

No.

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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, E. 7.

16th March, 1914.

by

PERCY W. HEWARD.

Correspondence welcome:

Scriptural literature for Believers

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ADDRESS TO PARENTS.

By Mr. P. W. Heward,

At Forest Gate, 16th March, 1914.

PROVERBS 4.

One feels a certain delight, dear friends, in the atmosphere, if I may so call it, of the fourth chapter of Proverbs. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable, but different parts of Scripture have different aspects. In the 4th chapter of Proverbs we have brought before us an ENTHUSIASM for the Truth of God. Who can forget the words about not forgetting? Who can miss the powerful impetus wrapped up in the message of verse 7. "Wisdom is the principal thing, get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding". Here we behold a REAL enthusiasm for the wisdom that is from above. "Good doctrine" in the language of verse 2, is brought before us, as that which becomes an ornament of grace and a crown of glory. No decorations, no outward show, can compare with this. Moreover, we notice that wisdom is not simply for the mind, "When thou goest thy STEPS shall not be straitened", "The PATH of the just is as the shining light". It is not only "Get wisdom" but "Keep thy heart with all diligence". "Ponder the path of thy feet". If the heart is right the feet will be right as well, and thus we have a stress on the whole man devoted to that which is from God. Now we cannot read a chapter like this without sadly feeling that human conceptions have gone away from this Divine model. Other things engross; to the majority wisdom is NOT the principal thing. It is quite a secondary thing. Daily business, which may be most useful, occupies an entirely wrong position if it interferes with the heart exaltation of wisdom. Daily food, which is necessary, may become most harmful if it usurps the position that belongs to wisdom. Daily sleep, very desirable, may become but lazy self-indulgence if it interferes with the primary position of wisdom. Wisdom is the principal thing and remember that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,

and we read of wisdom in connection with faith which is IN CHRIST JESUS, for it is nowhere else. Ah, this conception of life has been banished from the advanced twentieth century, but it remains in the Scriptures, and it should be in the hearts of the Lord's redeemed. Everything of earth will take its right position if wisdom is the principal thing, but if anything quarrels with wisdom and disputes wisdom's supremacy, the whole life will be a wreck and a ruin. I do not mean there will be a manifest wreck and ruin. Much may be successful before men, but before God it will be a wreck and a ruin. I suppose in nothing is there more manifest the departure from this chapter than in connection with the training of children. It is a remarkable thing that education which professes to deal with wisdom is that which leaves true wisdom out almost more than all else. Education at the present time has other objects, the passing of certain examinations, a reputation for knowledge, a business prosperity; these things may seem desirable, but wisdom is the principal thing. I have not the slightest doubt but that if wisdom is in the right position, there will be a true mental progress. I do not think for one moment that if wisdom is rightly exalted there will be a failure. A believer may expect to lose for the Lord in this world. We realise that the world is still the place where Christ was crucified, but a believer need not expect that his mental powers will be damaged by being a believer. His head should be clearer, and more able to see a way through difficulties; he should be quicker at matters of daily occupation than those who have not the quieting power of the indwelling Spirit of God, than those who have not the controlling and training power of the Scriptures that God has given. Oh, it is sad to realise that instead of wisdom being the centre, other things become the centre, and children are growing up without the principal thing, in a nominally Christian country, and even IN CHRISTIAN FAMILIES, - yes, myriads of children are growing up in these days throughout this vast city without the stress on WISDOM as the principal thing. I need hardly say that God's work in connection

