

HOW SHALL WE ORDER THE CHILD?

William Hake

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HOW SHALL WE ORDER THE CHILD?

A word of counsel to Christian Parents
and all who teach and train the young

William Hake

Revised by R. C. Chapman

Enlarged Edition

“And Manoah said,
Now let thy words come to pass.
How shall we order the child,
and how shall we do unto him?”

Judges 13:12

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All Bible quotations are taken from the
Authorised Version of the Holy Scriptures

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

William Hake (1795 – 1890) is a character largely forgotten by secular and religious history, who nevertheless was used mightily by God in the cause of Truth during the nineteenth century. His testimony, counsel and support were instrumental in the secession of Anthony Norris Groves from Anglicanism, the acquainting of George Müller with his wife-to-be, and assisting the labours of Robert Cleaver Chapman of Barnstaple for some 30 years.

Born in Exeter, and called by grace in his youth, he became part of an evangelical movement away from the established church that would afterward become known as 'Brethrenism'. In regard to his own family life, he was married in April 1818 to one Elizabeth Truman (1795 – 1873) and together they were granted nine children, five of whom survived to adulthood. In 1839 the family removed to Northam, near Bideford, on the North Devon Coast, where Hake established a school for his own and other children called 'Tusculum', and latterly 'Wellesbourne'. The building is still in existence.

In 1851 they were joined by Henry Soltau, (whom Hake employed as a schoolmaster) and his family. Until this time, corporate worship had been conducted at home, but with conversions in the younger generation, and the number of like-minded believers growing, a more suitable venue was sought. Thus in 1858 meetings commenced in a rented 'Upper Room' of a building in North Road, Bideford. In

the mercies of God, the church then formed continues to the present day as North Road Chapel.

Hake had the great joy of seeing his children following the Lord (cf 3 John 4). William Truman Hake (1821 – 1875) served as the school's headmaster after his father's retirement, before travelling as a missionary to Switzerland. George and Henry also assisted in the school, and were active in the fellowship in Bideford, until their deaths in 1916 and 1917 respectively. Two unmarried daughters, Mary and Elizabeth remained close to their father throughout his life.

There was evidently a unique and sanctified atmosphere in the Hakes' home and school, to the extent that it was remarked upon in the local press; while Hake himself was requested by friends to put into writing his thoughts upon the up-bringing of children. The result was this short and rare volume (edited by R. C. Chapman, an intimate and lifelong friend of Hake's), published in the year before his death. In an era when corporal punishment was commonplace throughout society, and absent parents frequently delegated their responsibilities to nursemaids, governesses and tutors, this book must have seemed surprisingly 'progressive'.

Twenty-First Century humanists and psychologists would doubtless balk at the very title of this work, and then condemn its content (cf Isaiah 5:20), but the enquiring Christian reader will find it redolent with Scripture, and intensely spiritual. Its applications are particularly pertinent and searching. As a new parent himself, the writer has found it to be so at first-hand. Those expecting a book

about children will find one instead about parents. Its title might almost be recast in the words of another Biblical question: “*what manner of persons ought ye to be?*” (2 Peter 3:11).

Having learned of the existence and scarceness of this work several years ago, special thanks are due to Mr Ian Deighan of Derry who, in a remarkable providence, kindly supplied a copy of the text. It is reproduced here in a re-typeset form, in which direct Scripture quotations are denoted by speech-marks and italicised text, with references provided in-line. These, and updated typography are the only changes. Above all, gratitude is due to Almighty God for preserving not only this helpful book, but also a fellowship in Bideford where it would still be counted ‘worthy of all acceptance’. “*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them*” (Revelation 14:13).

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CHAPTER I

EXCELLENCY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES FOR THE END IN VIEW

Some say there are but few direct instructions in the Word of God on the great subject before us. “*Train up a child in the way he should go*” (Proverbs 22:6); “*Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4), are general directions; ‘but where’, it is asked, ‘are the minute instructions to guide us under our daily circumstances?’ I answer: The Bible is the voice of our Heavenly Father instructing us how to please Him. To this we should add that, as we, who by faith are the children of God, hear what **our** Heavenly Father says in that Book, so ought **we** to speak and act before our children. **We** are to hear God’s sayings; we should also observe His dealings with **us**, and then follow after the general exhortation: “*Fathers ... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*”: that is, bring up your children, taking the Lord for your example, and His book for your guide.

God will honour your diligent searching the Scriptures, and your persevering prayer for the instruction of His Holy Spirit, that you may grow in the knowledge of Him, and be filled with the knowledge of His will. He will set before you through the Word, abundant instruction for training your children in such a manner that, under God, they shall obey their parents – honouring both father and mother – and receive the promised blessing (cf Ephesians 6:1-3). It will be a joy to me if parents in this book see a friendly beam to light them through a path which is oftentimes darksome and trying, by

leading them more duly to prize the Holy Scriptures, and to use them as ‘a lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their path’ (cf Psalm 119:105).

Joshua was bidden to be strong and very courageous, that he might observe to do according to all the Law, that he might prosper whithersoever he went; he was to meditate therein day and night; and he had also the promise of the help of the presence of the Lord: “*Be not afraid ... for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest*” (Joshua 1:9). Thus we perceive that Joshua had not only the privilege, first, of referring to the word of God to ascertain what was His will in general, but also, secondly, of communing with the God of the Word as to things in particular which required the immediate counsel of God. At Jericho, Joshua found himself in the presence of the Lord. He, “*fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said... What saith my Lord unto His servant?*” (Joshua 5:14). In communion he receives full instructions; he observes them; the wall falls down flat, and the Lord gives him the city. We shall succeed in our undertakings with our children, sooner or later, if the Lord be with us; if while with them we are wont to say to our God, ‘what saith my Lord unto His servant?’

When successful, let us take warning. “*The Lord was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country*” (Joshua 6:27); but he knows nothing of the accursed thing in the camp; he takes counsel with his men and not with God, and the children of Israel are smitten before the men of Ai. “*Wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water*” (Joshua 7:5). (When the fame of the Lord Jesus went

abroad, “*He withdrew Himself unto the wilderness, and prayed*” – Luke 5:16). How soon, however, does the Lord arise for his help when Joshua returns to communion. The cause of failure is pointed out, the evil put away, directions are given by the Lord for the battle, God’s counsel is followed, the victory won, the people are enriched, and Joshua builds an altar unto the Lord God.

Again, in the matter of the Gibeonites, there was failure of communion with God, and we know how Joshua and the people were beguiled (cf Joshua 9). After this Joshua received encouragement and directions from the Lord, and all went well; for the Lord was his helper, his wisdom, and his strength. “*The Lord thy God is with Thee whithersoever thou goest*” (Joshua 1:9). “*Without Me ye can do nothing*” (John 15:5). May the gracious Lord make all this to be of constant, happy application to our hearts and consciences.

Who has not observed the encouraging instance to parents, of the blessing of God on early godly instruction in the case of Timothy? Who is there that loves his child (not to speak of the higher motive of pleasing God), who would not have that child early to ‘know the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus’ (cf 2 Timothy 3:15)? How faithful a disciple of the Lord Jesus did Timothy prove himself to be from his youth! What an example to all parents his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice! And we know that God richly recompensed them for training and ‘furnishing’ their child ‘unto all good works’ through the Scripture, which, “*is given by inspiration of God, and is*

profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

The well-known case of Samuel, too, holds out a great encouragement to Christian parents to give their children to God: “*I will give him*”, said Hannah, “*unto the Lord all the days of his life*” (1 Samuel 1:11). It must not be forgotten that such instances as these are recorded in God’s Word for this special object: to commend to us the privilege, the heavenly duty also, of giving our children in their earliest days to the Lord. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, received her son from the Lord; to Him she returned him, and He graciously accepted him as His child; trained him up, and made him an instrument in promoting the glory of God, and profiting, in the highest sense, his fellow-men to succeeding generations. God says by these, his true ‘worshippers’, Elkanah and Hannah, to every parent, “*do thou likewise*”. ‘Give your children to Me from their childhood, and I will ‘put them among My children’, ‘My jewels’, ‘will bless them, and make them a blessing’ (cf Luke 10:37, Jeremiah 3:19, Malachi 3:17, Genesis 12:2).

