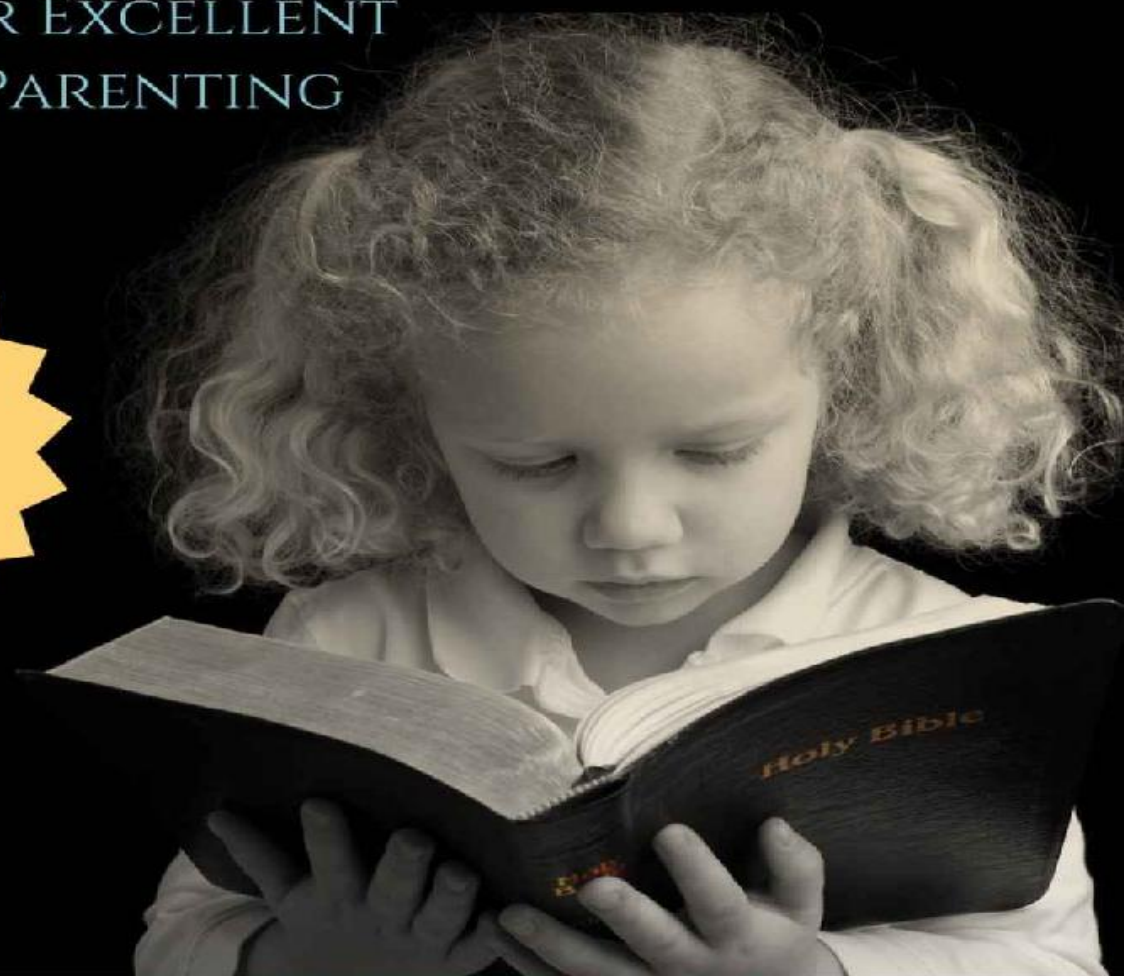


HOW TO RAISE *Children* FOR CHRIST

A GUIDE FOR EXCELLENT
CHRISTIAN PARENTING

52
TOPICAL
STUDIES



ANDREW MURRAY

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HOW TO RAISE Children for Christ

A Guide for Excellent
Christian Parenting

Andrew Murray



Preface

GOD is awakening in many hearts the longing to live a truly consecrated life, to be and do all that He would have of us. No sooner has the surrender to such a life taken place than the desire comes to have all who belong to us take part in the blessing – especially to have our home life with all its affections, its communication, and its duties sanctified too. Many parents find this a hard, almost hopeless task. In the days when their own Christian life was halfhearted and weak, the spirit of the world was allowed to come in and get possession. When a partner or children do not entirely sympathize, or the help and hearty response of spiritual fellowship is lacking, the consecrated one finds it difficult to maintain the personal life. How much greater to influence the whole circle and lift them up to the more blessed life.

To parents who are in this position and all parents who long to have their homes truly consecrated by God's presence and service, God's Word has a message of comfort and strength. It is this: God is willing to be the God of their house, and with His divine power to do more than they can ask and think. If they will open their hearts in faith to rest in the promise and the power of God, He will prove Himself to be for their house what He has been to them.

The one thing needful is that they know and believe what He has undertaken to be and do as the God of their seed. They will find that the lesson they learned in entering upon a life of entire consecration is what is needed here again. All was comprehended in the one word – surrender – the surrender of faith and obedience. They surrendered themselves to expect

and accept all God had promised and to do all that He commanded. This surrender of faith must take place with regard to the family.

As a parent, I put myself and my children into God's hands, believing that He will fulfill His promise and that He does at once accept and take charge. I confess the sins by which I have prevented God from working through me for my home. I yield myself to be His humble, holy witness; His loving, obedient servant; and humbly but trustingly I say, *When thou shalt come unto me, I will walk in the way of perfection and understand. I will walk in the midst of my house in the perfection of my heart* (Psalm 101:2).

A parent's faith needs what the faith of every believer needs – to understand and to get an insight into what God has undertaken. *Through faith we understand*; when faith has seen God planning and undertaking, it is a simple thing for it to rest and trust, to praise and act. I trust that this little book may help believing parents to meditate on God's revelation of His purpose with the family, and to see what abundant ground there is for expecting Him to fulfill their desire to have their house holy to the Lord. As we get into the mind and plan of God, our faith will grow, and its power will be manifest in ourselves and those for whom we are believing.

I send this book forth with the prayer that it may be blessed to make our glorious God better known, as He is eager to be known and honored as the God of the families of Israel. May this knowledge strengthen many parents' hearts to a larger faith and a more entire consecration of home life to their God.

First Day

The Family As God Created It

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.
Genesis 1:27-28

GOD'S purpose in the creation of man was to make known to the universe His own unseen glory and perfection. Man was not only to have single points of resemblance to God, but in all he was and did upon earth, he was also to prove that he was indeed created in God's image and after His likeness.

The traits of that likeness were varied and wonderful. In his dominion over the earth, man was to exhibit the power of God as King and Ruler of the universe. In the wondrous mental powers given to him, fitting him for this work, the image of God as the All-wise was to be seen. In his moral powers there was to be some reflection of the light that is inaccessible and full of glory: God's righteousness and holiness were to be revealed.

But one trait, the very highest, of the divine perfection still remained to be presented. God is love. As Infinite Love, He lives not for Himself alone, but finds all His blessing in imparting His own life through the Son of His love, begotten of the Father from eternity. In the Son He has established the universe with living beings, that the fullness of His love might flow upon

them. As the Loving One, He is the fountain of life; as the Living One, He is the fountain of love. In this, too, man was to bear the image of God, that his whole life might be a life of love, thereby giving life to those he loves. In the home on earth, the love of husband and wife or parent and child was to reflect the love and the blessedness of the Father's home in heaven and portray the deepest secrets of the life of the Godhead in the fellowship of the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit.

It is to this last and highest trait of the image of divine perfection – man's creation and the blessedness of a life in love – that we want to draw attention.

In the study of God's Word to discover what it teaches us about parenting, we must ascend the true Mount of Sources from the stream of divine truth to those hills of paradise where they all originate. We shall find the sure foundation of the family constitution, its purpose, its law, and its glory in the teaching of God's Word: *God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*

Man was created after the image of God that was seen in Christ. When man had fallen, Christ came to bring us into fellowship with Himself, to give us a share in His Sonship and inheritance, and to make us the children of God. By our regeneration through Him and His life, we also become the sons of God. God's Fatherhood of believers through the perfect blessedness of redemption is the summing up of the incomprehensible mystery and glory of the Divine Being.

And the father of the family on earth is to be the image and the likeness of this Fatherhood. He is the image of the heavenly in the life he imparts to his child, in the image he sees reflected, in the unity of which he is conscious, in the loving care he exercises, in the obedience and the trust he sees rendered to himself, and in the love in which family life finds its happiness.

What a solemn and blessed view this truth gives us of the parental relationship. In light of the divine origin and purpose of the family, we can

better understand and value our relationship with our children. Likewise, all our interaction with them would strengthen our obedience and our confidence towards the Father in heaven. We should see how the action of the heavenly and the earthly home on each other is reciprocal. Every deeper insight into the Father's love and the Father's home would elevate the communication in the home on earth and enlarge our expectations of the blessings God will certainly bestow upon it. And every experience of that love and blessing of a home on earth can be a ladder by which to rise nearer the great Father-heart in heaven. *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*: the two complementing each other – the home in heaven with the Father and the original home on earth with the father there.

How terrible the curse and the power of sin! Fatherhood in the likeness of God and the establishment of a home of love like that in heaven was to have been the high privilege of man as God created him. But alas! Sin came in and wrought a fearful ruin. The father passes a sinful nature to the child; the father feels too sinful to be a blessing to his child; and the home is too often the path not to heaven, but to hell.

But, blessed be God! What sin destroyed, grace restores. But, as we follow God's revelation in regard to the family in these meditations, we shall find that the purpose and provision of God's grace point back to the restoration of what was intended at creation: the fatherhood and the motherhood of earth with its love and its home, its care and its training of the children, the reflection and the fellowship of the home and the love of the Father in heaven.

Let every parent who feels conscious of his own shortcoming and longs for wisdom and grace to do what is right in the work entrusted to him look back in faith and hope to the heavenly origin of family life. The God who created it has redeemed it and creates it anew. He watches over it with tender interest and meets every parent who desires to be the minister of His holy purpose. If you truly want this, begin by making God's thought your thought and the fatherhood and family on earth the image and likeness of a

heavenly original. Look to God as the Author of your family life; count upon Him to give all that is needed to make it what it should be. Let His Father-heart and His Father-love be your study and your support; as you know and trust Him in adoring love, the assurance will grow that He will fit you for making your home the bright reflection of His own.

A Prayer for Parents

Oh, great and holy Creator of men! You have placed me in the wondrous relationship of a parent with a child owing its life to me. Would You give me, too, the happiness of living a life of love, the divine joy of loving and being loved. You have placed me, too, in a home, which is to be the image of the home in heaven, where the Father and the Son dwell in everlasting love.

Oh my God, I humbly confess that I utter these words with shame. How little has the perfect love and joy, the purity and brightness of heaven, been reflected in the home given to my charge. How little have I even understood my calling or truly aimed at the high ideal You have set before me. Father, forgive us, for Jesus' sake.

And hear me, when I ask You to guide my meditations and to help me in the study of Your holy Word that I may learn what Your purpose is with the fatherhood and the motherhood of this earth, and with what interest and love You look on each home given to Your protection and guidance. Teach me to know You in Your infinite Fatherliness that the study and the experience of that divine original home, after which the parent's heart was created, may fit me to be a true parent to my child. And let a Father's love and blessing rest on our home. Amen.

Second Day

The Family As Sin Made It

In the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth.

Genesis 5:1, 3

Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him. Genesis 4:8

GOD created man in His own likeness; Adam, the fallen, begat sons in his own likeness, after his image. The former expression tells us of man's high origin and destiny; the latter shows us how sin has such fearful and universal power. It was one of the wonderful traits of God's likeness that man had the power to pass life on to others. When sin became master, that likeness was not extinguished, but terribly defaced; he still had the power to pass on his own likeness.

By one fell blow in conquering Adam, sin had conquered the race. If ever the race is to be delivered from the power of sin, it will be by God's power to regain and renew the establishing of His kingdom. The parental relationship has become the strength of sin; when God restores it, it will be the strength of grace.

Note how the father's sin reappears and ripens in that of the child. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart ... and thy neighbour as thyself* (Luke 10:27). In these two great commandments, we have the sum

of God's will concerning us. Adam had transgressed the first and cast off the love of God. His firstborn refused subjection to the second and became the hater and murderer of his brother. Had Adam continued in the love of God, Cain would have loved his brother. With Adam's sin, his nature had become corrupted; that nature had been imparted to the son in his likeness. The child's sin was the fruit of the father's.

This first picture of family life that God gives us in His Word casts a somber light on our homes. How often parents can trace their own shortcomings and transgressions in the sins and tempers of their children. The remembrance that their children have inherited their evil natures ought to humble them and make them patient and gentle, as well as earnest and wise, and lead them to seek what can cure and conquer this evil power – the grace and the life that comes from above. Let parents not be afraid of realizing that God visits the sins of the fathers on the children; it will urge and encourage them to believe that He will also extend the mercy to the fathers and make the children partakers of that too.

Note also how that first child's sin was the root and type of all children's sins. The family had been destined by God to be the image of the bliss of heaven, the mirror of the life of love that reigns there. Sin entered, and the first family, instead of picturing heaven, became the type and portal of hell. Instead of the love and help and happiness for which God had appointed our social relation, envy and anger and hatred and murder render it a scene of terrible desolation.

The root of all sin is selfishness – separating us first from God and then from man. How early in the little ones in the nursery does it manifest itself or with companions in school or play. How often it rises even against the parent and refuses the love or obedience that is due. Let believing parents study with care what Holy Scripture reveals of love as the new and great commandment, the fulfilling of the whole law and the way to our dwelling in God and God in us, seeking for nothing so earnestly as this: the reign of love in our homes. Let them make it their aim that grace should restore their

family life to what God created it to be – a mirror and a foretaste of the love of heaven.

Let us not forget the influence of the parent's life: In his own image, after his likeness. These words refer not only to a blessing lost and to a curse that came with sin, but also to a grace that comes with redemption. Not by natural birth in the flesh can a believer beget a child in his likeness, renewed after the image of God. But what nature cannot accomplish, the prayer and the life of faith can obtain in virtue of the promise and the power of God. As faith and prayer claim the promise and the power of God, the influence of the daily communication will make itself felt, and there will proceed from the consecrated lives of father and mother a secret but mighty power to mold the lives of the children, either preparing them as vessels of grace or establishing and perfecting them in it.

And so we come to the blessed but solemn truth: Let parents be what they want their children to be. If they would keep them from the sin of Cain, who loved not his brother, then let them beware of the sin of Adam, who loved not the commandment of his God. *Let father and mother lead a life marked by love to God and man*; this is the atmosphere in which loving children can be trained. Let all the dealings with the children be in holy love. Cross words, sharp reproof, and impatient answers are infectious. Love demands and does not fear self-sacrifice; it needs time and thoughtful attention and patient perseverance to train our children correctly. Let the impression our children receive when they hear us speak of others – friends or enemies, the low, the vulgar, the wicked – be the love of Christ we seek to show. In all communication between father and mother, let mutual esteem and respect, tender considerateness and willing self-forgetfulness prove to the children that love is possible and blessed.

Above all, let us remember that the love of God is the secret of a loving home on earth. It is where parents love the Lord their God with all their heart and strength that the human love will be strengthened and sanctified. To make our home the nursery and the type and the foretaste of heaven, the

ordinary halfhearted religion will not suffice. The love of God shed abroad in the heart and the home and the life by the Holy Ghost will transplant our home from the gates of Paradise Lost, where Adam dwelt with Cain, to Paradise Regained, where even amid the weakness of earth the image of the heavenly is seen, and the home on earth is in the likeness of the home above.

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Lord God, we bow before You in deep humility. We desire to feel more deeply the terrible power of sin and the danger to which it exposes our beloved home. We come to confess how far as parents we have come short in that pure and holy love which You meant to be the beauty and the blessedness of family life. In our interaction with You and each other and our children and fellow men – Oh God, forgive us for lacking love. Let not our children suffer through us, as they grow up in our likeness. Deliver us, we pray, from the power of selfishness, and shed abroad Your love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

And, Oh God, bless our children with the Spirit of love. May we walk before them in love, that Your Spirit may use our example and our likeness to form them to Your Holy Likeness. Give us a deep sense of our holy calling to train their immortal spirits for You and Your glory. Inspire us with faith, with patience, and with wisdom to train them in the right way. Oh, that our home on earth might be to them the pathway and the gate to the Father's home in heaven.

Blessed Father, let us and our children be Yours wholly and forever.
Amen.

Third Day

The Family As Grace Restores It

And the LORD said unto Noah, Enter thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

Genesis 7:1

By faith Noah, ... prepared an ark to the saving of his house and was made a witness to future ages that the faith of a believing, righteous parent obtains a blessing, not for himself only, but for his children too (Hebrews 11:7). The New Testament teaching, by faith he saved his house, is in perfect accordance with what is recorded in the Old Testament history: *for thee have I seen righteous before me: enter thou and all thy house into the ark*. Even Ham, who deserved to perish with the ungodly world, was saved from the flood for his father's sake and by his father's faith.

We know how this fact had given sin its terrible power in the world. It was because of this that when Adam had sinned, his whole posterity had been made subject at one blow to sin and death. Was not the flood, as well as the fall, a proof of it? We see the children of Seth fall as deep as the children of Cain, because Seth, too, was a son whom Adam had begotten in his likeness with a sinful nature. Wasn't this what gave sin such a universal empire to a thousand generations? The family was sin's greatest stronghold; children inherited the evil from their parents. The unity of parents and children was the strength of sin.

Noah's deliverance from the flood was to be the introduction of a new dispensation. In it God manifested great principles of the economy of grace. These were: mercy in the midst of judgment; life through death; faith as the means of deliverance and the channel through which the blessing comes. It was now to be revealed whether the family was to be one of the means of grace. There was every reason to expect it would be. It had been sin's mightiest ally, the chief instrument through which it had acquired such universal dominion. This principle was now to be rescued from the power of sin, to be adopted into the covenant of grace, and to be consecrated and made subservient to the establishment of God's kingdom. How otherwise could the declaration be verified, *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*, if sin *alone* had the power through the parents to secure dominion over the children? Nay, in this very thing, we are to have one of the brightest displays of redeeming grace – that the relationship between parents and children, which had become the great means for the transmission and establishment of the power of sin, was much more to become the vehicle for the extension of the kingdom of God's grace. And though many ages would have to pass before the promised Seed of the woman would be born, yet in anticipation of that holy birth, the seed of God's people were to share in the blessing of their parents. It was on the strength of this hope that the children of righteous Noah were blessed with their father.

Let believing parents understand and remember this. The man who is righteous in God's sight is not dealt with only as an individual, but also in his interaction as a parent. When God blesses, He loves to bless abundantly; the blessing must overflow the house of His servant. It is not only for this temporal life and the supply of its many needs that the father must regard himself as an appointed channel through whom the blessings reach the child, and that he may count upon God's help. The parental relationship has a nobler destiny: for the eternal life, too, with its blessings, the believing

father is to regard himself as an appointed channel and steward of the grace of God.

When once we understand this blessed truth and in its fullness of promise by faith accept God's word, *Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation*, we shall value the words, *Enter thou and all thy house into the ark*. The seed of the righteous shall be blessed; the house of His servant God will bless. God gives the assurance that the ark in which the parent is to be saved is meant for his children too; it is for them as much as for him; the ark is to be the house of the family.

And as the blessing is to come for his sake, it is to come through his instrumentality too. It is not only a promise, but also a command: *Enter thou and all thy house into the ark*. It is to him the charge is given to see to it that just as he enters in, they will too.

And if the question comes up as to the power of a parent to lead his children into the ark as certainly as he himself goes in, the answer is simple and clear: *By faith Noah, ... prepared an ark to the saving of his house*. Let us believe that God always gives grace proportioned to the duty He imposes. Let the believing parent live and act and pray with and for his children as one to whom the ark and its salvation is indeed the one aim and joy of life, and who is assured that God intends his children to be there with him. Let him confidently trust God for the salvation of every child. Let him in that spirit instruct and inspire his children. Let them grow up under the consciousness that to be with the believing father is to be with one who is in the ark. This is the baptism – the figure of the ark with its resurrection out of the waters of the deluge that seals us in the blood of Jesus.

Beloved parents, listen to the blessed tidings of which Noah is God's messenger to you: there is room for your child in the ark; the God who saves you expects you to bring your child with you. Let it no longer be enough to pray and hope that your child may be saved. Accept in faith the assurance that he can be, and act in obedience to the command that you are to bring him in. And to each question as to how, let the answer be taken

deeper to heart: *Enter thou and all thy house*. Go in and live in the ark; bring up and train your little children; God's blessing will use your training for their salvation. Abide in Christ, and let the child feel that to be near you is to be near Christ; live in the power of the love and the redemption and the life of Christ. Your house will be to the child the ark where Christ is known and found. Oh, if you have indeed heard that most blessed word, *thee have I seen righteous*, let it teach you in the obedience of a joyous faith to fulfill the precept: *Enter thou and all thy house into the ark*;

Thou and all thy house – may the Word live in the heart of each believing parent.

A Prayer for Parents

O Lord my God, I have heard Your message telling me that since You have accepted me as righteous in Your Son, You would have my children saved too. I have heard Your voice of grace: *Enter thou and all thy house*. Blessed be Your name for the assurance of the salvation of his children it offers a parent's heart.

Lord, open my eyes to see what Your Word sets before me. Let me see in Noah the picture of a believing parent – walking with You, believing Your Word, obedient to Your command. Let me see in the ark the type of my blessed Lord Jesus, a sure and a safe hiding place for me and my child. Let me see in the saving of Noah's house the sure pledge of what will be given to every parent who trusts You for his children and obeys Your voice to bring them in.

O my God, give me grace like Your servant Noah that I may walk with You, and You may see me righteous before Your face, believing the promise of Your grace and obeying Your command to perform the work entrusted to me. May Your blessing abide on me and my children. And may it all be to the glory of Your Holy Name. Amen.

Fourth Day

The Child of the Covenant

And then the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thy heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thy heir. And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him for righteousness. Genesis 15:4, 6

Ye are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant. Acts 3:25

THREE times God had already given Abraham the promise that He would make of him a great nation, as the sand of the seashore in number. When God appeared to him the fourth time, Abraham poured out his complaint before God: *Behold, to me thou hast given no seed; and, behold, one born in my house is my heir* (Genesis 15:3). In answer, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, *This shall not be thy heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thy heir* (Genesis 15:4). Then note the memorable words: *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness* (Romans 4:3).

The great truth which this narrative sets before us is this: the longing and asking for the promise and the gift on God's part and the reception and the birth of our children on our part is a matter of faith. God takes the deepest interest and holds communion with men in this matter. Abraham's faith is exercised and found well pleasing to God in regard to the promise of a child. The natural longing for a child becomes the channel of fellowship

with God, and the natural seed becomes the heir of God's promise and the spiritual blessing.

God resolved to deal differently with Abraham than He did with Noah. The children of Noah had been born after the flesh. Before their birth, God had not entered into covenant on their behalf. They had become independent men before God made them partakers of Noah's blessing. With Abraham, He changed His way of dealing with His servants. The child, who was to be taken up into the covenant, was declared before his birth to be the object of God's care and the parent's faith. God takes charge of the very birth of the child, to watch over and to sanctify him by His Word and by faith. Everything connected with Isaac's birth was to be a matter of God's revelation and man's faith. Against nature and against hope, by His promise, God awakens the faith and expectation of a child. For twenty-five years, this faith is tried and purified until Abraham's whole soul is filled with believing expectancy, so the child would truly be the child of faith and prayer – a gift of God received by faith. Before the birth, Abraham is circumcised, once again sealed for God in the covenant of circumcision. In all this God would teach us that it is not only in their individual capacity, but also as parents that God would begin the great work of redeeming love. He would thus reveal to us how that wondrous power with which He had endowed man of bringing forth and giving life to a child after his own image, and which by sin had become the great strength of Satan's kingdom, was again to be consecrated and extended to His kingdom and glory.

Hence it is that the Bible is full of what cannot otherwise be understood – divine promise and interposition, human activity and expectation, connected with the birth of children. Everything concentrates on that one great lesson: the fatherhood and the childhood of this earth has a divine and heavenly promise, and everything connected with it must be a matter of faith, a service holy to the Lord and well pleasing in His sight. I must not only believe for myself; if I would fully honor God, my faith must also reach forth and embrace my children, grasping the promises of God for

them too. If I would magnify the riches of God's grace and be consecrated to God's service with my whole nature and all my powers, I must as a parent believe and labor.

And I see in Abraham that God thought a long time was necessary for the strengthening and ripening of faith before he might receive the promised child. This teaches me that this grace is a gift of high value and cannot be attained but by a close walk with God and wholehearted surrender to His teachings and leadings. The faith, which was sufficient to justify Abraham, was not sufficient to receive the blessing for his seed; it had to be further strengthened and purified. And believing parents will experience that there is nothing that so mightily quickens the growth of their faith as the reaching out after this blessing for their children. They will feel the mightiest stimulus to a life of entire devotion and unmixed faith that they may have not only enough for themselves, but also enough to impart to children: *According to your faith be it unto you* (Matthew 9:29).

But with this solemn lesson, Abraham's story gives us the comforting assurance that God will give the grace to attain what we need. With what patience and longsuffering did He lead Abraham and Sarah until they were fit to accomplish His purposes. It could be said of them, Abraham *believed ... that he might become the father of many Gentiles*, and, *By faith also Sara herself being sterile received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child* (Romans 4:18; Hebrews 11:11). Even now will God, who has undertaken to sanctify His people and fill them with His Spirit, train them for the holy calling of believing parents. He will teach us how the birth of our children can become the highest exercise of a faith that gives glory to God and the truest means of advancing our spiritual life and the interests of His kingdom.

With us, too, the promise of God and the power of faith are the wondrous links by which the natural seed becomes the heir of the spiritual blessing, and the parental relationship one of the best schools for the life of faith. It is especially in a believing fatherhood that we can become

conformed to the image not only of faithful Abraham, but also of the Father in heaven Himself.

A Prayer for Parents

O blessed God and Father, what thanks shall we render to You for the wondrous revelation of Your will in Your servants Abraham and Sarah. You sanctified and blessed the fatherhood and motherhood of earth that the seed of Your people might indeed be holy to the Lord. Where sin had abounded and manifested its terrible power, You made grace much more to abound; and Abraham's child, the heir of sin and misery, You made the heir of the promise and its blessing.

Gracious God, open the eyes of Your servants to see how, through the birth of Your own Isaac, Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, that in our flesh, the birth of our children has indeed been redeemed from the power of sin, and Your promise comes to us larger and fuller than Abraham could ever understand. Teach us, teach all Christian parents, to realize that if there is one thing in which You have an interest and give abundant grace, it is for a believing fatherhood, for our receiving our children from You and for You. O God, enlighten and sanctify our hearts to realize this: the fruit of our body is to be the heir of Your promise. And let our parentage, like Abraham, be what binds us to You in worship and in faith. Amen.

Fifth Day

The Promise of the Covenant

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. Genesis 17:7

That is, those who are sons of the flesh, these are not the sons of God; but those who are sons of the promise are counted in the generation. Romans 9:8

WE have here the first full revelation of the terms of God's covenant, of God's dealing in grace, with Abraham, the father of all who believe – the great foundation promise of what God calls an everlasting covenant. God had already revealed Himself to Abraham as his God and the God who would give him a child. The thing that is new and remarkable here is the assurance that the covenant to be established was to be with his seed as much as with himself: *a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee*. It is this promise that has invested these words through all the generations of God's church with an imperishable interest. Let us see how the same promise is for the child as for the parent.

The matter of the promise is the same in each case: *I will establish My covenant; [I will] be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee*. God's purpose is to stand in the same relation to the child as the father; the believing parent and the unconscious child are to have the same place

before Him. God longs to take possession of the children before sin gets its mastery from birth; indeed, even from before birth, He would secure them as His own and have the parent's heart and the parent's love sanctified and guided and strengthened by the thought that the child is His. *A God unto thee and to thy seed.*

The certainty of the promise is the same. It rests on God's free mercy, on His almighty power, His covenant faithfulness. God's faithfulness to His purpose is in either case the ground on which the promise rests, and its fulfillment may be expected.

The condition of the promise is in each case the same. In its twofold blessing, it is offered to the faith of the parent and has to be accepted by faith alone. If the promise that comes to a sinner in the gospel, *I will be thy God*, is not believed, that unbelief makes the promise of no effect. God is true, His promise faithful, His offer of mercy real, but it finds no entrance through unbelief, and the blessing is lost. Not otherwise with the other half, *a God to thy seed*; if the parent's faith accepts this for his child, God will see to it that that faith is not disappointed.

The recipient of the promise is the same. It is not as if the first half of the promise is given to the father, the second half to the child. No, but it is the same person to whom the two parts of the promise come. In the first half, the individual accepts it for himself; in the other half, as a father for his child, but it is one act. The promise is not held in abeyance to wait for the child's faith, but is given to the father's faith in the assurance that the child's faith will follow. With Abraham, as with each believing parent, the same faith accepts the personal and the parental blessing. The blessing is in either case equally sure, if faith equally holds it fast.

But here a difficulty arises with many persons. They see that God's promises of mercy to sinners are free and sure, and have found, in believing them, that they have come true; they know that they have been accepted. But it is as if the promise with regard to the children is not equally simple

and certain. They cannot understand how one can so confidently believe for another.

They know that the only sure ground for faith is God's Word, but they have not yet been able to realize that the Word of God really means this: that they are to believe that He is the God of their seed. Their impressions are in accordance with views that are ordinarily held and that may be expressed thus: God has established a general connection between seedtime and harvest, between faithful parental training and the salvation of the children. In neither case, the seedtime nor the training, is absolute certainty of success secured or God's sovereignty excluded. It is evident that such a general principle, with its possible exceptions, cannot give the rest of faith the parent longs for. Faith needs the assurance that God's purpose and promise are clear and unmistakable; then alone can it venture all upon His faithfulness.

Such was the promise given to Abraham; such is the promise to every believing parent. It is not in the general law of seedtime and harvest that I am to find the parallel for my hope on behalf of my child, but in that other very distinct and definite promise with which God Himself has linked it. The first half, *I will be a God unto thee*, is the divine pattern and pledge of the second, *a God to thy seed*.

When as a struggling sinner I first sought mercy, it was not to some general principle, but to the very definite divine assurance, *for every one that asks receives, and he that seeks finds* (Matthew 7:8). I believed the promise; I came and was accepted; I found the promise true: *I will be thy God*.

So the promise is now that He is willing to be the God of my seed too. Wherever God comes with a promise, He expects faith to accept it at once. The promise was not conditional on Isaac's believing; it was intended to be its source and security. And so, as I stand in covenant with God as my God and see how He offers to be the God of His people's seed, I have the right in

faith to claim this promise and to be assured of my child's salvation as firmly as my own, through faith in the God of truth.

The analogy between the two halves of the promise is complete. In the first, it was the question: Could I trust the love and power and faithfulness of God to accept and renew and keep such a sinner as I am? Faith gave the answer and secured the blessing. And now it is the other question: Can I trust the love and the power and faithfulness of God to accept and renew and keep my child? Faith can again give the answer, and this blessing too is secured.

When I believed to the saving of my own soul, it was not the secret things, which belong to the Lord our God that I had to do with, but the things revealed in His Word, His invitation, and promise. Oh, let us, like Abraham, not stagger at the promise through unbelief, but be strong in faith, giving glory to God, and be confident that what He has spoken, He is able and faithful to perform. Let us look upon our children, let us love them and train them as children of the covenant and children of the promise – these are the children of God.

A Prayer for Parents

O my God, how shall I sufficiently adore You for the grace You have revealed in the promise of the covenant? As if it was not enough to take such unworthy sinners and make them Your children, You offer to provide for their children, too, and make the house of Your servants the home of Your favor and blessing. You meet them with the sure promise once given to Your servant Abraham: *I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee*. Blessed be Your Holy Name!

And now, Lord, I ask You, give me grace to take this promise and trust it with my whole heart. I desire to believe that as sure as is the confidence I have that You have accepted me and are my God, so confident may I be that You are the God of my seed. As I yielded myself all sinful to You, and You took me as Your own, I give them, all

sinful, to You, and believe You take them as Your own. As I accepted Your promise for myself, I accept it for them. Give me grace now to look upon them as You do, as children of the promise. May this be what gives me courage and hope for their training on earth and their portion in heaven. They are the children of the covenant, children of the promise. Faithful is He who has promised, who also will do it. Amen.

Sixth day

The Seal of the Covenant

And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male in your generations.
Genesis 17:11-12

A BRAHAM received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith. Such was the meaning of the ordinance of circumcision given to Abraham. The whole argument of the epistle to the Romans reproved the Jews for looking at it in so carnal a light and degrading it from what it originally was – the holy sacrament of friendship and fellowship with God. It was the seal of the righteousness of faith, the emblem of the covenant of the spirit in which God would circumcise the heart, and the sure sign of God's faithfulness to him and to his seed. It is only this spiritual aspect of circumcision that justifies the church. May the Holy Spirit lead us to know the mind of our God.

We are taught that circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith. A seal is the confirmation of something that has been settled and transacted, the securing of privileges that have already been secured. Abraham had believed; God had counted his faith to him for righteousness and had taken him into a covenant of friendship. Circumcision was to him a divine seal and assurance of this. But it was also a sign with a spiritual meaning. It was

a sign of that purity and holiness, which was to be the mark of God's people.

The most remarkable feature of the covenant was its passing on the blessing from generation to generation, its taking possession for the service of God's kingdom of the very power of generation. Of this power, sin had taken possession; the very first sign of sin with Adam and Eve was that they knew they were naked and were ashamed. The very fountain of life was defiled and had to be cleansed.

And so, when the little child of eight days old had to suffer the taking away of the foreskin of his flesh, it was a token of the defilement there is in our natural birth. It was a foreshadowing of that Holy One who would be begotten of the Holy Ghost and of that second birth in Him, not of the will of the flesh, but of God, which was to be the blessing of the new covenant. It was a type of the circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, being buried with Him in baptism. The seal of the righteousness of faith under the Old Testament was the sign of the need of regeneration, a sign for the quickening and instruction of Abraham's faith and setting him apart as a father for the service of God.

Circumcision could not be to the infant Isaac different from what it was to Abraham. It was to him, also, a seal of his participation in that spiritual covenant of which God's promise and man's faith were the two marks. All unknowing, he had been taken with his father, and for his father's faith into the favor and covenant of God. It was to him, as to Abraham, a seal of faith – faith already existing and accepted. Not his own, but his father's; for Abraham's sake the blessing came on him.

We find this distinctly stated later in Genesis 26:3, 5: *I will ... bless thee; ... because Abraham hearkened unto my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.* And again in verse 24: *I am the God of Abraham thy father; fear not, for I am with thee and will bless thee and multiply thy seed for my slave Abraham's sake.* Abraham had not

believed for himself alone, but for his child; the faith that was counted for righteousness had reference to God's promise about his child. As a father, he had believed and received the child in faith from God; the sign of circumcision in the child was the seal to the child of the father's faith. God dealt with father and child as one; the father believed for himself and his child as one. The child had the same place in the covenant and the same claim on the seal of the covenant as the father.

And as he grew up, it would be to him a seal not only of the faith his father had, but also of God's promise waiting for his faith too. It would be a remembrance of the one thing required by God, the one thing counted righteous by Him, the one thing well pleasing to Him, and by which he in turn could pass the blessing on to his seed again.

What circumcision was to Abraham and Isaac, baptism is to believers and their children. It, too, is a sign, only far clearer and brighter. If circumcision spoke of the shedding of blood and the purifying of the very fountain of life, the water in baptism witnesses of the blood that has been shed and the Spirit that has been given with their cleansing and renewing. *And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit and the water and the blood* (1 John 5:8). Of all these blessings, it is a sign and also a seal – a seal from God of the righteousness of faith – that faith in His promise is well pleasing to Him and is counted as righteousness.

In this dispensation of larger love and more abounding grace, this beautiful provision of the everlasting covenant shines with new glory, the covenant for parents and children alike. But let us remember, in this dispensation of the Spirit, that the one condition of blessing, without which the covenant and its sign are of no value, is faith. The parent must meet God as Abraham did, as a believer. It is faith and faith alone that can enter into the covenant that pleases God and obtains the reward. The faith that claims the parent may claim the child too. It has the same warranty – God's Word. It has the same hope – God's faithfulness. It obtains the same blessing of

free grace – the salvation of my child as surely as my own. And it has the same sign as its seal – baptism.

A Prayer for Parents

O my God! We do thank You for the condescension to our weakness, manifested in giving us a visible sign, a divine seal of spiritual and unseen blessings. You know our frame and remember that we are dust. You are the Creator of our bodies, not less the Father of our spirits; You have redeemed them to be the temple of Your Holy Spirit. In the body, You set the seal of Your acceptance of us and Your right over us. Lord, teach us to understand this, and let holy baptism, the seal of the New Testament faith and life, be indeed to Your people the sign that they are baptized into the death of Christ.

And grant, most gracious God, that where Your people cannot yet see eye to eye in the dispensation of this ordinance, it may still be, not the symbol of division, but the bond of unity in the Spirit of love.

And teach us to recognize its deep spiritual meaning and to live ourselves as baptized into the death of Christ and circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands. Teach us in faith to claim the full spiritual blessing for our children, too, and to train them for it. And so fulfill to us, O our God, in full measure the promise of the covenant: *A God unto thee, and to thy seed. Amen.*

Seventh Day

Keeping the Covenant

For I know him, that he will command his sons and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and judgment, that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him. Genesis 18:19

FAITH without works is dead. Saving faith is an energy, the power of a new life manifesting itself in conduct and action. In true faith, the soul becomes united to God and seeks to enter into the divine will, as the surest way of becoming one with Him. As faith grows clearer and stronger, it always sympathizes more fully with God's plans; it understands Him better and becomes more conformed to His likeness. This is true not only of individual but also of parental faith. As parental faith rises, the family comes under its power and is permeated by the spirit of godliness. Parental faith in God's promise will always be known by parental faithfulness to God's will.

Abraham is a remarkable illustration of this. As distinctly as God's Word speaks of his faith, it also tells of his faithfulness as a father. God reasoned that His purpose in regard to Sodom should not be kept secret from Abraham, because of his character as one called to be the faithful leader of his children and household in the ways of the Lord. God confers on him the high distinction of having His secret counsel revealed to him. Faithfulness

in his household gave him access to God's secrets and to God's presence as intercessor for Sodom. Let us try to understand what this means, and why God puts such honor upon parental faithfulness as we look to its need, its character, its blessing, and its power.

