

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.

G O D L Y H O M E S .

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by

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G O D L Y H O M E S

I want, beloved friends, to take the position of a learner rather than a teacher. What I mean is this. When one speaks of practical subjects of this character it is impossible to speak as one would, unless one takes the position of a learner. I desire that God's truth may impress ME as well as YOU. If I am to limit myself, and only speak from the standpoint of what I have already reached, I shall have to cut down the fulness of God's truth. Therefore I must take the standpoint of a learner, and with you long to PRESS FORWARD to reach the heights which God is pleased to set forth. It is far easier to stand on a pulpit than to live for Christ in a home. The FREQUENCY of ordinary actions is the Devil's opportunity. It is far easier to preach at a street corner than to eat a meal TO THE GLORY OF GOD. The tiniest things are in this respect the largest. There are some who wish they could do a large thing. They "wish" they could "preach". If they can eat their dinner TO the glory of God, probably they have done a larger thing. It is a most difficult thing to do ordinary actions to the glory of God. Do not misunderstand me. It is comparatively easy to glorify God while you are eating a dinner, but Scripture does not only say "Whether you eat or drink, at the same time glorify God", it says "Do all to the glory of God, and THAT is the problem, namely, to have the consuming desire for the glory of God IN THE HOME. If one is among unsaved relatives, he is more frequently "on guard" than in comfortable surroundings. Christian parents, who have every encouragement toward a godly home, have the danger that if they are both Christians they will become used to spiritual things and lose the continual "guardedness" of one who dreads grieving God amid the ungodly. Yet how important is the home! The Holy Spirit in 1 Tim. 3 shows that the assembly breaks down, if the home breaks down. If

1 Cor. 14 rightly says that sisters do not speak in the assembly, the ACTIONS of sisters speak very loudly in the assembly, for THEY are a large portion of the home. The influence of brethren and sisters in Christ on the assembly is far larger in the home than when they meet together in the meeting. The home is the key to the situation. The Devil's first attack was on a home, and he ruined it. Thanks be unto God, the Book of Revelation shows an unruined family in the climax of glory, because of the triumph of grace. God has appointed an unruined family because delivered from ruin, and there will be no difficulty as to the conversation THERE. How blessed will be the talking of the truth, and the walking in the truth when His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face, and His Name shall be in their foreheads! But one thing we shall lose when glory arrives, even the privilege of a victory AMID difficulties. But THIS is the privilege of to-day, and to THIS the Holy Spirit invites. When God was pleased to lay hold of Abraham, He laid a stress on the fact "I know him in order that he shall command his children" not simply "I know he will command", but "I know him with a view to commanding his children". God's acquaintance with His people is with a view to training them that they may be able to train others. Nor is the guidance of a godly home an easy matter. Many have been apprenticed for years with a view to work which is FAR easier, but they think they can in a few minutes undertake this more difficult work, or that they will learn by "experience". Sometimes we DO learn by experience, but often we learn wrongly by experience. Many people THINK that if they can say, "I have experience of this", there is a proof that they understand. In most cases there is a proof that they misunderstand. Experience is one of the worst teachers. The human proverb is distorted. It is deeply important that we should learn FROM GOD how NOT to make mistakes in our experience. Responsibilities are often lightly assumed. But in view of eternity, oh that we may be solemnised! Present day theories tell us we have the advantage of

many centuries of civilisation, and we can look back and be heir of all the ages' gain. If we thus look back, we become heirs of all the ages' loss. Christendom's dark actions still exist, and we need to look BACK beyond the darkness of Christendom's theories to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. I wish we were not slaves, slaves of customs, slaves of opinions that other people hold. If only we could read the Bible for the first time! If only we could take the simple position of obeying the Lord for the first time! Oh, beloved friends, how delightful it would be if we felt, "I will just arrange my home as Scripture marks out". How often one thinks of the historian of the reformation. He said, In one country they lepped off what they could not find in Scripture; in the other country they thrust it all down, and began to build up what they could find in Scripture; and there was a vast difference between the two buildings. If only we could start our homes all over again, and introduce into them what we found authorised by Scripture! If we could build up our arrangements and have Divine principles for everything, how different would many of our arrangements be! We need to be emancipated from the fear of man that bringeth a snare. If only we could look at eternity, and realise the brevity of time, and see souls hurrying to judgment, and feel that grace had snatched us as brands from the burning, and that the little ones in our charge must live forever either WITH God OR AWAY FROM Him, that every day in their life is affecting their character, so that even if they are saved, failure in early training will mean failure in usefulness afterwards, and thus the misleading of others, - if only we could realise that the stones we set rolling we could not stop; and that the ripples which began continue in their course in ever widening circles, if only we could FEEL the effect of one word, the result of one action, - we should, indeed, tremble for our responsibilities! Yet we should not tremble with a bare trembling; for the one who sufficiently FEELS responsibilities to be thus bowed before

