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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)
BIDEFORD**

Lessons from John's Gospel

chapter seventeen

“And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19).

This is a very full verse! Christ sanctifies Himself in order that we, His people, might be sanctified through the truth; what are we to understand by this? The Mediator is praying that His elect might all be sanctified, but Justice might well interpose and say, No!, these cannot be sanctified any more than the reprobate, for they are **all** children of wrath; those whom Thou dost call ‘Thine own’- the elect - are as unworthy as are all men. To such an intervention Christ says, *“For their sakes I sanctify Myself”*; this is a meritorious plea and needs to be explained before we go further.

John 10:36 states that the **Father** sanctified the Son, and in Acts 10:38 the **Holy Spirit** is said to be the anointer or sanctifier of the Lord; but in this verse before us Christ, the **Son** says, *“I sanctify Myself”*. Once again, we see the absolute harmony of the Trinity, three distinct Persons but one God. **All** are to be seen concurring in this wondrous work of redemption; the Father sanctified and set apart His only begotten Son in a past eternity, that He should be the Saviour of His elect; the Son sanctified Himself by His willingness and condescension to become the Surety; the Holy Spirit sanctified Him by His operation, endowing the Man, Christ Jesus with all that was necessary for His life and death as substitute and redeemer of His people. It is essential that we bear these three aspects in mind so that we do not lose the balance of Biblical truth; in this nineteenth verse the emphasis is solely upon the Son.

In the counsels of Deity, before creation was effected, the Everlasting Covenant was drawn up and a remnant from out of a

fallen race, yet to be born, was elected by God the Father. This remnant would have to be redeemed, their sins propitiated and reconciliation to God accomplished. The Son immediately responded, *“Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God”* (Hebrews 10:9). Not by constraint but of a ready mind, the only begotten of the Father agreed to sanctify Himself, or to set Himself apart to accomplish this great work in due time. *“I delight to do Thy will”* (Psalm 40:8). There is great bearing given to this in Proverbs 8:22-31: *“The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men”*. The Son had that remnant of grace before Him from all eternity, His delights were with those sons of Adam yet to be created, who ultimately would be His bride. He rejoiced that one day He would come to this earth as a Man amongst them, to effect their redemption.

When the fulness of time was come, He was born of a woman, made under the Law; He had now arrived to accomplish that which He had set Himself apart for, and the Scriptures reveal how eager He was to finalize this: *“I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!”* (Luke 12:50). In the upper room He said, *“Arise, let us go hence”* (John 14:31); the cross, where He would give His very life an atonement for our sins, was only hours

away, yet our blessed Lord was possessed of this ardent desire to press on. There is another example of this fervency in the upper room, “*And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. And He said unto them, **With desire** I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer*” (Luke 22:14,15). The Lord had observed the Passover many times during His earthly life, but this time was special to Him - it was the last time. He was the Lamb of God’s providing, of whom all the other sacrificial lambs were only a type; He was about to suffer, to die for the sins of His people and put them away by the sacrifice of Himself. The earnestness of our blessed Lord at this point was such that Judas did not seem to be moving fast enough in his part of this great transaction, and Christ says to him, “*That thou doest, do quickly*” (John 13:27).

These are some of the circumstances underlying the Lord’s words in His mediatorial prayer, “*I sanctify Myself*”. Have we really entered into, or diligently pondered and meditated upon these amazing statements, in an endeavour to understand the depth contained in them? He had dedicated Himself to this great work of accomplishing His Father’s will in the salvation of all whose names are in the Book of Life; He redeemed each one with His precious blood. God’s Lamb, without blemish and without spot, voluntarily laid Himself upon the altar, “*I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father*” (John 10:17,18).

Christ, “*through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God*” (Hebrews 9:14); this is the One, our great High Priest who is praying in John chapter seventeen. “*For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*” (Hebrews 7:26). Under the old dispensation, the priests offered bulls, calves and goats while they themselves remained untouched.

Christ offered Himself, He was both priest and sacrifice, the offerer and the offering. He sanctified, or set Himself apart for this very purpose, but it was *“for their sakes”* that He did it. The Old Testament priests, being imperfect, had to offer up sacrifices for their own sins first before they could act on behalf of others; this was not so with Christ, *“Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself”* (Hebrews 7:27). Holy Scripture never speaks of Christ doing anything for Himself or for His own sake; it was always for others, it was for **us**, His people.