Think what *need* there is of it. Without it, the blessing offered to parental faith is lost, and the purpose of God made void. Were God to seek the salvation of the little ones by direct intervention or by special agents, there would be no reason for the part the parent is allowed to take in the covenant. God's objective is for the parent to train the child for God. God seeks a people on earth. The family is the great institution for this object; a believing and God-devoted fatherhood is one of the mightiest means of grace. God's covenant and the parent's faith are but preliminary steps; it is by the godly upbringing by the parents that the children are led to enter upon and possess the blessings secured in the covenant. They must learn to know and choose and love the God who has given Himself to them. The most precious promises will not avail unless the child is brought up in the course of patient and loving training to desire and accept the proffered friendship of the Holy One and obey Him and keep His commandments. God establishes His covenant with parents, not only for their comfort, to assure them of what He will do, but also to strengthen them for what they must do.

What God says of Abraham further gives us an insight into the true *character* of this grace: *For I know him, that he will command his sons and his household after him.* The spirit of modern so-called liberty has penetrated into our family life, and some parents, from a mistaken view of duty or from want of thought as to their sacred calling or from love of ease, have no place for such a word as *command*, which God here uses. They have not seen the heavenly harmony between authority and love, between obedience and liberty. Parents are more than friends and advisers; they have been clothed by God with a holy authority to be exercised in leading their children in the way of the Lord. There is an age when the will of the child is

in their hands, and the quiet, loving exercise of that authority will have mighty influence. We speak here not so much of commanding in the sense of specific injunctions; we speak of what we see in the heavenly Father – the tenderness of affection combined with an authority not to be despised. It is the silent influence of example and life that makes the child happy to be obedient to the authority.

The *blessing* of such parental faithfulness is sure and large. God says, *That the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him.* It was in the way of a godly education that the blessings of the covenant were to come true. God's faithfulness, and man's, in the covenant are linked by indissoluble ties. If Abraham was to be blessed, and his seed with him, and all nations again in his seed, he must, as a faithful parent, pass on to others what he knew himself of God. It is only as the children become partakers of the parent's spirit that they can share his blessing. In a way that passes all comprehension, but that fills us with adoring wonder at the place given to His servants in the fulfilling of His counsel, the faithfulness of God and man, each in his performance of the covenant obligation, are inseparably and eternally interwoven.

The solemn responsibility may well make us tremble. But God's Word meets us with divine comfort. The *power* is provided in the purpose of God. The words of the text are most remarkable: *For I know him [Abraham], that he will command his sons and his household.* It was with this very purpose that God chose him and revealed Himself; God Himself was the security that His own purposes should be carried out. It was because God knew that he could do it. And so every believing parent has the guarantee that God will give the grace of faithfulness to prepare for the blessing, as well as the reward upon it.

It is part of God's covenant that He will first teach man to keep it and then reward that keeping (Jeremiah 32:40). A covenant-keeping God and a covenant-keeping parent – in these the children must be blessed. *But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon those that fear*

him, and his righteousness unto the children's children, to such as keep his covenant and to those that remember his commandments to do them (Psalm 103:17).

Believing parent, see here the two sides of a parent's calling. Be very full of faith and be very faithful. Very full of faith: let faith in the living God, His covenant with you and your seed, His promises for your children, and His faithfulness fill your soul. Take God's Word as the only measure of your faith. And then, be very faithful: take God's Word as the only measure of your life, especially in the family. Be a parent such as God would have you be. Let it be your one desire to live and rule your home that your household may walk in the ways of the Lord. You may depend upon it that the blessing will be large and full. In the blessing for your own Christian life and the blessing on your home life and your children (1 Timothy 3:5-6), God will prove to you that believing, faithful parenting is one of the highest privileges to which man can be admitted. Study Abraham in his fatherhood as chosen of God, faithful to God, blessed of God, and find in him the type, the law, the promise of what your fatherhood may be.

A Prayer for Parents

O my God, have You indeed taken me into this wonderful covenant in which You are the God of the seed of Your saints, and made them the ministers of Your grace to their children? Open my eyes, I pray, to see the full glory of Your covenant, that my faith may know all that You have prepared for me to bestow, and may do all You have prepared for me to perform.

O my God, may Your covenant-keeping faithfulness be the life and the strength of my faith. May this faith make me faithful in keeping the covenant.

And teach me to realize fully what this parental faithfulness is that You ask of me. I would make this the one object of my home life – to train a

seed to serve You. By my life, by my words, by my prayers, by gentleness and love, by authority and command, I would lead them in the way of the Lord. O God, be my helper.

Teach me, above all, that as You have appointed this parental training for the fulfillment of Your purpose, I may be assured that You have made provision for the grace to enable me to perform. Let my faith see You undertake for me and all I have to do, and an ever-growing faith as the root of an ever-growing faithfulness. I ask it in the name of Your Son. Amen.

Eighth Day

The Child's Surety

Then Judah said unto Israel, his father, Send the lad with me I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him. Genesis 43:8-9

THESE are the words of Judah, when he sought to persuade his father to send Benjamin with him. He realized what his suretyship (guarantee) for the child meant and was ready at any sacrifice to fulfill its duties. This was evident from his pleadings before Joseph, when he said, *For thy slave became surety for the lad unto my father*, and offered himself as slave in his brother's place (Genesis 44:32). In this he was not only the type of his own descendant, the great Surety of His people who gave Himself in their stead, but also, because the spirit of self-sacrifice passes from the head to the body, of every parent to whom God commits the care of a child amid the dangers of the journey through life. The language and conduct of Judah will teach us some most suggestive lessons as to the little ones who have been entrusted to our charge.

Consider first the meaning of the engagement made. Amidst all the dangers down in Egypt, and so many seen perishing, Judah became surety for the child. As a parent, I take charge of the child, and the great God may hold me responsible if I do not bring him back to his father's home in

safety. With Judah I have spoken: *If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the sin for ever* (Genesis 44:32).

Consider, too, the *duties* of such a suretyship, as illustrated in Judah. He was thoroughly in earnest with the engagement he had undertaken. When the governor of Egypt had commanded that Benjamin should be kept as a slave, he at once came forward as a substitute. Not for a moment does he think of his own home and children or of Egyptian slavery and its hardships; everything gives way to the thought, *My father entrusted him to me, and I am surety for the lad*. With the most touching earnestness, he pleads to be accepted in the youth's stead: *For thy slave became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the sin before my father for ever. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy slave remain instead of the lad as a bond slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren* (Genesis 44:32-33).

Would God that Christian parents realized, as Judah did, what it means that they are surety for their child. Alas! how often, when our children are in danger from the prince of this world, and the temptations of the flesh or the world threaten to make them prisoners and slaves and hold them back from ever reaching the Father's home, we are found careless or unwilling to sacrifice our ease and comfort in seeking to rescue them from their danger. How often the spiritual interests of the child are considered subordinate to worldly prospects or position or profit, and the solemn covenant forgotten in which we undertook to make it our first care that the child should not be lost to the Father in heaven. How feebly we realize that it is only in a life of pure and wholehearted devotion in which the selfishness and worldly-mindedness are crucified and our life is lived for God that we can really train children for heaven. And how little we have learned, when danger threatens and our children appear to be growing up unconverted, to bow at the foot of the throne, until we see that our plea, *I am surety for the child*, has touched the heart of the King, and we have His word to set him free. Oh, may that be the ruling principle of parental life and love.

Consider now, too, the *encouragement* Judah's example gives. It sets before us the abundant reward the faithful surety will reap. In pleading with the ruler of Egypt, Judah thought he was dealing with a stranger, a despot, and an enemy. Little did he know that his pleadings were entering the ears of one who was his own and Benjamin's brother. He never dared to hope that it would exercise such a mighty influence or call forth that wondrous revelation of the ruler falling weeping on Benjamin's neck with his, *I am Joseph*.

And yet not more wondrous than we should expect as parents being surety for our children. If we did not feel the sinfulness of our children's nature and the dangers surrounding them, with what fervency could we plead with the great King and Savior of the world for their salvation? It is there that the blessing will come to us. It might be that we had no conception of the tender relationship in which He stands to us and our children as a Brother. In Jairus, the father of the lunatic, the Syrophenician woman, and in the experience of ten thousand parents, we have proof that their prayer led to experiences of the power and love of the Savior. They saw Him with whom they were pleading on the throne descend and say, "I am Jesus"; they saw Him embrace the beloved one they pleaded for and kiss him. Jesus was never so gloriously revealed as when they were pleading as parents and sureties for their children.

And just as Judah then learned to understand how Joseph was the true surety, who in the path of suffering had won the throne and their deliverance from famine and death, so parents will learn, the more they seek to fulfill their duties as sureties, they will know and rejoice in Jesus as their Surety. He has not only undertaken their own personal salvation; He has also secured the grace they need to fulfill their duties. He is the Surety for their suretyship, too, because theirs is grounded in His. The vicarious principle on which redemption rests and in virtue of which He died, *One for all*, runs through the whole of its economy; most specially does it appear in the family, that image of humanity as a whole. There the father is the head,

priest, and king, even as Christ is over His own house; the father is, in a limited sense, surety for the child. And now as he draws nigh to the King and discovers in Him the Great Surety, that revelation will give him new confidence and strength and joy in the work he has undertaken. In the light of the redemption and love and friendship of Jesus, the thought, *I am surety for the child*, will gain new brightness, and devotion to the training of the children will become more earnest. The readiness to make any sacrifice to save them will be more spontaneous, and the pleading of faith more confident and triumphant.

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Father, most earnestly do we ask You to open the eyes of the parents of Your church to see and know their holy and most blessed calling. May they understand and realize that You say to them at the birth of each little one entrusted to their care, “At your hands will I require it.”

O God, show us what the dangers are that surround our children and how impotent we are. Give us the true surety spirit, the willingness to sacrifice all rather than be unfaithful to our charge. As we see the power of sin and of the world threatening them, may we plead as for our own life, yea, with the offer of our life, that the children be now saved from sin and Satan. As Your eye sees us day by day with our children, may this be the one desire of our parental love that You find – that they may be wholly Yours. Be this our one aim in prayer and education and communication.

And may You, O blessed Lord Jesus, reveal Yourself as our Helper and our Joy.

O Lord Jesus, teach us and the parents of your church that we are the surety of our family. O Thou who art the faithful Surety, make us faithful too. Amen.

Ninth Day

Faith Hides the Child

And seeing that he was beautiful, she hid him three months. Exodus 2:2

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents because they saw he was a beautiful child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. Hebrews 11:23

THE story of Moses will lead us a step further in the study of the way in which the faith of parents will manifest itself in dealing with their children. It was faith that saw the goodness of the child; it was faith that feared not the king's wrath; it was faith that hid the child and saved his life. In each child born of believing parents, faith sees the same goodness, meets the same danger, and finds the same path of safety.

It was by faith Moses' parents saw *he was a beautiful child*. The natural love of a parent's heart doubtless made the child a beautiful one in the mother's eye; but faith saw more than nature could. God opened their eyes, and there was the consciousness of something special, of a spiritual beauty that made their babe doubly precious. And so the eye of faith sees in each little one a divine goodness.

Is it not a being created in God's image with the faint light of a divine glory, of an immortal life shining from it? Is it not an object of the great redemption, destined to be a partaker of the precious blood and the Holy

Spirit of Jesus, to be the object of the joy of angels and God's everlasting love and pleasure? A child whose worth exceeds that of the whole world? A child that even in this life can be a brother of Jesus, a servant of God, a blessing for the immortal spirits of fellow men? Surely faith may call the little one unspeakably fair, for it sees it shining as a jewel in the crown of the Lamb – His joy and His glory.

We have indeed a surer hope than Moses' parents ever had and a brighter light in which the heavenly beauty of our little ones is reflected. O Father, open the eyes of all Your people that, with each little babe You give them, their faith may see that it is a beautiful child.

It is faith that sees, but *fears not the danger*. Our children are still exposed to the same danger. Pharaoh had commanded that the children of God's people should all be destroyed. He knew that if the children were cut off, the people would soon die out. There would be no need of the trouble and danger of war; by a slow and silent but sure process, the nation would be cut off.

The prince of this world still pursues the same policy. When parents take a decided stand for God, the world may despise or hate them; it soon learns that it is of little use to attempt to conquer them. But it knows a surer way. The spirit of the world claims possession of the children; if these are won, all are won.

And too often Christian parents give their children as prey to the world. Children are allowed to grow up in comparative ignorance about the blessed Savior; they are entrusted to the care of irreligious or worldly teachers; they are allowed to associate with those whose spirit and influence is altogether worldly. And in many Christian homes, when the children were still young, all was earnest and decided; as they grew up, the tone changed, and the power of religion was far less evident.

And the church is often too faithless or feeble to warn against it. How little it has realized that in the parental relation, it has a mighty hold on the church of the future. To a large extent, the education of the young has been

left to the state, the secular school, and the spirit of the age until the youthful heart has lost the simplicity and tenderness of which the Master spoke when He said, *For such is the kingdom of the heavens*. Oh, what thousands on thousands of the children of the kingdom are drowned in the mighty Nile of this world, in the fruitful stream of its pleasures and profits.

Would God that the eyes of His people might be opened to the danger, which threatens His church. It is not infidelity or superstition; it is the spirit of worldliness in the homes of our Christian people, sacrificing the children to the ambition or society, to the riches or the friendship of the world that is the greatest danger of Christ's church. Were every home once won for Christ, a training school for His service, we should find in this a secret of spiritual strength not less than all that ordinary preaching can accomplish.

It is faith that still finds the same path of safety. By faith Moses was hid by his parents. They trusted God on behalf of this beautiful child, one of the children of His covenant. By faith Moses was *hid* by his parents – these simple words tell us our duty, what our faith must do. Christian parent, hide your child. And where? Oh, hide him in that safest refuge – the shadow of the Almighty, the secret of God's countenance. Lay your child there in faith daily from his birth, and let your soul be filled with the consciousness that He has indeed taken charge of him. Let the mighty rock of God's strength and the tender covering of His feathers be your child's ark, while still the child is not conscious of temptation or danger. With the first dawn of reason, let the clefts of the rock and the love of Jesus be the place of safety to which you guide his youthful feet.

And when the time comes that the child must come into contact with the world, you can entrust him to Him who is the Keeper of Israel. Let it be a settled thing with your heart that He has accepted your trust, has taken charge, and cannot disappoint your faith. Commit your child boldly to the waters in the ark of the covenant of your God.

The *reward* of the faith of Moses' parents will be ours. Not only was Moses saved, but he also became the savior of his people. Your child, too,

will not only be blessed, but will also be made a blessing. Each child does not have the calling of a Moses. But in His kingdom, God needs not only a Moses, but also a Moses' mother and a Moses' sister for the fulfillment of His purposes. Let your faith do its work: God Himself will see to it that our labor is not in vain. The education Moses' mother gave her son during the years of his childhood was such that all the years of his training at Pharaoh's court could not obliterate it. His parents' faith bore fruit in his faith, when he chose suffering with the people of God and was not afraid of the wrath of the king, because he saw Him who is invisible.

Let faith hide the child in the ark of God's love. Let faith train the child for God and His people; when the time comes that the child must go into the world, he will be safe in the power of faith and of God's keeping. A child of faith will not only receive a blessing for himself but will also be a blessing to those around.

A Prayer for Parents

God grant that the church may indeed become like Moses' mother, the faithful nurse of the children He entrusts to her care. He will give a wonderful fulfillment of the promise, wherever He finds the fulfillment of the duty: *Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.*

Gracious God, with my whole heart I thank You for the teaching of Your Word, by which You prepare me to fulfill my holy calling as a parent. I thank You for the example of Moses' parents and pray that the grace that taught them in faith to save their child may be given to me too.

I acknowledge, Lord, that I do not sufficiently realize the value of my children, nor the danger to which they are exposed from the prince and the spirit of the world. Lord, teach me to recognize the danger but not fear the commandment of the king. Open my eyes to see in the light of

heaven that each little one is a beautiful child, entrusted to my keeping and training for Your work and kingdom. Help me in the humility, watchfulness, and boldness of faith to keep them from the power of the world and of sin. May my own life be the life of faith, hid with Christ in God, that my child may know no other dwelling place.

And grant all this to all Your people, O my God. Let Your church awaken to know her place in this world and her calling to go out to the land to which God has called her. In the training of the children, let the mighty power of faith be seen. Oh, give us grace to rear our children for You. Amen.

Tenth Day

A Lamb for a House

Let each man take a lamb according to the families of the fathers, a lamb per family; When He sees the blood upon the lintel and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over that door and will not allow the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. Exodus 12:3, 23

IT has often been pointed out that, of all the Old Testament sacrifices, there is none that gives a clearer or richer revelation of the person and work of our Lord than the Passover. It has often, however, escaped observation how the whole institution of the Paschal Lamb aimed at deliverance, not of the individuals, but of families, the houses of God's people. What else is the meaning of the expressions in Exodus 12: *A lamb per family* (v. 3); *take lambs according to your families* (v. 21); and *take of the blood and put it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses* (v. 7). The lamb and its blood are the consecration of the dwellings and the family relations of God's people. In the hands of the father, God thus places the destiny and the safety of the whole house.

Christ, our Passover, is slain for us. We love to trace how the foreshadowings of the Paschal Feast were fulfilled in Him. But is the Old Testament feast to stand higher than the New, and the blood, which was for the saving of the house here to be only for the individual? And not be

sprinkled on the houses too? How the Christian parent might then envy the Jew, who enjoyed the privilege of knowing that he had done it to the saving of not only himself but his household too. And the Christian parent would not have the right thus to claim the blood for his children? God forbid! Christ, the Lamb of God, is still *a lamb for a house*. His blood may still be sprinkled upon the door that the destroyer enter not in. In the new covenant and with the precious blood of Christ, the principle still holds true: it is the believing father's right and duty in faith to appropriate the blood for his whole house. His faith has the divine warranty and will be rewarded with the divine blessing.

Let me endeavor henceforth to live in this faith and fully realize this privilege. As I think of the precious blood and seek to walk in the nearness to God, let me claim its cleansing power for my house as well as myself. Let me be assured that my faith as a parent has power and does secure a divine influence. Daily there is the sin of my house defiling and darkening. I have in nature transmitted sin and death; through me they inherit it. Thank God, as a father, I may also transmit the grace and blessing of redemption.

Not only my own soul, but my house also, can daily be kept under the sprinkling and cleansing of the blood. And each time I enter my door or think of Satan entering it, in the light of heaven I may see it sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb. Parents and children together stand under the cover and protection of the blood: the Lord is our keeper.

Every year in Israel parents had to renew the sprinkling: the blood of the Lamb has been shed once for all. I have now only to renew the consecration of my house to the Lord in the assurance of faith: the blood saves me and my children. In this faith I may confidently expect that the wondrous redemption of the blood will exercise its full and mighty influence, until all our domestic life and its relations be sanctified, our house be wholly the Lord's, and each child be consciously and confessedly one of His redeemed.

To this end, I must notice carefully how God commanded the parents to teach these things to their children (Exodus 12:26; 13:14). *For the grace of*

God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us (Titus 2:11-12). What is secured to the child in redemption must be made his own in free and personal appropriation. And this cannot be without his knowing it. The children were to be taught that they belonged to the redeemed people, that they belonged to the redeeming God. The parent was to act not only as priest, and thus, in a sense, mediator, but also as prophet and teacher. Let me seek grace and wisdom in the spirit of faith to teach my children what the blood has done for them, to make them know and love the God who accepted them before they knew Him.

One thing more is deserving of very special note. The believing Israelite had not only every year to sprinkle the doorposts with blood, and so to testify that it was only in the blood that he and his house could stand before God; he had also to write upon these same blood-sprinkled doorposts the words of God's law (Deuteronomy 6:7-9).

In all the going out and coming in of his children, these words were ever to meet their eyes; the freedom from Egypt's bondage and Egypt's curse was a freedom to serve God. God wills to be not only trusted but also obeyed. It is *to obey and be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, the Christ* that we have been chosen: the doorposts sprinkled with the blood and inscribed with the words of the law remind me of the blessed oneness of faith and obedience, liberty and service. I would in the joy of the great redemption, train and educate my children to know and love and keep the commands of their God. Day by day, in faith and prayer, in teaching and living, I would seek to set before them in its harmony the blessedness of a faith that freely accepts all that God gives.

A lamb for a house. I must pray that God's Holy Spirit reveals in His full power all the truths that cluster around this blessed word. God's wondrous provision for making the family the foundation includes: A father redeemed by the blood; his children through him and with him partaking of the sprinkling; the father to sprinkle the house; the father to teach the children

of this precious blood and of the God it reveals; and the blood-sprinkled doorposts inscribed with the words of God's law.

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world, the Son of God, whose blood cleanses from all sin, in humble faith I claim that blood for myself and my children.

May my own experience of its ever-cleansing power every day grow fuller and clearer. And may I by Your Holy Spirit realize fully my right to claim it for my house.

O most blessed Savior, may the power of Your blood work in me so mightily that my faith may accept it in full assurance for each of my children as a present blessing. May we, under the covering of the blood, know ourselves protected from the destroyer.

O most gracious God, who implemented this wondrous ordinance of a lamb for a house, I yield myself to You afresh as the minister of Your covenant. Use me, my God, to save my children, to train them for You and You alone. I would have the doorposts not only sprinkled with the blood, but also inscribed with the law. I would have Your service be the one thing they grow up for. As You have chosen us in sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and blood-sprinkling, may faith in the blood and surrender to Your will be as the two doorposts, between which we go in and out. The Lord make it so. Amen.

Eleventh Day

The Father As Priest and Prophet

And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What do you mean by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD's passover, who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. Exodus 12:26-27

THE Passover sets the believing parent before us in a twofold aspect. First, as dealing with God on behalf of the children and bringing down the blessing on them; then as dealing with the children for God and seeking to lead them up to Him. In the former capacity, he sprinkled the blood of the lamb upon his house, securing God's protection for the children. In the latter, he had to instruct his children, telling them of what God had done and seeking to lead them to the personal knowledge and acceptance of this God as their God. Those two parts of parental duty are linked to each other, the first being necessary as the root and origin of the latter. The parent's work as priest fits him for his work as prophet and teacher.

The second is indispensable to the full appropriation of the blessing that the former has secured. It was after sprinkling the blood for himself and his child that the parent had to instruct him in the meaning of the holy mystery. As we keep this in view, we shall recognize the beauty by which God has

chosen and appointed the believing parent as the instructor of his children and realize this as the best means of securing a godly seed for the Lord.

Observe, it is the parent who has himself already experienced the salvation of God who is appointed to lead the child to know God. The knowledge of God is no mere matter of the understanding; it is to love Him, to live in Him, to experience the power of His presence and His blessing. It is evident that the man who would teach others to know God must be able to speak by personal experience of Him, must prove by the warmth of love and devotion that he loves this God, and has his life from Him.

When God instituted the family, He revealed Himself to each head of a family as the God of his salvation. By sprinkling the blood on his own house, he performed the act of faith by which the destroyer was kept from his house; when he went forth from Egypt and undertook the journey to Canaan, he could bear personal witness to God's faithfulness and the efficacy of the atoning blood of the lamb. He could speak as a living witness from personal experience. As a redeemed one, he could tell of redemption; he could tell of the Redeemer God.

It is even so now: personal experience of the power of the blood can fit a parent for speaking to his children of God. Looking back upon the time when personal deliverance from sin was experienced, looking up to a God with whom a personal communication is maintained, and looking forward to a home where the longing spirit knows it will inherit a place prepared by the Father fits a parent to speak aright and in power. The parent who has himself experienced redemption can tell his child in truth of the God of redemption, who can act in accordance with the injunction of Exodus 13:8: *And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when he brought me out of Egypt.*

And as parents in Israel had to renew the remembrance of that deliverance every year, so now the parent who lives in the ever-fresh experience of what the powers of redemption are can speak of the mercy and the truth, as well as of the blessed service, of the God of salvation.

But observe further, this parent has also been constituted and accepted as God's appointed minister in the redemption of the child. This gives an increased fitness for his work as instructor of the child. He cannot just speak of a salvation he has experienced, urging and inviting the child to come and taste. No, in sprinkling the blood upon the door of his house, he also saved his child from the destroying angel. He was honored to act with God on behalf of the child; what the child could not do, he did for him, and the deed was accepted. The child has initially been made partaker of the blessing of that sprinkling of blood; in growing up, he must personally accept what has been secured and sealed to him.

And what a mighty advantage it gives the believing parent when he can look upon his child in the light of that great transaction between God and himself, of which that child has been the object. What confidence it inspires in his faith! How his energies will be roused! What a strong motive in pleading with the child himself! He speaks to him, no longer as a stranger to the covenant of grace, but as a child of the covenant. He points him to a God who began to deal with him in the weakness of infancy; he can attest to the reality of an engagement entered into between God and himself and sealed in the sprinkling of blood. He shows him how God dealt with the houses and the families of Israel.

And the father has no less power in pleading with God on behalf of the child. He reminds the great Jehovah of the blood and the oath of the covenant, and claims for his child the blessings of redemption. Next to his own personal experience of the blessing of salvation, this consciousness of his seed being received with him into covenant constitutes the fitness of the believing parent for being the minister of God's grace to his child.

But there is another thought that brings out still more strikingly the wondrous adaptation of the family constitution for the working out of God's purposes – that it is grounded on the natural relationship. It is not any one redeemed man saying to his fellow man, "Come and see what God has

wrought for me.” Nor is it any one redeemed man saying to some child, “Come and let me lead thee to thy God.”

But it is a father with his own child. In nature, they are one, united by the closest and most wondrous ties. The child has his life from the father. The father looks upon him as part of himself, of his flesh and of his bones; he loves and cherishes him. This love seeks, even in nature, the happiness of the child and can often make wondrous sacrifices to attain it. And God lays hold of this love in the parental covenant and purifies him to be the minister and vehicle of His grace. With a parent’s love, there is a parent’s influence. The weakness of the child renders him dependent to a wondrous degree upon the parent’s will. The character of childhood is formed and molded by impressions; unceasing communication with the parent can render these impressions deep and permanent. The child’s love to the parent rises and meets the parent’s love, and the spirit of the parent can be breathed into the child. God’s grace seeks to avail itself of this, and while the Holy Spirit has the prerogative to renew the soul and make a child of God, there is a need for the means and instrumentalities through which His gracious workings are applied and established. And of all these instrumentalities, there is none more wondrously devised or more beautifully adapted to its object than godly parentage. A parent, partaker of God’s love and grace himself, and then sent forth to make all the influences to the great work of gaining the child for God, is one of the most wondrous exhibitions of God’s grace upon earth.

A Prayer for Parents

Oh my God, I come to You again with the earnest prayer for Your teaching. You have said, *I will be the God of all the families of Israel.* Open my eyes to see clearly and my heart to feel deeply what Your purpose is in this.

Since sin entered and ruined our nature, You took possession of the little ones for Yourself. You seek to secure parents with all their love and influence to be Your ministers. You enter into covenant with them, giving them the right to claim the blood of the covenant for their children, and in that blood the promise, *A God to thee and to thy seed*. And then You send them as redeemed and having claimed and accepted redemption for their children to use their influence for You and win and train their children for Your love and service.

Lord God, open the eyes of the parents of Your church to their calling, that they may honor You as the God of their families. And, O Lord my God, bless my own house and give me grace, as one of Your redeemed ones, to train my children for their God. May the joy of a personal experience of redemption and the love of the blessed Redeemer warm my heart and inspire my words and light up my life to testify of You and train them for You alone. Amen.

Twelfth Day

Sanctify the Firstborn

And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, ... thou shalt ransom all the human firstborn among thy sons. And it shall be when thy son asks thee in time to come, saying, What is this? Thou shalt say unto him, With a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery; and it came to pass when Pharaoh was hardening himself to not let us go that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt from the human firstborn to the firstborn of the beast; therefore, I sacrifice to the LORD every male that opens the womb, and I ransom every firstborn of my sons. Exodus 13:1, 13-15

*L*et my people go that they may serve me. From these words, we see service as one purpose of redemption. God frees His people from bondage in Egypt to direct them into the liberty of His service, the willing, loving, free service of a redeemed people. The deeper God's people enter into the spirit of redemption, the deeper will be their insight into the blessed unity of liberty and service, of liberty and necessity.

No true service of God is without liberty; no true liberty is without service.

We have seen in the Passover what a permanent place the family and the children take in redemption. No less than their parents were they redeemed

to serve; all their training was to be a training to the service of God. Pharaoh said to Moses after the plague, *Go, serve the LORD your God. Who are those that shall go?* The answer was very distinct: *We must go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters.* It was on this point that the negotiations were broken off. The going of the children was what the king would not consent to: *Even if the LORD be with you, how can I let you go with your little ones; look at the malice which is before your face* (Exodus 10:8-10). And later, when Pharaoh still wanted to keep the property, he felt that this must be conceded: *Go, serve the LORD; only let your sheep and your cows remain; let your little ones also go with you* (Exodus 10:24). The future of the nation must be secured for God; a people that are to serve God must see to the little ones.

After the people had left Egypt, the very first command God gave to Moses was in regard to the firstborn, who were to be separated and sanctified for Him. In each family the firstborn son was counted the chief and the best; the father looked upon him as Jacob said of Reuben: *Thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength.*

His was the birthright and the place of honor in the family. He was the representative and head of all the children. God looked upon Israel as His firstborn among the nations. Because Egypt oppressed him and would not let him go, God slew the firstborn in Egypt. And now in commemoration of this and as a pledge of God's claim on all the children and the whole people, every firstborn belonged to God and was set apart as His peculiar property.

And with what objective? For none other but His service. This is depicted as the tribe of Levi being taken instead of the firstborn. *Thus shall the Levites shall go in to minister in the tabernacle of the testimony; ... For they are completely given unto me from among the sons of Israel, instead of each one that opens the womb; instead of the firstborn of all the sons of Israel, I have taken them for myself. For all the firstborn of the sons of Israel are mine* (Numbers 8:15-17). And in the redemption money, which

had to be paid at the birth of each firstborn, the parents had the reminder that the firstborn belonged to God and His service and were represented in the Levites.

The principle involved in this is one of deepest importance: God claims our best children for His own direct and immediate service. The whole people, old and young, were to serve Him, but the firstborn were to be entirely set apart for the special maintenance of that service, not only in the worship, but also by instructing the people in the law of their God. Let us try to recognize the lessons the Christian church can learn from this.

In Israel, all the firstborn and all the children of Levi, a twelfth part of the whole nation, were claimed by God to be at His disposal in the service of His house. And in Israel, that service consisted solely in the maintenance of what existed; nothing had to be done for the extension of the kingdom or the propagation of the knowledge of God among the heathen. Today, the Christian church must also teach all the nations and seek the extension of the kingdom throughout the whole world. The question is naturally asked: If Israel had to set apart one-twelfth of its children for the work of God, what portion should the Christian church devote to the work committed to her? And what portion has she devoted?

Alas, the answer to the latter question is so sad. Hardly a missionary or philanthropic society is engaged in teaching and rescuing the ignorant and the lost who does not need laborers. The call is sounded louder every year that the doors to the hundreds of millions of heathen are opened wide, and yet how few are the laborers. And why? Simply, Christian parents do not, as a rule, educate their children that they are the Lord's, place them at His disposal, or train them to look upon this as their highest privilege.

Just think for a moment what would be thought of the loyalty of Englishmen to their Queen if it were found difficult to find men to be her bodyguard or accept appointments in her service. What would we think of an army where the general could never obtain volunteers for a post of danger and of honor. And Jesus Christ, our King, who came to seek and

save the lost, has said that these who forsake all for His and the gospel's sake are His guard of honor and shall have His richest rewards. And yet, while in every profession there are complaints of more applicants than openings, the Master has to wait, and His work has to suffer, because His people do not understand that they and their children have been redeemed to serve Him who gave Himself for them.

And what is the cure for this evil? And what can we each do to wipe out this terrible reproach? What we can do is this: Let us devote every child to God and His service. Let us cease praying that our children may be saved, while we never think of giving them to serve. Let us cease choosing honorable and lucrative professions for our children, with the truth that they can serve God in any calling, allowing that to be an excuse for declining special service. Let us lay each child upon the altar, seeking this one thing – that he may become worthy and fit for the service of the King.

And let the church lift her voice and cry, “You are redeemed for service, you and your children.” Isn't this the reason so many parents have prayed for the salvation of their children and been disappointed? The prayer was utterly selfish; it was simply the desire to see the child happy, without any thought of the glory of God or consecration to His service. When God rewarded the faith of Moses' parents, it was because He wanted a servant by whom He could save Israel. When God redeemed Israel's firstborn on the night of the Passover, it was to have them for Himself. Oh, Christian parent, when God offers to be to your children what He was to Moses and Israel's firstborn, it is because He wants them for His service, His blessed service of love and liberty. He gave His Firstborn, His Only Begotten, for you and your children; can anything be too precious for Him? Know that for you and your children, it is the path of honor and blessing. Let your example teach the church that because you love your children most intensely, you know nothing better for them than to yield them to the will and the work of their God.

A Prayer for Parents

O Lord, You are a great and a glorious God, and Your kingdom rules over all. You alone are worthy to be praised; You alone have a right to the love and the worship and the service of all Your creatures. In heaven above and on earth below, blessed are Your servants who stand around Your throne and do Your will.

O Lord, we ask that You accept our children for Your service. Let them all be used for Your service and glory.

O God, teach us to understand that You need them in the struggle of Your kingdom with the power of darkness. We give them to You. We will train them for You. We will wait in prayer and faith for You to inspire them with a holy enthusiasm for the kingdom. We ask You to fill us with the love of Jesus to serve You, as Your Son did, and give our lives to save men.

O Lord God, You have redeemed us and our children by the blood of the Lamb; let our firstborn, let all our children be holy unto the Lord. Amen.

Thirteenth Day

The Sabbath and the Children

But the seventh day shall be the sabbath of the LORD thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter.

Exodus 20:10

AMONG the most precious blessings, which a child going out into the world from a godly home can take with him, is the reverent observance of the Sabbath. In its separation from evil company in God's house and the calm and thoughtful quiet it can bring over his spirit, it will be a safeguard and a help, a schoolmaster to bring to Christ. If he is a Christian, it will be one of his surest aids in the growth and strengthening of his faith. Sabbath observance is part of a parent's duty that needs much wisdom and grace. The Lord, who has imposed the duty, will not withhold the grace.

In the fourth commandment, children are particularly remembered. The command is given to the parents; their obedience is manifested as their children keep this day holy. *Thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manslave, nor thy maidslave.* It was as a family ordinance that the Sabbath was first given. *Thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter,* as the terms of the covenant; *a God to thee and to thy seed* suggest that it is first the parent and then the child through the parent with whom God wishes to deal.

The parent's keeping holy the Sabbath precedes the training of the child to do so. Here is the principle, which lies at the root of all true education:

What I desire to make my child, I must first be myself. Example is more than precept; being is more than teaching; what I am and do is more important than what I tell him to be or do. The question is often asked how we can teach our children to revere and love the Sabbath. We must insist that the day should be a holy day to the parents first. As they serve God and the spirit of holiness breathes on and from them in the services of the Sabbath, that day becomes a day not only of strict observance but also of joyful worship, quickened devotion, and real loving fellowship with God. As the Sabbath is a delight, the first condition will be fulfilled for teaching their children to love it.

Let Christian parents note this. God means the Sabbath to be to your child what it is to you, not in value of your training and habits, but what it is to your own experience, as a day you really love and rejoice in.

Look upon it as the day of *rest*, of entering into God's own wonderful rest. The rest of God is in a finished work; by faith in that work we enter into that rest and the great calm, the peace that passes understanding and keeps the heart and mind (Genesis 2:3; Hebrews 4:3-10).

Look upon it as a *holy* day, the day God has given as a token and pledge that He who is holy makes us holy too (Exodus 20:11; 31:13). It is in fellowship with God that we are made holy; let His presence, His love, and His joy be the mark as well as the fruit of keeping it holy.

Look upon it as a day of *blessing* (Genesis 2:3). Sin robbed us of the blessing God laid on the day. In the resurrection of Christ, the finished work of creation was restored, finished, and perfected in a higher sense. Under the leading of the Holy Spirit, the first day of the week, the day of the Lord Jesus, took the place of the Sabbath of death, when the Lord of the Sabbath was in the tomb. And now all the blessings of the living Christ, His finished work and resurrection power and eternal rest, are to be ours. Oh, let it be to thee a day of blessing in the fellowship of the Father's love and the Son's grace through the Holy Spirit, and thereby you have taken the surest step for its being a blessing and a joy to your sons and daughters.

And now comes the second lesson. Parents are responsible to make it a matter of distinct effort and prayer to train their children to keep the day holy. It is a sacred obligation resting upon them and requires the sacrifice of personal enjoyment, the exercise of thought and wisdom, and the patience of much faith and love.

In seeking to do so, two dangers must be avoided. Two principles are implanted in our hearts to guide us to action – pleasure and duty. The former leads us to seek what is for our own interest, one of the most powerful motives of all. But when our pleasure is at variance with the interests of others or the will of God, the sense of duty restrains and regulates the desire for pleasure. The reward of obedience to duty is that it becomes the highest pleasure. The art of education is to bring pleasure and duty into harmony, that both may be attained.

In training the child to keep holy the Sabbath day, there is a danger of putting either of these principles too exclusively in the foreground. With our Puritan and Covenanting ancestors, the only sanction sought for keeping the Sabbath was the law. In our days, we are in danger of the opposite extreme, that the day is to be hallowed and loved only as far as it is made interesting and pleasant.

Do not hesitate to speak of God's command and of duty, for God trained Israel as a child in the life of law for the life of love in Christ. Tranquility of mind and serenity of spirit are invaluable blessings; the quiet of the Sabbath helps to foster them. Holiness is much more than separation; it is a positive fellowship and enjoyment of God.

On the other side, exercise a wise and loving thoughtfulness as to the ways in which the day can be made a happy one. Picture lessons for the younger ones and careful selection of interesting reading for the older ones brings enjoyment. Singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody to the Lord creates a tone of happy and loving reverence. The personal communication in Bible study and prayer of the believing parent will find the means of leading the child on to call the Sabbath a

delight and to inherit the blessing promised to those who do so (Isaiah 58:13).

Dear Christian parents, the thought of how we ought to train our children to love the Sabbath reminds us of our shortcomings and our impotence. But let's not be discouraged. We have God, the God of the Sabbath, to teach us and our children to sanctify His day. Let us look to Him to give us grace to feel and show that the Lord's Day is the happiest day of the week. But if God is our highest joy, and the desire after His service and love our highest aim, then He Himself will sanctify our Sabbaths, our hearts, our homes, and our children.

A Prayer for Parents

Most Holy God, I do thank You for the precious gift of the Sabbath day and its wonderful blessings. Oh, grant that each succeeding Sabbath may lead me deeper into Your rest, the rest of God in Christ, and into the fellowship of Your holiness and blessedness. May a daily life that seeks its only joy in Christ, wholly yielded to the Spirit, prepare me for keeping the day holy.

Blessed Father, I ask for grace to train my children to love and hallow Your day. I know that nothing but the joy of Your presence in my own life can fit me for it. Give me wisdom, as Thy servant, to bring to my children the sense of Your holy will and Your lovingkindness by claiming the day for Yourself. May the fear of grieving You and the joy of pleasing You each find due place in their hearts. May the duty and the pleasure be their delight in Your day. Amen.

