

## **The Duties of Parents to Their Children**

By [Cotton Mather](#)

*I know him, That he will command his Children And his Household after him, And they shall keep the way of the Lord. Gen. 18:19*

As the Great God, who at the Beginning said, Let Us make man after our Image, hath made man a Sociable creature, so it is evident, That Families are the Nurseries of all Societies; and the First combinations of mankind. Well-ordered Families naturally produce a Good Order in other Societies. When Families are under an ill Discipline, all other Societies being therefore ill Disciplined, will feel that Error in the First Concoction.

To Serve the Families of our Neighborhood, will be a Service to all our Interests. Every serious Christian is concerned, That he may be Serviceable in the World; And many a serious Christian is concerned, because he sees himself to be furnished with no more Opportunities to be Serviceable.

But art thou not a Member of some Family? If that Family may by thy means, O Christian, become a Well-regulated Family, in that point thou wilt become Serviceable; I had almost said, Incomprehensibly Serviceable.

They that have the Government of some Family, do make up no Little part of this Great Assembly. And, Sirs, are there any of you, that would forfeit that Honorable Title, of all the Faithful, The Children of Abraham? Give your Attention, ye Children of Abraham, while I set before you, the Example of your Father for your imitation.

Our Glorious Lord-Messiah, is here going to Communicate unto Abraham some of His Heavenly Counsels. And we have a Text before us, that assigns a Reason for that gracious Communication. The Reason is, the care which this Good man, would thereupon take to bring up his Family in the Fear of God.

In this Text there are some Remarkable Things; and things that some Wise men have often remarked. There was an Excellent man, sometimes a Preacher of the Lord Jesus Christ, in this very place; whose custom it was, not only to Read a portion of the Scripture before his Prayers with his Family, but also to Infer and Apply brief Notes out of what he Read. He professed, That he found none of all his weary Studies in Divinity, so profitable to him, as this one Exercise, for the

Rare and Rich Thoughts, which he therein found himself supplied withal, And he Declared, "that he looked on it as an accomplishment of this very word; Shall I hide from Abraham, the thing which I do? I know him, that he will command his Children, and his Household.

Moreover, You may here Observe a most comfortable Connection, between, He will, and They Shall. Say's the Lord, He will Command his Children, and They shall keep the way of the Lord. It seems, If every one that is Owner of a Family, would faithfully Command, and manage those that belong unto him, through the Blessing of God, they would generally Keep His Way, and His Law.

I find a famous Writer in the Church, therefore thus expressing himself; "If Parents did their Duties as they ought, the Word Publically Preached would not be the ordinary means of Regeneration in the Church, but only without the Church, among Infidels: God would so pour out His Grace upon the Children of His people, and Hear Prayers for them, and bless Endeavours for their Holy Education, that we should see the Promises made Good unto our Seed."

We will now Dismiss these Reflections; and Repair to that Grand Case, which hence offers itself unto us.

## **The Case**

*What May Be Done by Pious Parents, to Promote the Piety and Salvation of Their Children?*

The Case Inquires, What may be done? You will take it for granted, that the Answer to it will tell you, What Should be done? For you will readily grant, that in such an Important Case as this, All that May be done, Should be done!

In the Case We Inquire after what is to be done, by Pious Parents. Other Parents will take no due Notice, of the Injunctions that God has Laid upon them concerning their Children.

Parents, If you don't first become yourselves Pious, you will do nothing to purpose to make your Children so.

Except you do yourselves walk in the Way of the Lord, you will be very careless about bringing your Children to such a Walk.

It is not a Cain, or a Cham, or any Enemy of God; that will do anything to make his Children become the Children of God. The Psalmist in Psal. 34:1,4,11, could first say I will bless the Lord and I sought the Lord, and then he says, Come ye Children, and I will teach you the Fear of the Lord.

O Parents, In the Name of God, Look after your own miserable Souls; How should those wretched people do anything for the Souls of their Children, that never did anything for their own?

