

1. Martin Luther's Treatise on Christian Liberty is based on two propositions: A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.  
A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all. Christ frees him from the guilt and power of sin, the terror of death and the power and lordship of the devil. In that sense the Christian is free. That is Gospel. But now he has the duty to love his neighbor as he loves himself. That is Law, third use of the Law. The Law is the Christian's guide, showing him how to treat his neighbor.
2. In the Russian Catechism, pp. 29-32, you will find the table of duties. This is a list of Bible passages showing you what you owe your fellowmen in their various stations of life.
3. Eph. 5:22 to 6:9 lists the duties of husbands, wives, children, fathers, slaves and masters. Our text today dwells only on the duties of children and fathers.
4. Rom. 1:18 to 3:20 is devoted to the life of natural man, the man who is still dead in trespasses and sin. Rom. 2:14-15 plainly says that natural man has a knowledge of God's Law written on his heart. He knows God's will. He obeys the ten commandments after a fashion, though very imperfectly. But he does not live his life by faith in the Son of God Who loved him and gave himself for him. Gal. 2:20. The works which do not proceed from faith in Christ are dead works. At Mt. 6:2 Jesus tells us that the works of people who are not Christians have their reward. Evidently He means that God rewards them in this life but it goes no further than that. At Eph. 5:1-2 Paul says: "Therefore be followers of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." That is a description of the works of a Christian. At Php. 4:18 Paul calls the gift which the Philippians sent him "a sweet aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God." And at Rom. 12:1 we read: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." That is how God views the works of Christian.
5. At Gal. 5:14 Paul says: "The whole law is summarized in one sentence: 'You will love your neighbor as (you love) yourself.'" This is a quote from Lev. 19:18. This love shows itself in different ways. Wives love their husbands by being subject to them. Eph. 5:22. Husbands love their wives by giving their lives for their wives. Eph. 5:28. Children love their parents by obeying and honoring them. Eph. 6:1. Fathers love their children by rearing them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Eph. 6:4. Slaves love their masters by obedience. Eph. 5:5. Masters love their slaves by gentleness and fairness. Eph. 6:9. Christians love their enemies by doing good to those who hate them. Lk. 6:27. Citizens love their government by obedience and paying taxes. Rom. 13:1-7. Love is the Christian reflection of God who loves and cares for His creation.
6. The Gospel always says "Done!" Nothing needs to be added to what Jesus did for us. It is complete. The Law always says "Do!" It requires Godly works from us. But even these works are gifts from God. Eph. 2:10 Christ said: "I am the Vine. You are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, brings forth much fruit. For, without Me you can do nothing." Jn. 15:1-8.
7. The Lord remembers the works of His children. Rev. 14:13. The works of a Christian do not earn salvation but the Lord rewards these works. He will even reward their suffering. Mt. 5:12. Parents sometimes give their little children money so that the children can buy gifts for others. When the children then give gifts to the parents, the parents lovingly reward the little children as if the money had not been their own. Verily, God is love!

Theme: THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Introduction: God instituted the family, Gen. 1:27-28. If the family is godly, it is a foretaste of heaven. But if children and parents are ungodly, the family becomes a foretaste of hell. Read Ps. 127:3-5. Children are gifts from God. They bring happiness into the family and to the parents. God wants all members of the family to do their duty so that the family is a harmonious group.

I-Their life is centered in the Lord. From Eph. 5:21 to 6:9 Paul discusses the relationship of members of the larger family circle. At that time slaves were considered as members of the larger family. Notice how often the Lord is mentioned in their relationships. 5:21 gives the general rule: "Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." The Lord is the center of their relationship. Then in vs. 22 we read: "Wives be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord." The wives are not married to Christ but their subjection to husbands should be as to the Lord. In vss. 25-33 husbands are constantly reminded that Christ is the center of true marriage. At 6:1 children are told to be obedient to their parents (the wife is included) in the Lord. Their relationship to the Lord by faith is no more important than their relationship to parents by deeds. Again, the Lord is at the heart of their obedience. And, at 6:4 we are told that fathers (this includes mothers) should rear their children by the training and admonition of the Lord. The Word of the Lord should be their guide and rule. Paul says at Gal. 2:20: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me." The works of the flesh are of Satan. But the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22-23) causes a family to be a blessed group.

II-Their life is ruled by proper attitudes. Read vss. 1-2 of our text. The proper attitude of children toward parents is one of obedience and honor. This is very important because the sinful flesh causes people to disobey and dishonor. Look about you in the world. The world is like an asylum filled with disobedient and rebellious children. Think on the sons of Eli. I Sam. 2. They were corrupt and did not know the Lord. In the temple they took the best meat of the sacrifices for themselves. They caused people to abhor the Lord's work. They committed fornication with women who came to worship at the tabernacle. Or think of Absalom. II Sam. 15. He stole the hearts of the people away from David his father. He rebelled against his father. Even though Eli's sons and Absalom grew up in a godly environment they lost their souls. No. Children are to honor their parents as did Joseph. Gen. 46. He honored Jacob and provided a home for him. Think of King Solomon who honored his mother. I Kings 2:19. Think of Jesus who was subject to His parents and who provided for His mother. Lk. 2:51; Jn. 19:26. Joseph, Solomon, Jesus had the mind and attitude of the Lord. God promises obedient children a long life. This is the rule, not the exception. And then we come to the fathers. We often hear of fathers who abuse their children, irritate them, anger them, expect too much of them, make them bitter. These are sins of the flesh. Fathers should not provoke their children to wrath but rather bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They should teach them the Word of God, train them carefully, spank them when it is necessary for their good. Hebr. 12:9. Children who are reared correctly will return to honor their parents when they are old.

Conclusion: Remarkably, you cannot find an ideal human father in the Bible. Therefore, we close by advising parents and children to pray together: "OUR Father Who art in heaven." Let the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be their Helper, Friend and Guide.