

No.

76.

"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

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by

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1.

It is always a difficulty, dear friends, to say all one would. We are continually reminded of the weakness of all human faculties, and of something worse than weakness, even intrusion of sin to mar speaking and mar hearing alike, but I cannot hide the fact that I always look forward to a special talk with the parents of the boys and girls who attend, and with others who are deeply interested in this testimony for God among the children. How can we emphasize too much the things of God? Here we are found at the present time upon this earth. A glance up on a bright evening will make us feel how small is the seemingly large world in which we are placed. A glance up and we behold countless centres of blazing light, and we realise that space is beyond our knowledge. We look back to time, and we realise that a past eternity is beyond our knowledge. We look onward, and we realise a future eternity is beyond merely natural knowledge, and then on the background of all these grandeurs of an infinite God, there comes before us, or should come before us, the thought that we belong by nature to a rebel race, and yet that infinite God, Who could create myriads to obey Him, is pleased to manifest His love in saving those who have rebelled against Him. Surely in the light of this, and in the light of eternity the things of earth seem so small, and the things of God seem so real, and so large. Ah, dear friends, I make no apology for laying a stress upon ^{God's work among the boys and girls, I make no apology for laying a stress upon} the things that are not seen, for the things that are seen are temporal, and our brief span of life on earth is soon over, - and there is eternity. True, if one is fitted, by grace, through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus for eternity, one is also fitted for time, but eternity is vaster than time. Surely there is never a need for an apology as to laying a stress upon the things of God. A man may apologise, aye, and more than apologise for stress on the things of earth, though the things of earth seem so near, - because to lay a stress on THEM is sinful. The true attitude is to recognise God in all, and to regard life simply as an opportunity for glorifying God. Everything else will

fit into its right place, if we have this wondrous view of life, and if any are quickened by the work of the Holy Spirit, there is another view of life, "All flesh is grass, and the goodliness of man as the flower of the field", which "to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven". But if anyone is in Christ there is a new creation, and the brief passing days of earthly life are all bright opportunities, amid troubles and trials, to please the gracious God Who has so graciously saved the worthless and hell-deserving.

The first thought that must come up in every meeting of this nature is our own personal relationship to God, for unless we can say that we have seen ourselves as guilty sinners, and have fled for refuge to God's One Ark, and City of Refuge, and Saviour, unless we can say that our sins are blotted out by the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us, unless we can say that He bore our sins in His Own body on the tree, and that we have been born of the Spirit, and desire to walk in newness of life, - unless we can say all this, we are unfit to take a TRUE interest in others. I am not pleading for selfishness, but, beloved friends, we shall only spoil everything else that we touch unless we are personally brought near to God by the blood of His dear Son. Salvation first, service next. And when there is salvation, service comes down even into the tiniest details of daily life. No one can truly labour among children, whether in the home, or school, or wherever it may be, unless that one is in a personal relationship to God. No one can truly carry out a parent's office, that most sacred office, unless there is a personal relationship to God by the blood of the Lord Jesus. I know there are myriads without this personal relationship, but none can rightly carry out ANYTHING - TRULY carry it out, unless there is this personal relationship by God's wonderful grace.

There are one or two Scriptures that I want to bring before you this evening, the first being in Deut. 6. You will have noticed in that passage as we read it, more than one reference to the children: In one verse we have the children taught, in the