Fourteenth Day

The Children's Commandment

Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be lengthened upon the land which the LORD thy God gives thee. Exodus 20:12

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Ephesians 6:1

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Colossians 3:20

THE first four commandments have reference to God and the last five to our neighbor. Between them stands the fifth, which is linked to the first four, because to the young child the parent takes the place of God. The child must learn to trust and obey his God from the parent. And this is the transition to the last five, because the family is the foundation of society. This commandment lies at the foundation of all divine and human law, of all our worship of God, and of all our communication with man.

Of the ten, this is the children's commandment, but also the parents' commandment. A wise ruler makes good subjects; a firm commander, faithful soldiers; it is on the parents' character that the children's fulfillment of this precept will depend. And so it leads us to consider what parents must be if they are to succeed in training their children to honor them.

The sentiment of honor or reverence is one of the noblest and purest our nature is capable of. The power of perceiving what is worthy of honor, the

willingness to acknowledge it, the unselfishness that feels it no degradation, but a pleasure, to render it are all honorable and ennobling; nothing brings more true honor than giving honor to others. Giving honor is one of the chief elements of a noble character and a preparation for rendering to God the honor due to Him. If the teaching of Scripture to honor God, to honor all men, to honor the widows, and to give honor to whom honor is due is to be obeyed by our children, they must be prepared for it by learning first to honor their parents. If they are to honor all men by recognizing even in the degraded and the lost the worth that belongs to them as created in the image of God, they must be carefully prepared for it in the family. It is not only to secure a happy home, but also to fit the child for his future relationship to God and his fellow men, laying one of the foundation stones of a noble character and a holy life.

The child must honor the parent in obedience. *Obey your parents* is the New Testament version of *Honour thy father and thy mother*. The importance of this word *obedience* is more than the mind can grasp. God created man with his wonderful liberty of will that he might obey Him. Obedience to God was to lead to the enjoyment of God. By disobedience, sin entered; in obedience, the twofold obedience of Christ and to Christ, salvation comes (Hebrews 5:8-9). The parent has the sacred charge of training the child to obey, linking happiness and love in home life with obedience. The will of the child, with his mind and affections, is given into the parent's hands to mold and guide. In yielding his will to the will of the parent, the child acquires that mastery over his will, which leads to strength and safety, making him a fit instrument for doing God's will. Man was created free that he might obey; obedience is the path to liberty.

On this point parents often err; they often say that to develop the will of the child, the will must be left free, and the child left to decide for himself. They forget that the will of the child is not free; passion and prejudice, selfishness and ignorance seek to influence the child in the wrong direction.

The superior judgment, calmer deliberation, and fuller experience of the parent are to decide for the child.

But are we in danger of repressing the healthy development of a child's moral powers by demanding submission to our will? By no means. The true liberty of the will consists in our being master of it, such that we become our own masters. Train a child to master his will in giving it up to his parents' requests, and he acquires the mastery to use it when he is free. Yielding to a parent's direction is the path to self-control, and self-control alone is liberty. The New Testament says, *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right* (Ephesians 6:1). In obedience, the parent is honored.

In all his disposition and conduct, the child is to be trained by the parent, thereby bringing honor to the parent. Manners are more important than many think; the neglect of good manners not only reveals a lack of respect and courtesy, but it also reacts on the heart and fosters the selfishness and indifference for others' feelings. John Locke has said that next to religion and virtue, manners are the most important thing in education – more so, he thinks, than learning.

Let parents remember that in taking trouble to train their children, they are forming habits, which will repay all their labor. God told Israel, *Those that honor me I will honor*, which is reflected in the life of earth too. None have received higher honor on earth than those who have honored all men, even the poor and needy.

And now, the parent must cultivate and develop this sentiment in the child. The young child is guided, not by reflection or argument, but by feeling and affection. He cannot yet realize and honor the unseen God. He cannot yet honor all men as a creation in God's image. The child can only honor what he sees to be worthy of honor. And this is the parent's high calling: always to speak and act and live in the child's presence in such a way that honor may be spontaneously and unconsciously rendered. This can only be where, in quiet self-recollection and self-control, the parent lives as

in God's fear and presence and walks worthy of this calling. He is the one who has been placed in the home at the head of a family. Yes, the head receives honor; let the parent as a leader guide in love and the fear of God, and his honor will be given him.

Above all, let parents remember that honor really comes from God. Let them honor Him in the eyes of their children, and He will honor them there too. Let them beware, however, that honoring their child more than God is the surest way to bring grief for both parents and children. But from parents who seek to honor God, children will learn to honor both God and them; the parent who teaches his child to obey the fifth commandment has guided his feet into the way of all God's commandments. A child's first virtue is the honoring of and obeying his parents.

A Prayer for Parents

O my God, I come to You with the prayer to open my eyes and help me realize the place of the family in the purposes of Your grace, and the parent's holy calling to train his child for all that You would have him be. I ask You to reveal to me the importance of the fifth commandment, that I may teach my child according to Your will.

Fill my own soul, I pray, with such honor and reverence of Your holy majesty that both my child and I may learn what honor is. May honoring his parents and honoring his God work in him the spirit of humility, which will render to all their due.

O Lord, I look to You for grace to secure the keeping of this, the children's commandment, in my home. Oh, grant that I may always live worthy of all honor. And may the holy power of training young souls to keep Your commandments to honor and serve You, be the fruit of Your Spirit's work in me. I ask it, my God, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Fifteenth Day

Parental Instruction

Now these are the commandments, ... which the LORD your God commanded to teach you ... that thou might fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou and thy son and thy son's son, all the days of thy life And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart, and thou shalt repeat them diligently unto thy sons and shalt talk of them being in thy house and walking by the way, lying down in bed, and rising up. Deuteronomy 6:1-2, 5-7

T*hou and thy son and thy son's son.* With these words in the second verse, Moses expressed the thought that God's purpose in His commandments was not limited to the individual or to a single generation, but to the people through their whole existence. Each one who received the commandments of God was to strive not only to keep them himself but also to maintain them among his children. *Now these are the commandments, ... which the LORD your God commanded to teach you ... that thou might fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, ... thou and thy son and thy son's son.* In the following verses (5-7), this idea is enlarged upon. In verses 20 and 21, the duty is expounded upon to the children, relating the wondrous relation of God's people to Him and His mercy and faithfulness

that had redeemed them from the land of Egypt. The means for maintaining and extending the fear of God among His people is the faithful performance of parental duty in harmony with His purpose that His service and blessing should descend from son to son. The special aspect here is parental instruction, and we are taught how unceasing this ought to be.

Parental instruction must be *from the heart*. We all know how little influence is produced by commands or instructions when given by a listless or uninterested teacher. Only the heart can reach the heart; the loving warmth of interest and affection can waken corresponding emotions in the child. He therefore says, *thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart. And these words shall be upon thy heart, and thou shalt repeat them diligently unto thy sons*. How easy and how blessed the work, so often overlooked and neglected, to those who listen to God's guidance. Love the Lord your God with all your heart. If you love Him, love His words too; let them live in your heart, let them have a place in your affections. And, the heart filled with God's love and God's words finds it easy to teach them to the children. Let holy love for God and His words mingle with all your fond and tender love to your little ones, and it will be a sweet and happy work to win your beloved to the Father. When the work of instructing the children upon earth threatens to become a burden or a weariness, you may be sure it comes from something wrong within you: the love for God in heaven or the delight in His Word has been fading. When you seek fresh vigor to instruct your children hopefully and joyfully, you must turn to the words that reveal the secret of a godly education. For you and your children, there is an unspeakable blessing in the wisdom that connects the heart's secret love with the mouth's spoken words:

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart. And these words shall be upon thy heart. And thou shalt repeat them diligently unto thy sons. Oh, that we might remember that this is the divinely appointed ministry and means for the salvation of our children – parental love

elevated and strengthened by the love of God, *guided* and *inspired* by His own holy Word.

The parental instruction must likewise be *diligent* and earnest: *Thou shalt repeat them diligently unto thy sons* – or, as it reads in the original: “Thou shalt sharpen them unto thy children.” The word *sharpen* is used of the sharpening of weapons to make them penetrate deep. It must not be a cold declaration of His will that we communicate, or no mere intellectual knowledge. And so the godly parent must use diligence to consider how he can best find access to the heart for the words that he speaks. He does this by carefully considering how he can best gain both the child’s understanding and affections by seeking to avail himself of the best opportunities for securing his interest, by studying the art of speaking in the spirit of love, and not without the preparation of prayer. He does it by striving to make his whole life an attractive example of what he has taught, because there is nothing that drives home the word of instruction so well as the confirmation of a consistent and holy life. Above all, he seeks to do it by waiting for that Holy Spirit who alone can make the Word sharp as a two-edged sword. God’s promise is sure: from earnest, painstaking, and prayerful effort, the blessing of the Spirit will not be withheld.

And to this end, the parental instruction must be *persevering* and continuous. *Thou shalt repeat them diligently unto thy sons and shalt talk of them being in thy house and walking by the way, lying down in bed, and rising up.* The entrance of divine truth into the mind and heart, the formation of habit, and the training of character are not attained by sudden and isolated efforts but by regular and unceasing repetition.

This is the law of all growth in nature, and God seeks to use it in the kingdom of grace by dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the principle that is so beautifully applied by Moses to parental duty. The instruction he had prescribed was not to be by means of set times and stated formal lectures; the whole life with all its duties must be interwoven with the lessons of God’s presence and God’s service. With a heart full of God’s

love and God's Word, the ordinary duties of daily life were to be no hindrance but rather a help to lead the youthful hearts heavenwards. The children were to feel that in the moments of morning or evening prayer, the continued and spontaneous outbursts of the heart proved that it was a life and a joy, that God's presence and love were a reality and a delight. Whether we are sitting in the home or walking by the way; in quiet rest or in the labors and duties of the way; with the Bible of God's grace or with the books of God's glory in nature; home retirement or wayside communication – all afford opportunity and material for recognizing the goodness and rejoicing in the service of the ever-present One. The whole of the day and the whole of life was to be the occasion of an uninterrupted fellowship with the Holy One and of pointing the little ones to the unseen Father in heaven. And lest the objection is made that all the speaking would become wearisome and annoy the child (an objection often made with terrible truth against mere speaking in religion, while heart and life deny it), such an objection is often the excuse for a heart that knows no fervent love. If this objection should be made, we point once more to what the source and center and secret of all is: *Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart. And these words shall be upon thy heart. And thou shalt repeat them diligently unto thy sons and shalt talk of them being in thy house and walking by the way, lying down in bed, and rising up.* Such a wholehearted love and such a loving piety! Ah, how it would receive wisdom from on high and be guided by divine love to know when and how to speak. How it would influence children's hearts with the flame of its own zeal; how it would find a willing and a loving ear when others become weary. And how surely it would be blessed.

A Prayer for Parents

O Lord my God, I thank You for each new reminder of the value that my relationship to my children has in Your sight and for Your call to me

as a parent to carry out Your purpose. May each thought of loving and serving You ever be connected with Your Word.

Blessed God, give me wisdom and grace to be such a teacher of my children as You would have me be. I see how You desire no other person to usurp the parent's place. You have appointed him the first and highest teacher. Lord, teach me, with all parents, to take home the lessons, which You see we need to fit us for our work.

Fill our hearts with Your love and Your Word. O Lord, love knows of no sacrifice; it counts nothing a burden; love does not rest till it has triumphed. Oh, fill us with Your love; shed it abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit; and fill us with Your Word dwelling richly in us that teaching our children will be the spontaneous overflowing of the heart's fullness. And make us diligent and wise in studying to do our work well, to sharpen Your words deep into our children's hearts too. Help us to persevere, day by day, and all the day, walking in Your love and presence, making our whole life an influence to educate our children for You.

Father, help us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Sixteenth Day

The Consecrated Home

As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. Joshua 24:15

IN God's dealings with Noah and Abraham, with Israel in the Passover and at Mount Sinai, we have repeatedly noticed the united mention of father and children in His commands and promises: *Thee and thy house, thee and thy seed, ye and your children, thou and thy son.* In the words of Joshua, we have the response from earth, *as for me and my house.* The parent boldly vouches for his family as well as himself; the covenant engagement of the Father in heaven is met by the covenant obligation of the father on earth. Joshua is here the very model of a godly parent, and in him we can see what parental religion ought to be.

Let it be a *personal* religion: *As for me and my house.* He began with himself. We cannot too strongly press the truth that for a godly education, the first and the most essential requirement is personal consecration. It is good to reflect on our responsibility, to study our duties and the best way of fulfilling them, to speak with our children, and to pray much for them – but all these may be called accessories. The first thing on the part of the parent is a life devoted to God and His service. This creates the spiritual atmosphere the children are to breathe. This gives our performance of duty and our dealings with our children their spiritual influence. This gives our praying and our working its value with God. *As for me.* There must be no

hesitation or halfheartedness in the consciousness or the confession of devotion to God's service. As often as the prayer for God's blessing on the children comes up, it must be in the spirit of David: *For thou, Lord GOD, knowest thy slave. Therefore, now let it please thee to bless the house of thy slave* (2 Samuel 7:20, 29). With God and men, in the home and out of it, as well as in the hearts of parents themselves, it must be a settled thing: *As for me, I will serve the Lord.*

But let yours be as distinctly a *family* religion. Take your stand for all who belong to you: *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

Some pious parents do not understand that this is their duty and their privilege. They do not understand what God has put in their power. They imagine they honor God by thinking that the religion of their children is dependent on God's will apart from their assistance. They are so occupied, either with the engagements of their calling in this life or even with religious work, that they cannot find the time for speaking out and acting out the grand decision: *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* Or, perhaps, the father leaves the religion of the children to the care of the mother, and the mother thinks that the father as head is more responsible. They hesitate or neglect to come to an understanding, and the religious education of the children does not take the prominent place in the communication of parents with each other. Let each believing parent take Joshua's words – first, in the depth of his own soul, then in fellowship with partner and children. The more we speak it in prayer and conversation, the more the power of the principle will assert itself and help us so to guide the house, that it too serves the Lord.

The words of Joshua teach us more. Let yours be a *practical* religion: *We will serve the Lord.* The religion of many parents consists only in salvation, not in service. They pray most earnestly that all their children may be saved; they comfort themselves, if they see them spend their lives in the service of the world, believing they will yet be brought in before they die. No wonder their education for this life has been a failure: they never

understood the truth and never trained their children under its guiding influence. Did we not hear God say of Abraham, *For I know him, that he will command his sons and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, ... that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him* (Genesis 18:19)? Do we not remember the words of God about the deliverance of Israel from Egypt: *Let my people go that they may serve me* (Exodus 8:1); and of Pharaoh: *Go, serve the LORD; ... let your little ones also go with you* (Exodus 10:24)? Hasn't the Holy Ghost spoken, *how much more shall the blood of the Christ ... purge your conscience from the works of death to serve the living God* (Hebrews 9:14)? All redemption is for service. The glory of heaven will be that *his slaves shall serve him*. Let our lives and our homes be consecrated to serving God: let obedience to His will, the carrying out of His commands, the doing of His work, and devotion to the interests of His kingdom, give family life its nobility.

And then let yours be a *confessed* religion. In the presence of tens of thousands of the children of Israel, the first symptoms of the falling away became evident, so Joshua made this good confession: *choose you this day whom ye will serve, ... as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD* (Joshua 24:15). As with Abraham leaving his father's house and Israel leaving Egypt, Joshua was to maintain a religion of decision and confession; a coming out and being separate – one of a peculiar people unto the Lord. This is the religion we want in our family life: God's own holy and blessed will, revealed in the leading of the Holy Spirit. Oh, let us believe that though it may appear hard to be peculiar, if we trust God for His guidance and yield ourselves to His personal friendship and love to walk with Him, then the blessing of separation will be unspeakable to ourselves and our children.

If parents read this and are conscious that their house's service of God has not been what they would have it be, let me venture a word of advice. Speak with each other about it and unite your desire to live as entirely for

God as grace can enable you to do. If your children are old enough, gather them, too, and ask if they will not join in the holy covenant.

We will serve the Lord. Let that covenant from time to time be renewed in a distinct act that the conviction may be confirmed: We do want to be a holy family, a house where God dwells and is well pleased. Ours must be a home wholly consecrated to God. And don't be afraid that the strength will not be given to keep the vow. It is not we who have to do the work and then bring it to God. The Father in heaven is calling and helping and tenderly working, both to will and to do in us. We may count on Him as the inspirer to carry out the purpose of our heart: *As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*

A Prayer for Parents

O Lord my God, I thank You for what I have seen this day – Your servant Joshua, the leader of Your people Israel into Canaan, in his faithfulness to You as father in his own home. I humbly ask You to give me grace to say as distinctly and as publicly as he did: *As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*

Lord, may mine be a personal religion. O my Father, let Your love for me and my love for You be its inspiration and its joy. May my children see that it is with my whole heart that I serve You; that it has become a delight and my very nature.

And may mine be a family religion, exercising its influence on my home, gaining and training all to walk with me. Lord, remove every inconsistency and all weakness that might hinder anyone from being wholly Yours. May mine be a truly consecrated home.

May mine, too, be a practical religion, serving You day and night. Let the knowing and the doing of God's will, the working for His kingdom, and the seeking His glory be the one desire of our hearts.

May our home be a blessing to others in encouraging them to take a stand for You. Lord God, let Your Spirit work mightily in the homes of Your people, that everywhere this confession may be heard ringing out: *As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.* Amen.

Seventeenth Day

Consecrated Parents

Then Manoah said, Now let thy word come to pass. How shall we order the child, and what shall he do? Judges 13:12

AN angel of the Lord had appeared to Manoah's wife to predict the birth of a child, who should be a Nazarite unto God from his birth and a deliverer of God's people. At first, Manoah recognized God-given grace would be needed to train such a child for God's service; he therefore entreated the Lord and said, *O my Lord, let the man of God whom thou didst send come again unto us and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born* (Judges 13:8). And when the angel came again, his one petition was: *How shall we order the child, and what shall he do?* Let us consider the prayer, the answer, and the attendant blessings:

Notice the deep sense of responsibility and unfitness for the work of training a child as a Nazarite unto God. The angel had already given Manoah's wife the instruction, but Manoah is so deeply impressed with the holiness of their calling as parents of this child that he asks for the angel to come again and teach them. What a contrast to the thoughtless self-confidence with which many Christian parents undertake the training of their children. How little effort is made to realize the importance of the work. How little prayer for the preparation of the Spirit to fit them for it. How little true surrender to God as the only fitness for training a child for

God. What would be thought of a man offering to manage a bank or navigate an ocean steamer who had no training? And what can be said of the presumption of taking charge of an immortal spirit of such priceless value with no fear? Would God that all Christian parents might learn from Manoah to feel and confess their ignorance and to set themselves at once to seek and obtain the needed grace.

We note, further, how Manoah's sense of need at once led to prayer. He believed in God as the living God, as the Hearer of prayer.

He believed that where God gave a charge or a work, He would give the grace to do it right; that where God gave a child to be trained for His service, He would give the wisdom needed to do so aright. Instead of the sense of unfitness and feebleness depressing him or the sense of his obligation setting him to work in his own strength, he simply prayed. Prayer to him was the solution of difficulties, the supply of need, the source of wisdom and strength.

Let Christian parents learn from him. Each child is a gift of God, as truly as Manoah's, and must be trained for God and His service. We may also depend on the Father, who has entrusted the child to us, to give the grace to train. But let us pray – pray believing, pray without ceasing, at each step of our work; God hears prayer and none more surely than that of a parent seeking wisdom to train his child.

One more thing we must observe in regard to Manoah's prayer: it was after his wife had told him of the angel that he asked for guidance. He longed to hear himself, to have full certainty and perfect clearness. As parents, we have plain and full directions for training our children in God's Word; experience also supplies us with much of great value; but all this does not diminish the need for prayer. With each child and the separate needs of each, we always need renewed wisdom direct from above; daily renewed prayer is the secret of training our children for God.

God's answer. Let us learn the lesson Manoah's story teaches. God loves to answer a parent's cry. The angel had nothing new to communicate, and

yet God sent him, because He would not leave His child, who seeks to know His will, in the dark. The angel's first appearance was what had encouraged Manoah to hope he might come a second time. Those who have already had communications with God and divine teaching about their children will be those who desire more and pray for it most earnestly.

The answer to Manoah's prayer contained no new revelation; it simply pointed back to the instruction previously given: *Let the woman keep herself from all that I said.... all that I commanded her let her keep.* In answer to our prayer, it may be that no new truth will be revealed or no new thought impressed. But the answer to the prayer may be something better. As the Holy Spirit leads us back to what the Lord has already spoken, to study and adopt the principles laid down in Holy Scripture, we shall realize as never before how our children are the Lord's. And parents are God's ministers, in whose holy life the children are to be blessed.

It is this last thought that comes out with special clearness. What were the commandments that had been given and were now renewed? The angel had only spoken of the life of the mother before the birth of the child: the Nazarite child must have a Nazarite mother. Education consists not so much in anything we do or say, but most of all in what we are – and that not only when our children are of an age to see and judge, but also long before, even before their birth. In that holy time of mystery, when mother and child are still one, and influences from a mother's spirit pass into the child, God says, *Let the woman keep herself from all that I said.... all that I commanded her let her keep.* This life of moderation and self-denial is a life of purity and obedience that is the preparation for a mother's and a father's work. God's answer to the prayer, *How shall we order the child?* is, "As you live, you train: live a Nazarite, holy to the Lord, and your child will be a Nazarite unto God, a deliverer of His people Israel."

The blessing from Manoah's prayer was more than the answer. There was the blessed revelation of God Himself and the wonderful knitting together of the hearts of the parents. Before he left them, the angel of the

Lord revealed himself such that Manoah felt, “We have seen God.” When he asked the angel’s name, the angel replied that his name was “Wonderful.” And the angel did *wondrously*. And this is still the name of the parent’s God, *Wonderful*. Like Manoah, we pray and wait for and accept His divine teaching. Wonderful in His love, wonderful in His ways, wonderful in His work, wonderful in what He does for us as parents, and wonderful in what He does through us for our children. Oh, let us worship the Lord, the parent’s God, whose name is *Wonderful*. And let our prayer end in praise and worship, in faith and truth.

What a picture the chapter gives us of the way in which father and mother are lovingly to help each other in all that concerns their children. Manoah’s wife gets the message; immediately she tells her husband. He prays at once for more light and fuller teaching. The angel comes again to her; she runs to tell Manoah, who follows her. He hears again what his wife had been told. When the sacrifice was offered, and the angel did wondrously, Manoah and his wife looked on together and fell on their faces to the ground. And when Manoah was afraid and said, *We shall surely die because we have seen God*, she comforted him and strengthened his faith.

This is the blessed fellowship of love and faith, of prayer and worship between husband and wife, to which the coming and the training of a child can lead. Not only are the parents a blessing to their children, but children to their parents also. As they talk together of God’s promises and His commands, telling the other what has been revealed, they unite in seeking to know and carry out God’s will. As they pray and worship before Him whose name is *Wonderful*, they unburden their fears and encourage each other to trust and hope.

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Lord, as You join us together to train children for Your holy service, we bow in united worship before You. Make us of one heart and mind by Your Holy Spirit, so all You reveal to the one may be

shared with the other. Grant that in our conversations and our prayers, in our weakness and fear, in our faith and our worship, we may feel what blessing and help there is in You sending us to each little flock of children to be tended.

Lord God, we come to You now for wisdom for each child You have given us. Of each one we would say, What shall be the ordering of the child? Open our eyes to see the treasures of wisdom in Your holy Word. Reveal Yourself to us as the God of the covenant and the promise, the parent's God, whose name is *Wonderful*. Teach us in holy fear and reverence, in childlike trust and joy, in purity of life and separation from the world, to walk before You and train our children, holy to the Lord, prepared to fight for the kingdom, and to be the deliverers of the oppressed. Amen.

Eighteenth Day

A Consecrated Child

For this child I prayed, and the LORD has given me my petition, which I asked of him. Therefore, I also have given him back to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall belong to the LORD. 1 Samuel 1:27-28

THE communication between the believing parent and the Lord in reference to his child has been set before us under different aspects. In Samuel's story, we have a new and very beautiful expression of the relationship. Hannah received a child from the Lord in answer to her prayer; she could find no better way of expressing the love and joy of her heart than in giving her child back to the Lord to be the Lord's for as long as he lives. Whether we think of God, our child, or ourselves, there is every reason to say, *As long as he lives he shall belong to the LORD.*

Doesn't the child belong to God? Was the child not created to bear His image as His servant for His glory? God looks upon him as His; he has only been loaned and entrusted to me to train. The child is indeed not mine but the Lord's. And because I am naturally so inclined to forget this, to love and treat the child as if he were altogether mine, I count it a precious privilege to give him to the Lord for all the days of his life.

And God has not only a right to the child, but He also needs him. The work He has to do upon earth is so great, and He has so arranged for each

child his work. Shall I not count it an honor to give to my King the child, which is His, which He has loaned to me with the privilege of loving and training and enjoying him? And shall I not delight to give what is my most precious possession upon earth to be His? Yes, all I am and have belongs to Him who gave His Son for me, to Him alone; my child I have also given to the Lord as long as he shall live.

If I give my child to God, I know that He accepts him and takes him for His own to make him His own. He will make him one with His beloved Son, cleansing him in the precious blood and in a second birth by His Spirit, giving him a new and holy nature. He, the great God, will adopt my child as His and make him His here on earth, taking him up to His own home through eternity. He will use me as His minister, giving me all the wisdom I need to train my child as His. I give my child to God because I love him. Who would not give their child to such a God for such blessings?

And for my own sake, too, I give him to the Lord, for the child I give to God becomes doubly my own. I know that the child I give to God, and whom He holds for me and gives back, I can love with a more intense and holier love. Even if death were to come and take my child from me, I would know that he was still mine in the Father's home, only taken from me for a time. God gave the child to me; I gave him back to Him. God gave him once again to me, and once again I gave him back to Him; giving my child has become the link of a most blessed friendship and communication between God and me.

Let us now consider how this consecration of the child is to be maintained and carried out in education. The grace promised for training a child is not given at once, but rather just as the grace for our own personal life is given, day by day. In the education of our children, difficulties will often arise in which it seems God's help does not come. That is the time for prayer and faith. In the child's natural character, there may at times be more to fear than hope. Our own ignorance, unfaithfulness, or feebleness may often make us fear that, though God be faithful, we may be the cause of our

child not growing up to be the Lord's. At such times, as at all times, God must be our refuge. We plead for grace for the child that has been given by us and accepted by God. The more we do this, it will become a settled thing in our souls, that what we gave, God took, that it is His, and we can leave it with Him. Such faith will give rest and bring a sure blessing.

Let our child know that he has been given away to God. Let him realize this so that it gradually becomes a motive with himself. Let not our words, but the whole spirit of our life and prayer and education make the child feel, "I am the Lord's."

Let us remember this ourselves as a motive to the faithful discharge of our duties. The pressing duties of life, the spirit of the world around us, and the little help we receive from the church, make even godly parents grow negligent. The child's education needs a high tone of devotion in daily life, and that without ceasing. Let us from time to time look at our children to stir ourselves to diligence, to faith, and to prayer. Let us ask God what place He has for each child in His kingdom. If such a spirit animated each parent, a far larger number of young Christians would grow up to work for God. May God by His Holy Spirit teach us the full meaning and power of the words we use. I have given my child to be the Lord's as long as he lives.

A Prayer for Parents

O Lord my God, hear, I pray, a mother's prayer, as I come to You with the child You have given me. O my God, I have heard that You allow the mother to give her child back again to You, and that, having accepted and sealed him for Your own, You entrust him to her again. My soul bows in the dust at the thought of this inexpressible privilege, this joint ownership in my child between God and me. I look to You for the grace to enable me to keep this treasure, to be given back to You with usury.

Teach me, I pray, to love this child with a holy love and to train him for the service of Your temple. Teach me to speak of You and Your love so

that my child's heart may be won for You. May my whole life be an inspiration, inviting and helping to what is pure and lovely, to what is holy and well pleasing to You. And may You in Your great goodness, cause my child early to hear the voice that called Samuel, and in childlike simplicity and reverence to answer, *Speak; for thy slave hears.* O Lord, You will not despise a mother's prayer. You accepted my surrender. By Your blessing, we shall be a consecrated mother and a consecrated child. Amen.

Nineteenth Day

Parental Weakness

Ye ... honor thy sons above me ... for those that honor me I will honor, and those that lightly esteem me shall be vile. 1 Samuel 2:29-30

I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knows of (because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them). 1 Samuel 3:13

SOME men are born to rule; it causes them no trouble; it is their very nature; they often do it unconsciously. To others it never comes naturally; they either shrink from it or utterly fail. They appear to be lacking the gifts that fit them for the work; it is always a struggle and an effort. In ordinary life men can choose, or are chosen for, the situations they fill as rulers or commanders.

In family life we see a strange and solemn spectacle: every parent has to rule, whether he is fit for it or not. His unfitness does not take away his responsibility; the terrible consequences of his failure to rule still fall upon him and his children. The picture of feeble old Eli, faithful to God's cause and ready to die for the ark of God but unfaithful to his duty as a parent and unable to restrain his sons, suggests the necessary inquiry as to the causes, the consequences, and the cure of parental weakness.

We have spoken of natural incapacity for ruling as one cause. But this is never so absolute that determined effort could not remedy it or that the grace of God could not change it. We must therefore look for other causes. And of these the chief is the lack of self-discipline. A Christian should not ask what is easy or natural, what he likes, or what appears possible. His one question must be “What is duty? What has God commanded?” There is wonderful strengthening, even for the weakest character, in giving oneself up to God’s will. The fear of grieving the Father, the desire of pleasing Him, and the assurance of His strength to aid our weakness energizes the soul. The will wakens up, and nothing is so invigorating as the hearty effort to obey. Because the Christian parent does not realize and is not taught by the church that ruling his home well is his duty, many children are ruined by parental weakness.

Closely connected with this is the good-natured weakness, misnamed kindness, which cannot bear to reprove or punish a child. No grace of the Christian life is obtained without sacrifice, and this very high grace of influencing and forming other souls for God needs special self-sacrifice.

But the chief cause of parental weakness will be found deeper still – the lack of a life of true devotion to God Himself. God is the great Ruler and Educator; he who does not live under command to God in his own life does not have the secret of authority and command over others. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; failure in personal godliness is the root of parental failure.

And now the consequences of such parental weakness. One element in the law of consequences under which we live makes parenting a solemn endeavor. Ordinarily parents are not experienced until it is too late. Our actions are seeds; no one who looks at the little seed could ever imagine what a great tree could come from it. Consequences, as seen in those around us, somehow hardly affect us; we hope that, in our case at least, the results will not be so disastrous. When conscience or experience tells the parents that they have been guilty of weak parenting, please look at the picture of

Eli and his home under God's judgment. Ponder carefully what God says. Remember that throughout the universe there is no well-being except in harmony with the law of our being. In earth and heaven, in nature and grace, in the individual, the family, and the church, obedience to the law is the only possible path to happiness. To disobey that law is to court misery. It may not always become manifest in the same degree or with equal speed, but in the loss of power to their child's character, in the loss of peace and happiness, in many cases in the loss of the soul forever, the parents must reap what they sow. God appointed parental rule in the family as the symbol of His own authority where parents and children alike are to honor Him.

The cure of such weakness. In speaking of the causes, we have already indicated some of the remedies. The first one is this: the determined purpose, by God's grace, to do God's will. My duty is never measured by what I feel within my power to do, but by what God's grace makes possible for me. And I never can know how much grace can enable me to do, until I begin. But to him that hath shall be given. Let the weak parent accept God's instruction: he must rule his children. Let him remember that not to rule his children means that both parent and child dishonor God by not doing His will. Let him yield himself to the God of grace with the purpose of doing His will; the surrender will be accepted, and the grace not withheld. Step by step, amidst many a failure, the honest effort to do God's will cannot remain without its reward.

Next to this, let the parent who has failed study some of the simplest laws in the art of ruling. It is often due to the entire ignorance and neglect of these that failure comes. Ruling must be learned. Some of these rules are as follows: Do not give too many commands at once; begin if need be with only one. If you secure obedience to one, your child's consciousness of your power to rule is established. Do not command what you cannot enforce or what the child does not have the power to obey. Begin when it is easy for you to secure obedience and the child to render it; in all learning we proceed from the easy to the less easy. Let the command be given in

quiet, deliberate tones, with full self-control; hasty, ill-regulated injunctions lead to disobedience. Self-rule is the secret of all rule; as you honor the law yourself, others learn to honor it too.

Above all, let the Christian parent who would rule well remember God. He is God's minister, doing God's work. God loves the children and wants them trained for Himself. He is your covenant-God; depend upon Him to be your help and strength. God will rule your home through you. Yield yourself to Him. Not only pray for help but also believe it is given. Say to your Father that you desire to do your duty and honor Him with your children. And, depend upon it, in the spirit of a quiet, restful assurance that God's strength will work in your weakness.

A Prayer for Parents

O my God, with fear and trembling I bow before You, the righteous God, who will not give Your honor to another, nor suffer sin to go unpunished. Impress deeply upon my heart, O Lord, the solemn lessons You teach Your church by Your judgment on the house of Eli Your servant.

Not to rule our children, to give them their own way, is to honor them more than You. Before we realize it, weakness becomes wickedness in ourselves and our children too. You have made every parent after Your image that he may rule his home well and command his children in the way of the Lord.

O God, have mercy upon us. Let the thought of Your command to rule our home, of Your judgment on disobedience, of Your promised grace to those who give themselves to obey, and of Your blessing on a home ordered in Your fear stir us with our whole heart to fulfill our holy calling in Your fear. And let us, above all, believe that as we and our children fulfill Your will, we are in the path of true blessing for this life and the life to come. Amen.

Twentieth Day

The Father As Intercessor

And it was so, when the days of their banquets were over, that Job sent and sanctified them and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and blasphemed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually. Job 1:5

WHAT a beautiful picture of a man in whose heart the fear of God lives! He fears lest his children sin against God or forsake Him in their heart. He is so deeply conscious of the sin of their nature, that, even when he does not know of transgression, the very thought of their having been in circumstances of temptation makes him afraid. He fully realizes his position and privilege as father that he sends for them to sanctify them and takes upon himself the continual offering of the needed sacrifice. Job is here another example of a servant of God in whom faith in God takes up the whole home in its intercession and whose fear of God extends to the sin of the children. God could hardly have said of him, *There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and has departed from evil*, if this element had been lacking (Job 1:8). The book might have been complete without it as far as the record of Job's patience and faith is concerned, but we would have missed the much-needed lesson –

a man's entire consecration to God implies the consecration of the home life too. Let us study the lesson his example teaches.

A deep sense of the sinfulness and the sins of his children is one of the marks of a godly parent. It was on account of sin that the blood of the lamb was sprinkled in the Passover. Parents were made the instructors of their children to lead them from sin to the service of God. In all God's dealings with us in redemption and grace, in His revelation in Christ and His cross, He has one object – to save us from sin and make us partakers of His holiness. If God finds the parent in harmony with Himself, the parent can be His fellow worker, and the blessing promised to him will come true.

And shouldn't we all confess how superficial our views of sin are? And how easily we are satisfied, while under the appearance of what is good and loving, sin may be lurking, or our children growing up renouncing God in their hearts. And how sadly lacking we are in that deep sense of the grief and dishonor to God which our children's sin brings and which ought to motivate us to plead for their forgiveness. Let parents ask God to give them a right sense of what sin is in its curse, its dishonor to God, and its power. The one thing that He aims at is that the power of Christ's victory over sin may be seen in them, that we and they and our home may be holy to the Lord.

Very special watchfulness where there is special temptation will be the natural fruit of such fear of sin. Job knew that at a time of feasting, there would be special danger, and as often as the days of feasting were past, he sent for his sons and sanctified them. What an impression these children must have received of the fear of sin in their God-fearing father, and how it would waken in them the fear of forgetting God! Every thoughtful parent knows how there are times and places when the temptations of sin come more speedily and easily surprise even the well-disposed child. Such are the times, both before and after a child goes into the company and the circumstances where he may be tempted, that a praying father and mother should do what Job did when he sent for his sons. A Christian man, recently

converted, has told of the indelible impression made by his mother taking him into her room, just as he was to start on his first long journey from home, and praying with him that he might be kept from sin.

Let us ask God to make us watchful and wise in availing ourselves of opportunities. There are times when the conscience in a child is especially sensitive, and a word fitly spoken will sink deep into the heart. There are times when the conscience has been slighted and a word or prayer will help to waken it up and restore its authority. A parent who is in sympathy with God's purpose and holds himself at God's disposal will be guided from on high as to when and how to speak, to rouse and strengthen in the child the consciousness of sin and its danger.

A godly parent has power with God to intercede. Job not only sent for his children to speak, but he also sanctified them through the burnt offerings. The parent's faith obtains pardon for the child, and he has a right to intercede for the grace that can save and sanctify. We have seen from Noah on down that God gives the parent the right and the power to appear and act on behalf of the child, and that such representative action is accepted. To lay hold of this is the very essence of parental faith; to act upon it is the secret of parental power and blessing. The whole family constitution is based upon this; all the other influence a parent is to exert depends much on his being clear on this point: I am the steward of God's grace to the child; I represent the child with God and am heard on his behalf. This makes him confident in saying, I represent God with my child; I have God's help to give me influence and power. I have overcome the power of sin in my child's life by pleading with God for him.

Dear parents, let us plead earnestly that God may enlighten our hearts by His Spirit to know our calling – to intercede and prevail for our children. We want the Holy Spirit so to shine on our family life that the first thing shall not be the happiness of parental love, providing the good gifts, their education for a life of prosperity and usefulness, but the yielding to God's redeeming love to be ministers of grace and blessing. Let us live to secure

God's purpose – the deliverance from sin; let us act in the assurance that He will use us. And our family life shall always be lit with God's presence and the joy of the heavenly home.

A Prayer for Parents

Gracious God, I humbly ask You to print deep in my heart the lessons Your holy Word was given to teach. May Job, who has taught Your saints patience in the hour of trial and of Your wondrous grace in delivering from it, be to all parents a lesson and a model of the God-fearing parent.

Teach us, we pray, how this marks the fear of God in its full power and extent as we intercede for our children. Oh, teach us, Lord, to fear sin as the one thing Your soul hates and make it our purpose that the children sin not.

Teach us to realize our God-given position as intercessors and to plead the blood for them as for ourselves. May we know in faith that we are heard.

And teach us to bring them with us that they may learn both the fear of God and the confidence of faith. O God, if we are indeed Your children, may this element distinctly mark our piety and our faith that they embrace and influence our homes as much as ourselves. Amen.

Twenty-first Day

The True Good

Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

Who is the man that desires life and loves many days that he may see good?

Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

Psalm 34:11-14

THERE is a science called Ethics that seeks to discover the laws, which should regulate human conduct and teach the art of living right. In this pursuit, the science seeks to find out what is the motivating principle that urges men to act as they do. In the discussions, the word that comes up universally is *Good*. Men propose some good or other as the reward of their efforts.

