

*Parenting Principles for Christian Families*

**Table of Contents**

*Prologue* ..... 4

*Introduction* ..... 5

*Chapter 1 — Parenting Basics:  
Paul’s letter to the Philippians* ..... 9

*Chapter 2 — Philippians 1:  
Christ, Our purpose for living* ..... 14

*Chapter 3 — Philippians 2:  
Christ, Our example for living* ..... 19

*Chapter 4 — Philippians 3:  
Christ, Our reward for living* ..... 25

*Chapter 5 — Philippians 4:  
Christ, Our power for living* ..... 33

*Epilogue* ..... 44

## Parenting Principles for Christian Families

### Prologue

In undertaking to write about this most vitally important subject, one does so with a great sense in his soul of personal failure in the very things in which he now seeks to set forth in this little booklet regarding principles for parenting. In the very helpful, recommended book, *“To the Parents of My Grandchildren”*\* the author writes: “Some of these pages have been blotted with tears; and I am not at all sure that all the lessons have been learned that the writer is trying to pass on to you. Do not think he writes *because of any imagined superiority*—he does not.” At the end he says: “The words of the grandfather are ended: they have greatly condemned him. They have made him feel how he has failed, and how utterly unqualified he was for [writing these things]. But God is faithful.”

These words echo one’s personal experience as a parent and suitably describe his own feelings. At the same time one longs that our gracious, loving God might be pleased to use the meditations offered herein for much profit and blessing for parents who diligently seek to raise their children in faithfulness to God, for His glory, and their blessing.

*Douglas Nicolet  
December, 1999*

Please address questions or communications to:  
The Christian Shepherd, Inc.  
POB 57471  
Des Moines, Iowa  
50327-2189  
USA

\* *“To the Parents of My Grandchildren”* is available from Bible Truth Publishers, Addison, Illinois, Bibles & Publications, Montreal, Quebec, Canada or Bible Truth Supply, Corner Brook, Newfoundland, Canada.

—Introduction—

*First things first—realities and difficulties*

In view of a world that has become vastly darker than when “*To the Parents of My Grandchildren*” was penned, it is crucial that those who are raising a family in a world about to begin its 7th millennium of history, walk soberly in the fear of God, diligently seeking light and wisdom from His Word. The Bible contains all the Divine wisdom, precepts and principles needed for parenting and for the protection of our beloved children—those precious, priceless treasures given to us from our God.

The one who is the “prince of the power of the air” is ever the same in his hatred of God and His divine institutions—spheres such as marriage and family. But we are assured that our God Who is light and love also *never changes*, (Mal. 3:6), and His precious Word given for our blessing and guidance *never changes* (Matt. 24:35).

How specially appropriate to our subject are the words of the Lord Jesus commending the one who hears “these sayings of mine, and doeth them.” He is likened to “a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.” (Matt. 7:24, 25). Dad and mom!—build your family with great diligence, in holy fear and trembling before God, on that “Rock”.

Be assured that in one measure or another, the *rains* of trial will fall on your precious family, the *floods* of immorality, violence and corruption will rise, trying to drown your children, and the *winds* of humanistic, godless thinking will *beat* against your home seeking its destruction. But though such adversity is assured, our blessed and unchanging “Rock,” the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word, are ever the unfailing refuge against all the power that Satan arrays against you! May God then grant that with purpose of heart, parents see with eyes anointed by the Holy Spirit the reality of the fearful foe who has marshalled himself against them, that they may daily seek the wisdom of the Word of God for the guidance and protection of their beloved lambs.

Christian parents who seek to preserve their beloved children have such wonderful comfort afforded them in the Word of God! Let its Divine light and wisdom be the guide for every decision you



make—always remembering that “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” (1Jn. 4:4)

***When winning is vitally important***

In the sad story of Absalom (2 Sam. 15), the handsome, charismatic son of David who wickedly tried to usurp his father’s kingdom for himself, we read that he began his wicked scheme by *stealing the hearts* of the children of Israel (2 Sam. 15:6). He professed to love each one and to care about their condition. But he also subtly suggested that as long as David (his father) was king, they would never really get what their hearts desired or what they really needed (2 Sam. 15:1-6).

Satan seeks to do this very thing today to our children, and he does so very effectively. Disguised as an *angel of light*—appearing beautiful, harmless, appealing—he steals into the very place established by God for the protection of our lambs—the family circle. Through a thousand different ways—domestic chores, work responsibilities, friends, recreations, hobbies, and even natural family relationships (all wholesome, proper and helpful in themselves)—Satan can enter the Christian household unnoticed. Once there, he sets about—using these very things—to *steal* the heart of each precious child by promising that he (disguised in the light and attractiveness of them) has more love, understanding and satisfaction than the child can ever expect to receive from dad and mom.

***Protecting against theft***

In order to neutralize these efforts of the devil to *steal* the hearts of your children you must act upon the principle of Proverbs 23:26, “My son, *give me thine heart*, and let thine eyes observe my ways.” Daily seek grace and wisdom to *win* the hearts of your children in confidence and love, before they are *stolen* by the enemy. *Demanding* obedience from children (though absolutely necessary), if not coupled with love and compassion, only serves to make it easier for the enemy to eventually *steal* their hearts. “[Love] *suffereth . . . beareth . . . endureth . . . never faileth . . .* (1 Cor. 13:4-8).

***Working to win hearts***

Parenthood does not automatically insure that you will always *have* your child’s heart attached to your own. An infant naturally expresses dependence, love and confidence (Num. 11:12, Isa. 49:15).

But this infant confidence and dependence will not *always* be so. As your children grow older, *IF* you have not *won* their hearts, *attaching* them to yours—they will increasingly become easy prey for the bright and tempting lies of Satan. The self-will and independence of the flesh which we all have, will begin to assert itself (see this strikingly illustrated in the life of king Saul) more and more. Heart attachment is vitally important to keep them from a path of willfulness and sin. But, this must be developed. It does not automatically happen.

“*For I was a son unto my father, tender and an only one in the sight of my mother. And he taught me, and said unto me, Let thy heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live.*” (Prov. 4:3, 4 JND).

#### ***Has your heart been won?***

Please notice the beautiful and solemn moral order of Prov. 23:26. The *heart* comes first, and then comes the *example* to be followed. We are quick to teach our lambs, “Children obey your parents...” (Eph. 6:1, Col. 3:20)—and we need to do that. But coupled with this is the need of parents to learn for themselves, the joy of Christ dwelling “in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love...,” (Eph. 3:17). If the love of Christ has not *won* your own heart attaching you to Himself dear dad and mom, then quoting “children obey”, will seem to your children more like a *law demanding* cold submission, than a *request commanding* loving obedience.

#### ***Parents are more than policemen***

Don’t misunderstand—teaching children obedience is absolutely essential—but if you have not *won* their hearts first, so that they have willingly *given* you their full confidence and trust, obeying you may seem no different than obeying any other authority they encounter in life. With respect to our children, obedience should be more than this. We submit to God given authority in our lives, but not because a policeman, teacher, or governor has *won* our hearts in love. We submit to them, often *in spite* of what we think about their use of authority. However, with parenting, obedience and submission ought to be the result of *winning* our children’s hearts in love and trust. “*Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children,*” (Eph. 5:1 JND).

### ***Won hearts and captured eyes***

A child naturally *observes* and *imitates* the example set by those who have won its heart. Remember this in relation to the world's idols—sports, entertainment, political figures, etc. If you have not won their hearts, seeking to attach them to the Lord Jesus, be assured that Satan will provide a famous athlete, entertainer, or other object who will steal them! Then, rather than being molded by your example, (Christ displayed in your life) they will be fashioned by the examples of these idols.

Oh! be ever so careful of your ways, for apart from the Word of God, your ways are the greatest *lesson book* your little ones will have in their early life! Let Psa. 139:23-24, daily form every activity of your life. “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any *wicked way* in me, and lead me in the *way everlasting*.” Then each parent will be able to say to their beloved children, in the spirit of Gideon, “look on me and do likewise...” (Jud. 17:7).

### ***A New Testament father***

We find a wonderful parenting example in the New Testament seen in the Apostle Paul, who was a *spiritual father* perhaps without equal. Often in his epistles, he makes reference to his *spiritual children* longing that they may be preserved and blessed.

