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“Christian Education —the only response to a God-given parent’s duty”



Based upon a sermon preached by Rev. Ivan Foster in Toronto Free Presbyterian Church, Lord’s Day evening, September 24th, 2006.

“I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father,” 2 John 1:4.

This message was preached at the dedication service marking the beginning of the eighteenth year of Toronto Free Presbyterian Church’s Whitefield Christian School.

It is most appropriate that a new school year starts in harvest time. It surely serves to keep before the mind of the parent and of the educator the eternal harvest which will be visited upon every member of the human race. Christian education lives and labours in the light of that great harvest. It does seek not to serve, as its chief aim, the purpose of preparing a child for a successful adulthood as far as business and financial success go.

important but . . .

Those are important and have their rightful place and are addressed within a truly biblical school. But far more important than earthly success and honour is the preparation of the child for eternity.

That is the chief concern of Christian Education!

text

Our text helps us understand this objective and how it is best achieved.

I. TEACHING OUR CHILDREN THE TRUTH OF GOD IS THE CHRISTIAN’S CHIEF DUTY

1. We are commanded by God so to teach our children. “Children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.” God commands us to walk in His truth. This is the essence of Christianity. “And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him,” Acts 5:32. “And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him,” Hebrews 5:9.

Children can walk only in the path that is taught them.

2. Please note that children can be taught the truth. The word for “children” is the same as appears in Matthew 2:18. “In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.”

This prophecy is applied to the infants slaughtered by Herod. It shows us that the term



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“children” covers those that are as young as 2 years-old, as was the case with the infants slaughtered by Herod.

It is possible to teach the very young the things of God and the way of salvation through Christ.

Paul said to Timothy: “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,” 2 Tim 3:15.

The Greek word for “child” is elsewhere translated “babe” in Luke 1:41, 44; 2:12, 16, “infant” in Luke 18:15 and “new born babes” in 1 Peter 2:2.

Thus we see that the very young may be taught to reverence and regard the Word of God. The Saviour said: “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,” Matthew 18:3. This childlikeness (I do not say ‘childishness’) is required in adults if they are to be converted. Trust and unquestioning faith mark the child’s demeanour and it is to that the Saviour is referring.

3. Children must be taught. They cannot come to this knowledge of themselves. How foolish are those who say that they will not seek to influence their children but rather leave them to discover for themselves the religion that meets their needs. That is like determining not to teach a child road safety but rather leaving it to fend for itself when it comes to the matter of crossing a road!

God’s Word

The child is born in sin and ignorance of God and is incapable of making a right decision regarding its spiritual well-being. It **MUST** be taught from God’s Word.

Parent, heed what the Word of God says about the spiritual state of our little ones from the moment of their birth. “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me,” Psalm 51. “What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?” Job 15:14. “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others,” Ephesians 2:3.

4. In this duty the whole church is to be involved. Parents and office-bearers are to be actively involved in this work. This is a letter from an elder to a parent. In it a warning is issued about deceivers and deception, verse 7. In the measures taken to preserve ourselves from such deception, are we to ignore the children?

It would be contrary to human instinct even amongst the most depraved.

5. The children must be protected. John “begs” in verse 5. He calls for the sanctity of the home to be preserved, verse 10. This was a matter of great importance to him.

Home Invaded

Secular education invades and threatens the Christian home.

It sends home literature extolling the lie of evolution in the pupil’s school bag and the parent is required to supervise and assist in the poisoning of the mind and heart of the child by this deception of the devil. To thus permit the entrance of error into our home is to be a “partaker (or partner) of . . . evil deeds”, verse 11.



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Defiance of God

A Christian who sends his child to a state school is defying the plain injunction of God to “train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it,” Proverbs 22:6.

II. IT IS OUR DUTY TO SEEK TO SEE OUR CHILDREN PROGRESSING IN THE TRUTH

The word “walking” means to advance, to progress.

1. Profession without progress is empty. John saw the evidence of genuineness in this mother’s children, verse 4. He found them walking in the truth.

No matter how clear the profession of faith in Christ, if it is not accompanied by a “walking in the truth,” it cannot be genuine.

“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” James 2:20.

Parent, be not content with the words of a child’s profession, but look for the holy works that must accompany true conversion.

Resurrection

In Mark 5:36-43 we read of the raising of the daughter of Jairus. Please note the five steps involved in her resurrection. Christ took her by the hand. He spoke the words of life to her. She arose, she walked and took food. These three signs follow every true conversion, when the life of Christ is conveyed to the soul of the sinner. They rise, walk and begin to feast.

This is what John saw in the children of this mother.

Christian, look for it in your children and be not content with anything less as proof of their conversion.

2. Truth is a suitable path for the young. Life for these children was to walk in the truth of God.

Many believe that the young require something from the world or they will be discontent and unhappy and fall short of full development.

That is the equivalent of saying that full health can never be enjoyed unless it involves sickness!

life abundant

Christ the TRUTH is also the WAY. He, through His Word and Spirit, provides “life abundant” (John 10:10) for those who obey His Word, and that includes children and young people.

Heaven

Heaven consists of uninterrupted fellowship with Christ. The closer we walk with Him here on earth, the more of heaven’s joy we experience.

3. The Christian’s walk in truth should be instinctive. The word “found” means “to hit upon”. It was an unexpected encounter between John and the children of the lady to whom he is writing.



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Consequently, these young people were not putting on a display for John's sake but were accustomed to walk in the truth. It was something they did, whether observed by others or not. It was as natural to them as breathing! As Joseph fled from the evil enticements of Potiphar's wife, so these young people turned their back on the world and walked instead in God's truth.

May God grant us such a generation of young people today in the Free Presbyterian Church!

III. GOD-FEARING YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD CAUSE ALL TO REJOICE

1. John the apostle rejoiced. He was made glad by the obedience of God's Word seen in the lives of these young people. Nothing will bless the people of God more than to see the young going on with God.

2. John rejoiced greatly. It means "without measure." And why not?! The opposite case should cause us great sorrow. "Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not," Jeremiah 31:15.

The tears were for a lost generation of young ones who walked not in the truth of God.

"And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel," Judges 2:10.

Christian education is required to avert such a catastrophe falling upon the Free Presbyterian Church.

The failure to promote and encourage Christian education can only hasten the tragic day like that referred to in Judges 2:10.

3. John was inspired to write a letter about the matter. God would have a permanent record preserved of this apostolic endorsement of godly parenting for the church throughout the ages to ponder.

Here it is, a testimony to the vital importance of teaching our children the truth in our day.

Our Duty

Let Free Presbyterian parents, ministers, elders and members generally realise their duty in this vital matter and act now for the preservation of the young of the flock of God.