And who that reads his Bible has not pondered the Lord’s words of Abraham, His Friend, as recorded in Genesis 18:17-19? “*And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him*”. The perfect

submission of Isaac to Abraham (cf Genesis 22) was a reflection of Abraham's long course of obedience to God. Abraham had exercised himself to profit for many years in the path of obedience; so much so that he was more ready to obey the word – *"Take now thy son"* – than the word spoken at the first by the Lord: *"Get thee out of thy country, unto a land that I will shew thee"* (cf Genesis 11:31, 12:1-5 and 22). In the intermediate long period, his faith had increased with increase of knowledge of God; and he had been continually such a worshipper, that his faith did not fail when he was called upon by God to sacrifice his son, his only son, Isaac, whom he loved.

Abraham (not without infirmity) was wholly consecrated to God. And Isaac was to Abraham what Abraham was to God. Patient, holy submission is seen in both. It is written, *"And they went both of them together"* (Genesis 22:6), and again, *"So they went both of them together"* (v.8). What a heavenly picture is here of the perfect fellowship between the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. *"I and My Father are one"* (John 10:30); *"As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee"* (John 17:21).

Happy that family where the heavenly reality finds its shadow in the ways of parent to child, and child to parent, as was the case with Abraham and Isaac, as recorded in Genesis 22. In many a true believer's house, alas! it is not so. With such I would deeply sympathize, and, in all humbleness of mind, would say, Trace the evil matters – whether in yourself or your child – to their root; be assured 'you shall reap if you faint not'. Though you be faint, yet pursue; you have God on your side while you pursue. Interesting

cases of success in the end come at this moment to my mind, in which there seemed for many years to be no hope, yet this was the comforting word, “*Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*” (Galatians 6:9, Judges 8:4).

Whatever the difficulties, take courage; commune with God. By God’s grace pursue the path of faith toward God, of faithfulness to yourself, and love and faithfulness toward your child; trusting in God, that, in answer to your daily prayer, God will grant, in the end, sweet fellowship; such that parents, sons, and daughters may be worshippers together, as was the case with Abraham and Isaac: “*I and the lad will go yonder and worship . . . They went, both of them together*” (Genesis 22:5-6).

The Word of God not only furnishes examples for the encouragement of parents, but also of merciful warning against neglect of the training their children; and we need both. Look, for instance, at Lot. Lot was of a worldly spirit, or he had not pitched his tent toward Sodom, among a people, of whom it is written that they were: “*wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly*” (Genesis 13:13). And although, as the apostle informs us, he “*vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds*” (2 Peter 2:8), nevertheless, by his worldliness, fatherly influence and godly authority failed. Hence we find that two or more of his daughters were married to ungodly men – to whom, when he warned them of the coming destruction of Sodom, “*he seemed as one that mocked*” (Genesis 19:14). So they, with Lot’s daughters, perished in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain in the

which Lot had dwelled, God, “*making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly*” (2 Peter 2:6).

At no time was the remembrance of these records more needed than the present. We are “*the children of God*”. We are ‘the servants of the Lord Christ’, “*bought with a price*”, ‘redeemed to God by the blood of Christ’, called “*holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling*”, made “*kings and priests by Christ unto God and His Father*”, “*who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*”. We are “*strangers and pilgrims on the earth*”, ‘our citizenship is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ’ (Romans 8:16, Colossians 3:24, 1 Corinthians 6:20, Revelation 1:5, Hebrews 3:1, Revelation 1:6, Ephesians 1:3, Hebrews 11:13, Philippians 3:20). Let not, therefore, the “*holy seed*”, in any sense, “*join in affinity with the people*” of the world (Ezra 9.2, 14). The sin is of a far deeper dye now “*in these last days*”, when God has “*spoken to us by His Son*” (Hebrews 1:2), than it was in Ezra’s, or in any former day.

Let us with all prayerful diligence – as those who ‘are not ignorant of Satan’s devices’ (cf 2 Corinthians 2:11) – ‘put a difference between the holy and profane ... between the unclean and the clean’, lest the Lord be more and more ‘profaned among us’ (cf Ezekiel 22:26). Let us do all things in reference to ‘the judgment-seat of Christ’, considering how such-or-such a thing, which we allow for ourselves, or our sons, or our daughters, will appear then and there.

Abraham, in the strength of the Lord, could rescue Lot and his goods from the hands of the kings who had taken him captive (cf Genesis 14:12); but how solemn is the thought – Lot returns to Sodom! (where the angels find him, a judge sitting ‘in the gate’). None can rescue his sons-in-law, married daughters, or his ‘goods laid up for many years’ from ‘the brimstone and fire which the Lord rained upon Sodom, from the Lord out of heaven’ (cf Genesis 19:1, 24, Luke 12:19). “*Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” (Galatians 6:7). Melchizedek, when he brought forth bread and wine, ‘blessed Abram’ (cf Genesis 14:19). Had Lot taken warning and confessed his sin of dwelling in Sodom, would he not have found mercy and received the blessing of the Lord through Melchizedek as did Abraham? But, alas! he would return to Sodom despite the warning he had had from the Lord through being taken captive, and the unselfish example which Abraham had shewn him: “*I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth*”, said Abraham, “*that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich*” (Genesis 14:22-23).

Lot was not content, as was Abraham, with ‘the Lord, the Most High God’, for his portion. He wanted something beyond ‘the Possessor of heaven and earth’! He will be made rich. So he returns to Sodom to bear the consequences, however plain the warning, or excellent the example. “*The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it*” (Proverbs 10:22). Christian parents, receive the warning; and may the fulness of the blessing be upon you.

We know the rest of the sad record concerning Lot, his wife, and his two remaining daughters. If in our own case there has been failure, let us deal with God, who will deal with us according to His word. God would have us cast ourselves with deep sorrow and confession upon His grace. *“The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy”* (James 5:11). Let us be assured of His compassion and faithfulness, and that *“the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations”* (2 Peter 2:9). *“With God all things are possible”* (Mark 10:27). There is nothing too hard for the Lord. It is never too late to trust in God. *“In everything let us make known our requests to God”* (Philippians 4:6). *“Pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us”* (Psalm 62:8).

The case of David, with respect to some of his children, is also full of instruction. The Lord make it so to us. It is said of Adonijah in particular, *“His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, why hast thou done so?”* (1 Kings 1:6) and, doubtless, in the cases of Amnon and Absalom, also, there was carnal fondness and consequent failure. Here, then, we have an instance of a man of God – the worshipper of God; the man after God's own heart; the Psalmist and prophet; one of the most eminent of God's saints – neglectful of this great duty, namely, the godly training of his children. How heavy the troubles brought upon David by the wickedness of Amnon in regard to his sister Tamar, by Absalom's murder of Amnon, and purposed murder of his father. These were indeed the solemn retribution of God for David's own sins of adultery and murder, yet how greatly must these sorrows of David have been aggravated by the reflection that his own spoiled children were the instruments of this retribution.

One has said, “If parents make the fountain bitter, how can they expect the streams to be sweet?” David was a great king and warrior; a great prophet; “*the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel*” (2 Samuel 23:1); but he was also a father. God’s requirement of a father is, “*Train up [your] child in the way he should go*”. God’s promise is, “*and when he is old, he will not depart from it*” (Proverbs 22:6). Eunice had joy through godly training of her son: neglecting this, David reaped a bitter harvest.

How touching the record concerning Absalom! When tidings were brought to David of his death, “*the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said: O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!*” (2 Samuel 18:33). Thus was David scourged. “*The Lord scourgeth every son whom He receiveth . . . what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?*” (Hebrew 12:6-7). David was scourged through sins of his children similar to his own. It must not, however, be forgotten that he ‘despised not the chastening of the Lord’ (cf Hebrews 12:5). He ‘accepted the punishment of his iniquity’ (cf Leviticus 26:41); yet how long after his sins of adultery and murder did he delay making his confession to God! Sorrows increase when confession fails: “*When I kept silence*”, said David, “*my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long . . . Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin . . . Thou forgavest*” (Psalm 32:3). “*Thou shalt not die*” (2 Samuel 12:13). These things are written for our profit. May we duly ponder them.

Again, Jacob, in his youth, deceived his father Isaac. Isaac had bidden his elder son, Esau, to bring him venison, savoury meat, such as he loved, purposing to bless Esau. But Jacob, instructed by his mother, went to the flock, “*brought two good kids of the goats to make savoury meat withal*”, deceiving his father and lying: as if God were not able to rule the mind of Isaac (as He did afterward that of Jacob himself, according to Genesis 48:1-20).