The students of Ethics are divided into two great schools according to the meaning they attach to the word *Good*. With some, it expresses the good of well-being, the possession or enjoyment of what is desirable. They maintain that happiness, our own or that of the human race, the fear of pain, and the desire for pleasure are and ought to be the motives of conduct.

Another school takes a higher ground. It maintains that though the desire of happiness is innate and legitimate, it may not be man's first or ultimate

goal. Happiness will be the accompaniment and the reward of something higher. The good, not of well-being but of well-doing, is the only true good. The ideas of right and wrong are deeper and holier than those of pleasure and pain. To teach men to *do good* is their ideal.

In the words of our psalm, children are invited to come and learn what the secret of a happy life is. The call appeals to the desire for happiness: Who is he that would *see good*? The teacher promises to show the path of true well-being. That path is *Depart from evil, and do good*. God has ordered our nature that well-being will follow well-doing: to do good is the sure way to see good.

But our inspired teacher goes further. He not only tells of our *seeing* good and *doing* good but would also teach us the secret of *being* good. Human science cannot teach this. It may speak of the value of uprightness and purity as the inner motivation to make conduct really good, but it cannot show us what the true, the only pure and purifying motive is. The psalmist tells us, *Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD*. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom and goodness. It is doing what we do unto the Lord for His sake and as obedience to Him; it is our personal relationship to God that makes conduct really good. To fear God is being good; then follows doing good; then follows seeing good.

Christian parents have in this call, *Come, ye children, hearken unto Me*, words prepared for them by the Holy Spirit to use. They are God's ministers to teach the children the fear of the Lord, the path to the true, the highest good. Let us try to make the lessons meaningful to ourselves.

To begin with the lowest, *seeing good*: *Who is the man that desires life and loves many days that he may see good*? Let parents not be afraid of promising their children that it shall be well with them if they do indeed fear God. With a Creator of infinite goodness and wisdom, it cannot be otherwise: doing right and pleasing Him must bring blessing and happiness. The desire for happiness may not be the only or the first motive for a man's

conduct. Experience has proved that those who make it their first object fail; while they who gave it a second place find it. It is so in religion. God commands us to be happy; He promises us joy, but always in connection with our being in the right relationship to Him and His will. So the previous verse had said, *Those that seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing* (Psalm 34:10). The promises that God will do us good are many. *I will surely do thee good*, He said to Jacob (Genesis 32:12). To Israel, He said, *Do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD that it may be well with thee* (Deuteronomy 6:18). The principle expressed in the prayer, *Do good unto those that are good*, tells that the favor and friendship of God, His peace and presence, His guidance and help will come to those who do His will. Such obedience and doing good will bring a blessing even for this life.

Let our children learn early that if they would see good, it will be found with God. Let them learn from us, not as a doctrine but as a personal testimony; let us show them that the service of God makes us happy, and the good which God bestows is our one desire and our highest joy.

The next step is *doing good*. Let us seek in the hearts of our little ones to link well-doing and well-being. *Blessed is the man that fears the LORD* (Psalm 112:1). The Christianity of our day has learned to seek safety in religion but pleasure and happiness in the world. Our children will need a clear testimony that doing God's will and serving is blessedness and enjoyment. No trouble ought to be great, if we can teach them these lessons.

And now comes the teaching as to what *doing good* is: *Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it*. Sins of the tongue, disobedience, and temper are the three principal temptations children have and against which parents must guard.

Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Let the Christian parent strive for deep conviction of the power of the tongue. It reveals what is in the heart and is able to set it further on fire. It is the

medium of communication and influence on others. It is the index of the presence or the lack of integrity or uprightness, which is the very foundation of true character. Parents, strive to make your children true – first true in words and then true in heart and deed. A child's truthfulness and integrity may be the beginning of his walking in the truth of God. *I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my sons walk in the truth.* Let this be your aim even with the little children (3 John 4).

Depart from evil, and do good. To a young child, the parent is as a conscience, as a god. Train your little ones to flee from evil, to depart, to come away from everything naughty and forbidden, and to do good. Keep the child occupied in what is good, what is allowed by you and pleasing to you. Stir and strengthen the child's will; train him to *do* good, not just to think and wish and feel good, but to do it. It is the will and what it does that makes the man.

Seek peace, and pursue it. To quarrel is a sin that comes easily with children. Let us train ours to respect the rights of others. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God* can become part of the education in the nursery (Matthew 5:9).

But we have still the highest good to speak of: we must not only seek good and do good but also *be good*. Only a good tree can bring forth good fruit. And what is it to be good? *I will teach you the fear of the LORD.* There is none good and no good but God; if we seek and find Him, we find all good; in the fear of the Lord, good conduct has its spring, and virtue has its worth. *In simplicity of heart, fearing God; And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord* (Colossians 3:22-23); it is the personal relationship to God carried out into all our conduct that constitutes the fear of the Lord. It is not the fear of a slave but of a child, twin sister to hope and love: *The LORD takes pleasure in those that fear him, in those that wait upon his mercy* (Psalm 147:11).

And how can the fear of the Lord be taught? Dear Christian parents, you know the answer: only by walking in the fear of the Lord all the day

yourselves. Train children by living it. Let them see you walk in the fear of the Lord all the day, His holy presence resting on you and brought throughout your daily life. Let them see in your conduct that religion is a holy sentiment and emotion, a power in the heart, which moves the will to do what is good. And let the light of your eyes and the brightness of your face be the exposition and the confirmation of God's truth.

Blessed is the man that fears the LORD.

A Prayer for Parents

O my God, I ask for grace to take to heart and wisely apply in teaching my children the lessons of Your Word.

May my communication with them be full of the joyful assurance that the fear of the Lord is the path to the enjoyment of all good and that Your service is happiness. Let this be so real that all thought of there being pleasure in the world or sin may pass away.

Help me to teach them the fear of the Lord by instruction and example and the spirit of my life. May thoughtfulness, truthfulness, and lovingkindness mark the conversation of my home, and may the life of all be holy to the Lord. Day by day, let me show them, through Your grace, how departing from all evil and doing good that produces peace and holiness is what Your fear teaches.

Give me grace to teach them that the fear of the Lord itself is the true good, the principle of all good. May we walk as children in the full light of Your countenance, only fearful of offending You. And let ours be the true Christian life of Your disciples of old who, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

O my God, I ask You, make me a parent such as You would have me be, and let Your blessing rest on my home. Amen.

Twenty-second Day

Training

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

THIS promise is the Scripture expression of the principle on which all education rests – a child's training can decide what his afterlife is to be. Without this faith, there could be no thought of education; when this faith is elevated to a trust in God and His promises, it grows into the assurance that a parent's labor will not be in vain in the Lord.

Education has been defined as developing a child's faculties, fitting him to fulfill his destiny, and developing in him all the perfection of which he is capable. Such definitions have their value, and yet their application is dependent upon the further statement of what his faculties and destiny really are and where his highest perfection would lie. It is only when the aim of education is grasped that its work can be successful. Just as everything will depend on a correct view of what *the way he should go* is, only then can the training assure the divine fulfillment of the promise.

There have been so many failures in religious training, that a spirit of doubt has grown as to whether a principle like this can be regarded as holding universally good. With such doubt we undermine God's covenant. Let us rather believe that the failure was man's fault: *For God is true, and every man a liar* (Romans 3:4). Either the parent did not make *the way he*

should go his one aim in the child's training, or the training in that way was not what God's Word had ordered. Let us see what the Word teaches us on each of these points.

As to *the way he should go*, we need have no doubt. The names Scripture gives to this way make clear what it is. God calls it *the way of the Lord*, when He speaks of Abraham training his children; and we often read of *walking in His ways, the way of His footsteps, and the way of His commandments*. It is called *the way of wisdom, the way of righteousness, the way of holiness, the way of peace, and the way of life*. It is *the new and living way* opened by Christ for all who will walk in His footsteps; it is Christ Himself, the living Way, of whom Scripture says, *walk in Him*.

Many religious parents are most anxious to see their children saved, but do not choose this way for them; they do not decide on it to be the one and only way in which they are to walk. They do not think they should expect the children to walk in it from their youth, so they do not train them in it. It is not their first goal to train wholehearted, devoted Christians. They are not always ready to walk in that way themselves – in the narrow way; they have chosen it, but not exclusively and finally. They have their own thoughts as to the way they and the child may go. No wonder their education fails; a mistake here is often fatal. There may be no doubt or hesitancy; *the way of the Lord* must be heartily accepted as the only *way he should go*.

Train up a child in the way he should go. *Train* is a word of deep importance for every teacher and parent to understand. It is not telling, teaching, or commanding, but something higher than all of these, without which the teaching and commanding often cause more harm than good. It is not only telling a child what to do, but also showing him how to do it and seeing that it is done, taking care that the advice we give is put into practice.

We can understand what is needed for such training if we look at the way a young horse is trained. It is made to yield its will to its master's, until at last it is in perfect harmony with him and yields to his slightest wish. It is directed and accustomed to do the right thing until it becomes a habit, a

second nature. Its own wild native tendencies are checked, but it is encouraged and helped to the full exercise of its powers. I have seen a coachman watch his young horses and sit ready to help them lest they should lose their confidence or be overcome by some difficulty. And I have thought, If only parents bestowed this care on training children in the way they should go.

Training may be defined as aiding the child to obey easily and willingly. Doing from choice is what we aim for.

Doing. The parent who wishes to train not only tells but also sees that the thing is done. To this end, he seeks to engage the interest and affection of the child on the duty to be performed. Knowing how naturally thoughtless and fickle a child's nature can be, the parent urges or encourages until the thing is performed. He is careful not to give too many commands or give them hastily; he begins with requests to which submission is most easily secured, so the thought of obedience might not be linked with the thought of something displeasing. But the great thing is that the parent watches the child learn to consent until the will has become deed and action.

Doing habitually is an element of training. Success in education depends more on forming habits than on inculcating rules. What the child has done once or twice he must learn to do over and over again, until it becomes familiar and natural. When there is a danger of slipping back, the parent helps and confirms the habit until its mastery is secure. Going on from a first and a second command in which obedience has been secured, the principle is extended until the child comes to feel quite natural that in all things he should do the parent's will. And so the habit of obedience is formed, which becomes the root of other habits.

Doing from choice. This is something higher – the true aim of education. You may have good, obedient children, in whom there never has been much resistance to a parent's training. They render habitual and willing obedience, but when left to themselves in later life, they depart from the

way in which they were trained to go. The training was defective; parents were content with habits without principles. The training of the young horse is not complete until he delights, full of joy and spirit, to do his work. The training of the will is the aim of education. Beginning with *obedience*, the parent must lead the child on to *liberty*. The apparent opposites have to be reconciled in practice – to choose and will for himself what his parent wills, and find his happiness not only in obedience to the parent's command but also in approval of the thing commanded. And here is indeed the highest art, the real difficulty of training a child in the way he should go.

But here the promise of divine grace comes in. No mind has yet comprehended the wondrous interplay of God's working and our working in the matter of our salvation. But we do not need to understand it to be sure of it, and we do not need to understand it to depend on God's faithfulness. The believing parent seeks to form the habits of obedience; while in prayer and faith to mold, guide, and strengthen the will of the child in the way of the Lord, he may count on the workings of God's Holy Spirit to do what God alone can do. He reckons on a divine wisdom to guide him; he counts on a divine strength to work with him and for him; he trusts in a divine faithfulness to make the Word true and sure in all its fullness. *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.* (See Appendix B for a summary on training.)

A Prayer for Parents

Holy Lord God, with fear and trembling I bow before You in view of the work to which You have called me. O my God, I feel deeply that I lack wisdom; I come to You, who gives liberally. Your Word has said it shall be given.

Lord, give me the spirit of wisdom, that I may understand the wondrous nature of that immortal spirit that has been put into my charge with its power of mind and emotion and will. Give me wisdom, that I may know the way in which the child should go, even the way of Your

footsteps, and let me walk in it that he may learn from me that there is no other way pleasing to You, so there is no other way that can give us true pleasure. And give me wisdom that I may know how to guide and influence the will, that it may give itself first to my will and then to Yours, to always choose Your way. Lord, give me wisdom to train my child in the way he should go, even the way of the Lord.

And, O my God, strengthen my faith to hold fast the blessed assurance that Your promise is sure, and Your power is infinite. Amen.

Twenty-third Day

The Child Choosing the Good

He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. Isaiah 7:15

OF all the wondrous powers with which God has endowed man, his will – the power of determining what he does and so what he is – is the most wonderful. This is the deepest trait of the divine image, so He gave man to a large extent the power of deciding and making himself. The mind with all its wondrous capacities, the soul with all its wealth of feeling, and man's moral and religious nature have been given to exercise that royal prerogative of the liberty he has from God – to will himself and fashion his own being and destiny for eternity.

And the parent has the solemn task of teaching the child how to use this will correctly. This delicate will is put into the hands of the parents to keep, to direct, to strengthen, and to train the child unconsciously to hold and exercise it to the glory of the God who gave it. One would imagine that parents would shrink from the task with trembling, or they would count no sacrifice too great to secure it. To those who seek the wisdom from God in faith, and understand and fulfill their task, success is possible and even promised.

The problem is one of great delicacy – to combine the greatest degree and the fullest exercise of personal liberty with perfect obedience. God's Word has taught that obedience is the child's first virtue in which his will is

to be exercised. He is to obey, not because he understands or approves, but because the parent commands it. In this, he is to become the master of his own will, voluntarily submitting it to a higher authority. Obedience from this principle will secure a double good: while guiding the will into right habits, it strengthens the power the child has over it. When this has been attained, a safe foundation has been laid for further exercise of the child's free will in his choices. The parent must regard this as his highest and most blessed work. *That he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good* in childhood is simple obedience. As he grows, a parent's influence must still train the young will to exercise the power on that will and be trained himself to refuse the evil and choose the good.

And how is this to be done? The choice of the will depends upon the impulse and motives, which depend upon the objects presented to the mind. In our fallen nature, the soul, dwelling in the flesh and surrounded by the world, is far more alive to the visible and the temporal than the unseen and the real. It is deceived by what appears pleasing or beautiful; the influence of what is present outweighs what is of infinitely greater worth in the future. Amid the thoughtlessness of childhood that lives in the seen and the present, the parent acts as a conscience to the child, calling him to higher instincts and convictions and leading to the true pleasure. But the training aims specially at teaching the child to refuse the evil and choose the good when no parent is near to help. In the conscience, every man possesses a guardian and helper of inestimable value. Wise training can do much to establish the authority of this inner guide. Let the authority of the parent and conscience be linked together, so even in the parent's absence, his influence may be felt. Cultivate in the child the power of self-control, of recollection, of quiet thoughtfulness, that he may always wait to listen for the gentle inner whisper that tells him to refuse the evil and choose the good.

Conscience, however, can only tell us to do the right; it cannot always teach what the right is. The mind may be wrong in its views of good and

evil, and faithfulness to conscience may even lead to choose the evil and refuse the good. The inner light shines upon the path of what we think is right; it is only the light from above that shows what that right really is. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my way* (Psalm 119:105). One of the most precious influences of a godly education is the consent of the heart to take God's Word as the standard of good and evil and the desire to let it decide in every choice. The authority of the parent, of conscience, and of God's Word is a threefold cord that cannot be broken, binding the child to the throne and the will of God, knowing to refuse the evil and choose the good.

This education is not to take the place of divine grace but to be its servant. It both prepares the way for God's Spirit by forming a strong and intelligent will for God's service, and follows up the work of grace by guiding it in the path of God's perfect will. Such a training, so that the child may know to refuse the evil and choose the good, is of unspeakable value. The parent will recognize the responsibility entrusted to him of awakening, guiding, and strengthening that young will on which such infinite issues depend. To *know to refuse the evil and choose the good* will be to choose Christ and holiness and eternal life.

Dear parents, God's highest gift to man in creation was his will – that he might choose the will of his God. Your highest work is to take charge of that will in your child and be God's minister in leading it to His service. Pray earnestly for light on this holy trust committed to you. See in it the power to which the gospel comes to make it free to choose God and His service, Christ and His love. Realize your own incompetency to influence a will in which the powers of light and darkness are wrestling for supremacy and cast yourself on Him who leads and renews.

A Prayer for Parents

O Lord my God, how holy is the work You have committed to a parent.
Open my eyes, I do pray, to see my responsibility. May the traces of the

divine image to be seen in the child's power of willing and making himself, stand out clear to me. May the tremendous issues for time and eternity, depending upon the right use of his will, be ever before me. May I understand the danger from the corruption of sin within and temptation from without. May I realize the wonderful power entrusted to me by You, giving the child's will into my power. And may a due sense of my own impotence, and You, Almighty Power, working in me, combine to keep me humble but hopeful, conscious of my weakness but confident in You. O God, teach me to form and train the will of my child to refuse the evil and choose the good.

Lord, make me very gentle and patient under a sense of my own willfulness. Help me be ever faithful to fulfill my commission well and full of trust, because You are my Help and my Father.

O my God, do it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Twenty-fourth Day

God's Spirit in Our Children

I will pour my spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring: One shall say, I am the LORD's; ... and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD. Isaiah 44:3, 5

EVEN in the prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, quoted by Joel on the day of Pentecost, express mention is made of the sons and daughters; so here too the blessing of an outpoured Spirit is made to the seed and offspring of God's people. The root principle of the covenant, promising grace to the fathers for the children, to the children for the fathers' sake and through the fathers, is to be the mark of the dispensation of the Spirit too. Not resting content with a religion inherited from the fathers, the children would openly profess their personal faith in the words, *I am the Lord's*. Let us seek to grasp the two thoughts – the personal acknowledgment of the Lord as the fruit of the Spirit's work and the sure promise of the Spirit to do that work.

Earnest parents have the desire that their children may be found coming forward to make a personal confession of the faith in which they have been educated. If we enter fully into the mind of God, it will be one of the great aims of parental training to rear our children for such a profession. And yet many Christian parents hesitate to admit this. Some believe the dangers of a distinctly religious education and promoting a formal and traditional faith

appear so great that they leave their children to themselves. They would never think of asking them whether they can say, *I am the Lord's*, or encouraging them to do so. They do not believe in the conversion of children, for they think the children are so impressionable that such a profession is not to be trusted and ought to be avoided. Others are so much in the dark on the question of assurance of faith, they have no liberty to say, *I am the Lord's*; it is no wonder they never think of helping their children to say it. They think only the advanced believer dare speak with such confidence; in themselves, it would be presumption and pride. Still others may admit in theory the duty of making such a confession and the possibility of a child making it too, yet the heart is so cold and worldly that the warm, loving confession of Jesus as their Lord is never heard from their lips. Their family worship and religious profession testify to anything but the living, loving attachment to a personal Savior, so their children would never learn from them to say, *I am the Lord's*.

And yet we see it promised that the Spirit's working will manifest itself in this way. The experience of these last years has proved to many that a distinct profession of Jesus as a Savior is as sure a fruit of the Spirit's presence among the children and as trustworthy as among older people. Do we not tell them from their youth that God is love and that He gave Jesus to be a Savior? Do we not tell them that they belong to God?

And why should it appear strange if the child believes what we say and speaks it out: *I am the Lord's*? We tell them that Jesus receives sinners who confess their sins and give themselves to Him to be cleansed. This truly is what we ought to hope for as the fruit of our instruction – that when he feels his sins, the child goes and confesses them to the blessed children's Friend and believes that He does not cast him out but accepts and pardons. If their young hearts are touched and consent, let us beware of refusing or doubting their profession or reproaching them when they fail; let us remember the promised fruit of the Spirit's working among the children is this: *I am the Lord's*.

Are we to think that there is no danger at all connected with it? Are we to rest content with the momentary impressions, which speak the words without inquiring further? By no means. As with older folks, so with children: impressions may be temporary and profession superficial. God's Word teaches us what it is that will give them sincerity and reality. Our prophecy teaches a second lesson: it is the Spirit's working that will make the words *I am the Lord's* spirit and truth.

And in what way is the outpouring of the Spirit to be given? Blessed be God, the promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit dwells in the church of Christ, in the hearts and the homes of His believing disciples. In promising the Spirit to the offspring of His people, God pledges that parental instruction, a consecrated home life, and His ordinances of family religion are to be the means the Spirit will use for leading the children to Christ. The Spirit always works through the Word; to the child, the parent is the God-ordained minister of the Word. The blessing of the new dispensation is this: that the parent may depend on the Holy Spirit for his children and all the parent's teaching and training, though it be in weakness, fear, and trembling, may be in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

But everything depends upon the parent as a minister of the Spirit. He must live and walk, be led and sanctified by the Spirit; he must speak and pray in the Spirit, and he must claim and accept the promise of the Spirit for his child. It is possible that a child's profession may be of no value. This depends greatly on the parents and others who have influence. If the child hears the language of a joyous faith and consecration, he unconsciously catches that meaning from the spirit. If parents continually speak words of help and encouragement, even the little child can prove the reality of the change of which this profession was the token.

Dear parents, let God's thoughts for your children enter your hearts and rule there. Two thoughts are particularly important: God's Spirit and my children belong to each other; in faith I may claim the Spirit's dwelling and working in them. And, my child may know and say that he is the Lord's; the

fruit of the Spirit is the faith of the heart and the confession of the lips, “Jesus is mine.” Let this promise be your strength as you deal with God, your strength as you deal with your child: *None that wait on thee shall be ashamed* (Psalm 25:3).

A Prayer for Parents

O Lord God, we draw near to You to claim the fulfillment of this promise on behalf of our beloved children. Lord, may they from their very youth have Your Spirit poured out upon them that even in the simplicity of childhood, they may say, *I am the Lord's*.

O Lord, be pleased to fill us with Your Holy Spirit. May all our home life and our parental influence be a channel through which the Spirit reaches each child. God, help us so to live the life of the Spirit around him.

We ask You, gracious Lord, to give us great singleness of aim in training our children for You alone. Oh, that the indwelling of the blessed Spirit may not be thought of as rare, but as the one gift the Father loves to bestow and the first thing the child needs to grow into a noble man and Christian. Lord, let our training of him, as Your exclusive sacred property to know and say he is Yours, be our one desire. And may we count on this: that each child we so consecrate to You, You will by Your Spirit consecrate for Your own. May we experience how wonderfully the parent's work and the Spirit's work blend in securing the seed of Your people for Yourself. Amen.

Twenty-fifth Day

From Generation to Generation

My righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

Isaiah 51:8 KJV

WHEN we speak of a generation in the history of man, we think of the shortness of human life and the continual change among men. *One generation passes away, and another generation comes, but the earth abides for ever* (Ecclesiastes 1:4). What a contrast between man and the heavens above or the mountains around him – always the same. What a contrast between man, whose life is but a span, and the unchangeable, everlasting God.

We find that God's Word does not so much contrast items as it links opposites together; it lifts man out of the ever-changing life to find his refuge in the unchangeableness of God. *As for man, his days are as grass; But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon those that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children* (Psalm 103:15, 17). *O my God, do not cut me off in the midst of my days; thy years are from generation to generation. They [the earth and the heavens] shall perish, but thou shalt endure But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The sons of thy slaves shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee* (Psalm 102:24, 26-28). Death may separate one generation from

another, but God's mercy connects them, passing on from one to another; His righteousness, which is everlasting, reveals itself as salvation from generation to generation. At every point where God meets and acts with man, there are two sides to be regarded – the divine and the human. God's faithfulness inspires that of man and therefore demands and rewards it. In some passages, it might appear as if everything depended upon man and his keeping the covenant; and so it does indeed, but not as if this keeping of the covenant were to be his work by which he secures the blessing. No, but it is in the mercy and truth of God, as these are known and trusted, that human faithfulness has its strength and security. To know God's purpose, to believe God's promise, and to adore God's unchanging faithfulness communicates to the soul the very spirit of that faithfulness and binds us to Him.

Let us first look at the divine side of this – salvation from generation to generation. In Isaiah, from whom we have these words, the truth is expressed with great frequency and distinctness: *And this shall be my covenant with them, said the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words, which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from now on and for ever* (Isaiah 59:21). When God made His covenant with David, He anticipated generations in which there would be disobedience and therefore punishment (Psalm 89:30-33). But here the promise of the Spirit and the Word in the mouth of God's Anointed One and His people is not to pass from the mouth of the seed's seed. And blessed be God, there are families in which for generations and even for centuries, the Word and the Spirit have not departed. Let us only open the heart to take in the promise, and to let it grow within us.

Then we have that other beautiful promise: *I will confirm your work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles and their offspring among the peoples; all that saw them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the LORD has blessed* (Isaiah 61:8-9). Or, as it is otherwise expressed: *For*

their births are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring shall be with them (Isaiah 65:23). In the power of the promised Spirit, believing parents may claim and expect, from child to child, to see the blessing of the Lord. This is to be the fruit of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; the promise, *Thou and thy son and thy son's son*, is to have its literal fulfillment. This is not only for our comfort and joy and the blessing on our children, but also that God may be known and glorified. *Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles* is the reason that the Word and the Spirit are not to depart from the mouth of our seed.

Let us look now from the human side at the fulfillment of this promise: *My salvation from generation to generation*. Most strikingly, God's purpose is set forth in the words of Psalm 78:4-7: *We will not hide them from their sons, showing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD and his strength and his wonderful works that he has done. For he established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their sons: That the generation to come might know them, even the sons which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their sons that they might set their hope in God and not forget the works of God but keep his commandments*. And then we read Psalm 145:4: *One generation shall praise thy works to another*; the triumphant joy of that psalm of praise being the spirit in which the parents tell their child of God's glory and goodness. Here we have the human side. Parents who know God show His praise and His strength and His wonderful works to their children. Parental instruction is in the ministry of the Spirit, not less but more than in the old covenant, a testifying for God in the spirit of praise. The children are taught not to forget the works of God, but to set their hope on Him and keep His commandments, to trust and to obey Him. And so His righteousness, which is from everlasting to everlasting, becomes salvation from generation to generation (true example in Appendix A).

Parents, it is God's will that His salvation should be from generation to generation in your family too, that your children should hear from you and pass on to their children the praise of the Lord. We know what is needed – nothing but wholehearted devotion to God. Nothing less will do. God's salvation must not be a secondary thing; it must be the first thing. This wholehearted devotion will give strength to our faith and confidence to our hope. Under its inspiration, our prayers will be persevering and believing. It will impart to our instruction the joyful tone of assurance and make our whole life the model for our children. One generation living for God will secure the next for Him; His salvation is from generation to generation.

A Prayer for Parents

Gracious and most blessed Father, I bow before You once again that I may fully comprehend Your holy purpose with an earthly parentage, to transmit through it Your blessing. O my God, let Your word, *my salvation from generation to generation*, so fill my heart that my calling and duty with Your promise and purpose may be equally clear to me, and the salvation of my children be as sure as my own.

And grant, Lord, that in Your light I may realize and manifest fully what salvation is – salvation from sin and its power unto the holiness and the service of God. Let it be in me a salvation that fills my heart with gladness and my lips with praise and my whole life with purity and love. Let the salvation in which I walk and in which I train the children be the salvation of God.

O my God, I ask You, give me grace as the one heirloom my children cherish in their parents, the one thing transmitted in our home from child to child, the salvation, the love, the joy, the service of God. Yes, Lord, You are the Eternal and Unchanging One; let it be from generation to generation. Amen.

Twenty-sixth Day

The Crowning Blessing

I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Joel 2:28

THIS is the promise that the day of Pentecost fulfilled. The coming of the Comforter, the baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire, the endowment with power from on high, and receiving the power of the Holy Ghost to be His witnesses to the end of the earth are all precious promises of Christ, the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. The Holy Ghost is the heavenly sign with which the church has been marked and sealed.

What a place of promise is given to the children! *Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.* The first thing introduced in the promise of Pentecost is not the anointed disciples but the sons and the daughters prepared to prophesy. Let us examine what it teaches us of God's purpose, a parent's hope, and a child's education.

God's purpose. With the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, the bride, God had an objective – power from on high for her work of testifying to the ends of the earth. Only the last words of the Master speak of this (Acts 1:8). All the other blessings of the Spirit – assurance, joy, holiness, love – have influence, fruit-bearing, and the power to bless as their aim. Because many Christians do not understand this, there is often a weary and fruitless

seeking for the blessings of the Spirit. If there were a wholehearted surrender to God's service and work, the Spirit would come without being sought. The measure of the Spirit will be given according to the work we undertake and what our faith expects to perform.

This is true of our children too. In Joel's prophecy, God reveals His purpose with our sons and daughters. Prophesying in the power of the Spirit convicts even the unbelieving and unlearned. And for such prophets God wants our sons and daughters. And for such prophets we ought, in this dispensation of the Holy Spirit, to educate our sons and daughters.

The world is in sore need of them. The church is suffering for want of them. Supply always creates demand. Because there is so small a supply, the church thinks it has done something great when there is some increase in the number of its agents. But oh, if there were a heart to enter into God's purpose, and the church and parents understood what glory it is to train our sons and daughters to be prophets of the Most High, witnesses, and messengers for Jesus our Lord, what a change it would bring in our modes of operation. As the children of this world do their utmost to obtain some high commission in the army or navy or a good appointment in civil service or business, why shouldn't the children of God press around the throne of their Father, seeking fulfillment of this promise and making them His prophets. God's purpose is that the Holy Spirit should take possession of our sons and daughters, filling them for His service. They belong to Him, and He to them.

The parents' hope. Just imagine believing parents entering into this purpose of God. Could any doubt still arise in their minds as to whether they might count on the conversion of their children? "Aim high" is a daily maxim; you will accomplish more than he who is content with a lower range. Nothing will give such confidence of the salvation of our children and the Spirit's working for conversion and renewal as the consciousness of having surrendered them to the service of God and His Spirit.

This will equally inspire us with confidence in regard to our fitness for parental duty. We have no idea of the extent to which self-interest weakens faith and self-sacrifice strengthens it. If I lose all selfish thought of myself and my child, my Father will give me strength and grace for training that child for Him.

And then, though there is a diversity of gifts and I may not see each child used in the direct service of the Master, I may be sure that the heart's purpose is accepted, and the effort to train all my children to be the vessels of God's Holy Spirit has had its elevating influence on my own soul, on my home, on each of my children, whatever their external calling in life may be. The more distinct my acknowledgment that in this dispensation the Spirit claims all, the more I may depend upon His presence with me and mine.

The children's training. Such a purpose in God's heart, and such a hope in the parent's heart will influence the children's training!

Cultivate virtues with the high aim of having the child more fit for the work to be done, and cultivate moral power to be prepared for the Holy Spirit's filling. Let obedience, self-control, integrity, justice, humility, and love be the goal in education that the Holy Spirit may form them into a noble Christian, an efficient servant of the Lord, a true prophet. The prize that parents aim at for their children is often counted worthy of any sacrifice. Oh, let us set our hearts upon the promotion we seek for our children that all thought of sacrifice passes away as we study and labor, as we pray and believe, to have them counted worthy among those the Spirit of the Lord anoints for His work.

And now we have seen what God would be for our children – a God in covenant with the blessing of the blood and the Spirit of Jesus. And we have seen what He would have our children be to Him – a covenant seed to receive and transmit and multiply the blessing throughout the earth. And we have seen what He would have parents be – standing between Him and their

children, the ministers of the covenant to be the channels for the Spirit's training for His service.

God help us to learn these three lessons. God help us to believe and receive all He is willing to be for our children through us. God help us to give and train our children for all He would have them be. God help us to be faithful sureties for our children, to seek for them nothing less than God seeks, and to live, that from our homes may go forth sons and daughters to prophesy in His name.

A Prayer for Parents

O Lord our God, we thank You again for the institution of the family for transmitting Your salvation to all generations. And we thank You for the revelation of Yourself as the covenant God of the children of Your servants, pledging Yourself to fulfill all Your promises of blessing. And we thank You most of all for the promise of the Spirit to dwell in our sons and daughters.

O Lord, fulfill Your promise to our children. Give us grace to train them for You and prepare them to be ready for the Master's use, every gift cultivated and consecrated for Your service. Let our sons and daughters prophesy in the power of the Holy Ghost.

O Lord, bless all believing parents. Let Your claim on their children, promise of the Spirit, and power promised to them fill their hearts that all their training may be in harmony with Your purpose: *Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Amen.*

Twenty-seventh Day

The Heavenly and the Earthly Father

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those that ask him? Matthew 7:11

WE began our meditations on the Old Testament with man created in the image, after the likeness, of God, with the home on earth the picture of the home in heaven. The glory of the New Testament is its fuller revelation of the Father in heaven; our New Testament studies begin with what God means family life to be and how the fatherliness of God casts light upon our own fatherhood and what we are to be to our children.

First, we note how Jesus wants us to rise from and through the experiences of fatherhood on earth to truly know the Father in heaven. Not that our fatherhood was the original and the reality, to be used by way of comparison and illustration to make God's relationship clear to us. By no means. God is the true Father – from eternity, in His very nature, as the God of love. Fatherhood was the glory and the blessedness of the Divine Being. And our fatherhood on earth has been given as a reflection of His to lead us to a participation in its honor and joy. We are to taste the blessedness of begetting a son in our likeness, the object of our love, the reflection of our image, a companion and helper in all our work.

Home life is a school as much for training parents as children; the deepest mysteries of God's love are best studied by a parent in his own bosom. As we think of our love for our children, the joy they give us, the tender sympathy their troubles awake in us, and the patient kindness their waywardness requires, Jesus wants us to look up and calculate how much more all this must be in God, the Good and Perfect One, the Fountain of love. He wants us to banish every shadow of unbelief from the heart and live our life in the sunshine of God's love. As we see what influence a parent can exert on his child, He would have us be sure that the Father does love and is able to breathe His own mind, His own disposition, and His own Spirit into us. And as we strive to secure the love and obedience of our children and long that they should find their happiness in our will, our friendship, and our company, He asks us to remember that the Father loves to meet us in secret, that the voice and the trust of His child are His joy. What a study for every father and every mother in each pulse of love and joy. And so, in the light of the fatherhood of earth, we rise to what Fatherhood in heaven is.

But the Fatherhood in heaven will also cast its light on the fatherhood of earth and teach us what it ought to be. In giving us the place and the name and the power of father, God has made us His image-bearers. He asks and expects us, in doing our work, to copy Him and act like Him. The parents who desire to bring a full blessing to their children must make God's Fatherhood their model and their study.

They must enter into God's purpose and make it their own, giving themselves to pursue it with their whole heart. The heavenly Father seeks to educate children into His likeness: He has nothing higher to bestow on them. God has appointed parents on earth to be His ministers and fellow workers to carry out His plan, but how can they, unless they understand it and make its realization the first object of family life?

From the Father in heaven they must learn the way in which that purpose is to be attained. In His dealings with His people, they will see how

He first came, as with Abraham, in love and kindness, securing trust and confidence; then with law and its authority, leading them to self-knowledge and self-renunciation; then with the gospel of liberty in the Spirit, maturing them into men. From Him, parents will learn to combine love with authority in the tenderness and patience and self-sacrifice of divine love and in the firmness and righteousness of divine rule; the parent will find the secret of successful training.

The parent must learn how the Father has come down to us in Christ and shown us by His own example that He only wants us to be as He is. As the earthly father gazes and studies, it will dawn upon him how this is the highest duty of our fatherhood. A father must breathe his own spirit into the child, and as that parent receives His Spirit day by day, he can breathe this into his child. Isn't it a solemn but most blessed thing to be a parent? First, he is a child of the heavenly Father and then he is His image, His substitute, and His picture to the child on earth.

This brings us to a third lesson. The earthly father must not only take the Father in heaven as his model and guide, but he must also reflect Him in a way that the child may most naturally rise from him whom he sees to the unseen One whom he represents. A child loves his parents by natural instinct; as the child sees in the father all that is holy and worthy of honor, natural love becomes an affectionate and enthusiastic admiration. The example of the Christian father ought to give a child the best of sermons of the love and care of the heavenly Father and all the blessing and joy He wants to bestow.

But to attain this, the parent must consciously aim at making himself the ladder by which the child can climb to the Father above. When the bright, living, happy piety of the parents, mingling holy reverence to God with childlike love, shines on the children from their early youth, the name of God as Father will become linked with all that is lovely and holy in the memory of a child.

And is it possible to live such that all this shall be true? The one thing the Father loves to give, the center of all His good gifts, is His own Holy Spirit – His Father-Spirit to be in us the spirit of a son. And we have only to believe, and as we believe, to receive, and as we receive, to yield to and live in the Spirit. Then He will make our fatherhood the image of God's, and from us there will flow streams of living water to bless our children.

What a world it would be if every Christian father set himself in true earnestness to realize and fulfill his calling. Shouldn't all fathers and mothers join in the fervent prayer that the Father would make us all the worthy bearers of that name?

A Prayer for Parents

Our Father who art in the heavens, we unite in an earnest prayer for all Your children who bear the holy name of father. Give us, we ask You, more insight into Your Fatherhood and what unspeakable riches of blessing for us and our children it includes. Let us, from the wonderful traits of Your likeness in our feelings towards our children, rise up to believe and enjoy the divine fullness of love which Your heart and Your name offer to us. Let our fatherhood so teach us the blessedness of being the children of Your Father-love.

And then, our Father, give us to see how You command and expect that our fatherhood shall be nothing less than the reflection and the outflow of Your own. Oh, may they indeed be one: one in purpose, one in method, one in principle, one in spirit. O God, we want to be fathers to our children, just as You are to us; make us such, so that You can fully use us as the channels for Your Father-grace to our little ones. May they see in us true pictures of Him to whom we teach them to say, *Our Father who art in the heavens*.

Father, we look to Your Son for the answer to our prayer. We count upon the tenderness and the faithfulness of Your love and upon Your

mighty power and Spirit to bless the parents of Your church who cry to You. Amen.

Twenty-eighth Day

Children of the Kingdom

But the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness.
Matthew 8:12

HERE in close union we have the wonderful privilege and the terrible danger our children have in the church of Christ. They are sons of the kingdom; what can be more glorious? They can be cast out into outer darkness; what could be worse? The only way to avoid the latter is fully to grasp the former – to let it be a power ruling and renewing the whole life. To this end let us try to comprehend all it implies.

Sons of the kingdom. What kingdom? The answer is simple: the kingdom of God. And where is this kingdom? In heaven. It is that divine rule or dominion with the throne of God as its center. He who dwells there is the Holy One from whom all life and all law and all love flow forth. Around that throne are powers and principalities and dominions with their untold myriads of holy spirits who do His will and are the messengers of His power.

And how can this heavenly kingdom be here on earth? When God created the heavens and the earth, it was a sinless territory where His heavenly empire might be established. But the power of the kingdom of Satan interfered, and the coming of God's kingdom was delayed. For four

thousand years, it was promised and hoped for, but the kingdom of heaven was not yet on earth.

And how did this kingdom come? When the King Himself came to earth, then the message was heard: The kingdom of heaven is at hand; the kingdom of heaven is come unto you. He came, first in His own life as a servant to show us that implicit obedience and delight in doing the will of God. In that obedience unto death, He broke the power of Satan and of sin, showed the wondrous love of our King, and set us free for the blessed life of serving and obeying. And when He took His seat upon the throne, the kingdom could come. In the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the kingdom came in power and was set up in the hearts that had been prepared to receive Him and to enter the kingdom.