To the Philippian believers, he expresses confidence that God was going to work blessing for them, because it was “righteous for me to think this as to you all, because ye have *me* in *your hearts*...” (JND). What does that mean? Their hearts had been *won* by Paul and thus, when he was away from them—a prisoner in Rome—they still believed, obeyed, and lived what he taught them. They saw in the apostle's life a living example of what he taught, and because of their love for him, they followed (imitated) his example (Eph. 5:1).

Paul's motive was that the Philippians' hearts might be won for Christ. Do not lose one moment of the *short* time you have with your beloved children following his example! Diligently seek to win their hearts—that the enemy not be able to *steal* them. Once you have *won* their precious hearts you then can say to them in love, “give me thine heart” and they will in confidence and love, yield. Thus will you be able to effectively train them “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). “*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*” (Prov. 22:6).

## Parenting Basics—Paul’s letter to the Philippians

### *Parenting as practiced by Paul*

Paul was an *apostle* of Jesus Christ, a *teacher*, an *evangelist*, a *shepherd*, and a *spiritual father*. His fathering care and tender love for his children is evident throughout his all epistles. In Galatians he refers to those he had so much concern about, as “*my little children*”. To the Thessalonian believers he was gentle as a *nurse* who cherishes *her children*, exhorting, comforting and charging them as a *father* his *children*. In young Timothy he had found a *dearly beloved son*, in Titus, *his own child after the faith*, and to the Corinthians he expressed concern because they had *not many fathers*, while he warned them as his *beloved sons*. His example shows the immeasurable impact parents have upon their children and the normal love and affection that ought mark every parent–child relationship.

### *Philippian fundamentals for parenting*

One has been impressed that Paul’s letter to the Philippians—the epistle which gives us many principles for living a *normal Christian life* in this world—also presents an especially wonderful treasure chest of principles which give guidance for parents as they raise their children.

Let us first notice that there are four main themes of his letter: Chapter one presents the Lord Jesus as the *Purpose* of normal Christian life (1:20, 21). Chapter two presents the Lord Jesus as the *Pattern* of normal Christian life (2:5-11). Chapter three presents the Lord Jesus as the *Prize* to be gained in living a normal Christian life (3:8-14), and chapter four presents the Lord Jesus as the *power* needed for living a normal Christian life (4:13). Christ is *everything* in normal Christian life!

These are four fundamental *building blocks*—purpose, pattern, prize and power—which are essential for effective Christian parenting. They provide the spiritual foundations which when built on, will lead to the preservation and blessing of our children, protecting their hearts from being *stolen* by Satan and this present evil world. Let’s consider them more closely.

### *A proper purpose*

Children need a proper *Purpose* for life—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Their tender hearts crave satisfaction just as do ours. Parents, do you *know* He alone can fully and truly satisfy? Then *teach* that to your children. The world is your competition. It presents to them its own corrupted and defiled heroes as objects for their hearts' satisfaction.

Its heroes—real or fantasy—come from fairy tales, entertainment, music, sports, military might, science fiction, or even hobbies. And while some things, if very carefully controlled may be relatively harmless, see to it dad and mom, that you *do control* how much contact you allow your children to have and how involved you allow them to become with those things.

For example, *Winnie the Pooh*<sup>®</sup> characters are gentle, harmless and enjoyable—and when properly controlled, can be fun. The danger is that they, if not properly controlled, may seem more real, loving, and gentle to your children than the blessed Saviour, Himself—becoming a *substitute* for Him.

Almost *all* the heroes of this dark world—real or fantasy—are characterized by one or more godless traits—pride, fantasy, foolishness, violence, or corruption. Dad and mom! don't expect the heroes of a world that spit in the face of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ to provide your children with a heart's desire which will attach them to our blessed Saviour!

Further, almost everything the world offers children will be hidden under an exciting and harmless appearing cover. Never forget that the enemy of your children's souls is that *angel of light* who deceived Eve in the garden. (2 Cor. 11:14).

Fill your children's hearts from their earliest moments with the Supreme Object above all objects—Jesus—the only One Who can truly fill and satisfy their precious hearts. Speak His blessed Name often to them from the time they are infants. Use *every circumstance* in life as an opportunity to speak well and lovingly of the Lord Jesus. *Redeem the time* (Eph. 5:16), bringing the blessed Saviour into everything—every circumstance of life—every day. Let your children see that the Lord Jesus is truly the supreme Object and Purpose of *normal life*.

### ***A proper pattern***

We often hear this saying—and it has much truth in it—“what you *do* speaks so loud, I can't hear what you *say*”. Our children learn by example and are guided by example, as well as by words (Eph. 5:1). Providing an example for others to follow is a Divine principle.

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.” (Php. 3:17). Dad and mom, be very exercised about the example your life provides for your lambs!

The Lord Jesus in His life, sets the perfect example of love, service, humility—all of the virtues that parents should desire to see developed in their lambs, are seen in His life. But those Divine virtues ought to be seen having their proper effect in the lives of parents, first. Words mean little to children, if actions do not support what is spoken. The Lord Jesus sets the perfect example as a Man who “began both to *do* and to *teach*.” His actions (as a Man) morally came before His words—His words were perfectly supported by His actions.

We are not perfect as He was, but the example we seek to set for our children, can “be perfect” in the sense of having our hearts fully committed to walking with the Lord, in full submission to His Word. (1 Ki. 8:61, 2 Tim. 3:17).

### ***A proper prize***

In Philippians, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is set forth as the *prize* to be gained (Phil. 3:9–14). *He* is to be the motivation for living a *normal* Christian life. Everything in this life was, to Paul, as worthless when compared to *the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus*. (Phil. 3:14, JND)

While much blessing can result from giving children *appropriate* rewards to *encourage* them in their obedience—rewards should never be used as *inducements* to cause obedience. We read, “*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*” (Jn. 13:17). A believer is not to obey the Lord because he expects to be rewarded, but because he finds joy—happiness—resulting from obedience to the Lord. Thus, in the natural realm as in spiritual, an *obedient* child is a *happy* child.

Abraham, *the friend of God*, was one whose life was marked by obedience to God and there were tangible results—“*the LORD hath blessed my master greatly. . . he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.*” (Gen. 24:35). Under law, Israel was rewarded for obedience. “*Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people. . .*” (Exo. 19:5—see also Deut. 11:8-17). Though we are not under law, when children *are* obedient, wise giving of rewards from

time to time provides encouragement and reinforcement of their obedience.

Suppose one summer day a father says to his son, “I want you to mow the yard.” The boy obeys and starts to mow. The day is hot and the work is hard, so while the boy is toiling, the father comes to him and says, “You’re working very hard. When you’re finished, let’s go to the ice cream shop and get a treat.” This reward is neither an *incentive* or *inducement* to obey—it is an encouragement to press on in the path of obedience.

Remember too, dad and mom, your children are noticing whether or not obedience marks your life—if you too are seeking to *please* the Lord, as you want them to do. “*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*” (Jn. 14:15)

### ***Proper power***

Children should know that they have access to an unlimited supply of power to help them to be obedient. They need to realize that while obedience is *expected*, they have the power to obey because they can *do all things through Christ* (Phil. 4:13). All of us soon find that submission and obedience are part of a very difficult conflict. The world, the flesh, and Satan actively oppose any desire to obey God. Realize that in demanding obedience and submission (absolutely vital!), your children face very real foes that constantly encourage them to rebel and disobey. Shew them by example that in the Lord Jesus there is found all strength and moral courage needed to walk in obedience.

Remember, the world in its frantic pursuit after power, will teach your children to look *within themselves* to find the source of power necessary to do *what they want*. This concept is full blown humanism, rampant in every area of Cain’s world today.

It is vital that your children early learn—by your example and words—that the strength needed to walk through this dark world and the power to submit and obey God’s Word, is only found in the Lord Jesus Christ. “*But unto them which are called. . . Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*” (1 Cor. 1:24). “. . . my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” (Eph. 6:10).

Thus have we considered the fundamental *building blocks* of principles for parenting as seen in the apostle’s letter to the believers in Philippi. We will now take up in more detail some of those precious principles found in the epistle that Paul wrote under Divine



inspiration, to the Philippian believers. May our blessed God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, be pleased to bless these thoughts to each who read them.



