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***"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH
ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD."***
COL.3.1

ADDRESS TO PARENTS.

An Address (revised)

At Forest Gate,

5th May, 1913

by

PERCY W. HEWARD

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ADDRESS TO PARENTS.

By Mr. P. W. Heward,
at Forest Gate, 5th May 1913.

Proverbs 4, and Job 1 1-5 read.

I felt, dear friends, that the five verses just read would be a suitable preface to our little talk this evening for I want you to regard this as a HOMELY talk with all the definiteness and the plainness that we associate with a home. I am sure we shall get along better if we realise that we are about to consider things of the greatest importance, of every-day importance, of present importance, and to consider them most definitely and plainly. With a desire that God may be glorified, I would readily acknowledge that I have looked forward to this meeting, not I hope simply to the meeting as a meeting, though it is a joy to meet parents of the boys and girls, but have looked forward to it believing that GOD will use it and I know there are others who have looked forward with the same mind and object. But now, at once, I feel my difficulty:- How can I say all in an hour that has taken many hours of prayerful thought and consideration? How can I seek to bring before you the enthusiasm that I long there may be, for the fuller study of the Scriptures on the part of the boys and girls. Again you will not misunderstand me when I say that I must not only have a talk about the arrangement of God's work here for the boys and girls, not only have a talk about the training of the children, but I must take the opportunity of bringing something more of God's Truth before YOU. I am sure, dear friends, that if you are rejoicing in the grace which is in Christ Jesus you are looking forward to a personal blessing this evening, apart from any arrangements for the children, and I feel that, before God, I am responsible to pass on His definite message from the Scriptures to every one present. I know not the state of the hearts, there is only One Who knows how we all stand before Him: - Only One, even God Himself, knows the condition of every one present this evening. Oh, dear friends, at the outset of such a meeting as this, you will surely understand that I feel a concern as to whether those of us who are found here tonight are indeed rejoicing in the salvation of God. It is blessed to talk about the salvation of the children, it is blessed to talk about bringing the Scriptures before the children, but, dear friends, God's word shows plainly a stress upon the salvation of the parents first. I wonder how many of us are able to say that by the grace of God we know we have passed out of death into life. Blessed indeed is it if, without boasting, but with confidence in Him Who speaks the Truth, we can say we have rested on the finished work of the Lord Jesus. The expression is not mine, for He Himself said, 'It is finished', and there is a sufficiently broad basis for any who ^{are} brought, and caused to be no longer trusting in their own works, but as guilty sinners to rest on and rejoice in HIM. If then we have been led out of death into life, and out from darkness to light, if we are, as Scripture puts it, 'in Christ Jesus', I am sure we shall be intensely earnest about the children, - at least I hope so, for it is a wondrously solemn thing to realise that children are growing up in this WICKED world with an ETERNAL future. Yes, children are growing with evil around them and evil of terrible forms and subtle forms and with an eternal future. Oh how solemn it is, how precious it is to consider the training of such! And a vast amount depends on training, yet you can never train a child into salvation. The GIFT of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord. It is God's grace to save any of us, whether young or old. No one can be developed into a christian, for the Lord Jesus beautifully worded it, with His perfect language, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God", and you know the word "man" there does not mean those who are grown up, it signifies that ANYONE must be born again, and from above. But though salvation is the grace and the gift of God, yet training is deeply important inasmuch as God uses the Scriptures oft-times to bring salvation, and when He is working He graciously grants that the Scriptures are means in various parts of that work, as well as becoming most useful afterwards. Therefore, dear friends, I want at the outset, to leave this point in your minds and to ask you all to ponder before God as to whether you are rejoicing in this wondrous salvation. And next I want to go on to speak from the book of Job, the first chapter, as to a believing parent's responsibility. The fifth verse is the verse on my mind, it has been on my mind for weeks. "It was so when the days of their feasting had gone about, 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 cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually". He felt himself responsible, and apparently they were not small boys and girls of a few years old, - they had grown up, but he still realised a responsibility. I would bring this definitely before believing parents. I would say, beloved friends, do you realise your responsibility for children, not only when very little, but in the years of growing up? It is a responsibility which cannot be ^{avoided} ~~avoided~~. A solemn responsibility, a precious responsibility. There is not only an ordinary earthly relationship between a parent and a child, but there is a relationship before God, that HE holds as of the greatest importance. The parent's authority to guide and control, the child's subjection to be guided and controlled, not merely for two or three years, not merely in boyhood and girlhood, but much, much further, where there is Scriptural regulation. You remember