In the Case, we Inquire, after what is to be done by Parents for their Children. But let it be Remembered, That our Servants [others in our home] are in some sort likewise our Children. Our whole Household, as well as the Children that are our Offspring, are to be taught the Way of the Lord. An Abraham will have his Trained Servants. We read concerning a certain Person of Quality, in 2 Ki. 5:13. His servants came near and spake unto him, and said, My Father.

Let not those of my Hearers, that are without such Invaluable Blessings of God, as Children, count themselves unconcerned in our Discourse, if they have any Servants under them. A considerable part of what is to be done for our Children, I pray, Masters, think, as we go along; Think, without our particular inculcation, whether nothing. This may be done for your Servants: and, God make Eliezers of them for you!

Attend Now To The Counsils of God

**I. Parents, Consider the Condition of your Children; and the loud cry of their Condition unto you, to Endeavour their Salvation! What an Army of powerful Thoughts, do at once now show themselves, to besiege your Hearts, and subdue them unto a just care for the Salvation of your Children!**

Know you not, that your Children have precious and Immortal Souls within them? They are not all Flesh. You that are the Parents of their Flesh, must know, That your Children have Spirits also, whereof you are told, in Heb. 12:9. God is the Father of them; and in Eccles. 12:7. God is the Giver of them.

The Souls of your Children, must survive their Bodies, and are transcendently Better and Higher & Nobler Things than their Bodies. Are you sollicitous that their Bodies may be Fed? You should be more sollicitous that their Souls may not be Starved, or go without the Bread of Life.

Are you sollicitous that their Bodies may be Cloath'd: you should be more sollicitous that their Souls may not be Naked, or go without the Garments of Righteousness.

Are you Loath to have their Bodies Labouring under Infirmities, or Deformaties? You should be much more Loath to have their Souls pining away in their Iniquities.

Man, Are thy Children, but the Children of Swine? If thou art Regardless of their

Souls, truly thou dost call them so!

One of the Ancients, namely Cyprian, has a pungent comparison for this matter; Pray, Consider; (said that Great man) He that minds his Childs Body more than his Soul, is like, one, that if his Child and his Dog were like to be drowned, should be solicitous to save his Dog, but let the Child perish in the water.

How deaf art thou, that thou dost not hear a loud cry from the Souls of thy Children in thine Ears, Oh, my Father, my Mother, look after me!

But more than so; Don't you know, That your Children, are the Children of Death, and the Children of Hell, and the Children of Wrath, by Nature: And that from you, this Nature is derived and conveyed unto them!

You must know, Parents, that your Children are by your means Born under the dreadful Wrath of God: And if they are not New-Born before they die, it had been Good for them, that they never had been Born at all.

The law of equity was in Exodus 21:19 If one man wound another, he shalt cause him to be throughly healed. Your Children are born with deadly wounds of Sin upon their Souls; and they may Thank you for those wounds: Unjust men, will you now do nothing for their Healing?

Man, thy Children are dying of an horrid poison, in their Bowels; and it was thou that poison'd them. What! Wilt thou do nothing for the succour [help]! Thy Children are thrown into a Devouring Fire; and it is from thee that the Fiery Vengeance of God has taken Hold of them. What! Wilt thou do nothing to Help them out!

There is a Corrupt Nature in thy children, which is a Fountain of all Wickedness and Confusion. The very Pagans were not insensible of this Corrupt Nature; they styled it our Congenite [congenital] Sin, and our Domestick Evil, and cried out, with Tully, "*Simul ac Editi sumus in Lucem, ac suscepti, in omni continue pravitate versamur.*"

The Jews have been yet more Sensible of this Corrupt Nature; they have Stil'd it, our Evil Frame and the poison of the old Serpent; and This they understand by The Enemy, so often mentioned in the Scripture; And, The Heart of Stone and, the Wicked that watches the Righteous.

