of the Word, and then while I preach, you will pray with your eyes open.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, this is the first commandment, with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Our Heavenly Father, we ask for your Spirit's enabling.

The song that we just sang was a prayer, and we ask you to speak. We recognize that you have given to us your Word, and then you and your divine care and affection for the Bride of Christ have also appointed men to teach the Scriptures and to do so with the enabling of the Spirit of God.

[1 : 50] Let your Word be clear. Let it be convicting. And let we who know Christ grow to be like Him. In your precious name, amen.

We live in a culture and a society where there is an absolute growing disconnect between parents and children.

I think it was last week that there was a young lady in her mid-twenties who took it upon herself to sue her parents. How many of you were tracking that on the internet?

Now, the case came to nothing at this point, but given the perversity of our culture and its progressive degradation, I don't know if in the future we won't see those kind of cases succeed. But forget that case. All you have to do is go into any one of our grocery stores, and you will watch little tyrants in the aisle running their parents' lives ragged. And their parents are in this coddling, threatening kind of mode, like, if you do this, you will – how many of you have noticed that before?

[2 : 59] And you are thinking in your mind – here, here's what you're thinking. Everybody look at me. Everybody look at me. You follow me. You're thinking that child needs to be saved and under the Spirit's control.

That's not what you were thinking. Actually, ours is not the first generation that has struggled with children who misbehave and parents who are negligent in their spiritual duty.

If you were to go back into the Old Testament, you would find that there are a number of different passages in the Old Testament that speak explicitly to the way in which the culture was to take care of openly rebellious and disobedient children.

In fact, there are a number of different curses that are leveled against sons and daughters that are not responsible in their relationship with their parents.

If you were to turn at this time, and we won't do it, but if you were to turn to Romans chapter 128, you would find that in the list of the characteristics of an unregenerate and immoral culture, the issue of being disobedient to parents is recognized as one of the markers that takes place when people turn their backs on God.

[4 : 39] Actually, if you were to follow along and pick up on other passages, you would see that one of the reasons that God brought punishment to Israel and sent them into the Babylonian captivity was because Jewish children were not being responsible to their parents.

And given the level of disrespect and disobedience that I see all around in our culture, and even on occasion I see in our congregation, it might make sense this morning to preach on a parent's responsibility to follow Scripture in the biblical exercise of discipline and nurture.

But that is not what the Holy Spirit focuses on here. And one of the characteristics of exposition is that a pastor who is going to be faithful to the Word is not given the liberty of launching and going in

the direction he thinks he should go in.

He is under the authority of the Word of God, and his responsibility is to make the Word clear. This passage is the second of three examples that flow under the heading of a Spirit-filled life.

What does it say in Ephesians 5:18? Be filled with the Spirit.

[6:22] Isn't that what it says? And it says, being submissive to one another because of your reverence, your fear of Christ. Following that, Paul, as a good teacher, would you bear with me?

These mics are...don't worry about them. I just...I'm in the moving mode today, so I don't want to trip over anything and cause Caleb and Charity undue anxiety.

Okay. Had nothing to do with the point. Here we go. Listen. Paul, as a good teacher, says, now listen, let's get this straight. You're to be submissive.

You're to be submissive because of your relationship with Christ. And he says, and I'm going to give you three examples. People who know Christ ought to have different kinds of relationships than people that don't know Christ.

And all God's people said... I'm not saying amen. I'm a Baptist. It's all right.

[7:28] Okay. But the truth is, is that people who are saved, right? You follow me? People who are saved and filled with the Spirit have to have different relations.

Don't have a choice because the Spirit of God, it says, be filled with the Spirit. If you're being filled with the Spirit, you're going to be, what? Different. Different.

And Paul says, let me get this clear so you can understand. Let me give you three illustrations of where your relationships are different. One is in marriage. Two is in your home with parents and children.

Three is at work. We're going to look at the second by looking at the first of the set. And one of the things that you're going to notice in all three of them is that there is responsibility given to each party in the equation.

The wife is to be submissive to the husband. The husband is to love his wife. The child is to be essentially submissive to the parent. The parent is not to be a dictator and an authoritarian person in the child's life.

[8:30] Third, it says that the slave is to be under authority and submissive to that person who is their master. And the master is not to be a tyrant.

So as we look at this passage this morning, we are here to hear, boy, that works, we are here to mark the fact that God has something to say to all of you who are children.

Let me make it clear. The Christian child is to obey. Now, without giving yourself away, I want to ask you if you think you're a child this morning.