The example shewn to them by their forefather Abraham was this: ‘he called upon the name of the Lord’, he believed what God had said, he communed with God, and again he ‘called upon the name of the Lord, the everlasting God’ (cf Genesis 12:8, Romans 4:3, Genesis 17:3, 21:33). Had this example been followed, they would have had a single eye to God’s will; Isaac, Rebecca, and their son Jacob, instead of being divided in purpose and action, would have been found worshippers together at the altar. Kids of the goats, instead of being killed to make savoury meat to deceive, might have been offered to God, to prefigure Him who was to come and make His soul an offering for sin.

God indeed loaded Jacob with benefits, remembering the promise in Genesis 28; but there was no confession of the sin of deceiving his father, and therefore much sorrow from time to time was his portion, in a way of retributive discipline from God. It is written, “*I loved Jacob*” (Malachi 1:2). Again: “*Whom the Lord loveth He correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth*” (Proverbs 3:12). And again: “*Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law*” (Psalm 94:12).

We well remember what happened to Jacob while serving Laban. How Laban deceived him during the twenty years he was with him. Many years, however, passed before the severe stroke of correction came; but it came at last. *“Be sure your sin will find you out”* (Numbers 32:23). *“God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”* (Galatians 6:7). We shall see that in his fast advancing age, (cf Genesis 37) the image of that which is recorded in chapter 27, as done in his youth, was, as it were, mirrored back. In his youth Jacob uses the ‘goodly raiment of Esau’ (his father Isaac’s favourite son), and kids of the goats to deceive his father, and thus by subtlety he obtains the blessing. In his age, Jacob’s sons use the goodly raiment, the ‘coat of many colours’ of Joseph, dipped in the blood of the kid of a goat, to deceive their father.

How *“the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it”* (Proverbs 10:22). But if Jacob will have recourse to ungodly means to get his blessing, the fruit must be sorrow – ‘bitter as wormwood’.

When Jacob was young, his father, it is written, ‘smelled the smell’ of his brother Esau’s raiment (cf Genesis 27:27), which Jacob wore to deceive. Afterwards, when his own son Joseph’s garment, dipped in blood, was brought to him, *“Jacob rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon his loins and mourned . . . He refused to be comforted”*. He said, *“It is my son’s coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is, without doubt, rent in pieces”*. *“I will go down into the grave mourning”* (Genesis 37:34, 35, 33). *“The recompence of a man’s hands shall be rendered unto him”*

(Proverbs 12:14). “*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Proverbs 14:12).

Nevertheless, the concluding days of Jacob were bright indeed. From the time that he “*offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac*” (Genesis 46:1) at Beersheba, on the way to Egypt, to the time when his departure was at hand – seventeen years – Israel walking with God, ‘waiting for His salvation’ (cf Genesis 49:18), was Israel indeed. Must he not have been greatly helped to self-judgment by the remembrance of the manner in which the sins of his early days, had been brought to his mind through the ways of his sons?

Observe, there is no record in Jacob’s history of his building an altar, or offering his offering, from the time God said to him, “*Arise, go up to Bethel, and make there an altar unto God*” (Genesis 35:1), to the time when he “*came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac*” (Genesis 46:1). To him these many years were years of painful discipline which made him at last to cry out, ‘All these things are against me. Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away ... ye will bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave’ (cf Genesis 42:36, 38). If we do not from day to day remember Him who in mercy “*put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*” (Hebrews 9:26); of whom the offering and the altar are types, we shall be failing Jacobs, not prevailing Israels.

CHAPTER II

THE WAYS OF CHRIST – THE PATTERN FOR US

As we do the will of our Heavenly Father after Christ's pattern, so shall we be enabled to train our children well. Consider God's Word: it is addressed to us, as before said, by God as our Father; let us read, and by the Spirit understand, the instruction contained in this precious volume (which, from first to last, testifies of Christ), and carry it out in our daily walk; so shall we serve as epistles of Christ to our children, even before they are able to read; and they will read in us what we learn from our Heavenly Father.

The best way to teach another what is right is to do it first ourselves. I have been asked, 'Can children imitate grace?' Children imitate the ways of their parents – the greater the grace set before them the better: being imitators **by Grace**, and imitating the example **of Grace**, are different things. Take, by way of illustration, the precept and example of Christ, "*Love one another, as I have loved you*" (John 15:12). It is true we cannot make our children love the children of God, as such; but we are to set before them an example for their imitation, and are to love all our brethren and sisters in Christ; and by precept with example to encourage our children to love their brothers and sisters.

The Grace of the Lord Jesus! How it is manifested, and how it shines forth in His ways! If we imitate Him, we shall be kind to our children; we shall do every kindness in a kind manner – and

accompany our kind deeds with kind words. Our blessed Saviour did this. When the leper comes to Him, and says, “*Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean*”, Jesus puts forth His hand and touches him, saying, “*I will, be thou clean*” (Matthew 8:2-3). Here we find the Lord Jesus not only doing a good deed – that is, healing the leper – but doing it in a kind manner, and speaking also a kind word. His deed, word, and manner were kind. Again, when the Lord heals the sick of the palsy, He says: “*Son, be of good cheer*” (Matthew 9:2); and to the woman diseased with an issue of blood: “*Daughter, be of good comfort*” (Luke 8:48). The four gospels abound in like deeds of the Lord. “*Seek, and ye shall find*” (Matthew 7:7).

Our crookedness is often made manifest by contrast with the perfect way of the Lord Jesus. One great cause of our failures is that we are like a workman, if such could be found, who has line and plummet in possession, yet flatters himself that, without line and plummet, he can build his wall.

Mark the conduct of our blessed Lord in Matthew 14:15-27. The disciples would instruct their Master, saying, “*The time is now past, send the multitude away*”, and so on, not calling Him Lord. He does not in a direct manner rebuke the disciples; but displays His wisdom and His power in putting them into circumstances where they shall prove their weakness, and their need of Him. Having fed the multitude, He constrains the disciples to go into a ship without Him, while He sends the multitude away. The ship is tossed with the waves, the wind contrary, they are troubled, they have come to their wits’ end. They see Him walking on the sea – they cry out for fear.

Thus their Lord brings them into trial to teach them to think humbly of themselves, and to bring them into better acquaintance with Himself. He also makes way for His ready word: “*Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid*”. Children are often like the disciples when they said to their Lord, “*The time is now past, send the multitude away*”, etc.; they think all the wisdom is with them. We should convince them of the contrary in a patient, Christ-like manner. How like a father to His children was the blessed Lord to His disciples! ‘He knew their frame; He remembered that they were dust’.

Let us also mark the way of the Lord Jesus when dealing in rebuke. I have found, as parent and teacher, much profit from the record of the Lord’s way with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews (John 3:1-21). Nicodemus, though sincere, was ignorant, and slow of heart to believe. He came also by night. How much better had he come in broad daylight in sight of his fellow-Pharisees.

The Lord, having taught the birth from above, defers rebuke until the words, “*How can these things be?*” Then says the Lord, “*Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*” adding (according to Nicodemus’s own word, “***we know** Thou art a teacher*”), “*We speak that **we do know**, and testify that we have seen*”. This reproof has due effect, and Nicodemus becomes a true learner. Now observe, verse 19, “*This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light*”. Again, verse 21, “*But he that doeth truth cometh to the light*”. Surely Nicodemus thought within himself, ‘I am commended because of coming to the light. My teacher claims

to be the Son of God, The Light; but have I not been like those who love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil?”

We know the blessed fruit. Nicodemus is the helper of Joseph of Arimathea in the burial of the Lord; in the eye of his fellow-Pharisees defiling and degrading himself, but in his own sight doing office of highest honour. How patient the teacher! How heavenly His teaching! How gentle His reproofs! Observe also He leaves the work to the Spirit of God of making His words life and light, strength, joy, and courage to Nicodemus, an example to preachers of the gospel, and to parents and teachers.

Now let us observe our Lord Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50). The Son of God, unhonoured by Simon, ‘sits down to meat’. Other guests – had aught of courtesy been lacking – would have taken great offence. How deals the Lord? The two debtors in the parable, Simon and the woman, are alike frankly forgiven. Simon (v. 43) unwittingly passes sentence on himself. The Lord shows Himself the Searcher of hearts, the Son of God, having power on earth to forgive sins; and, while comforting the weeping one, lately so vile a sinner but now full of faith and love, at once rebukes, instructs, and pardons Simon.