## Philippians One: Christ, our Purpose for living

### *Prayer and fellowship*

**1:3–6** “*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ.*”

It may seem strange that we begin our meditation by encouraging parents to earnestly pray for their children. But the example of this *father’s continual prayers* for his spiritual children serves as a striking and important reminder that earnest, constant parental prayer is an absolute, vital necessity. It is the indispensable and *normal* service upon which all other Christian parenting must be based. Let us always “*Pray without ceasing*” for our children (1 Th. 5:17).

The Philippians’ hearts were also engaged with the apostle’s in the gospel and thus they enjoyed fellowship together. Along with constant prayer, it is good to draw the hearts of children into *fellowship* with parents’ spiritual exercises. The glorious gospel of Jesus Christ is a *normal*, fundamental part of everyday Christian family life. It needs to be lived, enjoyed, and proclaimed! “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*” (Rom. 1:16).

We also see that Paul had confidence in the Lord’s completion of His Divine work in the Philippian believers. Earnest, prayerful Christian parenting produces the same spirit of confidence in the *Lord’s* working for blessing in the lives of children. But such confidence is all in the Lord, for He said “*without me ye can do nothing.*” (Jn. 15:5).

### *Winning hearts and gaining confidence*

**v 7** “*as it is righteous for me to think this as to you all, because ye have me in your hearts. . .*” (JND)

Paul had confidence in their future blessing because they had him “in their hearts” (please notice the important difference and correct reading in the JND translation). Having *won* their hearts in love he could be assured that they would *give* themselves to him in love and obedience. We earlier spoke of the vital necessity of *win-*

ning our children's hearts. In Prov. 4:23 the father beseeches his son: "Keep thy heart more than anything that is guarded; for out of it are the issues of life." (JND). If parents gain their children's confidence by winning their hearts, they can more effectively guide them from harmful influences.

### ***The right kind of love***

v 8 *"For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ."*

Paul's care and concern was measured according to the tender affections of Christ—a far higher love and motive than the world's. Christ's love ought to be the standard of affection between parents and children. Human affection—which makes amazing sacrifices for its objects—may be dangerous if it *gives* what Divine love would withhold, or if it *withholds* what the tender *bowels* of Christ would give.

God loves without needing a reason. Human love, when not guided by Divine affection, loves because of what it receives. When David defeated the mighty foe, Goliath, and was esteemed and honored by all Israel, Michal, Saul's daughter, *loved* him. (1 Sam. 18:20). She desired to be connected with his glory and honor. However, later when the ark of God was returned to Jerusalem, she *looked out at a window* seeing her husband David and *despised him* (1 Chron. 15:29), for she received nothing for self from David's joy. May Divine love—the *bowels of Jesus Christ*—mark the affections of parents.

### ***Expressing love properly***

v 9–11 *"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in full knowledge and all intelligence, that ye may judge of and approve the things that are more excellent, in order that ye may be pure and without offence for Christ's day, being complete as regards the fruit of righteousness, which [is] by Jesus Christ, to God's glory and praise."* (JND)

Little children—if living in a normal, loving family environment—will by nature, freely express love in natural purity and innocence. However they do not always know *when* such displays of love are appropriate or wise.

Paul prayed for his children in the faith, that their love would not only increase and abound (happy condition for a Christian home!), but that its display among them would be guided by Divine wisdom

and according to Divine righteousness. Even very little children can be taught to appropriately, in a way pleasing to the Lord, display the love they so naturally and willingly express. Encourage children to *abound* in love, while giving guidance for its right and proper expression.

***When “bad” is good***

v 18 “*What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*”

Things didn’t seem to be working out very well for the beloved apostle (see v 12–17). He was a prisoner in a Roman dungeon, and even though the gospel had been blessed to souls, some of those who had been saved through his preaching were now using the very gospel that had saved them, to add even more afflictions to the beloved servant of Christ. But he did not get discouraged, for he knew that “all things work together for good to them that love God . . .” (Rom. 8:28).

Our lives often work out differently from what we think best. Families may be confronted with serious trials and difficulties, while at other times, they become the object of positive persecution. The apostle was happy because both the *bad* and the *good* were being used to further the gospel and magnify Christ. Parents should instill in their children, this same spirit of humble acceptance of God’s sovereign ways.

***Thinking of others***

v 19 “*For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,*”

See how beautifully Paul claims the prayers of his beloved Philippian children! Their prayers for him were the natural outflow of their love for him. A happy service in which to engage our children—praying for dad and mom, brothers and sisters, and others too!

***An Object for life—a Purpose for living***

v 20, 21 “*According to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but in all boldness, as always, now also Christ shall be magnified in my body whether by life or by death. For for me to live [is] Christ, and to die gain*” (JND ).

We witness almost daily the tragic ends of those who no longer

feel they have any purpose or reason for living. Without Christ life is a hopeless existence ending in a hopeless eternity.

But Paul had a wonderful purpose for living—a Divine and eternal Object for this life and for that to come—Jesus Christ. *He* was the purpose of Paul’s life. No purpose or object was more precious to the apostle than that Divine Person.

In answer to the question, “What’s the purpose of life?”, the world will offer your children many attractive choices. Each will seek to claim their interests and energies for its own gain and welfare. Of course, the things the prince of this world (Jn. 12:31, 16:11, Eph. 2:2) presents to them will seem very worthwhile and attractive. But what Satan or the world presents your children will always be *substitutes* for Christ—never *means* to help them move through this life to His honor and glory.

Dad and mom! present the Lord Jesus Christ to your children as the preeminent purpose for life—the Object for living. Only when He is so, will all else—careers, hobbies, friends, etc.—find a proper level in their lives. But don’t expect them to have Christ as the Object and purpose for their lives, if He is not by example and in reality, the Object of your heart and life.

“. . . *have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth;*” (Col. 3:2 JND).

### ***Are you sacrificing for them or spoiling them?***

v **23, 24** “*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.*”

Need we say that parenting is full of sacrifice? Love happily makes such sacrifices, but be sure that the sacrifices you make for your children are in order to meet their *needs*, not to satisfy their whims or lusts. Sacrificing to give children *everything* they desire will produce unsatisfied and self-willed souls.

The results are far more solemn than we may realize. In 1 Kings 1:6 we read concerning Adonijah, the brother of Absalom, that David “his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?” David’s indulging of his son’s *will* was the eventual cause of Adonijah’s death. (1 Ki. 2:31). Be careful! Trying to give your children everything they want is no proof of your love, and will almost surely result in disasters and tragedy in their lives.

### ***Unity, courage, and conflict***

v 27–30 “*Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*”

Paul couldn't always be with his spiritual children. But he earnestly desired that they would not change their manner or purpose of life (*conversation*) in his absence. Physical separation from parents is a gradual and normal part of a child's life. But *moral* separation of heart between parents and their children is not normal. In Proverbs we see the desire of the father's heart expressed in many touching ways: “My son, hear the instruction of thy father” (1:8), “My son, forget not my law” (3:1), “My son, keep my words” (7:1), etc. May we say with the Apostle John—“*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*” (3 Jn. 1:4).

Having *one spirit* is a wonderful family goal—parents and children walking in fellowship with each other. “Two are better than one. . . if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow. . . and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” (Ecc. 4:9-12).

Parents also must help their children realize that *living Godly* in this world will bring *persecution* (2 Tim. 3:12). Children will be able to endure such *conflict* if they observe that their parents experience the same in their life of faith, and press on without being discouraged.

## **Philippians Two: Christ, our Example for living**

### ***Comfort and love in a world of conflict***

▼ 1 *“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,”*

Having warned his children that there would be conflicts in the Christian pathway, Paul now sets before them a Divine and perfect *pattern* to follow in the midst of such difficulties—the Lord Jesus Christ. The comfort, fellowship and tender affections that ought to mark our families in a scene of conflict, are all found perfectly in Christ, through the Spirit.

### ***Pursuing the good of others***

▼ 2-4 *“Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”*

Displays of selfishness, pride, and contention are considered by some “experts” as a normal part of “child development”, but they are totally contrary to God’s Word. Paul entreats his spiritual children to show love towards each other, seeking unity, and in all humility, putting the good and welfare of parents, brothers and sisters, before self.

The apostle’s joy is presented as an encouragement to his children. We ought to present the same to our children, teaching them that their obedience brings the Lord’s heart and our hearts joy. It is important that parents encourage and cultivate this conduct through compliments and other positive reinforcements—i.e. “what you did, made me very happy, but most important, it pleased the Lord Jesus.” The world’s humanistic philosophy, always putting “me” and “my desires” first, has no place in a believer’s individual or family life.

