

Spirit-Filled Fathers

Ephesians 6:4
Halifax: 21 September 2008

Introduction

Today we continue on in our series in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.

- As we come once again to study a small portion of this letter, I want to remind you about something very basic...
 - What is this Epistle about? and why should I preach through it?

Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians is a letter he wrote to those in Ephesus who had come to trust in Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

- It is not an ordinary letter at all because it was written by one who was an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - As such, Paul was guided right down to the details in every word he wrote...
 - He was guided by the Holy Spirit in a marvellous way such that his personality still comes through,
 - but such that every word is God-breathed,
 - revealing not only to the Ephesians,
 - but to the entire church of Jesus Christ in every age,
 - exactly what the Lord wants us to know.
 - We have before us in this letter the very Word of God to His church,
 - that which with the rest of the Bible is the only perfect rule of faith and practice...
 - Showing us what we are to believe and how we are to live as those who are being saved out of sin.
 - And the Lord Jesus has commanded those whom He has called to preach the word in the assembly of His people...
 - That is, to explain the sense of the words and how they apply to those in the assembly.
 - Preaching is God's institution,
 - and He is pleased to use it to gather His elect to Himself for salvation,
 - and then to build them up in faith and obedience and joy and comfort.
 - It is for you to attend diligently to the Word and to pray earnestly for God to bless the preaching of the word in the local assembly.

As we are making our way through Ephesians,

- I want to keep before you the overall flow of this letter.
- In the first three chapters,
 - we are shown how the Lord has lavished His grace upon His people...
 - The apostle goes on and on showing us how He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing—
 - forgiving us and transforming us when we were lost and ruined by sin.
- And then in chapters 4-6,
 - we are told how the people who have been lavished with His grace ought to not live...
 - And just lately, we have been looking at how they are to live in their domestic relations as those who are filled with His Spirit.
 - In Ephesians 5:18, the apostle commanded us to be filled with the Spirit...
 - And then in 5:19-21 he speaks about how the filling of the Spirit will affect our worship, our attitude, and our domestic relationships that involve submission...
 - And then in 5:22-6:9, he speaks about the three sorts of domestic relationships and how each of them will be affected...
 - First the marriage relationship...
 - Then the parent-child relationship in chapter 6...
 - and finally the servant-master relationship which begins in chapter 6 verse 4.

Last week, we began looking at the parent-child relationship.

- I pointed out that Paul addresses the children as among those who have been lavished with grace and who are to be filled with the Spirit...
 - They are part of the congregation.
 - We saw that they are called to obey their parents in the Lord,
 - and that when they do, they are promised that it will go well with them and that they will live long on the earth.
 - And no wonder!
 - If their parents have come to know the Lord, their parents will surely direct them in the way of the Lord Jesus...
 - They will direct them to look to Jesus for their salvation...
 - And if the children continue in the way they are directed—

- If they honour and obey their parents in the Lord,
 - They will know God’s blessing all the days of their life and will inherit the earth which God has promised to renew and give to His people forever.
 - If they truly honour their parents, they will share in their parent’s inheritance in the Lord.

Having seen God’s call and promise to the children of His grace-lavished people at Ephesus,

- We now come to look at God’s call to the fathers among His grace-lavished people.
 - They are addressed in Ephesians 6:4.
 - This is the verse I will expound today, the Lord willing...
 - It says,
 - Eph 6:4: And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

I. Christian fathers, see here that you are called to be Christ’s ministers to your children.

A. Paul singles you out here.

1. In verses 1, he told children to obey their parents in the Lord (both mother and father)
 - and in verse 2, he quoted the fifth commandment which says “honour your father and mother”
 - Both parents are specifically mentioned.
 - But then in verse 4, he speaks on to the father (πατηρ) and does not even mention the mother (μητηρ).
 - This makes it quite clear that he is being deliberate about addressing the father and not speaking to the parents in general for some reason.
2. So what is his reason?
 - a. It is just this—
 - Fathers, the responsibility for the spiritual condition of your household falls upon you!
 - It is up to you to bring up your children in the training and admonition of the Lord.
 - It is not your wife’s responsibility, it is *your* responsibility.
 - You are to see that your family walks in the way of Jesus Christ.

b. Men have been slackers about this all throughout the centuries of the human race...