Will not you that are Christians, then show your Christianity, by Sensibly doing what you can, that your Children may have a Better Nature infused into them?

What shall I Say? I may say, The Time would fail me to mention a thousandth part of what might be said. But, in short: Is it not a sad Thing to be the Father of a fool?

Alas, man, till thy Children become Regenerate, thou art the Father of a Fool; Thy Children are but the Wild Asses Colt! I add; would it not Break thy Heart, if thy Children, were in Slavery to Turks, or Moors, or Indians?

Devils are worse than Indians, and Infidels: till thy Children are brought home to God, they are the slaves of Devils.

In a word; Can thy Heart Endure, that thy Children, should be Banished from the Lord Jesus Christ, and Languishing under the Torments of Sin among Devils, in outer Darkness throughout Eternal Ages?

Don't call thyself a Parent; Thou art an Ostrich [they care not for their offspring]. Call not these, the Children of thy Bowels; thou hast no Bowels! I will not say, that Zipporah call'd her Husband, A Bloody Husband. But all the Angels in Heaven call thee, A Bloody Father, and A Bloody Mother; and are astonished at the Adamantine Hardness of that Bloody Heart of thine; and those Heartstrings that are Sinewes of Iron!

## **II. Improve the Baptism of your children, as an obligation, and an encouragement unto you, parents, to endeavour the salvation of your Baptised little ones.**

Of your children, you may say, with Jacob, in Gen. 33:5 These are the children that God hath graciously given to me. Now, will not you heartily give back those children to God again: their Baptism is to be the sign and seal of your doing so.

You generally bring your infant children unto the Baptism of the Lord: I suppose, it is because you are satisfied, that the children of believers were in the Covenant with God, in the days of the Old Testament; and, that the children of believers then had a right unto the initial seal of the Covenant, and, that in the days of the New Testament they have not lost this priviledge.

Well, but when you bring your children to the Sacred Baptism, what is it for? Oh, let it not be done, as an empty formality; as if the Baptism of your children were for nothing, but only a formal and a pompous putting of a name upon them.

No, but let the serious language of your souls, in this action, be that of Hannah, in I Sam 1:28: I have given this child unto the Lord, as long as he lives, he shall be given unto the Lord.

I find in the private writings of an holy man, who died in this place, not much above a year ago; That the day before one of his children was to be Baptised, he spent the time in giving up himself and his child unto the Lord, and in taking hold of the Covenant for both of them, and in praying that he might on the morrow, be

able in much faith and love and Covenant obedience, to do it, at the Baptism of the Lord. Oh, which he writes it is not easy, though common, to offer a child unto God in Baptism.

Sirs, when you have done this for your Children, you have a singular advantage to plead for the fulfillment of that word upon them in Is. 44:3 I will pour my Spirit upon thy Soul, and my blessing upon thy offspring. You may go before the Lord, and plead, Lord, Was not the Baptismal water poured by thy command upon my children! Oh, do thou now pour upon them the heavenly grace, which that Baptismal water signified.

And now, no sooner let those Children become able to understand it, than you shall make them understand what the design of their Baptism was. Parents, I am to tell you, that if you let your Children grow up, without ever telling them, that, and, why, they were Baptised into the Name of the Lord, you are fearfully guilty of taking the name of the Lord in vain.

It was the manner of an excellent minister, upon the Baptising of a child, solemnly to deliver the child into the hands of the Parents, with such words as those, here, take this child now, and bring it up for the Lord Jesus Christ, I charge you.

God from Heaven speaks the like words to you, O Parents, upon all your Baptised Children. And that you may bring up your Children for the Lord Jesus Christ, you must as soon as you can, let them know, that in Baptism, they were dedicated unto Him.

Show them that when they were Baptised, they were listed among the servants and soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that if they live in rebellion against Him, Woe unto them!

Show them, from Matthew 28:19 &20. That since they are Baptised into the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, they must observe all things, whatsoever the Lord Jesus Christ, has commanded them.

