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CHAPTER XI.

THE SPECIAL DUTIES OF CHILDREN TOWARDS THEIR PARENTS.

Richard Baxter

THOUGH precepts to children are not of so much force as to them of riper age, because of their natural incapacity, and their childish passions and pleasures which bear down their weak degree of reason; yet somewhat is to be said to them, because that measure of reason which they have is to be exercised, and by exercise to be improved: and because even those of riper years, while they have parents, must know and do their duty to them; and because God useth to bless even children as they perform their duties.

Direct. I. Be sure that you dearly love your parents; delight to be in their company; be not like those unnatural children, that love the company of their idle play-fellows better than their parents, and had rather be abroad about their sports, than in their parents' sight. Remember that you have your being from them, and come out of their loins: remember what sorrow you have cost them, and what care they are at for your education and provision; and remember how tenderly they have loved you, and what grief it will be to their hearts if you miscarry, and how much your happiness will make them glad: remember what love you owe them both by nature and in justice, for all their love to you, and all that they have done for you: they take your happiness or misery to be one of the greatest parts of the happiness or misery of their own lives. Deprive them not then of their happiness, by depriving yourselves of your own; make not their lives miserable, by undoing yourselves. Though they chide you, and restrain you, and correct you, do not therefore abate your love to them. For this is their duty, which God requireth of them, and they do it for your good. It is a sign of a wicked child, that loveth his parents the less because they correct him, and will not let him have his own will. Yea, though your parents have many faults themselves, yet you must love them as your parents still.

Direct. II. Honour your parents both in your thoughts, and speeches, and behaviour. Think not dishonourably or contemptuously of them in your hearts. Speak not dishonourably, rudely, unreverently, or saucily, either to them or of them. Behave not yourselves rudely and unreverently before them. Yea, though your parents be never so poor in the world, or weak of understanding, yea, though they were ungodly, you must honour them notwithstanding all this; though you cannot honour them as rich, or wise, or godly, you must honour them as your parents. Remember that the fifth commandment hath a special promise of temporal blessing; "Honour thy father and mother that thy days may be long in the land," &c. And consequently the dishonourers of parents have a special curse even in this life: and the justice of God is ordinarily seen in the execution of it; the despisers and dishonourers of their parents seldom prosper in the world. There are five sorts of sinners that God useth to overtake with vengeance even in this life.

1. Perjured persons and false witnesses.

1. Murderers.

1. Persecutors.

1. Sacrilegious persons. And,

1. The abusers and dishonourers of their parents.

Remember the curse on Ham, Gen. 9:22, 25. It is a fearful thing to see and hear how some ill-bred ungodly children will talk contemptuously and rudely, to their parents, and wrangle and contend with them, and contradict them, and speak to them as if they were their equals: (and it is commonly long of the parents themselves that breed them to it:) and at last they will grow even to abuse and vilify them. Read Prov. 30:17, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

Direct. III. Obey your parents in all things (which God forbiddeth not). Remember that as nature hath made you unfit to govern yourselves, so God in

nature hath mercifully provided governors for you. Here I shall first tell you what obedience is, and then tell you why you must be thus obedient.

I. To obey your parents is to do that which they command you, and forbear that which they forbid you, because it is their will you should (to so. You must,

1. Have in your minds a desire to please them, and be glad when you can please them, and sorry when you offend them; and then,
1. You must not set your wit or your will against theirs, but readily obey their commands, without unwillingness, murmuring, or disputing: though you think your own way is best, and your own desires are but reasonable, yet your own wit and will must be subjected unto theirs, or else how do you obey them?

II. And for the reasons of your obedience;

1. Consider it is the will of God that it should be so, and he hath made them as his officers to govern you; and in disobeying them, you disobey him. Read Eph. 6:1-3, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise,) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayst live long on the earth." Col. 3:20, "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord." Prov. 23:22, "Hearken to thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." Prov. 13:1, "A wise son heareth his father's instruction." Prov. 1:8, 9, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck."
1. Consider also, that your parents' government is necessary to your own good; and it is a government of love: as your bodies would have perished, if your parents or some others had not taken care for You, when you could not help yourselves; so your minds would be untaught and ignorant, even like to brutes, if you had not others to

teach and govern you. Nature teacheth the chickens to follow the hen, and all things when they are young, to be led and guided by their dams; or else what would become of them?

1. Consider also, that they must be accountable to God for you; and if they leave you to yourselves, it may be their destruction as well as Yours, as the sad example of Eli telleth you. Rebel not therefore against those that God by nature and Scripture hath set over you; though the fifth commandment require obedience to princes, and masters, and pastors, and other superiors, yet it nameth your father and mother only, because they are the first of all your governors, to whom by nature you are most obliged.

But perhaps you will say, that though little children must be ruled by their parents, yet you are grown up to riper age, and are wise enough to rule yourselves. I answer, God doth not think so; or else he would riot have set governors over you. And are you wiser than he? It is but few in the world that are wise enough to rule themselves; else God would not have set princes, and magistrates, and pastors, and teachers over them, as he hath done. The servants of the family are as old as you, and yet are unfit to be rulers of themselves. God loveth you better than to leave you masterless, as knowing that youth is rash and unexperienced.