- and the Holy Spirit calls you, as Christians husbands, to be different.

1) Just look at the way it is in our society...

- Men will sire children and then abandon them entirely to their mothers!

- As Christians, we need to see what an extreme wickedness this is!

2) And I say, even in families where the man sticks around and provides materially for his children,

- There are many who take no responsibility for their Christian nature—

- even among those who call themselves Christians.

- Here they profess the Lord Jesus, but they take no pains to train their children up in His ways!

c. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so!

- The Lord has especially appointed the Father to take on this role!

- My brothers, inasmuch as you have abandoned it,

- you need to get on your knees and plead with the Lord to forgive you!

- It doesn't matter that our society scoffs at this...

- It doesn't matter that you had a bad example in your home...

- It doesn't matter that other Christian men around you are not taking up this calling...

- The Lord has spoken and His is the word that counts...

- And He says...

- Eph 6:4: "**Fathers**, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

B. This is not to say that mothers have no role to play in parenting!

1. Indeed they do!

- You wives are called to submit to your husbands as we have already seen.

- You are given to come alongside your husband as his helper...

- And that certainly includes in parenting...

- You are called to be a keeper at home, to love your husband and to love your children...
 - Indeed, the bulk of the every day work falls on you!
- 2. But you see, the point is, the *responsibility* for the Christian nurture of the children belongs to your husband.
 - He is to set the tone for a household that serves the Lord.
 - He is to lead the family in worship, to call them together and to teach.
 - He is to initiate...
 - And He is to see that the children respect their mother and honour her.

C. Men, in short, you are called to represent Jesus Christ in your home.

1. When it says you are to bring your children up in the training and admonition of the Lord, it is saying that it is not to be your own training and admonition!
 - You are called to be the Lord's minister...
 - You are to speak His words of counsel to your household...
 - You are to chasten your children with His chastisement...
2. I'll have more to say about what that involves later,
 - but for now I just want you to see that you, *you* in particular, fathers, are called to the Lord's minister.
 - This is a huge responsibility...
 - a. Every day, as the Lord's minister, you tell your children about the Lord Jesus.
 - You tell them by the way you walk and by the way you lead them to walk.
 - You either tell them the truth and lead them in the truth about Him...
 - Or you tell them lies about Him...
 - But you always represent Him... whether you like it or not.
 - That is your position as a father.
 - b. I know you might wish that you could say, "Oh no, I am not able to represent the Lord" and be done with it...
 - But you can't!
 - If you are a father, God has established you as His representative...
 - Even if you completely abandon your children—
 - Even you go across the world and never see them again—

- You still represent Him...
 - You represent Him as a shepherd who runs away when it is hard!
 - You represent Him as one who does not care for His own.
 - It is a terrible mis-representation,
 - but it is still a representation... your representation of Him...
3. No fathers, instead of trying to deny the place He has appointed for you,
- It is far better for you to humbly accept it and cry out to Him to give you the grace you need to represent Him well!
 - He promises to give grace—not to those who run away in fear, but to the humble—
 - to those who cry out to Him in their sin and weakness that they might have grace to serve.

TRANS> So fathers, accept your place as God's ministers in your home...

- Be eager now as we come to look at the particulars of how you are to do this...
- We will first look at the particulars of what you are avoid...
- Then we will look at the particulars of what you are to do.
- First,

II. The particulars of what the Lord has called you to avoid doing—

A. Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath!

1. All of you know what this means because it is so common...
 - You provoke someone to wrath when you do something that irritates them.
 - You have all struggled with this at times...
 - You have had times when your own father did not represent the Lord very well and you lost your patience—
 - even if you did not erupt, you were irritated because you were provoked by him.
 - On your part, it's no excuse...
 - You are to bear patiently when your father is unreasonable...
 - You are not to carry bitterness or a grudge toward him...