### ***The Supreme Pattern for parents and children***

▼ 5 *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:”*

The Lord Jesus as a perfect Man presents the pattern for how children and families ought to function. All in the Christian home begins with having fellowship with the mind and thoughts of Christ.

### ***Humbled, serving and rewarded***

**v 6-8** “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

The Lord Jesus left the supreme place in heaven, willingly humbling Himself to the very lowest place, that others might be blessed. Beautiful and perfect pattern of service! A lovely, vitally important spirit to cultivate in our children—concern about the welfare and blessing of others. It was that which caused the “house of Stephanas” to addict “themselves to the ministry of the saints”. (1 Cor. 16:15). The spirit of service is totally contrary to the world’s spirit which considers immediate self gratification its primary object.

After humbling and serving, come rewards. Be willing to reward your children when they display this spirit of behavior. “*And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*” (Rev. 22:12).

### ***The best motives for obedience***

**v 12, 13** “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

**Love**—Notice carefully the way in which the apostle Paul presses upon his Philippian children obedience. And especially their obedience in view of his absence. He says, “*Wherefore my beloved*”. Paul’s deep love for his spiritual children—a love they were well aware of and could not deny—provides a powerful influence. Could they refuse such a love?

**Praise**—Further, Paul is able to praise their conduct—“as ye have always obeyed in my presence”. Don’t fail to praise the good and virtuous in children, whenever you have opportunity! You must require obedience from them—but how much happier for all, if that claim is nurtured by your positive support causing your children to realize that you not only demand, but also have joy in their obedience. (3 Jn. 4).

In a letter regarding encouraging children Mr. Darby wrote: “*Be to their virtues ever kind, and to their faults a little blind.*”

**Fear**—The Philippians’ obedience to Paul’s teaching would be

tested in his absence. The world's attitude towards obedience is flippant and scornful. Children must be encouraged to display a life of obedience in Godly fear and trembling—for disobedience to parents is sin against God.

**Purpose**—Children should also understand that obedience is necessary in order that God's intended purposes of blessing may be fully realized and enjoyed in their lives.

***“Please, obey”—two words that don't belong together***

Now notice another very important principle relating to obedience. The beloved apostle, though speaking with tenderness and affection, does not say “Wherefore my beloved, *please* obey in my absence”—nor do we read in God's Word, “Children *please* obey your parents in the Lord”.

Saying “please” makes obedience a matter of choice to the child, serving to develop naughty self-will. Of course there are times when it is appropriate for parents to say “please”—in order to teach children courtesy and respect. Saying to a child, “Sally, may I *please* have one of the cookies you baked today?” teaches the importance of politeness. However, saying to a child, “Sally, will you *please* do what I have asked and clean up the kitchen right now?” teaches self-will.

***The “spirit” of obedience is important too***

v 14 “*Do all things without murmurings and disputings:*”

We read that God loves a *cheerful* giver. No one enjoys a gift that is given grudgingly or a service rendered in a grudging manner. What husband could be satisfied with such a spirit displayed in the home, by a wife? What parent could be satisfied with such a spirit of obedience from a child?

What a beautiful spirit we see in Rebekah who, when asked by Abraham's servant for a drink of water *hasted* to grant his request, offering to draw water for his camels without being asked. She *ran* and *hasted* without murmuring or complaining—willingly doing even more than what had been requested.

Does it seem a daunting task to instill in your children a happy, uncomplaining spirit of obedience? Dad, what kind of spirit did your children see displayed the last time you complained about having that extra load of work your boss expects you to complete? Mom, what spirit did you display in front of your children when the parking

lot attendant wouldn't allow you to park so close to the store entrance? Don't expect your children to display attitudes they don't see displayed in you!

“. . . *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. . .*” (Gal. 5:22). “. . . *try the spirits whether they are of God:*” (1 Jn. 4:1)

### ***A good reputation***

▼ 15 “*That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;*”

All of us, including our children, quickly gain reputations—at work, in the neighborhood, at school, or in the family sphere. Reputations are normal—but for a believer, reputations valued by the world may not always be pleasing to God, nor are they to be sought after. A reputation as a shrewd, ruthless businessman, a fierce competitor with little pity, or a vindictive, demanding consumer may be valued in this world, but they have no place in the lives of Christians or their children.

Teach children (by example first and by words second) that *blamelessness* is a priceless reputation to gain—the only one morally suited to those who call themselves by that *worthy name* of Christ. How very happy and blessed the family circle where children are *harmless* in their conduct, giving no reason for *rebuke* from parents or others who observe them.

Also, the results of Godly examples set by older brothers and sisters in a family are immeasurable in their potential for good. Such Christ-like conduct also *preaches* a powerful gospel message to a world that won't listen to words.

“*A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.*” (Prov. 22:1).

### ***Selflessness in a selfish world***

▼ 19-21 “*But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man like minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*”

Believers are to “every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.” (Rom. 15:2). The example for such selfless conduct is our blessed Saviour Himself—“For even Christ pleased

not himself. . .” (Rom. 15:2, 3). The apostle instructed the Galatian believers to “bear one another’s burdens, and thus fulfil the law of the Christ.” (Gal. 6:2, JND). He certainly knew what selflessness was—“Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” (2 Cor. 11:28).

Here again we see the importance of parents *winning* the hearts of their children to themselves. When this is so, what interests and concerns dad and mom, will also be of interest and concern to the children.

Children need to learn early in life that though they are individually and deeply loved, something is more important than themselves. Focusing on the needs of others is a rare and valuable quality to develop. *Love one another* (Jn. 15:12), *prefer one another* (Rom. 12:10), *serve one another* (Gal. 5:13), *forgive one another* (Eph 4:32), *admonish one another* (Col 3:16), and *consider one another* (Heb. 10:24) are all precious results of that *natural care* which Timothy so beautifully displayed in his life.

#### ***Learning to “spend and be spent”***

v 27 “*For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.*”

Epaphroditus served the assembly and the apostle at great personal cost. He was willing to *lay down his life for the brethren*. Paul set the example he followed, by willingly spending and being spent in service for the Corinthians. (2 Cor. 12:15). However, these Scriptural examples will have little effect on children, if they do not see similar selfless service in action in the lives of their parents.

Along with setting an example, parents must help their children to learn to serve *intelligently*. Not every service that bears the name of “Christian” is suitable to the Lord’s honor and glory. Paul beseeches the Roman believers (and all believers) to “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your *intelligent service.*” (Rom. 12:2, JND).

#### ***Bearing responsibility***

v 29, 30 “*Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.*”



Man refuses to accept responsibility for the results of his wicked behavior. Today, the impunity with which he mistreats his fellow man, refusing to accept any responsibility for the pain and suffering he willingly inflicts, is a sad example. Such a wicked spirit may adversely affect the Christian home. It is true that for the Lord's servant, "to his own master he standeth or falleth." (Rom. 14:4). But that does not remove responsibility from the servant for his actions. "It is right not to eat meat, nor drink wine, nor do anything in which thy brother stumbles, or is offended, or is weak." (Rom. 14:21, JND) Concern for how our conduct affects others is an important concept to instill in children, and critically important for parents to display.

The Philippians' failure to serve the apostle was not due to a lack of Christian love or concern. Circumstances denied them that privilege. Thus Epaphroditus, in Divine love, bore that burden of service on their behalf, doing so at great cost to himself. Another has reminded us that "Every action has *present* and *eternal* consequences". It is good for children to learn early, that their actions or lack thereof, cause consequences which may have profound, lasting effects on others.

The Divinely perfect example is seen in the Lord Jesus who "... suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." (1 Pet.. 2:2-25). What solemn yet eternally precious consequences from His life! May we seek to emulate this Divine pattern of service in our finite measure.

### Philippians Three: Christ, our Reward for living

#### *Repeating and reminding*

**3:1** “*Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.*”

As a boy I often spent hours during the summertime riding my bike around our little town, or fishing in a river which was a few blocks from home. My dear parents repeatedly warned me to be careful. They set specific times when I was to be home. Much to my annoyance, they frequently repeated these directions and warnings. *Sometimes*, coupled with the constant warnings and reminders there was a *reward* given—used as an encouragement when I had listened and obeyed.

