

PARENTAL DESIRE, DUTY, AND ENCOURAGEMENT

John Angell James, April 28, 1810

This, the first of Mr. James's printed works, was preached on the occasion of his son's baptism.

"I will be a God unto you, and to your children after you."

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

"And Abraham said unto God, **O that Ishmael might live before You!**"

How discordant have been the voices with which the religious world has answered the momentous question, "What is truth?" Unhappily for the peace of the church, the various sects of which it is composed, in replying to this enquiry, seem to have tried how jarring they could render the sacred tones of religion, by repeating those sentiments in which they differ—rather than how harmonious, by dwelling on those points in which they agree. It would be well to consider, how many notes there are which we could all strike in unison—and among many of this kind, one is, the importance of the rising generation; or, which is indeed the true meaning of that expression, of **the instruction and government of youth**. In whatever point of view we contemplate this subject, it appears supremely grand and interesting.

Our children, according as their future character shall be, **must eventually live either in endless happiness--or eternal woe**; and therefore a regard for their welfare should rouse our attention to their improvement. They are the blossoms of either our earthly comfort--or distress; therefore a concern for our own peace should induce us to train them up in the way they should go. They are to be the

actors in the great drama of human life, when we shall have closed our parts, and have made our exits; therefore benevolence to the world should make us cautious what characters we send to act upon its stage. If the Redeemer shall have a church upon earth, after the present generation of believers--our children are to compose that church; therefore zeal for the divine glory should engage our most serious application to this part of Christian duty.

If these considerations impress your mind, listen with solemn and candid attention to the DIRECTIONS with which they are followed.

The text presents us with the example of a father pouring out to God the warmest wishes of his heart on behalf of his child. That father is the venerable Abraham. God had just declared to the patriarch his intention of giving him a son by Sarah his wife. The news was at first received with joyful astonishment, and adoring gratitude, but a fear soon arose in his bosom, which damped all his pleasure—What is now to become of Ishmael? Must he die to make room for the child of promise? Or what would be still worse, must he become another Cain, and go out from the presence of the Lord?

We notice here, that much of our present distress arises from hastiness and impatience of spirit. We are for rushing to the end at once, and will not wait until God has opened his own designs, and illustrated his own meaning. We look at detached parts of the embroidery of Providence, and distress ourselves because we discover a little shade. Whereas, if we would but permit Jehovah to go on unfolding the whole piece, we would soon discover that there was no ground of complaint. If Abraham had waited but a few moments longer, his pleasure would not have experienced this admixture; but nature struggles, the affections of the father are troubled for his son, and he exclaims, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" We may, therefore, judge, that this petition expressed a desire, both for the natural and spiritual life of Ishmael. It seemed to say, "Oh let this my son live and share the blessings of the covenant, with him who is to be born of Sarah."

Having thus explained the import of this prayer, I shall

consider—

What blessings a Christian parent should desire from God on behalf of his children.

What means must be used by him in order to obtain them.

What encouragement the word of God affords him, that the means will be connected with the end.

I. What BLESSINGS should a Christian parent seek from God on behalf of his children?

Is it forbidden to desire **the continuance of their natural life**? Certainly not; provided that desire be entirely under the control of submission to the will of God. To shudder at the thought of seeing the blooming countenance of life exchanged for the pallid face of death, is the operation of that principle which God himself has planted in the parent's heart—it is the irresistible impulse of nature—and we are not required by Jehovah to tear up with indiscriminate violence every natural feeling of the human bosom; but only to weed out the bad ones, and so to check and direct the growth of the rest, that they may not attain a wild and noxious growth which would overtop the judgment, or cast a cold destructive shadow upon religion itself. What but this strong desire in the bosom of the parent for the life of the child, is it that prompts to all those unwearied exertions which are necessary for its preservation? But for such a principle as this, how many would allow the 'kindling lamp of life' to expire through neglect, or would extinguish it with violence, rather than endure all the solicitude and fatigue which are necessary to cherish the vital spark, and fan it to a flame!

Nor is it forbidden to ask those things for our children which would contribute so much to their temporal comfort; provided, that desire be also in entire submission to the will of Jehovah. Industry is part of religion—indolence one of the vices which it brands with indelible infamy. "He that provides not for his own household has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." Now what is it that keeps the

hive of society from swarming with workers? What is it that braces the arm of industry, and makes it willing to ply at the oar of labor? What is it that enables you to refrain from discontent, as you wipe away from your brow the memorial of a cursed earth? Is it not your children? Is it not a kind concern to provide for their future needs, or to help them to provide better for themselves. Who, when he looks over that valley of tears, into which his child has entered, and through which he must pass, and contemplates squalid poverty, dire disease, frantic madness, the iron hand of oppression, the eye of envy rolling in its socket, seeking whom it may devour, the forked tongue of slander, all like dreadful bandits, infesting his path, and waiting to assault him; who, I say, can help spreading over him the shield of such a prayer as this?—'Oh! that Ishmael might live before you!' and have accomplished in his experience your own words, "He Himself will deliver you from the hunter's net, from the destructive plague. He will cover you with His feathers; you will take refuge under His wings. His faithfulness will be a protective shield. You will not fear the terror of the night, the arrow that flies by day, the plague that stalks in darkness, or the pestilence that ravages at noon. Though a thousand fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, the pestilence will not reach you." (Psalms 91:3-7)