And who were the subjects of this kingdom? Jesus had said, *Except a person be born again from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God* (John 3:3). Nothing less than the Spirit of God could fit him to enter or even see the kingdom. But with this solemn message, Jesus had also said, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heavens* (Matthew 5:3).

What are the marks of those who truly belong to this kingdom? Nothing less than the marks by which the King was known on earth: obedience and love towards God and an absolute surrender to His will. And love towards man to bring the blessings of the kingdom to all around. In each one of whom the kingdom truly takes possession, the prayer, *Thy kingdom come*, becomes the desire of the heart.

And who are the children of the kingdom? In His great mercy God had committed the promise of the kingdom to Israel, and all its children were its heirs. And now our children, destined for its blessings and baptized into the fellowship of the church, are children of the kingdom, for Jesus said, *of such is the kingdom of the heavens*.

And what is needed to secure for them the possession of the kingdom to which they have been made the heirs? What is needed above everything is this – that they be so educated and trained in the very spirit of the kingdom

that the blessing may become their own personal and everlasting possession.

And who is to train them? Christian parents, this is our holy privilege. As children of the kingdom, they are entrusted to us to keep and nourish. To parents God has entrusted the high commission of leading their children to the life of possession and full enjoyment.

And what is needed to enable the parent to do this? Nothing less than with his whole heart *he himself must live in and for the kingdom of heaven*. The atmosphere of the home must be the spirit of heaven; Christ's command, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God*, must be the ruling principle of all its conduct. Unconsciously the child must receive the impression that not only personal blessing but also the interests and extension of God's kingdom are the hope and the joy of life. Parents whose citizenship is in heaven and who live in it will alone be found worthy or fit to train the children as heirs of the kingdom.

And how are parents able thus to live? *My kingdom*, Jesus said, *is not of this world; my kingdom is not from here*. It is from above, from heaven, from God. Coming out of the world, the believer must tarry in God's presence in worship and surrender until the anointing is fresh upon him. As long as we are content with just enough religion to save ourselves and our children, we shouldn't be surprised if they remain unsaved. Only in seeking to be filled with the Spirit may we count on the blessing of a successful education. *My kingdom is not of this world* – the spirit of the world destroys all that parents hope to effect by their purposes, their precepts, or their prayers. In Christ's command, *First the kingdom*, we have the secret and the certainty of a successful education.

Parents, your children are children of the kingdom, the kingdom of God in heaven. Hold and love and train them as such – for God alone. From God alone is your hope and your help. Seek it in much prayer. Accept it in childlike faith that believes you have what you ask for, staying open every

hour to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, through whom the laws and the powers of the kingdom can work in us.

Above all, remember Jesus. He said, *Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heavens*. He is the King: in Him we have the kingdom as a Presence. Live with Him, on Him, in Him. He loves our children and looks after them; His presence and love will fill us and them with a holy enthusiasm for the kingdom, so they will grow up in the kingdom and for the kingdom. And we shall taste the joy unspeakable of having our home with its life and love and training within the kingdom.

A Prayer for Parents

Our Father who art in the heavens, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever (Matthew 6:9, 13). Blessed is Your name, that by Your almighty power Your kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, has come to this earth and will come until the whole earth be filled with Your glory. Blessed be Your name that we and our little ones are the children of the kingdom. O Father, we look to your Father-love to give us, fathers and mothers, grace to realize how sacred our calling is, because we are training children of the kingdom for You. May all our love and communication and influence help to link our children inseparably with the kingdom. May they never know that they are not living and growing up in it.

Blessed Lord Jesus, You said, *of such is the kingdom*. We ask You to reveal to us what Your kingdom is in its spiritual reality and glory, even here on earth. May the kingdom of God live within us in such power that the very atmosphere our children breathe will make them children of the kingdom. Amen.

Twenty-ninth Day

A Mother's Persevering Prayer

A woman of Canaan having come out of the same borders cried unto him, saying, Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me; my daughter is sick, possessed by a demon. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou desire.

Matthew 15:22, 28

IN the Old Testament, we found God's promises of blessing on the godly training of children and His threatenings on the neglect of this duty. In more than one example, we saw the threats come true. In the sons of Aaron and Eli and in the family of David and Solomon, proof was given that personal righteousness of the fathers could not save the ungodly child. And we found no answer to one of the most solemn questions and which has been as a burning furnace to many parents' hearts: Is there hope for a child growing up in sin and passing beyond the reach of a parent's influence?

It is in Christ Jesus that God has revealed how completely the power of sin and Satan has been broken. It is in Christ Jesus that God has shown us what is possible for His grace to do. It is in Christ Jesus, too, that we must seek for the answer to every question of a parent's heart. In His earthly life is revealed all that the Father and He are willing to do for us; so there we find what a parent may hope for from His mighty saving power on behalf of a wandering child. As we study this carefully, we shall be surprised to find

how many of the most precious and encouraging words of Christ about faith have been spoken to parents in reference to their children. *Be not afraid, only believe. All things are possible to him that believes. O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou desire* (Mark 5:36; 9:23; Matthew 15:28). Such words are the blessed assurance that there is no case in which a child in Satan's power is beyond the reach of a Savior's love and a parent's faith. We see how this is wonderfully worked out in the story of the Syrophenician mother, as we think of her daughter's misery, her prayer's refusal, her faith's perseverance, and her rich reward.

Her daughter's misery. *My daughter is sick, possessed by a demon.* How many mothers have to pray this prayer for a child possessed with an evil spirit far more terrible than what we read there. In this case, it was more sickness than sin; it was the power of Satan in the body more than the soul. But, alas, how many grown-up children of Christian parents are under the power of Satan, given up to pleasure, worldliness, self-will, or sin. Let us encourage them to believe that, however hopeless their case appears, there is One who is mighty to save, the parent's Friend, the children's Redeemer. Let them come to Him with their need and cry out in prayer, *My daughter [child] is sick, possessed by a demon.* Let them make full confession of their child's lost state. Beware of excusing their sin by the thought of what is good or loveable about them. Ask that they may be saved and made happy and taken to heaven. Ask that they may turn from the power of Satan unto God and be translated from the power of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son. Ask that they may be born again, changed from being the children of the Devil to be God's friends and children; honor God by confessing their sin and acknowledging His righteous judgment; ask distinctly and definitely for a full salvation.

Her prayer's refusal is the second lesson this woman teaches us. Christ appeared to turn a deaf ear to her prayer. At first He did not answer her. When He did speak, His answer was worse than His silence; it cut off all hope: He was not sent to the heathen. A second answer, given as she had

come nearer and had again worshipped Him, saying, *Lord, help me*, appeared to heap contempt on her misfortune: she was not only a heathen but a dog. She presented a true picture of what passes in the heart of a pleading parent. They hear of Christ's love and power and begin to pray with great urgency. But He answers not a word: there is no sign of thought or change on the part of the lost one. Still they pray, and it is as if the power of sin grows stronger. Conscience begins to speak of parental sin and unworthiness. The parent settles down in a quiet despondency or a vague hope that tries to shut its eyes to its own wretchedness. Oh, the dark, heartrending uncertainty as to the salvation of that child.

Her faith and perseverance. This is why this mother's example is held up to us. She refused to be denied. She met silence and argument and contempt with one weapon – more prayer, more trust. She had heard of the wondrous Man and His compassion; she saw it in His face; she heard it in the voice that refused her; she would not believe He could send her away empty. She hoped against hope; she believed against appearances and even against His very words; she believed and she triumphed. And now, mother, you who are pleading for your prodigal child have your example. Let her faith and perseverance put your unbelief to shame. In the face of all appearances and all doubts, let your faith rise and claim the promise of an answer to prayer in the name of Jesus. Yield yourself to the Holy Spirit to have everything searched out and brought to the light that you must confess and cast out. Don't trust in the fervency of your desires or in the wrestling urgency of your petition; seek your strength in God's promise and faithfulness, in His power and love. Let the soul, in restful, deliberate confidence in Jesus, praise Him for His promise and His power to save. In this confidence let nothing shake you from the continuous and persevering prayer of faith. The prayer of faith is always heard.

The wondrous blessing she obtained is for us too. There was not only her daughter's deliverance from this grievous trouble; there was also something almost better – a spiritual blessing, our Lord's delighted approval

of her faith: *O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee as thou desire.* Yes, it is in the earnest, believing supplication for a child that the parent's heart can be drawn out toward the Lord, can learn to know and trust Him aright, and can rise to that insight into His love, which is most pleasing to Him. Mother, as you are pleading for loved ones, come nearer to Jesus. He is able to save them. He waits for your faith to take hold of His strength to accept their salvation. Oh, don't let your child perish. Mother, come nearer, tarry with Jesus in prayer, trust Him: your child can be saved.

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Lord Jesus, I, too, like the Syrophenician woman, have a child possessed with a demon. Like her, I come pleading, *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David.*

O Lord, I would confess the sin of my child. You know it all: he has rejected Your love and has chosen the world and sin. I confess my sin, too, Lord. You know how bitter the thought is that, had my life been less in the world and the flesh and more full of faith and of love and of You, my child might have grown up differently. Lord, in deep sorrow I confess my sin; oh, don't let my child perish. Son of David, have mercy on me.

Blessed Lord, I put my trust in You. I look in faith to Your almighty power; the things that are impossible with man are possible with God. I look in faith to Your promise to hear prayer. Lord, I believe You hear me; help my unbelief. I lay this perishing child at Your feet and plead Your love. Savior, I believe in Your love and claim deliverance for my child. In this faith I will praise You for Your grace; I will tarry at Your feet day by day, praising You and looking for Your fulfillment. Make haste, O my Lord, for Your name's sake. Amen.

Thirtieth Day

The Heavenliness of a Little Child

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of the heavens. And whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name receives me. Matthew 18:4-5

THE disciples had come to Jesus with the question, *Who is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens?* (Matthew 18:1). He spoke so often of the kingdom that to them it suggested the idea of power and glory; they could not help but wonder who would have the highest place. How strange and incomprehensible Jesus' answer must have been. He called a little child and set him in the midst of them. He told them that as long as they were thinking of who would be greatest, they could not enter the kingdom; they must first become as little children, and then the humblest and most childlike would be the highest in the kingdom. And whoever would receive one such little child in Jesus' name would receive Him. The deeper the sympathy with the child nature, recognizing Jesus and His name, the closer and more complete the union with Him.

How wonderfully applicable to parents are Jesus' words to His disciples. In creating a family with father and mother, God sets a little child in the midst. And in that little child, He opens the mystery of the kingdom of heaven and the spiritual world to them. He tells them that if they want to know about heaven and their fitness for it, they must study the child nature.

On earth they will find nothing so like heaven as a little child. Parents must learn three lessons from this.

First, the heavenliness of the little child. Where do we see this? Our Savior uses one word, *Whosoever therefore shall **humble** himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom.* The greatest will be he who thinks least of being greatest, because he loses sight of himself in seeking God and His kingdom. The great beauty of childlikeness is the absence of self-consciousness. The child loses himself in what is around him. The curse of sin is that it makes every man his own center; even when he seeks the kingdom of heaven, he is still thinking how he can be greatest in the kingdom. In the true child, self does not yet manifest itself; it lives and is at rest outside of itself in the parent. It loves and rejoices in being loved; it is truthful and trustful to all around, counting upon others to be what they appear. This naturalness and simplicity of the child, Jesus tells us, is something heavenly, the thing in nature most allied to the kingdom. We need to learn that a parent should seek to preserve and cherish nothing more carefully than this heavenly childlikeness. The secret of that beautiful calmness and serenity is the image of the peace and the rest of heaven.

The spirit of the world is the very opposite; with its rivalry and ambition, its seeking excitement and possessions, it destroys all that is beautiful and heavenly in the child. Especially Christian parents, who have the means for gratifying taste and pleasure at their disposal, are in danger of destroying the simplicity and tenderness of the child by stimulating desires which are of the earth. And so, in the midst of a great deal of Bible teaching and hymn singing, the very heart of true religion may be eaten out by the artificial and unchildlike spirit of the homes.

Parents, study the thought of Jesus' heart when He spoke so strongly of the need of being childlike. Value the childlikeness and simplicity of your little one as his heavenly beauty, realizing that the little one is susceptible to what surrounds him – the fostering influence of the heavenly life or the withering effect of a worldly life. A wonderful suitableness exists between

the Holy Spirit, who brings heaven down to us and reveals it within, and the heavenliness of childhood. Train your children in that holy, happy stillness which keeps the heart open to His workings.

But how shall the parent succeed in doing this? Our Lord's words have a second lesson. If we are to watch over the heavenliness of our children, we must ourselves be childlike and heavenly minded. Christ put a little child in the midst of strong men to teach them. Our children lose their childlikeness early because parents have so little of it. The atmosphere of the home often lacks that simple, happy, trustful living in the Father's presence. To be great in the kingdom of heaven is too seldom the object of earnest desire. To be the greatest by being humble and childlike, the least and the servant of all, is hardly dreamed of. No wonder parents hinder and quench the spirit of the child instead of strengthening it.

Let parents study to be childlike. Very few studies are more difficult, but very few bring a richer reward. The little treasures entrusted to us have a higher worth than we know; their very littleness and their future value is what constitutes their greatest attraction. Only the childlike life of the parent living in great simplicity of truth and trust with the Father can maintain the childlikeness in the child too.

To this end let us take in the third lesson our Savior has: *Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name receives me.* Let us receive our children at their birth in the name of Jesus, in His Spirit, with His appreciation of their simplicity and humility. Let us receive them in His name, as those whom He loves and blesses and of whom He says, *of such is the kingdom*, to be kept and trained for Him. Let us receive them in His name as sent by Jesus to remind us of His own childlike humility and obedience to the Father. Let us receive them day by day in His name, as a gift from the Father to draw us to Him. Let us receive them and cherish them in His name as He would receive them, as He did receive them and bless them. Let us receive them in His name as we would receive Him.

This is not asking too much, for He asks and promises nothing less. He that *receive[s] one such little child in my name receives me*. He that recognizes and loves the childlikeness and the Christlikeness of the little child receives Christ Himself. This is the promise. With every child, something of heaven and of Christ comes into the house. In many cases it is not noticed or cared for, and all of heaven is pushed aside by the world. Blessed are they who know that by receiving the child in Jesus' name, they receive Him. *Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name receives me*. With the child He sets in their midst, He takes the parents into His training to teach them how to be great in the kingdom of heaven, making their child a blessing to them that they may be a real blessing to the child. He comes to bless parent and child together and make the home what it was meant to be – the picture, the promise, and the pathway to the Father's home in heaven.

Dear parents, shouldn't we ask our Lord Jesus to open our minds to His thoughts about the heavenliness of our children and to open our eyes to see Him in them, so our little ones might be the blessed messengers that lead us to heaven and bring to us Jesus Himself?

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Lord, open our ears to hear what You speak and our eyes to see as You see. Give us hearts to understand and experience how surely You fulfill Your promise: *Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name receives me*.

Lord Jesus, we ask You for a childlike spirit. May the simplicity and restfulness, the love and the loveliness, and the trust and truthfulness of the child nature dwell in us that the heavenly childlikeness of our little ones might be maintained through advancing years. Let us realize that we cannot truly fulfill our parental calling unless our walk with God is like that of little children.

Blessed Lord, we thank You, that however feeble we are or how far short we might fall, we may still receive You. You come to be our Teacher and our Helper. We ask You to strengthen us and all parents in this faith that we might understand that nowhere are You nearer or more ready to bless than in the home where the children are received in Your name to be saved by You and trained for You. Amen.

Thirty-first Day

Suffering Children to Come to Jesus

But Jesus said, Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of the heavens. Matthew 19:14

WHAT deep significance there is in this word, *Suffer the little children to come unto me*. We suffer or permit that which we are not naturally inclined or prefer to be otherwise. The mothers had probably heard the words Jesus had spoken and brought their little ones to be blessed by this wonderful Teacher (Matthew 18:3-5). Jesus saw the disciples rebuking them. They found it hard to understand and follow the Master; what could the little children have to do with Him? Jesus hears them and says, *Forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of the heavens*. He loves to have the children; they are nearest the kingdom and the fittest for it; the kingdom needs them as the teachers of the wise and the great to show the path through which heaven can be entered.

Suffer the little children to come unto me. The word reminds us how our wisdom cannot understand that the kingdom and the little ones are specially fitted for each other. The faith of a child is often tolerated as a thing not to be trusted or rejoiced in. With such a spirit in parents or the church, the youthful grace is quenched, and the child's religion becomes much as that of the majority of older people. Listen to the words of the Master. If you cannot understand or approve, do not forbid or hinder the children in

coming to Jesus; just bear with it, until you see how He can bless them and until His word, *of such is the kingdom*, has entered your heart, and you learn to receive them as He did. Only then will you have right views of what childlike faith is.

Childlike faith must consist of what constitutes the very center of God's revelation – coming to Jesus. In His own words, *Come unto Me*, our Lord spoke of the blessed rest He would give to all who came to Him to exchange their weary burdens for His loving yoke. This simple gospel is what a child needs. His faith is ready to believe in the unseen One, so kind and loving. His humility finds no difficulty in confessing his sin and his need of help. And nothing appears more simple and natural than that this loving Savior should be obeyed and followed. As by instinct, the child reconciles faith and works; he sees that trust in Him should bring obedience. But, above all, the child takes in what older people often cannot comprehend – that all religion and salvation center in a living Person: to a child, *Jesus Himself* is religion, to be loved, trusted, and obeyed. Oh, if only coming to Jesus in prayer, surrender, and love would be the spontaneous exercise of our faith. Oh, let us not hinder, but help our children to come to Jesus.

This childlike faith can be hindered. The words of Jesus suggest the thought. The child is weaker than the older disciple but is under his influence and can be kept back by him. God has given the training of the children into the hands of their elders, but his simple faith and sense of love and duty to Jesus may be terribly checked by the example and conduct of those around him. So Jesus says, *Forbid them not*. The word means “hinder them not.” The faith of the child is feeble and can easily be hindered. Christian parents are appointed as guardians to watch and foster its growth. All growth comes from within and depends upon a healthy life. But young and feeble growth needs to be preserved from danger and be provided for.

Often parents have been bitterly disappointed in their children: when young, they felt deeply and spoke beautifully, but before long all was lost.

The parents probably trusted what was a blessed, but feeble, beginning. They did not watch over the evil influences, which the young plant could not resist. They allowed the spirit of the world, company, pleasure, and the enjoyment of the world to choke the good seed. Or they failed to supply the needed nourishment. As the child grew up, personal speaking of this blessed Jesus, fellowship, and an example of a warm, living Christianity, and a living love for Jesus were missing. The child's faith disappeared, because the parents hindered it.

How different the result is where coming to Jesus is in a right spirit, fostered and encouraged not only in the little ones but also in the growing boy and girl through the years that lead to maturity. We need to be kept from right-hand as well as left-hand errors. On the one hand, we must beware of despising a child's faith as of little value. Like all beginnings of life and growth, they may be feeble and easily lost; they are still of infinite value as the preparation for that which abides forever. We must, on the other hand, be kept from overestimating or trusting in it. We must remember that the tender plant needs unceasing care and that only in the congenial atmosphere of a home holy to the Lord can we count on its ripening fruit to eternal life.

We have already suggested what a child's faith needs. Just suffer the child to come to Jesus and remove every hindrance. Believe what Jesus says, *of such is the kingdom*, and allow this heavenly element in the child's nature to show itself and reach out after the Son of God. In teaching your child, let Jesus and the coming to Him to be saved from sin, to have the heart sanctified and satisfied, be your chief end. Beware of coming between the child and Jesus; let the child have free access to Jesus. Beware of hindering the child by distrust or coolness. Let the warmth of your love for Jesus, your holy example of obedience, your teaching and praying – your whole life – be a daily help to the child to see Jesus, live with Him, and long for Him. Jesus Christ is meant to be our everyday friend, our every-hour companion. Let all the wondrous influence you possess be wielded for

this one thing – to satisfy the desire of the Savior’s heart and make your child wholly His.

These words of Christ’s were spoken to disciples who knew Him and confessed Him to be the Son of God. These chosen friends were sound in the faith, but they didn’t understand His thoughts about children. Many theologians, preachers, and parents still do not understand Jesus. Dear parents, let the Savior teach you the preciousness of your little ones. Learn to see in them what He does; in His light, your care of them will become a blessing to you and to them.

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Savior, we ask You to open our eyes to see in our little ones what You see, to think of them as You do. Make this so clear to us that it may become impossible not to lead them to You. Let Your claim on them and Your love for them be the secret principle that inspires all our education.

And we ask, Lord, for a heavenly wisdom to know how to guide them in coming to You and helping them abide with You. And may our faith in Your love for them be the power by which their young hearts are made strong.

Blessed Lord, You are the parent’s and the children’s Friend. *Come unto me* is Your call in every need and for every blessing. We come now, Lord, and ask grace to enable us to bring our children. Grant us Your Holy Spirit, that day by day and year by year we may possess and train them for You alone and for Your glory. Amen.

Thirty-second Day

A Father's Tears

*And straightway the father of the child crying out with tears, said,
Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief. Mark 9:24*

WHEN Jesus spoke to the disciples about the mothers who were coming with their little children, His word was, *Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not*. In this story in Mark, He uses a stronger word. When the father of the lunatic told Him that the disciples had not been able to cast out the evil spirit, Jesus reproved their unbelief and said, *Bring him unto me*. The expression is a stronger one, still setting forth the same truth. The little ones were quite ready and willing to come to the loving Stranger to be blessed. This poor child had to be brought, whether he knew it or not. There can be no evil spirit in a child so strong, no resistance so desperate, that the parent doesn't have the liberty and power to bring him to Jesus. To every disciple, to every father and mother, Christ's voice is heard calling, *Bring him unto me*.

If we want to understand what it is to bring a child to Jesus, we have the further communication of this father with Jesus. When he told the touching story of how the boy had been the prey of this terrible trouble, and pleaded, *if thou canst do any thing, help us, having mercy on us*, Jesus threw all the responsibility of the issue upon the father and said, *If thou canst believe this, all things are possible to him that believes*. It was not the question of

whether Jesus could and would do it, but whether the father could believe. If he did, the healing was sure; if he did not, it could not take place.

If thou canst believe this, all things are possible to him that believes. These words express the blessings of God's mighty saving love that are put at the disposal of faith. By faith we understand what God has done and what He will do. By faith we see Him who is invisible, in the reality of His almighty power and His love for us. By faith we receive His Word into our very heart as a quickening power. By faith our heart, our nature, and our life are opened up to God. By faith we become fully conscious of the purpose of His will and Him waiting to work it in us. By faith we forsake the visible, ourselves, with our thoughts and strength, and look to what God has promised, giving Him the glory. Faith is the exercise of a will that yields itself for God's holy will. *All things are possible to him that believes,* because *with God nothing is impossible*, and faith is union with God.

In speaking these words to the father of the lunatic, Jesus gave us the secret of successful parental training and prayer. He tells us that it is not only the ministers of His gospel, the watchmen, and the workers in fields of special danger or difficulty, but also every Christian parent that needs to exercise strong faith and secure the salvation of his child. It teaches us that His compassion and power are longing to help us, if we can believe. If not, we are to blame if our children perish.

There are parents who think this is a hard saying. They seek the cause of unconverted and unsaved children in God and not in themselves. Has God's sovereignty nothing to do with the salvation of our children? If it does, how can all the responsibility be thrown on our unbelief? Scripture reveals to us most clearly God's sovereignty; the final decision of the destiny of each man is in His hands. Scripture also reveals man's responsibility and the all-prevailing power of faith. True humility accepts both statements without reconciling them; it accepts the truth Jesus utters here – that if the parent can believe, the child can be saved.

This truth ought to affect us. With tears the father cried, *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief*. In the agony of the thought that his unbelief may keep the blessing from his child, he bursts into tears and casts himself at Jesus' feet to be delivered from that unbelief. With this penitence and confession, faith is exercised and victory is given. The devil is cast out, and the child is saved. Christ's word had done its work and revealed the unbelief, but it also wakened the faith that brought the blessing.

Christ's word must do the same with every parent who pleads for a child's liberation from Satan's power. A father's tears have power. There must be confession and humbling wherever there is to be strong faith. There must be the conviction and confession of the sin of unbelief.

When the disciples asked the Master why they could not cast out this devil, He told them it was because of their need for prayer and fasting. Their unbelief was an indication of the state of their hearts. The world, the worldly man, cannot believe. The self-righteous, proud man cannot believe. Only the pure in heart, the humble, the soul that thirsts for God and forsakes all to follow Christ can be strong in faith. Therefore, the first step in the path of an overcoming faith is the confession of sinfulness and sins.

I have heard parents plead earnestly with God for the conversion of their grown children, when I secretly feared that they could not be heard. I saw no sign of confession of parental sin. There are parents whose worldliness, lack of living faith, and self-indulgence and neglect in the education of their children have simply sown the seeds and are now reaping the fruit in the departure of their children from God. And yet they wonder why their children are not more religious. They sometimes pray earnestly for them and try to have the faith that their children will be saved. They may be deceiving themselves. True faith sanctifies. It searches the heart. It confesses the sin of unbelief. It casts itself weeping and helpless at the feet of Jesus. There, and there alone, resting on His strength, it obtains the blessing He loves to bestow.

Fathers, let these children first bring you to Jesus in confession and prayer and trust; your faith can then bring them in truth. And in yourself and in them you will experience what the power and truth is of the word: *If thou canst believe this, all things are possible to him that believes.*

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Son of God, look in mercy upon a parent who now comes to You with a child still unconverted and under the power of the Evil One.

O Lord Jesus, have compassion on us and help us. Let our children be delivered from Satan's power and make them children of God.

Lord, I have heard Your voice, and it has filled my heart with trembling. I have to confess how little my life has been a life of faith and how my unbelief has hindered the blessing from my child. I must confess the worldliness and selfishness, the lack of surrender and obedience to You, which have made a strong faith impossible. Lord, I do believe; help my unbelief.

I believe, Lord, in Your mighty power. I believe in Your infinite love. I believe in You as my Savior and Friend. I believe that You hear me now for this child. Lord, I believe; help my unbelief. I look to Your Word and hold it fast. I yield myself to a life of entire surrender to You alone. In this faith I praise Your holy name. Amen.

Thirty-third Day

The Sacredness of Motherhood

He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.
Luke 1:15

MAY God grant us His grace, to meditate in holy tenderness and reverence on the truth revealed to us here, a truth of unspeakable preciousness and power. Our Lord has taught us that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist.

We find here, at the opening of the New Testament history, the same truth that came in the laying of the foundations of the covenant with the patriarchs. In preparing and securing servants to do His work, God loves to begin at the very beginning and take charge to sanctify the vessel He is to use for His service. The better we comprehend this part of God's plan with His church as one of the root principles of redemption, the better we will understand the holy privilege and duty of parentage. Mothers will be encouraged and strengthened in faith to yield themselves with all the hopes and joys of motherhood to be God's chosen vessels for the fulfillment of His purpose and the perfecting of His church.

Let us look first at what Scripture teaches us of the mother in whom the Holy Spirit is to work. Of John's parents, we learn: *And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless* (Luke 1:6). This is the God of nature, who is also the

God of grace. With omnipotence at His command, ready to work any miracles He pleases, He carefully observes His own laws, and when He wants a holy child, He seeks for holy parents. Throughout Scripture, especially in the New Testament, the blessed indwelling and in-working of the Holy Spirit is promised to the obedient. In obedience to divine command, man must build the house; then the Holy Spirit takes possession and fills it as the glory and the presence of the Lord. And so it was of parents, *walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless*, that John would be born who was to be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, and the forerunner of Him who would baptize with the Holy Ghost.

The double lesson for every parent, and particularly mothers, is of the deepest interest. A righteous and blameless life prepares for the power of the Holy Ghost in the unborn child. Let expectant mothers study Elizabeth's character:

Righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. It is to such a life that God chose us, *that we should be holy and without blemish before him in charity* (Ephesians 1:4). It is to such a life Jesus redeemed us: *He has reconciled you in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight* (Colossians 1:21-22). It is no more than what every child of God ought to be and can be, but it is especially what every mother should be who would offer her body as the temple of the Holy Ghost. Oh, if only mothers, and fathers too, understood to whatever degree the spirit of the world and the flesh are allowed to have rule, they hinder the influence of the Spirit upon the child. Let them believe that a life, which seeks to walk in obedience and righteousness, will be accepted and honored of Him. Let them believe that they have a right to ask and expect the Spirit that is in them to take possession of the life God gives through them. Let them cherish this as the highest and the brightest hope of a holy motherhood: *He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.*

Let us now look at what the angel's message teaches us of the child thus conceived and born:

And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord – three marks of a child born under the covering of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:14-15a). The parents are to *have joy and gladness*. Alas, how many Christian parents have had reason to say in bitter agony, “Would God my child had never been born!”

Wouldn't you rather have divinely given and divinely secured joy and gladness in the children that are given to you? Wouldn't you rather give them to God from before their birth? Yours will be the holy joy of heaven in them, as you see the beauty of the Lord upon them, a joy that no one can take away.

And many shall rejoice at his birth. Alas, how many children of Christian parents have been the curse of their fellow men. Wouldn't you rather have your child blessed and made a blessing with many to thank God that they knew him? Study the story of John's birth. Study it in connection with the story of Jesus' birth. It was for Jesus' sake, in the power of the Son of God coming in the flesh, that John was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. Plead the coming and the birth and the redemption of Jesus on behalf of your child. Claim the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh and the promise of the Spirit to you and your children, and your faith will be strengthened so that your child, too, may be filled with the Spirit and may make many to rejoice at his birth.

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord. This is the crowning blessing. A joy to his parents, a blessing to his fellow men, and great in the sight of the Lord is the Spirit-born child. Among men he may not make a name; in gifts and talents he may not be great, but great he will be in the sight of Him who sees not as man sees. He will be a vessel God can use for His work, a true preparer of the way for the coming of the Lord in His kingdom.

Mothers, God gives you this picture of Elizabeth and her child of promise with the double lesson: live as she did, and believe and receive what she did. Young mothers, your motherhood is a holier and a more blessed thing in God's sight than you know. If you are indeed God's child, you have been placed under the leading and the rule of His Holy Spirit in everything. Be sure that all the tender interest and solemn thought, all the quiet trust and joyful hope, which expectant motherhood stirs up, may be sanctified and refined by God's Holy Spirit, and you may be united with your little one under the overshadowing of His heavenly grace.

A Prayer for Parents

Ever-blessed God, once more You have shown me Your way in preparing a seed to serve You, and what a deep interest You have in securing a holy and blameless motherhood. I have seen You training a mother for Your service. You fill her heart with the thought of the divine destiny of her child. You stir her faith to the confident expectation of Your Divine Spirit and blessing on her seed. You call her in righteousness and blamelessness of life to her holy work. You teach her in all things that the life she is to bring forth is a holy gift from You to be received and borne in a pure and holy vessel.

O great and glorious God, in deep humility and trembling, Your handmaid bows before You to offer herself to Your service. O my Father, who gives the Holy Spirit to Your children to make even their body Your temple, and fulfills Your wondrous promise to Your child, let Your Holy Spirit dwell in me that I may influence my child for You. And let my child be born only for this one thing – that he may be great in Your sight and a blessing to all around him. Amen.

Thirty-fourth Day

A Mother's Surrender

Then Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. Luke 1:38

WE have often had occasion to notice the wonderful oneness of mother and child and to what extent the mother influences and decides what the child is to be. The life she imparts is her own life in the deepest meaning of the term. When God gave His Son to be born of a woman, this law was not violated, and the mother He chose for His Son was doubtless all that grace could make her to be the fit vessel through whom He would receive His human nature and disposition.

And so, just as Jesus is our example in everything, so we may expect His mother to be an example to our mothers. If the child Jesus is an example to our children, there will be something for mothers to learn from His mother. The heavenly messenger said to her, *Hail, thou that art much graced, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women* (Luke 1:28). And Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, said to her, *Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And blessed is she that believed* (Luke 1:42, 45). Mary surely left an example for every mother who yields herself like she did to the Lord, bearing a child that can be called the Son of the Most High. If only there were more mothers like Mary, there would be more children like the holy child Jesus.

And what constitutes the most marked feature of Mary's motherhood? It is the childlike simplicity of faith in which she surrendered herself to the divine purpose: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word*. She called herself the Lord's slave or bondwoman; in quiet trust and expectancy she looked to Him to do what He had said. It is the same spirit of obedient faith, which had once fitted Abraham to be the father of the promised seed, that now prepared her to become the mother of Him in whom the promise was to be fulfilled.

This was not without difficulties or questionings. We read: *she was troubled at his words and wondered in her mind what manner of salutation this should be* (Luke 1:29). When again he had spoken, she asked, *How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?* But after the angel spoke to her of the power of the Most High overshadowing her, she yielded herself to the divine word. And she became an example to every mother who would share the benediction, *And blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord* (Luke 1:45). It is the surrender of faith that makes a blessed motherhood: *Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb*.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Mary teaches a mother to yield herself to God for the service of His kingdom, that His purpose and glory may be made manifest in her. It was not by the birth of Mary's Son alone that God's kingdom was to come. Believing parents may look upon their children as the stones of the great temple of which Jesus was the cornerstone.

Over all the impulses of human love and the instincts of a God-given maternity, there hovers a divine purpose for the carrying out of His plan. Nothing will do more to sanctify the life of the wife and the mother than when she realizes she is the Lord's bondwoman, redeemed for this, that from her may be born a generation to serve the Lord. Human love will receive a divine consecration; what otherwise appears to be only natural and earthly is elevated into the heavenlies. The expectant mother knows she is

one of His servants, doing His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word.

Such is the faith that gives the strength to surrender to God's service. It no longer looks at difficulties or impossibilities; it depends on God to carry out His purpose and give the grace and the strength for the work to which He has called us. And this faith gives that quiet rest of body and spirit which brings health and strength to mother and babe. Or what mother is there who, as she first becomes conscious of her pregnancy, is not at times with Mary *greatly troubled* and does not ask, *How can all this be?* She finds no rest so sure or sweet as when she casts her troubles on her Lord. If the God of nature has created her for a calling, and the God of grace has redeemed her to fulfill that calling in the interests of His kingdom, she assuredly may trust His power and love not to forsake her in her hour of need. *When I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear* (Psalm 56:3-4). Such words have a thousand times over been the comfort of the trembling but trusting handmaid of the Lord.

Be it unto me according to thy word. One trait of Mary's character must not be overlooked. Twice it is said of her, *But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart* (Luke 2:19). It is in the holy quiet of meditation and reflection on what God has said that the spirit of trust is cultivated. It is only as God's words are kept and pondered in the heart that they can quicken and deepen a living faith. Every mother who searches Holy Scripture will find many sayings of God with reference to her sacred calling, which will fill her heart with confidence and joy. They will teach her to regard everything connected with the birth of the child as a matter of deepest interest to the Father in heaven. She will see how all the exceedingly great and precious promises may be claimed by her for the little one. She will see how her receiving the little one in the name of Jesus has the promise of Jesus' presence for herself and the child. She will find that all the grace needed for carrying out the training is most surely given to

each one who will be a handmaid of the Lord and believe what He has spoken. All is written in the Book of the Lord; the mother who listens and waits and believes will be able to say, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.* As she bides her time, let thoughtful, trustful pondering of God's words engage the heart, and she will find how true the word is: *Blessed is she that believed.*

What a holy and blessed thing the birth of a child becomes in the light of the birth of Jesus. What a holy and blessed task the mother has in light of the Most High God, as the means of the fulfillment of His purpose, the promotion of His glory, and the experience of His special grace and mercy. As the mother ponders these things, she will understand something of that word of Paul: *she shall be saved in childbearing, if she continues in faith and charity and sanctification and modesty* (1 Timothy 2:15). Just as labor in the sweat of his brow was given to man, so the labor of childbearing was given to the woman. It calls and helps in continuing that blessed life of faith and trustful dependence, of love and gentleness and motherly kindness, in which true blessedness is found. It helps to form that perfect womanly character which is one of God's most beautiful gifts on earth. It is in this path of loving acceptance of God's appointment and trustful resting in His promise that the Word will come true, as a greeting to each expectant mother: *Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*

A Prayer for Parents

Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Yes, Lord, as You have already looked upon her in Your mercy and set her apart for the sacred work of bearing and bringing up a seed for You, continue to look upon her to give her all that she needs and to work in her all that is well pleasing in Your sight. *As the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until he shall have mercy upon us* (Psalm 123:2). Grant to Your child an ever-increasing clearness, the

blessed assurance that in this holy calling of motherhood she is indeed Your handmaiden, called to the fulfillment of Your purposes, set apart for the service of Your kingdom. Let this thought teach me to look upon everything connected with the birth of my child as of deepest interest to my Father. Let it encourage me to cast every fear and burden, every care and pain, on Him in whose service they come. Let it sanctify all the hope and joy with which You wonderfully sweeten the sorrow with which sin had filled our cup.

And so let it be unto me according to Your Word. In childlike faith, O my Lord, I take Your blessed Word with all its teachings and its promises as my light and strength. In the time of patient waiting or in the hour of anguish, Your Word shall be my stay. Let Your Holy Spirit unfold to Your handmaiden what treasures Your Word contains for her as a mother that she may know at the right time to receive what You have provided for her. May she be so prepared that the child, who has been received according to Your Word, may be trained according to that Word and enter into the full enjoyment of all that Your Word holds out in promise to the seed of Your people. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. Amen.*

Thirty-fifth Day

A Mother's Thanksgiving

Then Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saving Health, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. (Luke 1:46-48)

THERE is perhaps no moment of such exquisite joy and deep, unutterable thanksgiving taking the place of pain and sorrow as when a mother knows herself to be the living mother of a living child. Our blessed Lord used it as the type of that wondrous surprise when His disciples found Him to be the Living One after they had mourned for Him. *The woman, when she is in travail, has pain, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers the anguish no more, for joy that a man is born into the world (John 16:21).* A mother will not find a more fitting expression of her joy than in thanksgiving to Him to whom she owes so much. She will find expressions of that thanksgiving in many portions of Holy Scripture. How often has the mother almost instinctively asked for the words of Psalm 103:1-5: *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless the name of his holiness. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgives all thine iniquities; who heals all thy diseases; who redeems thy life from destruction; who crowns thee with mercy and compassion; who satisfies thy mouth with good things so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.* But as the simple summary of

all a mother has to say, no words will be found more beautiful than these of the mother of our Lord: *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saving Health, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden* (Luke 1:46-48).

In His holy providence, the Father has ordered that the first week after the birth of the little one is a time of weakness, in which quiet and rest are needed for the restoration of nature's exhausted powers. The arrangement is one of wondrous grace, giving the mother time to prepare herself again for the new duties placed on her. While household duties and ordinary communication are kept at a minimum, the Lord would keep His child in the secret place of His Holy Presence to encourage and instruct her for the responsibilities awaiting her. And there is nothing more pleasing to her Lord or strengthening for her than the spirit of thanksgiving, which should give its bright tone to all her thoughts and hopes and the song of praise as Mary declared: *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saving Health, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; ... For he that is mighty has done great things unto me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is on those that fear him from generation to generation* (Luke 1:46-50).