And I would venture to say that most of us, in our own thinking at least, thought that we slipped from childhood into adulthood when we turned... Well, I know that for one of my sons, when he turned 16 and got his driver's license, he thought he had arrived.

And, you know, it's like when I'm 16 and I can drive, I'm on my own. Now, for others, it's like when they turn 18, right?

[9:36] They have all these kind of rights that come to them. And maybe for some others, it's when they're 26 and they go off their parents' insurance. I don't know. But here's the deal. We tend to think about childhood being that time where we are dependent, where other people have authority over us, and we're bound by a...

You got this word? Curfew. Well, when I'm an adult, I'll come in when I want to. And I may live in my parents' home, but only so long as the rent is not too high and the restrictions are not too binding.

And our culture actually characterizes people by certain titles, such as an infant or a baby. What's an infant or a baby? It's probably someone who's still messing their diapers, right?

I mean, that's our thinking. And then when they graduate from that stage, we think about them as a little boy or a little girl, and we kind of work their way up until they're a teenager, and then they're an adult or they're a middle-aged man.

You know how it goes. We got all this kind of grade. Paul chose a word that really deals with relationship, not age.

[10:54] When he says, children, obey your parents, he includes me because I am a child. And when he says, obey your parents, he has explicit instruction to Tim Knoyer, who is the child of Quentin and Marlea Knoyer.

He is speaking to Heather Anderson. He is speaking to Sam Knoyer. He is speaking to every one of you in here who have, try this, living parents.

So if you have a living parent, the word in this context applies to you. The spirit-filled child is commanded to obey parents.

And obeying, very simply, as we look at the passage, means listening to the instruction that is being given and following up with action. Do this, I will, and it happens.

Furthermore, as we read in Ephesians chapter 6 verse 1, the believer's obedience, the believing child's obedience, is linked to their relationship to Christ.

[12:15] By the way, just so you follow this, and let's kind of make a connection here. Is it true that being obedient is something that's pretty important, whether you're a believer or not?

The answer is, yeah, yeah, yeah, it makes sense. But this passage was written for believers. It's written for those who know Christ. For those who are not believers, it's like, hey, first thing you need to do is get things settled with Christ.

You need to come to cross. And so when we see here that Paul says, and we're looking at the passage, children, obey your parents in the Lord, it's speaking to believers and referencing or relating their obedience to their relationship with the Lord Jesus.

For one thing, what we need to take away from that is that obedience is not based on mutual agreement. Have you ever, as I referred to the grocery store, have you ever noticed how sometimes parents and their little children who are in a cart and can't move without the cart being pushed by an adult are engaged in negotiations?

Would you please do this? And the child says, no. And then there's this kind of labor, you know, this kind of laboring process where the parent says, well, I'll get you Cheerios. Well, that's, I had those last time.

[13:33] I don't want that. You know, I want a cell phone with a data plan, you know. Oh, if you'll obey today, you can have that. You know, this business of debate and accommodation to your child.

Can I tell you something? Now, this is a little sidebar. Remember, I'm not preaching primarily to parents. I'm preaching to children. But everybody smile at me because I want you to take this with a good heart. If you, as a parent, are not helping your child learn obedience and respect, you are preparing them for a rude culture shock when they hit the real world.

I was talking with Todd Anderson, who I am very closely related to. He happens to be my son-in-law. And Todd is regional manager for Meijer.

He said to me, I, as one who has responsibility, oversight of about 3,000 employees, can tell you very quickly children who come from homes where obedience and honor was an understood responsibility and children who come to me from homes where that was not.

Seth. Seth. Where are you, Seth? Raise your hand. Wave at me. Ah, there you are. Hiding behind Pete. Not really.

[15:05] Seth is going to go April 30th to Guantanamo. When is it? March 30th. That's too early. I'm sorry.

Seth is on orders, and he is in the military. He's going to go down to Guantanamo, and he's going to spend about nine months down there. Seth understands what it is to obey. A superior says, do this, and he says, well, can we talk about that?

I think there's a better way to do that. You know, I don't know what the consequences would be in the short term, but I can tell you in the long term that Seth would probably be pounding sand. And I got to tell you, this business of obedience is something that is important, and it is a primary issue in people's lives, and it's not based on mutual agreement.

I want to remind you also that a godly child then obeys because of their relationship with Christ. A godly child obeys. So I want you to hear this.