Still, however, these things are but secondary objects of desire with him who contemplates, in its true light, the character and **destiny** of that being which with rapture he calls his child. By the aid of revelation he penetrates the disguise which the helplessness and unconsciousness of infancy seem to have thrown around the noblest part of his nature, and discovers through all this--the grandeur and the dignity of IMMORTALITY. He sees a spark of being which shall go on kindling, until it has witnessed the extinction of the sun itself--blazed out into eternal existence. He sees in his countenance, that face which is to shine with the glory of God, like the sun in the skies--or to be clouded with the infamy and horror of the divine curse. He hears a voice which is to be forever hymning the praises of its Creator--or to be forever venting blasphemies against its Judge. In short, he contemplates a being born for eternity; one who will be forever towering from height to height of glory in heaven--or sinking from gulf to gulf of despair in hell.

He reflects that his child is born with the latent seeds of corruption in his nature, which await only the advancing spring of life to vegetate, to strike root, to spring up under the fatal warmth of temptation, and bear the bitter fruits of rebellion against God. He sees, in imagination, the world, the flesh and the devil, gathering round the very cradle of his infant, fixing their murderous eyes upon his immortal soul and going out to prepare for his ruin.

Amidst the throbbing anguish which such reflections produce in the heart of a believing parent, one thought cheers him, that his child has entered upon a world where a Savior, wise, powerful and gracious, waits to offer his grace and guidance, as the "Captain of Salvation," to conduct him, through all the successive stages of human life, to the possession and enjoyment of everlasting bliss.

With such reflections as these in his bosom, the truth of which he can no more doubt, than he can of his own existence, what can, or what ought a Christian parent to desire for his child, as the grand ultimatum of all his concern and solicitude, short of everlasting bliss? It is in this sense that he uses the prayer of Abraham, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you." If he possesses an immortal soul—if that soul is in danger of being forever undone—if there be a possibility of his being made eternally and inconceivably happy—to desire anything for him less than grace here and glory hereafter is cruelty of the blackest kind.

The salvation of the soul being thus pointed out as the object which should constitute the first wish of every parent's heart on behalf of his child, I shall now mention—

II. Those MEANS which must be used by him in order to obtain it.

In the distribution of his favors to the human race, God generally connects his bounty with our exertions. This remark applies both to temporal and spiritual benefits. Nor can we expect that even our children will be blessed, independently of our efforts. If, therefore, it be asked, what

can be done by us that our children may participate in spiritual and eternal blessings? I answer, in the language of inspiration, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." This exhortation enjoins the whole extent of religious education; on which I shall now insist; as an attention to this subject forms the only rational ground for expectation of the divine blessing on your offspring. Religious education includes, Discipline, Instruction, Example, and Prayer—and any system defective in either of these important particulars is not likely to be attended with success.

1. If we would have our children grow up as we desire, we must maintain **DISCIPLINE** in our families. By discipline, I mean the exercise of **parental authority** in enforcing obedience to all suitable commands and prohibitions.

This part of religious education should begin **EARLY**. The importance of this is written upon the whole system of nature, and is repeated on every page of the history of Providence. The 'supple twig' bends to your will, while the 'sturdy oak' laughs at your authority. A radical mistake with many, who see the importance of discipline generally, is an error as to the period of life, when it ought to commence. They forget that children are to be brought under the control of authority, long before they are capable of instruction. The 'tempers of the heart' sprout before the judgment begins to bud; and therefore before the parent can attend to the latter, all his care should be directed to the growth of the former. And as 'conscience' at a very early period of childhood ascends her throne in the bosom, cites the little culprits before her tribunal, and makes them sensible of her verdict—we should as early, join the exercise of parental authority with the power of this inward monitor, and impress their minds with the distinction between right and wrong.

