

Fill the Children First

“...*Jesus said...Let the children first be filled:*” (Mark 7:27).

In view of the morally corrupt and spiritually dark day in which we live, it is our prayer and desire that the following editorial may, by God’s grace, be used in stirring up afresh the hearts of dear believers who may read this—specially those of parents and grandparents (and great grand-parents as well!).

A Special Target of the Enemy

Christian children and young people increasingly have become, we believe, a special target of Satan in His desire to destroy souls and corrupt lives. What careful and extreme vigilance is required by Christian parents—and we may say also, what a need for that spirit of prayer we read of in James 5:16 (JND Trans); “*The fervent supplication of the righteous man has much power*”. Perhaps never in the history of our North American lands has this kind earnest combatting in prayer been more necessary than today.

We may read of the wicked Pharaoh who sought to kill all of the baby boys born to God’s dear people in Egypt (Exodus 1). Again we can read of the wicked Herod’s slaughter of infant boys in the coasts of Bethlehem Judea in the days when our blessed Saviour—God manifest in flesh—was born into this world (Matt.2:16-18). These are but two examples of the lengths to which Satan will seek to go to turn the children of Christian parents aside from the path of faith—the unceasing effort he will make to destroy the children of Christian parents.

Special Help for Christian Parents

The Word of God is replete with precious principles that, if believed and obeyed by Christian parents, will provide protection, comfort, and safety for their beloved children. The verse quoted at the beginning of this editorial is but one of innumerable passages which provide such guidance and help in these dark days of danger and need.

“*Let the children first be filled*”. What a wonderful and yet simple principle the Spirit of God records here for parents to use as a guide in caring for their beloved children and protecting them from Satan’s attacks!

Its importance is magnified when we consider the circumstances which brought forth these Divine words from the Saviour. A Gentile mother with no right to Israel’s blessings presented herself to the Lord with a

desperate need—a need which perhaps a mother most deeply would feel. Her daughter was grievously vexed with a devil. No love in nature is greater than a mother’s love and so we can well imagine the earnest, heartfelt pleading of this mother for her child. Nor was the blessed Lord Jesus insensitive to her heart’s feelings He had created. Few circumstances would seem more urgent and pressing on His love than the deliverance of a helpless child from the power of Satan. Yet in the presence of such need, the only One with power to deliver the child of this poor outcast from Satan’s bondage, teaches us that there is something even more important—the children must first be filled.

The blessed Saviour did not disappoint the dear Gentile mother’s faith—her daughter was healed. But His words provide such a vitally important principle for Christian parents raising children today!

Our Heritage

Our children are “*an heritage of the Lord*”! So priceless is this heritage that they require the *first place* of care and nurturing in Christian homes. This does not mean Christians should not care for others, for the world through which we pass is a scene filled with tremendous needs. But Dad and Mom, your children must come first—they must be filled first!

Believers are exhorted, for example, to “*bear ye one another’s burdens*” (Gal.6:2) and to “*remember the poor*” (Gal.2:10). The church which is so precious to the heart of Christ, is ever presented as fully worthy of our service—consider the lovely example of “*the house of Stephanas*” (1 Cor.16:15).

Struggling believers, our unsaved neighbors and workmates, those in need of the very staples of food and clothing to survive—surely all of these (and more) have great and vitally important needs. Yet in the midst of such pressing and innumerable needs we hear our blessed Lord Jesus’ words for parents; “*Let the children first be filled.*” Dear Dad and Mom, your children are that wonderful heritage given you by the Lord and they are the first, most precious, and most important need which requires your daily, fervent godly care.

See that you diligently and prayerfully *fill* your children first—they have *natural needs* which need to be filled. Do you think the world will do a better job *filling* your children with what it offers than you can do filling them by the wisdom of God? They also have *spiritual needs* which you must daily fill. Do you think that Satan, the prince of this world that hates your Sav-

your, hates you and hates your children, will present anything which will bring spiritual blessing to them? Be sober and much in prayer before the Lord that you might be given the daily wisdom and energy to *fill the children first!*

A Solemn Example

The book of Nehemiah presents a solemn warning to parents, showing the danger of becoming occupied with other things, which though important, cause neglect of meeting our children's needs.

“...*And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabeel...*” (Neh. 3:4). The account of the rebuilding of the wall in Jerusalem marks a wonderful time of restoration in the history of the people of God. Those whose hearts had stirred them to return were occupied with the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem; surely a most worthy occupation! The very fact that the Spirit of God has been pleased to record the names of those who worked on the wall would indicate the value God placed on their efforts. Among these we read of ‘Meshullam’. Though there were evidently several different men who bore that name, one in particular stands out as a most solemn warning to parents to be sure that their children are ‘filled’ before they occupy themselves with other things—as pressing and important as those things might be.

Good Work With Bad Results

The particular man named Meshullam we are interested in following was the son of Berechiah (“*Jehovah blesses*”), the son of Meshezabeel (“*God delivers*”). What a rich, wonderful heritage was passed to Meshullam by his father and grandfather! Meshullam was occupied in a good work by helping in rebuilding the city of David (Jerusalem), God's center and the nation of Israel's center.

Meshullam however, in all of his zeal for the Lord seems to have forgotten something; “*After them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against his chamber*” (Neh.3:30). Though he repaired the wall, his work was ‘*over against his chamber*’.

Meshullam had children—but we don't read that he repaired where his family lived. Later in Nehemiah we find Meshullam's daughter is married to the son of Tobiah, one of the most bitter enemies of the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem!

Poor Meshullam! He evidently did not insure that his children were filled and satisfied with what they needed that only he as their father could supply. Though he bus-

ied himself in a good work, his failure to see *first* to the *needs* of his children seems to have been the cause of losing his daughter to the enemy.

It is also a sobering thing to note that the name “Meshullam” means “friend”. Meshullam was indeed a friend and he proved his friendship by his labor. But he was a friend of others before he was a friend of his daughter. And he certainly *was not careful* about who he developed friendships with! Others were filled with the efforts of his labor before he was able to fill his daughter with that which she personally needed. His careless friendship and careless parenting cost him his daughter. Perhaps she found in the family of the enemy of God's people the very emotional support and interest that her father did not take time to give her.

Important Needs First

Dear Dads and Moms! See to it that you daily are before the Lord seeking the wisdom needed to “*fill the children first*” that they not slide into the world, for it will certainly show them the interest and support—though defiled—that parents may fail to give them! And above all else, *fill them with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for them*—His love displayed in each detail of their daily lives. Fill them with Christ!!

In closing, let's remember the words of the bride in the Song of Solomon who laments; “*They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept*” (SS.1:6). Parents, carefully guard that *precious vineyard* God has given you to oversee before you become the *keeper of other vineyards* (your *vineyard* is your children and home—that which ought to produce natural and spiritual joy and delight)! “*Let the children first be filled*”.

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