

Introduction

- Rico Tice - tax disc - policeman - found it was 5 months out of date - policeman was merciful - but Rico had to put it right straight away
 - we may need to take the same prompt action of reconciliation as we come to Ephesians_6
 - for it presents us with uncomfortable challenges in how we are to live
- Looking back over Ephesians:
 - don't we love chp.1 - chosen, enlightened by Christ...
 - chp.2 is amazing, rescued by God, brought from death to life, from wrath to rescue;
 - chp.3 how wide, long deep is the love of Christ...
 - so, chp 5:8 we should live as children of the light - yes!!!
- But then we hit the ethical revolution that should follow in 5:21, where we are to submit to one another in Christ, time and again we **refuse** to do it....
- Don't know where we each are in placing our lives under Christ's Lordship, but lets look at what God has to say to us about:
 - **Children (v.1) Fathers (v.4) Slaves (v.5) and Masters (v.9)**
- We cannot make up our own rules here - need to submit to Scriptures.

Children!

- Bible knows all about rebellious children:
 - Absalom, civil war in time of David
 - or Jesus' picture of human rebellion against God is a rebellious son (parable of the prodigal) - Father I wish you were dead - I want your stuff but I don't want you!
- If you are a Christian with Christian parents then the message is clear:
 - obey your parents **IN THE LORD**
- This phrase is added since it is the Lord's authority, delegated to the parents, that gives parents their authority
- This is why 1st 5 commandments are to do with our relationship with God:
 - and the fifth is honour father/mother, which is a duty to GOD
 - parents stand "in loco dei" in the place of God
 - so honouring them is part of my duty to God
- This may sound very hard to young people, especially in our teen years and into young adulthood
 - our youth culture today tells us to disregard our parents, do our own thing, find our own identity
- OK, what is the motivation to obey?
 - **vs.2,3**
 - what does that mean? Why such a motivation?
 - well, helpful to see Deut 5:16 (commandments) which is being quoted
 - why submit to parents? **Because they are the ones who will tell you how to stay in the promised land**
 - which in NT terms is **how to get to heaven**
 - in other words, obey/honour your parents, because then you can spend all eternity with Christ!!
- Your souls are at stake here - and Christian parents will show us the path to eternal life - to love the Lord who has rescued you
 - so, children, submit to parents as to a teacher - so that you can hear and take in of the Lord Jesus Christ, of his rescue...

Parents

- Doesn't that just prompt a question for parents:
 - are these children being taught by me about the gospel?
 - are they hearing by example of the rescue of God?

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- sadly, often, we fail to communicate that clearly.
- Don Carson in "Spiritual Reformation", says that many have had an experience like the following:
 - asking "how are your children" and getting a response like "Oh Johnny is doing really well... list of achievements..." And how are they doing spiritually? (pause) "I'm afraid they are not really walking with the Lord, but we are hoping they'll come back someday".
- Of course, that initial response (to speak of earthly things) may simply be privacy, of quiet and local concern not to speak ill of a family member
 - but too often it reflects our warped priorities
 - Rico Tice speaks of apparently Christian parents raging at him for influencing their bright children to give up good careers to enter ministry or missionary work!
 - others are joyous over their children's material prosperity and apparently not terribly concerned about their spiritual state and their indifference to the God who made them
- Are our children hearing the gospel of grace in our homes?
- Ruth Graham, wife of Billy, in her book "Prodigals and those who love them" traces the turning point of their son Franklin's return to faith to a walk Franklin took with Billy on his 21st birthday:
 - Franklin had almost broken his parent's hearts by his life of drink and drugs
 - but on that walk Billy told his rebellious son "we are your parents, and we will never stop loving you"
 - they never sent him away saying "you are a disgrace to us"
 - and that experience of grace, of being treated in the same way as Billy preached on the great platforms across the world that God treats us turned the heart of that deeply rebellious young man
- That's what v.4 is about - fathers, don't exasperate your children
 - why? So you don't stop them hearing the gospel!!
 - don't misuse your authority, don't make irritating or unreasonable demands
 - this was revolutionary for the time - that children have a life and personality of their own, and their concerns should be taken into account!!
 - are children for our own fulfilment, our own pride
 - or do we have their concerns at heart - and particularly that we model Christ for them?
 - "instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (v.4)
 - "bring them up" has the sense of nourish them - fondly cherish them - recognising the delicacy of their character
 - and that takes time
- I was particularly struck by something Rob Parsons said in "A 60 minute Father" on this point:
 - "Need to get over the illusion that a slower day is coming."