how Eli was blamed when his grown up sons sinned. The thought is intensely solemn, surely it makes every child of God say, Who is sufficient for these things? Now I have not the slightest wish in connection with the work of God in the Bible School to relieve you of your responsibility. Please do not look upon the Bible School, (may I speak frankly and plainly?) please do not look upon it as an easy way of getting out of your own work. YOUR responsibility is for the training of the children. I have no wish to, and I cannot relieve you of that appointed "burden". I can, and desire to help you IN it, but I cannot take away your responsibility before God, and a Bible School is not meant to be something instead of home training, it is not meant to be an easy way out of a difficulty. I feel that if you look upon the Bible School as simply something to which to send the children, and that is all, the children will not be the most satisfactory ones in the Bible School. You must realise, dear friends, that a Bible School is only PART of the training, but it IS part, and I want YOUR HOME interest at all times therein. I believe by the grace of God, I can advise you in various ~~various~~ matters concerning the studies, and guide the arrangements. But do not please look upon it that your responsibility is thereby finished and settled when you have sent the boys and girls to the meeting. I was about to say it had only just begun, I mean just begun in THAT connection. I want your enthusiastic interest throughout. You will notice Job felt his responsibility in such a way, that he rose up EARLY IN THE MORNING. You will find many children of God in the Scriptures rising up early in the morning, you never find a stress on rising up late, but frequently a stress upon rising up early, and I want to mention in this context, two things, viz. that I not only want your emphasis upon earnestness yourself as to the matter of the children's study ^{but I would suggest that the best time for the children's} is the morning. I do not say this is compulsory, but it is certainly more desirable that the children should do their Bible study before the other arrangements of the day, I mean their individual study connected with the homework of the Bible School. It is best mentally, it is more satisfactory from the standpoint of putting things of God first. It is best, moreover, because there is a tendency to crowd things out when they are put off till later on. I merely bring this suggestion before you as one of the greatest importance. I believe you have gathered with the desire of being advised, dear friends; I seek to carry out the suggestions that are plainly and earnestly brought to your notice, especially when they are supported by the authority of Scripture so definitely. It will interest some to hear, a goodly number know already, that a little branch of this Bible School is arranged for early morning meetings up in Jarrow, from which I have recently come. There, it is proposed, four mornings in the week the children in the home where I was staying will meet with their father before he goes out to his business, and he will go through some of the work. There they will turn things round the other way to what we have down here; their individual work will be at night, and their meetings will be in the morning. I think it is impossible for us to carry out that here. In olden times there were many more early meetings than we have at the present time, but I am doubtful if we should get the full number of boys and girls, should we arrange a half-past seven Bible School every morning; but the individual study in the home is better at half past seven in the morning than half past seven in the evening.

We pass along to the next point with regard to Job. You will notice that he said, "it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their HEARTS", not that they had cursed God openly. Job was not a man who had outwardly wicked sons. You must not think from this context that Scripture means they were evil men who delighted in grand feasting and so forth. Nothing of the kind, it was simply that Job was so deeply concerned lest they should have at all cursed God in their heart, lest there should have been a tiny sin. Job felt about little things. Dear friends, I am convinced of this that the Bible School depends very largely on LITTLE things. May I mention a few little things to you. You may think them very little, but they have a large bearing when they are all added together. Let me lay a stress on the early and regular arrival of the boys and girls. I would emphasize both words, the EARLY and the REGULAR arrival. I think I have had some who have practically gone through this term without being late once. I think that ought to be almost the universal condition. Not only is it desirable for the children's sake, but it will eventually make it easier in the home, and furthermore it is preferable for the other boys and girls, and for those of us who, by the grace of God, devote our time to this work. Let me plead with all parents present never to keep the boys and girls away from the meeting. Regard the Bible School not only as an ordinary school, but as even more important, for two or three reasons. First of all, that which concerns the Scripture is more important than other studies. Secondly an ordinary school is more or less a commercial arrangement to which one has a certain business right. In connection with God's work in the Bible School, there is a labour of love on the part of those who are engaged in it. Those who co-operate with myself in this work desire to do it as unto the Lord. Therefore, dear friends, I think you will agree with me that our feelings in this matter should be studied even more than those of any who are simply engaged in a commercial enterprise, and if I bring before you, as I would, that the absence of the children, or the lateness of the children, increases my work considerably, I feel that you will do all you possibly can to ponder more how you can avoid this. Let me say, furthermore, for I want to speak very plainly, and I feel that I shall offend no one:- I think those who are present know sufficient of God's work here and the interest in the boys and girls to realise that our desire is for God's glory, and blessing to the children, and therefore I can speak plainly, - I always feel

