


A WORD ABOUT
THE CHILDREN.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER DALLAS, A. M.,
RECTOR OF WONSTON, HANTS.

*Author of the "Cottager's Guide to the New Testament,"
"Look to Jerusalem," &c.*



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MAY every person who reads this tract find a blessing in it; and that he may do so, he had better begin by saying,

*O God, for Jesus Christ's sake,
give me the Holy Spirit,
that I may profit by whatever
is good in this Tract.*



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A WORD ABOUT THE CHILDREN.

THE love of a father, or a mother, is one of the sweetest and best feelings that we have ; but men and women, in the sinful state in which they now are by nature, do things for the sake of the present pleasure, or ease or advantage they can gain. They do not consider the future consequences—for the most part they do not believe what they are told of the consequences ; and the more they love any thing, the more the present gratification blinds them to the future results. If we indulge the parental love only for present pleasure to ourselves in pleasing the children, or if we let them have their own way to save ourselves the trouble of correcting them, we overlook the purposes for which that love was put into our hearts, and go the way to bring ruin on the children and misery to ourselves.

When God sends a child into the world, He provides two people who are to have the particular charge of it. To induce them to take this charge He furnishes them with a new impulse directed towards this particular object ; and He has made this new object a source of very great pleasure : He implants the peculiar love of parents in their hearts. Nothing can be more delightful

than a father's and a mother's AFFECTION for their child ; and it never comes till the child comes that needs it.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.—Psa. ciii. 13.

Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ?—Isaiah xlix. 15.

Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it.—1 Kings iii. 26.

God means this AFFECTION for some use. Besides this natural feeling God has given great POWER to parents by his Word. When He spoke the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, He commanded all the children to “honour their father and mother,” and promised that they should not be cut off in their youth if they did so.

Honour thy father and thy mother : that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.—Exod. xx. 12.

Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father.—Lev. xix. 3.

Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother.—Deut. xxvii. 16.

He confirmed this under the Gospel.

And he [Jesus] went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.—Luke ii. 51.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord : for this is right. Honour thy father and mother ; which is the first commandment with promise ; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.—Eph. vi. 1-3.

From these passages you find that God has placed very great power in the hands of parents over their children. Do you think that God has given them this power for no end ?—Do you not

think He will require an account of how it has been used? Most assuredly He will: and if it has been neglected, or has been employed for our own pleasure, and not for the purpose for which it was given, it will be a dreadful day when He calls for the account.

What was the purpose for which this AFFECTION and this POWER were given? To understand this purpose you must call to mind the important truth which you so often profess to believe—that we are born in sin, and are children of wrath.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.—Psa. li. 5.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.—Rom. v. 12, 14.

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.—Eph. ii. 1, 2.

Our children follow us in the same state.

Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.—Job xiv. 4.

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.—Prov. xxii. 15.

Children from their earliest infancy strive to have their own way. Their own way, though seemingly a small matter at first, is the broad way, and leads to destruction in the end.

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one : there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre ; with their tongues they have used deceit ; the poison of asps is under their lips : whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness : their feet are swift to shed blood : destruction and misery are in their ways : and the way of peace have they not known : there is no fear of God before their eyes.—Rom. iii. 10—18.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.—Rom. viii. 7.

All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way.—Isa. liii. 6.

The habit of having their own way when young confirms children in rebellion against God in after age.—The habit of submitting their own wills, and being subject to their parents prepares them for submitting themselves to God, when by his grace they shall know his will afterwards. The purpose for which this GREAT POWER is given is to produce this habit of obedience in the children ; and the purpose for which this DELIGHTFUL AFFECTION is given is to induce parents to persevere in a kind but firm use of the power. Both are greatly wanted ; for it is a difficult thing to subdue the will of a child, and without such *power* it could not be attempted ; and it is a long and tedious work, and without such *affection* nobody would continue to use the power.

There are a great many passages of Scripture which teach parents how to use this *power* and this *affection*. Take, for instance, what is said in Proverbs xix. 18,—“CHASTEN THY SON WHILE

THERE IS HOPE ;" which text shows, *first* A PARENT'S DUTY, and, *secondly*, THE TIME FOR DOING IT.

I. The parent's duty is to "chasten their children," as the first part of this text shows. This does not mean that they are always to beat their children. It means that when children strive to have their own way contrary to what their parents order, they must be hindered and forced to submit ; and when they rebel and take their own way, they must feel that it is sure to bring painful consequences ; so that they may by degrees find out that it is of no use to rebel, and that it is better to obey.