- Nor are you to allow his treatment of you to distort the way you think of the Lord Jesus whom your father poorly represented to you...
 - You must always remember that part of your irritation (sometimes even most of it) is due to your own selfish and sinful way of looking at things...
 - but you all know what it is to be provoked by a father or by others in authority over you who do not represent the Lord as they should in their ministry over you.
2. What's more, we can see the sad results of Christian children who have been provoked by the fathers...
- a. How many sullen teenagers there are who have very little regard for their fathers!
 - They are everywhere!
 - They are in Christian homes all around us!
 - They are bitter and cynical and sarcastic....
 - b. And how many adults there are who have very painful memories of their relationship with their fathers...
 - Oh yes, they are able to be civil around them, but the wounds are very deep.
 - Some of them are Christians, but they still struggle with their understanding of the Lord...
 - and they struggle in their relationship with their fathers.
 - Some have even become atheists...
 - Yes, there are many atheists who are atheists because they hate their Christian fathers...
 - And now they hate the Lord.
 - Someone has said that an atheist has two parts to his creed...
 - First, "I believe there is no God"
 - Second, "I hate Him."
 - They were provoked to anger as children and they have never gotten over it.
 - Being a sinner by nature, the atheist has never stopped to consider that their fathers presented a distorted picture of God to them...
 - They have chosen to believe the lie,
 - and but for the grace of God, they will continue to believe it.

TRANS> Christian fathers, you see how serious a matter this is...

- You are to avoid provoking your children to wrath by your conduct...
 - This verse shows clearly that this is something you are quite capable of doing.

B. Let me flesh out some ways that you, as a Christian father, can provoke your children to wrath...

1. First, you can provoke your children to wrath by inconsistency.

- There is short term inconsistency and long term inconsistency.
 - a. Short term inconsistency is your swings from day to day...
 - You know, when your discipline of your children has more to do with what kind of mood you are in than with your child's behaviour.
 - Your poor daughter accidentally knocks over your glass on Monday and you lose it—Monday was a hard day...
 - but on Thursday, she speaks harshly with her mother in front of you and needs to be rebuked by you,
 - but it doesn't bother you a bit... you don't say a word.

TRANS> Believe me, when your discipline is like that,

- it is quite unlikely that your son or daughter will have any respect for you...
- They learn that your discipline has nothing to do with God's unchanging principles—
 - It only has to do with how dad is feeling.
- b. Long term inconsistency is when you are on and off with your discipleship...
 - You hear a sermon or read a book that fires you up and all the sudden family worship begins,
 - you decide to attend both services on the Lord's Day,
 - you begin to chasten your children consistently...
 - all well and good...
 - But then you get a bit distracted and soon things are back to the way they were.
 - But just about the time everyone starts to settle in to the slackness,
 - a new wave of spiritual energy comes and Dad is at it again!

- Don't be surprised if your children are irritated with you when you start up family worship every night again...
 - and when you try to tell them how important it is!
 - "Yea, right Dad! real important!"
 - And I tell you, it's even worse when you take your irritated son to the pastor to straighten him out and the pastor tells him how he ought to honour his father...
 - and then you give it up again...

TRANS> Inconsistency is a great way to provoke your children to wrath.

- Look to the Lord for His grace to keep you from this irritating behaviour.

2. You can provoke your children to wrath by hypocrisy.

- There are two common kinds of parental hypocrisy...
 - a. First, there is the hypocrisy of the father who holds his children to a standard he never follows himself...
 - For example, the father that insists that his children always ask for forgiveness when they have wronged another...
 - but who never asked forgiveness himself...
 - I have spoken to a lot of people who never once heard their father ask for forgiveness...
 - and I can assure you that it was not because their father never sinned!

TRNAS> That is one sort of hypocrisy—

- Don't try to impose a standard on others if you are not willing to follow it yourself...
 - b. The second kind of parental hypocrisy is the hypocrisy that has a different standard when the church people are around than when they are not...
 - The children know that when friends from the church come over, there is one standard,
 - but when someone else comes over there is another standard.
 - Children in such a home learn very quickly that the *real* issue
 - (as far as Dad is concerned at least)
 - is not what God says, but who happens to be around.