that if a boy or girl is away from the Bible School without a written request from a parent it is teaching the child discourtesy, and to teach a child discourtesy is a dangerous thing. Discourtesy is a subject that is picked up without going to school to learn it, there are numerous examples of it to-day. I feel that absence from a Bible School should in general, only be caused by illness. If there is illness that keeps away, then if parents send a postcard, sometimes via other pupils, to reach me before the Bible School takes place, I shall know to make arrangements for notes to be taken for ~~notes to be taken for~~ the boy or girl who is away, and everything will keep level; otherwise I sometimes feel the difficulty that I cannot fill up certain seats. I do not know whether this boy or girl will be coming in "later", then the time afterwards this one or that one comes that has been absent the week before, and there is confusion with another boy or girl's marks, and it considerably increases our work. Dear friends, I ask you for the children's sake, for the sake of those who are devoting their time to this work, and for everything concerned with the Bible School to arrange for regularity and early arrival of the children. As they go through the study you will find the advantage. Irregularity will disappoint them, they will get behind in the work, they will find it hard to catch up, or they will not catch up, and then they will drag others back. Do emphasize the Scriptures FIRST in this matter.

I come now to another little thing. Job was careful about various little things, and I want to ask you to be. I would urge you, dear friends, to see the boys and girls do the homework. It is not arranged to be too much for them, I am inclined to think that it has often been too little. Boys and girls naturally do not know fully HOW to arrange their studies. If they do a little every day, regularly, they will gradually become more and more orderly. The mind, instead of being wasted, will be growing. There will be advantages in numerous ways, for how often NOT having enough to do is the source of mischief. A child's mind WILL take in something; if it is not taking in that which is Truth, and that which is valuable, the mind will be taking in that which is dangerous and harmful. Lazy people as a rule work very hard, and those who learn nothing, as a rule, learn a good deal. You follow what I mean, there is a laziness as to real work which is accompanied by hard toil in other things. Many people will work hard to avoid work. It is a common thing at schools, I mean schools which have a large amount of secular homework, to find those who will toil much to get out of toil. Laziness is oftentimes misplaced energy. How important that the energy which a child has should be directed into the right channels, and a child can be brought to take an interest in studies, and to do the studies regularly and satisfactorily IF the parent is gladly willing to give the little ENCOURAGEMENT that is needed. I do not ask you to do the studies, I have not the slightest objection to your doing so; if any parents like to make a parent's request I HAVE received for a copy of all the books to make it possible to go through the studies themselves, I shall certainly seek to fulfil their request, but I do not ask you to do the studies; I do ask you to encourage the boys and girls that they may do the studies. The studies are very small, half an hour every day or so of direct Bible work, and a quarter of an hour or 20 minutes of Greek, and a quarter of an hour or 20 minutes of Hebrew. Some this term will only be taking up the Greek, others will have the opportunity of the Greek and the Hebrew. Let me urge upon you, dear friends, the importance of JUST ENCOURAGING your young folks to take up THIS part of the work as seriously as they take up the meetings, and to enjoy this part as much as they enjoy the meeting. The HOME studies should be a preparatory pleasure and a great deal depends upon how the parents look on all. If you regard the home study as unnecessary the children will copy your opinion, and I do not want to lead the child to go against this, so that it is deeply important you should have the right opinion. I want the children to copy their parents. It is important therefore that the parents should be those who are to be copied, even in this respect. May I make one or two little detailed suggestions? Do not disturb the children, if you can possibly help it, WHEN they are doing their studies, - regard them as being almost away from the house for the time. What I mentioned last time I repeat this time, if you disturb them ONCE in the study, they will disturb themselves a second time, and a great failure of to-day is a lack of a concentrated mind. Let the mind be concentrated it can get through twice as much work with twice as much ease. It is not, dear friends, that I want to put a burden upon the boys and girls, you will find that it is really the lifting of a burden, for apart from the spiritual advantages, the mental advantages are real, and the thoughtfully studying child is the more contented child. The child who is rightly trained and controlled in mind will be more controlled in temper and other things, and self-control is deeply important. There has often been a stress upon the importance of studying alone. Here I am touching on something which is difficult to arrange. It is recorded of one of the great head masters of a great school in the last century that he laid a great stress upon winning for the boys under his charge the opportunity for quiet study alone. Now I do not believe that every house can provide a library or two or three libraries for the boys and girls each to have a study of their own, but I do believe, dear friends, that you can often arrange, if there is a little care in the matter, that the boy or girl in studying should be alone for this study. If it is at ALL possible, do not regard the arrangement of it as unnecessary worry. You will be thankful for it afterwards. I know that three or four children should be able to study together without disturbing one another, but I am not always sure that three or four adults study as well together as when they are by themselves. There is the tendency to talk, I find, with adults, and sometimes the tendency is stronger in children. Do all you can to let

