

**Fathers and Sons**  
Proverbs 3:1-8, June 20, 2010  
Trinity Sunday III

Beloved of the Lord.....It is God's holy commandment that we are to give proper honor to our father all the days of our life. To honor our father is to respect his office, his God-given authority, and obey him because we love him. While every father is sinful by nature, and the older he gets the more he sees his failures as a father, the strength of every Christian father is their Heavenly Father above, who through His Son has shown us infinite mercy and kindness. The strength then we as fathers need to raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is always to be found in Christ the Son of God, whose blood washes away our sins in fatherhood. Let us hear and heed now this wisdom the Lord gives all fathers and sons in Proverbs 3, for if there is any wisdom we desire to give our precious children, it is the highest wisdom of all, the wisdom of Christ crucified.

I. Don't forget, but obey your father's commandments. Wise Solomon now as a good father instructs his son with God's Word saying, "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments." The law of our fathers is his commandments for our own good. All decent parents desire the best for their sons and daughters, thus they teach their child obedience for the child's own good. As a rule disobedient children are punished by God, but obedient children generally have an easier life. "For length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee." If we were rebellious sons who constantly gave our fathers grief and strife, our life might be short. Absalom died young, with three darts through his heart. Proverbs 30 says, "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." On the other hand, God promises good and obedient children long life. Whenever people reach the age of 80, 90, or even 100 we can assume they were probably very obedient children but there are exceptions to the rule. John the Baptist had to be an exceptionally obedient child, yet he happily suffered a martyr's death as a young man. Jesus was a far better child, sinless and holy, keeping God's commandments for us from the heart, yet for our sake He also died around the age of 33, but rose again the third day. "Love is the fulfilling of the law". It is because we love Jesus that we should

always be happy to keep the commandments of our earthly father.

On the greater scale of things, when Solomon writes, "My son, forget not my law", we also hear our heavenly Father saying, "My son, forget not My law." Thus if God calls us into that office of fatherhood, we ought also not forget God's law, but listen and obey. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." It is not enough for fathers to take their children to church on Sunday, and assume they have done their duty. God's Word ought also be taught by fathers in the home. We should also practice what we preach. Wise Solomon gave by the Word precious wisdom to his sons, but he set a poor example as a father with his polygamy and idolatry. There are many fathers who learn all too late, that while they took good care of the child's body, they neglected the child's soul. Luther said, "We see that parents are more to be blamed for the fact that children are disobedient and naughty than the children themselves. For parents are neglectful and do not devote their attention to their children. Nor do such parents deserve to have their children turn out well for them." Jesus said, "Seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." The heart and soul of all we teach our children ought to be Christ crucified, and the full truth of His Word.

While the sinful nature of our children is inborn, children often learn how to sin by the poor example of parents. Children learn to be lazy from lazy parents. Children learn to gossip, slander, and rebel against authority from their parents who speak evil of others. Children learn to quickly judge, condemn, and be hypocrites, from parents who do the same. The apple never falls far from the tree. While it is never our intent to teach our children such, it will happen because we are the sinful children of Adam and Eve. Therefore dear fathers, since you know well there are times your children see your sin and learn from your sin, confess before your child with your lips, those sins you sorrow for in your heart. Then be sure your child knows Jesus and His forgiveness is the hope and strength of your heart. Psalm 73 says, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

II. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee. Thus when we speak of fathers and sons on Father's Day, let our thoughts ascend to our heavenly Father above us who sent His only-begotten Son for our salvation. I John 4:14 says, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." It

is through Jesus Christ the SON of God, that God the FATHER has forgiven all our sins against our own children, against our own parents. What comfort we have in heart as parents, knowing the slate of our sins AS PARENTS, AS CHILDREN, has been wiped clean by the HOLY SON OF GOD. This mercy God has for us through Christ creates in us a heart merciful toward all men. "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart. So shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man."

Sons of God should not only obey God's law, but exercise and show the mercy of their Father to their fellow man. While fathers must in general enforce the rule with the rod, the apple lies not far from the rod. "Ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Both wisdom and love will dictate the use of the rod. Proverbs 29:15 says, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." Parents who over-discipline their child drive out all the love of a child for parent. Parents who under-discipline their child love only themselves and not the child. While we as parents often err on both sides, it is by faith we strive to be as Christ, properly exercising the law and the Gospel. Sometimes love compels us to discipline for if the line is not drawn and enforced, the child will yield to no law. But sometimes we must in mercy show there are exceptions to the rule. Sometimes the guilt a child feels is punishment enough. But whatever the case may be, always be diligent to impress upon your child for whom Christ died, "Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace." Proverbs 23 says, "The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him."

III. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Solomon now instructs his son, as God instructs His children, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." To trust in God with all our heart is to commit our whole life to God's good keeping. We TRUST He will take good care of us, hence "take no thought for the morrow" and "fear not only believe." If money is scarce God can provide a feast in the wilderness. If health is poor we remember Jesus is our Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. If our will is contrary to His will, God's will is always best. Through every trial and tribulation we must stop trying to figure out why God has allowed this or that to happen to me, for God says "lean not on thine own understanding." Rather again and again it is by faith we must learn to say, "My

heavenly Father knows what He is doing, even if I do not. His wisdom far exceeds my own and whom the Lord loveth He chasteth." "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Does God punish believers for sin? Yes, in a way, but it is really discipline or a gentle correction, and it is never too much or too little, but always "spot on" so to speak. He gives us only what we can bear, for He is a loving Father, a merciful Father, a gracious Father, "slow to anger and plenteous in mercy." Indeed He would give us no trial at all if it weren't really necessary, but it is necessary that we as children of God might remember, God does not intend for me to live on earth forever, but heaven is my home. Ah how vain, shallow, and earthly our minds so often are, and we cannot see the forest for the trees, but God through tribulation parts the heavens before us and we see "There is where I want to be, there with Jesus, He died for me."

Finally dear Christian, Cast "all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." "Cast thy burdens upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee." "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Stop putting God last in your life, wake up and put Him first! For He put your life first before His own, that you through Him might live forever and never die! "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Again and again become a child of God, by repenting of your foolish wisdom, and submitting to the highest wisdom of all, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief!" Then even when you are old and near death, or young not knowing death is around the corner, you may boldly say "Death I fear thee not, for Christ by His blood has given me life and the gates of paradise are open before me!" This "shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones." Amen.