

Colossians 3:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

Analysis

Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Paul addresses children directly (revolutionary in ancient culture that barely acknowledged children's personhood). "Obey your parents" (ta tekna, hypakouete tois goneusin, τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονεῦσιν) commands submission to both parents' authority. "In all things" (kata panta, κατὰ πάντα) is comprehensive but has limits: obedience stands "in the Lord" (implied from v. 18, 22), not requiring sin against God.

"For this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (touto gar euareston estin en Kyriō, τοῦτο γὰρ εὐάρεστόν ἐστιν ἐν Κυρίῳ) provides motivation: children's obedience pleases God. This transcends mere duty; obedience becomes worship when offered to honor God. Ephesians 6:1 adds "for this is right," appealing to natural law and Fifth Commandment (Exodus 20:12). Parental authority derives from and represents God's authority.

Historical Context

Ancient Roman patria potestas (paternal power) gave fathers absolute authority over children, including power of life and death. Children were property until father died. Paul maintains parental authority but qualifies it: children obey as to the Lord; fathers mustn't provoke (v. 21). Christianity humanized parent-child relationships while maintaining ordered family structure, protecting children from arbitrary abuse while teaching proper respect for authority.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How do you teach children to obey cheerfully as worship to God versus grudging compliance?
2. What are limits to children's obedience—where do parental commands conflict with God's commands?
3. How does recognizing that obedience is 'well pleasing to the Lord' affect parenting and child-rearing philosophy?

Interlinear Text

Tà	τέκνα	ύπακούετε	τοῖς	γονεῦσιν	κατὰ	πάντα	τοῦτο
G3588	Children	obey	G3588	your parents	in	all things	this
G5043		G5219		G1118	G2596	G3956	G5124
γὰρ	ἐστιν	εὐάρεστόν	τῷ	κυρίῳ			
for	is	well pleasing	G3588	unto the Lord			
G1063	G2076	G2101		G2962			

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 20:12 (References Lord): Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Proverbs 30:17 (Parallel theme): 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.

Proverbs 6:20 (Parallel theme): My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

Deuteronomy 27:16 (Parallel theme): Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Proverbs 30:11 (Parallel theme): There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.

Matthew 19:19 (Parallel theme): Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Leviticus 19:3 (References Lord): Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.

Hebrews 13:21 (Sin): Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Colossians 1:10 (Sin): That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Proverbs 20:20 (Parallel theme): Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.