Discipline must be **REASONABLE** in all its commands, and that reasonableness should, as much as possible, be seen upon the face of the command. We should particularly guard against enjoining anything obviously ridiculous or impracticable. There are few impressions to which the minds of children are more susceptible than those of ridicule—and any command, which, when it is attempted to be obeyed,

subjects them to the mortification of either derision or despondency, is destructive of all confidence in parental discretion; a lack of confidence is soon followed by contempt, and that as soon by rebellion. As frequently, therefore, as possible, when the child is capable of reflection, let the reasonableness of your commands be manifest. But as this cannot always be the case, and where it cannot, your authority must not give way, I exhort you, by a line of consummate wisdom towards your children, to transfuse into their minds that lesson which you have learned with respect to Jehovah--to trust His heart, where you cannot trace His hand.

Discipline, to be successful, must be **STEADY** and **UNIFORM**. This is of the utmost importance—for depend upon it that a parent, whose commands spring only from his mood, will soon find to his cost, that he has taught his child to obey from no other principle.

The first thing to be attended to in a command is, that it be reasonable; and the second, that it be obeyed. All parents ought to consider themselves invested by God with a degree of authority, which they can at no time allow to be trampled under foot by their children, without despising an ordinance of God. I have been shocked to see some families, where parental authority seemed to be the result of no principle, subject to no rule, directed to no end, but caprice. These alternate fits of stern severity and ruinous indulgence were following each other with most destructive influence, like a frosty night succeeding a sunny day in the early spring--to the injury of every tender plant exposed to its baneful attack. There was nothing belonging to parental authority but the scourge, and that never used, but in seasons when it ought never to be used at all—in moments of passion! There were the arms of a weak mother affording an asylum to the young fugitive, fleeing from the displeasure of a stern father; there the child, placed between these two extreme sources of ruin--undue severity, and foolish fondness--was learning to abuse the indulgence of the mother, and to detest the authority of the father. Christian parents! is it thus you cause your families to become the nurseries of the church of Christ? alas! they look more like the hotbeds of sedition, and the schools of political tyrants.

The great defect in the administration of public justice in this country is, that the penalties of the law are too severe to be executed—hence it is that such multitudes are condemned, and compared with this number so few executed. In consequence of this, the severity of the threatened punishment loses all its effect in deterring from the commission of the crime; because of the chance of mitigation which the general practice of our courts holds out to the offender. Take heed that you do not make this the fault of your domestic discipline. **Never command what you do not mean to have performed—never threaten what you do not mean to inflict.**

Discipline should always be maintained in a spirit of **LOVE**. For if indulgence has slain its tens of thousands--severity has slain its thousands. Man is a creature formed to act more by the constraints of love than fear; hence says God in speaking of Israel, "I drew them with cords of love, with bands of a man." Do we not thus learn from him who constructed the human mind, and of course, best knows the principle on which its operations are to be directed--that it is to be governed by affection? Of all the incorrect, unnatural, disgusting associations, which the disordered state of the moral world ever presented to the eye of an observer, there is not one more repugnant to the feelings than "a tyrant's rod, grasped in a father's hand!" We shall generally find that the harsh language, and frowning countenance, with which a command is uttered, are more irksome than the command itself. I would entreat you never to forget a line, which I doubt not you have often repeated to your children, "Let love through all your actions run."

The nearer you live to their hearts, the more likely you are to impress them—for the words of our Savior will apply in all their force to this case, "If you love me, you will keep my commands." Attract them to love you; and then their own affection will constrain them to obey you. A child will generally feel no wish to escape from a system of discipline, which springs entirely from the tenderness of his father. Parental authority should, to a considerable degree, resemble the magnet, which while it has all the hard inflexibility of the steel, acts only by the attractive influence

of the loadstone.

And as this applies to the whole of domestic discipline, so with peculiar force to the **PUNITIVE** part of it. If there be one act of paternal authority, which ought to display more affection than the rest, that act is correction—because there is no act so much in danger of misconstruction in the mind of the child. And if he be once impressed that his sufferings are inflicted more to gratify your resentment, than to cure his faults, he will be likely to feel towards you, as you would towards the surgeon, who, you were persuaded, tortured you for his pleasure, and not for your benefit. Let him be convinced that it cost you much anguish to inflict the least punishment—for as we sympathize with those around us in the feelings of their mind, a correction given in a rage will be generally received in a rage. Genuine repentance will be most likely to respond to genuine affection.