Further, Simon already quickened from death to life, sees his unhonoured guest to be the Christ on whom he had believed, and all his guests heard, from the words of Christ to the woman, “*thy faith hath saved thee*”, the glorious gospel of the forgiveness of sins. Have we not here a notable instance of the Lord’s mind and manner in

rebuking? When set at nought, not moved, except in infinite love to care for his host the Pharisee, and all his guests, and to comfort her whose ministry must have been highest joy to his heart. The like mind in us parents and teachers will turn all trials of patience into fair occasions for profiting those with whom we have to do.

John 13 – 17

The scene before us is our Lord with His disciples, just previous to the death of the cross. They failed in love one for another. There was a strife among them which of them should be accounted the greatest. They had also indignation within themselves against the woman who brought her box of ointment to anoint the Lord's body to the burying. It was at such a time as this that our Lord spake all those heavenly words contained in the portion of John's gospel referred to; and that He, their Lord and Master, stooped to do the office of the lowest servant. "*The Father had given all things into His hands*" (John 13:3), He was come from God and was going to God; He rises from supper, He lays aside His garments, He takes a towel and girds Himself, He pours water into a basin, and begins to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. But the Lord knew, and makes known His greatness. After He had washed their feet, He took His garments again, and being set down, He said unto them, "*Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet*" (John 13:13-14).

The Lord and Master washes His disciples' feet! Shall we not bear His manner in mind while we are engaged in discipline? We should

not only stoop, but be very gracious while we are determined to cleanse; and so much the more, if the feet be tender, are we called to the fuller manifestation of a tender mind. If we must be severe with the hand, we should so much the more manifest the tenderness of the heart.

‘Looking unto Jesus’ is our rule. The Spirit of God teaches how and when to take again our garments and resume our place of authority which God has given us. The greater the meekness with which we minister, the greater the firmness with which we rule. The Lord shewed His gracious determination to rule in His service to Peter; and when He resumes His place and authority as Lord and Teacher, in His lovely grace, He aims at the happiness of His disciples, saying, *“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them”* (John 13:17). The Lord’s authority is most marked while washing the feet; His grace how manifest in the declaration of His lordship!

In verse 6, Peter calling Jesus “*Lord*”, asks Him, *“Dost Thou wash my feet?”* The Lord after a very gentle manner would set him right: *“What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter”* (John 13:7). Peter, instead of being satisfied with the exceeding gentle answer of Jesus, and without saying ‘*Lord*’, replies, *“Thou shalt never wash my feet”*. This reply makes a demand upon the Lord. *“If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me”*. This causes Peter to change his tone, and he says again, “*Lord*”, adding, *“not my feet only, but also my hands and my head”* (v.8-9). The Lord, however, at length has His own way, and Peter must be served as his Master is willing to serve him. This spirit of Peter is often at work in our children. We shall oftentimes

have occasion to exercise gracious forbearance with steady determination; we must not by yielding spoil the child, but be determined under all circumstances to rule, not for the sake of ruling, but for our children's happiness.

The commandment to love, contained in John 13:34, was given by our Lord at a time, as we have seen, when the disciples were at strife. Peter turns the subject. "*Lord, whither goest Thou?*" (v.36). Doubtless Peter had great love for Christ, but he would rather have had his own will gratified than obey the commandment of the Lord. The Lord had said, "*Whither I go, ye cannot follow Me now*". Peter said, "*Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake*" (John 13:36-37). How like is this to the conduct of many a child: 'why cannot I go with you?' etc. Children should be brought up to be content with the parents' commands. It must be left with the parents to answer their children's inquiries or not, as to their reasons for determining after such and such a manner. They will perhaps, like Peter, feel disposed to do many things, and promise to do many more. But, "*to obey is better than sacrifice*" (1 Samuel 15:22); therefore, though children make all kinds of promises – 'I will be so good, if you will let me do this or that' – parents must be firm, as well as affectionate; and what wisdom dictates, not what the child wills, must be determined on.

We may be tempted in two ways; first to act as if we were wise enough to do without God, because we have only a **little child** to deal with; or secondly, we may fail to go to God in difficulties, as if impossibilities were before us, and be discouraged because we have

such a child to deal with. Now as to the first, let us be assured that we as much need the Lord's help effectually to stay the tongue of a child and to order his goings, as Joshua needed the Lord's help when he said, "*sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon*" (Joshua 10:12); and as to the second, God knows nothing of impossibilities: "*the sun stood still in the midst of heaven*" (v.13)! But we ought to remember that Joshua spake to the Lord, before he said to the sun, 'stand thou still'. Let us say, 'it is a little child, but a great difficulty'; or, 'it is such a child; but power belongs to Him with whom I have to do; I will put it into the hands of the Almighty God'.

But observe the new commandment of our Lord (cf John 13:34). If we loved one another as we love ourselves, truly we should have attained to much; but the Lord Jesus says, "*Love one another as I have loved you*" this is the new commandment. The Lord shews to us the pattern of His love for us to copy. We would have our children to love one another dearly – we teach them accordingly – but we should also in every way, by God's grace, set them a good example: let us, beloved, as brothers and sisters of the heavenly family in Christ Jesus, love one another. Let us mourn before God, and with godly sorrow confess before Him, whatsoever His blessed Spirit points out to us in our hearts or conduct contrary to this.

In training children, we have our Peters; let God be our Teacher, that we may teach them. Shall there be reproof? Shall it be sharp or gentle? Or shall we bear with their simplicity and ignorance? As we learn of God, we shall be able to teach aright.

CHAPTER III

THE PARENTS' AUTHORITY

A solemn question, which cannot be too early settled by parents, is this: who is to rule – the father or the child? God, in His Word, says: “*A son honoureth his father ... if then I be a Father, where is Mine honour?*” (Malachi 1:6). This applies both to the Heavenly Father and the earthly. We know what God’s order is: “*Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord*” (Colossians 3:20); and ‘we are not ignorant of Satan’s devices’ (cf 2 Corinthians 2:11); he would bring dishonour to God and distress into families by reversing the order of God.

Parents are tempted to disobey God in yielding, when they ought not to yield. It may be to avoid present trouble, or it may be through false affection; but let us be assured that where there is most of godly love there will be most of godly rule. Often do we ‘reap a whirlwind’ (cf Hosea 8:7) of trouble in after days because of failure in this respect in our child’s infancy. Children should be early checked if they act or talk as if they were in any degree wiser than their parents. However, if we have through over-indulgence brought trouble upon ourselves and our children, let us encourage one another to go to God with our case; yea, even though it seem to be beyond cure. Let us confess failure and sin (it is never too late) and henceforth walk more carefully in His ways, trusting and hoping in God who is rich in mercy, and He will be our help. In His strength we shall prevail.

Whatever the difficulty, whatever our former mistakes, present weakness, or ignorance, only let us ‘pour out our hearts before God’; ‘His hand is not waxed short’; “*His compassions fail not*”; “*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him*” (Psalm 62:8, Numbers 11:23, Lamentations 3:22, James 1:5). Let us ask believingly – seeing that God gives “*freely*” and readily, because He knows the need, and it shall be given. Let us trust in Him. In answer to our prayer, He will take our child, stubborn and self-willed it may be, in hand. He will shew us His ways; He will teach us how in love and wisdom to “*order the child*”, and we shall, through grace, reap a blessing: only let us, as we have often already said, deal with God (He is our Father) about these matters, remembering that the Son of God, who is: “*not ashamed to call [us] brethren*” is the merciful and faithful High Priest, ever living to make intercession for us, and to sympathize with us (Romans 8:32, Matthew 6:8, Psalm 25:4, Judges 13:12, Galatians 6:9, Hebrews 2:11, 2:17, 7:25, 4:15). If we have, through former failure, been made to eat of the fruit of our own way, we shall find it equally certain in our future experience if we be obedient to the will of God, that, “*to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward*” (Proverbs 11:18).

We must, however, govern. Love reigns to serve. We cannot fully serve unless we fully rule. The sooner we begin the parental rule with our little ones the better: yet it is of the deepest moment that we guard against harshness and needless severity, or we harm the young and tender plant by unwise pruning. Wherever there is mastery without love, the child’s confidence in his parents, which is

natural and so lovely, is lost. He obeys through fear – not filial fear. He should fear lest he grieve the father’s heart. But he is afraid! He does not confide! In his father’s presence he stays his thoughts and feelings; whereas, he ought to be ever ready and glad to tell out all that is in his heart to his father.