Show them from Romans 6:4, that since they are Baptised, they are Buried with Christ in baptism, and must live no longer in sin, but be Dead unto all the Vanities of the World.

Show them from Galatians 3:27, that since they are Baptised, they have put on Christ, and must follow His Example, and be as He was in the World.

Show them from I Peter 3:21, that being Baptised, they must now make the Answer of a good conscience, to all the proposals of the New-Covenant: and God propounding to them, shall my Christ be thine, and wilt thou be His? They must conscientiously answer, Lord, with all my heart!

Put this very solemnly unto your children; My child, shall God the Father, be thy Father? Shall God the Son, be thy Saviour! Shall God the Spirit, be thy Sanctifier; and are thou willing to be the servant of that one God, who is, Father, Son, and Spirit?

Leave them not, until their little hearts are conquered unto that for which they have been Baptised. It has been the judgment of some Judicious men; that If infant baptism were more improved, it would be less disputed. Oh, that it were thus Improved.

### **III. Instruct your children in the great matters of Salvation; Oh, Parents, do not let them die without instruction.**

There is indeed, an Instruction in Civil Matters which we owe unto our Children. It is very pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ, that our Children be well formed with, and well informed in the rules of Civility, and not be left a Clownish, and Sottish, and Ill Bred sort of Creatures. An Unmannerly Brood is a Dishonour to Religion.

And, there are many points of a Good Education that we should bestow upon our Children; they should Read, and Write, and Cyphar [arithmetic], and be put unto some Agreeable Callings; and not only our Sons, but our Daughters also should be taught such things, as will afterwards make them useful in their places. There is a little Foundation of Religion laid in such an Education. But besides, and beyond all this, there is an Instruction in Divine Matters, which our Children are to be made partakers of.

Parents, Instruct your Children, in the Articles of Religion; and acquaint them with God, and Christ, and the Mysteries of the Gospel, and the Doctrines and Methods of the Great Salvation.

It was Required, in Psalm 78:5 He commanded our Fathers, to make known to their Children, that the Generation to come might know, who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their Hope in God, and keep His commandments.

It was required in Eph. 6:4 Fathers, bring up your children in the Nurture and Admonitions of the Lord. Would you have your Children to be Wise and Good? I know not why you should expect it, unless you take abundance of pains, by your Instruction to make them so.

There was a Wise and Good son, who gave that account how he became what he was; in Prov 4:3,4. I was my Fathers son, and he taught me. O Begin betimes, to Tell your Children who is their Maker, and who is their Saviour, and what they are Themselves, and what is like to become of them; and by no means let them

want [lack] that Advantage in 2 Tim 3:15 From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation.

Cause them to look often into their Bibles, and here and there Single out some special Sentences from those Oracles of Heaven for them to get into their Memories. And for the better management of their Instruction there are especially two Handles, to be laid hold upon; the one is, a Proper Catechism, the other is the Public Ministry.

Be sure that they learn their Catechism very perfectly; but then content not yourselves with hearing them say by Rote the Answers in their Catechism; Question them very distinctly over again about every clause in the Answer and bring all to it so plain before them, that by their saying only, Yes, or No, you may perceive that the sense of the Truth is entered into their souls.

And then, what they hear in the Evangelical Ministry, do you Apply it unto them after their coming Home; Confer with them familiarly about the Things that have been handled in the [proper and true] Ministry of the Word: go over one Thing after another, with them, till you see they have got clear Ideas of it; Then put it unto them, Are not you now to Avoid such a thing; or perform such a thing! And must not you now make such and such a prayer unto God? Bid them then, go do accordingly.

Hence also, 'twere very desireable, that you should watch all opportunities, to be instilling your Instructions into the souls of your little Folks. They are narrow-mouthed Vessels, and things must be drop after drop instilled into them. It was required in Deut. 6:6,7 The words which I command thee, Thou shalt teach them Diligently unto thy Children, and shalt Talk of them, when thou sittest in thine House, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou sittest down and when thou riseth up.