Great wisdom (Jas. 1:5) is needed for parents to know when to faithfully remind children of their instructions and warnings, and when to refrain from further remonstrance as seen in Acts 21:14—“And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.”

However, let us never forget that Satan ever seeks to lull Christian parents into accepting as a normal part of growing up, children’s impatience at such “reminders”. Such a spirit displayed in children should not be considered normal and certainly not of God. While it requires much prayerful communion with the Lord to know when it is *a time to keep silence, and a time to speak*. (Ecc. 3:7), reminding our children of that *good way wherein they should walk* (1 Ki. 8:36) is ever *safe* for them, and ought never be rendered in a tedious way.

A spirit of *joy in the Lord* insures that loving, gentle, and constant parental reminders to children will not seem to them as unnecessary, tedious or delivered in a berating spirit.

#### *The voice of children’s peers*

Satan, always withstanding the truth of God, constantly tries to get children to *throw out* their parents’ instruction. He often uses *peer pressure* telling them that their parents’ concerns and instructions are outmoded. We often hear something like, “your dad and mom just don’t understand what life is all about—they’re old fashioned and out of touch with reality”. In order to neutralize such false teaching, parents must practically apply Divine principles of Scrip-

ture to *current moral conditions* of this world. Seek the Lord's help to gain *an understanding of the times*. (see Jas. 1:5). And be sure to let all—even when demanding obedience—be done in the *loving, beseeching spirit* of Prov. 4:10—“Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.”

### ***The voice of music***

The enemy will also constantly entice children to *tune out* parental instruction through music. The amount and variety of this world's music available on radio, MTV, as well as CD players is incredible. It often has a mesmerizing effect on listeners and through it, Satan has an easy, effective channel by which to send his wicked messages.

The most startling display of this principle is seen in the history of Nebuchadnezzar, who set a golden idol (probably of himself) that was to be worshipped by all in his kingdom. The stimulus used to initiate this idolatrous worship was “. . . at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and *all kinds of musick*,” (Dan. 3:5).

While music may be used (and enjoyed) for real blessing and in praising the Lord, (1 Sam. 1:6, 2 Ki. 3:15, Eph. 5:19), always remember that *this world's* music was created after Cain *went out from the presence of the Lord*, in order to make him happy in his willing separation from God (Gen. 4:21).

### ***The voice of technology***

Satan can also use the exciting, ever-changing science and technology of our day to cause children to *drown out* parental guidance. Man, in alienation from God, is *ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth* (2 Tim. 3:7). This is true in natural as well as spiritual things. Almost on a daily basis, *old technology*—once considered brilliant—is discarded in favor of that which is new. Children's hearts (indeed, all of us!) can easily become caught up in all the excitement of this constant development and change.

Of course, technology used to alleviate suffering and improve living conditions through medicine, communications, industry, agriculture, etc. ought to be a cause of heartfelt thanksgiving to God. Comparatively few humans however, can adequately keep abreast of all these developments. And sadly, we see the increasing use of

technology for ungodly purposes. Man continues to display that he is wholly unable to *morally* control the very technologies he has created.

When an unbalanced and unrestrained passion for technology is allowed (or unwisely over-encouraged), communication between parents and children may become virtually impossible.

***Warnings always, explanations. . .sometimes***

v 2, 3 “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

Having gained the ear of children, parents have a wonderful opportunity to *warn* as well as *remind* them of the reasons for their instructions. While children’s obedience to parents never *depends* on giving reasons for obeying, there are times—such as Paul uses here with the Philippians—when *reminders* and *reasons* are important. He tells them to *beware* and then he explains *why*. When Jehovah commanded obedience from His people, the *reasons* and *consequences* are often given to them—but *not always*.

We see the proper *moral order* of this illustrated in the life of Joseph in Genesis 37:13, 14. “And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again.”

When Jacob requires obedience of Joseph, he gives no reason nor does Joseph request one. Their communications are beautiful and simple—“*come and I will send thee*”, the response, “*Here am I*”. It is *after* Joseph’s unquestioned submission to his father’s request, that Jacob then *explains* the reason for his request.

These principles are seen in perfection when God commands Abraham to offer up his Isaac. Not one word of explanation does God give (or does Abraham require). Afterwards, when Abraham has fully submitted, having been restrained from sacrificing Isaac, God *then* explains His reasons for why He had so commanded Abraham.

Ephesians 6:1-3 (JND) presents the principle in Divine clarity. “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord*” — unquestioned obedience is required. “*for this is just*” — the reason for obedience (righteousness before God) is given. “*Honour thy father and thy mother, which*

is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest be long-lived on the earth.”—the happy results of obedience are presented after the responsibility to obey is commanded.

***An infinitely better prize***

v 7, 8 “*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,*”

Though Paul had much to glory in as a Jew, he had learned that Christ was not only the *object* and *pattern* for his life, but the supreme *prize* to be gained in life. All that might naturally be valued in this life, was to him worthless in comparison to the incomparable Christ. It is good for children to learn early that nothing in life is equal to Christ. But remember it is *children* that are learning that lesson and learning this critically important lesson will take time, even as it did with Paul (and with those who are parents). “*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. . .*” (1Cor. 13:11).

Children will best learn that nothing can serve as a substitute for the Lord Jesus, if they see that nothing displaces Him in their parent’s life. “*That we henceforth be no more children,. . . But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*” (Eph. 4:14, 15).

***The importance of taking—and of giving***

Teaching children to value Christ above all else, requires that at times parents will have to deny certain things—activities, entertainments, toys, etc.—to them. When this happens, it is vital that those things are replaced with something *better*.

It is wonderful when parents desire to replace the world in their children’s hearts with Christ. But make sure it is the *world* and not *nature* that you are seeking to replace. God has created man as a *three part* being—spirit, soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23). Parents must not fail to minister to the needs of their children in each of these spheres. For example, enjoying family Bible readings is of the *spiritual*, loving children and teaching them to love, is of the *soul*, while enjoying activities, games and hobbies with them is of the *body*.



The book of Hebrews illustrates this principle. In it, Jewish believers (and all believers) were taught that God was replacing all that they enjoyed in Judasim with that which was *better* by faith in Christ. If something is *denied* to children in order to draw their hearts to the Lord, but nothing *better* is given to replace it, the child will begin to look at Christianity as a negative, hard and empty path to follow.

***Developing their abilities or creating weights***

Everything that Paul gained in the flesh, in the privileged position as an Israelite, was of no value to him in gaining Christ. He found that all his developed abilities and privileged position were merely *weights* that held him back from gaining the supreme Reward and Goal in his life.

While children's abilities and talents must not be *over-looked*, neither should parents allow them to be *over-emphasized*. Sometimes, parental pride unwisely encourages children to develop God given talents in ways which can only benefit the world. A dear brother used to say in reference to how such abilities and talents were used: "Is it a wing or a weight?"

Aholiab and Bezaleel were *cunning* engravers and embroiderers. David was a *cunning* player on the harp, Hiram a *cunning* worker in brass, Daniel and his three friends were *cunning* in knowledge. All of these had special talents and abilities that were used to serve God and His people. The Bible has many other examples of those whose special abilities were used for the Lord's glory. Parents do well to spend time prayerfully and carefully encouraging those abilities in their children which may be used in service for the Lord and blessing to His assembly.

***The real Goal is not found in this world***

As parents seek to guide and direct children it is vital to place before them a proper goal and prize. But the reward and goal of Christian life—Christ in glory—is not found in the horizon of this world. Its promises of prosperity, prominence, security, etc. have no value as motivation for walking the path of faith. The world urges each one to pursue a *calling*—one which will satisfy the individual and benefit the world. Christians have an infinitely more precious and glorious calling—*one which parents must embrace for themselves, before seeking to direct their children to pursue that blessed calling.*

### ***A proper perspective***

v 13 “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,”

Poor Lot’s wife! She did not want to *forget* the things that were behind. She turned back from the path of faith to what her heart really craved, and lost everything including her life. How vital that children’s hearts be guarded from becoming attached to this world! Otherwise, having begun to put their *hand to the plough*, the time will come when children will *look back* on that which they have never really left in heart. It is easy to quote 1 Tim. 6:7, “*For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*” —far more difficult to live it and teach it to our children. The *pilgrim spirit* is vital!