TRANS> Don't be surprised if your children don't have much regard for your Christianity if it is like that...

- I can't say I have much regard for it either...
 - My counsel to a child that is taught that kind of Christianity is to cast it off and embrace the real thing...
 - To walk in the fear of God instead of in the fear of man.

TRANS> Hypocrisy is a great way to provoke your children to wrath.

- Look to the Lord for His grace to keep you from this irritating behaviour.

3. Thirdly, you can provoke your children to wrath by harshness.

a. Fathers can be quite cantankerous at times...

- lashing out at their poor children with harsh words or even striking them in anger and frustration.
- In James we read that the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God...
 - How true—
 - As Solomon said, the rod of anger will fail.

b. Fathers, you need to remember that your children are but dust, even as the Lord pities you and remembers that you are but dust.

1) I do not say that you are to overly lenient and indulgent...

- Many fathers are not nearly as firm as they ought to be with their children...
- But it is to be a firmness and a discipline that is exercised for the good of your children.
 - Like the discipline of Lord described in Hebrews 12.

2) Indeed, the Lord commands you to use the rod to chasten your sons and daughters while there is hope.

- He even tells you that if you do not use it, you hate your son!
- But it is always to be used to correct—to teach—to alert him to the seriousness of what he has one.
 - It is not to be used as a way to get even or to get out your frustration on your child...
 - You are not to wait until you are so angry that you *want* to chasten him...

- You are to chasten him long before that to correct him.
- c. I can understand why there are so many who are opposed to the use of the rod in our society...
- and why there are so many who despised the rod when it was used on them...
 - It is because they never saw it used in the proper way.
 - They never saw it used for correction and for adornment—only for revenge...
 - That, you see, is not the Lord's discipline... it is your own.
 - The world is actually correct when they say that the rod used with harshness will actually promote violence...
 - It often does! It often will!

TRANS> Harshness will seat bitterness deep in the heart of your child and nothing but God's grace will be able to root it out.

- Look to the Lord to give you His grace to root out harshness from you now lest you have to plead with Him in the days to come to root bitterness out of your child...
4. Fourthly, you can provoke your children to wrath by leniency.
- a. I already spoke about the importance of being firm in a right way when I spoke about harshness...
- If you refuse to use the rod, it is because you hate your son...
 - There are a lot of angry children in our society who have never been chastened by their parents...
 - David had many angry sons for this very reason... for it is said of Adonijah of his father David...
 - 1 Kings 1:6: And his father had not rebuked him at any time by saying, "Why have you done so?"
 - The behaviour of Absalom and Amnon testifies to the same leniency.
- b. But you will say, how could leniency provoke a child to wrath!
- 1) My brothers and sisters, just look at a two year hold that has been indulged and you will see...
- A child has a conscience—
 - a conscience before God so that he knows when he has done evil...
 - If he is never called to account for it,

- his conscience is never relieved...
- His foolish parents speak tender words to him when his heart is torn up with rebellion and guilt.

2) Such a child will very quickly learn to resent his parent's very kindness...

- he will have no respect for them at all.
 - The happy, gentle, and loving child is the one who is lovingly and promptly corrected by his father for his own good.
 - Not the child who bears the rod of anger, but the child who is corrected quickly with the rod of the Lord.
 - The child who is firmly called upon to face his sin for what it is...
 - to confess it to the Lord and to seek the Lord's forgiveness and grace.

TRANS> Fathers, if you fail to correct your child, if you fail to restrain him in his sin, you will do what you can on your part to make him angry.

- Look to the Lord to give you the grace to avoid a destructive leniency.

5. Fifthly, you can provoke your children to wrath by unreasonableness.

a. There are those fathers who seem to be never satisfied with their children...

- Oh my brothers, there are many who do not expect enough from their children...
- But don't go too far in the other direction so that your children never meet with your approval...
 - That there is always something wrong with whatever they do...

b. A poor child voluntarily clears off the table without even being asked...