How often in a week, are we Diverting ourselves, with our Children in our Houses? There thy stand before us; There is nothing to hinder our saying some very profitable thing for them to think upon; well, can you let fall Nothing upon them, that it will be worth their while, for them to think upon?

What, Nothing of God, and Christ, and of another World, and of their own Souls, and of the Sins that may Endanger them, and of the Ways which they may take to be Happy? Doubtless, you may say something.

And who can tell? It may be after you are gone to behold the Face of the Lord Jesus Christ in Glory, these your Children will Remember Hundreds of profitable Instructions, that you have given them; and Live upon them when you that gave them, are Dead.

With Two Strokes I will clench this advice. The one is that in Proverbs 22:6 Train

up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not Depart from it. The other is that in Prov 17:25. A Foolish Son is a grief to his Father, and a bitterness to her that bare him.

#### **IV. Parents, with a Sweet Authority over your Children, Rebuke them for, and Refrain them from, everything that may prove prejudicial unto their Salvation.**

Sirs, You can do little for the Welfare of your Children, if once you have lost your Authority over them. Would you bring your Children to the Fear of God? Your character then must be that in I Tim 3:4 One that ruleth well his own House, having his Children in subjection, with all gravity.

Don't by your Lightness and Weakness and Folly, suffer them to Trample upon you; but keep up so much Authority, that your Word may be a Law unto them. Nevertheless,

Let not your Authority be strained with such Harshness and Fierceness, as may discourage your Children. To treat our Children like Slaves, and with such Rigour, that they shall always Tremble and Abhor to come into our presence, This will be very unlike to our Heavenly Father.

Our Authority should be so Tempered with Kindness, and Meekness, and Loving Tenderness, that our Children may Fear us with Delight, and see that we Love them, with as much Delight.

Now, Let our Authority, effectually keep in our Children, from all their unruly Exorbitancies and Extravagancies. If we let our Young Folks grow Head-Strong, and if we grow Afraid of compelling them to the Wholesome Orders of our Families, we have even given them up to Ruin. God brought that Son to an Untimely and a Terrible End, of whom its reported in I Kings 1:6 His Father had not Displeased him at any time, in saying, Why hast thou done so?

I beseech you, Parents, Interpose your Authority to stop and check the Carrier of your Children, when they will be running into the paths of the Destroyer.

Gratify them with Rewards of Well doing, when they Do well; but let them not be gratified with every Ungodly Vanity, that their Vain Minds may be set upon.

Wherefore keep a strict Inspection upon their Conversations; Examine, How they spend their Time; Examine, What Company they keep? Examine, Whether they take no Bad Courses.

Be not such Foolish Enemies to yourselves, and your Children as to count them your Enemies, that shall friendly advise you of their Miscarriages. That wretched

Folly, is a very Frequent One!

When you Find out their Miscarriages, effectually Rebuke them, and Restrain them. Incurr not the Indignation of Heaven, once Incurred by a Fond Father, in I Sam 3:13; I will Judge his House forever, for the Iniquity which he knoweth; because his Sons made themselves vile, and he Restrained them not.

Ah, Thou Indulgent Parent; if you canst not Cross thy Children, when they are disposed unto that which is for the Dishonour of God, God will make thy Children to become Crosses unto thee.

Sirs, When your Children do amiss, call them Aside; set before them the Precepts of God which they have broken, and the Threatenings of God, which they provoked. Demand of them, to profess their sorrow for their fault, and Resolve that they will be no more so Faulty.

Yes, there may be occasion for you, to consider that Word of God in Proverbs 13:24 He that spareth his Rod, hateth his son, but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes; and that Word in Proverbs 19:18 Chasten thy son while there is Hope, and let not thy soul spare for his Crying; and that word, in Proverbs 23:13,14. Withold 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.