### ***Standards that don’t change***

v 16 “Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”

Setting proper Christian standards according to the Word of God is crucial for children. However, once those standards have been set, be careful that you not allow them to be changed to accommodate the ways and morals of a changing world. Doing so will surely teach children that popularity, position, wealth, convenience—whatever man determines is right in his eyes—are all appropriate reasons to change Divine standards found in the Word of God.

“*For I am the LORD, I change not;*” (Mal. 3:6).

### ***No favoritism***

Parents who show special deference to one child over others, are working ruin in their family. Consider the solemn record given of Isaac and Rebekah in Genesis 25:28: “*And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of [his] venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.*” What ruin, unhappiness, and even hatred such unwise favoritism shown by a father and a mother brought into this dear family! Sometimes one child’s qualities or temperament may be especially endearing to one or both parents. But each child is unique and should be nurtured and disciplined in unfeigned love. Parents must use *equal weights and balances* in dealing with children, remembering that each child of God is loved with a Divine, unchanging and infinite personal love.

“The Son of God who loved *me...*” (Gal. 2:20).

### ***Being an example***

v 17 “*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*”

The importance and lasting effects of parental example are beyond measure. As mentioned earlier, the world has role models to present to children—but they are godless, corrupt, immoral or violent. Remember, dad and mom, you are *role models* for your children. The companions your children choose for life will be influenced—positively or negatively—by the examples you have set for them.

### ***Warning without gossiping***

v 18, 19 “*(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)*”

If parents display a critical spirit towards others, as well as a gossiping tongue about the shortcomings of their brethren, terrible damage to the tender hearts of children will result. On the other hand, parents do need to be clear and open concerning those habits and manners of life that are not pleasing to the Lord. The *spirit* in which this is done is of all importance. Paul wept for the dishonor done to the name of Christ, even as he warned his beloved Philippian children of these enemies.

### ***It's going to get better***

v 20, 21 “*For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*”

The world teaches that this life is “all there is”. Nothing that holds the promise of fleeting carnal pleasures is forbidden. “Indulge!”, it cries, “*for tomorrow we die*”. Parents! diligently teach your children from early years that this is not the end—there is something far more wonderful and glorious coming and that our lives ought to be lived in view of coming day.

Man's indulgent, humanistic philosophies which constantly encourage the search for self gratification all are marked by one chief demand—*NOW!* He demands satisfaction at the *push of a button*,



refusing to think of the future, willing to trade eternity for present, immediate pleasure. While the world fills children's minds with fiction, fantasy and fairy tales promising immediate pleasure and endless futures, Christian parents, mindful that all in this scene will *pass away* (Matt. 24:35), must order the home environment according to that coming day when all will be like and pleasing to the Lord Jesus. How vital that our lambs learn that giving up in this world to gain in the one to come, is the truly happy and blessed path.

*“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”* (Jn. 12:25.)

## Philippians Four: Christ, the Power for living

### *Assurances of love*

v 1 “*Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.*”

It is love for Christ which gives believers the desire to *stand fast in the Lord*. Paul’s heart of love for the Philippians overflows as he beseeches them to not give up in the path of faith. As noted earlier, how could they refuse such constraining love?

Encouraging children to hold fast to that which they have been taught—to not give up those Divine precepts—will be much more effective when coupled with like assurances of *parental* love and affection .

Constant reminders of the Lord’s love and parental love will serve as a wonderful motivation for children to stand fast in the Lord. We doubt that parents could ever *too often* tell their children that “We love you. You are very special to us”. May our children always enjoy the confidence of knowing that they are *dearly beloved* to us. When this is so, the following desire will carry real weight when expressed to them: “*My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother*”. (Prov. 6:20).

### *Family unity*

v 2 “*I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.*”

The value of family oneness and unity in Christ is beyond price. But if it be not *Christian* unity (which unity we are to *endeavor to keep*), it is of little worth. Simeon and Levi were *united* as brethren in their violence. This *unity* grieved the heart of their father Jacob who said, “unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united. . . Cursed be their anger”. (Gen. 49: 6, 7).

We often speak of the importance of maintaining the *unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph. 4:3) in the assembly. Are we seeking diligently to see that same spirit of unity kept in our families? If there is no *uniting bond of peace* in families, there will be little of that spirit reflected in the assembly.

“*Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*” (Psa. 133:1).



***Care for others—personal rejoicing***

v 3, 4 “*And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.*”

A loving concern for their brethren and seeking to *do good unto all men* (Gal. 6:10) is another of the vital *Christian graces* parents must develop in children. But even more important is attaching their hearts to the servants of Christ who minister among the saints and the lost. In doing this, even little children will experience true rejoicing. But as always, such a spirit is most effectively developed in them if it is working effectively in their parents. If children see exhibited in their parents a grudging, complaining spirit when called upon to help others, or if they see them display reluctance in serving other believers, they too will quickly lose interest in ministering to the brethren. “*God loveth a cheerful giver*” (2 Cor. 9:7), “*by love, serve. . .*” (Gal. 5:13).

***Physical and emotional gentleness***

v 5 “*Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.*”

In the JND translation this is rendered “*Let your gentleness be known. . .*”. Every facet of children’s lives and interaction with others inside and outside the family circle ought to be characterized by *gentleness*—gentleness in words, work, play—in *all* family interactions with one another. But remember again, children must see gentleness displayed in their parents.

***Being gentle parents***

Before speaking of the importance of developing gentleness in children, one would beseech parents to see to it that every action of their own lives—individually and within the family sphere—is marked by *gentleness*. This is especially important when commanding obedience. Harshly spoken parental commands are far too easy to speak, far too dangerous to allow, and far too damaging to use. Emphasizing the importance of parental commands by raising voices, or by allowing spoken words to sound angry or frustrated—worse yet, by yelling at children—teaches them a deadly lesson.

In such an environment, children quickly learn to respond only to parental anger, harshness or frustration. Unless dad or mom

*sounds* angry, children see no reason to listen. Thus the vital quality of parental love in child discipline is lost, and children learn that parental anger and frustration is to be expected as normal in matters of obedience. Sadly, they soon learn that obedience is only necessary when dad and mom are angry. Oh! dad and mom, be gentle!

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, . . .”* (Gal 5:22) *“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.”* (1 Th. 2:7). *“Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. . .”* (2 Cor. 10:1).

### ***Being gentle children***

In the world children are increasingly taught to interact with one another through rough talk and unseemly physical contact. The reasoning that such conduct is a normal, healthy part of childhood is a lie of Satan. Much of this violent activity has developed from the unwise over-emphasis placed on organized school and professional sports which are by nature often violent and often connected with gross immorality. *“Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”* (1 Cor. 10:7).

The Word of God clearly tells us that *bodily exercise profiteth for a little* (or *for a little time*). (1 Tim. 4:8). Physical exercise is good, violence is not. There are many kinds of wholesome physical activities which families—children and parents—may enjoy without encouraging them to engage in physically violent, unbecoming, or morally unseemly conduct.

Ever remember that it is the *power* of Christ which enables His own to live manifesting gentleness in a world characterized by corruption, unseemly physical contact and violence.

### ***Dangerous physical contact***

An especially dangerous tendency in the present culture has emerged in recent years, having its roots in the *feminist—equal rights* movement. This morally destructive spirit actively encourages young girls to *compete* (through physically rough contact as well as all other areas of life) with boys. We would beseech Christian parents to be especially careful of this evil influence. *“. . . also that the women in decent deportment and dress adorn themselves with modesty and discretion”* (2 Tim. 2:9, JND). *“. . . it is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. So*

*she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz. . .” (Ruth 2:22, 23).*

It is so important to teach children early in life, that there exists specific, clear boundaries of Godly propriety in their contact with members of the opposite sex. These boundaries, meant to control the way in which boys and girls interact with each other, are vital for God has ordained unique and different spheres of life for the male and female.

Rough or otherwise unseemly physical contact and harsh language should never be allowed—not between brothers and sisters and not between playmates. To allow such, flies in the face of the principles of the Word of God. *“It is good for a man not to touch a woman”*. (1 Cor. 7:1). *“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt. . .”* (Col. 4:6).

There are, as we have said, a wide variety of healthy and appropriate physical activities that children can be encouraged to enjoy by watchful Christian parents. Remember that our blessed Lord Jesus as a Babe, a Boy, a Young Man, and a Man was *holy, harmless, and undefiled*. What a wonderful example for parents to present to their beloved little ones as they seek to mold them into gentle, undefiled God-fearing children.