other verse the children asking. Both thoughts are important. It is delightful when children ask "What mean ye?" ~~But the earlier~~ And it is a grave mistake to check the question "What mean ye?" But the earlier verse is the one just now before me. "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children". As you notice in the margin, the word "teach diligently" is the word "whet" used for whetting a sword, or (shall we say?) "sharpen". Indeed the latter expression "sharpen" brings out fully the Divine idea. "Sharpen intensely", that is the word. "Thou shalt sharpen intensely". What does it mean? Two things at least. First, thou shalt make the Truth pointed for the children. We often talk about pointed truth, and the Holy Spirit here instructs those who know God's truth themselves (for verse 7 follows verse 6, and verse 6 says They shall be in THINE heart) The Holy Spirit here instructs those who know God's Truth themselves to seek to make that Truth pointed to the children. There is nothing blunt or dull in pointed Truth. Here we have brought before us the parents' responsibility to bring Truth before the boys and girls in a very pointed way. Now that expression "a very pointed way" must have several thoughts in your mind. We use the words "a pointed way" in connection with a mode of utterance which cannot be misunderstood. If you were to say of anyone who was reproofing others "He made it clear that he meant me in a very pointed way", everyone would know what you signified. Now Truth is to be used in a very pointed way, in dealing with the boys and girls, for Truth concerns even the youngest. Children do not need to have their minds stored with fables, and then that we should fill up the corners with Truth. Truth is all important, and pointed Truth is not only impressive, but it remains within, as the pointed arrow sticks where it enters. Therefore it is the duty and responsibility of parents to use pointed Truth. They must never regard the Scripture as dull. The things of God are the reverse of dull. The parents must show they regard the Truth as sharp and pointed, and the children will remember it, and will take an interest in pointed Truth. I believe

there is a further thought here wrapped up. I believe that not only should Truth with its sharpness be brought before the young, but that they will be sharpened by it. There is nothing that has educational power to compare with Scripture, and, in this connection, may I lay a stress upon the added words, "Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou layest down and when thou risest up". I am sure that every grown up believer must feel convicted by such a passage as this, for the thought is, - take every opportunity of speaking of the Truth, and the parents are thus told to instruct the children. "Thou shalt talk of them ". Truth is not only to be formally presented. "Thou shalt talk of them", the enjoyable topic of conversation. Now let us remember, dear friends, that if anyone says that this means too much of the Bible in the home, this position is the position of the infidel, for it is not MY proposal, that the Scripture should be talked of so frequently, but the Holy Spirit's Own statement. The Holy Spirit's Own stress is upon this talking in the morning and in the evening, and in the walking by the way, and it is linked with the word "sharpen". The children will not be dull if they have, what some call, "too much of the Bible". There will be advantages in every way, if there is a true stress upon the Word of the Living God. Oh, let me emphasize in this connection a very definite plea for the home. A Bible School is important, I would not for a moment undervalue it, but the Bible School is not instead of the home, nor should it be so regarded. May I explain what I mean? The home is the atmosphere of the life. We are not always eating, but we are always breathing. The school may supply much, and may take a deep interest, but the atmosphere of the home affects considerably the whole of the future life. If there be a spiritual enthusiasm for the Scripture in the home, there will be wondrous effects afterwards. But it is impossible to obey this verse unless there be an enthusiasm for the Scripture in one's self first.

And now I want to take another verse in the Book of Proverbs. You know that the Book of Proverbs is a Book which is

full of information about the training of children, and of older children too. It is a book that is remarkable for its plain speaking. "Proverbs" are nothing unless they are plain. Unless you know what a proverb means, what is the value of the proverb? and a proverb has not space to go miles of words round the subject, it must strike at once, or you have reached the end of the proverb. The Book of Proverbs is full of the plainest speaking, and some of the plain words concern the training of children. May I take an example from the 23rd chapter. In the twelfth verse we read, "Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge, Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with a rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod and shalt deliver his soul from hell." A passage that came to my mind in this connection was Eph. 6. 4. "And ye, fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." For the word "nurture" used in Eph. 6, is the word that means discipline, practically the same word as the word "correction" in Proverbs 23. It is rather remarkable that there are two words in the Greek, both with practically the same sound. One is the child's "playing", and the other is the child's "being corrected". Only one letter different, and both having practically the ^{same} sound - παιδεύω, παιδίζω. The Holy Spirit, I need hardly say, takes the word of the child being corrected, and uses it in Ephesians 6. 4. Now I take it that we recognise Scripture as containing the very words of the Holy Ghost. It therefore becomes us to understand what the passages mean, - this passage in Proverbs with the one in Ephesians. Let me ask you to notice the words again. "Withhold not correction from the child", or withhold not discipline. My first point, therefore, is the value of discipline, - first to oneself, and then to others. Another verse of the Book of Proverbs says that a child left to himself bringeth shame. Discipline is the exact opposite of leaving to oneself. The apostle tells us on one occasion that the thing which he brings before us is evidenced