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child ; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.—Prov. xxii. 15.

Withhold not correction from the child : for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.—Prov. xxiii. 13, 14.

Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way : and he that hateth reproof shall die.—Prov. xv. 10.

Beating may sometimes be necessary to produce this, but it must not be too often, nor too much, nor for small things ; above all it must not be in anger.

Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.—Eph. vi. 4.

Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.—Col. iii. 21.

No beating, nor any other punishment, is of any use if the child is allowed to go on in his own way ; or if what is punished at one time is overlooked at another. Some parents beat their

children not so much to correct them, as to give a sort of payment for a certain fault—the child has his way in doing the thing forbidden, and the parent has his way in beating the child, and the matter is done with; but God has not His way acknowledged, and this is the great object of chastening. God puts parents as it were in His place as regards their children: in some respects the parents are to the children what our Father in Heaven is to all: and He gives parents an example how to chasten, by the motive and the way which He takes in chastening His children. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” Heb. xii. 6.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.—Rev. iii. 19.

For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.—Prov. iii. 12.

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.—Psa. cxix. 75.

II. The second part of this text shows the time for doing the parent's duty, that is “while there is hope.” There is no hope of gathering the waters of a river after the flood-gates of the stream are opened, and the land has been overflowed—there is no hope of bending a tree which has got to its full growth; if you would bend it you must take it while it is yet a twig. So it is with a child—there is no hope that the parent's power will keep in subjection the strong spirit of after years, when the early self-will of the child has been indulged or overlooked. The duty of a parent to chasten a child into submission should begin to be exercised as soon as the child begins

to oppose its own will to the parent's—that is, long before an infant can speak. The sooner the duty is begun the less trouble will result afterwards both to parents and to children.

Train up a child in the way he should go : and when he is old, he will not depart from it.—Prov. xxii. 6.

Cast thy bread upon the waters : for thou shalt find it after many days.

In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand : for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.—Eccles. xi. 1, 6.

The consequences of neglecting to take the hopeful time for doing this duty, are shewn in the following passages of Scripture.

The rod and reproof give wisdom : but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.—Prov. xxix. 15.

A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.—Prov. xvii. 25.

In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house : when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth ; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.—1 Sam. iii. 12, 13.

Observe the consequences of the neglect of this important duty which has been too common in this country within the last few years. It cannot be hid from the observation of any person who takes any interest in their fellow creatures amongst whom they dwell. “ Disobedience to parents ” (2 Tim. iii. 2), seems too plainly the mark of these “ perilous times.” But if the parents used the POWER God has given them, and the AFFECTION he has implanted in their hearts to “ *chasten their children while there was hope,*” such a state of

things could not exist. Young children of nine or ten years old take their own way in spite of their parents who quietly submit—Young girls leave their homes, and are seen walking about with young lads, and never think of giving any account of themselves to their fathers and mothers—The most awful swearing that is heard comes often from the mouths of the youngest lads—The most open Sabbath-breaking which takes place is principally by the same lads, who ought to be led to the house of God by their parents, in quiet obedience, at least, if not in willing devotion—The young girls who come to church too often show their careless inattention by talking and laughing in that sacred place, when they think that the minister's eye is not upon them—They are allowed by their parents to sit where they choose, instead of being kept under the parental care by the mother's side. These are but the beginnings of sorrows. What is likely to be the progress and end of such beginnings? The history of almost every parish in the country—the state of the prisons and the bridewells—the shamelessness of many an unmarried mother—the broken hearts of many an aged father and mother, can testify what may be expected. May God affect the hearts of the parents that more misery may not follow. How can parents be so blind—so foolish—so cruel in their indulgence! How dreadfully will they have to answer for it one day! How can this unkindness grow out of God's gift of such AFFECTION! How can this weakness appear in connexion with such responsible POWER!

What makes this state of things so much more inexcusable, is the many helps with which parents are provided in these days to assist them in doing their duty. There are Infants' Schools, and National Schools, and Sunday Schools, for all ages. Some parents neglect these advantages, and do not send their children—Some make foolish excuses, and some make no excuse at all—Some think that the children at these schools do not learn to read fast enough. It is an easy thing to teach children to read words, as a parrot may be taught to speak words, but it is of no use for children to know how to read, if they do not *understand* the words they read. The object of these schools, is to carry on the purpose of God concerning the children : to teach them obedience, and to bring them to Christ. With this object they are to be taught to *think* first, which is the hardest thing to teach ; and then reading comes with the thoughts, and they remember what they learn. How many grown-up people are there who can look back on the time when they, as children, could get pretty quickly through the spelling book, but who have since forgotten all they learnt, because they did not understand what they were about.