His incarnation was for us: *“For unto **us** a child is born, unto **us** a Son is given”* (Isaiah 9:6). His obedience to the Law was for us: *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that **we** might receive the adoption of sons”* (Galatians 4:4,5); - Christ was made under, or subject to the Law for us, His people, that He might fulfil it vicariously and so impute that flawless righteousness to us. His death was for us: *“Surely He hath borne **our** griefs, and carried **our** sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for **our** transgressions, He was bruised for **our** iniquities: the chastisement of **our** peace was upon Him; and with His stripes **we** are healed”* (Isaiah 53:4,5). His resurrection was on our behalf: Christ *“was delivered for **our** offences, and raised again for **our** justification”*; the apostle Paul writes concerning Christ’s resurrection, *“Thanks be to God, which giveth **us** the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 15:57). His ascension and glorification as Mediator is on our behalf: in His ascended glory He has power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him, that power is given unto Him for the eternal benefit of the elect, that **all** shall be effectively called. His second advent is to call us unto Himself, to be forever with the Lord and be eternally glorified: *“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the*

*archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall **we** ever be with the Lord*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17); then will be fulfilled that amazing petition which is found in this mediatorial prayer, *“And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given **them**; that they may be one, even as we are one”* (John 17:22).

The eternal Son of God sanctified Himself and came into this world to live and to die for **our** sakes; He wholly set Himself apart for **our** eternal blessing, and this leads on to the latter part of the verse under consideration: *“that they also might be sanctified”*. There are many scriptures which complement this: *“Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it”* (Ephesians 5:25,26), *“Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate”* (Hebrews 13:12) are two examples. Our blessed Lord had one great aim and object in setting Himself apart as Mediator and Surety; it was that **we** might be redeemed and restored unto God; *“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10).

How is this sanctification actually effected and made valid to elect souls who are by nature the children of wrath, even as others? How do **we** personally come into the good of it? This verse nineteen tells us that it is *“through the truth”*. God’s Word is the truth (cf v.17) and here is the means whereby our sanctification is revealed to us and becomes actual to us; *“Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you”* (John 15:3), *“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”* (2 Corinthians 7:1). It is through the truth concerning Christ which is contained in the Word of God, that we are sanctified and justified. Christ is the source, He is the Mediator who has effected salvation. The Holy Scripture, the Word of Truth is the means

whereby we learn of it, and under the Holy Spirit's power it is made actual to us. This is the great dominate theme of the Bible: without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins - **no remission!** Nothing other than the blood of Christ can permanently remit and cleanse human sin, "*Ye know that **He** was manifested to take away our sins*" (1 John 3:5). Christ undertook this work of redemption, He sanctified (set apart) Himself to accomplish it; we never requested it, indeed it was planned before the human race was created. In due course the Son of God became incarnate, took our nature, fulfilled the Law, satisfied the Law-giver, merited grace on our behalf without our asking or even thinking. In applying this grace however, it is not automatic; this glorious truth is revealed to us through the Word. In Hebrews 3:1 we are bidden to **consider** the High Priest of our profession, who is Jesus Christ. We all need this constant reminder to consider and ponder these great and fundamental truths of the faith.

W.H.Molland

“’Twas love Divine that sanctified
In Christ, those souls for which He died,
In Him their holiness was given,
Their meetness for the joys of heaven.
Jesus beheld their lost estate
And for them bled without the gate,
There He their suffering Surety stood
And sanctified them with His blood”.

Love - Knowledge - Judgment

Love, from the Divine standpoint, is totally different to man's conception of it. It is a most awesome subject for it is an authoritative precept. Love to God and to our fellow men is a part of the Law of God given at the beginning of creation and later inscribed upon tablets of stone at Sinai (cf Exodus 20:1-7); summarized in the New Testament by the Lord Himself, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*" (Matthew 22:37-39). This is known theologically as the Moral Law of God and is binding upon all men for all time. Tragically, on account of man's fallen depraved nature, this matter of love to God and man is but a shadow of what it ought to be. Conversely the overall picture is "*God is not in all his thoughts*" (Psalm 10:4). Generally speaking, man's thoughts are primarily toward himself, endeavouring to fulfil his own desires and aspirations (cf Ephesians 2:3), fellow men taking second place.