- and then his father complains because he missed a crumb—or stands by without a word when his mother complains...
- Or the young daughter has her first recital and dad is embarrassed because she stumbled—and the criticism starts to fly...
 - This is a good way to discourage your child.

c. Consider how patient Jesus was with His disciples as He taught them...

- Yes, He held them to a high standard,
 - but He did not give them more than they could bear.

TRANS> Unreasonableness is a good way to provoke a child to wrath...

- Look for grace to overcome this sin...
6. Sixthly, you can provoke your child to wrath by bitterness—
- Bitterness is when you hold a grudge...
 - when you refuse to forgive your child and reconcile with him...
 - I tell you, reconciliation should be immediate and it should be complete...
 - When your child has sinned, have him ask you for forgiveness,
 - and then forgive him and let the matter be done once and for all...
 - Bearing a grudge is a sure way to estrange your children and develop bitterness.
7. Seventhly, there is negligence—
- when you are so distracted with your own things that you do not take the time to listen to your children and to teach them in a meaningful way...
 - There is the father who is the CEO and his work is just too important...
 - or the one with all the hobbies who pushes his children off to the side...
 - Your children know if your golf or your fishing is more important to you than they are...
 - You can pretend that they don't realise, but they do and they will resent it but for the intervening grace of God.
8. There is favouritism—
- when you show preference toward one child over another as Jacob did with Joseph—provoking his other sons.
9. There is legalism and the imposition of a thousand rules...
- There are those parents who seem to enjoy making a show of all the things they do not allow their children to do...
 - I do not say that there is no place for house rules, but they ought to be done in a way that is designed to promote godliness...
 - not just to show off how committed you are to the Lord.
 - Rules provide protection for children,
 - A father might not allow his children too much time on the computer...
 - or might insist that his children be home by a certain hour...
 - but if rules become a substitute for godliness,

- the result is either children who are just as angry and fussy about things as their parents...
- or children who rebel and break the yoke that they were unable to bear.

10. There is failure to understand your children—

- Remember the bone head husband?
- Well the bone head father is the father who expects his children to follow his demands just because he says so...
 - who fails to listen to his children to understand the difficulties they have with what he has asked of them...
 - who does not help them work through those difficulties...
 - I'm not talking about a two year old's difficulties—
 - the two year old's difficulties are difficulties in obeying you...
 - I am talking about older children.

TRANS> Yes my brothers and sisters, there are many children who have been provoked to wrath because there are many ways to provoke a child to wrath.

- Fathers, you are to see that you do not provoke your children to wrath and that your wife does not provoke them to wrath...
 - and even that older siblings don't provoke them.
 - You are responsible.
- So what is to be done instead of provoking your children?

III. You are to bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord!

A. The words that are used here are variously translated in our English Bibles...

- Let me begin by showing you what they mean...
 1. First, the verb translated “bring them up” (ektrefw)
 - This word is an intensification of the word that means to feed or to nourish...
 - The same intensified form is used in Ephesians 5:29 when it speaks about the way a man will **nourish** and cherish his own flesh.
 - It speaks of taking a keen interest in caring for another...
 - taking the pains for them—to give them what they need...

- and to do it in the very gracious manner of one who really cares for another.
- The ideal example is that of the Lord
 - In Isaiah 1, He speaks of how He nourished and brought up children...
 - He cares so deeply for us that He went to the cross to provide us with what we need.
 - How long He bears with us, even though we are ungrateful and even though we are so unworthy.
- This is the kind of care that you fathers are to provide for your children!
 - You are to bring them up, to gently nourish them up, in the training and admonition of the Lord...
 - Remember, you are the Lord's minister and you are called to provide His nourishment to them.

TRANS> Now let's look at the two words that describe what it is we are to nourish them with...to bring them in...

2. First, with the Lord's training...
 - or as some versions say, His *discipline* or others, with His *nurture*.
 - (paideia in the original)
 - a. paideia is a word that refers in particular to child training...
 - It refers to all aspects of the training process—
 - discipline in the broadest sense...
 - Shaping a child to be what he ought to be even as you would train an athlete or a musician.
 - b. The word is also sometimes used to refer more narrowly to chastisement.
 - It is used, four times in Hebrews 12 to speak of the chastening of the Lord which is not pleasant at the time, but which produces righteousness.
 - Again, the focus of the corrective discipline is to change the behaviour from what it is to what it ought to be.
 - c. When you think of it as bringing a child from where he is to where he ought to be, you can see the complete picture—everything that is in view...
 - Take a particular skill—
 - You are training someone to be a carpenter...