It is hardly necessary to remind a mother of all there is for her to praise. As she thinks of anxious thoughts and fears, her song is: *I sought the LORD, and he heard me and delivered me from all my fears* (Psalm 34:4). She looks at the precious little treasure that has been given to her, and the words come spontaneously: *What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?* (Psalm 116:12). She sees in the little one an immortal being, fitted for showing God's glory on earth and sharing that glory in heaven, as a jewel in Jesus' crown. Her soul bows in trembling wonder at the thought that the charge of keeping such a treasure should be committed to her. She remembers that, though the little one has inherited from her an evil nature, through her, too, it has the promise of the covenant and the pledge of the Spirit: her child is holy, because she is one of God's holy ones

in Christ. She thinks of all the grace and wisdom and strength provided her in Christ to secure to her and her child all that God's love has prepared. As she listens to the voice, *My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness* (2 Corinthians 12:9), she can only sing again, *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saving Health. And his mercy is on those that fear him from generation to generation.* It is God Himself in whom Mary and grateful mothers are glad and rejoice.

This spirit of thanksgiving is of greater worth than can well be expressed. It elevates and sanctifies both the joy and the glad possessor, because it lifts all out of the sphere of the natural into the fellowship of the spiritual. In this way it is the true preparation for all the work the mother has before her. We saw in Mary's surrender of herself to God how two elements were combined in the surrender to the work she had to perform: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, and the trust that depended on God to do for her what He had promised: *Be it unto me according to thy word.* In both of these aspects, the thanksgiving and joy of the hour of deliverance will be guidance and strength.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord. The labor of bearing a child is but the beginning of that labor of love to which God has appointed and set apart the mother. The whole work of rearing and guarding and training the child is now to follow. The spirit of thanksgiving is the best preparation for the altar of consecration. If the mother is indeed to receive grace for the right and successful fulfillment of this new charge, it will require on her part a very definite giving up of herself to be the Lord's loving slave for this holy work. As she looks at how much she may need to part with and put away, and how much she will struggle against to overcome to be the holy mother of a holy child, she may think the sacrifice and strain will be too great. She may think it is impossible to live so strictly, so entirely given up to God's service. God could bless us and our children even though we are not so holy. If that mother would just pause and think of what God has done. Has the

thanksgiving been so unreal, the joy so selfish and earthly, that there can be any hesitation as to whom these lives shall belong? God forbid; if the thanksgiving has been true, can't it lead the mother to say that she will live entirely for God that she may have grace to train a child? *The joy of the LORD is your strength*; a mother's joy is the power for a mother's work; the spirit of thanksgiving leads the mother and child to the altar of consecration where they are laid as living sacrifices to the Lord.

Be it unto me according to thy word. This word of faith and trust, looking to God to do all that He has promised, gets new meaning after the experience of the first part of its fulfillment. In all the work that awaits the mother in the future, the goodness just experienced teaches her to trust. Let her yield herself heartily, not to her work, but to her God for His work; she may have confidence that His teaching and His help and His strength are realities. Let her in the joyful spirit of praise take His Word, and as she studies what it says of a mother on earth, note what it says of the Father in heaven and the abounding grace He has undertaken to supply. Her faith will grow strong that the joy of a child born into the world is but the beginning of a joy that shall know no ending. Let thanksgiving lift the heart to God in praise. Let faith lift the heart to God also; thanksgiving will become natural, and the life of mother and child may become one unceasing song of faith and love, of surrender and obedience, of thanksgiving and praise.

Blessed be the Lord, for He has showed me His marvelous kindness. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.* What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?

A Prayer for Parents

O my Father, in this the time of her weakness and gladness of heart,
Your handmaid draws near to praise Your mercy and love. Here am I
and this precious child You have given me, the witnesses of Your power
and goodness; may our lives, all our days devoted to You, be the
sacrifice of thanksgiving we bring You.

Oh, hear the prayer of Your handmaid, and let my life, now received anew as from Your hand, indeed become wholly new. In daily communication with my Father, in close following and fellowship with my Lord Jesus, in a very tender yielding to the leading and sanctifying of the Holy Spirit, I desire to live wholly as Your handmaid.

And with myself, Lord, I offer You my precious child. Let the grace I have asked for fit me from his very birth to hold him as Your property, a sacred trust from You to nurse and train as Yours. He comes from You, O my God, a gift to me; accept him from me again, a living gift to You. Come to Your handmaid, I pray, in this time of her weakness and thanksgiving. In this time of holy quiet, let Your presence overshadow me and give me the assurance that my prayer is heard: that You have accepted her and her little one as Your own forevermore. Amen.

Thirty-sixth Day

Jesus, the Children's Surety

They brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord) and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord. Luke 2:22-24

ACCORDING to the law of God in Israel, a child was circumcised when he was eight days old; this was done in the child's home. On the fortieth day, the mother was to appear in the temple to bring the sacrifice of her purification and to present her child to the Lord (Leviticus 12:6). If the child was a firstborn, his presentation had special reference to the firstborn belonging to the Lord and had to be redeemed. The child Jesus, therefore, had to be presented to the Lord, as being made under the law and made like unto His brethren in all things. Not only did He experience everything we pass through, but by giving us the Spirit, which was in Him when passing through those experiences, He also may now impart to us the blessing and the sanctifying grace that flow from fellowship with Him. This truth brings wonderful joy and comfort for parents as they bring their little ones to present them before the Lord.

Let us study this presentation of the holy child Jesus. There He is, presented to His Father in heaven by His earthly parents – a helpless infant, but a pleasing sacrifice, a sweet-smelling savor. He came as the firstborn

among many brethren through whom our little ones can be acceptable to the Holy One. He was indeed made like us that we might become like Him; He was made like our children that they might be made like Him. He was not only Mary's firstborn but also the Father's firstborn among many brethren. Where the firstfruits are holy, the whole family is holy.

In Israel, the presentation of the child was accompanied by a sacrifice to cleanse away the defilement of sin cleaving to both mother and child. And what a mercy that the mother now can look to the blessed Jesus, the great sin offering and atonement, for her cleansing from all sin, so she may be accepted and fitted for being a true mother to this child. And what mercy that the children share in the effect of that great sacrifice before they understand it – that they may receive that Holy Spirit which is the lawful inheritance of the seed of God's believing people. We present our little one to the Lord with Jesus as the great sin offering, making us acceptable, clean, and holy to the Lord.

The objective of this presentation in the temple was to acknowledge God's claim upon them and devote them to Him as His property. With what gladness and confidence parents do this after seeing Jesus presented in the temple. What does this mean? Hasn't the Eternal God not spared His only-begotten Son, but given Him up for us and our children? Hasn't He given His Son, the Lord of glory, to be our children's possession to enter into all their feebleness and misery? Hasn't God submitted His Son to a death like ours under the curse? Shall we now withhold our children from Him? Or shall we not most gladly present them before Him to be wholly His, devoted to His service and glory? Shall we not place our little one beside this holy child and say, "Father, through Your holy child Jesus, with Him, in Him, like Him, I present my child to You, to be the Lord's forever?"

Be assured that in presenting your child, there is a rich and sure blessing. Presented to God in Jesus, accepted in Jesus, he may now grow up with and like Jesus. Let your faith lay hold of the holy child life of Jesus as belonging to your child. Let your faith maintain and renew daily the solemn

act in which you as a parent appeared before the Lord to present your child to Him, before you took him back to your home to rear and train. What we present to God He takes. And what He takes He keeps. And our faith only needs to look to God's taking and keeping to have the joyful assurance that the matter is settled between God and us. Let this faith make you strong to train the child for God in a strength and grace which He will give to secure His property for Himself. Let this faith speak to your child, as he can receive it, knowing he has been presented with Jesus, like Jesus, in Jesus, to the Father. Let the holy childhood of Jesus overshadow and sanctify the childhood of your little one. Let your children grow up in the friendship and the footsteps of the holy child. Live as those who are going to train children to be like Jesus. If the thought appears too difficult, let it but oblige you to ask the Father whether He desires your child to be wholly like His and whether He expects you to train him to be so. The answer will not be withheld, and the presentation of Jesus in the temple will become a pledge of the grace that enables you.

We all know how, in the economy of grace and the work of salvation for man, there are always two powers in action, the divine and the human. To the former corresponds faith that looks to God's promise and power; to the latter corresponds works, without which faith cannot fulfill the will of God. In our study of the teachings of God's Word on the parent's calling, we have ever found how two aspects of truth are presented: while at one moment everything appears to depend upon a parent's faith in what God does, the next moment a parent's character and conduct appear to decide all. The two are inseparably interwoven.

We have been meditating on the spiritual side and speaking less of the practical training of daily life. Let all parents be assured that there is nothing more intensely practical than an act of real faith. If our presenting a child to the Lord is the deed of an intelligent, childlike, heartfelt faith, it will have its mighty influence on our daily treatment of the child. If it is renewed from day to day, it will have its effect on our whole relationship to

the little one growing up under our care. As we think of the child as God's devoted and accepted property, and regard ourselves as trustees to whom he has been committed for keeping and training, knowing God would never expect us to take charge without providing the grace to do it well, our faith will be the vital principle ruling all our conduct. Sanctifying our home life and elevating our education to what God would have it be, our faith will transform each child.

A Prayer for Parents

Eternal God, You are the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; we bring to You our little one that You may regard him in Your great compassion, cleanse him, and accept him as Your own to be set apart and sealed as holy to You. We present him to You, O Lord God. We do it in the assurance of faith and hope, because Your own holy child Jesus was once, as the firstborn, presented in the place and on behalf of all who are brought to You in faith in Him. Blessed God, beside Him and in Him, the children's Surety, we present our child to You.

We ask You to enlighten our understanding to comprehend all that Your Son, being made like our children, implies and secures. Strengthen our faith to recognize and accept all the fullness of blessing it has opened to us. Let the holy childhood of Jesus be the protection of the childhood of our child. Let the likeness of our child, be the beginning and the power of a likeness that shall take possession of the whole life. And give grace to Your servants to be the worthy parents and guardians and guides of a child who has been presented to the Lord, as Jesus was. For His sake, O Father. Amen.

Thirty-seventh Day

The Baptism with Water and the Spirit

John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you in water; but one mightier than I comes, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.

Luke 3:16

MAN has a twofold nature: the external and visible, and the internal, unseen, spiritual. Sin brought both under the power of the curse. In redemption, both are to be partakers of the glorious liberty of the children of God: *waiting for the adoption, that is to say, the redemption of our body*; the whole man, body and spirit, is to be saved (Romans 8:23). All God's dealings with us have respect to both sides of our nature; through the external, He seeks to reach the inner man; the inner is renewed so the blessing may stream out and take possession of the outer man.

On this premise we have the twofold baptism of our text: the baptism with water and the baptism with the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist teaches us the relationship between the two; the insufficiency of the baptism with water in itself and its high value as the pledge and the preparation of what was to come.

First we note the faith which the baptism with water warrants and demands as a sign and seal of the baptism of the Spirit. It is a sign in which God sets forth the working of regeneration, the cleansing of our nature by

the renewal of the Holy Spirit. It is also a seal, an assurance that God gives the Spirit to the faith that claims and takes it. When John came, the coming of Christ was certain; when John had baptized with water, the baptism with the Spirit was certain too. God gave the one to waken faith and expectation for the other. So intimate is the connection that our Savior did not hesitate to speak of being *born of water and of the Spirit*.

God teaches us that what He has meant to be one and made one in promise, our faith can make one in reality. As in the whole economy of grace, the connecting link between God's promise and His fulfillment is our faith. The promise of God is no empty word, though our unbelief may make it of no effect. In His purpose the water and the Spirit are inseparably united: *Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate* (Mark 10:9).

The whole history of John teaches us that the Spirit could not be received until the way had been prepared for Him. He does the double work of preaching: repentance of sin and faith in the Lamb of God. A most blessed lesson for the Christian parent. The workings of the Spirit are evident in some children from birth. In others they become manifest at very different stages of growth. But in all, the manifestation of the Spirit needs a parent's education: the child needs to be taught what sin and repentance are and what giving up everything not according to the will of God is. The child also needs to be pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God, through whom the Spirit is to come. So that, as in the parent there is to be the harmony of faith and work, so the child must be trained for a God who asks to be trusted and obeyed. It is by the obedience of faith that parent and child are prepared for the fulfillment of the promise.

Learn one more lesson from John. The secret of the union between faith and work in him is his deep humility. His preaching had been with mighty power. A great revival of religion was taking place; all men were flocking to him; no prophet in Israel had ever preached as he had done. And yet he says, *The latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose*. The more the

soul has received of the vision and the fellowship and the power of the Holy One, the deeper the sense of its utter nothingness and absolute dependence. But also, the deeper its confidence in the truth and power of Him and the greater its courage for His work. The thought might rise that the assured confidence of the Spirit's being given to our children may lead to pride in us. He that understands what faith is knows the answer. True faith and deep humility are inseparable, because faith is the becoming nothing to let God be all. And so true faith and faithful labor are inseparable, because faith yields itself to God to use and to work through us. Let it be with the parent as with John; there is nothing that makes us so strong to honor God as when we are bound by the threefold cord of strong faith, earnest effort, and deep humility.

Christian parent, have you accepted the promise of the Spirit? Oh, hold that promise fast in a living faith. Praise God unceasingly for His gift to your child, even when you don't yet see its fulfillment. Let your daily home life be subject to the high destiny for which God has entrusted a child to you: he is to be a vessel filled with His Spirit. Labor hopefully with this blessed prospect in view. As often as these labors prove your impotence or unfaithfulness, look to Him whose servant you are and who has made you the messenger of the Spirit. He will fit you for the work He has given you to do. Jesus has said, *He that believes in me as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water* (John 7:38).

Believe in Jesus; try again, and once again, and ever more again the unexhausted fullness of that word; live your life by the faith of the Son of God. Through you the Spirit will flow out to your child.

Let us pray for God to make all His servants ministers of the Spirit, that they may have grace in all their service to speak and act as men who have realized that the Spirit has been given to follow and to seal the message and the work of faith. And that they may have grace to lead and train both parents and children into the understanding of that presence of the Holy Spirit in their home life.

A Prayer for Parents

Gracious God, I thank You for Your assurance of the baptism of the Spirit. And I thank You that as our little ones are with us children of the covenant and its spiritual promises, they also share in the seal of the covenant and are heirs of the promise of the Spirit. Lord God, teach me, teach all believing parents, teach Your church to believe that You wait to give the baptism of the Spirit too. In the great gift of Your Son, You have given Him who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

Blessed Lord Jesus, I come to You with my children. I bring them to You. I claim for them the baptism of the Spirit. In faith I accept that I will train them to believe in You that they may by faith come to the personal possession of what I have received for them. Before they can yet believe, I offer myself, that through me and the influence of my life, Your blessed Spirit may rest upon them.

Blessed Savior, give me grace in this faith to train them wisely and according to Your will, preparing in them the way of the Lord. With the consciousness of my unworthiness and impotence, may this be my one hope and aim – that my children may live daily under the rule of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thirty-eighth Day

A Faith Home

There came one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not; only believe, and she shall be made whole. Luke 8:49-50

*F*ear not; only believe. To how many thousands have those words been the messenger of comfort and hope, as they struggled under the burden of sin or sought help in a trial or difficulty? It told them there was deliverance from fear by believing in Jesus; faith can banish fear. And yet, how many who have found a blessing in these words have forgotten that they have special meaning to parents? It is Jesus, the Lord of the home, of parents and children, who speaks: *Fear not; only believe*. The words remind us of the double lesson: in our children there is every reason for fear, in Jesus every reason for faith.

When we look at our children, there is every cause for fear. When we think of the evil nature they inherit from us and the mighty power Satan has in this world into which they are entering, we may well fear. When we see, both in Scripture and in the world around us, how often the bright promise of childhood is blighted and the children of a religious home depart into the ways of evil and of death, we may well fear. When we think of the dangers to which they are exposed in the nurses that surround their infancy, the little

friends of their childhood, the schools they attend, the spirit of this world, and the literature, amusements, and business from which they cannot be kept separate, we may well fear.

And then, when we think of our children and realize how unfit and unfaithful we are to take charge of them, the fear grows stronger whether they will secure the blessing prepared for them. We know how the atmosphere we create and breathe through our home is stronger than any command or external practice. We are conscious of how much is still of worldliness and selfishness, not in the fullness of the Spirit and the love of God, and we tremble at the thought of how our children may suffer from our lack of grace. We have reason to fear: if only we had a more earnest, hearty fear of the power of sin and death.

To such the word of Jesus comes: *Fear not; only believe*. Only believe: for faith is the one condition through which the power and the salvation of God are given. Only believe: for it is by faith that we throw our children and ourselves on Jesus and secure His blessing. Only believe: let faith look upon God's covenant with us and our seed and see how He gives us all the grace we need as parents, as well as all the grace our children need. Only believe: it is faith that is the mighty renewing power in a man's life that teaches him to obey and do all that God has commanded. Only believe: this is the one thing Jesus asks of the parent, who seeks his child's deliverance from sin and death, but fears he may fail in securing it.

This is now the one lesson we must seek to learn: Faith is the first duty of a parent who has come to Christ. Just as with the penitent sinner or the believer seeking more grace, all things are possible to him that believes. Our domestic and personal life must be a life of faith. We must not only have the heart, but also the home, purified by faith. Faith is the one thing God asks for in His children. If the family structure and a holy parentage are to be God's first means of grace to the little ones, we must be diligent in reminding each other that parental faith is the only starting point to parental duty and parental obedience, parental happiness, and parental blessing.

Only believe must be written on the doorposts of our homes. Faith must be the animating power of all we are and do for our children. It must indeed be our only care and aim: Jesus said, *Only believe*.

To realize this truth, it may be well to remember what God's Word says of faith in that portion devoted to it (Hebrews 11). There we read: Faith understands; faith offers a more excellent sacrifice; faith pleases God; faith saves the household; faith obeys when it is called; faith receives strength to bear a child; faith offers up the child; faith blesses the children; faith hides the little one; faith saves the firstborn. Faith is first the spiritual understanding that receives the revelation of God and His purpose; it hears His voice; it listens to His call; it believes His promises. Then it is a divine energy, a living principle of action that carries out God's will and inherits all His blessings. We see it in a special parental form in what is said of Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Moses' parents, and Moses.

It was in each case faith that made it possible, made it simple and easy, as parents, to do what made them the channels of a divine blessing to their children.

And still the power to understand God's purpose with our children, to save our household, to obey God's will, to offer our children to God, to bless our sons, and to save them from the destroyer depends upon our faith. The living Christ, who is our salvation and our strength, speaks, *Only believe*. It is in the knowledge of Him and in His presence that such a faith is possible. Has He not redeemed our children as well as us from the power of sin? Has He not come to make the covenant of promise, *thy God and the God of thy house*, a brighter and fuller reality than ever it was to Abraham? Has He not secured a power from on high for us to fulfill every obligation of keeping our children for Him? Has He not made true all the promises given of God's Spirit upon our offspring in that one word on the day of Pentecost, *the promise is unto you and to your children*? Can we not count upon Him to give what we need if only we believe?

Only believe. Let us take the command literally; faith has never been disappointed. Living faith will teach us to see new beauty and preciousness in our children. Living faith will waken in us new earnestness and desire to hold and train them for God alone. Living faith will give its hopeful and confiding tone to all our communication with God for them and all our communication with them. May we claim the name Faith Home as the name of our home, because everything is done in the faith of Jesus. The birth of our children and our love for them, our prayer with and for them, our watching against their sins and reproving them, our teaching and training, their lessons and employments and pleasure – all will be under the inspiring power of *Only believe*.

Such a faith life in the home is not possible without the faith life in the heart. We cannot be to our children more than we are to God. *Yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God:* this must be the language of the father and mother, who would have theirs a faith home (Galatians 2:20). Day by day, hour by hour, our lives must be, *I live by the faith of the Son of God*.

Christian parent, this life is for you. Learn to say: For this day I accept Jesus for all my duties as believer and as parent. Commit to Him every duty, every difficulty, every circumstance, every moment, and then say confidently, *I know whom I have believed*. It is He who said, *Only believe; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him* (2 Timothy 1:12). This is the blessed secret of a faith life and a faith home.

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Savior, I thank You for this precious word. I have long heard and understood that it is by faith alone the sinner is saved. I have begun to understand and experience something of what it is to live entirely by faith. Lord, teach me the additional lesson that in the home, faith is the power of blessing, and that in all my communication with my family,

Your word still is, *Fear not, only believe*. O Jesus, You are the parent's Friend; in nothing do You delight so much as in revealing Your saving and sanctifying power in the family life which You have redeemed.

O my Lord, I ask You to teach me and all parents how impossible it is to train our children or be a blessing to them, except by living the life of faith. Open our eyes to see all that You offer to our faith and how our love for our children, our influence, education, and training may all be perfected by the faith in the power of Your finished redemption and abiding presence. Show us how all our own weaknesses and fears, the waywardness of our children and the wickedness in the world that tempts them can be met by Your power and love, if we only trust You. O Lord Jesus, teach us to know You as the Savior of our children in the homes. Let our whole life and communication with them, day by day, every day and all the day, be in the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Amen.

Thirty-ninth Day

The Chamber of Death

And all wept and bewailed her, but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleeps. Luke 8:52

IN God's great school of tribulation, there are many classes. In the department where God trains parents, there is one room, which all fear to enter. As many are led into it, they are seen struggling and murmuring. As its darkness closes in on them, they almost refuse to believe that God is love. Many pass through it and come out of it with almost no divine comfort or holiness that the chastisement was meant to bring, because they did not know why they were there and did not wait for the teaching and blessing Jesus gives. Others who entered trembling can testify that the chamber of death, which we speak of, was to them the gate of heaven; it was the death of a little one that led them to know Jesus. As truly as to Jairus with his dead daughter, the child's death was the parent's life.

How does Jesus meet the sorrowing parent in the chamber of death? First, He asks for silence and solitude. Jesus comes to the house and finds the people making a noise. At once He puts out the crowd and goes in with the parents and the three disciples. One thing that hinders the blessing of affliction is that too much effort is spent in the communication with men and comfort sought in their sympathy. One of God's great objectives in chastisement is to draw the soul to Himself and to the unseen. My soul is

silent unto God; *I will hear what God the LORD will speak*: such is the disposition God would have in those whom He visits (Psalm 85:8). He has lessons, often difficult lessons, to teach the parents whose little one has been taken by death; only when there is the teachableness that looks to God and waits on Him will the trial become fruitful in blessing.

The parent is led to ask, “Have I loved my child in the Lord or looked upon him and treated him too much as my own possession? Has the spirit of my life and my home been an educating of my children for heaven and its holiness? Is there worldliness, selfishness, or sinfulness that this affliction must remind me of?”

Affliction cannot profit without heart-searching, and heart-searching is impossible without the stillness of soul found in separation from man and meeting with God. Oh, let parents beware of too much time with friends, seeking and finding comfort in their company. God wants to see us alone, so He can bless or comfort us. Jesus waits to reveal Himself in the power of His great salvation, but He cannot do it except the crowd is put out. Even His ministers are only to come in as they come with Him and point to Him.

Once He is alone with the parents, He says, *Weep not*. Jesus does not condemn weeping. He wept Himself; weeping touched His heart. And yet He said, *Weep not. Woman, why dost thou weep?* Those were His first resurrection words. Jesus came to dry our tears. He said, *Weep not*. Weeping is often self-indulgence, a nursing of our grief, the fruit of being too absorbed in ourselves. Weeping often hinders the voice of God being heard and the blessing the affliction was meant to bring. By taking away a child, God meant to take us away from ourselves and make room for Himself. Weeping fills us with ourselves. God would have us learn to love and worship His will. Weeping is often the adoration of our own will.

Beloved mourner, hear the voice of Jesus say, *Weep not*. He does not say it without a reason. It is not enough that the noise of the crowd outside is put away; the tumult of thought and feeling must be hushed too, so within the soul there is silence. At the bidding of Jesus, the gush of tears must be

restrained. The heart must turn to Him, to ask who this is who bids us cease our weeping and how He justifies His injunction. Obedience to the command is the path to the comfort He brings.

And what is the comfort Jesus gives? He leads from the visible to the invisible; where we only see death, He speaks of life; He comes to rouse us to faith and reveal Himself as the Living and Life-giving One. *Weep not; she is not dead, but sleeps.* With these words Jesus draws near to the lifeless form of each little one over whom a mother's bursting heart is weeping, to remind her that death has been conquered and the loved one is not dead.

Your little one is not dead. Judge not by sight. There is a better life than the life of this earth – the eternal life in which God dwells. He may have taken the child so He could draw you heavenward. He may have needed to empty your heart to make room for Himself. He may have wanted to draw you to Himself and prepare you to receive what He has to give of His power, His love, and Himself.

It is Jesus Himself who comes to speak to you of all this. As in the Old Testament, it was the God of the covenant who came to one believing parent after another with His promise of what their children should be; in the New Testament, it is Jesus, the Surety of the children, in whom the parent will find the grace for all he needs to train a seed for God. Jesus said, *He that has seen me has seen the Father; Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me* (John 14:9, 11). In the incarnation of Jesus, all that God had promised of blessing to parents and children is now fulfilled. If we but learn to know Jesus and believe on Him to live in the faith of Him, our home and family life will be holy to the Lord. No sacrifice is too great, if we learn to know Jesus aright. It was in the chamber where Jairus's daughter lay dead that her parents learned to know Jesus.

Weeping parents, God's one purpose and desire, His one great thought of blessing and comfort is this: in His Son Christ Jesus He has come to bless and take possession of you. Let your time of affliction not pass without an experience of what Jesus is as the parents' Friend, their Teacher, Comforter,

and Sanctifier. And the loss you have sustained will be restored tenfold to you and the children still left to you. Even if this were your only child, the power and blessing of this new knowledge of Jesus, the Living One, will enable you to bring it to others. You will be led to confess how that death has become your greatest gain. The presence and the power and the love of Jesus can more than compensate for the absence and the loss of the child.

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Lord, in this hour of deep sorrow, I come to You, my Savior and the Savior of my little one. I ask you to come with me to the chamber of death, where Your weeping child waits for You. Oh, come and be my Comforter and my Teacher. Put out the noise of the crowd, all the sad thoughts, and the uncontrolled feelings that keep me from hearing Your voice. Speak and say to the storm, *Be still*, and let Your presence be the great calm. O my Savior, speak and I will hear.

Speak, Lord, of Your holy will and Your right to do what pleases You and teach me to say, *Thy will be done*. Speak, as needed, of my sin and wandering, of my love of the creature, of my lack of love for You and delight in Your fellowship. Make me see how this chastisement was what I needed to make me a partaker of Your holiness. Speak, Lord, and teach me.

Speak, Lord, and comfort Your child. Reveal Yourself to me as the Resurrection and the Life, the Shepherd who has taken His lamb into His bosom. Reveal Yourself as my Shepherd. Reveal Yourself as the house-Friend to sanctify our family life more than ever into the blessed experience of Your care for the homes of Your people. Come in, Lord Jesus, come in to me in the chamber of death and take me and my beloved home and make us entirely Yours. Amen.

Fortieth Day

The Widow's Child

There was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; ... And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said unto her, Weep not. Luke 7:12-13

MY attempt to share Scripture on the education of children would certainly be incomplete, if I said nothing on the sad and difficult, yet often blessed and successful, work of a widow's training of her orphan children. It is indeed one of the sorest trials that can befall a woman. The husband for whom she left her father's home, on whom she depended as her guide and guardian, in whom her life and her love found their joy, to whom she looked for help and strength in the training of her children is taken from her, and she is left alone and desolate. The stricken heart seeks for the object of its affection, and the sight of the beloved little ones still with her only brings new bitterness instead of being a treasure. It is not only the heart of man that is touched by this thought; the heart of God is too. Throughout Scripture, from the repeated commands in the law of Moses down to James's testimony that pure religion teaches us to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, God never forgets the widow. *A father of the fatherless and a defender of the widows is God in his holy habitation. He raises up the fatherless and widow; Leave thy fatherless children; I will*

raise them; and thy widows shall trust in me (Psalm 68:5; 146:9; Jeremiah 49:11): Such words reveal to us the very heart of God.

When Jesus came, He could not fail to show this too; He was the Father's image, God was in Christ. The picture of the Master's life might have been incomplete without the story of the widow of Nain. In what He said of the widow's mite, we see how His eye watches over a widow's poverty and values what men would call her little deed of love. At Nain we see Him as the Comforter of widowed motherhood. Let us go to Nain, where many widows have found Jesus as Friend and Lord, to learn what the Savior of our children has to say to a widow weeping over her child. Not only when the tears are those of sorrow over loss, but also when they are from anxious love or sad distress at the sight of those left behind, Jesus meets us with His *Weep not*.

Weep not, widowed mother, as you look at your little ones, and the heart almost breaks at the thought of their being fatherless. Weep not, but come, follow me, as we seek Him who has been anointed to comfort all that mourn. Weep not, as you tremble to think of how you are to train and educate them all alone in your weakness. Let your soul be silent unto Him who came from heaven to say to the widow, *As a man child whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you* (Isaiah 66:13); weep not.

Weep not! And may the wounded heart not have at least the comfort that the unrestrained flow of its tears brings? Just think for a little moment. As little as the widow of Nain knew why Jesus spoke those words, you know it yet. But let it be enough that Jesus said it. All the other parents, whose children Jesus blessed, came and asked for help; He spoke to the widow without being asked. Her widowhood was her sufficient plea: *When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said unto her, Weep not*. Jesus is looking on you; do not let your tears keep you from looking and listening to Him. Be sure that if it could have been, He would have spared you that cup; but now that it has come, He is looking on you in compassion, waiting

to comfort and to bless; in the most tender love, but with the voice of authority Jesus says, *Weep not*.

But Jesus was not one who comforted only with words; His words were always followed by deeds. If you will look up and see, He will show you what He will do. To the widowed mother at Nain He gave back the dead son, who had taken the place of a husband. And His believing people know that the departed ones who have died in the Lord will be given back to them in glory and forever. Weeping widow, look up to Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, and believe. The resurrection, the meeting again, the being ever with the Lord, are realities as real, more real, more mighty than the separation and the sorrow; look up in faith, it is Jesus who speaks, *Weep not*.

But oh, the desolation that in the meantime fills the heart and the sense of utter helplessness to fulfill my charge with these boys and girls who need a father's wise, firm, loving rule. Dear mother, when Jesus says, *Weep not*, He never speaks without doing; He gives what can dry the tears. What do you think? If Jesus were to take the place of the father to these children, wouldn't this make you smile and sing even through the tears? If, as a living reality, Jesus would undertake the responsibility of educating those children, being your Adviser and Strength and your assurance of success in your work, wouldn't this be enough to stop those tears? This is what He comes to do. God's words, *Leave thy fatherless children; I will raise them; and thy widows shall trust in me. The LORD ... raises up the fatherless and widow*, show that Jesus comes in human tenderness and in the nearness of the Holy Spirit to fulfill (Jeremiah 49:11; Psalm 146:9). You may trust your fatherless children to Him; He will preserve them; He will be the father of the fatherless.

It may be that a widowed mother may read these words and find little meaning. Though a Christian, she has not learned to live by faith, to count the unseen things of faith surer and clearer than the seen; the promise may appear vague and distant. She hardly dares hope that it would ever become

a reality, that she could be sure that Jesus will do it for her. She does not feel as if she is good or holy or believing enough for her children to receive such a wonderfully special and divine guidance.

My sister, come and listen if you want to learn what Jesus would have for you, that you may have confidence that your children are preserved and blessed by Him, and your tears will pass away in the sunlight of His love and care. He asks but one thing of the widow: *And thy widows shall trust in me. Now she that is a widow indeed and desolate, trusts in God, and is diligent in supplications and prayers night and day* (Jeremiah 49:11; 1 Timothy 5:5). *Trust me*: this was what He claimed for the widow of Nain; this is what He asks of you. *Trust Jesus*: this is the message I bring you this day in your weeping, anxious widowhood. *Trust Jesus*: trust Him for yourself. Let each thought of your departed one lead you to say, “I have Jesus with me – I will trust Him.” Let the consciousness of sin and shortcomings wake the prayer, “Jesus! I will trust You to make me what I should be.” Trust Him with your children, with their temporal and their eternal interests. Only remember, the life of trust needs a life of undivided, simple, childlike surrender. Be wholly His, and He will prove Himself wholly yours. Tarry in prayer and supplication, in the silent, restful committal of every care and fear to Him. I am confident He is mighty and faithful to keep that which I have committed unto Him. Trust Him wholly; they who wholly trust Him, find Him wholly true.

And if ever the double trial of the widow of Nain should be yours, remember that Jesus is the Comforter of the widow doubly desolate. This will be the time in which you will find Him become doubly precious, and you will have grace to say, *My flesh and my heart fail; the strength of my heart is that God is my portion for ever* (Psalm 73:26).

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Lord Jesus, how shall I praise You for the story of the widow of Nain. Blessed be Your name for the special place the widow has in Your

heart and the tenderness of that compassion. Lord Jesus, for every widowed mother we now pray to You. Teach her to come to You with her fatherless children.

We bless You that there are thousands of widowed mothers who have shown how wonderfully You bless the helpless and how richly You have blessed their children.

Teach the widow, we pray, to put her trust in You. You are able and willing to do what man dares not expect, what man counts impossible, if we honor You by trusting Your love. O Savior, help the weak faith of every widow. Let her desolation and her sorrow and her helplessness compel her to cast herself with her children on You. Draw Yourself near and reveal Yourself. Speak into the depths of the sorrowing, anxious heart Your word of comfort: *Weep not!* Oh, let Your widowed child hear You speaking, see You come to take charge, and provide and care for the education of her children. Teach her that her one work is to trust You, in separation from the world, a divine guidance and blessing on her children. Let her continue in prayer and supplication in daily communion with You the unseen One. Let her know how You are the widow's Friend, the Savior and the Friend of her children. Amen.

Forty-first Day

The Sick Child

And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him and besought him that he would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. John 4:46-47

ALMOST every parent passes through this experience. In the training of the parent through the child, God uses a child's sickness as one of His special means of blessing. And in the parent's training of the child, the sick room has often been the place where the parent found his way to the child's heart, to guide him to Jesus and the distinct confession of faith in Him. Let us prepare for the sick rooms with the lessons of the story of the nobleman of Capernaum – how sickness is to be met, to be healed, and to be blessed.

How is sickness to be met? God's great gift to sinful men is Jesus; in His Son He meets our every need. And the one great thing God asks of us is faith – the trusting surrender to let this blessed Jesus be to us all that the Father would have Him be. And because He has been given to us to accept and use on behalf of our children, until we can lead them to accept Him for themselves, the one thing that God asks of the parent is faith – trust in Jesus. As faith in God was how the saints of old pleased God and how God sought to train them, so faith in His Son is the one supreme grace by which

the Christian parent can please God and obtain His blessings on his children. All God's leadings and dealings have this one purpose – to make us strong in faith, giving glory to God.

When God allows sickness to come upon a child, the parents' hearts agonize at the sight of his pain and the fear of losing him. The question comes with terrible force, Why does God permit all this suffering? Scripture tells us it is for the trial and the purifying and strengthening of faith. God's one purpose with parent and child is to work and increase faith in them. By faith they become capable of receiving and showing the revelation of God's glory; by faith God can dwell in them and work through them. God's one desire is that they should fully believe in His Son; and our one desire should be to meet the sickness by faith in Jesus.

This is the one great lesson the story of the nobleman teaches us – the growth and increase of faith in the dealing with Christ. It begins as a general faith in Christ's compassion and power; this brings him into contact with Christ. He believes in Jesus as a healer, but it becomes a distinct faith in the promise he received: *And the man believed the word that Jesus spoke unto him* (John 4:50). He believes in Jesus as the Healer of his child. And then the faith in Jesus the Healer is perfected in the faith in Him as Savior and Lord: *he believed, and his whole house* (John 4:53). This is God's one purpose with sickness; let it be ours too. Let the chastisement reveal to us our unbelief, that fleshly and worldly spirit, and that unholy life in which unbelief has its root and its strength.

How is the sickness to be healed? This is the second question our story suggests. The answer is simple: By the power of Jesus. In Matthew, Christ's healing work is spoken of as the natural result of His atoning work that Isaiah spoke of (Isaiah 53; Matthew 8). He took upon Him our human nature in the flesh and having redeemed it, lifted it into the glory of the eternal life in heaven. When on earth, He delighted in healing the sick, even when He could not save their souls. In His Word, He left the assurance that the prayer of faith would save the sick, because the prayer of a righteous

man availeth much. He has led His children a thousand times over by His Spirit, applying the promise of an answer to believing prayer. His great desire in sickness is to educate us into that simple, childlike faith, which has the assurance that its petition is granted. Let us see that the lesson of the chastisement has been accepted and the sin has been confessed. Let us claim the life of the beloved sick one for God's glory, and the word of Jesus can come to us as to the nobleman: *thy son lives*.

The Lord Jesus used sickness as a means of drawing to Himself. When the sickness had done its work, the healing perfected what had begun. The sickness had brought the nobleman to Jesus in hope and expectancy; the healing left him a confirmed believer with his household. Health obtained directly from Jesus in the prayer of faith, health received consciously as a gift of redeeming love, is one of the most wonderful spiritual blessings – a bearing in the body the mark of the hand of Jesus. Let each parent realize that health, asked for and received in faith, may be a token of more intimate contact with Jesus than the blessing of the sickbed ever has been. The new revelation of the power and the love of Jesus may make us and our household believers as never before – full of faith and devotion to Him who has blessed us.

Parents, our sick children are God's messengers to lead us to Jesus and to faith in Him. The sickness has a message and a blessing. It calls us to remember parental sin and to confess it. It calls us to search the heart and life and home as to whether we have trained them as holy to the Lord. It comes to make the heart tender and humble and to draw it to Jesus. Oh, let us beware lest in all the care or sorrow the sickness causes, we flee to seek deliverance and miss God's purpose. He wants to bring us in faith and hope to Jesus. Let us pray that we may not miss the blessing of the sickness.

And, let us accept the greater blessing of the healing. The exercise of faith honors God more than anything. We learn to know Him as the Living One. We have the token of the acceptance of our surrender and our trust.

Our home has become the scene of the display of His kingly power. We and our home become the Lord's as never before.

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Redeemer, we come to You to learn the lesson that sickness has this one purpose – to draw us to Yourself. When You were on earth, the sickness of a child was one of the cords with which the Father drew men to You. And still He takes parents into the sick room of their little ones, so they may learn to seek and find You, to wait for and receive the revelation of Your power and love.