Quest. But how long are children under the command and government of their parents?

Answ. There are several acts and degrees of parents' government, according to the several ends and uses of it. Some acts of their government are but to teach you to go and speak, and some to teach you your labour and calling, and some to teach you good manners, and the fear of God, or the knowledge of the Scriptures, and some are to settle you in such a course of living, in which you shall need their nearer oversight no more. When any one of these ends are fully attained, and you have all that your parents' government can help you to, then you are past that part of their government. But still you owe them, not only love, and honour, and reverence; but obedience also in all things in which they are still appointed for your help and guidance: even when you are married from them, though you have a propriety in your own estates, and they have not so strict a charge of you as before; yet if they

command you your duty to God or them, you are still obliged to obey them.

Direct. IV. Be contented with your parents' provision for you, and disposal of you. Do not rebelliously murmur against them, and complain of their usage of you; much less take any thing against their wills. It is the part of a fleshly rebel, and not of an obedient child, to be discontent and murmur because they fare not better, or because they are kept from sports and play, or because they have not better clothes, or because they have not money allowed them, to spend or use at their own discretion. Are not you under government? and the government of parents, and not of enemies? Are your lusts and pleasures fitter to govern you, than your parents' discretion? Be thankful for what You have, and remember that you deserve it not, but have it freely: it is your pride or your fleshly sensuality that maketh you thus to murmur, and not any wisdom or virtue that is in you. Get down that pride and fleshly mind, and then you will not be so eager to have your wills. What if your parents did deal too hardly with you, in your food, or raiment, or expenses? What harm doth it do you? Nothing but a selfish, sensual mind would make so great a matter of it. It is a hundred times more dangerous to your souls and bodies to be bred too high, and fed too full and daintily, than to be bred too low, and fed too hardly. One tendeth to pride, and gluttony, and wantonness, and the overthrow of health and life; and the other tendeth to a humble, mortified, self-denying life, and to the health and soundness of the body. Remember how the earth opened, and swallowed all those rebellious murmurers that grudged against Moses and Aaron, Num. 16; read it, and apply it to your case; and remember the story of rebellious Absalom; and the folly of the prodigal, Luke 15; and desire not to be at your own disposal; nor be eager to have the vain desire of your hearts fulfilled. While you contentedly submit to your parents, you are in God's way, and may expect his blessing; but when you will needs be carvers for yourselves, you may expect the punishment of rebels.

Direct. V. Humble yourselves and submit to any labour that your parents shall appoint you to. Take heed, as you love your souls, lest either a proud heart make you murmur and say, This work is too low and base a drudgery for me; or lest a lazy mind and body make you say, This work is too hard and toilsome for me; or lest a foolish, playful mind do make you weary of your book or labour, that you may be at your sports, and say, This is too tedious for me. It is little or no hurt that is like to befall you by your labour and diligence; but it is a dangerous thing to get a habit or custom of idleness and voluptuousness in your youth.

Direct. VI. Be willing and thankful to be instructed by your parents, or any of your teachers, but especially about the fear of God, and the matters of your salvation. These are the matters that you are born and live, for; these are the things that your parents have first in charge to teach you. Without knowledge and holiness all the riches and honours of the world are nothing worth; and all your pleasures will but undo you. [1] Oh what a comfort is it to understanding parents to see their children willing to learn, and to love the word of God, and lay it up in their hearts, and talk of it, and obey it, and prepare *betimes for* everlasting life! If such children die before their parents, how joyfully may they part with them as into the arms of Christ, who hath said, "That of such is the kingdom of heaven," Matt. 19:14. And if the parents die first, how joyfully may they leave behind them a holy *seed*, that is like to serve God in their generation, and to follow them to heaven, and live with them for ever. But, whether they live or die, what a heart-breaking to the parents are ungodly children, that love not the word and way of God, and love not to be taught or restrained from their own licentious courses.

Direct. VII. Patiently submit to the correction which your parents lay upon you. Consider, that God hath commanded them to do it, and that to save your souls from hell; and that they hate you, if they correct you not when there is cause; and that they must not spare for your crying, Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 29:15; 23:13, 14; 19:18. It is not their delight, but for your own necessity. Avoid the fault, and you may escape the correction. How much rather had your parents see you obedient, than hear you cry! It is not long of them, but of yourselves, that you are corrected. Be angry with yourselves, and not with them. It is a wicked child, that instead of being better by correction, will hate his parents for it, and so grow worse. Correction is a means of God's appointment; and therefore go to God on your knees in prayer, and entreat him to bless and sanctify it to you, that it may do you good.

Direct. VIII. Choose not your own company, but use such company as by your parents is appointed you. Bad company is the first undoing of a child. When for the love of sport you choose such playfellows as are idle, and licentious, and disobedient, and will teach you to curse, and swear, and lie, and talk filthily, and draw you from your book or duty, this is the devil's highway to hell. Your parents are fittest to choose your company.