However, when a person is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, that person becomes a new creature. Having received the spirit of Christ, the heart and mind is renewed and there is not only a God-given ability but also a Divinely-inspired desire to be obedient to the Law and its mandate, of which the two great precepts are summarized in Matthew 22:37-40. Concerning love to our fellows, special mention is made in the Scriptures of "*the household of faith*" (Galatians 6:10), "*the brethren*" (1 Peter 1:22) and "*one another*" (1 John 4:11); the focus here is Christian love. This love is not sentiment, ardent natural fondness or strong fleshly passion. Rather is it love which is intensely **spiritual** and should flow out spontaneously to God and to others, but especially to others of like precious faith who are our brethren and sisters in the Lord. Being

incontrovertibly spiritual, it necessarily follows that such love must be guided and channelled aright. On this subject of Christian love, many of God's children are ill informed, viewing it as a kindly, mellow, benevolent spirit which is indulgent enough to overlook everything and embrace almost anything which lays claim to the term of 'Christianity'. To them it is so tolerant and accommodating as to never question, let alone assess and judge matters of either belief or practice. This attitude is totally contrary to Biblical truth. As the title of this article suggests, **knowledge** and **judgment** are integral components in this matter of **love**.

In the New Testament, the Great Head of the Church gives full instructions through the writings of the apostles concerning this, as in all matters "*that pertain unto life and Godliness*" (2 Peter 1:3). The infant church at Philippi is a classic example of a body of Christians in need of such instruction. This body of believers were brought together under God as the result of Paul's ministry in that city (cf Acts 16:9-40), so it was therefore natural that he had a continued interest in them. The opening verses of his letter clearly show how he rejoiced and gave God thanks for them all (cf Philippians 1:1-4). They were obviously devoted to Christ and to one another, but it is apparent that their understanding of God's mind and will was elementary. They were simple, sincere believers but to some degree their love exceeded their **knowledge**. In no way did Paul despise or speak disparagingly of their affection and devotion; indeed, in the very early part of his letter he informs them that he prays that their "*love may abound yet more and more*", but adds, "*in **knowledge** and in all **judgment***" (Philippians 1:9). The Christian is to grow in knowledge as well as in grace (cf 2 Peter 3:18); spiritual intelligence must match devotion; for a balanced, God-honouring life, it is essential that understanding and love go hand in hand. It is in the measure in which the believer grows in both of these, that he will more fully conform unto the image of Christ who is both light and love, as set out in such detail by John in his first epistle.

How balanced is the teaching given unto us by God in His Word! Light and knowledge without love and devotion develop into cold orthodoxy. Contrariwise, love and grace without truth will lead a believer or a church into compromise and error. It was with this conviction and burden that Paul wrote to the church at Philippi. They must abound in love, but they must also increase in knowledge and exercise judgment. The apostle was so concerned on this question of **love**, **knowledge** and **judgment** being kept in absolute balance that he told the believers at Philippi how he had been in fervent prayer for them, to this end; *“For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your **love** may abound yet more and more in **knowledge** and in all **judgment**”* (Philippians 1:8,9). This intercession on their behalf reveals the seriousness of this matter and although they had not been aware of Paul’s great concern for them, yet God knew how this man laboured in prayer on their behalf. There was an imbalance within this assembly of God’s people; as far as love was concerned there was devotion and happiness among them, but Paul emphasises the need for it to abound with **knowledge** and **judgment**.

In all spiritual matters, the mind as well as the heart is affected; the mind is the seat of intelligence and it must have Divine enlightenment for it to act spiritually; the heart is the fount of affection, but is liable to deception, even when it has been regenerated, therefore it must be carefully guarded. It is sadly possible for the heart to run away with the head. Many Christians have brought the name of Christ into disrepute by acting unwisely or foolishly under the deceptive guise of love. An informed mind, heart and conscience is necessary if the Christian is to act with Godly intelligence. Spiritual love must be scripturally regulated, not motivated by blind impulse nor overlooking irregularities, as is often the case.