But if it must be so, Remember this Counsel; Never give a Blow in a passion. Stay till your passion is over; and let the Offenders plainly see, that you deal thus with them, out of a pure Obedience unto God, and for their true Repentance.

One of the ancients, has this Ingenious gloss In the tabernacle, Aarons Rod, and the Pot of Manna, were together; so (says he) when the Rod is used, the sweetness and goodness of the Manna must accompany it: and Mercy be joined with Severity. Let me leave that premonition with you, in Proverbs 29:15 A child left unto himself, bringeth his Mother to shame.

#### **V. Lay your Charges upon your Children; Parents, Charge them to Work about their own Salvation.**

The Charges of Parents have a great Efficacy upon many Children; To Charge them vehemently, is to Charm them wonderfully.

Command your Children, and it may be they will Obey. Let Gods commands be your commands, and it may be your Children will obey them.

Lay upon your Children, the Charges of God, as David once upon his, in I Chron 28:9 My Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve Him with a perfect

heart, and with a willing mind; if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee, but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off forever.

Now, Sirs, You will do well, to single out some singular Charges of God, and calling your Children one by one before you, Lay those Charges upon them, in the Name of the God that made them, and obtain from them, if you can, a promise that they will observe those Charges, with the Help of that God. I will set before you, three or four of those Charges.

Let one of your Charges upon your Children, be that in I John 3:23 This is His commandment, that we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ.

Charge them to carry their poor, guilty, ignorant and polluted and Enslaved souls unto the Lord Jesus Christ, that He may Save them from their Sins, and Save them from the Wrath to come.

Charge them, to mind how the Lord Jesus Christ Executes the Office of a Prophet, and a Priest, and a King, and Cry to Him, that He would Save them in the Execution of all those Blessed Offices.

Let another of your Charges be that in Hag 1:5,7 Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider Your Ways. Charge them to set apart a few minutes now and then, for Consideration; and in those minutes,

Charge them to Consider, what they have been doing, and what they should have been doing, ever since they came into the World, and if they should immediately go out of the World, what will become of them throughout Eternal Ages.

I have read of a Dying Parent, who laid this Charge upon his wild Son, That he would allow one quarter of an Hour every Day to Consider on something or other, any Thing, as his Fancy led him. The Young men having for some while done so, at last began to consider, why his Dying Parent should lay such a Charge upon him. This brought on so many Devout Thoughts, that before long, in the Conversion of the Young man, the Desire of the Dying Parent was accomplished.

Oh! If you could Engage your Children to Think Upon Their Ways, there would be Hopes of their Turning to God.

But, Let a Third of your Charges, be that in Matthew 6:6 Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father that sees in secret.

Charge them to retire for Secret Prayer, every Day that comes over their Heads, Talk with them, till you see, that they can tell, what they should Pray for: and then, often Charge them to Pray every day; yea, sometimes Ask them, Do you Remember the charge I Laid upon you?

Ah, Parent, thy children will do well, while it can be said, Behold, They Pray. And thy House filled with thy Childrens Prayers, would be better accommodated, than if it were filled, with all the Riches of the Indies.

Let a Fourth of your Charges be That, in Proverbs 9:6, Forsake the Foolish and Live.

Charge them to avoid the snares of Evil Company; Terrify them with Warnings of those Deadly Snares.

Often Repeat this Charge unto them, That if there be any Vicious Company, they shun them, as they would the Plague or the Devil.

Often say, My son, if Sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

Often say, My child, walk with the Wise, and thou shalt be wise, but a Companion of Fools shall be destroyed.

Oh, Do Not let the Beasts of prey, carry away thy Children alive.

Shall I add; it is here intimated, That an Abraham, is to Command his Children, very particularly, about, The Way of the Lord. The Way of the Lord, is the Way of his Right, Pure, Instituted Worship. Well, then, Command your Children, that they do not Forsake the Holy Institutions of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Embrace a Vain Worship, consisting of things that He never Instituted.