In reading the gospels, we observe that – Love, Lordship, Service – were always combined in the ways of our blessed Lord. A boy was lording it over his mother, a widow, who had been, from her children’s infancy, too indulgent. He was helped to see his fault, in this instance, by being kindly told that if he would be master in one thing, he should offer to take the whole rule of the house from off his mother’s shoulders. “Would not that be entirely out of place?” said his friend, “you yourself shall judge: take the keys; go to the markets; and act in everything as if you were the master, and your mother were under your command”. Evils of this kind are fast growing; and we, as Christian parents, know that high-mindedness and pride go *“before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall”*. Presumptuous ignorance, ‘pride’, ‘folly’, ‘fall’, ‘destruction’, ‘death’, are words which present a remarkable cluster of warnings in Proverbs 16:18, 22, 25. And in the course of the same portion, from verse 19 to 24, are found the reverse of these; namely: ‘humility’ ‘lowliness’ ‘happiness’ ‘health’ ‘sweetness’ and ‘life’.

God will maintain our rule in our families if we truly and humbly walk with God, and depend upon Him. As we manifest a spirit of dependence on God, and of trust in His love and wisdom before our children (and He oftentimes puts us to the test), so may we expect that

under God they will believe, and act as if they believed us to be wiser than they. We often hear that ‘wisdom and power belong to God’. Let us see to it that we so believe, and by grace so act as if we believed. If we fail in a spirit of dependence on God, we ought not to be deterred from confessing this to God, even though our children are present, as they should be, in our daily worship.

The mastery is what human nature aims at. Satan tempted our first mother thus: “*And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said...*” (Genesis 3:1) at first questioning and, as it were, reproving God; disannulling His judgment. Then, “*ye shall be gods*” (v.5) as if he had said, ‘ye who are but subject creatures now, shall be masters, like the Most High’. From that time the proud spirit of antichrist, “*I will ascend ... I will be like the Most High*” (Isaiah 14:14), has prevailed in the unregenerate heart, and begins to manifest itself in childhood. A child will try how far he may go in this Antichrist path. Happy for him if his parents are wisely watchful against this, with prayer to God from the birth; for, I say again, if he be suffered to gain the ascendancy in childhood, trouble will be increased as years creep on; and the child, the youth, the man, will be greatly, perhaps irreparably, injured. A parent should never allow the real mastery even in play with his little one.

A loving parent may make an idol of his child. If parents make their Absaloms their idols (cf 2 Samuel 13 – 18), they may expect that their idols at the last will become tyrants. Let parents love their offspring; but whether they are the companions of their children in little games, or teach them, or whatever they do, their ways should

be such as that they may, under God, look forward to the time when the blessing will be theirs spoken of in Proverbs 17:6, “*children’s children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children are their fathers*”. Children should also be encouraged with all tenderness to ready obedience. The parents’ first bidding should be enough. It is better to nip the bud of contention than to eat the bitter fruit. Oh that it may please God – in this day of increasing pride, boasting, disobedience to parents, and the like – to grant the needful grace to fathers and mothers for considering the root of these spreading branches, whose fruit is ‘grapes of gall, their clusters bitter’ (cf Deuteronomy 32:32).

In how many families even some of the youngest children are indefatigable in little matters (‘alas!’ parents and teachers say, ‘they are but little matters’) striving to be masters of those who are over them. ‘I must have such a thing, why cannot I?’ and the like. They ought never be allowed to gain their point. Direct their attention, if possible, to something more attractive; never failing to show that you sympathize with them; but beware of putting the sceptre in your child’s hand; if he has it to wield when young, you may endeavour in vain to wrest it from him when he grows older. It may be his ruin – as it was the ruin of Adonijah, and of the sons of Eli (cf 1 Kings 1 – 2, 1 Samuel 1 – 4).

CHAPTER IV

DISCIPLINE IN THE FAMILY

*“Jesus saith unto her ... Go to My **brethren**, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and **your Father**” (John 20:17). “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timothy our **brother**, unto the church of God which is at Corinth ... Grace to you and peace from **God our Father**, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Corinthians 1:1-4).*

God calls Himself Father: He would have us imitate Him, for He is a pattern to fathers. Jesus calls Himself Brother: He is a pattern to the brothers of the heavenly family. An earthly family should represent the heavenly: the father should consider the “*Father of mercies*”; should look out for the tearful eye that he may shew mercy and give comfort. Paul and Timothy speak to the Corinthians about the character and the love of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Heavenly Father is pleased when we speak about Him, and He is pleased when we set forth His love. His blessed book is full of His love. He rejoices in the exercise of His love, and so let parents rejoice in the exercise of their love. From our relationship, we parents have continual opportunities for making manifest our love.

A father may have much love, but his time may be taken up with many occupations; and if he be not mindful, he will fail to shew to his child the precious jewel which is in his heart. But we must remember, that God so manifested His love towards us, as to give His only begotten Son to die for us. And we also should seek to make our love very manifest, speak to our children about our Father; tell them in their little sorrows how our Father has comforted us in our sorrows, and how we delight to comfort them.

It is not, however, mercy alone that we are to shew forth. Mercy must be mingled with faithfulness and truth; discipline will be needed. I do not mean the iron rod of the law. God spares not the rod, but in His infinite love He spared not His Son. God is alike strict and gracious. He has given us His Son; and enjoins obedience that we may be happy.

There is authority and love in the name of 'Father'. Address the heart of a child; importune it to be happy. Does not our God and Father do this in His word? Many chapters in the Proverbs are deeply instructive in regard to this. Read prayerfully chapter 3:13-18, the whole of chapter 4, and chapter 8:32-36. "*My son, let thine heart keep My commandments*". "*Happy is the man that findeth wisdom*". "*Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Happy is every one that retaineth her*". "*Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father*", etc. God not only does not take pleasure in His people's affliction, but He is afflicted in all their affliction. He beseeches us in His word, and He counsels us to choose the good and to refuse the evil. The apostle Paul, who had the Corinthians in his heart of love, wisely makes them

their own judges. He asks them whether he shall come “*with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness*” (1 Corinthians 4:21). We may, in like manner, say to our child, ‘If you will make my heart glad, choose what I have chosen for you ... I set my love before you, and the rod; if you will be disciplined by the rod it is your own choice, not mine’. “*My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine*” (Proverbs 23:15).

The more our faith and patience grow, and the more prayerful we become, the less the need of the rod; but it may be needed. I first give a kind reproof, then a warning, and if these fail, the punishment, perhaps the rod, comes. God often speaks a long while before He smites: see His patience with His people of old, His patience and long-suffering even with Pharaoh. A right-minded child will never forget the unwearied patience of a Christian father or instructor. Affection wisely manifested paves the way, under God, to happy results from the rod. Christian parents should follow the ‘more excellent way’, seeking to God and His word, that they may learn to prepare the ground in which they sow, that there may be the more abundant reaping. The obedient ear of the child is oftentimes the fruit of the shewing forth of the parent’s heart’s affection; thus, when the loving parent has to become the wise reprover, he may hope to meet with the obedient ear.

If children’s ways are evil – if we must be sharp in our rebukes – be it so; we must be faithful to them; let us determine on profiting our children at any cost of our own feelings, at the same time, let us so act as to cherish their love for us, and after the “*rod and reproof*”

(Proverbs 29:15) have had their effect, the children will remember the mode of correction, and return to loving obedience. The apostle Paul, that father to the Corinthians, abundantly sets forth this principle in his two epistles. We know that the state of the Corinthians was evil; their ways also towards the apostle, their father in Christ, were evil; the apostle, however, determined that the worse their ways, the more abundantly would he shew them his love. How evident is it upon the face of it all that he had them in his heart to “*die and live*” with them (2 Corinthians 7:3), and that if they would choose the rod (cf 1 Corinthians 4:21), the rod would smite his heart before it could reach them. It was “*out of much affliction and anguish of heart*” that he acted thus, “*with many tears*”, not that they should be grieved, but that they might know the love which he had more abundantly unto them (2 Corinthians 2:4); he would have his care for them in the sight of God to appear unto them, (cf 2 Corinthians 7:12); he would set before them “*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 16:23, 2 Corinthians 8:9, 13:14). There was the “*meekness and gentleness of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 10:1), as well as the boldness of Christ’s apostle. He gave proof of his love to his Corinthian “*children*”, while as his “*beloved sons*” he warned them. He made it manifest that his heart was “*enlarged* ” toward them (2 Corinthians 6:13, 1 Corinthians 4:14, 2 Corinthians 6:11).