Both pulpit and press today, teach a love which is highly dangerous. ‘**Love**’ is the catch-word of the modernistic ecumenist, and very many ‘evangelicals’ and ‘reformed’ are no different in their attitude; differences in doctrine and practice must not be mentioned and should they inadvertently arise, all must agree to differ, there must be no discord. This has given rise to the Devil-invented theory of two levels of doctrine: ‘**primary**’ and ‘**secondary**’. These are now common terms, heard from men who claim to be conservative, orthodox ministers of the Word of God. Some go further, speaking of ‘**essential**’ and ‘**non-essential**’ truth; this talk comes from men who preach with great verbosity that they stand for the complete authority of Holy Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, yet by action and example, these same men are seen to totally ignore certain parts of God’s Word, whilst others misinterpret sections of it in order to accommodate denominational dogma. Little wonder the church is in such disarray; it can be no other, for a clear line of demarcation between that which is truly Biblical and that which contains fabrication, scarcely exists in this age.

The excuses generally given for the prevalent, kindly, tolerant spirit are numerous. Some consider if a person has made a profession of faith, that is sufficient; whether or not this is followed by Biblical baptism is of little account and as for sitting at the Lord’s Table, that is relatively unimportant. Regarding church connections, what does it matter if they be Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Brethren, Presbyterian, Anglican, Church of England (continuing or not continuing) or any other group? The essential thing is that they have professed faith, therefore there must be fellowship for we are one in Christ! The fact that some hold to the practice which encapsulates the Devil-invented dogma of baptismal regeneration is not a reason for discord. A variation on this theme are those who believe that if an infant is born of one believing parent, that child is in the Covenant of Grace and must receive the seal as such, by being sprinkled with water; this practice, although totally unscriptural, is

also not to be a cause for division, as it is considered secondary truth. Others teach a second experience in order to receive the Holy Spirit. None of these and many other issues are to hinder fellowship; love is the overriding factor. What vast numbers of Christians think and act in this way today! Many acclaimed ministers who, one would think, should know better, are in this spiritual curry which is so spiced with love that the different ingredients cannot be identified - these all have a love which is not scripturally regulated.

The Bible clearly **commands** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we are to **withdraw** from all who walk not after the teaching received from our Lord Jesus Christ and the inspired apostles (cf 2 Thessalonians 3:6 & 1 Timothy 6:3-5). Contrary to this most clear and authoritative mandate, such statements as ‘But they have a faith’, ‘They are good people’, are frequently heard. This is not the criterion. Are they righteous **before God**, “*walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*”? (Luke 1:6), or are many of the commandments secondary and the ordinances optional? These are the issues which have to be faced. It is deplorable how many in church leadership will fellowship with others of all manner of mixed belief and practice; by such action they prove unmistakably that all Scripture is not authoritative to them, much is only secondary.

It is recorded of the Jews, “*They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge*” (Romans 10:2). Sadly, what was true of some of those Jews of early church days is true of great numbers in the present generation. There is a zeal, an ardour and love but it is misguided. Love may abound, but if it is not according to knowledge, this will inevitably lead to spiritual irregularity. The great Head of the Church knew how deceptive and misguided the heart can be, consequently manifesting itself in a love which is not scripturally regulated, hence the tremendous importance of always keeping **love** linked with **knowledge**. ‘Love is blind’ is a common

expression, but spiritual love must **not** be blind; it must be enlightened, instructed, directed in all its exercises by the Word of God. If love is not regulated by the Holy Scriptures it will soon degenerate into fanaticism on the one hand, or loose accommodating sentiment on the other, both of which are totally ineffective in the maintenance of full-orbed truth.

The importance of sound teaching, practice and example is set forth throughout Scripture; God said of Old Testament Israel, “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*” (Hosea 4:6). Nothing will destroy the cause of Christ more surely than a lack of fully comprehensive, Biblical teaching. The apostle John possibly has more to say about love than any other New Testament writer and has been styled ‘the apostle of love’ but sadly, much is read into his writings which is not there! He states the manner of his love concisely, “*I love in the truth*” (2 John v.1); his was an informed and controlled love. Love must be both constrained and restrained by legitimate instruction only found in the Scriptures of Truth.