There are some clauses in the Second Commandment, which intimate, That if Parents would see the Mercies of God upon their Children, they must Charge them, to Worship God, only in those Ways of Worship that God hath appointed.

Thus keep Charging of your Children, while you Live. And if you are capable so to Do, Do it once more with all possible Solemnity, when you come to Die. The words of a Dying Parent, will probably be Living Words, and Lively Ones.

When our Excellent Mitchel was a Dying, he let fall such a Speech as This, unto a Young Gentleman, that Lodged in his House, My Friend, as a Dying man, I now charge you, that you don't meet me out of Christ in the Day of Christ. This one Speech, brought into Christ, the soul of that Young Gentleman! Truly, if your Dying Lips, may utter such Dying Words unto your Children, who can tell, but they may then be brought into Christ, if they were never so before!

But, lest you should have no opportunity to Speak in a Dying Hour, why should you not Write such things, as you would have them to Think upon, when you shall be Dead and Gone? An unknown deal of Good, may your Children reap, from the Admonitions, that a Dying Parent may Leave unto them.

## **VI. Parents, be Exemplary:**

Your Example may do much towards the Salvation of your Children, your Works will more Work upon your Children, than your Words; your Patterns will do more than your Precepts; your Copies than your Counsels.

What was then said unto Pastors, may very fitly be said unto Parents, in Titus 2:2, In all Things show thyself a pattern of good works; and in Timothy 4:12 Be thou an Example in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.

It will be impossible for you to infuse any Good into your Children, if you appear void of that Good yourselves. If the Old Crab go backward, it is to no purpose, for the Young One to be directed to go forward: Sirs, Young Ones, will Crawl after the Old Ones.

Would you have your Children, well principled with the Fear and Faith of God? Mind that passage, in Acts 10:2, Cornelius was a devout man, and one that Feared God, with all his House.

Mind that passage in Acts 18:8 Crispus Believed on the Lord, with all his House. It seems, the whole House, is like to do, as the Parents do. It is as Austin [Augustine] expresses it, the ususal cry, *Nolumus esse meliores quam patres*, We will be no Better than our Parents, If the Parents will make their Cakes to the Queen of Heaven, the Children will kindle their Fires for them.

Justin Martyr somewhere Inquires why the Prophet Elisha imprecated the Revenges of Heaven upon the Children that mocked him, when they hardly understood what they did? and he answers, The Children Learned their wicked Language from their Parents, and now God punished both of them together.

Parents, let your Children see nothing by you, but what shall be commendable and imitable. Be able to say unto your Children, My child, follow me, as you have seen me follow Christ.

Let them from your Seriousness, and your Prayerfulness, and your Watchfulness, and your Sanctification of the Lord's Day, be taught, how they should walk and please God. You "Bid" them well; "Show" them How!

## **VII. Prayer, Prayer, must be the Crown of all:**

Parents, is it your Hearts Desire? Let it be also your Prayer, for your Children, that they may be Saved.

Prayer for the Salvation of any Sinners, availith much. How much may it avail for the Salvation of our Sinful Children? Much availed that Prayer of David in I Chron. 29:19, Lord, Give unto my Son a perfect Heart, to keep thy Commandments.

Parents, Make such a prayer for your Children, Lord, Give unto my Child, a New Heart, and a Clean Heart, and a Soft Heart; and an Heart after thy own Heart.

We have been told, that Children once were brought unto our Lord Jesus Christ, for Him to Put His hands upon them; and He Put His hands upon them, and blessed them. Oh! Thrice, and Four Times Blessed Children! Well, Parent, Bring your Children unto the Lord Jesus Christ; it may be, He will put His Blessing, and Healing, and Saving Hands upon them: Then, they are Blessed, and shall be Blessed for evermore! If Abraham cry to God, O that my son Ishmael may live in thy sight! God will say to Abraham, concerning Ishmael, I have heard thee!