When your child disobeys you, it's a heart problem. Do you understand that? And for you to deal with it in any other fashion than to address the heart is to miss the underlying issue.

[16:21] Godly obedience, as we look at this passage, it says, children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. But that little statement is recognizing that obedience is something that is righteous, it's proper, it is something that God expects.

Let me give you a very interesting little illustration on this matter, and I want you to turn back in your Bible just for a little bit back to Luke 2, verse 51. Luke 2, verse 51.

Now, I'm taking you back to a passage that is one of the few references we have on Christ as a child. You'll remember the immediate context is that his parents had gone up to Jerusalem to worship, and subsequently, as they were leaving and traveling back, they missed the fact that Jesus was not with them.

And they went back and found him in the temple teaching. But look at verse 51. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and now the next little part, and was submissive to them.

Question. Do you think there's a possibility that Joseph and Mary, being imperfect parents, how many of you grew up in dysfunctional homes?

[17 : 47] Every one of you grew up in homes where there were two sinners in authority over you. Am I right? That could categorize you as having grown up in some kind of dysfunctional home.

None of your parents got all the answers right, nor were all of their expectations perfect. And Joseph and Mary are an illustration of human parents giving instruction to the very Son of God, and what did He do?

He had a submissive heart to their office and their authority. So if Jesus could be submissive because it was right, what are you doing to your child as a parent when you do not help them understand that their obedience to you is fundamentally a spiritual issue?

Go back to the passage in Ephesians and look at the second part of it. It says, honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with promise. While obedience has to do with hearing and acting, honor is about attitude with which obedience is given.

Honor is about attitude with which obedience is given. It's really not enough that a child merely obeys, for obedience can largely be the outcome of intimidation or manipulation and not the outcome of a desire to please Christ.

[19 : 22] Now I want to go over that slowly. A parent may rely upon intimidation or manipulation and in doing so completely fail to actually address the heart issue of their child.

Yelling or using anger to frighten a child or constantly negotiating with the child by using manipulation and awards may work for a period of time, but ultimately the child will fail to be obedient or honoring if that is what you rely on.

When you are a manipulative parent and you are not a parent that helps the child understand the heart is the issue, eventually their rebellion will slowly magnify and listen to me carefully.

Everybody smiling? God will bring other people into their life to teach what you were unwilling to address. God has appointed parents to be His physical representative and assistant and you're responsible to help your child understand that behind obedience and behind honor is really a hard attitude and their relationship with Christ.

Now let's recognize that attitudes are always hard to pin down because they're most often internal and private. Do you follow that? Every one of you here have had probably at least a handful of bad attitudes so far this morning.

[21 : 04] Admit it. Okay. You didn't like one of the songs. There's just a probability that one of them would not have been on your high list of first 10 to sing on Sunday morning. And some of you thought somebody else's jewelry just didn't go with their outfit.

There's some of you here that are a little wiggled out that I don't have a tie on. I mean, you know, there are different things that you could be upset about. And you may smile at me as you go by the door and say, Pastor, it's so nice to see you.

There's one or two of you going to say, what's the deal with the tie? I'm going to say, I didn't wear one. Okay. But, you know, we can have attitudes and not really bring them to the surface.

See, a child may obey and even do it with a smile, but inside their heart is profoundly rebellious. By the way, just a little sidebar for parents.

I can't help this. Some of the most compliant children actually end up being the most rebellious when they eventually leave the home. How do you understand that? Reminds me of what Shakespeare said, one may smile and smile and still be a villain.

[22 : 11] So you want to pay attention to attitude, attitude, attitude. I've got to tell you something that I will tell you as part of God's incredible blessing to me.

God did me a solid favor by moving my parents in next door. And I can tell you, I have said that I was finished with my last remodel and I am remodeling now so they can move in our house.

A great blessing in my slow and painful process of growing to be more like Christ has been the ministry and blessing of caring for my aging parents.

And I've learned that honoring your parents will intrude into your plans and your schedule. It will call on you to meet needs and follow instructions that you think are unreasonable.

It will cause you to change some of the things that you wanted to do to accommodate those who God has put you in relationship with. And unless a parent's needs and instructions really interfere with the Word of God, a child honors God by complying.

[23 : 35] I want to come back and touch on this again. Honoring is all about the heart and it reflects the value that God has appointed to the office that parents have been assigned by God.

Honor is something that a child owes to a parent as long as the child or the parent is alive.

And when we think about that, I can tell you this from experience, that when you get older, you will learn more about honor than you learned when you were younger.