‘The Regulative Principle’ is a term frequently used by those who claim to be regulated by Scripture alone. However, a cursory glance at the teaching and practice of many of these, prove their claim to be false. The sprinkling of infants, the link of church and state, are examples of their established order which is totally outside New Testament Church teaching. It is from God’s Word alone, without additions, subtractions or adjustments, that the child of God must obtain that **knowledge** whereby he can, with spiritual intelligence, keep the law summarised as **love** to God and men. At this point **judgment** comes in; of itself **knowledge** is not sufficient. Throughout history, Christians have been faced with theories, dogmas and divers practices, often set forth by pleasant, likeable men who were sound on some points. In the British Isles at least, this situation is now probably more common than it has ever been; God’s children are constantly being confronted by a great variation of

Biblical interpretation emanating from the lips and pens of men who claim to stand four-square on the Word of God. Although many may not agree with all that is taught yet, for the sake of love they acquiesce, quoting, “*Judge not*” (Matthew 7:1), as if those two words are a blanket statement which must cover all differences between the people of God.

Already it has been made clear from the Holy Scriptures that the Christian is to “*love in the truth*” (3 John v.1). It is by a knowledge of the Word that the truth is known. Knowing the truth, the child of God is to make a judgment according to the Divine Mandate; in this way he is said to “*judge righteous judgment*” (John 7:24). It is incumbent upon every individual Christian to **do this** if they are to fulfil their high calling of contending earnestly for the faith (cf Jude v.3). The present tendency within the ranks of professing evangelicals and those of reformed persuasion and practice is to unite in matters on which they agree and not touch upon the parts of God’s Word which cause dissension. This is done under one common eclectic umbrella of showing a generous loving spirit. They believe that to set forth a spirit of tolerance and brotherly love is bound to be good and will strengthen the church in general. This reasoning is without foundation, for it runs totally at variance with Holy Scripture. Secular history also proves the fallacy of it; whenever the people of God of mixed belief and practice have commenced to unite, with the underlying notion that amalgamation will strengthen them, it has always been a sign of their deficient teaching and lack of resolution. Such movements are symptomatic of weakness and are the precursors of decay and disaster. The Church of Jesus Christ has always been seen at her best and in her greatest purity when there has been separation, secession and withdrawal. It is this which has strengthened her witness and brought truth to the front and been supremely to the honour of her Great Head.

The crying need of the hour is for local, independent,

Biblically-based churches who are bound solely to the Word of God, having no denominational systems and dogmas, to tenaciously take their stand and herald forth **all** the counsel of God, fearlessly denouncing error and any who dare to compromise or tamper with God's sacred truth. Such a stand will be a bulwark against all the smothering of the malpractices of professed orthodox churches hiding under the non-judgmental blanket of love. A careful examination of the Holy Scriptures will soon reveal that there is nothing incongruous in the title of this article: **Love, Knowledge and Judgment** as these three must always be kept together.

W.H.Molland

Delinquency

This is a word often used in today's society, yet its true meaning is little understood. It is defined as 'a failure', 'an omission of duty', 'an offence', 'guilt'; a delinquent is 'an offender', 'a culprit'. Closely allied to, indeed a very part of **delinquency** is **disobedience**. All delinquency stems from disobedience.

Much is publicised about the delinquency of youth and various reasons are given as to its cause, such as broken homes, bad company, lack of parental training and so on. Much of this is undoubtedly true, but such conclusions take the matter a stage further, as we reflect on previous generations, thus involving parents who have omitted to carry out their duty in training their offspring. Would it be correct to assume that delinquency **originated** with either the children or their parents? It most certainly would not; there was disobedience, failure and lawlessness with **their** forebears. Looking at it in this way, which we must, we go back over the centuries, for **every** generation has, in varying degrees, been

disobedient with consequent failure in their offspring. Delinquency in its many guises has been propagated in every generation and its root cause, whatever form it takes, is disobedience. Where did it start and which was the first delinquent generation? It started in Eden with Adam and Eve who were the initial offenders, the first delinquents. There were no adverse circumstances in their case such as a broken home or bad company; they flouted the express command of God, their Creator. The fount of the human race became **delinquent** by this one means, **disobedience**, even though he knew the fatal ongoing consequences of his failure to obey; Adam heads a race who by nature are all delinquents. *“By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners”* (Romans 5:19), *“By one man, sin entered the world”* (Romans 5:12); all mankind by nature are the children of disobedience, this is the spirit which **worketh** within them (cf Ephesians 2:2). Let none be self-righteous or spiritually conceited, for that very spirit which dominates present day, so-called delinquents is in us all and but for the mercy of God, could manifest itself to a far greater degree than it does.