And here I would caution you against the injudicious conduct of those who substitute the divine threatenings of Scripture, for parental correction. To resort with a promptitude which has at last the effect of profaneness, to these awful ideas, on every recurrence of carelessness and perversity, is the way both to bring those ideas into contempt, and to make all faults appear equal. It is also obvious, that by trying this expedient on all occasions, parents will bring their authority into contempt. If they would not have that authority set at defiance, they must be able to point to immediate consequences, within their power to inflict on delinquency. Perhaps one of the most prudent rules respecting the enforcement, on the minds of children, of the conviction that they are accountable to an all-seeing, though unseen Governor, and liable to the punishment of obstinate guilt in a future state--is to take opportunities of impressing this idea the most cogently, at seasons when the children are not lying under any blame or displeasure, at moments of serious kindness on the parts of the parents, and serious inquisitiveness on the part of the children; leaving in some degree the conviction to have its own effect, greater or less, in any subsequent instance of guilt, according to the greater or less degree of aggravation which the child's own conscience can be made secretly to acknowledge in that guilt. And another obvious rule will be, that when a child is

to be solemnly reminded of these religious sanctions in immediate connection with an actual instance of criminality in his conduct, that instance should be one of the most serious of his faults, and one which will bear the utmost seriousness of such all admonition.

Discipline should respect each child in particular according to his individual disposition. In the same family, there may be a variety of dispositions, which will require a varied method of treatment--in addition to the general principles of education which apply alike to all minds. And therefore, as the farmer consults the nature of his land, adapting the seed to the soil; and as the physician studies the constitution of his patient, suiting the remedy to the disease; so ought every parent to study the dispositions of all his children, that he may adapt his discipline to the peculiarities of their respective tempers. And it requires no unusual amount of wisdom to discover wherein those peculiarities consist; for as the sun is seen most clearly when rising and setting, so the dispositions of mankind are discovered most distinctly in childhood and in old age.

Almost every child has some predominant feature of mind, which should be most assiduously checked or cherished, as it is either amiable or hateful. All have their besetting sins, which will be likely to expose them, in future life, to peculiar danger; and which, in dependence on divine grace, the parent should endeavor to tear up as roots of poison. And they each have some distinguishing traits of excellence, which should be seized as the helm of the mind, to steer it in safety, through the dangers with which it is surrounded.

It may, perhaps, after all that I have said, be asked by some, what has this to do with religion? To this it might be sufficient to reply--Did not Jehovah, with most emphatic marks of his divine commendation, mention the order of Abraham's family? "I know him, that he will **command** his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." On the other hand, with what awful marks of divine displeasure did he punish the lack of discipline in Eli's family! "I am about to do something in Israel that everyone who hears about it will shudder. On that day I will carry out against Eli everything I

said about his family, from beginning to end. I told him that I am going to judge his family forever because of the iniquity he knows about: his sons are defiling the sanctuary, and **he did not restrain them**. Therefore, I have sworn to Eli's family. The iniquity of Eli's family will never be wiped out by either sacrifice or offering." (1 Samuel 3: 11-14)
Heart-rending doom! Parents, take warning!

That discipline is connected with religion is plain—for what, in truth, is religion? Is it not choosing the will of God in preference to our own—bending our will to his absolute authority—implicitly obeying his commands—cheerfully acquiescing in his determinations without murmuring? And is not every parent to his child in God's stead? And thus by being trained up to consider and **obey the authority of his parent as absolute**, the child is gradually taught to bow down to the will of Jehovah.

2. **INSTRUCTION** is the next branch of religious education. It would be quite needless to combat the absurdity of those who would have children left altogether untaught in religious opinion, until they arrive at years of mature judgment to choose for themselves their own creed. If religion were nothing but speculation—if the mind were inaccessible to sin and Satan until adult age—if the character could grow up lovely in the sight of God independently of the very means which he has established for this end—if a system of education, in which religion is totally neglected, be more likely to engage their attention to it hereafter, than one, where it is held up as an object of supreme importance—only then could we admit the idea that no pains should be taken to teach them the principles of religion. Such a sentiment may do very well for those who hold that the child is innocent and indifferent to error; but not for those who believe that good conduct can be expected only from right principles.

I shall consider,

1. The MATTER of instruction. And this must be the doctrines and the duties of Scriptural revelation. Many think that only the preceptive part of Scripture should be taught to children—as if the morality of the Bible were in its own

nature, or could be taught to us, totally independent of its doctrines. The foundation of all the precepts of the New Testament is laid in its great fundamental doctrinal truths. The morality of the Christian religion is not of that flimsy kind which many imagine—it is not merely action; but action springing from good principles, flowing in a right direction, and tending to a proper end. To teach a child Christian morals, and leave him ignorant of every truth which identifies its nature, by distinguishing it from every other system, is a deplorable manner of training him up, "in the fear, and nurture, and admonition of the Lord."

You are bound by the sacred authority of God's word, to instruct your children in the knowledge of the divine character, as an omnipresent, omniscient, holy, just, wise, powerful, gracious being, the true God, and God of truth—in the character, the work, and the love of Christ—in the degenerate state of the human heart, with the necessity of an entire renovation of the mind, by the influence of the divine Spirit—in the way of acceptance with God, through faith in the great Mediator—in their accountability to God, as the judge of human conduct; and a future state of happiness and woe.