God, sufficiently feels responsibilities to trust in the Living God. I am quite aware that the same. I am setting before you will either make you miserable OR happy. Miserable, if out of touch with the Lord; happy, if able to trust the Lord; so in accord with our feelings we may have an index as to where we stand in connection with Him. I think it is well to realise that if any find such subjects unpalatable the reason is they are out of touch with the Lord. They may be believers but out of touch with the Lord. It is deeply important that we should apply GOD'S own teaching in the home. We should not have expressed it thus. I lay a stress on this aspect of unpalatable, and perhaps you think "what a proud assumption", but it is not so, for the STRONGEST statements I am about to make are Scripture statements, and, therefore, if we are out of touch with these, we are out of touch with their Author, and THAT is a serious matter.

If, by grace, we are enabled to read the Scripture, we shall soon find that the great object of life when one is saved, is to PLEASE God. Of necessity, I am only speaking to those who are saved; yet I long that any who are not saved might be brought to see the blessedness of salvation, and the contrasted height of salvation through such meditations. You cannot live a Christian life till you have a life from Christ, because of His death. We cannot be those who receive strength to serve till we know the mighty strength of Him who saves, but, after salvation the attitude of life should ever be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do"? It is easy to do some acts that please the Lord, or that seem to please Him. Ah, He calls for the whole, for the ATTITUDE, for the complete LIFE, and not simply for isolated "actions". Actions are impulsive and temporary, - a CONDITION of obedience, walking in the Spirit, THIS is appointed. "Do all to the glory of God". That is a plainer statement than anything I have said, and more heart-searching and far-reaching. "Do ALL in the Name of the Lord Jesus". You cannot build up a worldly home in the Name of the Lord Jesus. You cannot train children for the world in the Name of the Lord Jesus. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any

man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." A true sense of the reality of grace will give a true sense of the real value of things. Eternity is so important! To lead the children to Christ must ever be the primary object. God can bless a bow drawn at a venture, but those who have charge of homes are not to draw bows at a venture, they are, as Enoch, to WALK WITH God. The home is the school, the first school, the chief school. It has a larger influence than all else. It is meant to have a larger influence. The power of those who guard and guide the home is meant to be real. Anything that breaks down this authority and power is the Devil's socialism. God has entrusted power to a parent. The parent must both use it, AND be worthy of it. Let me put the exhortation in the other order; - must be worthy of it and use it. If we would have power we must walk with God. A variable temperament exercises but little power; at least little power Godward. It produces variableness in others. An even temperament of communion with God is deeply important. The life should be a life of continual progress. It is vain to urge others to study the Scriptures unless we study the Scriptures ourselves. It is vain to talk of the preciousness of Christ unless our life proves this is real. "Sending" others to a meeting is well; we must come to meetings ourselves first. Arranging for the learning of Scriptures by children is well; we must learn Scriptures ourselves first. The shepherd in the east goes before. The parent must go before. Scripture speaks of children IMITATING their parents. Indeed, so definitely is this impressed that the Holy Spirit lays a stress on it in the great SPIRITUAL "home", - "Be ye imitators of God as dear children". The child is MEANT to imitate; he learns to speak thus. The power of imitation is very real. The child takes a MODEL in the home. It is important that the model should be a good one. Training begins unconsciously.

It is interesting to notice at the present day the great emphasis on UNconscious assimilation which is being brought forth with respect to language learning.

So much of a child's education is unconscious assimilation, and even the parent's manner is "assimilated". It is deeply important that there should be the power of communion with God in the parent's whole behaviour. If you delay training till it is conscious training, if you say, Oh but there is not understanding at present, you will find that the delay has given opportunity for the Devil to teach a number of lessons, and you will try, it may be in vain, to blot out those lessons. The Devil does not ignore the power of unconscious assimilation, he works from babyhood. The Holy Spirit lays a stress on work from babyhood. Timothy was encouraged because from a babe he had known the Holy Scriptures. "From a child" is an entire alteration of the Holy Spirit's word. It is "From a babe"; and we recollect, too, the stress of Psalm 8 on the mouths of babes and sucklings. GOD CAN WORK IN EARLIEST LIFE, but this involves a tremendous responsibility as to earnestness. Oh, you say, I have no time. Whatever responsibilities we take upon ourselves, we must take time to fulfil. We must be honourable. If I undertake some business for you, and then say I have not time and get all into confusion, you say I am dishonest. If there is a responsibility assumed, time must be found for it. Thatover it means, at the loss of sleep, at the loss of everything which is prized in a physical way, time must be found for spiritual things. If the responsibility is taken, the responsibility must be fulfilled.