Lord Jesus, teach us to learn the blessed lesson of coming to You and trusting You. We may be sure that You are watching over us to teach, comfort, sanctify, and heal. Teach us that You are still the same and ready to hear the prayer of faith, mighty to bid the sickness depart, and free us from the power of death, to gladden and sanctify a parent's heart by Your grace and for the Father's glory. Oh, grant us this faith that we may honor You.

And grant, Lord, when You have heard and given back a child to the parent's faith, the blessed fruit may be that the parents believe in You as never before. May all see that Jesus is now Lord and Master, the beloved Friend of the home. As the sickness leads You, may the healing bind them to You and Your blessed service. Amen

Forty-second Day

Feed My Lambs

Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He said unto him, Yes, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He said unto him, Feed my lambs. John 21:15

PETER was a fisherman. After the first miraculous draught of fishes, the Lord had said, *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men* (Matthew 4:19). Peter's work on earth became the symbol of his heavenly calling. After the second miraculous draught of fishes, in the days preceding the ascension, our Lord no longer calls Peter a fisherman, but a shepherd. There is a deep meaning in the change. One great point of difference exists between the fisherman and the shepherd. While the former catches what he has neither reared nor fed and only seeks what is full-grown, casting away all the little fish back into the sea, the shepherd directs his special attention to the young and the weak. His hope depends on his care for the lambs.

The type of the fisherman gave no place for the Master to give special charge concerning the children of His church. The Shepherd's calling, *Feed my lambs*, sets forth the deep importance and the blessed reward of giving first place to the little ones of the flock. Peter and Christ's ministries were not only to feed the sheep; the prosperity of the church would depend upon their feeding the lambs as well. What was said to them is applicable to parents as under-shepherds, who have their little flock of lambs to keep and

rear for the Master. Christ's commission to His church through Peter shows the place the little ones have in His heart and teaches us to think of the weakness, the value, the need, and the hope of our children.

Feed my lambs, Jesus says, and reminds us of the weakness of our children and their religious life. I once left a sheep farm in company with its master towards evening. There were threatening clouds, and as we were leaving, he hurried back to cry out to his son, "Take great care of the lambs! There is a storm coming!"

As the Lord was about to ascend to the throne, one of His last words was, "Care for the lambs." The sheep is a weak and helpless animal; how much more the little lamb. It cannot care for itself. The Master would have every minister and every parent realize how utterly dependent the child is on the care of those to whom he is entrusted. The child cannot choose the company under whose influence he comes. He does not know how to choose between good and evil. He knows nothing of the importance of little words or deeds, forming habits, sowing good or bad seed, or yielding himself to the world or God. All depends upon his surroundings: parents especially have the children in their power. What a solemn responsibility to lead and nourish them carefully, to feed them, not with the husks of this world's thoughts and pleasures but with food convenient to lead them only in the green pastures.

Feed my lambs. The words remind us of the high value of the little ones. In the lambs, the shepherd sees the possibilities of the future: as the lambs, so the coming flock. The church of the next generation are the children of today. No wonder He says, *Feed my lambs*. But He says more; He says, *Feed my lambs*, and *of such is the kingdom of God*. He loves them and counts them of great worth not only for what they are to become but also for what they already are in their childlike simplicity and heavenliness. He loves them for all the blessings they bring to those who receive them in the name of Jesus. Let us try to catch His spirit as He cries, *Feed my lambs*. Oh, let us learn to look upon our children in the light in which Jesus looks upon

them. Our little ones are His lambs: we are daily to feed them that they may grow up as the sheep of His pasture.

Feed my lambs. The children's great need is set before us. Food is the condition of growth. Food is something received from without to be assimilated and taken up into our very life. The body has its food from the visible world. The mind is nourished by the thoughts that enter it. The spirit feeds through the mind on the thoughts, the words of God. The little ones cannot seek pasture for themselves; Christ looks to parents to bring to them day by day some of the thoughts of divine wisdom and love, not just a chapter of the Bible read together but without their comprehension. The one desire and aim must be to rear the child for Him. The consecration of the child to the Lord must be the chief thing in his life. The idea of the child belonging to Him and growing up entirely for Him makes the duty easy.

Feed my lambs. The words tell the provision Christ has made for His weak ones. To whom were the words spoken? To the one of whom the question had been asked, *Lovest thou me?* and who had answered, *Yes, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* Only one who is inspired by love for Jesus can truly take charge of the lambs. This is the examination of fitness for the duty of parent and shepherd of the lambs: *Lovest thou me?* This is the provision Jesus has made for the lambs: true love for Jesus can do the work.

To every parent who longs to know how he can obtain the needed qualification for his work: let Jesus search your heart – once, twice, a third time – until the remembrance of past unfaithfulness brings tears, and the answer comes, “Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You.”

Alas, this is the blight of so many Christian homes – the conscious, fervent, and confessed love of Jesus is lacking. Nothing influences a childlike love: the warmth of a holy love for Jesus will make itself felt. There may be a great deal of religion and teaching and praying, but only love will conquer. Love for Jesus will lead to careful obedience, walking with Him and trusting Him heartily. Love for Jesus will make the desire to

please Him very strong. Love for Jesus will make our testimony of Him personal. The food we feed the lambs will have the warmth of a divine love about it. Jesus wants parents who love Him with their whole heart and strength: this is the provision He has thought out for His little lambs.

The religion of Jesus is a religion of love. Of the Father it is said, *God is love*. Jesus Himself is the gift of a love that passes knowledge. His own life and work is one of love – love stronger than death. When the Holy Spirit comes to us, He sheds the love of God in our hearts. Our whole relation to the Divine is to be one of love. And our relationship as parents and children was meant to be one of love. Jesus came to restore this by calling parents to love Him; then by receiving the little ones in His name, for His sake, and in the fervor of His love to take charge of them. The home is consecrated by the light of Jesus' love resting on the children, the power of His love dwelling in the parents, and the whole of education being made a work of love for Him.

Christian parents, accept your blessed calling; you are the shepherds of the divine love to tend and feed the lambs. In His church, the Chief Shepherd has many shepherds to care for the flock, but none can care for the lambs as the parents. *He ... makes his families like a flock* (Psalm 107:41). Jesus looks to parental love, inspired and sanctified by redeeming love, for the building up of His church. Let us pray to have our eyes opened to see things as Jesus sees them, to realize by the Holy Spirit what He feels for our little ones, what He expects of us and is ready to do for us in giving us wisdom and strength.

Feed my lambs. When this word is made the law of a parent's duty, it will inspire gentleness and love, heavenly hope, faithful care, and an unceasing life of faith in the love and grace and blessing of Jesus on our home.

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Savior, You are the Good Shepherd of whom my soul has said, *The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want*. I bless You for the tender love that did not forget the little ones, but carefully committed them to the charge of Your servant Peter. I bless You for the holy privilege You have given me of being a parent and bearing Your commission: *Feed my lambs*. I bless You with my whole heart for the honor and blessedness of being to others what You are to me, a gentle, loving Shepherd. Oh my Lord, may my daily experience of the way in which Your Shepherd-love does its work on me be a daily lesson to teach me how to feed my little flock of lambs.

Blessed Master, I ask You to open my eyes to look upon my children as You do and regard them in the light of Your claim upon them. Open my eyes to see what a holy life of fellowship with You is needed to do my duty to You and Your lambs. Take away every thought of reluctance and fear of difficulty and burden, and let me see how a simple, childlike life with You is the best training for doing a parent's work correctly.

And to this end, fill me with Your love. I confess with shame that there has been so little of an enthusiastic love for You in my life. Lord, forgive me and deliver me from it. Let a bright, obedient love for You be the atmosphere of the home in which my children grow up. O Lamb of God, You allow my children to bear the same name as God's lambs; oh, let Your holy love in my heart be the inspiring power of all my communication with You and with them. And let me prove how wonderfully You are my Shepherd, and how blessedly I am their shepherd.

For Your name's sake. Amen.

Forty-third Day

The Holy Spirit in the Family

For the promise is unto you and to your children. Acts 2:39

WE have not forgotten the frequent use in the Old Testament of the words in which parents and children were joined together as partners in God's covenant and blessings. *Thee and thy house, thee and thy seed, you and your children*, and *me and my house* were the expressions of the blessed bond that made the whole family one in God's sight. God be praised, the expression is found in the New Testament too: You and your children. And nowhere could it have found a place of deeper significance than where we have it today. On the day of Pentecost, as the church of Christ, which had just been born by His resurrection from the dead, received its baptism of the Holy Spirit, the word is heard: *For the promise is unto you and to your children*. All the blessings of the new dispensation are at once secured to our children.

For the promise is unto you and to your children. The promise is of the Spirit of the glorified Jesus in all His fullness, the baptism of fire and of power. When we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we confess our faith in the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit, not only as one with the Father and the Son, but also as being the third person, brings the full and perfect revelation of the divine glory. Through Him, all the promises of God are fulfilled, and all grace and salvation in

Christ becomes a personal possession and experience. God's Word calls our children *children of promise*; it is specifically of this promise of the Holy Spirit that they are the heirs. And the secret of a godly education is to bring them up in the faith and for the fulfillment of this promise. We must learn to look upon the aid and the presence of the Spirit in our daily training as absolutely necessary and indispensable. In all our praying for them and living with them in our daily life, we must learn to depend upon and expect the direct working of the Holy Spirit.

For the promise is unto you and to your children. The very thought of training children every day in dependence upon the Holy Spirit's presence appears to some too strange and high: the thing is impracticable. The reason for this thinking is simply that they have not yet learned to understand and enjoy the abiding of the Spirit as essential to a true Christian life. The promise of the Spirit is to *you*; as parents realize that it is only the continual leading of the Spirit that enables them to live as God would have them can they become the ministers of the Spirit to their families. Oh, that the church of Christ understood the place and the power which the Spirit of God is meant to have in every Christian and in every Christian home. All the complaints about the neglect or the failure of religious education have their root in this: the Holy Ghost is not expected or accepted as the only strength of the believer for all God asks of him. As you parents receive the promise and live and walk in the Spirit, will you receive it for your children too?

For the promise is unto you and to your children. As in nature, so in grace, you and your children have been linked together for good or for evil. Physically, intellectually, and morally, they are the partakers of your life. Spiritually it may be so too. Your daily life is the channel through which His quickening and sanctifying grace can reach them. If your life is more carnal than spiritual, do not think it strange if your children grow up unconverted. You are hindering the Holy Spirit. You are breathing day by day into your children the spirit of the world. You are, it may be unconsciously, but most effectually, using all your influence to train them

into man's religion in its harmony with the spirit of the world instead of God's religion in the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. The promise is to you *and* to your children: in spite of your evil influence, through the faith of others, the blessing may reach them, but you have no reason to expect it except as you yield yourselves to be the channel for its conveyance. If nothing else has yet roused us, maybe parental love might lead us to see that for our children's sake, nothing less is needed than for us to be filled with the Holy Ghost.

For the promise is unto you and to your children. The promise! If only all parents understood what is implied in the promise. Too many look upon a promise of God as a mere word or thought – something that is without power until the children do what is needed to make it effectual. They do not know that the Word of God has a living, mighty energy, a divine seed life, and if they will hide and keep it in their hearts, it will beget the faith through which the blessed fulfillment comes. I come this day to every parent who reads this with a wonderful message. The promise of the Holy Spirit in His fullness and His power is to you and to your children. A promise means that God in His infinite power has bound Himself to do what He has said, and He will most certainly do it for us as soon as we claim it in faith. And the promise here means that the Holy Spirit is ours, waiting to come to our home and be all that we need to make it holy and happy. And however far our home life may be from God's ideal, and however impossible it may appear to us that we shall ever succeed in making it very different, God Himself will fulfill it. A promise needs two things: the receiver must believe and claim it, and the giver must fulfill it and make it true. Let our posture be that of simple, trusting faith in God for ourselves and our children; God is faithful, who will also do it.

Dear fellow parents, let us humble ourselves that our home life has not proved the truth and the glory of this promise more distinctly. Let us confess with shame how much has been carnal and not spiritual, of the spirit of the world and not of the Spirit of God. Let us open our hearts to

take in the promise of God as something that has a divine quickening power. Let us look upon ourselves as the divinely appointed ministers of the Holy Spirit to prepare and train our children from their youth up, and let us yield ourselves wholly to His guidance and working. Let no sense of shortcoming or weakness discourage us, but let us place our lives as parents under the leading of the Holy Spirit, because we can be to our children only what we are to God. Let the spirit of praise and thanks fill us, for God bestowed the wondrous grace upon our family life by the special working of His Spirit. Let our unceasing prayer and our confident expectation be that our home on earth may become nearer to the home in heaven.

A Prayer for Parents

O holy God, how shall we bless You for the promise that our home is to be Your home, the abode of Your Holy Spirit? May the Spirit of Your divine love be the link that binds us together. Glory to Your name, O my God, for the promise of the Holy Spirit to us and to our children.

O God, we open the doors of our beloved home to You and place it at the disposal of Your Holy Spirit. May our love for our children and our desires for them, our daily communication with them and our influence on them, all be under the continual overshadowing of Your Holy Spirit. May our whole life be that which Your Holy Spirit breathes – holiness to the Lord.

We claim the promise for our children. In simple, childlike faith, we desire to depend upon it, as a settled thing between You and us. Give us grace, O Father, as we see tendencies and dispositions in them that make us fear, or influences around them that bring danger; oh, give us grace to plead the promise in the assurance of faith!

O Father, may we live ourselves, guide our home life, and train each child day by day under the leading of the Holy Spirit. May the holy

reverence, the deep, quiet joy, the tender watchfulness, the death to self and the flesh, and the life of faith in Jesus always be ours. Amen.

Forty-fourth Day

Parental Self-Culture

Thou, therefore, who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?

Romans 2:21

NOTHING can be more inconsistent and vain than the attempt to teach others without teaching ourselves. Only in ordinary instruction that the teacher has mastered and made his own can he successfully communicate to others. It is only the lesson I first teach myself that I can really teach my child. One of the first laws in the science of home education is that it depends far more on example than precept; what parents are avails more than what they say. There is not one lesson of child life, which the parent must not first learn himself. Let us look at some of them.

The great aim of education is to give the child the perfect mastery and ready use of all the wondrous powers God has endowed him with. To this end a wise self-control is one of the first virtues. As a state cannot prosper if there is no wise, intelligent ruler to make its laws and provide for its needs, so happiness cannot thrive in the little empire within man's home, unless everything be subject to a ruling power. The child must be trained to habits of quiet thoughtfulness in speech and actions. This training comes far more through example than precept. The atmosphere of a well-regulated home and the influence of parental self-control will unconsciously set their mark on the child. When parents give way to impulse and temper, perhaps while

reproving the child's temper, the effect of the good advice is more than neutralized by the evil influence of the spirit displayed. It is the spirit of the parent that influences. The child may never look up and say, "But God's Word says, *Thou, therefore, who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?*" If parents honestly watch themselves, they will often discover the causes of their children's failings in themselves. Such discovery ought to lead to confession before God and a hearty surrender to the teaching of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We can depend upon the divine renewal to fit us for true self-control; and what we by grace teach ourselves will in due time influence our children too.

But the self-control must know its object and the path to reach that object. The child finds both in the word we have repeated so often – obedience. He must control himself to be able to render obedience to his parent, so he may be trained to what will be his liberty and his glory, obedience to God. But here again the parent's obedience will be contagious; it will inspire the child. If the parent's position is one of privilege and liberty and command, the child may feel that the burden of obedience is all put upon him, the weaker one.

"Johnny," said a father once to a child, who was hesitant in obeying, "whose will must you do, your own or Papa's?"

"Papa's will," was the reluctant answer, but he followed with the question, "But whose will must Papa do then?"

The father was able at once to answer, "God's will," and then explained how he considered such obedience his greatest privilege. He could at once take his place by the side of his child as also having to give up his own will. The parent who can appeal to his daily life with his children, so they know how he seeks to do the will of his God and prays in their presence will find a mighty power to inculcate obedience in the child. When, on the contrary, the seeking of our own will marks our communication with our children, we do not need to wonder why our education is a failure. Let us turn at once

and hearken to the voice: *Thou, therefore, who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?*

Very specifically this holds true with the great commandment that is the fulfilling of the law. Family life has been specially ordained of God as the sphere where love can be cultivated. In nothing is our self-control to be more proved than in loving others and restraining everything that is selfish or unloving. In the daily life of our children with each other and their companions, we have in miniature the temptations to which later life will expose them. For the exercise of the virtues of gentleness and forbearance, of forgiveness and generosity, of helpfulness and generosity, continued opportunity will be found. Principles must not only be inculcated, but the trouble must also be taken to lead the child to do the right thing easily and lovingly. Many wish to help the poor, for instance, but do not undertake it, because they do not know how to begin. One of the highest parts of a right Christian education is to make generosity the chief object of life, and awaken the desire to live to make those around us better and happier. But this can only be attained as the parents teach themselves as well as their children to cultivate these virtues. In the daily life of the family, the parents must seek to prove that love is the law of their life. It must be understood that unkind words, harsh judgments, and unloving reports form no part of their conversation. In communication with each other, with children, with servants, with friends, and with the world, God's love must be sought after and manifested. In the sympathy with the needy and wretched and in the actual loving self-denial exercised for the sake of the poor or the suffering, the example of Christ and His love must be reduced to practice in daily life. In this way can education to a life of love be truly successful.

Thou, therefore, who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? These words ask whether we are doing the first and most needful thing for being successful teachers of our children: teaching ourselves. Yes, parents, teach yourselves. If we are to train our children wisely, we must go through a new course of training ourselves. We must put ourselves to school again and be

teachers and scholars in one. Of the two scholars whose education has to go on simultaneously, the parent and the child, the parent will often find that the child makes more progress. The lessons, which teach parents, are often of greater importance and difficulty than those the child has to learn. It is especially beneficial if the first lesson learned is the need of self-teaching, the need of teachableness, the need of continual daily learning.

Let the parent who begins to see this realize what it means to become a scholar. All schooling requires time and trouble, patience and payment. Teaching that costs nothing is of little value. No one can graduate as competent to train a child for eternity without making sacrifices. Take time to study God's Word and what it says about a parent's duty. Study man's moral nature as the sacred trust committed to your care. Teach yourself to cultivate that nature to its highest fitness for God's service: it will be the best preparation for teaching your children correctly. And if you feel you need the help of some friend to stimulate and to guide – let Jesus be that teacher. He came and taught Himself that He might know how to teach us; He learned obedience that He might show us the way. He came to show us the Father; He will likewise reveal the Father's love and grace, the fatherly tenderness of our God, so we will be full of a joyful assurance that He will not refuse to teach and enable us to be true fathers and mothers to our children. And we shall understand that to be teachable, obedient, loving children of the heavenly Father is the surest way of having our children be teachable, obedient, and loving too.

A Prayer for Parents

Gracious God, I come again to seek the grace I need for filling my place as a parent. I ask You to imprint deep on my heart the solemn thought that I can effectually teach my children only what I teach myself, and I can only expect the truth that influences my own life to influence theirs. O my God, I think with shame of how I reprove them for the reflection of what they have seen in me. I confess how much there has been

lacking in me of that spirit of childlike love and self-denial, joyful obedience to You, and thoughtful self-sacrifice for others, which would have been the highest education to them. O my God, forgive me for what is past and give me grace in everything to teach myself what I want to teach my children.

Be pleased especially to help me realize that as I live as an obedient child with my Father in heaven, I can teach my children and expect them to be obedient to me. Lord, may childlike simplicity and obedience be the atmosphere my home breathes, the bond that makes parents and children one. As I think of my own slowness in learning, may I be very patient and gentle with my children, yet full of hope that the lessons I impart to them will have their effect.

Jesus, Master, teach me, that with Your teaching I may teach my loved ones. Amen.

Forty-fifth Day

Baptized into Christ

How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Know ye not that all of us that are baptized into Jesus the Christ are baptized into his death? For we are buried with him by baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised up from the dead to the glory of the Father, likewise we also walk in newness of life. Romans 6:2-4

And ye are complete in him, ... buried together with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead. Colossians 2:10, 12

IN writing both to the Romans and the Colossians, Paul pleads with believers to live a life of separation from sin and the world, a life of holiness and liberty. He uses their baptism into Christ as he unfolds the spiritual meaning of that baptism, a union with Christ in His death and His life. Paul shows how this is the obligation and the possibility of a walk like Christ's in newness of life. Baptism is the symbol of the deep spiritual mystery of our perfect oneness with Christ; as it is understood and believed, it is the pledge of an abiding union and the ever-growing likeness to Him.

The parent needs to continually remember what God meant baptism to be. Without this he cannot educate the child into the possession of what God intended. Without this he cannot live himself that life God has in store

for him. Let us try to understand what baptism is in the full light of the Holy Spirit's teaching.

The great lesson we are taught is that in baptism the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are set forth. We know that baptism originally was by immersion. Scripture teaches us how the old world in the time of Noah had been destroyed and renewed again by a fearful baptism of water. The old nature, mankind in its sinfulness, had perished under the water. From the water, a new and cleansed world had emerged; Noah the believer had been brought forth, as begotten again from the dead.

Scripture teaches us how Israel, God's firstborn among the nations, had shared that terrible baptism. In the Red Sea, Pharaoh, the old man, had perished; out of the waters that were death to Egypt, Israel came forth as God's firstborn to sing the song of redemption. The Holy Ghost teaches us to regard the waters both of the flood and the Red Sea as types of baptism and its spiritual meaning (1 Peter 3:20; 1 Corinthians 10:2).

As the Jew went in under the water, he not only thought of the water in its cleansing power, but also the giving up of the old life and the reception of a new life. Going in under the water meant the drowning death of the old nature, the putting off of sin in confession and repentance; the coming up out of water meant the profession and the hope of a new life.

John's baptism of water was but a preparation; Jesus Christ alone could give the true baptism – the true deliverance from the old nature. But even He could not do this until He had Himself undergone His own baptism into death. In Him the two elements, the old and the new, which in the flood and the Red Sea were represented by two separate parties – in Him they were united.

Jesus bore the power of sin in His own flesh – *Our old man is crucified with him* (Romans 6:6). He descended into the deep where He had to cry, *All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Let not the violent force of the waters overcome me* (Psalm 42:7; 69:15). It was this prospect that made Him say, *But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I anguished*

until it is accomplished (Luke 12:50). And again, *Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?* (Matthew 20:22). This was Christ's baptism, a terrible reality – a baptism into death.

But this was only half of it. Jesus also had *come out of the water*, the entrance on a new life (Mark 1:10). That new life, typified in Noah and Israel, symbolized in John's baptism, now became a reality. Jesus was raised from the dead in the power of a new victorious life that can die no more. *For we are buried with him by baptism into death, that just as the Christ was raised up from the dead to the glory of the Father, likewise we also might walk in newness of life* (Romans 6:4). *[Ye are] buried together with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead* (Colossians 2:12).

In the power of the Holy Spirit, baptism is our participation with Jesus Christ in the deepest and most mysterious experiences of His life. As our faith looks to, rests on, and yields itself to the working of God who raised Him, we experience the power of His death and His life working in us. Our life becomes conformable to His – that life of His which died and lives forevermore. Reckoning and knowing ourselves to be indeed dead unto sin and alive unto God in Christ, we have the power to walk in newness of life; we are made free from sin and able to live as the servants of God and of righteousness. And as often as the flesh suggests that we must sin or tells us to seek our strength in carnal help and ordinances, God's Word reminds us of our strength: We have been baptized into Christ, into His death and into His life.

What strong consolation this teaching of God's Word offers believing parents in training their children. The deeper our insight into the spiritual blessings, the more we shall value the grace which secures them to our children. Our gratitude will be deeper; our sense of responsibility more solemn; our faith more stirred to effort; our whole life will be holier, as the channel through which all this blessing is conveyed to the child. It is

through your life – not your teachings or prayers or beliefs, for these are only parts of yourself – but through your life, representing the sum of all you are that God would have your child inherit the blessings of Christ.

What an urgent call for the parent to live as one who has been made one with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. Let no believing parent say or think that this truth or this life is too high for him. If he is a true believer, this Christ, who died but lives again, is his life, his blessedness. The parent cannot taste the true blessedness of the life of faith, or praise or honor God aright, or abide fully in Christ, unless he accepts Him in all He is and gives. Live to this end yourselves under its full power, as people who have been baptized into the death of Christ with the flesh crucified, made free from sin, and bearing daily the cross and the dying of the Lord Jesus. Live as those who in baptism have been raised again by faith in the working of God who raised Jesus. Let your faith claim all the power of His resurrection life; all that God wrought in Him, He will work in you (Ephesians 1:20; 2:6; 1 Peter 1:21). Let all of your education be in this faith in the working of God to make true to your child all He promised in raising Jesus from the dead. Live as one baptized into the death and life of Christ, taking charge of a child who is a partaker of the same faith.

Lead the child to Jesus, to whom he alone belongs. Lead him to the cross, to take it up and bear it in the love of Jesus. Help him, as the flesh and the world tempt him, to practice the blessed self-denial, which Jesus links with the cross. Guide him in that path of bright and loving obedience, where truest happiness is found. Speak to him of Jesus, the Risen One, as a living Friend, as the power of his new life. Long before he can understand the theology of it, let the tenderness of his young heart be won for Jesus and a life devoted to His service. Pray for grace, that above everything you may be to your dear child the interpreter who teaches him to understand the death and life of Jesus.

A Prayer for Parents

O my God, I thank You with my whole heart for all the blessing and power that is secured to me through Christ and His death. And may You set me apart as a parent to live as one baptized into Christ's death, that my life and my teaching may lead my child to know the blessed life in Christ which has been sealed to him.

O my Father, I humbly ask You to deliver me from all ignorance and unbelief concerning this wonderful baptism into Christ's death and my fellowship in it. Enlighten my understanding, strengthen my will, and help my faith in Your mighty working that my own life may be in the full power and fellowship of the death and the resurrection of Jesus. As crucified to the world, as dead to sin in my Lord Jesus, I yield myself to walk in newness of life with Him.

May this be my one aim in the education of my children: to have the power of the cross revealed in those You have given me. And may the life of Christ be manifest in me and my home, to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

Forty-sixth Day

Heritage of Holiness

But now they are holy. 1 Corinthians 7:14

LET us bless God for this precious sentence.

There is not a deeper or more distinctly divine word in Scripture than *holy*; in this statement, the whole treasure of holiness is made the heritage of our children. God's holiness and our children are meant for each other; as parents, we are the God-ordained links for bringing them into perfect union. In order to do this, we must *understand* and *apply* this precious truth. The revelation of God's holiness was a gradual one, because it was the opening up of the mystery of the Holy Trinity. There was first holiness as seen in God, its source and fountain; then in Christ, the Holy One of God, our sanctification; then in the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of holiness in the church. It is only by gradual steps that we can rise from the lower to the higher use of the word and enter into the fullness of divine meaning.

Holy. The word expresses a relationship. Whatever was separated unto God and made His property was called holy. *The LORD will show who are his and who is holy ... the man whom the LORD chooses, he shall be holy* (Numbers 16:5, 7). Apart from the moral character, whatever had been given to God and taken by Him to be His own was holy. And so the first and simplest thought our faith must take in and fill with spiritual meaning is this: our children belong to God. The very fact of their being born of

believing parents makes them His in a very special sense. Just as in olden times the children of the slave were the property of the master as much as the slave himself, so the Lord's redeemed have no desire to look upon their children in any other light than wholly and absolutely His. *But now they are holy.*

Holy. The word suggests a destiny. As we study the word *holy* in Scripture, we notice how everything that is called holy had a use and purpose. Every holy day and thing, place and person, had its service to fulfill. Let the Christian parent beware of looking upon holiness as a mere means to an end, simply as the way to get to heaven. Oh, it is infinitely more. His child is God's property to be used in this world only as God directs, to be trained with the one purpose of doing God's will and showing forth God's glory. The more clearly this is understood and made the distinct object of the work of prayer and education, the more speedily we will be led to grasp what the word *holy* contains in its higher meaning and what the path is to realize the blessing it offers.

Holy. The word is the pledge of a divine life-power. Let us beware of emptying the word *holy* of its divine truth and power. If God calls our children holy, it is because they are born and have their life from a believing parent, who is holy in Christ. The child of true believers, having soul and body under the rule and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, inherits not only his parents' sinful nature but also the habits and tendencies and dispositions, which the child of the heathen does not share. These are the true seed germs of holiness, the working of the Holy Spirit from the mother's womb. Even where it cannot be seen, there is a secret heritage of the seed of holiness implanted in the child of the believer. And with this there is given the promise of the divine life and power by being born of a holy parentage. There is secured to him that Holy Spirit in whom the holiness of God has reached its full manifestation. In promising the Holy Spirit to His disciples, our Lord said He would be a river of living water flowing from them to others. The believer has a power to influence those with whom he comes in

contact; his faith is to save his household, since the child born of him inherits a blessing in the very life he receives from one who is sanctified by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. When God gives our child the name of holy, there is the beginning and the pledge of a divine power, even the work of His own Holy Spirit. Let nothing less than this be what our heart reads in God's words: Your children are holy.

Holy. The word describes a character. God's holiness is His infinite moral perfection: He hates and destroys the evil; He loves and works the good. Holiness is the divine energy of which perfect righteousness and infinite love are the revelation. God seeks and gives correspondence with Himself. *Be ye holy; for I am holy* (1 Peter 1:16). In calling your children holy, God invites you to have them be partakers of His holiness; without this, holiness is but a name and a shadow. It is the work of the Christian parent to train his children in such dispositions, habits, and ways of thinking and feeling and acting as shall be in harmony with the faith. *Holy in all manner of conversation* is what your children are to be (1 Peter 1:15).

It is as we begin to understand the word, *but now they are holy*, that we shall know to apply it rightly. We shall find it a word of great power in our dealings both with God and with our children. With God it will be the strength of our prayer and faith. We shall feel liberty to claim that we are not sent away with a mere possibility, a promise without fulfillment. No, we may be sure that when our children are called holy, all that is implied in the word *holy* is meant for them. As we study the wonderful word in the story of Israel, in the character of God, in the person of Jesus, in the work of the Spirit of holiness, we shall find the assurance that it is all for them.

As we plead for the conversion of our children, we shall say with holy boldness, "Have You not said they are holy?" As we plead that they may not only be saved, but also sanctified vessels suitable for the Master's use, we shall most confidently cry, "It cannot be Your will that anything less than all Your power and love be given." As in its light we confess how little we have realized the holiness of our parentage and the holiness of our

children, the blessed heritage of holiness they have in us as believing parents, we will yield ourselves more than ever to train them as holy to the Lord.

And so the word will exercise its mighty influence in our dealings with our children. We shall think of our home and family as His home, the dwelling place of His holiness. We shall write holiness to the Lord upon our doorposts. We shall realize that the first need of a parent, whose children God calls holy, is to be very holy; that personal holiness is the indispensable condition for educating a holy child. *But now they are holy* will lead us to look to our own position, *Be ye holy*, and to our own example and conduct as the channel through which the knowledge and the love and the power of holiness are to come to them. We shall realize that nothing but a life in the holiness of God, a life entirely under the leading of the Spirit of holiness, can fit us for watching over and training the children God has given us.

A Prayer for Parents

O my God, my meditations on this word of the Holy Spirit have made me feel the need of His divine light to teach me what it means to You. Lord, show me what the thoughts and the purposes of Your heart are when You say to believing people, *But now they are holy*. Show me how in this word there is secured to my child all that treasure of sanctification, which is prepared in Christ and which the Spirit makes our personal possession.

O my God, Your words are never like men's words, empty thoughts; they are full of meaning, life, and power. Oh, make these words quick and powerful in our hearts, that we may understand and rejoice in and hold fast the infinite blessing they bring us. And grant, Lord, that as we love and train, as we pray and believe for our children, it may all be with this one object as our motive and aim – that we and they may be holy to the Lord, realizing and showing forth the glory of His holiness. Amen.

Forty-seventh Day

The Reign of Love

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. Ephesians 6:4

Fathers, provoke not your children lest they become disheartened.

Colossians 3:21

Charity suffers long and is benign; ... seeks not her own, is not easily provoked. 1 Corinthians 13:4-5

Teach the young women ... to love their children. Titus 2:4

THE apostle had noticed in the houses he visited how education often suffers from a lack of love. And so, in addressing different classes in his general epistles, he speaks especially to fathers. On the two occasions in which he names them, he repeats the warning to them not to provoke their children to wrath. His words suggest three thoughts: a child is often provoking; a father often allows himself to be provoked; and the result generally is that he again provokes the child to wrath. Thus, instead of his reproof being the help and the strength of his child in seeking what is good, he discourages and hinders him. Paul's warning indicates the whole subject of the difficulty of giving reproof or punishment in the right spirit and the need of patience and wisdom and self-control. Paul shows that the secret of a parent's rule is to reign in love.

Note first that fathers are here particularly addressed. They are expected to take a part in the management of the children. Many fathers neglect this

and seek to throw the work entirely on the mother. When returning home from the day's labor, they do not feel inclined to trouble themselves, and the children are regarded more as a burden and a weariness than as a charge entrusted by the Lord to be met in the spirit of love and gladness. God has joined the weakness and gentleness of the mother to the firmness and strength of the father; it is as each takes his share in the work and becomes the helper of the other that the divine blessing may be expected.

Therefore, it is of great importance that in addition to the daily, united devotions at the family altar, there should be set times when father and mother join in reading and conversation and prayer on the training of their children. One-half hour a week set apart for this purpose, if it were only for one year, would bring a rich reward. It would supply the lack of a training school for parents and draw attention to many important lessons, which may not be noticed in the presence of work. It would give the opportunity for a mother's calling for and receiving a father's aid and guidance. It would bring the blessing on conjugal and parental love, of which Peter speaks: *Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them wisely, giving honour unto the woman, as unto a more fragile vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers not be hindered.* Let every father accept his calling to take his part in the training of the children (1 Peter 3:7).

Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. The occasion of this taking place is ordinarily that the child has first provoked the father. A child is sometimes wayward, often thoughtless, so that even what was well intentioned may be the cause of annoyance. It is only when the weak nature of the child is carefully and lovingly taken into account that the parent will be able to patiently bear with him and train him. It is the privilege and honor of the parent to have this immortal spirit entrusted to his charge, even with all his failings and the trials of patience. Let parents not be surprised or be taken unaware by what may be trying to their temper and patience; they will see the need for preparing themselves for their holy work by faith in Him who fits us for every work He gives us to do.

Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. There is much in some children that is provoking, and there is much in some fathers that is easily provoked. Beware of giving way to such provocation, for it has been the ruin of many children. To educate a child is impossible without self-control. This Scripture is true: For patience is necessary, and the patience finishes the work (Hebrews 10:36; James 1:4). The whole life of the Christian is meant by the Father in heaven, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to be one of watchfulness and self-recollection. In home life these graces are especially indispensable. The sudden outbreaks of temper in children, the little vexations arising from their disobedience or neglect or mistakes, their little quarrels and naughtinesses are all occasions on which a father needs the love that is not easily provoked. God meant the rule of the family to be like His own, a reign of law inspired by love.

Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. However provoking the child may have been, however inclined the father may be to feel provoked, he must not provoke the child to wrath. One provocation calls forth another; an angry father, giving way to his failing of being provoked easily, makes an angry child. The calm, quiet assertion of authority helps to bring the offender to the acknowledgment of the justice of his punishment. When the parent gives way to anger and passion in a sharp reproof or hasty punishment, the child's passion is roused too. He becomes angry and vexed at an infliction he does not understand. Passion ordinarily rouses passion; the parent is the teacher and example of the child, appointed by God to meet and conquer outbreaks of his passion by the gentle firmness of love. How sad when the opposite is the case, and a father's hasty anger inflames a child's passion, and the father becomes his provocation to wrath.

Lest they become disheartened. In the struggle between good and evil that goes on in the child, there is nothing needed as much as being encouraged to believe that the victory of the good is within his reach; goodness is possible and pleasant. To inspire a child with a holy confidence

in what he can accomplish by God's grace and the aid of his parents is one of the blessed secrets of success in training.

In training a horse, the utmost care is taken never to overtax it or give it a load that might lead to failure; at each difficult place its master is alert with his voice and hand to inspire it with confidence. The horse must not know that it could fail. May the child never be discouraged by thinking his weakness is not regarded or that he has not received the help or justice he expects. Children need a love, which they too seldom receive, and a thoughtfulness, which parents too seldom bestow.

Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. The education of a child is a holier work than many think. It needs self-training above everything. Without his knowing it, your child is God's schoolmaster to bring you nearer to Christ. Not only does the child, in his tenderness and lovingness, call forth the love of your heart, but his waywardness and willfulness call for it even more, as he puts it to the test and schools it in patience and gentleness. Study to have every token of your displeasure, every reproof and every punishment, so marked by love that through it all the child may be encouraged into goodness.

But it is not by reproof and punishment, however gently and wisely administered, that parents will keep their children from becoming provoked or discouraged. This is only the negative side; the positive is of more importance. Prevention is better than cure. Always cultivate in yourself and the child that state of feeling which takes away the opportunity of conflict. Endeavor by your own tranquility, gentleness, and kindness to promote the same feelings in the child. Throw yourself in sympathy into their interests, entering into their state of mind and feeling. Expect them to enter into your spirit and temper and instinctively to yield themselves to its influence. And as you seek to maintain the rule of love as a principle of action, you will find how the children will catch its spirit and become your helpers in making your home the reflection of the life of love in which the heavenly Father guides and trains His children.

A Prayer for Parents

Gracious God and Father, the longer we listen to the teaching of Your Word on our duty as parents, the more deeply we feel the need of a divine grace for doing that work correctly. I come to You with the humble confession of my sin; how often sin in the child has only been met by sin in the parent, causing new sin in the child and discouraging him in the battle. And You have meant the parent to be the model of a holy, patient love, uniting and helping the child's weakness and by his example encouraging him into the assurance that he, too, can conquer. O God, we ask You to open our eyes that we may know our holy calling. Give us a deep conviction that nothing but Your own Spirit, dwelling in us day by day, can fit us for training sinful beings in a life of holiness; that nothing but the most entire surrender to walk with You, to be in everything guided and possessed by Your Spirit, can prepare us for the work of parents. O God, may a holy wisdom and patience in meeting each little outbreak and the power of a love that enables us to bear and to conquer be given to us. May we inspire our child with confidence in us and the victory of good. O God, may we train our children after Your mind to be a pleasure to You with Your help. Amen.

Forty-eighth Day

The Nurture of the Lord

And, ye fathers, ... bring them up [nurture] in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

WE know the importance of recognizing the distinction between instruction and education, or between teaching and training. The former is the communication of knowledge, secular or religious; the latter is helping the child to incorporate the teaching that has been set before him. The two words the apostle uses correspond exactly to our expressions: we might translate, “Nurture them in the training and teaching of the Lord.”

First note the spirit, which must pervade the upbringing of our children: *Nurture them in the discipline and admonition **of the Lord!*** Our children are the Lord’s; their whole education must be directed by this thought. We train them for Him, according to His will and in His Spirit. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as our Lord and Master, with His personal presence, His love and rule in heart and home, must be our aim; we must educate our children as *unto the Lord*. That they may know and love Him, that they may be fitted to obey His will and to serve Him, must be what all our education strives after. And it can only be this as we wait for His Spirit to guide and sanctify us for our work. Our whole nurture is to be the nurture of the Lord.