Let not your minds be diverted from an attention to this important duty, by supposing that such points are entirely beyond the capacity of children; for, in addition to the observation that they understand more than we are aware of, I may remark, that it is entirely a mistake to imagine, that in order to derive benefit from a doctrine revealed to our faith, it is necessary that we should comprehend that doctrine in its full extent. Who can grasp the thought of omnipresence, as an attribute of Jehovah? and yet, who may not derive the most extensive benefit from a belief of this unfathomable idea? And the same observation might be made with respect to many other important truths of revelation, the existence of which is all that is the object of faith--while the mode of that existence is left for the discoveries of eternity to unfold.

But while I enjoin an attention to the foundation, I would be equally solicitous in calling your notice to the superstructure. Assiduously inculcate upon your offspring every moral,

relative and every social duty. Teach them that holiness is necessary both to our felicity on earth and in heaven; and that it includes everything we owe to God as creatures and as sinners—everything we owe to man, in all the different relationships by which we are connected with the human race.

2. The MANNER of religious instruction should also be regarded with attention. This of course, should be as much adapted to the capacity of the child as is possible. The historical parts of Scripture may be employed by every judicious parent, as a medium of conveying instruction to the youthful mind. Children are generally more attached to these parts of God's Word than to any other; and as they contain so many instances in which the anger and the grace of God are displayed, they should be pointed out as exemplifying the divine attributes and displaying in striking colors the degenerate state of the human heart. And when the characters of Scripture are set before us on one page, acting under the dreadful power of sin; and on the next, converted by the grace of God; they afford an opportunity of explaining what man is by nature--and what he must be by grace. In the conduct of eminent believers, and especially in the actions of our blessed Redeemer, are examples to which we might direct their attention for a view of Christian virtues. And by teaching them to observe the workings of their own minds, how much of the deceitfulness and wickedness of the human heart, might they be brought to discover.

Catechizing, by the experience of all ages, has been proved to be an excellent method of communicating religious knowledge—and what advantages do you possess in the incomparable productions of the children's spiritual friend, Dr. Watts! I should also advise you, not merely to allure your offspring to read the Word of God—which certainly ought to be most assiduously done—but also to learn *to memorize* select and impressive portions of Scripture. You thus give them *a Bible in their minds*, which they may find of essential service to them, long after they have lost that which you committed into their hands. To enliven the task, one of Dr. Watts's hymns should be occasionally taught; but, for the most important of all reasons, because it is the Word

of God, I would have their memory chiefly stored with Scripture.

Instruction should not be confined merely to stated seasons, as in other branches of education; but it ought to occupy a considerable share of the *common conversation* of the parent. I greatly fear that there are multitudes of Christian parents who never open their lips to their children on the subject of religion, except on a Sabbath-day evening. This grand and important topic, all the rest of the week, is "lost in silence and forgotten." And is not this training them up to follow to perdition the millions who have plunged into remediless ruin, by the mistake, that godliness is only a Sunday's concern; a thing to be put on and off with the Sunday dress?

Observe, I entreat you, the method which Infinite Wisdom has prescribed for this interesting duty, "You shall teach these words diligently unto your children, and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up." The occurrences of every day, of every hour, would present a proper occasion of instructive observation. Afflictions, and remarkable dispensations of mercy, which follow each other in our own, or in our neighbor's circumstances, in such rapid succession; the ravages of disease, the visits of death, which in this mortal state are scenes so frequently before our eyes; these and innumerable other events may, by a judicious, holy parent, be made the constant preachers of religion—and when it is thus taught, it is represented as an every day's concern.

Still, I do not mean to say, that for a work so important and necessary as that which I am now enforcing, there should be no stated seasons. Among various other gracious and wise purposes for which the Sabbath was instituted, one is, that we might have more than ordinary time, to attend to the religious instruction of our families. And O how many things combine to render this a season peculiarly suitable. Then, when entirely detached from worldly concerns—when the parent's own mind is devoutly impressed with the supreme excellence and importance of eternal things, by looking through the veil of ordinances into eternity itself—when he

returns to the bosom of his family, with all the savor of true religion on his mind—when he has just been stimulated to parental duty, and animated with the sweet theme of parental encouragement—when the subjects of public discussion form a topic for private instruction—then let every father, every mother, not squander away the precious moments which occur between the public services of the day; nor trifle away the 'golden season' by frivolous, idle conversation; but, dividing their little charge between them, endeavor to lead their minds to God.