But that is the black side of the subject. The responsibility must be fulfilled: - He is able to make all grace abound. That is the BRIGHT side of the subject. And the bright side is larger than the dark side. But the Lord's power must be expected, and claimed. It is vain to pray, "Lead us not into temptation", and then to walk at once into it. It is vain to pray for grace to look after responsibilities and then to put the Scriptures in the background. The strain is real, but the Christian's real employment in life is to live for God. Actually IF HE IS PUT FIRST, earthly things which are necessary will often be done far more quickly. However, there must not be a bargaining spirit. It is

not "If the Lord enables me to get through my work then I will spend a little time in studying the Scripture". That is the bargain reminding of the words "Of all that Thou givest me I will surely give the tenth to thee". No, beloved friends, the Lord must be FIRST, and other things must be wrapped up in the exaltation of the Lord. If you have not time for the Scriptures, I am not at all surprised. Because you have not time, of course you have not time. Do you follow what I mean? If you have not found time for the Scriptures, the whole life is in confusion. We can WORK very hard, and yet can accomplish MUCH LESS, because the oil of the work of the Spirit of God is left out from the machinery. God can make chariot wheels drive heavily. There may be ever so much work and little accomplished, (Cf. Hag. 1 with its solemn message). God can make chariot wheels drive the reverse of heavily. A word on its wheels is brought before us in Scripture, and the LIFE can be on its wheels, because they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. You say "Ye-es". The Lord does not want your "Ye-es". A ring of determination is needed when we accept the Scriptures. It is a FACT that they that wait upon the Lord SHALL renew their strength. The Lord does not want your uncertain "yes". The "Amen" of a certainty befits the one who believes in a Living God. But you say, "I tried but I could not". Then there was something wrong with the one who tried, not with the Lord who promised. The failures are simply a call to fuller trust in the Living God. God is equal to emergencies, and every moment is an emergency. Days pass quickly, and we accomplish so little. The believer who is not ashamed of yesterday is not prepared for to-day. But the believer who is not prepared to trust the Lord for to-day is getting ready for a dark to-morrow. Only as we have confidence in the Living God can we meet the strenuous responsibilities, wherever we are placed.

All of us think that OUR difficulties are greater than those of others. Our difficulties are distinct from those of others; but One who knows all our difficulties has used the strongest language, far stronger than I am using. Oh, say many, not with their lips, - we are too polite for that, - "You do not understand"

They may not be in the meeting, in large numbers just now, but there are many such in the world. If ever a believer gets into an unhealthy state spiritually, one of his favourite thoughts is, "You do not understand". This is an index of a low condition spiritually. Take those symptoms of disease and deal with them accordingly. Never feed the disease of grumbling. It desires food, but starve it. And everyone who in heart says, "You do not understand", ought to remember that the Lord does understand, and He has put stronger statements than we make to one another. His commands are most inclusive. "Thy commandment is exceeding broad" There is not a child of God in a healthy condition spiritually who is not at times brought to a certain "fear" of parts of the truth. They seem to break down all pride and make us to feel, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But if they shut off everything, they open one door, "Our sufficiency is of God!"

We find in the Earlier Scriptures a stress on the home. The words of God are to be in the heart, and then it is written "Thou shalt speak of them". Oh how great is the stress on the comprehensiveness of the "school-home" in Deut.6. "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thine house, and on thy gates". FIRST in the heart. The word "Thou shalt teach them diligently" is "Thou shalt sharpen them upon thy children"; that is, Thou shalt use them as GOADS upon the children. Oh, you say, "I do not want to give them too much of IT, for fear they become tired of IT". Face the facts, beloved friends, Do you speak from experience? If so, no wonder if the children do become tired of IT. If YOU do not want too much, for fear YOU become tired, others will be influenced by you. Exalt HIM, and "it" will be more enjoyable, the precious "it" of His truth.

I am not only speaking to parents. The message is equally needed for every believer. We all have blessed

influence over others in accord with our enjoyment of the truth. But there is another POSSIBLE influence, oh to be saved from this! "Thou shalt sharpen them upon thy children, and talk of them when thou sittest in thine house". How much of the conversation in the house is worth NOTHING as to the Judgment Seat of Christ. It IS difficult to converse to the glory of God. The Lord blesses the walking by the way when there is talking as on the road to Emmaus, with a burning heart. But He puts sitting in the house first. He puts the Scripture at night and the Scripture in the morning, "When thou liest down", "When thou risest up", and THEN the Scriptures for a sign upon the hand. The BUSINESS must be on the line of God's will. Nothing that causes a qualm of conscience, and nothing that takes away the time from spiritual things. The child of God has no right to rob His spiritual life for earthly things. It is a poor exchange. Better lose in the world than lose at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And there will be a need to lose in the world if we are to have reward in that day, and train the children to lose in the world. Have no ambitions except to glorify God. Let everything else be wrapped up in this.