Pray for the Salvation of thy Children, and carry the Names of every one of them, every day before the Lord, with Prayers, the Cries whereof shall pierce the very Heavens. Holy Job did so! Job 1:5 He offered according to the number of all his Children; Thus did Job continually.

Address Heaven with daily Prayers, That God would make thy Children the Temples of His Spirit, the Vessels of His Glory; and the Care of His Holy Angels.

Address the Lord Jesus Christ, with Prayers, like them of old, That all the Maladies upon the Souls of thy Children may be cured and that the Evil One may have no possession of them.

Yea, when thou do cast thine Eyes upon the Little Folks, often in a day dart up an Ejaculatory Prayer to Heaven for them; Lord, let this child be thy servant for ever.

If your Prayers are not presently answered, be not Disheartened: Remember the Word of the Lord, in Luke 18:1, That men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

Redouble your Importunity, until thou speed for thy child, as the poor Woman of Canaan did.

Join Fasting to thy Prayer; it may be, the evil in the soul of your child, will not go out, without such a Remedy. David sets himself to Fasting, as well as Prayer, for the Life of his Child. Oh, Do as much for the Soul of thy Child!

Wrestle with the Lord. Receive no Denial. Earnestly protest, Lord, I will not let thee go, except thou Bless this poor Child of mine, and make it thy own! Do this, until, if it may be, thy Heart is Raised by a Touch of Heaven, to a particular Faith; that God has blessed this child, and it shall be Blessed and Saved Forever.

But is this all that is to be done? There is more. Parents, Pray with your Children, as well as for them.

Family prayer must be maintained by all those Parents, that would not have their Children miss of Salvation, and that would not have the Damnation of their Children horribly fall upon themselves. Man, thy Family is a Pagan Family, if it be a Prayerless Family: And the Children going down to the place of Dragons from this thy Family, will pour out their Execrations upon thee, in the Bottom of Hell, until the very Heavens be no more.

But, besides your Family Prayers, Oh, parents, why should you not now and then, take one capable Child after another, alone before the Lord? Carry the Child with you, into your Secret Chambers; make the Child kneel down by you, while you present it unto the Lord, and Implore His Blessing upon it.

Let the Child, hear the Groans, and See the Tears, and be a witness of the Agonies, wherewith you are Travailing for the Salvation of it. The Children will never Forget what you do; it will have a marvelous Force upon them.

Thus, Oh, Parents, You have been told, what you have to do, for the Salvation of your Children; and certainly, their Salvation is worth all of this!

Your Zeal about the Salvation of your Children, will be a symptom of your own Sincerity. A total want of Zeal, will be a Spot upon you, that is not a Spot of the Children of God.

God will Reward the Zeal. It is very probable, That the Children thus cared for, will be the Saved of the Lord. Your Glad Hearts will one day see it, if they are so: it will augment your Heaven, through all eternity, to have These in Heaven with you.

And let it be Remembered, That the Fathers, are not the only Parents obliged thus to pursue the Salvation of their Children: You that are Mothers, have not a little to do for the Souls of your Children, and you have Opportunity to do more than a Little.

Bathsheba the Mother of Solomon, and Eunice the Mother of Timothy, did greatly contribute unto the Salvation of their famous and worthy Sons.

God has Commanded Children, Forsake not the Law of thy Mother. Then, a Mother must give the Law of God unto them.

It is said of the Virtuous Woman, She looks well to the ways of her Household; Then a Virtuous Mother looks well to the Ways of her Children.

Your Children may say, In sin did my Mother Conceive me. Oh, Then let Mothers

do what they can, to Save their Children out of Sin!

And especially, Mothers, do you Travail for your Children over again, with your Earnest Prayers for their Salvation, until it may be said unto you, as it was unto Monica the Mother of Austin, concerning him; Tis impossible, that thy Child should perish, after thou hast Employed so many Prayers and Tears for the Salvation of it."

Now God give a Good Success to these Poor Endeavours!

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