

THE
EDUCATION OF CHILDREN:

HOW PIOUS PARENTS SHOULD
GOVERN, TEACH AND DI-
RECT THEM,

By
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THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

Unto all elders and joint-heirs in the faith of Christ, grace be to you and peace from God, our heavenly Father, through his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, by the power and co-operation of His Holy Spirit, to his everlasting praise and glory, and to our edification and salvation, Amen.

You are aware, beloved brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, that we all, without exception, inherit from Adam an ill-disposed, evil and sinful flesh; nay, that all our desires from our youth are evil continually, as Moses writes; also, we find nothing in ourselves, as the proper treasure of our first birth, but perfect blindness, unrighteousness, sin and death. If now the power of this innate disposition is to be diminished, suppressed and destroyed, it must be accomplished by the pure fear of the Lord, which proceeds from a true faith through the word of the

Lord, and from a clear perception of the righteous judgment and terrible wrath of God, which will burn forever against all impenitent sinners. For the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; it drives out sin and makes upright, pious children.

Since, then, the merciful Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Almighty Lord, has encompassed us with the light of his grace, and through faith in Jesus Christ, has awakened us from iniquity and ungodliness to a life of righteousness; therefore, let us diligently follow the glorious example of the true love of Matthew the publican, who was not satisfied with enjoying the heavenly calling and grace himself, but went and invited other publicans and sinners, that they might also be saved and obtain the like spirit, grace and mercy from the Lord; for such is the nature and disposition of Christ.

Trade among yourselves with the talent received from on high. Have compassion on your unbelieving, blind parents, brothers and sisters husbands, wives, servants and neighbors ; do not conceal from them God's gift, grace, word and will ; for their feet are in the way of death. Perhaps they may at some time or other, extri-

cate themselves from the snares of unrighteousness in which they are bound and entangled, and turn themselves to the Lord with all their hearts. My dear brethren, understand this as regards men of sense and discretion. Brethren in Christ, if we saw any such in danger of being drowned or burned, or in any danger threatening their lives, and there was a prospect that we could render them assistance, would not our inmost souls be moved with compassion towards them, if haply we might afford them relief? Undoubtedly. And now we see with our own eyes, (if we but believe the Lord's word) that they are walking in the shadow of eternal death, already committed to the grave of hell, and liable to be devoured forever and ever by the eternal, unquenchable fire, unless from their hearts they turn unto Christ and his word, repent, and become regenerated, as the scriptures teach. Therefore, consider seriously the heartrending misery and wretchedness of their poor souls which must live forever, either in heaven or in hell, and strive diligently and faithfully whether they may not yet, in some way, by your faithful ministry of pure love, and by the direction and instruction of the divine word, be rescued and

delivered from everlasting destruction, and be made partakers of eternal salvation. For genuine charity is of such a nature that it is constantly hungering and thirsting after the glory of God and the salvation of all men, even of those who are strangers to us according to the flesh.

Beloved brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, forasmuch as we are now constrained by saving charity, with benevolence and sympathy, and know by the unction of the spirit and word of God, that the nature of man is completely corrupted in Adam, and is opposed from youth to the word of the Lord, as aforesaid; let us, therefore, be particularly vigilant and solicitous with regard to our own children, displaying unto them a greater degree of spiritual love than towards others; for they are the natural offspring of our flesh and blood,— a serious and precious charge committed by God to our especial care. Be, therefore, particularly mindful that you instruct them from their youth in the way of the Lord, that they fear and love God, walk in all modesty and submission, are genteel, well disposed, discreet, honor and obey their father and mother, using reason-

able language, not lying, nor clamorous, not stubborn nor self-willed; for such is not becoming the children of the saints. The world desire for their children that which is earthly and perishable,— money, honor, fame, and wealth. From youth they are trained up to vice, pride, haughtiness and idolatry. But with you, who are born of God, this is not the case; for it behooves you to seek something else for your children; namely, that which is heavenly and eternal, and hence it is your duty to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, as Paul teaches. (Eph. 6.) Moses commanded Israel to teach their children the law and commandments of the Lord, to talk of them when they sat down in their houses, and when they walked by the way, and when they lay down, and when they rose up. Now, since we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that we should show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, (1 Pet. 2) it therefore behooves us to show ourselves patterns and examples in all righteousness and blamelessness, and to appear unto the whole world as we are thereunto called; for if we do

not keep a strict eye upon our own children, but permit them to follow the inclination of their evil, corrupted nature and disposition, not correcting and chastising them according to the word of the Lord, we may with the greatest propriety lay our hands upon our mouths and remain silent and speechless. For why should we teach those not of our household, when we take no pains to preserve our own families in the love and fear of God? Paul says: "If a man provide not for his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."