even by nature. Doth not nature itself teach? Surely we may say this likewise as to training. God has marked out very clearly that children need training. All nature bears a certain witness to the importance of training. The very plants and the animals contribute a ~~teaching~~ ^{testimony} in this connection. But man is different to the animals; we find in man a weakness and dependence at the beginning of life, more than among the animals. God has arranged there should be marked out clearly that the child requires a leader, that the child requires a controller, and so the Holy Spirit Here shows it is important not to withhold discipline from the child. Discipline includes a number of things. It includes an orderliness, it includes a holding back from things that are wrong, it includes an encouraging on to things that are right. Discipline is deeply important I believe that God will graciously use the very regularity, and the punctuality, and the arrangements, of the Bible School, in details in connection with discipline, - and let me earnestly plead with parents, never, directly or indirectly, to weaken one iota of any discipline that is arranged in connection with the Bible School. Emphasize and lay a stress upon all that is of the nature of discipline. I like those words "WITHHOLD not discipline". The same term comes in another place of the man who withholds corn, and you know the expression "withhold not good from the one to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it". The word rather implies, therefore, "It is thy duty to give it to the child, and thou art a thief if thou dost not". "Withhold not correction", therefore, implies that the child has a right to be corrected. So, dear friends, do not think that in emphasizing correction there is a stress upon that which is unkind to the child. This is only a true standing up for the child's rights. It is robbery to withhold correction. It is unfair to withhold it. It is a cruel kindness to draw it back. I well recollect one lad, perhaps the most difficult to control that I have met, in experience of boys and girls, a lad at this time almost grown to a young man, and he said to me on one occasion (he was of the nation of Israel), "I wish you would MAKE me do what you want me to", or words to that

effect, and added, "The trouble is, I have had a father who never made me obey", and the boy was simply the slave of evil which led him on - (I suppose at this time he was about 18 years of age) - further and further in things that were abominable to God and man, yet even in his ruined, and manifestly ruined, condition, he could see the harm of not receiving discipline when younger. Withhold not correction, it is cruel. But, further, the passage continues, "For if thou beatest him with a rod he shall not die". The word "if" being in italics. Here seems to be the Holy Spirit's answer to false fears. I take it that we realise how often in proverbs and brief statements the meaning goes far beyond the literal interpretation. I made the statement just now that one is always breathing, but not always eating, but no one would go away and say that I was then talking about "eating". I meant something far beyond "eating" in that brief parallel proverb. So is it here: this expression means something far beyond a literal stick of wood. God gives a far more comprehensive term. It may include physical punishment on certain occasions, but it includes far more.

The words came to my mind a good while ago in connection with this address, "If thou beatest him with a rod, he shall not die", and I thought there must be a kind of IRONY wrapped up in them. "He shall not die" as if to suggest that many a parent has false fears and false feelings and what I may term "unkind kindness". You can take this thought, first of all, with regard to that which is physical. Oh, how often more time is spent upon the body than on the mind, and soul, and the Holy Spirit here says, Train, educate, do not say, Oh I am afraid of putting the body second, - "He will not die". Put the body and its health second, other things first, if thou dost attend to the training and the discipline, he will not die. Do not have foolish theories of physical exaltation beyond the more important part of the individual. The mind is more than the body and the heart is more than the mind. The body is the smallest part before God, May I in this connection urge parents and others not to be afraid that their boys and girls will do too much study. At the present time there is a common tendency to be afraid

of over-study. If study HAS killed any, play has killed more. I am not now speaking figuratively. There are more deaths through play than through study, both directly and indirectly. Further, our feelings are largely the product of a number of things, and it is possible for the child to take a real delight in study and things connected with the knowledge of God's Book. In one sense there is no reason why th a child should not find parts of study to be the truest pleasure, I had almost said, the truest play. You will follow what I mean. There is actually in itself, - mark the wording, - IN ITSELF, - nothing more of play in getting tired kicking a ball about than in getting tired by learning a few Greek words. Attitude, and feelings, the result of everybody's opinion, decide that one is play, and the other is work, but attitude and feelings are not always the wisest things. You can take as real and deep interest in study as in other things, and more so. If the mind is trained to be hungry, the mind will want to work to satisfy its hunger with ita more interesting food. You know very well, dear friends, that difficulties in different surroundings have a different view altogether. The man who HAS to go on certain work, which he does not desire, up steep paths, complains of their steepness, whereas the climber rejoices in paths that are steeper; and the child who complains of running an errand, will run faster in a race. The difference is not in the action, but in the condition of mind. The condition of mind makes the pleasure or the toil, - and it is most important that parents should train their children from earliest life, to a right attitude of mind as to what is truly pleasurable. Why should that which has no results be always regarded as pleasure? (A blowing bubbles, as it were?), and that which has results be regarded as work? Surely it is a true pleasure to have that which extends beyond nothing, and the child should be taught so. The child echoes the parents' feelings more than the parents' words, and if the parents' interest is in definite study, and if the parent quite approves of the holy enthusiasm for these things, there will be a gradual impression