with the Bible School stands definitely by this wondrous verse. We do not take any particular motto, for we have so many. The whole Scripture is to be emphasized in a Bible School, but if any verse could briefly sum up the attitude we would seek by grace to take, resting on the basis of the Lord's wondrous salvation, it is this, "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding. Oh that the day will dawn when many Christian parents will act upon this passage with a fulness of activity never before exemplified! for though there are always encouragements in the Lord's work among the children, do not think, beloved friends, that we have by any means reached the goal I have in view. I regard the work still as in its pioneer stage. Years ago thoughts were before me of something to be more fully developed upon these lines, and I believe with further searching of the Scriptures, one can see there is much to be accomplished. We are but at the beginning, but what is needed is that some should have the privilege of taking a definite stand, that wisdom may be the centre of their children's education and that so our pioneerwork may be gone through more quickly, with its fulness of results to others. A deeply solemn responsibility is laid upon Christian parents in this matter that the work may go forward TO THE GLORY OF GOD. But though I have read Proverbs 4 and would desire that its message might linger and more than linger in every mind, Proverbs 4 was not the particular passage before me. It is so difficult to say all one would; time is short, language is weak, and one longs that all the different circumstances of the hearts, known in their fulness only to God might be dealt with by His Truth. Who is sufficient for these things? With one of old, we must say, We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God. Oh that God Himself may cause His Word to be with power to-night that every believing heart, whether of a parent or not, may be concerned as to the fuller knowledge of the Truth and as to the responsibility for training ALL in any

measure entrusted to one's care! and oh that there may be in this gathering, as in all our gatherings, that joy which Scripture says is in heaven over those who are brought to repentance, - whether unsaved ones saved by infinite grace, or saved ones recovered to a fuller and fuller repentance that they may have a fuller and fuller enjoyment of the knowledge of the Truth! I cannot suit every circumstance with my words, but that God may convict us all if we are putting wisdom in a secondary place, or if there are defects in our training of those committed to our care that God may convict us all, is I am sure, not alone my heart's desire, but that of many.

Will you turn first to Eph. 5, "Be ye therefore followers of God as beloved children". The "therefore" looks back to ch. 4. 32, and the whole context is deeply practical to those who are "in Christ Jesus". May I at the outset say, beloved friends, that this expression, "Be ye followers (or imitators) of God" can only apply to those who are God's children, and we do well at the beginning of every such meeting as this to ask ourselves if we are actually His dear children. We are thinking of training the children, of training those children who are committed to our care, but have we first a child's relationship to a heavenly Father? Ah, this must come at the beginning, for if our knowledge of God be only mental, if our acquaintance with Truth be only superficial, if there has not been a deep heart work that we have seen ourselves as lost sinners and been quickened by the Spirit of God and beheld the finished work of the Lord Jesus on Calvary for us the worthless, if this has not been our experience, then the exhortations of Scripture can NEVER be put into practice. Scripture describes a sinner as dead, and a dead man cannot do living works. The important question which comes first is not, How shall I train my children? But, Am I a child of God myself? If THAT can be satisfactorily answered, the believer must feel weighted down with the responsibility of training others in the midst of a ruined world, but the

weighting down is accompanied by a lifting up, if there is a confidence in the Living God and a willingness to put His will first in everything. In EVERYTHING, beloved friends! It is easy to put God first one day a week, or at least to profess so to do. It is easy to give up certain things for God, it is easy to show certain interest in the things of God, but there is not the true rejoicing unless there is a devoted willingness to put God first in EVERYTHING. Surely such a thought must come with heart-searching power to each believer. The fear of man bringeth a snare. the applause of man bringeth more than a snare, the power of custom is likewise that which drags down. What we need is to be emancipated from our own opinions, and from other people's opinions, and be enthralled by the will of God. Be ye imitators of God as dear children. I like the word "imitator" in such a context as this, for we all know what a true imitator is. You will recollect how God's dear servant Paul when writing to the Corinthian believers, said, Become imitators of me, as I am of Christ. The same word is here. Be ye imitators of God as dear children. What is the underlying thought? Is it not this? - A dear child, a beloved child, naturally imitates a PARENT. You recollect how on another occasion we saw the precious words of Phil. 2, where Timothy served with Paul AS A SON WITH A FATHER. This is as if the apostle said, I want to show you how earnest he was, and I can find no better example of it than a son with a father. Here is a beautiful description of the harmony that should exist in homes. And likewise here we have brought before us the imitation that should be manifest in homes. Be ye imitators of God as dear children. Now this aspect of God's Truth is deeply important. I would repeat it:- THIS ASPECT OF GOD'S TRUTH IS DEEPLY IMPORTANT. Be ye imitators; a child imitates a parent. Have you felt this, dear friends? Your children imitate you more than you think, in numberless ways, sometimes reproducing your worst qualities very exactly. Imitation is not always conscious. Imitation depends upon an