### ***Home—a friendly or fearful place?***

**v 6** *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”*

A spirit of fear, anxiety or constant tension allowed in the home creates harmful, lasting effects in the lives of children. We have an unending resource of strength and provision in our blessed God. Not a hair of our heads is unimportant to Him, and He is pure, Divine love—always doing *exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think*. (Eph. 3:20). Let parents be diligent to instill in their children at an early age, faith and confidence in our blessed God—His grace and love.

We need to be aware of the great (and sometimes permanent damage) that can be done to the tender minds of children, if they are raised in a family atmosphere of constant tension, anxiety and stress. We would warn parents to keep from displaying or allowing such a spirit in the home.

Gathering the family together to pray about concerns and trials in calm confidence before God is a wonderful, blessed experience for

children. Parental peace and confidence in the face of difficulties is vital, effectively teaching children that: “*I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.*”

### ***Striving for peace***

▼ 7 “*And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*”

Through the redeeming work of our blessed Lord and Saviour we have peace with God. (Rom. 5:1). Thus, Christian homes and family relationships ought always to be marked by *peace*—never by strife. What sad accounts we have in the Word of some families of saints of God who created or allowed strife and turmoil among their children. Peace doesn’t just happen. Peace must be cultivated continually, first individually in the lives of parents, then in the home and family.

The first boy born in this world, Cain, murdered his brother in a fit of jealous rage. Esau planned to kill his younger brother Jacob, after Jacob had deceitfully stolen Esau’s birthright at his mother’s direction. Joseph, so loved by his father, was *hated* by his brothers, who sold him into slavery in Egypt. The history of some of David’s children such as Absalom, Amnon, and Tamar is exceedingly sad to read. Yet, all of these accounts (and many more) are recorded in Divine Inspiration *for our learning* (Rom. 15:4) that our families might not have to suffer the awful results of such unrestrained strife, anger, and envy.

Dad and mom! always be at peace with each other, and prayerfully, diligently teach your children to ever *follow things which make for peace*. (Rom. 14:19).

### ***Practicing purity***

▼ 8, 9 “*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*”

If one were asked to provide a single Biblical *rule* for effective parenting it would be difficult to quote a better passage than these two verses. The principles contained in them are so plain as to need little comment.

But specially notice, how Paul connects the example of his life with that which is honest, just, pure, etc. So often we as parents fail, not so much in reading the Word to our children, but failing in being diligent to *live* our lives according to the tenor of the Divine words we read and teach them.

Dishonesty, impurity, evil reports, lack of virtue—diligent Christian parents naturally zealously guard their home from such influences which would mar and defile the family atmosphere. However, parents may not always realize how loudly habits, words, and actions speak to the precious lambs that God has given to them—especially when such actions contradict the words being spoken.

Dear parents! seek grace and humility before God to *live* before your children consistent with the Word of God and with what your children hear you say. Never allow words or conduct in your life that are not in full harmony with the Word of God!

A home marked by an atmosphere of Godliness, with parents whose lives set an example of holiness and reverence, will result in children having a real sense of His presence as *the God of peace*. How happy the home that is marked by such peace!

***Satisfied with more and satisfied with less***

v 10–12 “*But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*”

Teaching children to be content is vital if they are to enjoy happy, fulfilled lives—and vital as well to experiencing happy, peaceful homes. In the world in which many of us live, where material wealth and possessions are easily gained, learning to be content with little—learning to do with less or without—is a task that requires power which can be found alone in Christ.

The Apostle could be full or suffer want—it made no difference to him. He was not seeking to please *self*, but to please His Lord. Being *full* did not cause him to covet when he was in want, and being in *want* did not cause him to expend his energies seeking to gain what he lacked materially. The strength and power of Christ gave

him all that was needed to be satisfied and serve acceptably in each circumstance of his life.

*“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”* (1 Tim. 6:6). “. . . *the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;*” (1 Tim. 6:17). “*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*” (Rom. 8:32).

### ***Strong weakness***

v 13 *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”*

In a world marked by a frantic quest for *power*, multitudes of godless philosophies and schemes to find, gain and wield power are proposed. Some teach that “knowledge is power”, others, “riches are power”, while others say “liberty is power”. Whatever the philosophy, children are taught that the *strong* win and survive, while the *weak* lose and perish. They learn to look within themselves, relying on their own intelligence and force of will, as resources to live successfully and happily. They constantly hear that strength to overcome life’s obstacles is found within self. Reliance on *self* is placed in direct opposition to dependence on *God*, and is ruinous to Christian growth.

Divine truth concerning strength and power is beautifully presented in Hannah’s song found in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Towards the end of this doxology of praise she says: “*He will keep the feet of his saints. . . for by strength shall no man prevail.*”

Boys especially are targets of the world’s emphasis on power and strength (girls are more marked as objects of lust and seduction). Through numerous means (such as entertainment, sports and advertising) physical strength is glorified. But strength needed to live in dependence on God, is ridiculed as being an unacceptable sign of weakness in men.

Paul rebukes the worldly-minded Corinthian believers (2 Cor. 10:10) because they had adopted the world’s view and value of strength, finding fault with the beloved Apostle because “*his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.*” Yet, except for the blessed God-Man, Jesus, perhaps there was no other as strong and fearless in his faith, as the Apostle Paul (see 2 Cor. 11:23-33). On the Damascus road he had met One who was infinite in power and love. In the strength of that glorious omnipotent Christ, Paul found he

could indeed do *all things*.

How important for children to learn this lesson in a world marked by self-will and self-pleasing. Christian parents have the wonderful privilege of teaching their children that the *strength* of Christ will enable them *to refuse the evil, and choose the good* (Isa. 7:15), in a scene which uses the power it gains to willingly run to *the sink of corruption*. (1 Pet. 4:4 JND).

### ***Rewards for others***

v 17 “*Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.*”

The apostle had commended the Philippian believers for materially providing for his needs. But it was not *his material comfort* that caused this commendation. He desired they might have the joy of producing fruit that would have its sure reward *for them*, in a coming day of glory.

This vital principle—seeking the good of others before self—is entirely at odds with the cravings of the flesh. As in all things, our Lord’s life provides the perfect example for He *did not please himself*. By the example of His perfect life of service, children learn that believers are *not to please ourselves*, but to *please his neighbour*. . . (Rom. 15:1-3 JND).

In an environment where parents by Godly wisdom, minister to the family in the spirit of *laying up for the children* (2 Cor. 12:14), their lambs will find deep joy in learning to serve others—in thinking of others first.

“*For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give. . .*” (Mk. 10:45).

### ***God first***

v 18 “*But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.*”

The gift of love Epaphroditus brought to Paul from his beloved Philippian children no doubt caused him deep joy as well as practical comfort. But the highest evaluation he gives it is that it was *well pleasing to God*.

Sometimes we see a car bumper sticker with a school name reading, “My son (or daughter) is an honor student”. Such parental satisfaction with the reward that their child’s diligent hard work has

earned is understandable. But children's actions that are *acceptable, well pleasing to God* ought always to be the chief reason for Christian parental joy and satisfaction.

*"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord". (Col. 3:23).*

### ***Promised supplies***

**v 19** *"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."*

In chapter 2 we mentioned the great importance of parents making a difference between providing their children with things they *need* and trying to give them everything they *want*.

Here this Divine principle is presented simply and in wonderful clarity and power. God has made a promise to His dear children. He will unfailingly supply their *every need*. And He Who is infinite in wisdom and love, always and perfectly knows the difference between the *needs* and the *wants* of His children—knows what is best for them and when to give to them.

Then too, our wonderful God and Father ever invites His beloved children into His presence—at all times—to make our *requests known*. (Phil. 4:6, Heb. 4:16). Though we often are not intelligent in the expression of our desires, there is the sweet confidence of knowing that at every moment we are welcome to pour out those desires in His blessed presence.

In like manner our dear children ought to know that they are ever and always welcome to come at all times into our presence (and are encouraged to do so) to express their desires, wants and concerns, however little or insignificant they may seem. If parents have diligently developed a relationship of love and trust with their children, there will be ready acceptance of a parental "no" or "not now", expressed as happily as receiving the answer "yes". Trust and confidence in parents gives children the wonderful assurance that dad and mom really do know what is best for them.