Here I must also seriously admonish you to attend to the 'spirit of instruction' as well as to the letter of instruction. In this particular, I must again express my fears that many parents are criminally neglectful. Instruction itself is but a means to an important end—that end is impression—serious, lasting, deep impression. Religion is a thing to be felt, as well as known. It is not merely an outward form, but an inward principle! But, alas! this is forgotten by multitudes, as it applies to themselves; and by multitudes more, as it applies to their children. One would be led to imagine, from a survey of their actions, either that their offspring were naturally incapable of feeling the power of true piety, or that it was no part of their duty, as parents, to endeavor that they should experience this influence.

The only faculty of their children's mind which many attempt to bring under the control of religion, is the memory. And with others, who rise one step above them, the highest object of their pursuit is to give them knowledge, without attending at all to its influence upon their heart and conscience. It is flattering, no doubt, to a parent's vanity, to hear a child astonish us by the strength of his memory, in repeating catechism and hymns; but what does it profit his immortal soul, if 'repetition' be all that he is taught? For my part, "I would rather hear him speak five words with his understanding, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." It is with them, as with ourselves, "Though they understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not love, they are nothing." **To have a knowledge of the truths of Scripture, without an experience of their influence upon the heart, is only walking to the bottomless pit with the torch of truth in our right**

hand! If, then, you would come up to the scriptural standard of religious education, admonish them with earnest, affectionate, persevering entreaty, "To remember their Creator in the days of their youth."

I particularly recommend separate advice to each child alone. General addresses are frequently evaded by the very people to whom they are directed—we are apt to hide ourselves in a crowd; and are too much engaged in applying reproof to others, to remember how suitable it is to us—thus using their guilt as a broad, impenetrable shield, to ward off the arrows of conviction from ourselves. Take your children separately into your closet; and there, when they can find no shelter from reproof, no shield against conviction, no possibility of forgetting that they are the single objects of parental advice and affection; there pray with them and for them; there pour out to God the wishes of your heart on their behalf; there entreat them to cheer their parent's heart by choosing the God of their fathers as their portion and their friend. Oh! the moving, melting power of such admonition!

And, as you wish not to counteract all the efforts which you are using for the salvation of your children, do not teach them to think lightly of the work and character of their public instructors. Convince them that these are seeking, in public, what you are in private, their eternal happiness. Take them constantly to the house of God, and instruct them to listen with solemn attention to the exhortations which come from the pulpit. Never, never, in their hearing, indulge a criticizing, faultfinding spirit, or you will soon induce them to believe that they go to the house of God only as fault-catchers. "If you take a malignant pleasure in flinging your censures on your minister, and caviling at his discourses, you are scattering round your families the seeds of damnation, and are not to wonder when you see them gathering the fruits, by despising religion, and preferring a novel, or a play, to those sermons which you have taught them to revile."

3. If you would give either meaning or force to anything you say, add to instruction **a holy and suitable EXAMPLE**. We are all, to a very considerable degree, influenced by

example, and especially children—for 'imitation' is the regent of their soul; and those who are least capable of reason, are most swayed by example. They are remarkably acute in observing the slightest deviations in others from those precepts which are enjoined upon them, and more readily believe their eyes than their ears.

Example derives much of its force from these three circumstances—the regard we feel for the person in whom it is exhibited; the agreement of our taste with his conduct; and the frequency which we possess of witnessing that conduct—and when these things all combine, we are irresistibly carried away by their force, like the little rivulet swelling into the mighty torrent of the mountain. Parents, remember that all these circumstances meet in your example, to give it power over the minds of your offspring, if your conduct be any way inconsistent with your profession as Christians. Such, alas! is the degeneracy of man by nature, that evil has abundantly more power over us than good; it falls in with the current of the heart. Hence there is in their minds a principle which gives amazing force to everything wrong in your conduct; for, at the same time, it is an example always before their eyes, and the example of one whom duty constrains and nature prompts them to love. They are much more likely to do as you **do**--than as you **say**. While they are able to reply, "You who teach others; don't you teach yourselves?" all the convictions which you would fasten upon their minds will bound off, like arrows from an impenetrable shield.

And I am fearful that it is too necessary to say something on the nature of that example which every Christian parent should place before the eyes of his children. It is not sufficient that the copy be without the foul and dismal blots of immorality; it must exhibit all the lines and characters of the beauties of holiness—a mere blank may not teach them any flagrant vice, but it will not instruct them in any spiritual excellence. **The example of many seems only to guard their offspring against going to perdition in the broad high road of profanity, while it leaves all the more secret, though not less ruinous paths of destruction open to their choice.** I would recommend, as a most important point, a constant, sincere, unostentatious display

of eminently spiritual religion—a line of conduct, throughout the whole of which, true godliness is seen to reign; in which there should be knowledge guiding affection—the ardor of the Christian, without the wildness of the enthusiast—holy joyfulness, without sinful levity—exemplary holiness, without monkish gloom—vigilance in serving God, without indolence in worldly duties—piety towards Jehovah, blended with meekness, benevolence, and affection towards mankind—religion surrounding with its radiant glory, the father, the husband, the master, and the neighbor; like the brilliant gem, sparkling amidst the polished gold—in short, morality, in all its branches, springing from sterling godliness.

