

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

*Ephesians 6.1.*

'Children, obey your parents!' Why is it that that sounds odd today, quaint, old-fashioned? and, no doubt, to many teenagers, plain unfair? A lot of young people would think it monstrous that they should actually *obey* their parents. And even *more* worryingly, some *parents* would feel distinctly uncomfortable expecting their children actually to *obey* them. The whole notion of children obeying their parents, many today would say, is outdated, oppressive, patriarchal.

So how have we come to this state of affairs when until only two generations ago parental authority was and always had been the order of the day? In a word, Marxism. Marxist communism is not the only way to help the poor, but many people *think* it is, forgetting that Marxism is deeply atheistical. Why? because communism's principal aim is not to help the poor but to gain totalitarian power for the centralised state. Marxism rejects religion, and *has* to reject religion because it seeks with all its might to take the place of God. The totalitarian state, as we saw in the USSR and in communist China, demands absolute obedience. Since worship of God would take away from the state, God must be abolished.

Now why am I labouring this? because the family stands in the way of the citizen giving full obedience to the state. If your first loyalty is to your *parents*, then the state does not command full obedience. And that is why Marxists have always persecuted the church and denounced the 'family' and 'marriage' as 'bourgeois' constructs. As rivals to the state, marriage,

families, and the church must be attacked and undermined. Since the war, family life has undergone death from a thousand cuts.

And it has worked. Now, against your will, your children *will* be taught the state ideology, particularly on sex education which *forces* people to accept homosexuality, despite their Christian reading of holy scripture. You only look after your children on approval from the state. If a social worker thinks you are a bad parent, your children will be taken from you and it is up to you to prove your innocence. I could go on.

But there has also been a steady attack on the notion of authority these past years. As our State has become more and more authoritarian with its CCTV cameras and draconian laws, so individual people - parents, teachers, clergy - have lost their sense of authority. They no longer believe in themselves. So church leaders no longer feel confident about Jesus as the world's only Saviour. Teachers feel it is their role only to teach facts and technical knowledge. Who are we to force our values on to children? Even parents sometimes feel this. And yet it is the task of the older generation to pass on their values to the younger generation. If you turn to our text, to *Eph* 6.4 on p1177, you will see how fathers should bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord. We always assume that this sort of thing is the *mother's* role. We assume that *women* will teach in the Sunday School. Why? What a fantastic thing it would be, especially for young boys, to see *men*, to see their *fathers*, passing on their Christian faith! And there is nothing more precious a parent can pass on to his child than the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

My influence as a preacher is negligible. You *parents* are far more effective evangelists than I could ever hope to be. You are missionaries to your children. The weakest argument of all is when parents say, 'I'll let my children make their own mind up about religion'. Well, they've effectively already made up their minds for them, haven't they? Do they leave their children to decide whether to brush their teeth each morning, or to go to school each day? I don't think so.

Let parents be parents. You parents are *not* your children's friend. I hear of mothers going clubbing with their daughters and parents allowing the children to call them by their Christian name. Anyone can call you Jimmy. Only your child can call you father. And too many parents spend their time *negotiating* with their children. Just tell them what to do. That's your job. Again, this all stems from sub-forms of Marxism where everyone is equal and has equal rights. Adults have rights, so *children* do. So do animals. It is called 'speciesism' where an adult human being is just the same as a goldfish. No. Children are children. They are not yet capable of carrying the full adult burden.

Last week a 19-year old was jailed for 7½ years for raping a woman of 19. When he was four he was expelled from school for tipping custard over a dinner lady who refused to give him a drink. At 13 he was excluded from school for hitting a teacher. Then he was in and out of prison. With no father present he had no-one to discipline him. His mother hit the nail on the head when she said that the boy never learned to accept authority. Because of weak parenting, there are far too

many youngsters who have never learned the word 'No'. They cannot accept being thwarted. Even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had to learn to obey. In *Luke 2.51* we read: 'Then [Jesus] went down to Nazareth with [his parents] *and was obedient to them*'. If you can't learn to obey, you won't be able to give orders. The motto of the RMA at Sandhurst where our Army officers are trained is 'Serve to lead'. We need to learn boundaries, and to know the meaning of the word No. Only parents can teach this.

*Eph 6.1* says that children should obey their parents *in the Lord*. Some parents, I'm afraid, are bullies. They have complete power over their children when they would be nobodies outside their families. Even when the children grow up they still sometimes use emotional bullying to control. Christians know that only *Jesus* is Lord. We as husbands, or as parents, do not have complete power over anyone. Only Christ has that. So parents should exercise authority over our children in the knowledge that we ourselves are obedient to the Lord *Jesus*. And *v4* gives very good advice to fathers that they should *annoy* their children ... When a father walks out on his marriage, I often wonder what he thinks he is doing to his children.

Little children *obey* their parents, and, *v2*, older children *honour* them and care for them. That doesn't always mean agreeing with them - or even *liking* them!

The fact is that, contrary to modern thinking, we do *not* exist as individuals, making our lonely way through life. We have to get on with others, relate to each other, fulfil our

obligations and differing roles in life. That's the way God ordered it, and you can't buck God. He made us to love.