When there are many evils to meet, observe the worst and follow this up with authority. Others may be left for a time; some will drop off of themselves. There may be found a gradual amendment, yet with occasional outbreaks; all this requires patience, caution, wisdom, and prayerful waiting upon God. See a tangled skein, who

would attempt to disentangle it by pulling, with impatient hand, at all the knots at once? But I would repeat, let us ever remember that prayerful self-discipline is to be much exercised while we are engaged in the nurture of children; no haste when they are hasty; no impatience when they are impatient. We must get accustomed to carry things in prayer to God. The daily circumstances will then be helps to communion with God, while otherwise they would be burdens grievous to be borne. It is no little mercy to find that our daily trials are means of blessing and communion.

CHAPTER V

UNITY OF JUDGMENT BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE, BEHAVIOUR IN TRIAL

Parents should remember the word, “*being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered*”. (1 Peter 3:7). Prayer by husband and wife (by teacher also with teacher in schools) should be continually made for wisdom to walk together, that the children may observe how parents and teachers are, with a humble mind, ‘minding the same thing’, ‘of one accord’, no ‘strife or vainglory’, no ‘murmurings and disputings’ (cf Philippians 3:16, 2:2-3, 14). Husband and wife daily reading the Scriptures together with prayer will be honoured of God; and this will surely result in heavenly like-mindedness, which is so much for the glory of God, and the welfare of families.

Avoid any – the least – manifestation of difference of judgment in the presence of your children or your household. Differences of judgment may be expected; but there is a remedy. God is ever ready, if we have but a ready mind, to join us together, “*in the same mind, and in the same judgment*” (1 Corinthians 1:10). He who gives the power to think can give us the power to think according to His thoughts. Let husband and wife, parents and teachers, together desire this of God – to judge of things as He judges, to have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, and all will be well (cf Philippians 2:5).

In cases of difficulty arising from differences of judgment, let us never forget that (as in all other respects so in this) the Lord Jesus Himself is our Pattern: He tells His Heavenly Father everything. Let us do likewise. In the smallest, as well as in the greatest matters, our

Lord made everything He saw, everything He heard, an occasion of converse with His God and Father. Just as the Psalmist, in Psalm 119:23, 69, and throughout: “*Princes also did sit and speak against Me*”, etc, “*The proud have forged a lie against Me*”, etc. In the prophetic Psalms concerning Christ we hear Him say, “*False witnesses did rise up; they laid to My charge things which I knew not. They rewarded Me evil for good*” (Psalm 35:11-12). He tells out what is in His heart to God: “*I delight to do Thy will, O my God*” (Psalm 40:8). See Him, even in the depths of His soul’s distress on the cross, pouring out His complaint to God, telling God what He saw, what He heard: “*All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him . . . They gaped upon Me with their mouths . . . They part My garments among them*” (Psalm 22:7-8, 13, 18). “*Many there be which say of My soul, there is no help for Him in God*” (Psalm 3:2). And again, “*As for Me, My prayer is unto Thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time*” (Psalm 69:13), “*I give Myself unto prayer*” (Psalm 109:4).

It is a great point of wisdom to deal with God before our children in all circumstances, whether prosperous or adverse. One result of this will be a peaceful countenance in storm and calm, and that is what they should see. Happy are we if our circumstances find us thus dwelling in God (cf Psalm 91:1, John 6:56, 1 John 4:16). Children see with keen eye their parents’ ways. If they see we depend upon God, and look to Him to guide us in ‘our matters great and small’, this will be a lesson continually before them which God will own and bless. We should not fail to bring the highest principles of God’s word to bear on our smallest matters, the matters of the moment.

CHAPTER VI

PARTICULAR FORMS OF EVIL IN CHILDREN

Selfishness

If we would have our children unselfish, we ourselves should be such; we become unselfish by contemplating the Lord Jesus. He could give up all for the sake of those He loved. I would recommend that children who are selfish should have ‘the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ’ put before them (the natural mind may discern and admire the grace, though it may not receive the salvation), who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich (cf 2 Corinthians 8:9). For ourselves, let us, by God’s help, walk round the cross of His Son, as it is presented to us in the Scriptures, and hearken to the words of love spoken by Christ while on the cross, and to the language of such Psalms as 22, 69, 88, etc.

Let us contemplate Him – Himself and His love. The Spirit of God conforms us to Christ when He brings home to the soul the sufferings of Christ, and as we ourselves are conformed to our blessed Lord, so shall we set an example of self-denial before our children. If we know that “*it is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35), let us make it appear. Let us not forget that love “*seeketh not her own*” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Cultivate the love of children one toward another, and you greatly check the spirit of selfishness. We ought in every way to help them to care for, to love and esteem one another.

Selfishness is a ruling evil in the whole human race; it will therefore be more or less manifested in our children; all should therefore be early taught that to do things to serve and please others, with a ready and unselfish mind, is a happy and important business of life; and that those who determine on pleasing themselves are sure to miss their aim.

Slothfulness

The Word of God says, “*Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep, and an idle soul shall suffer hunger*” (Proverbs 19:15). When we exhort our children to diligence, if we show them not a good example, must we not expect to fail? If a child is idle, suppose a young child, in his lessons for example, work with him, begin the lesson with him, explain it, question him; shew its principles, its application, question him again; thus lead him on and encourage him, bid him to begin again, and try to do it himself. Encourage the child when he is in any degree diligent, commend him as far as you can with truth: be very slow to chide him, avoid it if possible. Aim rather to prevent idleness by an easy, lively, attractive mode of development and instruction; when this fails, give the wise and timely firm reproof; I should advise you also to read portions of the word of God upon the subject: speak and read of diligence first, or of idleness and diligence as we find them connected in the book of Proverbs – the book of exhortation which speaks unto **us** as unto children, and gives us words for our children. There is no sword for sinner or saint like “*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Ephesians 6:17).

By consulting the Scriptures with your child, it will be seen that the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; that the path of sloth leads to beggary and ruin (cf Proverbs 13:4, 24:33-34)! Nevertheless, while there are some parents, who should solemnly consider the evil of laxity, there are others who should be guarded lest they be too eager to turn the course of a child, by nature indolent, into habits of diligence. I speak now of young children. It is better to wait patiently until strength of mind and character come with age, assisted by suitable mild discipline, than to force a young child contrary to nature. In regard to lessons, even if it is evident there is ability to learn, yet if there is a strong natural disinclination, it may be the voice of God to the parent or teacher instructing him to wait patiently and prayerfully, and for the present to develop the faculty and by all means to render the lessons as agreeable as possible, in the hope that the pupil himself will be persuaded, and by experience discover, that diligence brings its present and future reward.

Unthankfulness and Lack of Affection

We greatly encourage thankfulness in our children by living in a thankful spirit ourselves. "*In every thing give thanks*" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). If we have any gift to present to our children, however small, let us first thank our Heavenly Father that He has given this to us, and then, in presenting it to our children, encourage their gratitude to us. When at meals, we should, God helping, exercise a thankful spirit in the presence of our little ones, and look to God to bless our example. When children continue unthankful, we must needs refuse them the ordinary parental smile of approval. God sends His rain on

the just and on the unjust, and is kind to the unthankful and the evil, but they have not His fellowship or His smiles. It should be manifest that it is our joy to give a token of approbation whenever we see improvement. God's reward 'to him that hath' is, 'it shall be given' (cf Mark 4:25). The child should perceive that by his growing gratitude he is making the heart of his father glad.

Above all, let it be remembered that there is a deep root to unthankfulness and lack of affection (cf 2 Timothy 3:2-3), lest it be slightly dealt with, and that deep root be left untouched. What is the root? Is it not self-love, which receives every kindness as payment of a debt? It is right that the evil of unthankfulness should be solemnly exposed; but exposure is not cure; the means for that is only to be had from above. The ways of our blessed Lord, and of holy men of God, in regard to thankfulness, should be spoken of as recorded for our example (cf 1 Chronicles 29, Daniel 2:23, Matthew 11:25, 15:36, Luke 10:21, 22:17, 24:30, Romans 1:8, 6:17, Ephesians 1:15, 16, 5:20, Philippians 1:3, 4:6, Colossians 1:3, 4; 3:17, 2 Timothy 1:3, Hebrews 13:15, etc).

In showing to our children from the Scriptures that which God requires of men, in the way of gratitude for His benefits, we please God, and we help in the best way those whom He has committed to our trust. Children who are not converted may have a conscience of obligation to the giver of all good – to the great Creator, though they do not know the Lord as the Redeemer. The sin of ingratitude to God, who crowns them with mercies daily and hourly, should be pointed out, but especially the sin of turning their backs upon His

love in the gift of His Son Jesus Christ, who came to die for sinners, that they may be saved from wrath. Great as is the sin of unthankfulness for any temporal benefit, yet what is it compared with an ungrateful return to God for the love manifested to fallen man in the death of the Son of God?