by the "atmosphere", if I might so term it again, by the atmosphere of the home, and the child will delight in that which is desirable from a mental standpoint. If there is the gracious working of God in answer to converted parents' definite prayers, doubtless He will grant the wondrous results spiritually, which are still MORE important and comprehensive, and INCOMPARABLY beyond all else. So then let me urge every parent never to be afraid of children doing too much, but to ^{be} very much afraid of children doing too little.

Secondly, this sentence of the verse at which we are now looking "If thou beatest him with a rod, he shall not die", has another aspect, especially when you take it with Eph. 6. Eph. 6 says "Do not make angry, but bring up in the chastisement of the Lord". Oh, some will say, "I am afraid to REPROVE too much, for fear I make them angry"! The Holy Spirit says that chastisement is the opposite of making angry, in other words, the parent has truest influence who is CONSISTENT in reproof. Influence that is purchased at the expense of careless discipline is an influence that will soon fade away. I think I have noticed a tendency in these days on the part of parents to be more afraid of their children, than the children are of their parents. The parents are afraid of grieving their children, and the children are often not afraid of grieving the parents. This is turning things up-side-down, and as soon as a child feels you are afraid of offending him, there is the tendency for the natural heart to take advantage of this, and for the child to claim a measure of equality, and to seek to have drawn battles with the parent. Let the parent's authority be emphasized without any hesitation, let there be no fear of offending, let there be not so much concern as to what the child will think, but more concern as to what is right before God, and the children will come to take this for granted, and be happier as well as more obedient. For nothing is more dangerous and miserable than to learn early to have one's own way. The one who has rightly learned not to have his own way is truly happy. Oftentimes one finds people who have not sufficient trouble to be

happy, and sometimes children are not enough restrained to be happy. They have ups and downs and merriness and disappointment, but they have not real happiness because they have too much of their own way. A word in this connection, remembering the expression of the Holy Spirit, - "If thou beatest him with a rod he shall not die" - a word in this connection as to some who say "But I know there are cases of Mr. So-and-So, or someone else I have seen, or some one else heard of him; he trained his children very religiously and then they broke entirely free from it. He exercised a strong discipline and then they threw off all the yoke". This argument is a two-fold fallacy. First of all it depends on not knowing enough. It is assumed that the cause of their breaking loose was the restraint, whereas the cause of breaking loose may have been the IRREGULARITY of the restraint. Unless the whole life is known, an inference is not possible. Furthermore for one case of this kind, I suppose there are 20 cases of the other kind, where the parents have not exercised the restraint, and the children have broken loose. Only such are all passed over, and the others are brought forward. Nothing is more inconsistent than a heart that has made up its mind first.

May I bring before you next, dear friends, in connection with the context of Proverbs 23, and the word "admonition" in Eph. 6, a plea for "mind-placing". The word "admonition" is literally "a fixing of the mind", and here in Prov. 23, we read "Apply thine heart unto instruction and thine ears to the words of knowledge". "Apply thine heart", a half-a-heart is totally out of place. "Apply thine heart", The mark of a child of God, is to do everything with the whole heart, and the Holy Spirit emphasized mind-placing or mind-fixing. Some of us recollect on the Lord's Day that the passage came before us which says "These fool's eyes are in the ends of the earth, he cannot keep even his eyes fixed, nor can he keep his mind fixed. In every way there is a wandering about and a lack of concentration. God has particularly commanded concentration. Undoubtedly, this can be exhibited in the fullest way, where there has been saving grace. Thus will there be