- You have to teach him about the tools and show him how to use them and get him using them until he becomes proficient...
- And as he makes mistakes, you have to correct him and even rebuke him at times.
- You are teaching him how to walk as a carpenter.
- So is as a child is learning godliness...
 - You have to show him how to walk with the Lord,
 - and then get him walking so that he becomes more and more proficient...
 - And there are times when he will rebel and you have to correct him and direct him back to the right path.
 - Both training and chastisement are part of the process of bringing him from where he is to where he ought to be.

TRANS> That is *paideia*...

3. Secondly, there is admonition.

- a. This is the word *nouyesia*.
 - This speaks of using words according to the need of the moment...
 - It speaks of bringing words to the situation that apply to the situation...
 - It is all different sorts of counsel...
 - sometimes warnings...
 - sometimes encouragement...
 - sometimes reproof...
 - sometimes blame...
 - sometimes simply guidenace...
- b. The difference between this and the word training that we just looked at is that
 - *nouyesia* has to do more with what you say and
 - *paideia* has to do more with what you do.
- c. Instruction with words is very important because the Lord's revelation comes to us in words...
 - He in fact gave as language as the why by which He would primarily make Himself known to us...
 - It is a wonderful vehicle and we are to use it.

TRANS> paideia and nouyesia are to go together in the Christian nurture of a child.

- But now I want you it should be observed that both words carry the suggestion that there is something wrong that needs to be corrected...
 - This surely grows out of the idea that children are all born in sin...
 - And this being so, we are all in need of correction...
 - We all need to be transformed from our sinful ways to God's ways.
 - And that is what fathers are supposed to do...
- And there is only one way that we can bring our sinful children from where they are to where they need to be.

B. We must nourish them up with the training and admonition **of the Lord!**

- of the Lord our redeemer!
 1. Do you see now what this means?
 - Fathers, you cannot save your children,
 - You cannot wash away the guilt of their sins...
 - You cannot change their hearts...

TRANS> But you can nourish them constantly in the training and admonition of the Lord!

2. Do you see what this is?
 - You teach them, from their very earliest days, to constantly walk in the redemptive grace of the Lord!
 - You teach them to live joyfully and constantly and expectantly in the Lord—under His gracious training and admonition!
 - a. That means that you keep before them not your own standard, but His standard as it is revealed in the scriptures!
 - That they are to be holy as He is holy...
 - That they are to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength...
 - That they are to love each other even as Christ has loved us...
 - That they are to do all things without grumbling and complaining...
 - You are to teach them the high standard of their father's house!
 - You are to show them how beautiful it is to live this way...

- You are to show them the glory of their heavenly Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ and call them to imitate Him...
- You are to tell them what a privilege it is to live in His house!

TRANS> It is not your standard, but His standard that you are to train and admonish them to keep.

b. But Christian father, it is absolutely essential that you train them and admonish them in the only way that they can live by this standard...

1) You are to teach them the way of the Lord for us fallen miserable sinners...

- It is the way of grace!
- It is the way of redemption in Jesus Christ!

2) You are to train them to live in the freedom of total forgiveness!

- To constantly rest in their crucified Lord who cleanses them from their guilt...
- When they commit particular sins,
 - you are to teach them to go at once to the Lord with those sins, to confess them to Him and ask Him to pardon them...
- You are to teach them to never live with unconfessed sin...
 - to show them the Lord's readiness to always forgive us if we will but repent and come to Him...
 - You are to show them the crucified Saviour who went to the cross to bear our sins and teach them to rejoice in that forgiveness.

3) And you are to teach them to live in the **hope** of redemptive grace.