So, here I go with the parent business again. All parents should drive home today in the car and say to your children, who am I living with when I get old?

It's me, it's me, it's me, right? Then you're making headway. Okay, pastor, stop.

[24 : 50] Now we come perhaps to what is really the most important part. Christ-exalting obedience and honor are spirit-enabled. That's really important.

Don't miss this. Paul's instruction to children is really part of the larger lesson I began that way by reminding you that when the Spirit of God speaks to the church about the issue of being spirit-filled, he really wants the church to understand that at the root of a spirit-filled life is the way we speak to one another, the way we relate to one another, and in particular, this attitude of submission and servanthood that references and respects the other person and values and prizes them.

So when a believer is spirit-filled, all relationships are governed by the Spirit. That's important.

When a believer is spirit-filled, all relationships are governed by the Spirit.

The spirit-filled wife is submissive. The spirit-filled husband is loving. The spirit-filled child is obedient and honoring. So when your child is being disobedient or your child is being disrespectful to your authority in your office, the fundamental problem is what?

Their spiritual state. And you as a parent ought to look at that and say, ooh, opportunity knocks.

[26 : 23] I have an opportunity of stepping in as a loving, careful, caring parent to teach this child some spiritual truth in a safe environment that they will not find when they go to Walmart or Meijer or the Army.

And so if you do it properly now, guess what you will save your child from learning later? What? The headache.

So let's draw some practical application to this passage. Let me present, first of all, some thoughts for those who are children.

And all of us here are children. When you are struggling with obedience and honor, determined effort is not enough.

Let me say that so you understand. When you are struggling with obedience and honor, determined effort is not enough. How many of you tried to gut it out spiritually before on your own?

[27 : 32] Hmm? We've done that. I want you to understand that ask the Holy Spirit to help you obey and help you honor. You know, it's amazing.

Scripture tells us over and over again, and one illustration in particular in John chapter 15, verse 5, Jesus says to His disciples, without Me you can do nothing. The implication of that is that it shouldn't be one of these brilliant moments where you discover how weak and how frail and how difficult the spiritual journey is.

You can't do it by yourself. So when you find yourself struggling with obeying and honoring your parents, go to the Holy Spirit and say, listen, I need your help.

I need to be Spirit-filled. Call on Him who Christ has given you as your helper to strengthen your heart and to change your thinking so that you may do what is pleasing in His sight.

I have, I got to tell you, my parents moving in next door was just an incredible blessing.

[28 : 46] I have learned and am learning, I would much prefer using the present continuous tense, I am learning what it is to serve quietly and to do it willingly and to do it gladly.

and it has been a profound shift. My father, who was my hero, is my hero.

But I had to go through a change of recognizing what his disease has done to his mind and be willing to pick up dirty dishes all over the house and do it gladly.

There was a time where I would find those dishes and I would think, you're being inconsiderate of me. All about, you know, stupid. and the Spirit of God has slowly pounded my head.

I would encourage you to bathe your relationship with your parents with thoughts. I want to say this carefully because I know there are some of you here that really do struggle with your attitude towards parents.

[30 : 03] I would encourage you to bathe your relationship with your parents with thoughts of your relationship with Christ.

What has he done for you? I think about that song that we just finished singing earlier. Well, I even wrote the words down so I wouldn't forget it but something about, well, forget it.

I can't even get the words right when they're on the screen overhead. How I preach is a work of God. But something about being loved by the King and it causes my heart to sing, see, you all know the words but I forgot them already.

When I have Alzheimer's, nobody will know. Okay. Remind yourself of what Christ has done for you and let your affection for Christ which flows out of his unfailing love for you cause you to respect and honor and obey.

Now for parents who are instructing their children, listen carefully because we have a culture that is absolutely hell-bent on creating rebellious children and they have the ally of a wicked, sinful heart that all of us are born with.

[31 : 44] Agreed? So parents, teach biblical obedience and honor in the light of the cross. Let me say that slowly. Teach biblical obedience and honor in the light of the cross.

For one, you at one point were a hell-bound rebel and Christ found you in that miserable state and he drew you to his side with a love that never fails, never quits, never gives up.

He pursued you and found you and he didn't let your stubborn, rebellious heart cause him to be untoward in his attitude towards you or merciless in his dealing with you.

Parents, love them as you ought because you have been richly loved and teach them obedience and honor in the light of the cross.

Secondly, parents, consider your child's struggle as a spiritual indicator and an opportunity. Do you follow that?