the boys and girls have every opportunity to accomplish the study properly. There is one part of the work I should be glad to interest every parent in, and that is the learning the daily verses, - at least I make the proposal to you, that either father or mother in the home hears the daily verses. A few other "little things" I may mention. In the new arrangements there will be the registering on the weekly paper instead of in a book. In the parents' book I shall be pleased to have any requests from parents. If the homework is undone, do not let the boy or girls tell me, insert particulars yourself.

Never sympathise AGAINST the discipline of a Bible School. In a school of this nature a great deal of the benefit and blessing depends upon general discipline throughout the school. Most parents know that at schools, ordinary schools, there are many things which are unsatisfactory and that their children are often damaged considerably, I believe, damaged mentally in the ordinary training of the day. Certainly damaged from OTHER standpoints. The child goes to school oftentimes with many more satisfactory actions, from a human standpoint, than when that child comes away from school. Much that is evil is learnt at school, for those who are wrong seem to have a large influence in the ordinary schools of to-day. Now we do not want anything of that kind in our Bible School, but the other way round. Much depends on the discipline being maintained at a high standard in the school. Never then sympathise against the discipline. In connection with the arrangements some of you know very well that for omission to keep to the rules, a name is sometimes read out, and so forth. Never approve of a little smile at details of that kind. You can make those points large levers to keep the boys and girls interest. If they in the slightest portion fail, blame them; do not excuse them. I do not mean blame them with a harshness, but with an affection that feels sorrowful that they should have caused the slightest trouble to those whose hearts are set upon taking the deepest interest in them. I am sure of this, dear friends, that if

we have your loyal co-operation in all, we shall not need so much of it. You follow what I mean, if you blame them once or twice, you will not need to blame them so much afterwards. We can always make our work less by doing it, and if you will kindly do that part of the work, I think you will find it will decrease. While we on the one hand would loyally emphasize the parent's authority, we ask you to equally loyally emphasize the authority of those who guide in God's work here. A few things more. Sometimes if work is done in a slovenly way, whether in writing or in learning, or whatever it may be, there will be "returned work". If I were you I should ask the boys and girls if they have received any "returned work", and when the work has been done in a slipshod fashion, a few words from you might prevent it in the future and considerably reduce my strain, and your own as well. Suppose a boy or girl in your family has a "privilege", you are glad of that, you like your young folks to be encouraged, and suppose it is lost through disobedience, let your displeasure be realised - this will be a sever punishment. If the children love you, your displeasure will be the punishment. Yes, your grief, - and the more a parent's grief can be the punishment, the less need there is for other punishments. Grief should be the strongest power with your children. Let them love you sufficiently because of your consistent love to them. Jerkiness is a failure. Let them love you sufficiently to sorrow over your sorrow, and they will not break rules lest they break your heart. If at any time you cannot understand any of the arrangements and do not quite know what there is to blame, or what there is to commend, and if you cannot quite agree that they should have the work returned, if instead of speaking to them you will come round and see me, that I think will settle the point far more quickly and mutually satisfactorily. But if your hearts are with us, the boys and girls will progress better with the work. There have been encouragements this last term but I am never satisfied with past encouragements. I think we want to see more of GOD'S gracious working.