There should be uninterrupted consistency of conduct. A Christian in the church, a worldling everywhere else—a saint at the family altar and a cruel tyrant at the family table—always at public worship and never in private worship—fawning and courteous towards the richer brethren, and contemptuous towards the poor—one day all for God, and the next, all for the world, Satan, and self. Such an example as this, if it does anything, will do mischief—for your children will soon find out whether there be consistency in your conduct; and a defect here will counteract all the influence of partial and occasional godliness. I entreat you therefore to consider the importance of consistent spiritual religion; for as your offspring very soon understand that divine aphorism, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

If they hear and see nothing in your conduct, except on a Sabbath day, that directs their minds to eternal objects, they can hardly be persuaded that those objects engage much of your affection. When they see you so absorbed in worldly concerns, as to secure scarcely any time for the duties of the closet or the family, running through them with negligent haste, sometimes omitting them altogether--what can they imagine, but that religion is merely a thing to talk about. If you thus convert your house into a temple of Mammon, can you wonder to see them growing up the worshipers of that idol, which, by your conduct, you have taught them to adore? When they see you indulging in as much conformity to the world as you can, without giving up

the very profession of Christianity, what force will your exhortation carry with it, when you thus admonish them, "Be not conformed to this world?" When your house is never the resort of the righteous, but only of the mirthful, the worldly, and the rich, how can you expect that they will listen to your advice, to choose only the the godly as their companions?

If then, you would wish your children to go to heaven, do not think merely of *sending* them there, but *lead* them; for, as Tillotson observes, "to give them good instruction, and a bad example, is but beckoning to them with the head, to shew them the way to heaven; while we take them by the hand, and lead them in the way to hell."

Before I leave this part of my discourse, I would also insist upon the necessity of not only setting them good examples at home, but of using the utmost caution that they be not exposed to the contagion of bad example abroad. It should therefore be your business to select for them suitable companions. "He that walks with wise men, shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." One bad associate, negligently admitted to your children, may be the first step to irretrievable ruin. Many a wretch, from the scaffold, has traced back his infamy to this source—and many, in a still more dreadful situation, are cursing the day in which they first formed an unsuitable connection with a companion who led them astray from God.

Of course, this establishes also, the importance of choosing a proper person to superintend the general education of your children. I wish there were no just ground for reproach on many Christian parents, for neglecting this momentous subject. It is a lamentable fact, to the existence of which the experience of multitudes can testify, that one single week at school has frequently effaced from the mind the good impressions which were the result of years of parental solicitude and instruction at home. There is scarcely one single act of a parent's conduct which requires so much holy caution as the choice of a school, and yet with many people scarcely one that receives so little. What a shameful neglect is it, both of Christian principle and parental care, to make choice of a situation for the benefit of a few showy and

useless accomplishments, or, at best, literary advantages, where the soul, the immortal soul, is the last object of regard. Christian fathers and mothers! how can you ask of God with any degree of confidence, that he would save your children from being devoured by the roaring lion, when you yourselves have thrown them into his very den?

4. Let it not be supposed that any system of education can be complete without **PRAYER**.

"Every good gift, and every perfect gift, comes down from the Father of lights." Without the sacred influence of the Divine Spirit, the most judicious, affectionate, and persevering efforts will fall short of the desired end. It is, however, an encouraging thought, that, as no heart is so hardened by age and sin, but that the omnipotent grace of God can renovate it; so there is none so tender in childhood but that he can inscribe upon it his name and his image. Let us therefore "pray without ceasing;" since it holds as true, with respect to children, as to the most aged and obstinate transgressor, that "Paul may plant and Apollos water--but God gives the increase." Not one soul was ever converted to God independently of his grace. This work is entirely his own, yet he generally performs it by blessing human means. But I need not enlarge on this head, as it is, perhaps, that part of parental duty which is less neglected than any other by real Christians. Multitudes pray, who do nothing else; but let such remember that we must seek as well as ask.

Having thus considered the means which should be used by every Christian parent for the salvation of his children, I will,

III. Exhibit the **ENCOURAGEMENT** which the Scriptures afford, that such exertion will be blessed to the accomplishment of their desired end.