For Parents: How to make your child a delinquent

- Taken from Police Department, Houston, Texas circular
 - 1. Begin with infancy to give him everything he wants. In this way he will grow up thinking the world owes him a living.
 - 2. When he picks up bad language words laugh at him. That will make him think he is cute.
 - 3. Never give him any spiritual training until he is 21, and then let him decide for himself.
 - 4. Praise him in his presence to all the neighbours; show him how much smarter he is than the neighbours' children
 - 5. Avoid the use of the word "wrong." It may develop in the child a "guilt complex." This will prepare him to believe that when he is punished later on for wrong-doing society is against him and he is being persecuted.
 - 6. Pick up everything after him: his shoes, his books, his clothes. Do everything for him so that he will be experienced in throwing burdens on others.
 - 7. Let him read anything he wants. Have no concern whatsoever for what goes into his mind. Provide him with sterilised cups for his lips, but let his brain drink out of any dirty container for words and ideas.
 - 8. Quarrel frequently in the presence of your children. In that way they will be

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prepared for broken homes later on.

- 9. Give him all the spending money he wants; never let him earn his own.
- 10. Satisfy every craving of the child for food, drinks, and everything that has to do with the sense of taste and touch, gratifying every sensual desire.
- 11. Take his part against police, teachers, and neighbours. They are all prejudiced against your little child.
- 12. When he gets into real trouble, always defend yourself and say: "I never could do anything with him."
- Various versions kicking around on the net!

- With good, gentle discipline from parents children will learn to know and love the good, gentle discipline that God gives

Slaves and Masters

Slaves

- Slaves to obey earthly master - for behind him they were to see their heavenly master
 - see passage!
 - applicable to every form of work and service, not just slavery
 - think of your boss, your immediate superior at work - we are to see in them the Lord!!!
 - massively alters the quality of work we do for our employer!
 - Samuel Chadwick, a noted Methodist leader from many years ago, tells that he learned this lesson when someone spoke of John Newton, the converted slave trader, and said of him that if he were a shoe shiner, he'd be the best in the village - as if Jesus himself were to wear those boots! Samuel Chadwick was 10, and his father made him shine all the boots - and he hated it! But after hearing this talk, when he was next shining boots, the words came back to him... he looked at the shoddily cleaned boots he'd just "cleaned" and thought "would they look well on the feet of Jesus Christ?" And so he picked them up and redid them...
 - *see v.7!*
 - if we learn this we will work with sincerity, with consistency, conscientiously, willingly, and expectant of the Lord's reward
- *Do we have those headings ready for our work tomorrow?*

Masters (v.9)

- In the same way - basically means treat the slaves as you would treat Jesus Christ!
 - to look beyond the slave and see Jesus
 - so to serve the slave, ultimately!
 - slaves in Roman world known as "**instrumentum vocale**" - a tool that can speak!
 - but now masters are to serve them! You are ultimately equal, masters and slaves, before God in heaven
 - indeed John Stott reckons that here are the seeds that ultimately killed off the slave trade...

Conclusion

- What is behind all this? 5:21 - the subordinationist ethic!
 - in other words, "**you first**"
 - your needs go before mine - about mutual subordination
 - this is the road to Christian harmony
 - and it is the way of Christ, who said to us "you first" as he allowed himself to be slaughtered on the Cross - for us
- Question, inevitably, is **where do we need to change?**
 - we need to allow ourselves to be broken by the word of God