### ***The most important element in parenting***

**v 23** *"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."*

And so Paul—the *spiritual father*—brings to a close (as inspired by the Spirit of God) this letter to his dear Philippian children in the faith. In all that he has written to them, in all of the Divine instruction he was inspired to give to them, the final seal on its being made good in the many and varied circumstances of life they would meet,



is summed up in the precious word *grace*. And this grace is Divine for it is the *grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*. With His Divine grace attending their ways and all that they would meet with in life, they would find victory, joy, blessing and satisfaction—children in God’s family who were blessed exceedingly in all their ways, beyond that which they *could ask or think*. It should be so with Christian families (indeed with all believers) today.

May the spirit of *grace*, the grace of our blessed Lord Jesus, mark every facet of Christian homes and parent–child relationships. *Grace* in living and raising children for God’s glory is vitally important and absolutely necessary. Without prayerfully seeking fresh daily supplies of Divine grace, (*He giveth more grace—Jas. 4:6*) Christian parents raising children in this dark, godless world will find themselves powerless to preserve their precious lambs from the violence of the enemy—coming at times as an *angel of light*, at others as a *roaring lion*.

“*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.*” (2 Cor. 9:8).

“*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*” (2 Cor. 12:9).

“*Thou therefore. . . be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*” (2 Tim. 2:1).

“*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*” (Heb. 4:16).



### *In closing*

I remember realizing from the time our sons were very small, that an awful, implacable foe had arrayed himself against our family—the same wicked foe who motivated Pharaoh and Herod to destroy those precious little ones of God’s beloved people. His intention is the same today—to devastate the potential spiritual strength (boys) and fruitfulness (girls) of Christian families by seeking to destroy our children.

No doubt many a dear Christian parent has found special passages which have been used by the Spirit of God to provide a sense of sweet comfort. My wife and I were specially fond of the prayer of the Lord Jesus to His Father in John 17:15. “*I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from evil.*” He was leaving those He loved in a world that hated Him and them. He prayed in perfect Divine communion and intelligence with the Father, not that those He loved would be taken away from the evil, but would be kept and protected in the midst of it—from its influences and effects.

He knew in perfection what each of His precious blood bought children would have to face in this scene of His rejection. Yet, in perfect love and confidence, He commits those He loved *and gave Himself for*, to the Father’s care. We know that our precious Saviour has promised to *never leave or forsake* us, thus parents may experience sweet peace knowing that “*greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*” (1 Jn. 4:4). What an infinite resource Christian parents have, and what a solemn responsibility!

Thus it is, with the earnest prayer and heartfelt desire that these thoughts may be used in blessing for Christian families, this little meditation is closed with the words of the beloved apostle to the Ephesian elders: “*And now I commit you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up. . .*” (Acts 20:32).

### *Epilogue—What about physical discipline?*

I want to add a few brief comments on the vitally important issue of administering physical punishment (such as spanking) to children. In view of the spirit of this present world, this subject requires earnest and diligent parental prayer, seeking His guidance and wisdom.

We are witnessing a vast worldwide movement which in many lands has resulted in the enactment of laws forbidding parents to administer any kind of *physical* punishment to their children. As seen with other social movements of the past 3 or 4 decades, such laws undermine God established headship and authority.

Does this mean then that Christian parents—seeking to be subject to the *higher powers* (Rom. 13:1)—may no longer administer Biblically directed physical punishment to their children when needed? Of course not! for we ought to *obey God* rather than man. (Acts 5:29) The Word of God is plain on this critically important subject. “Withhold *not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.*” (Prov. 23:13, 14) From these verses we learn that physical chastisement, if applied when necessary and in the right spirit, can bring real happiness and blessing into our beloved childrens’ lives.

In the New Testament the Apostle Paul asks his beloved though disobedient spiritual children in Corinth, “What will ye? that I come to you with *a rod*; or in love, and in a spirit of meekness?” (1 Cor. 4:21). The *rod* symbolizes a severe, solemn chastisement. But we also learn by his warning in *spiritual* things, that the *rod* was evidently a normal method of administering punishment in *natural* things.

The present world is so hardened to violence and corruption that the words *rod* and *beat* imply significantly different thoughts than they were understood to mean in Biblical times. When used then as a object to administer *needed* chastisement, a *rod* often seems to suggest the thought of a *branch*—more in keeping with what we understand when speaking of a *switch* or similar object. At times however, it symbolized God’s dealing with man in a most solemn, severe manner (see Psa. 2:9, Rev. 2:27, 12:5, 19:15). Whatever a *rod* was understood to mean, it was one way—an accepted way—in which physical chastisement was administered when disobedience called for such punishment. Since this instruction is Divine, and our God has not changed (Mal. 3:6), we may rest assured that He has not

changed His principles concerning the vital issue of such discipline for children.

But dear parents! be careful of the way in which you use your hands to administer physical chastisement. The hands of the Lord Jesus were used to dispense blessing in Divine love—the hands of man were used to strike the Son of God in mockery and contempt. This is not to suggest that the hands should never be used to administer physical punishment, but Oh! dear parents, be very, very careful! Remember, it is a *rod* rather than a *hand* which in Proverbs.

#### ***Administering chastisement in the right spirit***

Punishing a child should always be a matter of humbling and grief to parents. Do prayerfully consider the possibility that the necessity to punish your child may suggest some failure or lack of watchfulness in your parental responsibilities. Let us not forget the sad but instructive history recorded in Judges 19–21. Too often parents may act in the spirit of the 11 tribes in Judges 19 who, anxious to punish the erring tribe of Benjamin, seem to have had no thought of their own need of being properly humbled concerning their part in that horrible sin. Only after the 11 tribes were broken and weeping before Jehovah about the failure that had come in among *them all*, did God judge the tribe of Benjamin for the awful wickedness they had defended. Let dear parents always *walk softly*, with tender consciences, seeking the Lord's mind as to what circumstances have brought about the need for chastisement of a child.

*Never*—we cannot too strongly emphasize the word—*never* should correction or chastisement of any kind be administered in a spirit of parental self righteousness, frustration, or exasperation. Too often the world has observed children horribly abused—both emotionally and physically. Christian parents—for the sake of honoring and glorifying our Lord and for the sake of their children—must be ever careful of the spirit in which they administer correction to their beloved lambs.

#### ***Administering chastisement in private***

Because of the current level of awareness and disapproval in the world of any kind of physical punishment for children, we encourage parents to be *very careful* that they administer needed chastisement *in private* whenever possible. Doing so in public may give occasion for government authorities to become involved in something

which ought to be kept between parents and children.

It is not, however, primarily fear of the world that encourages such *covering* or *hiding* when chastisement of our children is necessary. *Biblical* principles clearly show us that (Prov. 10:12 and 17:9) the motive for *hiding sins* is not fear of man (which brings a snare—Prov. 29:25), but *love* that *covers*.

“. . . *having fervent love. . . because love covers a multitude of sins*” (1Pet. 4:7, 8, JND)

“*let him know that he that brings back a sinner from the error of his way shall. . . cover a multitude of sins.*” (Jas. 5:20, JND)

In 2 Sam.1 we read of King Saul’s death—the result of God’s judgement on his sin and rebellion. Yet when David learns of the death of Saul and Jonathan, he and his men weep in sorrow. In his touching lamentation, David says “*Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.*” While fully submitting to God’s righteous dealings, David’s desire was that Saul’s failure and judgment would be *hidden* from the world. This lovely *principle* ought always to characterize parents’ when chastising their children.

Also we read that Ham saw the *nakedness* of his father, when Noah had become drunken (Gen. 9:20-29). Rather than *covering* (hiding) his father’s sin, he publicized it—and a solemn curse was pronounced on his son (Canaan) as a result. Oh! dear parents we earnestly beseech you to seek every means possible to keep from making the chastising of your children a matter of public display!

One also feels, that if administered only when necessary, and in a proper spirit, physical punishment may, happily, be needed very infrequently. As children grow older, the time comes when physical punishment is inappropriate. Our blessed God will grant needed wisdom in each individual case (Jas. 1:5).

God grant that dear Christian parents in these dark days and perilous times be *wise as serpents* and *harmless as doves*. But ever remember Moses’ parents, Amram and Jochebed, who raised their son—indeed, all three of their children—in the fear of God and in the very worst imaginable times, for *they were not afraid of the king’s commandment*.

L. D. N.