Direct. IV. Choose not your own calling or trade of life, without the choice or consent of your parents. You may tell them what you are most inclined to, but it belongeth more to them than to you to make the choice; and it is your part

to bring your wills to theirs. Unless your parents choose a calling for you that is unlawful; and then you may (with humble submissiveness) refuse it. But if it be only inconvenient, you have liberty afterward to change it for a better, if you can, when you are from under their disposal and government.

Direct. X. Marry not without your parents' consent. Nay, if it may be, let their choice determine first of the person, and not your own: unexperienced youth doth choose by fancy and passion, when your experienced parents will choose by judgment. But if they would force you to join yourselves to such as are ungodly, and like to make your lives either sinful or miserable, you may humbly refuse them. But you must remain unmarried, while by the use of right means you can live in chastity, till your parents are in a better mind. But if indeed you have a flat necessity of marrying, and your parents will consent to none but one of a false religion, or one that is utterly unfit for you, in such a case they forfeit their authority in that point, which is given them for their edification, and not for your destruction; and then you should advise with other friends that are more wise and faithful: but if you suffer your fond affections to contradict your parents' wills, and pretend a necessity, (that you cannot change your affections,) as if your folly were incurable; this is but to enter sinfully into that state of life, which should have been sanctified to God, that he might have blessed it to you.

Direct. XI. If your parents be in want, it is your duty to relieve them according to your ability; yea, and wholly to maintain them, if there be need. For it is not possible by all that you can do, that ever you can be on even terms with them; or ever requite them for what you have received of them. It is base inhumanity, when parents come to poverty, for children to put them off with some short allowance, and to make them live almost like their servants, when you have riches and plenty for yourselves. Your parents should still be maintained by you as your superiors, and not as inferiors. See that they fare as well as yourselves; yea, though you got not your riches by their means, yet even for your being you are their debtors for more than that.

Direct. XII. Imitate your parents in all that is good, both when they are living, and when they are dead. If they were lovers of God, and of his word and service, and of those that fear him, let their example provoke you, and let the love that you have to them, engage you in this imitation. A wicked child of godly parents is one of the most miserable wretches in the world. With what horror do I look on such a person! How near is such a wretch to hell! When father or mother were eminent for godliness, and daily instructed them in the

matters of their salvation, and prayed with them, and warned them, and prayed for them, and after all this the children shall prove covetous or drunkards, or whoremongers, or profane, and enemies to the servants of God, and deride or neglect the way of their religious parents, it would make one tremble to look such wretches in the face. For though yet there is some hope of them, alas, it is so little, that they are next to desperate; when they are hardened tunder the most excellent means, and the light hath blinded them, and their acquaintance with the ways of God hath but turned their hearts more against them, what means is left to do good to such resisters of the grace of God as these? The likeliest is some heavy dreadful judgment. Oh what a woeful day will it be to them, when all the prayers, and tears, and teachings, and good example.,; of their religious parents shall witness against them! How will they be confounded before the Lord! And how sad -it thought is it to the heart of holy, diligent parents, to think that all their prayers and pains must witness against their graceless children, and sink them deeper into hell! And yet, alas, how many such woeful spectacles are there before our eyes! and how deeply doth the church of God suffer by the malice and wickedness of the children of those parents that taught them better, and walked before them in a holy, exemplary life! But if parents be ignorant, superstitious, idolatrous, popish, or profane, their children are forward enough to imitate them. Then they can say, Our forefathers were of this mind, and we hope they are saved; and we will rather imitate them, than such innovating reformers as you. As they said to Jeremiah, chap. 49:16-18, "As for the word that thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken to thee. But we will burn incense to the queen of heaven-as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings, and our princes in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then we had plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil: but since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven,-we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine." Thus they walk "after the imagination of their hearts, and after Baalim (the false worship) which their fathers taught them," Jer. 9:14. "And they forget God's name as their fathers did forget it," Jer. 23:27. "They and their fathers have transgressed to this day," Ezek. 2:. Yea, "They harden their necks, and do worse than their fathers," Jer. 7:26. Thus in error and sin they can imitate their forefathers, when they should rather remember, I Pet. 1:18, 19, that it cost Christ his blood "to redeem men from their vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers." And they should penitently confess, as Dan. 9:8, "O Lord, to us belong confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and

to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee," ver. 16. And as Psal. 106:6, "We have sinned with our fathers," &c. Saith God, Jer. 16:11-13, "Behold, your fathers have forsaken me-and have not kept my law; and ye have done worse than your fathers: therefore I will cast you out," &c. Jer. 44:9, 10, "Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and your own wickedness? They are not humbled even unto this day." See ver. 21. & ch. 1:4, "Be not as your fathers, to whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Turn ye now from your evil ways, but they did not hear." Mal. 3:7, "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you." Ezek. 20:18, "Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers." So ver. 27, 30, 36. Follow not your fathers in their sin and error, but follow them where they follow Christ, I Cor. 9:1.

[1] Read Mr. Tho. White's little book for little children. Mark: 9:36; 10:14,16