atmosphere, depends upon a CONTINUANCE, depends upon a position of continual nearness. I know that you can see a person once and imitate him, but THAT is more affected, that is more conscious. The imitation which is unconscious, and most resultful, takes place day by day, day by day in the home. We know how that a continual dropping of water can wear away the hard stone, and the tiniest things repeated are more resultful than we are apt to imagine. I do not want to identify children and parents too closely, so as to make parents directly responsible for EVERYTHING that their children do, but I believe the indirect responsibility is far vaster than we are apt to acknowledge. You give me a book with an index, and I will know something of the book from the index. You give me a child, and he or she shall be the index to tell me something of the parent. It may be that the index does not give a full and fair account of all that the parent is, but it will give a general idea. It is remarkable how children make their ideals. naturally and rightly exalting their parents and copying their parents, but oh, does not this bring a great responsibility upon a parent? If your child is imitating you, be careful what you do. You did not read the Scripture to-day, can you be surprised if your child does not read it to-morrow? You put the things of God plainly second in the home during this year, can you be surprised if your children put them second in the home next year? You thought that meetings around God's Word were not of the greatest importance, can you wonder if your children will draw the inference when they grow up they need not put meetings around God's Word as of very great importance? A parent should be very careful as to his or her actions. Children notice omissions as well as what is done. You omit certain things, the child does not at first notice you omit them, but the child notices the RESULT of the omission. If only you had done those things there might have been an imitation in the doing of them. Ah, dear friends, do not think any of your actions are small, a parent is never off duty. Just as a king needs to be very careful how he acts, for all that

he does is watched and remarked upon, a parent in the sphere of of his kingdom, or hers, must necessarily be careful as to tiny things, for the subjects of THAT kingdom are watching. It is deeply important, deeply important that the parents should do that which is to be imitated, that which is to be copied. Unless you love the Lord with a deep love, and love the things of God intensely, how can you wish to be copied? Oh, do not think that if you neglect the Scripture you are only robbing yourself, you are misleading your children. But, you say, If I do all that I should do.... Ah, no, I will not put it like that, those who know anything of their shortcomings will hardly use such words, rather let me put it thus, You say, "If I do seek to obey the things of God and to carry out His precious arrangements, my children seem to be so different on some things, they are so hard to train, so hard to control, they do not imitate me on all points". There is not much doubt that children DO vary in their imitating, both in the degree and in the manner. Some of the children are affected most by some actions, and others by other actions. Moreover, the lines underneath in the old-fashioned copy-book are not so well written as the model copy. A parent will doubtless feel that the children often do cause grief in that they are not as the parent would have them; but, dear friends, here is no argument for carelessness as to the model copy, rather an argument for more emphasis on exactness, particularly as the responsibility of a parent is a responsibility that cannot be alienated, a responsibility unto God. When this passage came before me this morning, I felt it would just have God's message for this evening, or part of God's message. The children are imitating, beware how you act, do not think anything is too small. If you are impatient the children will be impatient; if you are careless, the children will be careless; if you are variable, the children will be variable; if you are indolent, the children will be indolent; if you are changeable, the children will be changeable; if you are untruthful, the children will be untruthful; if you are

proud, the children will be proud. Imitation is more resultful than we realise.