The nurture of the Lord is to bring up the child that he may be a vessel suitable for the Master’s use with every faculty of spirit, soul, and body

prepared for doing His will. The training and teaching must work in harmony for securing this blessed objective. All instruction and admonition has the forming of the will and character of the perfect man as its purpose.

The word *education* is so often used for instruction that I have used the word *discipline* to give the idea the apostle intended. The foundation of a useful and happy life will be found in the habit of order and self-control, the ready submission to law and obedience to duty. When impulse, circumstance, or our likes or dislikes do not rule the life but rather the steady purpose and power of knowing and doing right, then one of the chief objectives of education has been attained. Whatever contributes to the healthy development of the powers God has bestowed on us is included in the nurture of the Lord.

Order is at the foundation of what may be called physical virtues. “Order is heaven’s first law” (Alexander Pope). Throughout the immeasurable spaces of the universe and in the minutest atoms that the mind can conceive, there reigns a divine order; everything is under submission to law. How little it avails that a child or a man is converted if the power of self-control has not been cultivated. Conversion will not give this: the parent must prepare the home in which the Spirit of God is to dwell. The habit of order cultivated in a little child in external things can pass on into his intellectual training and become a mighty power in his moral and spiritual life. And it leads to that other foundation – virtue, decision of character, firmness of purpose, strength of will. Let every parent seek, in nurturing a child for the Lord, to discipline into a fixed habit the innate sense of the rightness of order and decision. They will become ruling principles in the wake of which other natural virtues will easily find their place.

Then come the legal virtues – those distinctly commanded in God’s law, such are obedience, truthfulness, justice, and love. Parents cannot remind themselves too often of the power of single repeated acts, which become habits. Our moral powers are strengthened by exercise. Conscience may be so disciplined as to become habitually tender and ready to act. The innate

sense of right and wrong, the feeling of guilt and shame following sin, and the authority of God's Word are all discipline of wise training for the Lord.

And then there are the virtues that belong more distinctly to the New Testament and the great redemption it reveals. These are the faith and love of Jesus, the indwelling and leading of the Holy Spirit, and the self-denial and holiness and humility of a Christlike life. All this is not only a matter of teaching in the faith of the promise of the Spirit, but also children are to be trained into it. To be temples of God through the Holy Spirit, and to bear the image and be fit for the service of the Lord Jesus, must be the aim of the divine nurture in which we seek to bring up our children.

For such training to be successful, it is necessary that there be authority; the nurture must be in the discipline of the Lord. It is not enough that the parent asserts the right God has given him. The parent must prove himself worthy of his place; his authority will depend upon the weight of his moral character. To acquire such influence must be a matter of study and effort and prayer. All who wish to govern children, not by force but by influence, not against their will but by means of it, must make the needs of childhood their careful study. Only then can the education of our children become the wise and well-ordered training in our household that they may keep the way of the Lord instead of being a series of experiments and failures.

Of such influence, in which true authority has its root and strength, the secret is a life in which we exhibit ourselves what we ask of our children. A life of childlike trust in the Father's love, submission to His authority, and surrender to His training will make itself felt through the home. It will waken our sympathy for their childlike needs and failings. It will waken their sympathy with our teachableness of spirit and our quiet restfulness in the divine rule. And the nurture of our children will be to ourselves and to them the Lord's nurture – God's nurturing us by means of them that He may nurture them by means of us.

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed God and Father, You have appointed us Your servants to bring up our child in a training and teaching which is to be Your own; we come again with the prayer for wisdom and grace to perform our task. We ask You to show us the difficulty and the sacredness of our task, to show us, too, the nearness and sufficiency of Your help. We want to realize that it is as we yield ourselves to Your training and teaching, and walk with You as loving, obedient children, that we shall have power to nurture them correctly.

We ask for grace to combine the admonition that points out the way with the discipline that trains to walk in it. We desire to form our children's character to that order and self-restraint, to that submission to law and authority, in which is the secret of happiness. We desire to give their body and mind such a healthy development that they may be the fit and ready instruments of a spirit under the leading of Your Holy Spirit. Blessed Father, we look to You for the grace we need to do this work.

We will trust You to show each of us when we are in special danger of coming short. We will trust You to accept our childlike desire to obey You and to bless our home. We claim the merit and the presence of Jesus our Lord. We claim the power of a full salvation for us and our children. Amen.

Forty-ninth Day

Home Rule

It is expedient, therefore, that the bishop be ... one that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all integrity; (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the congregation of God?) Let the deacons be the husbands of only one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 1 Timothy 3:2, 4-5, 12

IN considering the qualifications for office bearers in the early church – bishop, elder, or deacon – the state of their household should have been taken into account, and a failure there should have been considered sufficient to bar them from the office for which they otherwise might have appeared fit. It reminds us of the closeness of the link between parents and children and the organic unity of the home as a whole. From the household you can judge what the parents are; the parents make it. The home is the outgrowth and the expression of their life, the mirror in which their hidden failings are revealed.

Some may be inclined to doubt the truth of this statement. They have often heard of pious parents whose children have turned out ill. Is all the blame to be laid on the parents? We have no power to change the evil nature; grace alone can do that. Is it not going too far to put the blame of unbelieving or unruly children on the parents and count such a father unfit

for holding office in the church or household of God, because his own household is not what it should be? And yet this is what the Holy Spirit does. He teaches Paul to connect unbelieving and unruly children with the failure of the home rule and unfitness for church rule. He thus stirs us to search out what the secret evil may be by which the training of their children is robbed of its power and its promised blessing. We are to seek for causes of failure in the home rule.

The first answer may be suggested to us by the words of Paul, as he argues from failure at home to failure in the church. We may go another step and argue from failure in the family to failure in the person; the wrong in the home reveals something wrong with the head. We have seen that the secret of home rule is self-rule, first being what we want our children to be. The wonderful power of the will was meant to make man his own master. And yet how real self-control in daily life is foreign to many Christian parents. It is not the thought of God's will, nor the rule of their own will, that guides and decides their conduct, but they are led away by the feelings of the moment in conversation and conduct. Because they trust that they are God's children, that Christ's blood pardons their sins, and that their prayers will be heard, they hope for the salvation of their children. And yet their education is setting up the most effectual barrier against God's grace. Pleasing themselves, allowing their inclination or temper to be the rule of language and conduct, they give the most effectual contradiction to their profession of being the servants of God's will. If only all Christian parents might learn that a quiet self-examination and self-control and a calm stillness of soul that seeks to be guided by God's Spirit is one of the first conditions of success in our own spiritual life and in the sacred influence we wish to exert on our children. *In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength*; nowhere will the unconscious but strong influence of this restfulness be felt more than in family life (Isaiah 30:15).

But there may be other causes. A Christian may not be lacking in self-control and yet fail. The reason very possibly will be found in neglect of the

duty of ruling. With some, this may come from an entire ignorance of the solemn place a parent occupies. They have never thought seriously of the extent to which the souls and wills and characters of the children are in their hands. They have never taken any trouble to think carefully of the work entrusted to them. They may pray earnestly at times that their children may be saved, but they do not know that it is of more importance to pray daily that they may be fitted to guide their children correctly.

With others, the neglect of the duty rests on wrong principles thoughtlessly adopted. They admire a strong will; in the waywardness or self-assertion of a child, they often see nothing but cause for amusement or admiration. They wish to see their child grow up a strong, bold character, able to do and dare. They do not know that a wayward will is a curse. No wonder the children become disobedient or unruly.

And then with others the neglect of the duty comes from simple weakness and sloth. They admit that it is their duty, but it is so hard and takes so much time and thought. Let parents take time and thought to realize that to rule a child is as distinctly God's command as to love him or to care for him. The time and labor spent in cultivating this grace will be richly rewarded.

But still there are parents in whom neither of the causes of failure mentioned hold true. They do rule themselves and seek to rule their children but have failed. The cause must be sought deeper. There are some children easily ruled; there are others of nervous temperament or wayward disposition who appear to defy control. *The things which are impossible with men are possible with God* (Luke 18:27). Education is a work in which the parents are meant to be God's servants, His fellow workers, but to work with God means to walk closely with Him. The soul that is wholly given to Him and seeks undividedly to do His will is given the power of faith to hold fast the covenant and live in the assurance that God Himself will do the work.

Let there be simple, childlike heart-searching to see if there is desire for worldly honor or position as our goal; the spirit of the world is the most secret but most certain hindrance to true faith. Let the surrender of ourselves and our children – not only to God’s mercy to save, but also to God’s will to rule and use – be complete and unreserved. We shall find God to be our ally, and with Him on our side we must prevail. To have had power with Him in prayer is the sure guarantee of victory with the child.

Parents, the work entrusted to us is holier than we know. The precious instrument, so delicate and wonderfully made, is of such inconceivable worth. To take charge of an immortal soul, to train a will for God and eternity, surely we want to shrink from it. But we cannot. If we are parents, the duty is laid upon us. But, thank God, sufficient grace is prepared and promised too. If we give up our home and our life to God for Him to come in and rule, He will take possession, and by the gentle influence of His Holy Spirit, our home and our life will bow their will to Himself. Faithfulness in the home rule will give power to take care of the church of God.

A Prayer for Parents

Adorable Lord God, we worship You as the Ruler of the universe. Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of Your throne. You are gracious and full of compassion; slow to anger and of great mercy. Your kingdom rules over all, and Your rule is everywhere the fountain of all blessing and good.

O Lord, it has pleased You to ordain that in each home on earth Your heavenly rule should have its reflection. You have given parents power and authority over their children to rule in Your name. You have promised to give them wisdom and strength for maintaining that authority and ruling their children well.

We have to confess with shame how often this holy trust of ruling in Your name has been neglected and abused. We ask You to forgive us.

We ask You to deliver us from all that hinders that rule. We desire to take it up as a life work in Your strength. May a holy self-rule fit us for a happy home rule. We desire to make the work You give us a study and a pleasure to fit ourselves for doing it well. Be our Teacher and our Help.

Lord Jesus, we yield our homes and our children, our lives and all our powers, to be wholly Yours. You are able to keep that which we commit to You. Keep our homes as Your sacred dwelling place, where we and our children serve You in righteousness and love, in peace and in great joy. Amen.

Fiftieth Day

Children and the Scripture

When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice. 2 Timothy 1:5

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and in that which has been entrusted unto thee, ... and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto saving health by the faith which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 3:14-15

IF we connect these two passages, we find in them the true relationship in which children and Scripture ought to stand to each other. Between the unfeigned faith of the mother and grandmother and the faith of Timothy, Scripture had been the connecting link. Scripture needs the believing parent as its messenger. The believing parent needs Scripture as the vehicle for the communication of his faith. A parent's faith teaching the Word of faith may count on the child's faith as the fruit of his labors.

God has so ordered it that it is mostly through the Holy Spirit dwelling in His saints that the Word is brought to sinners in the power of the Spirit. One Spirit dwells in the Word and in the child of God. In the combined action of the two, the Word is made a blessing to others. It is one of the highest honors God has for the believing parent – that He has made him the

minister of His holy Word to his children. It is the unfeigned faith of father or mother that will be used by God to waken a child's faith. In real living faith, there is something contagious; the life of the Spirit breathes in it and makes its words a blessing. This truth suggests some precious lessons a parent should seek to learn.

Teach your child to believe the Word of God. In times past, God sought above everything to train His saints to be men of faith. There is nothing more pleasing to Him than faith. Faith is the soul's surrender to God – to hear what He says, to take what He gives, to receive what He works, to be entirely at His disposal. Faith in God begins with faith in His Word, and no habit a parent can cultivate in a child is more important than a trusting acceptance of all that God has said. In an age of doubt and questioning, teach the child to accept what he cannot understand, because God who is wise and great has said it. Teach the child to believe in His love, in the gift of His Son, and in the life through Him. Teach him day by day to look upon every promise, every truth in the Word, as the food of faith meant to make our faith and our life stronger. Parents, a child is naturally trusting; guide his young trust to that Word which never fails. The child wants to trust; the Word wants to be trusted; let your unfeigned faith bring them into contact.

To the end, teach your child to know the Word of God. Faith depends upon knowledge. Timothy had known the sacred writings as able to make him wise unto salvation. If the grace of God is to save us, it must teach us; it is wisdom from above; we must love God with the mind as well as the heart. Let the parent seek to give the child a clear and intelligent understanding of the great truths of salvation God has revealed. He cannot entrust this work to school or church, for it is astonishing how vague the knowledge obtained in this way often is. Let family worship be so ordered as to be helpful in the knowledge of God's Word. Try always to make it clear at what stage in the history of the kingdom and in the progress of revelation it was that the Word you read was given. Take time to fix in the mind not only the truths and the history of the Bible, but also especially to

memorize some of God's own words. Don't be content with the child's learning and saying his text at fixed times, because it is often forgotten as soon as said. But seek to have some of these words, by frequent repetition, so rooted in the mind that nothing can erase them. Teach the child to know the Book itself, to be at home in it and be taught by unfeigned faith to know that the sacred writings are an inestimable blessing.

Teach your child to love God's Word. This is more difficult than teaching him to believe. There is often the assent of faith and an interest in the knowledge of Scripture with very little real love for it. To teach this is no easy task. Its first requisite is that we love God's Word ourselves. *O how I love thy law* is an expression of piety which many earnest believers will be afraid to utter (Psalm 119:97). Love and joy always go together: what I love I rejoice to possess. Reverence and respect for God's Word, the earnest study of it, and the desire to be guided by it are good, but they do not necessarily breathe that spirit of delight, which says to God, *O how I love thy law*.

And yet a child's heart is particularly responsive to love. Childhood is the age of feeling and impression; the child can be won before he can give a reason for his hope. And a parent's holy, tender love for the Word of God will be the surest means of inspiring the child's love. Let this be a distinct matter of desire and prayer to guide the child that he may truly and heartily love it as the Father's Word. This will indeed be the token of divine grace and the preparation for all blessing.

And then, teach your child to *obey* the Word of God. God connects believing, knowing, and loving with *doing*. Obedience is God's test of uprightness and reality. Teach the child to make what the Father has said the standard of conduct. Let him see and hear that you do so. In our ordinary Christianity, children are educated into the belief that God's commandments are grievous. The idea of wholehearted, unceasing obedience to Him being joyful is never thought of. The Bible must not be as a law continually holding us in check, keeping us from what we would like, and demanding

what is difficult. As the Father's redeemed ones, we must say, *I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my bowels [heart]* (Psalm 40:8). If, in Christ Jesus, we enter into the blessed life of the liberty of God's children, our children will learn from us how impossible it is for us to read the Father's Word and not do it. Our study of it with them will have this as its one purpose: we want to know and do the will of God.

The custom of family worship is to be found in almost every Christian family. Every day a portion of God's holy Word is read there. But alas, in that reading there is often little power or blessing. Many earnest Christian parents look more to their private reading for profit and nourishment. And yet the daily gathering of the family around the Word of God might become a season of spiritual refreshment and nourishment. If we only took the same care to see that the children receive and enjoy the feeding with the divine Word as we do when we prepare a meal with what they need, they would receive and respond to God's Word.

Let parents make their family worship ordered to lead the children into the holy place, to be presented before the Lord, to be fed with the bread each one requires, and to receive the Father's blessing for the day. Let them prepare for reading the Word with the family. Let the reading be as of God's Word, in His presence, and waiting on His Spirit. Beware of the hurry, which gives only time enough for the hasty reading of a chapter. Family worship becomes a deadening form, hardening children into a habit of careless dealing with the Word and with God Himself. A few moments devoted to a quiet, loving, calling attention to what God says, making personal application, and encouraging the children to take and keep the Word may be the beginning of great blessing.

Parents, God's Word is your child's heritage from the Father in heaven. And you are commissioned to lead him into the knowledge and the love and the possession of its treasures. Make it a matter of earnest prayer and let that Word dwell richly in you in all wisdom. In giving His promises, Jesus said, *If ye abide in me and my words abide in you* (John 15:7). Let your life

be one of unfeigned faith that lives and delights in doing God's Word; such faith will pass on to your children. The quiet confidence that comes from God's Word is a power that makes itself felt with our children. And if you feel that you do not know how to bring the Word to them, remember that you have God to do the work and make His Word effective. Pray and believe for the Holy Spirit's working.

A Prayer for Parents

Gracious God, we ask You to give us a deep sense of the blessedness of this part of our work as parents, to bring Your holy Word to our children. May the privilege Timothy had be that of our children. May a deep, full, and joyous faith in Your blessed Word be the power in which all our Scripture teaching comes to them. Help us understand how their hearts are claimed by You and filled with Your words.

We ask You for the grace of wisdom and faith and patient faithfulness to bring Your Word day by day to our children. May our family worship be a holy season of communion with You in which we lead our children into Your presence to hear Your voice and receive Your teaching. O God, we yield ourselves to the supremacy and the power of Your holy Word; let it abide in us that our life may be the shining of Your holy light. Let us be so full of faith and love and obedience to the Word that our dear children learn to love and believe and obey it too.

Father, forgive us that Your Word has not been our daily delight. Will You make it so now? Amen.

Fifty-first Day

Believing Children

He who is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children who can not be accused of dissoluteness, nor insubordinate.

Titus 1:6

GOD expects that the children of believers should be believers too. There is nothing so honoring or pleasing to God as when we believe Him; nothing opens the way for His blessing and love to flow in and take possession of us as when we believe Him. And the very object and purpose of God in the institution of the parental covenant is that believing parents should educate believing children. They are the children of the promise; God and His grace are theirs in promise. A promise has no value unless it is believed; parents who believe will understand that it is their privilege and their duty to train children who believe.

Family life, as ordained by God, was to be a channel for the transmission of the blessing of the Spirit. It is in harmony with this that we so often find in the book of Acts mention made of the household: *[Cornelius] feared God with all his house. [Lydia] was baptized, with her household* (Acts 10:2; 16:15). To the jailor of Philippi, Paul said, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And [he] was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And [he] rejoiced, believing in God*

with all his house (Acts 16:31, 33-34). And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, *believed on the Lord with all his house* (Acts 18:8).

In the epistles of Paul, we find that he uses the expression, *the congregation [church] in thy [their/his] house*, four times. Though in these cases, no mention is made of children, the principle of the organic unity of the family assures us that the children were understood to be in it too. And it is so clear to Paul that believing parents should have believing children that when such is not the case, he regards it as a matter of blame. He indicates that there has been something wrong on the part of the parents, and their own faith and life has not been what it should be. They are prohibited from holding any place of leadership in the church of Christ. When the father, as the ruler of the church in the home, has not trained children who believe, he is unfit for taking care of the house of God. Children who believe are to be expected from parents whose lives are truly those of faith.

Even children can be believers. Trust, which is the power of believing what is told and what love has promised, is one of the most beautiful traits of true childlikeness. This wonderful power of a child's heart must be guided heavenward and led to cling to God and His Word, to Jesus and His love. There is nothing more natural to children than to believe, and through a parent's faith, the Holy Spirit is able to take possession of the child's faith. As the child grows, the faith may grow – a deep and hidden root of life that even amid temporary coldness still holds on to the blessed Savior.

God expects our children to grow up believers. We ought to expect it too. It is of the very nature of faith in God that it seeks to think as He thinks, to depend upon Him for what is impossible, to make His promise and His power the measure of its hope. The confidence that our children will grow up to be true believers will exercise its influence on us and on them – on us as a daily call to a life of pure holiness and consecration, and on our children in the creation of an atmosphere of faith around them in

which they breathe and live. In our homes, God expects that there will be children who believe.

The proof that our children are believers will be their conduct. Paul writes of elders: *having faithful children who can not be accused of dissoluteness, nor insubordinate*. Faith is perfected by works; like every other function of life, it can grow and become strong only by action. A life of faith is always a life of obedience. And a child's faith must prove itself in a child's obedience to the parents. Children who are allowed to be unruly and disobedient and self-willed will lose their childlike faith. Faith is surrender. I yield myself entirely to the influence of the news I hear, the promise I receive, the person I trust. Faith in Jesus is entire surrender to Him, to be ruled and influenced and mastered by Him. Faith in Jesus is the surrender to Him and His will, to let Him save us in the way He has opened up, the way of trusting, loving, holy obedience. Let parents seek to lead the little one's simple faith in Jesus to this surrender. Let them claim the child's obedience to themselves as obedience to Jesus. Their home will be the happy proof that believing children are not unruly.

If ours are not children who believe, let us seek the cause in ourselves. God's promise is sure, and His provision is perfect. It may be that the spirit of the world prevails in our heart and home, and that while the Sunday talks teach the children faith in Jesus, the weekday life trains them to faith in the world, to a surrender to its spirit and rule. Or it may be that while we are engaged in religion and religious work, there is little true spirituality: the joy, love, and power of holiness, which alone make religion a reality. Religion has been an occupation like any other, but the holy presence of Jesus has not been felt by our children.

Or, there may have been failure in our lack of training the children; we may have entrusted the work to others and neglected the self-denial and the study needed to fit ourselves for the work of ruling and guiding them in the ways of the Lord. Let us seek honestly to discover the reason for failure to

solve the sad dilemma: we are believers, and we have a faithful God; yet we do not have children who believe.

God calls us to search our hearts, confess, and return. And even if we have children who believe, but their faith is not in such power and devotion as we desire, let us turn to God with humbling and a new surrender. Our home life needs the warm light of a Savior's love and the joy of His presence shining from us; this is what our homes need as the secret of a successful education. Each new step in the path of entire separation to God and of larger faith in His abiding and keeping presence must make itself felt in the family. If there are circumstances and influences that appear to make it impossible, let us remember what faith can do: it can bring almighty God and His power into the scene. We may not obtain at once what we ask, but faith can live in us the life God wants us to live; it can keep the soul in peace and rest; it can exert its slow but sure influence. Faith of an entire surrender is what our homes need and will transform them into what God would have them be. Both with God and with our children, let us remember this well: there is no power so mighty as that of a quiet, restful faith that knows God has given what we have asked. He has taken charge of what we have entrusted to Him, and He is working out what He has undertaken. Parents who are believers, who believe with their whole heart and strength and life, will have faithful children who are not unruly.

A Prayer for Parents

Blessed Lord God, the God of the families of Israel, we thank You for each message that reminds us of what You would have our children be as the proof of the reality of our faith in Your Word and our life in Your love. We pray, blessed Lord, place it deep in our hearts that in every believing home You expect and seek believing children. Lord, as trees of Your planting, we yield to You the fruit You seek.

When You do not find it, we ask You to work a deep conviction of the sin that is the cause of the shortcoming. Whether it is from unbelief or

worldliness, the lack of ruling or living well, we ask You to reveal the sin, that it may be confessed and cast out. Reveal especially how it is the lack of our undivided consecration to Your will with its lack of assurance and experience of Your presence that is the secret cause of all our failure.

Blessed Lord Jesus, it was Your presence that drew so many parents to trust You when You were on earth. O Lord, it is Your presence with us that will strengthen our faith and give us children who believe. We set our homes open to You. Come in and reign. Be our joy and gladness every day. We have yielded ourselves to live each moment under Your rule; we have believed in Your acceptance of our sacrifice to keep us abiding in You; oh, give us the wisdom and sweetness, the faith and the power to be a blessing to our home. Oh, give us children who believe, children You can use for Your glory. Amen.

Fifty-second Day

I and the Children

Behold I and the children which God has given me. Hebrews 2:13

THESE words were originally used by the prophet Isaiah: *Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel* (Isaiah 8:18).

The prophet and his family were to be God's witnesses to certain great truths, which God wanted His people not to forget. In the epistle to the Hebrews, these words of the Holy Spirit are put into the mouth of Christ as His confession of His relationship to those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren. As we draw our meditations to a close, these words invite us to gather up all that the Word has taught us of the purpose and the promise of our God, of the work of love committed to us, and of the abounding hope in which we may look to the fulfillment of what God has led us to expect.

Behold, I and the children which God has given me. Let this be the language of a deep and living faith, as we think of the wonderful ground of our unity. I am one with my children in virtue of God's eternal purpose, when He created man and instituted the family. He meant the parent to beget children in his own likeness, to impart his own life and spirit to them, to have one life with them. When sin entered, the promise and the covenant were given to restore the blessing that had been lost; again, in faith, the

parent was to receive for the child and communicate to him the grace God had bestowed.

In virtue of that promise, I am one with my children, and my children are one with me in the enjoyment of the love and the life that comes in Jesus. In that faith, I present myself before the Father with that same *Behold* with which Jesus called the Father to look upon Him and His, and I say, too, “Father, behold, I and the children whom Thou hast given me.” Thou hast given them to me to be inseparably and eternally one with me. God has given them to me to keep and train for Him and present before Him as mine and His too. In this faith I want to look upon my little God-given flock to believe that they are one with me in the possession of all the promises and blessings of the covenant that the love of my God can give. And when it may appear as if they are not growing as one with me in Christ, my faith will still say, *Behold, I and the children which God has given me*. And when the thought of neglect in my training makes me fear lest my guilt is the cause of their being unconverted, I will still say, looking to the precious all-availing blood that cleanses all my sin too: *Behold, I and the children which God has given me*. We are one; we must be one through Thy grace; we shall be one to all eternity.

In Jesus Christ, nothing avails but faith working by love. *Behold, I and the children which God has given me*. When spoken in loving faith, the words become the inspiration of love for the work God has committed to us. The bond between a parent and child is a double one – the unity of life and of love.

This love in nature cares for and nurtures the child. It is this love that God takes possession of and sanctifies for His service. It is this love that becomes the strength for the difficult and yet delightful work the parent has to do.

Love is always self-surrender and self-sacrifice. It gives itself away to the beloved object; it seeks to enter into it and become one with it. True, full love has no rest apart from perfect union with the beloved; all it has

must be shared together. God calls His redeemed ones thus as parents to love their children, to identify themselves with them, to seek and claim their salvation as much as their own. And as the Spirit of Christ takes possession of the heart, the parent accepts the call and learns to say with a new meaning, *Behold, I and the children which God has given me.*

I and the children. I, the author of their life, the framer of their character, the keeper of their souls, the trustee of their eternal destiny. I, first blessed that I may bless them, first taught how my Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me that I may know how to love and how to give myself for them. I, having experienced how patient and gentle and tender He is with my ignorance and slowness and willfulness to watch over and to bear with their weakness. I, made one with these children that in the power of love I may be willing to study what they need and how I may best influence them and train myself for the work of training them to self-rule. I, walking in the obedience and the liberty of a loving child of God to guide them in the happy art of an obedience that is always submissive to law. Yes, the consciousness grows, that what I am, the children may and will be.

When faith and love have spoken, hope will have courage to take up the song and in full assurance to say, *Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me* (Isaiah 8:18). We are inseparably and eternally one. Hope is the child of faith and love. Faith is its strength for waiting and watching, love its strength for willing and working.

Hope always looks forward. It sees even when things are dark, the unseen God coming through the clouds to fulfill His Word. It sings the song of victory, when others see nothing but defeat. Amid all the struggles through which it may see a loved child passing, hope speaks. Through its own buoyant tone, it inspires the children when they are discouraged in the fight with evil; it seeks to be the morning star of the home. And as often as it looks for the blessed hope, the appearing of our Lord Jesus, and the glory that is to follow, it rejoices in the full assurance of an unbroken family circle in heaven. May God teach us to rejoice in this hope: *And believing,*

the God of hope fills you with all joy and peace that ye may abound in hope by the virtue of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

Behold, I and the children which God has given me. Beloved fellow believers whom God has honored to be parents, shall we not seek to have the spirit of these words breathe through our whole home life? It is God who has given us the children; it is He who regards them as one with us in His covenant and blessing and teaches us to regard them so too. In God's sight and promise we are one; in our life and love and labor, let us be one with them too; we shall be one through the glory of eternity.

A Prayer for Parents

Our gracious Father, we thank You for all the blessed teaching of Your holy Word concerning our children. We thank You that it has set them before us in Your light as created by You, ruined by sin, redeemed in Christ, and now entrusted to us to keep and care for while the Holy Spirit renews them to Your eternal life and glory. We thank You that You have come as our Teacher to fit us for teaching them. We pray for Your blessing on each word of Yours that we may indeed become parents as You would have us be.

O Lord, we ask You to establish in our thoughts and hearts and lives all the wonderful truths that gather around the home life. We treasure all the promises of Your Spirit and blessing as their sacred heritage. We do accept all Your warnings and instructions concerning children as the law of our home. O Lord, open our eyes that we may always have before us the picture of a believing home as You would will it.

Above all, blessed Lord Jesus, let Your presence and Your love and Your joy be the power to fulfill the Father's will and win our children's love. It is in You all the promises are Yea and Amen; come and accept our consecration to be wholly Yours; come and let our home be the abode where You love to tarry. Then shall it be blessed indeed, and each

of us will say with never-ceasing gladness of hope, “Behold, I and the child God has given me.”

Even so, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Appendix A

In the life of Fidelia Fiske, the devoted Persian missionary, we have an instance of the covenant blessing descending not only through generations but also through centuries. We read in her memoir:

“In the year 1637, when the effort seemed hopeless to establish in England ‘a practical world based on belief in God,’ two brothers, William and the Rev. John Fiske, emigrated from the county of Suffolk to America, settling first in Salem, Massachusetts, and subsequently in the adjoining town of Wenham. According to the testimony of Cotton Mather – ... – they were children ‘of pious and worthy parents, yea, of grandparents and great-grandparents, eminent for zeal in the true religion.’

“Let this last sentence be noticed. These two young Englishmen were the children of ancestors ‘eminent for zeal in the true religion’; we shall thus be able to arrive at one of the most encouraging and remarkable instances of the blessing of the Lord on ‘the seed’ of the godly. It may be presumed that these ‘great-grandparents’ of Suffolk lived a hundred years before the two brothers sailed for America.”

“Let parents observe, and let the fidelity of God to His promise be adored, – for more than three hundred and thirty years the line of the holy seed has been preserved!

“From William Fiske, a man of great intelligence and Christian integrity, descended a second William, who inherited his father’s abilities and virtues, was deacon of the church, and, like his father, held various offices of public trust and honour, representing his town for six years in the General Court.

“Ebenezer Fiske, son of William, jun., was born in 1679; resided at Wenham, was deacon of the church, and died at the age of ninety-two. The

son of Ebenezer was born in 1716 and removed to Shelburne. He was a man of inflexible religious principles, and exerted great influence in the growing community. His wife was a woman of energy and eminent piety and would frequently set apart whole days to pray that her children might be a goodly seed even to the latest generation. In 1857 three hundred of the descendants of this praying mother were members of Christian churches!

“Ebenezer Fiske was the child of these Shelburne settlers. He was a man of noble form, benignant face, saintly character, and lived to the patriarchal age of ninety-two. His son Rufus was a devout and exemplary Christian, sound in doctrine, firm in principle, and of a meek and benevolent spirit. His wife, the mother of the subject of this memoir, was a woman of great activity and equability, a native of Taunton, Mass.

“What a blessed testimony is this to the faithfulness of God to his people through more than ten generations! How impossible for any human mind to estimate the chain of sanctifying influence, which must have extended more and more as time rolled on! Ye praying fathers and mothers, let this remarkable genealogy confirm your faith in the promise of God. The emotions of the sainted head of such a house, as he beholds his descendants through successive generations coming into heaven, and the numerous converts they have won from Satan and from eternal death, can scarcely be conceived, much less described.”^[1]

^[1] Fidelia Fiske: The Story of a Consecrated Life, by William Guest

Appendix B

It may be helpful to parents, to young mothers especially, to give a short summary of the principles on which all training rests. Let them meditate carefully and prayerfully on what it implies: they will find that it is a work that cannot be performed without careful thought and earnest purpose. They will feel urged to plead the promise: *And if any of you lacks wisdom, let them ask of God (who gives abundantly to all, and without reproach), and it shall be given them* (James 1:5).

- *Training is more than teaching.*

Teaching makes a child know and understand what he is to do; training influences him and sees that he does it. Teaching deals with his mind; training, with his will.

- *Prevention is better than cure.*

Not to watch and correct mistakes, but to watch and *prevent mistakes*, is true training. To lead the child to know that he *can* obey and do right, that he can do it easily and successfully, and to delight in doing it is the highest aim of true training.

- *Habits must precede principles.*

Habits influence the person by giving a certain bent and direction, by making the performance of certain acts easy and natural, and thus preparing the way for obedience from principle.

- *The cultivation of the feelings precedes that of the judgment.*

The early years of childhood are marked by the liveliness of the feelings and the susceptibility of impressions. The parent seeks to create a feeling favorable to the good, to make it attractive and desirable. Without this, habits will have little value; with it, they have a connecting link by which they enter and grow into the will.

- *Example is better than precept.*

Not in what we say and teach, but in what we *are* and *do*, lies the power of training. Not as we *think* an ideal to train our children for, but as we *live*, do we train them. Not our wishes or our theory, but our will and our practice, really train. It is by living a thing that we prove that we love it, that we have it, and that we influence the young mind to love it and to have it too.

- *Love that draws is more than law that demands.*

To train needs a life of self-sacrifice, of love that seeks not its own, but lives and gives itself for its object. For this God has given the wonderful mother-love: it needs only to be directed into the right channel as the handmaid of God's redeeming love. Law alone always works sin and wrath. It is love that gives itself with its thought and strength to live for and in the other and breathes its own stronger and better life into the weaker one. Love inspires, and it is inspiration that is the secret of training.

About the Author

Andrew Murray (1828-1917) was a well-known South African writer, teacher, and pastor. More than 2 million copies of his books have been sold, and his name is mentioned among the other great leaders of the past such as Charles Spurgeon, T. Austin-Sparks, George Muller, D.L. Moody, and more.

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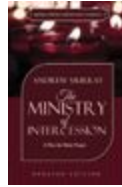
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Is humility a Christlike attribute that should be pursued? And even if it should be, can genuine humility actually be attained? Often so practical in application that it is overlooked, the answer is found by studying the life and words of Christ (*whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your slave*). This little book is a loud call to all committed Christians to prove that meekness and lowliness of heart is the evidence by which those who follow the meek and lowly Lamb of God are to be known. Never mind that your initial efforts will be misunderstood, taken advantage of, or even resisted. Instead, learn from the One who *came not to be ministered unto, but to serve*. For a Christian to be alive, for the life of Christ to reign in and through us, we must be empty of ourselves, exchanging our life for His life, our pride for true, Christlike humility.

Humility, by Andrew Murray

[Available where books are sold.](#)



If the answer to prayer is so positively promised in scripture, why are there so many unanswered prayers today (often misinterpreted as a “no”)? Scripture teaches us that answer to prayer depends upon certain conditions. Christ spoke of faith, of perseverance, of praying in His name, of praying in the will of God. But all these conditions were summed up in the one central statement: *If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* It becomes clear that the power to pray the effectual prayer of faith depends upon the *life*.

Let Andrew Murray show you what it means to live in Christ, and let his challenge for genuine intercessory prayer change your life – and the lives of those you are praying for.

The Ministry of Intercession, by Andrew Murray

[Available where books are sold.](#)



Jesus is still He who heals both soul *and* body. Salvation offers holiness *and* healing, and the Holy Spirit is willing to give us a manifestation of His power. When we ask why this divine power is not more often seen, the only biblical answer to be found is: “Because of your unbelief.”

Health as well as salvation is to be obtained by faith. The natural tendency of man is to bring about his salvation by his works, and it is only with difficulty that he comes to receive it by faith. But when it is a question of healing the body, he has still more difficulty grasping that truth. As to salvation, he finally accepts it because there is no other way to open the door of heaven. But for the body, he makes use of many other treatments. But happy is he who understands that it is the will of God to show the power of Jesus and to reveal to us His Fatherly love by healing physically as well as spiritually. By doing so, He increases and confirms our faith and teaches us that He demonstrates the power of redemption in the body as well as in the soul.

Divine Healing, by Andrew Murray

[Available where books are sold.](#)



Often disguised as something that would help him, evil accompanies Christian on his journey to the Celestial City. As you walk with him, you'll begin to identify today's many religious pitfalls. These are presented by men such as Pliable, who turns back at the Slough of Despond; and Ignorance, who believes he's a true follower of Christ when he's really only trusting in himself. Each character represented in this allegory is intentionally and profoundly accurate in its depiction of what we see all around us, and unfortunately, what we too often see in ourselves. But while Christian is injured and nearly killed, he eventually prevails to the end. So can you.

The best part of this book is the Bible verses added to the text. The original *Pilgrim's Progress* listed the Bible verse references, but the verses themselves are so impactful when tied to the scenes in this allegory, that they are now included within the text of this book. The text is tweaked just enough to make it readable today, for the young and the old. Youngsters in particular will be drawn to the original illustrations included in this wonderful classic.

Pilgrim's Progress, by John Bunyan

[Available where books are sold.](#)



To have found God and still to pursue Him is a paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too-easily-satisfied religious person, but justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux stated this holy paradox in a musical four-line poem that will be instantly understood by every worshipping soul:

*We taste Thee, O Thou Living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still:
We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.*

Come near to the holy men and women of the past and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God. Let A. W. Tozer's pursuit of God spur you also into a genuine hunger and thirst to truly know God.

The Pursuit of God, by A. W. Tozer

[Available where books are sold.](#)



Why are many Christians often defeated? Because they pray so little. Why do most Christians see so few brought *out of darkness to light* by their ministry? Because they pray so little. Why are our churches simply not on fire for God? Because there is so little real prayer.

We may be assured of this: The secret of all failure is our failure in secret prayer.

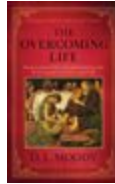
This book explores, in depth:

- God's wonder at our lack of prayer
- God's incredible promises concerning those who do pray
- God's condition for providing signs
- God's desire for earnest prayer
- God's perspective on hindrances to prayer

The Lord Jesus is as powerful today as ever before. The Lord Jesus is as anxious for men to be saved as ever before. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, but He does not stretch forth His arm unless we pray more – and more genuinely. Prayer, real prayer, is the noblest, the sublimest, and the most stupendous act that any creature of God can perform. Lord, teach us how to pray.

The Kneeling Christian, by Albert Richardson

[Available where books are sold.](#)



Are you an overcomer? Or, are you plagued by little sins that easily beset you? Even worse, are you failing in your Christian walk, but refuse to admit and address it? No Christian can afford to dismiss the call to be an overcomer. The earthly cost is minor; the eternal reward is beyond measure.

Dwight L. Moody is a master at unearthing what ails us. He uses stories and humor to bring to light the essential principles of successful Christian living. Each aspect of overcoming is looked at from a practical and understandable angle. The solution Moody presents for our problems is not religion, rules, or other outward corrections. Instead, he takes us to the heart of the matter and prescribes biblical, God-given remedies for every Christian's life. Get ready to embrace genuine victory for today, and joy for eternity.

The Overcoming Life, by D. L. Moody

[Available where books are sold.](#)

How to Raise Children for Christ – Andrew Murray

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