the mind-placing OF THE LORD, and a wondrous realization of the stress that God puts upon mind-placing and upon the applying of the heart, upon the enthusiasm that there should be of the whole mind, and the whole heart. Let me in this connection plead with you once more to recollect the physical is the smallest part, the mental is larger, the spiritual is greatest. Oftentimes the soul is clothed with rags, and the mind too, when the body has its robes; oftentimes the mind is fed on husks when such would not be brought before the children upon the table for the body. This kind of cruelty cannot be detected. If you starve a child it can be known, but if you starve a child's mind it cannot be known, but these things before God are serious. Oh that God may be glorified in a stress upon the importance of the whole being, that there may be salvation in the heart, the training of the mind, and then the use of the whole body in His service.

A word or two of practical arrangements, but first of retrospect. I think I have been in large measure encouraged with certain things that have taken place during this term. There have been discouragements. I think the scale-pan on the encouragement side seems heavier, and we long that this may be so increasingly. Let there be more prayer, prayer of those who love the Lord, and it will be so.....
(Younger child's essay on Nadab and Abihu read. "Nadab and Abihu had beautiful names. Nadab, in English, means "I am willing". It was indeed a beautiful name. Abihu means "God is my Father", or "My Father is He". It was another beautiful name. They were the High Priest Aaron's sons, they were the two eldest sons, they had many privileges. They were allowed to enter the tabernacle. ^{They were allowed to burn offerings in the Tabernacle.} They were in Aaron's family. They had many other privileges, - but, alas, they sinned against God, They took strange fire into the tabernacle, they went to God their own way. Sin must be punished. God sent His fire on them. Sin always brings death. The wages of sin is death. ")
 With regard to the prospect, of looking forward, may I emphasize truthfulness as to the homework. I mean emphasize that there should be not only a SAYING that it is done, but a

conscientious doing of it, otherwise the saying is harmful to the whole condition of truthfulness
 With a few brief, (shall I say?) proverbs, I would close, i.e. A few words to parents which may make pointed some of the suggestions that have been given. The first one on my mind is this, it has been on my mind for some days, "Love your children well enough to contradict them; let them love you too well to contradict you".

A word as to indulgence, so-called kindness, which is really cruelty. 'Remember that indulgence is an abbreviated form of self-indulgence, and that all of self is sin.

A word as to regularity and details. 'You cannot be INSistent unless you are personally CONSistent'. 'You cannot control unless there is in your life a consistency'. 'Do not look upon any of the tiny things of God's working as too small'. 'Remember little things are large things in germ'. Do not forget how you may hinder the work of the Bible School, by one action you may undo many. 'It does not take more knives to cut a long ROPE than a short one'. There is a great danger that parents think of educational information for children too late. The mind is stored with things that are worthless and the thought came to my mind in homely language that 'if you fill a room with rubbish, do not be surprised that there is no place for the furniture'. There is such a danger, dear friends, in this connection. The child's mind is often stored with fairy tales and worthless things, AND THE WORD OF GOD IS PUT QUITE SECONDARY. Remember we are not simply creatures for a few days of earthly pleasure. We have eternity in front of us. Let the things of GOD be first. Remember in this connection once more that mere information is not education. If you have an upright trunk or a stem in your garden and you tie on to it grapes, it does not become a vine. Information is tying knowledge on. The need is that there should be education, and much more, that there should be a spiritual education, that there should be a spiritual life first, that all the knowledge of the things of God might be part

of a desire to know more of Him. Our longing is not that the Bible School may go forward simply numerically, simply mechanically, and simply educationally as to the mind, but Oh that God may be exalted in the boys and girls being brought to know His grace, and then to know His Truth with a view to a living obedience, and with a view to a usefulness in these dark and perilous times, when men are seeking to underminé the Bible, and to draw many off into worthless pleasures and to sink them in an eternal ruin, while God in mercy waits to be gracious, while He in mercy has given unto us the precious Scriptures, Oh that THESE, beloved friends, and the Gospel of the grace of God which they set forth, may be dear to our hearts, and to the hearts of the children, who are in any measure entrusted to our care, in view of a real eternity.

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