[32 : 53] I had a conversation with someone in our fellowship, loved the person, and they were telling me about a certain problem and kind of midstream in talking to me, they said, oh, I know what you're going to say.

God is teaching me something. I said, why say it if you already know it? But, you know, it's like, you know, when, and I have to remind myself of the same thing, you know, when things are going left of center and they're not going Tim's way, I can be obsessive like it's going out of style and, you know, let's go back to parents.

When your children are having a meltdown, it's really just a spiritual indicator and an opportunity. See, never forget, never forget, never forget that the first concern you have is for your child's spiritual state.

Hmm? Your first concern is for your child's spiritual state. It's not about obeying me. You know, it's like, I want you to learn one thing.

By the way, listen carefully. If you are a yeller or a shouter, it's probably because you just haven't gotten your hands around the truth in your life yet. Ever heard me say that?

[34 : 09] Did you hear that? Huh? Did you hear that? A yeller or a shouter probably is not, how many, no. Do I get animated and a little emotional when I'm a pastor?

Yeah, bear with me, I'm preaching, but other than that, any of you that have seen me in your life personally, how many times have I yelled at you? Doesn't happen. It may be that the need for help with obedience and honor is really rooted in need for salvation.

And help your child to see that there is more at risk than this, their temporary relationship with you. It's about heaven and it's about hell.

And I think sometimes we as Christian parents are doing a disservice for our children when we really don't keep on coming back to the issue that the problems in their lives are really not about eating vegetables or making beds.

It's about where they spend eternity. And when you have problems, it's just giving you a little window of opportunity to step through and say, honey, you know what?

[35 : 29] This recurring problem you have with obeying me is really a reflection of where you are in your relationship with Christ. And your daddy's praying that you will come to Christ.

Or your daddy's praying that you would be a spirit-filled child. How many of you have done that? You follow me? Let's go in the bedroom and I'm going to teach you a lepid. We're going to give you a whipping.

You can choose the bill. I'm not opposed to spanking in case you're wondering. But let me tell you something. You can create temporary obedience and not change the heart.

Aim for the heart. Furthermore, as a parent, what you should always be doing is checking to see what's going on behind the scenes in their lives.

So let me close with this pointed question. Can you see evidence of the Spirit's help in your life in obeying and honoring your parents?

[36 : 46] I mean, what's the purpose of preaching? Do you follow that? It's to tell you what God thinks. Not so you can kind of feel your head's full of information and just walk out of here and dump it somewhere on the side of the road.

It's so that you can live in the light of what God wants. So the practical question is, do I see evidence that I am Spirit-filled in my obedience to my parents and my honor for my parents?

And you may be sitting here this morning and we talk about this issue of obeying your parents and honoring your parents and the truth of the matter is that the heart issue is bigger than external issues.

You may be here and do not know Christ and so your unrelenting struggle with obedience is really rooted in the fact that you have never come to Christ and sought His complete forgiveness for all of your sins.

You're a rebel against God and the first thing you need is by the Spirit of God to have a broken heart that cries out for salvation that you may know what He does in salvation.

[38 : 00] It may be that you are a child who is a believer but you are awash in stubbornness and pride.

And your problem as you sit here this morning is you think that things would be a whole lot easier if you just had a better set of parents. Guess what?

The sovereign Lord of this universe chose the ones you have. There will never be another option. And the Spirit of God wants you as a believer to humble yourself and ask His help so that you by His power to the glory of Christ may obey and honor.

Do you know why Paul teaches this lesson? So that the church of the living God could be a light in a wicked and perverse world. And we who are His children who have been redeemed from the pit isn't that right?

We're saying bring it on I want to be more like Jesus for the testimony of the cross and the power of the gospel that people looking at my heart and my spirit might say what's the deal with you?

[39 : 25] Oh it's not me. Yeah Jesus found me as an absolute wretch and He saved me and the Spirit of God is working in me and what you see is not me I want you to know it's the Spirit of God that works.

Here's the truth. God wants believing parents to minister to their children. God wants believing children to respect obey honor.

Let's close in prayer. Father I think this morning of the passage it says not by might nor by power but by my spirit saith the Lord and I pray that your word would find free course in the hearts of your believers today that those who know Christ would be drawn to desire to be obedient for the glory of our Savior and those that are here that do not know Christ would recognize that really the problem they have in their heart with obedience and honor is deeper than a relationship with their parents they need Christ and draw them to the cross today in your precious name amen let's let's let's let's