But there was another verse that was before me, and in time, before the other passages that I have mentioned. I felt I would take it LAST, - it comes in a very striking context, and I only want to take part of a verse. I refer to 1 Cor. 7 and the last clause of the 14th verse. The whole verse reads thus, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy". I take it that a passage of this nature at once presents problems. An unbeliever sanctified! Your children indiscriminately spoken of as holy! What is the meaning? At the outset I feel it is an invitation to a very careful word-by-word study of the Scriptures. Oh, dear friends, how much ruin has been brought about through careless searching of Scripture. Do not think that the Greek and Hebrew classes for the boys and girls are simply with a view to mental advancement, - their mental properties are very real, but beyond mental advancement there is the deep importance of a true knowledge of the exact words God uses. Oh, how many precious jewels some have found through looking into the exact words God has employed, but how many when they become older feel, rightly or wrongly, that they cannot spend their time and that they have not strength to learn the Greek or the Hebrew. ~~Why~~ Why they had learned as children! Do not deprive your child of this privilege, do not make it a matter of small importance, encourage them. Undoubtedly there are difficulties in the study, that which is attained without difficulty is usually of little worth. I know there is ONE thing as an utterly free gift, salvation; but apart from that God does not approve of men waiting till they receive things. We do not sit still that our food may come to us, there is need for work. We do not sit still that information may come to us, there is need for mental work. The same term is used here for

"sanctified" and "holy", but the root idea of the word ~~is~~ "holy" both in Hebrew and Greek is "separation". So much is this marked out in the Hebrew that a man who is separated to evil is called by the same name. Oh, you say, does that weaken the force of it? By no means, it strengthens it, for the thought seems to be that the word "holiness" means "separation", but if it is a separation to GOD, it MUST involve holiness of character, (Heb. 12. 14), hence the derived meaning of purity and righteousness, but not the derived meaning from separation, but from the fact that it is separation TO GOD. Ah, wherever He is there must be holiness. Here, therefore, we have one word rendered in two different forms, - sanctified and holy. A thought comes into one's mind that this passage was continually "illustrated" among the Corinthian believers. There were those who had been heathen idol worshippers before they were saved by grace. (Ah, dear friends, we have many privileges in these days:- how different it would be, if, when we went out to-night, we found idols at all the corners of the streets and found idol worshippers all round about us, - what privileges we have in these days, we little value them.) There were some, yea many, among the christians to whom the apostle wrote, who had been idol worshippers in wicked Corinth, but the grace of God had saved some of them, and they realised their responsibility to live to please Him, and some of them were concerned as to the method of dealing with problems. They would say, My wife, or my husband still serves idols, can I possibly live in such a house? It was to THIS that the apostle referred. Now take the word "set apart" which is the idea of that rendered "sanctified" and that rendered "holy" and you have the force of the passage. The unbelieving husband is set apart, the unbelieving wife is set apart, else were your children unclean, but now they are set apart. There was no thought that children were naturally holy to God for we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses as filthy rags. Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. By nature, there is none

righteous, no not one. How important therefore to know the meaning of the exact words that the Holy Spirit uses, for here are not my words but HIS. The argument therefore is just the opposite to that which an English reader might at first draw from it. It is this, one might say, my husband is an idolater, and I have been saved by grace, I was an idolater before but grace has laid hold of me, and made me one of the Lord's people, I long that he may be saved, but, oh, how can I live where there is an idolater? The Holy Spirit says, as it were, the husband is set apart, you can live still in that same house, You could not have friendship with other idolaters, but where there is a RELATIONSHIP it still remains. One might say, "How do I know that?" Why, says the argument of the apostle, if it were not the case you would need to turn children out of doors, because they are born sinners, but you do not do thus. They are set apart, you do not say they are to be cast out of the door till they are saved by grace. So that the passage IMPLIES that they are born sinners, and the need for the quickening of the Spirit of God. But my reason for bringing it up this evening is to show the force of that word "Your children are set apart". For whom? 'Tis not the thought of holiness to God here, as we have just seen, but a setting apart for some who are related to them, For whom? Their parents. Beloved friends, do you see the force of the words of Scripture? God's Holy Spirit specially uses this word "set apart" in connection with children and their parents. The children are entrusted to YOUR care. They are set apart for YOU, and YOU need to be devoted to them. Oh, let me plead for this! I am not pleading for merely physical kindness to the children, - many parents show that; they are afraid if their children are ill physically, but they are not so concerned as to mental losses and mental illnesses. I do not mean by mental illnesses those which are commonly called so, but the short-coming mind, the ill-trained mind. Many a parent would be alarmed if the child's body did not develop, if the child grew