Seeing that disobedience and delinquency are inseparable and parents are so positively involved, they cannot evade the issue. The Scriptures frequently address the tremendous responsibility of child training. It is not that parents can change the disobedient nature with which every child is born; nevertheless that rebellious spirit of disobedience seen even in infancy, has to be dealt with from early days or otherwise within two or three years, the battle can be well nigh lost. This is an important **moral** issue, incumbent upon every parent. A child is to be trained in the way he **should** go (cf Proverbs 22:6), not in the way the child **wants** to go. The strong resistance which even a small child shows to gain its own way has to be curbed; if not, the parents foster delinquency. This is the instruction which God has given to every parent to whom He has entrusted a young life. Should a breakdown in moral or social behaviour occur later on in that child’s life, it could well be traced back to the delinquency

of the **parent** in failing to stem that inborn spirit of disobedience **working** in the early years of their child.

Having touched upon the moral aspect in which **every** human is involved and accountable to the Creator, we focus our attention particularly upon **Christian** parents, whose minds have been enlightened and whose previous imaginations and thoughts have been brought into captivity to the **obedience** of Christ, having a readiness to revenge (punish) all disobedience, their obedience being fulfilled (replete) (cf 2 Corinthians 10:5). For a Christian parent, the question of child training runs deeper than **moral**, it is intensely **spiritual** and to be casual, or not take necessary action to check disobedience in their children, is an indication that obedience to Christ is not fulfilled in the parent. The home is the priority mission field. Godly parenting is a tremendous responsibility because every child is born in sin; the spirit that **works** even in a babe is the spirit of disobedience. If this was not so, no child would ever need training, it would always do right; this is not the case and so this tremendous responsibility devolves upon the parents. Great efforts are made in instructing their children to always say ‘Please’ and ‘Thank you’, and in washing hands, cleaning teeth, teaching table manners and respect for older people. Although these things are important, why do many of those same parents opt out of other issues under the pretext that they are matters to be left to the authorities and schools who are the so-called experts? This is folly. The average school today cannot even train in common courtesy; they lecture on evolution, teach a spectrum of religions, give inappropriate sexual education, but Biblical standards, Christian ethics and spiritual values are completely avoided. To be reasonable, should Christian parents expect such issues to be taught by unregenerate educationalists?

There is a prevalent viewpoint among parents, and even some grandparents, that you must not force Christian principles upon

children. They say that if the children want to go to the Lord's Day services, that is good, but they should not be made to go; if they prefer to play in the garden, allow them to; they will not understand what is said in the conduct of a service of worship in any case so let them do as they will. The Christian parent who acts this way is permitting the spirit of disobedience with which the child was born, to **work** (cf Ephesians 2:2). This is **disobedience** in the child, but it is **delinquency** (failure) on the part of the parent.

The old adversary, the Devil, who is the supreme **culprit** in all forms of delinquency, will always seek to instil thoughts into the mind of a Christian parent not to become unduly concerned about their children, they will turn out alright, so be careful not to sicken them with spiritual teaching. Christian parent, **Beware!** How many have fallen for this wile! It is in the way that the child **should** go that God holds the parent responsible. There must be example, training, discipline and correction and this cannot begin too early; a child should never be able to remember when training actually started. A horticulturalist commences to train a climbing shrub from its very first shoots; larger branches can never be trained, it is too late. So with children, it is the tender years which are vital.

Nursery rhymes have a place in mental development and memorizing, but simple verses of Scripture must be regarded as of far greater importance. A child of Christian parents should grow up in an atmosphere where the Word of God is common place. To say a child does not understand is invalid. Salvation does not come to any by understanding; it is by faith and faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Therefore to permeate the home with the Holy Scriptures is the duty of all Christian parents, so that they grow up in this environment. Little by little, line upon line, precept upon precept, Divine truth is imbibed (cf Isaiah 28:10); this does not mean that the child will grow into salvation but the Word of God is being planted and it is His Word which, according to His purposes of grace, He will use to salvation.