Do not undervalue the marks and the register and all its details. This future term we are making a more careful arrangement of marks than before. The reports that I hope to hand out this evening contain a fair number of marks on them. I think I had something like between two or three thousand sets of marking to make up with regard to the end of this term's work, and the reports contain them rather fully, that you may be able to follow out the progress. You will find their position in class, the number of those placed in the class, because not all are placed.... Do not undervalue details. I believe we can demonstrate more and more that a Bible School may be made to contain (shall I say?) EVERYTHING in education. We have the finest literature, we have wondrous history and geography. Apart from the Bible Arithmetic which will be developed more this term, I think the marking arrangements may be made to give lessons of thinking in figures, and mathematics is only thinking in figures. The important thing is not simply learning a few rules but learning to think. Anyone may know, in some fashion, a hundred rules and be unable to apply them. Learning to think is deeply important. I believe that in the olden days it was customary to have schools attached to little gatherings of Christians in the days of Paul, and so forth, - It is interesting to be acquainted with God's dear servants of old, and I believe, dear friends, we should have a Bible School arranged altogether on Bible lines, and to give unto the children in that, more training, not only than they obtain in the present day schools, but more training than is possible in any other way. If the Scripture has its right position, in the words of Deut.6, it will sharpen the children. Dear friends, I would lay a stress upon this, and I do trust the stress may be felt by you as well. "Thus did Job continually finishes the verse, and the words are "all the days". I want to apply THAT to you. I long that there might be a continuance of interest by parents. I am thankful to say that the attendance has been fairly large, on an average, throughout the whole term, and the interest has kept up fairly well the whole time. I noticed, however, that the verses were better

learned at the beginning of the term than at the end. That is the usual thing. Do not blame the children for it only. May I put it frankly, - Blame yourselves. Realise, dear friends, that all of us find it easier to start a thing than to keep it up. THUS DID JOB ALL THE DAYS. I believe I am right in saying that we all naturally, in the beginning of the term, when the new file comes along, or the new books, take an interest in the children, "Have you done this or that?" is natural, and so forth. But then we forget, and something else comes in. Let us remember "Thus did Job all the days". I want to urge you THROUGHOUT the term of its fifteen weeks, or so, to take your responsibility all the days. If by the grace of God you have been caused and taught to love Him, do all out of love to Him and loving care for the children. And now when I come to the more definite explanation of arrangements, how can I do that only in a few minutes? I have spoken about the reports which I shall give you as you go out. I urge you to study these reports carefully, and if there are suggestions in them, to seek to carry them out.....Irregularity and lateness, I would repeat, are the worst things of all for the children's training.....The children will lose certain marks if arriving after 5.45; if after 6 o'clock they will be entered as late.....Hang up the timetables, and look after the children's arrangements.....The marks will be transferable from one to another. The children can take some from their storehouse, and give to a new pupil, or another. This will encourage thoughtfulness and unselfishness...Nothing else may be put in the bag except the file, pencil, ruler, etc.....

I feel that, with regard to all, those of us who have this laid upon our heart, have a privilege and a duty to carry out for Him, and we are seeking to do it, though it involves a strain of really hard work. Again I would say, you can lighten our responsibility by encouraging the children still more and more, urging their regular and early attendance, and more than urging. Parents are not simply to urge but to arrange. Let the children naturally expect their parents' guidance and arrangements..... God has laid this upon our heart as service unto Him. It IS a heavy toil. I believe that sometimes I spend more time over the boys and girls than I do over the grown-up ones. The arrangement for the studies of the children in the Bible School now, takes me more time than the arrangement of heavier studies for adults, years ago, but all is, I hope, service unto God that will count in That Day. It is a privilege, but oh, dear friends, I do look to your earnestness, to your enthusiasm, and let me remind you that you are always welcome to come and have a look at the Bible School, to come and have a talk about your children. We want you to feel we have a real and deep interest in them, desiring for them salvation, and EVERY present and eternal blessing. Let me remind you in the words of Proverbs which we read at the beginning of our meeting together, the important thing is wisdom. Wisdom is the principal thing, as Solomon put it, "Get wisdom, get understanding, forget it not, with all thy getting get wisdom. Truly the price of wisdom is above rubies, and that wisdom is found in the Scriptures applied by the Spirit of God. We would emphasise THESE and urge THESE for the boys and girls. I believe the mental advantages are great, the indirect advantages are real, but ABOVE ALL we long that there may be SPIRITUAL advantages that will not only be for time, but also for eternity, through the finished work of the Lord Jesus.