into some abnormal shape or form, but because the mind cannot be seen, its lack of growth is not noticed! and beyond the mind there is the soul, and because these are not seen they are often put second and third and last. Oh, my friends, how much more time is spent on the body than on the mind and the soul. Food for the body is needed, clothes are needed as covering for the body, but the mind is more important, and the soul is more important than all. Oh, how one would plead with parents to emphasize this, in the words of Prov. 4, Wisdom is the principal thing, and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, and Christ is the Wisdom of God. I have felt concern that parents should have (shall I say?) more companionship with their children, and this verse struck me as appropriate in such a connection. The children are set apart for YOU. Do not make up your mind to have a number of other friends, make friends with your children. I do not mean a levelling down between the parent and the child. The parent is always in authority, the child will not become unduly familiar if you show a right friendship. It is when the parent has other friendships that the child becomes rude and careless of the parental authority. A right friendship is deeply important. Do not think of other friends. You must neglect something that is attractive:- then neglect other friendships, spend your time on the children, let THEM be your companions more and more. Do not think this is a waste of strength, be with them, enter into that into which they enter, take an interest in their Bible School studies. Oh, you say, I cannot do all this, I have something else to do, and something else, and something else, and something else. Many of the things one HAS to do are largely increased because of a failure to do what one SHOULD HAVE DONE. Train the children aright and they will decrease your work, fail to train them aright and they will increase it. Have a companionship with the children, spend your strength upon them, be devoted to them. But a word in this connection about MISTAKEN sympathy. It is remarkable how

I do not mean neglect something that is right, but you must neglect something that is attractive:- then I do not mean neglect something that

oftentimes mistaken sympathy is shown. I dare say you have all met persons, who, when you have not been feeling over well and perhaps have shown it in measure on your face, have expressed their deep sorrow that you are SO unwell, and have called attention to the fact that your face indicates this, and they have made you feel a good deal worse than you did before. Mistaken sympathy is one of the most dangerous things existing; and I suppose that if a child complains, - and children of all ages are apt to complain, - I suppose that there is the tendency to sympathise with the complaint, to sympathise with the murmuring. I feel this particularly in connection with God's work through the Bible School. I realise that it is almost a necessary result of Bible School work, particularly with Greek and Hebrew classes, that the children will sometimes say to their parent, "Oh, I cannot do this," or "I cannot do that", and there will arise a little of that freffulness of appearance and manner with which an unwise parent will sympathise, only to develop the mental illness that it betokens. If there be encouragement instead of discouragement, if the child be taught to rejoice in victory over difficulties, there will be a real advantage to the mind, and God may use it in connection with the study of Scripture to be a wonderful spiritual blessing AFTERWARDS, for I am sure of this; everyone who is a child of God and knows anything of difficulties in the Christian life feels his or her need for more spiritual backbone (shall I say?), more determination of character, and how often we have weakened our character by the childlike, or rather childish tendency to give up when difficulties come. Nay, the parent should encourage the child to surmount the difficulties. It is a cruel kindness to act otherwise. Most affectionately, yet earnestly, would I plead with every parent NOT to indulge in mistaken sympathy.