Lying

This is another subject for deep consideration. We must enquire of ourselves: have we been helpers in this sin? Have we never given way to exaggeration before our children? Have we prevaricated, or misrepresented, or put a colouring, upon any matter in their presence? Ask of God to make you strictly truthful, to give you to teach your children the value of truthfulness. If you have occasion to speak of anything respecting which there is uncertainty, speak circumspectly. Shun the use of words which express more than is meant, such as 'awful', 'horrible', 'glorious', etc. The use of these and other big words accords with many other things that mark the age, and are not less shameful because so common. Supposing, however, your child, to all appearance, is guilty of a lie, I should first put it to the child's conscience before God; if you cannot detect clearly the evil, leave the matter as if nothing had happened after you have shown the child that it is now left with God. If the child has been guilty in this, and has hid his sin, he will go on to more palpable falsehood and discover himself. "*Be sure your sin will find you out*" (Numbers 32:23).

If the child be found guilty, show it how great the sin is in God's sight, and in your sight – turn to the word of God about it, warn and

pray. Shew him the excellency of truth, in the sight of Him who is the God of truth; shew him also the folly as well as the sin of lying; of endeavouring by falsehood to keep you in ignorance about the matter, when God, who is greater than you, knows all about it. You are but the servant, God is the Master. He has done before God what he was ashamed of doing before you, and has also before God (who knows the heart) told a lie. Speak of Christ as sent into the world to die for sinful children, as well as sinful men, who, condemning themselves, believe in the heart on His name. Shew the efficacy of the blood of Jesus to blot out and put away the sin of lying, yea, all sin; ask the Lord to write these truths upon the heart – the Lord who says, ‘I will be enquired of’ (cf Ezekiel 36:37).

Whilst we are bound to show hatred of the sin, we must endeavour to gain the heart and conscience of the child. God loves the sinner, but hates his sin. I would not advise speaking much upon the subject in general, lest this produce hardness; neither would I, as a general rule, recommend coercive treatment, lest deceit be fostered; but I would aim to set up in the child’s conscience a principle of hatred to the sin. Encourage and commend truthfulness whenever seen. We may have need to punish for a lie, though not for the fault which the lie conceals. In such a case we should affectionately shew that all that was needful on the part of the child was to have told the truth.

Hastiness, Snatching

When we see these faults in a child, let the question be asked, ‘have I not been sowing the seeds of them in its heart?’ A parent may remember how he has snatched away something from a child, or at

least in word or deed shewn hastiness. Our snatching from a child will teach him to resist us, whilst if we speak to him kindly, he will readily yield, if under good training.

The Passionate Child

“The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression” (Proverbs 19:11). When a child acts in a passionate way, how shall we meet the provocation? What does God teach us? How did He act, even with Pharaoh and others in their many provocations of His wrath, and how does He forbear towards His children? If we do not defer our anger, we sin, and in this also the child will copy his parent. The best way to defer our anger is, to pray at the time concerning the matter which tries us. There is, it may be, some secret cause in our own hearts and ways for this manifestation of evil in our child, and we may trace God’s retribution in such manifestations. In that case, we need, as before suggested, to make our confessions before God. *“He giveth more grace”* (James 4:6).

Gossiping

Our lips are always engaged either for self and the world, or for Christ. *“The talk of the lips tendeth only to penury”* (Proverbs 14:23). In Proverbs 4 Solomon says, *“Let thine heart retain my words”* (v. 4), *“Receive my sayings”* (v. 10), and, *“My son, attend unto my words, incline thine ear to my sayings”* (v. 20). Our words, to be worth retaining, must be from God. The conversation of a child will very much depend upon the conversation of his parents. If he hears them engage in gossip about the failings of others, etc, they cannot but expect that like words will, by-and-by, be heard from the lips of the child. Let

us pray, that we may get words from God, before we speak words to each other. If we are prayerful readers of God's word, we shall have its precious truths in our hearts, and we shall speak according to the spirit of them. "*The tongue of the just is as choice silver*" (Proverbs 10:20).

Tale-Bearing

There is a great difference between tale-bearing and encouraging children to bring each other to their parents, or advising each other to go to their parents to tell of faults. We should encourage children of their own accord to make confession, so that correction may be needless. It is not well to allow children to correct each other, nor is it well to listen to little idle tales of one against another. "*The north wind driveth away rain, so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue*" (Proverbs 25:23). Thus, whilst you discourage tale-bearing, encourage children to help each other (even as we, the children of God, should do) in matters of confession and fault: encourage them by your love and readiness to help them, to tell you their faults. Our many faults compel us to go very often to the Advocate.

I would add a few words on reports. When I hear a report, I say, 'If it is a report only, do not be sure about it'. A great deal of mischief would be prevented if this rule were acted on. Never give forth an evil report; carry it to God. We displease God by believing reports, till proved according to the rule of Scripture. Oh, how wise, how righteous that rule! (cf Deuteronomy 19:15, 2 Corinthians 13:1). David should not have believed Ziba's report against Mephibosheth. (cf 2 Samuel 16, 19).

CHAPTER VII

DANGERS AND DIFFICULTIES OF THESE LAST DAYS

Genesis 5:21-24: “*Enoch walked with God*”. His short history will, I trust, prove to our purpose. The Scripture account of Enoch informs us that he lived sixty-five years, and had a son – Methuselah. “*Enoch walked with God, after he begat Methuselah, three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters*” (v. 22). And again, “*Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him*” (v. 24). The Word is silent in regard to the walk of his sixty-five first years, but distinctly states that he walked with God, “*after he begat Methuselah*”. Thus it appears that, in the midst of his sons and daughters, this family man walked with God 300 years. The apostle to the Hebrews says, “*Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God*” (Hebrews 11:5). A heavenly man. A father surrounded by his children, he and God walking together as ‘two agreed’ (cf Amos 3:3).

He was the seventh from Adam, and there were two generations between him and Noah, in whose days the flood came. In Enoch’s days the time was approaching when God would destroy man, whom He had created, from the face of the earth, because of wickedness. When God saw the evil and iniquity of man, that it was full, that the whole imagination, the purposes, desires of the heart were only evil continually, it was to Enoch, who, in the fear of God, walked before his household, that God gave a keen eye to mark the growing evil and apostasy; doubtless the same in principle, in the Lord’s sight, as that which in the present day is increasing, and will increase and

abound till the Lord shall come to execute judgment (cf Jude 14, 15), and thus fulfil the prophecy of this man of God. What words of life, “*Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints*” (Jude 14); how strong the contrast with “*great swelling words of vanity*” (2 Peter 2:18), from the mouth of men of the world, “*men of renown*” (Genesis 6:4), wise in their own conceit, who sought not to please God but themselves, seeking their own glory, will and profit, walking “*after their own ungodly lusts*” (Jude 18).

Oh, may the Lord give to us, who are believing parents and guardians, and to all His people, clear vision as to what has already grown, and is still in these last days fast growing around us, according to the ‘express’ warnings of the Spirit. (See, together with the words of our Lord on this subject in the Gospels, 1 Timothy 4, 6, 2 Timothy 3:1, 1 Peter 4, 2 Peter 3, Jude, Revelation). I quote a little: “*Giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared*” (1 Timothy 4:1-2), “*Perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*” (2 Timothy 3:1-4). “*Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived*” (2 Timothy 3:13). “*Scoffers, walking after their own lusts*” (2 Peter 3:3). “*They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. But thou, O man of God, flee these things ... fight the good fight of faith*” (1 Timothy 6:9, 11-12). “*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7). “*Let these sayings sink down into [our] ears*” (Luke 9:44), that the day of the Lord come

not on us unawares, and on our children, with destruction, without their fathers' warning.

“Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). The deceiver, liar, accuser, murderer, transformed into an angel of light! He is not without his helping servants in the world, *“whose end shall be according to their works”* (2 Corinthians 11:15). It is a mistake to suppose he will appear in dark and frightful forms. He and his ministers will seek whom they may deceive. Under shining garments he hides his own deformity, invisible to every eye save to the exercised eye of faith, made keen through looking to Jesus. What a misleading it will be if any of us be misled by an enemy transformed into an angel of light! And he or his ministers will mislead every foot, save the foot of him who, with Jesus, ponders his path. The grace, and wisdom, and power of God can alone be sufficient for us in such a day as this, and for our children in the day that is approaching. But, *“if God be for us, who can be against us?”* We shall be more than conquerors through Him who loves us. The Lord is our Helper; with His blessing we will train up our children in the way they should go. *“Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord”* (Romans 8:31, 37, Hebrews 13:6, Proverbs 22:6, Psalm 31:24).