My dearly beloved brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, take heed that you do not ruin your children and train them in vice, through carnal love, and thus give offence; lest in the day of judgment their souls be required at your hands, and it happen unto you, on account of your children, as it did unto Eli, the high priest, by the chastening hand of the Almighty, on account of his sons; (1 Sam. 3) but diligently imitate the testimony declared by the angel of the Lord respecting pious Abraham, "I know," says he, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice

and judgment." (Gen. 18, 19) This is the chief and most important care of the godly, that their children may fear God, do good, and be saved; even as the God-fearing Tobias admonished his son's children, saying, My son, hearken unto thy father; serve the Lord in truth, and cleave unto him in equity; be mindful of him, and let not thy will be set to sin or to transgress his commandments; teach this to thy children that they give alms, fear God all their days and trust in him with their whole hearts.

My beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, who from your hearts love the word of the Lord, thus instruct your children from youth up, and daily admonish them with the word of the Lord, setting them a good example. Teach and admonish them, I say, in proportion to the development of their understanding; constrain and correct them with discretion and moderation, without anger or bitterness, (Col. 3,) lest they be discouraged; spare not the rod, if reason and necessity require it, reflecting on what is written: Correct thy son, and keep him from idleness, lest thou be made ashamed on his account. (Prov. 29.)

Dearly beloved brethren and sisters in the

Lord, if all parents, (who glory in the name of the Lord,) would deeply impress the words of Sirach upon their hearts, and inscribe them on the tablet of their souls, O how virtuous, pious and devout would many children be raised, who now, alas ! run wild and unrestrained, honoring neither their parents nor the church and gospel of Christ. An evil-nurtured son, says Sirach, is the dishonor of his father ; again he says, Rejoice not that thou hast a multitude of children, except the fear of God be with them ; for one that is just is better than a thousand ungodly ; and better it is to die without children, than to have them that are ungodly.

Beloved brethren, consider these words well, and revolve them in your minds. Necessity impels me to write ; for some, alas ! live such lives with their children, that one is constrained to write and reprove. I write and admonish you again : Take heed, lest the blood and condemnation of your children come upon you. If you love your children with a godly love, teach them, admonish and instruct them in God, lest the Lord's word, blood and death be made unto them of no effect, and his name and church be blasphemed by the unwise, through them.

Beloved brethren in Christ, if you rightly know God and his word, and believe that the end of the righteous is everlasting life, and the end of the wicked eternal death, endeavor to the utmost of your power, to conduct your children in the way of life, and divert them from the way of death, as far as in us lies. Pray almighty God for the gift of his grace, that in his great mercy, he may guide and preserve them in the right path, through the directing influence of his Holy spirit. Watch over their salvation as for your own souls. Teach, instruct, admonish, threaten, correct and chastise them, as circumstances require. Keep them away from naughty, wicked children, among whom they hear and learn nothing but lying, cursing, swearing, fighting and knavery. Have them instructed in reading and writing, bring them up to habits of industry, and let them learn such trades as are suitable, expedient and adapted to their age and constitution. If you do this, you shall live to see much honor and joy of your children. But if you do it not, heaviness of heart shall consume you at last. For a child left to himself, without reproof, is not only the shame of his father, but he bringeth his mother

to shame. (Prov. 29.)

This brief admonition I have written to my beloved, from motives of sincere love, and not without a reason; for in the course of my ministry, I have too frequently observed, how disorderly, improperly, nay heathenlike, many parents conduct themselves towards their children. The absurd, senseless love of the flesh, has such an influence over some, and they are so blinded by the natural affection for their children, (O observe !) that they can neither see, perceive nor observe any evil, error or defect in them, notwithstanding they frequently abound in idle tricks and wantonness, are disobedient to father and mother, murmur at them, collect and carry abroad lies, quarrel and fight with other children, and mock people as they pass by, crying and calling after them.

Brethren in Christ, to connive, by reason of a blind, carnal love, at these and similar disgraceful tricks of children, is a love not to be applauded, but much rather to be shunned and avoided; for it is earthly, sensual, devilish. And forasmuch, as we ought to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the holy nation, the chosen generation, yea the bride of Christ, it by no

means becomes us, to have, or to bear such sensual love or preposterous affection, in any circumstances, towards our children; but it is our duty, as far as in us lies, diligently and earnestly to instruct and govern our children and household, as well as ourselves, in conformity to the sincerity of godliness, a life of virtue, and the word of God.

With this, I will have delivered and preserved my soul in the presence of the Lord and his church, and I do desire, for the Lord's sake, that this epistle may be taken in good part, and be read by the elders, in the hearing of all the brethren, to the end that the innocent may take heed, and be circumspect, and those who are guilty of these mis-steps, errors and failings, may reform, and that without considering me as being officious, in regulating the concerns of their household. Ah, no! in the presence of God, I desire nothing in this, but that in all things, you conform yourselves to the scriptures, and to Christian gravity, and that all the concerns of the Lord's church may be conducted according to the divine will and ordinance. The Searcher of hearts and reins knows that I lie not. I would, therefore, that you also

accept and receive it in love; for in sincerity have I written it.

And now, beloved brethren and sisters, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. (Acts 20).

The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, that your whole spirit, and soul, be preserved without spot, and blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he who called you. May the merciful Father, through his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, strengthen you all with the precious gift of his Holy Spirit. Amen.