There are many things that I could say, but my time is almost gone. You will notice this passage implies that there must be a separation from the things of the world by a believing

parent. The Christians at Corinth thought, We cannot have anything to do with those who are wrong, those who are of the world, and the Lord said in this case you can live in the same house, implying, do not have fellowship with the world except you have a Divine warrant for it. Now herein is a deeply important thought. Dear Christian parents, and Christian friends, who have responsibilities in this matter, I appeal to you not to go a little into the world; your children will go further. Let there be a standing aloof from worldliness, and from those things which drag down. Do not say, - The children must have some of those worldly pleasures and treasures, teach them that there are greater pleasures and treasures in the things of God. Nothing can be compared with the things of God. You know the model home given in Deut. 6; there the Scriptures are mentioned and God says, Thou shalt talk of them when thou walkest in the way, when thou sittest down, when thou risest up, always the Scriptures as the topic of conversation. But, you say, it cannot be. Well, dear friends, these are not my words, they are the Words of the Spirit of God. It is not that you object to the Bible School, not that you object to what I am saying, that is a small matter, but if you refuse, you are objecting to the words of the Spirit of God. Ah, you say, we fall short. Granted. We all fail, but there is the model to encourage us on, if we have tasted that the Lord is gracious. We cannot have too much of the things of God, in the right position. The things of earth are all fading away, and they are vanishing, the things of earth will not last,; what we want is to have a stress upon the things of God, they are precious, - priceless beyond all value. We CANNOT know too much of what God has said. It is my desire in the Bible School to be privileged by God to encourage the children to a real enthusiasm for the Scriptures. I long that God may call them by His grace and make them His, that they may know the preciousness of what it is to be in Christ Jesus, and THEN the enthusiasm that at first is mental will indeed be spiritual. When one looks around, and sees those who are growing up with a listlessness as to everything, one

is alarmed. (My experience is in running across various young men in the present day that there is not much determination of character, one often sees young men make up their mind to take up some study and drop it very quickly again). When one looks on all this listlessness of to-day, one feels, Oh, the need for an enthusiasm that will put on one side those things which are of small worth, or no worth at all. The apostle well said, Bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable for all things. So we may say as to all else, ordinary education, so-called, and often accompanied by that which damages the mind, ordinary education accomplishes but little, - Salvation is MUCH more, godliness is resultful, wisdom is the principal thing, get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding! As, dear friends, we seek in the Bible School to spend our time and strength in encouraging the children in these precious studies, let us have the fullest support of those who have any influence with the children, whether in the home or elsewhere. It is our privilege, to encourage the children, and to emphasize their parents' authority, but here is our difficulty. To the child, and rightly so, the parents decision is a very high court, but if one decision is given in the Bible School and the higher court of the home contradicts the decision, the child's position is considerably hindered. Let there be a loyal whole hearted support of the methods which God has graciously laid on our heart. The work of the Bible School, as you know, occupies time and prayer and strain. You, dear friends, in the home have LITTLE of this, in connection with the Bible School work. Let your small fraction of interest, I am not speaking of it disparagingly, but I mean in connection with the amount of time that those of us have to give in this matter, let the small fraction of work that it involves to you, - and if your children come to the Bible School it WILL mean a little WORK for you, - let that small fraction be wholeheartedly given. If by grace you know the Lord as your own Saviour, give it wholeheartedly unto HIM, for our desire is,

and (if you know Him) your desire must be, that He may be glorified not only in your own lives but in those young lives that are growing up in the midst of a sinful world, in the midst of times wherein there is irreverence, carelessness and disregard of God, but wherein God is still saving by His grace, and still proving the power of His never out-of-date Truth, which some of us rejoice to realise is a mine of inexhaustible wealth, and worthy of the fullest enthusiasm. And with the utterance of the Holy Spirit with which we began we may well close, in the light of 2 Tim. 3.15 and "All Scripture", "Wisdom is the principal thing therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding." Christ is the Wisdom and Christ is the Power of God, and all the treasures of Wisdom are in Him.

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