And next we have the Scriptures as "frontlets between the eyes". Let everything in the home remind you of Christ. The home will lose some of its DECORATIONS if it is to remind of Christ. "Oh, but" you say, at least I hope you do not, but you may hear some who say, "I do not see why we should give up this, and it seems a pity to have to give up that". Do not give it up. Do not give up what it is a pity to surrender. Cling to it, if you can with a restful conscience, when on your knees in the light of Scripture. But be careful that you have an exercised conscience. The thought of thanking God we have not to give up this, or give up that, will make us give up many more things than we have intended to give up. We shall find it hard to thank God for many things, & for their retention, though if anyone asks us to give them up we should be ready to defend them. It is easy to argue for worldliness, it is hard to thank God for worldliness, and in this way the victory over the wish that grieves God is

often possible. Godliness begins in wishes, and therefore it is important that the wishes should be brought into line with His will. "Thou shalt not have a wish" is a precious thought: self's wishes laid low.

"Thou shalt write them upon the posts of thine house". Here we have the stress upon the very house inside and outside - everything linked with God. Oh that there may be more evidence upon the very walls of the houses - "This is a believer's home". Many homes of believers and of others could be visited, and if we did not know who lived there we should be unable to sort out which were the homes of Christians, and which were the homes of those who were not Christians. If you could empty the homes of the persons, and visit the houses, do you think you could be able to pick out in every case - "This is the home of a child of God" "This is the home of a pilgrim who is a stranger in the earth, who is occupied with the thought of the coming of the Lord". Let all the dwellers in the home go out, and visit the empty homes, and then write down an account, "Impressions of a home, - the home of one who pleases God, and lives for Him". Do you think you would find many homes that would lead to such an impression. Oh, you say, but "things" are not everything. Granted. The "things" affect "everything". The weathercock does not make the wind, yet it shows which way the wind blows. Things are not everything, but they indicate something. The thermometer does not make the temperature, but it registers. Look at everything as the register of the Christian life, and take your own temperature sometimes.

It is deeply important, beloved friends, that we should ponder these things before God, for God gives beautiful patterns of godly homes. You find in the psalms, for example, such delightful words as these, - "Thy children like olive plants round about thy table", - a condition which reminds of the work of the Spirit of God, of life and growth. Again we have the sons as plants grown up in their youth, and the daughters as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace. **DECORATE** your houses in **THIS** way. Have a palace, because of the godly life of those in the home. Expect this from God. It is well to have a number of spiritual ornaments

in the home. One of the best ornaments is the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. But that ornament must pervade the whole life. You will find how the Holy Spirit describes true ornaments in Prov. 1. Let us take such passagos to heart. It is well to have a large supply of these ornaments. Decorate the home with them. They are worth having. They will last.

I have already referred to 2 Tim. 3, and the stress on the trained home and the ordered home. Before a brother could have any elderhood in an assembly of God, his home was to be RULED well, ruled well continuously, for a home knows nothing of socialism. A home is to be RULED well still. Ephesians reminds us of the NURTURE and ADMONITION OF THE LORD. That is the great thought of training. And so we have the stress on the Lord's exaltation from one end of Scripture to the other, and the Lord being exalted from morning to night. Rising early to glorify the Lord, emancipation from the world's ideas. It is not, "Oh, someone else does this, or someone else does that, or I cannot help fitting in with these arrangements, or I am afraid to look too singular before others". Let there be a perishing of all the opinions of other people. You are responsible TO THE LORD. Rise early in the morning for His glory. Scripture lays a stress on early rising, and you cannot find one verse to plead for late rising. Scripture lays a stress upon spiritual things at the OUTSET. Scripture lays a stress on the unity in prayer "That your prayers be not hindered". Let the very outset of the day be marked by the united prayer of parents, and let the children be taught from early childhood that the parents think much of the SOLEMNITY of drawing near to God. Let it be manifest that the parents delight in the Scripture, and so let the day go through with all its strain, but with all HIS STRENGTH.

Beloved friends, I meant to have spoken further. We have many other topics before us to-night. I will leave this introduction to the subject. If our hearts are warmed to love the Lord, and we are afraid to grieve Him, the application will be easier. But do

not let us brush aside any conviction of sin which God may have graciously given this evening. If we brush aside conviction of sin, we shall become colder and less sensitive to God's voice next time. May our experience be contrasted; may we ever become more sensitive, and more fervent in spirit, and learn the will of the Lord that we may do it with joy.