Another important and relevant aspect is the channelling of children into right company. It is dangerous for Christians to encourage close friendships with children of worldly families, for this immediately takes their children into the homes of the ungodly. Whilst Christians cannot isolate their young ones, they can most certainly guide and guard them, clearly explaining to them why they are being restricted. There is a vital precedent for parents as well as for the young set out in a hymn: "Make friends of God's children". If parents follow this precept and it is explained to their children, there should be very little problem. This principle should be followed from the very start; otherwise what should be a minor issue becomes a major difficulty.

It should be obvious to the reader that the supreme word in all this matter of child training is **obedience**. This is the vital requirement and it should start in infancy for even a babe must be made to understand that the parent is in control. Disobedience was the major sin sown in the heart of Adam and it has been transmitted to all his posterity. No child has to learn disobedience and one of the first evidences of this is disobedience to parents. The parent says 'No' and immediately the child does that which is forbidden. That disobedient spirit is **working** and it has to be broken; God holds every parent responsible to do this. There is nothing more pathetic than to see a young child get the better of the father or the mother and yet this is all too common. There are people who pride themselves on the way they have trained their dog to obey, yet who stand powerless in the face of their small children, even of the age of two or three years. If the principle of obedience is not instilled in a child by the parents when young in years, it will be reflected in other aspects of later life: at school, work, in society and also in the church. The problems in the classroom and workplace today, to say nothing of lawlessness in the nation, would have been far less if those concerned had been trained to be obedient by their parents when they were young. To this must be added the stark fact that a

child allowed to persist in disobedience becomes **hardened** in it; they see little wrong in their attitude and so develop their own wilful way. Is it any wonder that they will not obey the gospel and submit to the claims of Christ? It surely should be no surprise to us that many in later life who, though they might profess the name of Jesus Christ, will totally disregard sections of God's Word, often ignoring His express commands. Why? Because of a failure in **obedience** to that Word, resulting in spiritual **delinquency**.

How vital is this matter of obedience to Christians in their own lives and in the training of their children! How many parents who, through tolerance, a false tenderness or perhaps indolence, have allowed their children to get away with things. Once this starts, it will escalate at an alarming rate. Children are very much what their parents make them. If, from an early age, they are made to be obedient, it will be manifest; on the contrary, if they are allowed their own way, it will be apparent to all. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord: for this **is right** (cf Ephesians 6:1). This is part of the Law of God. However, children will not obey their parents if they have not been **taught** obedience; they are to be **brought up** "*in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4). Children are an heritage of the Lord. It is serious indeed, if parents allow that fallen spirit of disobedience to **work** in those whom they have brought into the world and make very little effort to curb it. This is **parental** delinquency and is a violation of that which God requires of Christian parents. "*Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it*" (Proverbs 22:6).

W.H.Molland

Editorial

The Truth, our knowledge **of** it and consequent judgment **by** it, demands firm discipline and example. This focuses very particularly upon those holding responsible roles, where a high degree of maturity and unflinching stability should be evidenced; alas, far too often complexity and vacillation is seen. This is the underlying theme running through this current magazine, hence the relevance of the following poem, to which the Editor's attention was drawn:

'Twas a Sheep

'Twas a sheep, not a lamb, that strayed away
In the parable Jesus told;
A grown-up sheep that had gone astray
From the ninety and nine in the fold.

Out on the hillside, out in the cold,
'Twas a sheep the Good Shepherd sought;
And back to the fold, safe to the fold,
'Twas a sheep the Good Shepherd brought.

And why for the sheep should we earnestly long
And so earnestly hope and pray?
Because there is danger if they go wrong;
They will lead the lambs astray.

For the lambs will follow the sheep, you know,
Wherever the sheep may stray.
Where the sheep go wrong, it will not be long
'Til the lambs are as wrong as they.

And so with the sheep we earnestly plead
For the sake of the lambs today;
If the sheep are lost, what a terrible cost
The lambs will have to pay.

Author unknown