The course of the world is evil; it is at enmity with God; that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. The wise man glories in his wisdom, the mighty man in his might, the rich man in his riches; the young man rejoices in his youth, his heart cheers him in the days of his youth; he walks in the ways of his

heart, and after the sight of his eyes (cf Jeremiah 9:23, Ecclesiastes 11:9). Happy is the man who walks with God, pleases God, and has the testimony that he pleases Him; who enriches himself with the unsearchable riches of Christ, and thus seeks to rejoice the heart of his Heavenly Father. *“They that [thus] deal truly are His Delight”* (Proverbs 12:22). The desire to give delight to our Heavenly Father is the secret of power in the service of God. Let Him see us delighting ourselves in Him and in His will, and He will make it manifest that He delights in us; and concerning our children, and all things truly committed to Him, He will, for His own glory, answer our prayers, and give us the desire of our hearts, according to His word.

But let us remember the exhortation, *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith”* (1 Peter 5:8-9). He is an angel of light to deceive, and a roaring lion to devour: mighty, wily, full of devices. The edge of his dreadful wedge is exceedingly fine! Who can see it? The Lord can see it, and point it out. The wicked one drives it where he may, to split up the finest workmanship. The ill-judged kindness of relatives – believers or unbelievers – places to which everybody goes, books which everybody reads, may be used by the arch-adversary against the young soldier of Jesus Christ, or the one whom the father and mother earnestly desire the Lord Jesus should choose to be a soldier. Apparently small and harmless beginnings oftentimes lead to mournfully evil endings. What must be done? Poll the burden of the difficulty upon the Lord. Let it be a matter between God and the adversary. Put all such things before God, who discerns between the

evil and the good, and who gives a discerning mind to those that wait on Him for it, to mark the approaches of the subtle, mighty foe. The Lord undertakes for us to war against principalities, and powers, and wicked spirits, and to exercise His wisdom against their devices. He will get victories, and give believing parents and their children the spoils, if the battle be put into His hands to order. Let us solemnly enquire if going to such-or-such a place accords with walking with God, and whether we can expect the testimony in so doing that we please God? Will such a book bear a prayerful examination? Will our Heavenly Father be pleased with our placing it in the hands of our son or daughter, whom He has given to us for nurture and admonition (cf Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4), and to be brought up for Christ?

As for ourselves, we should manifest that we are “*looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life*”; ‘keeping ourselves in the love of God’, ‘having compassion of some, saving others with fear, pulling them out of the fire’ (cf Jude 21-23). How much wisdom we need from God, that we may know whom, and when, and how to warn – on whom to have compassion – how to pull out of the fire! We best please God when, in helping and admonishing our children, we first incline our own ear to God, that He might open it, and give us right judgment. The perfect example is in Him who said, “*I do always those things that please Him*” (John 8:29); “*I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear I judge: and My judgment is just, because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me*” (John 5:30); “*I receive not testimony from man*” (John 5:34); “*I receive not*

honour from men” (John 5:41); *“I seek not Mine own glory”* (John 8:50)
“Even Christ pleased not Himself” (Romans 15:3).

It is remarkable that we have no details in Genesis ‘for our learning’, as to Enoch’s walk, and as to the manner of his pleasing God. The inspired writer gives us but these words: *“Enoch walked with God”* (Genesis 5:22) and *“pleased God”*. *“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God”* (Hebrews 11:5). The apostle adds, in immediate connection (v. 6), *“Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him”*. Enoch had faith, so he pleased God. Whatsoever is of faith cannot but please Him. He came to God – believed Him to be – he believed Him to be the ‘I AM’. He diligently sought God; walked with God. Thus he pleased God, and found Him, as faith always finds Him, to be his ‘rewarder’, and his reward. ‘He was not, for God took Him’. He is a bright example, then, of faith for us all, for parents and others, and though translated yet speaketh, yet prophesieth.

May we, in regard to our family matters, and in all things besides, come to God. Let it be our aim diligently to seek Him, and to refer everything to Him as it occurs. He delights in the fellowship of His blood-bought children. Let us act as those who *“believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him”*. Had there been need for details of Enoch’s mode of pleasing God in the bosom of his family, God would have given them ; but all that is needful is supplied

to us in the histories of other saints who walked with God, as Noah, Abraham, and onward to the Captain and Great Exemplar, the Author and Finisher of faith, our blessed Lord Jesus, and His faithful disciples.

None could approach God acceptably “*without shedding of blood*” (Hebrews 9:22). The Lord could not have respect to any, or to the offering of any, who brought not that which presented to Him in a figure the Surety for sinners, the Lamb of God. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (cf Genesis 6:8), walked with God (v. 9), builded an altar to the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar, and the Lord smelled a sweet savour, (Genesis 8:20-21). Our father Abraham builded many an altar to the Lord, who appeared to him, and told out His heart to His servant and friend. Whenever the altar was wanting, alas, what failures were seen!

On turning to Exodus 12:21, we read that Moses said, “*Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover*”. “*When your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service? Ye shall say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover*” (Exodus 12:26). All is well, all is safe; we are strong in the Lord, and guided by His eye so long as the Lamb is in sight. “*It shall be*”, said Moses, “*for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes*” (Exodus 13:16). The Lord would have us to be so constantly remembering the blood of the Lamb in the presence of our children, that they should take notice of it, so as in their hearts to enquire, ‘what meaneth this?’

Let every hour's business be of such a kind as to allow of thoughts of Jesus – Emmanuel – and His death. Thus we shall know the friendship of our Heavenly Father, and our Heavenly Master, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. If our eye keep the Lamb in the midst of the throne in view, we shall wait for Him of whom Enoch said, "*Behold, the Lord cometh*"; and there shall be also clear vision to discover what belongs to Christ, and what is leading to Antichrist and evil in its ripeness. We shall see "*the man of sin*" in the distance, as revealed to us in the Scriptures, point out to our children the nature of the evils of the day, and furnish their minds against the temptations that will beset their path.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Christian parents, beloved in Christ our Lord, let us remember the great end we have in view. Our prayer is, that our children may be true believers in Christ Jesus – the Son of God; that they may humbly bow to His lordship, and enjoy His friendship. That they, abiding in Him, may become His faithful witnesses, following hard after Him, the Captain of our Salvation; heart and eye fixed on Him, and ear open to Him whose blessed words and ways are the statutes of the house of God. To sum up all:

First. Through the Holy Scriptures, and by the grace and teaching of the Spirit of God, parents are to learn the will of God, and to bring up their children from infancy, after such a manner that they may understand that, as the parents are blessed through honouring God their Heavenly Father, so the children will be blessed through honouring their earthly parents.

Second. There are two great rules for the training of children: Let the parents have no will but God's; the children, none but that of their parents under God.

Third. Should not the parent say, 'my child is God's loan to me', as if God had said, 'take this child and nurse it for Me'? My child is a gift from God, to serve, it may be, as a mirror to me; to shew me much of my own ignorance, pride, selfishness, self-will; to help me to humble myself before God, and so the better to fulfil a parent's obligations.

Fourth. We cannot be too diligent in learning, through the Scripture, the ways of our Lord Jesus Christ; His kind deeds, and words, and faithfulness. As we look to Christ, and feed upon Him, we dwell in Him (cf John 6:54-56), and are conformed to Him; and thus we obtain ability from God to train our children.

Fifth. The Word being our Guide, the Spirit of God our Teacher, and Christ our Exemplar, we, walking in His steps, shall win our children's love and confidence. Patience will be tried and rewarded, and, by exercise, increased.

Sixth. Husband and wife are to remember that they are fellow-heirs of the grace of life, who should walk **together** in the path of training their children, communing with God, 'minding the same thing'; carefully, yea, with godly fear, shunning the manifestation of the slightest difference of judgment before their children.

Seventh. The order of God is – that the son should honour the father and mother. The parents must rule, that they may serve. True heavenly love and godly rule are inseparable.

Eighth. If to avoid present trouble we yield when we ought to command, we sow the wind, and must expect to reap the whirlwind. Nevertheless – whatever the age of the children, whatever the distress from disobedience – it is never too late to get the help of the Lord. Pour out your hearts before God – He is the Almighty – the All-wise. His hand is not waxed short. His compassions never fail.