- You are to teach them to cry out to the Lord to give them grace to live the life that He has called us to live...
 - And to show them that He has promised to write His law on our hearts so that we will delight in it...
 - And to teach them to look to Him to give them the Holy Spirit so that they will.
- A wise father will see his child starting to slip...
 - He will see the attitude starting to fail...
 - And he will come to that child and say,
 - "You are having a hard time, aren't you?"

- And he will pray with his child and ask for God's help in the time of need...
- And then he will rejoice when the Lord answers the prayer.

TRANS> Christian fathers, don't you dare hold your child to the high standard with out teaching them how to deal with the standard!

- You will surely crush them!
 - You are not ministers of the law, but of grace!
 - You are to teach them to walk in the forgiveness and the transforming power of Jesus Christ...
 - It is His training and His admonition that they need!
 - Redemptive training and redemptive admonition...
 - You have no other goal for them, as God's appointed minister, than to train them and admonish them to live in Jesus Christ.

C. But someone will say,

- "How can I bring my children up in the training and admonition of the Lord when I don't know if they are in the Lord?
 - I mean, what if my children are not regenerate?
 - Shouldn't I wait until they are regenerate and then bring them up in His training and admonition?
- 1. No Christian father, the Lord tells you clearly in His word that you are to bring them up in **His** training and admonition.
 - What is the alternative?
 - Bring them up in your own training and admonition until they reach some certain age of accountability?
 - Or bring them up in your own training and admonition until you think they have come to the know the Lord...
 - and then switch over to the Lord's training and admonition?
 - Are you to deal with them as those who are strangers to God's promises and grace until you are sure they have come to Christ?
 - No, Christian father,
 - God graciously calls our children his people...
 - He tells you that His promise to you and to your children...
 - He tells you to bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord Jesus—

- as those who have His forgiveness and who have His Spirit working in them to transform them.

2. Don't you see Christian father...

- You don't have to know just how God works in your little child to regenerate him...
 - God has not told you that...
 - He is only told you that He will be a God to you and to your children and that He counts you and your children as His people.
- God, in His unsearchable sovereign grace, works in His elect children and their parents together...
 - The only indication you have of God's grace to an infant is the state of His parents...
 - If his parents are in the Lord, then it is an evidence of God's grace to the child...
 - If his parents are in rebellion against the Lord, then you have no evidence of God's grace to the child.
 - We are to regard children as in a state of grace when they have a parent who is in a state of grace until the child is old enough to show us otherwise...
 - And we are to regard children as outside of grace when they have parents who are outside of grace until such time as God is pleased (if he is pleased) to bring that child to salvation.
- That is why the Lord calls Christian parents to train up their children in the training and admonition of the Lord.
 - You are to look to the Lord to work in you as a parent at the same time He works in your child...
 - You are to look to Him to work in you as His minister to your child at the same time He works in your child to receive that grace...
 - This is not something you do in your own strength, nor is it something your child does in his own strength...
 - It is something you do by faith, looking to God work in you and to work in your child at the same time.
 - All along, as a faithful minister, you pray for fruit, just as godly farmer prays for fruit in his field...
 - And as soon as your child is old enough pray, you teach him to pray for forgiveness and fruit...
 - You train him and admonish him in the way of the Lord...

- And if God give you the grace as a parent and your child grace, then your child will continue in the training and admonition of the Lord that you started him out in.
- When he is old, he will not depart from it.

Conclusion

Oh Christian father!

- What a wonderful, heavy responsibility the Lord has given to you!
 - You are Christ's minister of grace to your children!
 - If you have not begun, begin today!
- If you are a believer, the Lord says that your children are holy...
 - Do not treat them as unclean!
 - Bring them to Him for His blessing!
 - When they are babes, carry them along the pathway of looking to Jesus...
 - When they are toddlers children, take them by the hand along the same way...
 - When they are pre-adolescent, lead them in the way they are to walk...
 - When they are teens, instruct them with counsel in their walk...
 - And when they are adults, encourage them in their walk and be there to help them as you are there for all your brothers and sisters.
 - He will not reject them—He will bless them and He will bless you in order that he might bless them through you as His minister to them.

Christian father, this is the Lord's calling for you.