The principal thing to be taught children is obedience ; according to God's Law, to prepare them for obeying HIM when they come to know Him : and in this how sadly the errors of the parents and the neglect of their duty, mars and hinders the best endeavours that are used at School. It is the time of hope with these poor

dear little ones, and therefore it is the Scripture time for chastening to bend them into the right way. How often the necessary discipline, and, when occasion requires, the moderate and calm correction at school are rendered of no effect by the interference of an injudicious parent—at home the corrected child is pitied and encouraged—his foolish and often false tales are listened to—he is kept away for a day or two, and thus the correction that was necessary for his good, is made by the parent a snare to confirm him in evil. The cunning with which children work upon those parents who give way to them is very striking. Children who submit very quietly to the correction at school, which they know is calmly but steadily given, have cried aloud without any cause, upon the appearance of a hasty mother to endeavour to interfere. What will such parents feel when they find that their own conduct has hindered the good effect of that correction, which might have been the means of saving their children from destruction—that the abuse of their parental AFFECTION, has caused the failure of an attempt to bless their children with some of the benefit of parental POWER.

But there is another way in which parents undo at home the benefit of the best endeavours at school to train up their children in the way in which they should go. At school the children are taught the wickedness of swearing, and they are corrected whenever they are heard to swear: they are also taught to honour their father and mother. But when these children go

home how often do they hear that father or that mother, whom they are taught to honour, commit that sin which they are told is so very offensive to God. If a swearing child, who is corrected at school, goes home and hears his father or mother swear, what good can the correction be expected to produce. The same may be said of evil speaking of every kind, of deceit and of many other things, where the example at home renders the instruction at school almost useless. What a fearful account will such parents have to give for the effect of their evil example upon their children. It is quite shocking to find the early age at which some little children, make use of the most dreadful oaths as if they were common words. This however, arises in some cases because parents, who do not swear themselves, permit their children to run about the streets, and to hear the language made use of by men and lads; for such carelessness they will have to account. What can be said of that parental AFFECTION which allows a child to seek the infection of a disease which kills with the second death—what of that POWER which will not restrain the parents own tongue from spreading the poison which destroys the thing they love best.

One great source of evil to the children is the differences between their fathers and mothers concerning their faults; and the quarrels of which they are sometimes witnesses. Children cannot honour their parents when they see them quarrel: and if when the father corrects the mother will fondle the child, or the reverse, the child will

have his way, and is sure to repeat his fault. Many a child's soul will rise up in judgment against its parent on this account. Wherever there is a difference, God has given the authority to the husband, and the wife must not let the child see her oppose that authority. All differences must be privately settled; the worry of a wife taking part with her child against the father's authority is referred to in Prov. xix. 13.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2.

Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be unto their own husbands in every thing. Eph. v. 22—24.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Col. iii. 18.

Children, when at school are shewn the necessity for daily reading God's word, and they begin and end the day with prayer; they are taught, that without prayer there is no blessing. If they grow up to neglect the Bible and prayer, what will those parents have to answer for whose children are never called, when at home, to the family-prayer in the morning, nor to the family-prayer in the evening, and never find the Scriptures in domestic use. Upon this score a great load of sin lies with many parents. May God speedily set these matters right.

The very love which is in the parents' hearts

will become the source of distress and agony to those who may live to see the evil harvest of their own evil sowing—the future wicked courses and disgrace of these indulged and head-strong children. But this agony, great as it is, will be as nothing, compared with what those will suffer who, at the Judgement of Christ, shall stand to hear the curse passed upon their children, when they reflect that there was a time when they might have “*chastened their children while there was hope.*” In that day there will be no hope. The word of God as we have already seen commands “withhold not correction from the child ;” and adds this promise, “Thou shalt deliver his soul from hell.” Can hell itself have a pang more piercing than what a parent’s heart must feel at the thought of such a scene? Yes it can! It can have this aggravation added to it:—Christ died to save your child, but you stood in the way of his salvation.—Christ sent you THIS WARNING while there was yet time, but you would not be warned. O let not this aggravation of agony come upon you; but to day, while it is called to-day, love your children so well as to “*chasten them while there is hope.*”

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