How frequently is it the case, that when we admonish you to the use of such means as I have mentioned, you turn away and exclaim, "Ah! but we cannot give grace to our children." Sometimes this is the excuse of indolence and cruel indifference. You do not act thus with respect to their bodies, although it is as much beyond your power to make

their food nourishing as it is to make the means of salvation useful; and no one could stand acquitted of the charge of murder, who starved his child, because he could not bless his food. But this exclamation is sometimes the result of ignorance and error; and thus, through mistaken views of divine truth, many go with a forlorn hope to that work which affords the greatest encouragement to success. One would be led to suppose from such people that education, carried on with a view to real religion, were an experiment upon the human mind altogether beyond the directions of Scripture; and the success of which was not only doubtful, but very unlikely. What then, does the Word of God give us no encouragement to attempt the salvation of our children? Has Jehovah, ever attentive in other things to the happiness of his people, passed over in profound silence a subject which involves so much of their comfort? Has he given us no ground to hope that our exertions will be blessed? Has he left our hearts to be tossed about upon an ocean of doubt and agitation without a rudder or a compass? Certainly not. His Word is full of encouragement. Everything warrants the expectation that an affectionate, diligent, scriptural system of education will be blessed to the salvation of our offspring. The Divine Command and the Divine Conduct, both encourage such a hope.

1. The **DIVINE COMMAND** warrants this expectation. We certainly have some ground to expect the possession of a blessing, which is to be obtained, in the use of certain means, when we are really using the very means which God himself has appointed for that purpose. For while he leaves ample room for the exercise of his own wise sovereignty, he certainly does not mean to mock us by setting us upon the performance of certain actions, which have no tendency, no connection, no end. It is the property of folly, and not of consummate wisdom, to act without rule and without design. Indeed, the expectation which I am endeavoring to excite, you indulge with respect to almost all other ordinances. Why, when your eyes look round upon a crowded auditory, sitting under the sound of the Gospel, why thrills your heart with this delightful sentiment, "Surely some wanderers from God and bliss will be gathered into the fold of Christ tonight?" Is it not for these two reasons, that God has appointed the preaching of the Gospel for the

conversion of sinners, and that there is a fitness between the means and the end? Is it not for the same reasons that you expect to be edified by prayer, reading the Scriptures, sitting down at the table of the Lord, hearing sermons? Why then should the religious education of children be the only ordinance which fails to produce expectation of success. That it is an ordinance of God, is evident from his Word; for was it not under the spirit of inspiration that Solomon exhorted you "to train up a child in the way he should go," and that Paul said, "You fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" And that the means are suited to the end needs no proof. Take heed, then, of dishonoring God, by thinking lightly of his institutions.

2. This expectation is strengthened by a review of the **DIVINE CONDUCT**. Look at the church of God. Of whom is it chiefly composed? Do we not find that a very large proportion of its members are the seed of the righteous? For while the curse of God, like the air of a pestilence, enters invisibly into the families of the wicked; the blessing of God, like the light of heaven, silently descends into the habitation of the just. As the oil poured on the head of Aaron, which flowed down to the skirts of his garment, so have we often seen the blessing of God flowing from the parent down to the youngest branch of the household. I acknowledge that, frequently, Jehovah "calls those to be a people who were not a people; for he has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens;" but, generally, he raises up the son in the stead of the father. The church, like the fabled phoenix, seems to grow old, expire, and from its own ashes send forth a successor. The instances of conversion in advanced age, compared with those which take place in early life, are rare; and, indeed, many of those which do occur, seem to be only the resurrection of impressions long buried under a heap of youthful passions and worldly cares. How often have we heard the rapturous exclamation of the Christian father, "Rejoice with me, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." The prodigal left his father's house, but could not leave altogether his parent's instructions; these, although apparently lost to him, were still in the keeping of his conscience. The sun of prosperity shone out its day, and then sunk down behind the

hills of dissipation, and the night of affliction, dreary and tempestuous, followed. And this was the time for conscience to do its work—then, amidst the surrounding darkness, rose in rapid succession the long forgotten counsels of parental solicitude; and the very instructions which he once shunned as his enemies, were embraced by him as his guides, to lead him to his father and his God.

These observations, of course, apply only to those places where Christianity is known and professed; for when the Gospel comes to a people who have long sat in darkness, we may expect numerous converts of all ages; but when it has been long preached in purity and plenty, when ordinances have been regularly kept up, few, comparatively speaking, but those who are called in early life, are ever called at all. Mr. Baxter, in some part of his works, has this opinion, that if family instruction were properly and generally maintained, preaching would soon cease to be the common method of conversion. Thus sentiment, although it be certainly rather hyperbolical, deserves regard. And it is corroborative of all that I have said, that most of those who are recorded on the page of inspiration as eminent for piety, were called by God in early life; such, for instance, as Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, Josiah, Jeremiah, Obadiah, Daniel, John the Baptist, Timothy; and no other reason, says the judicious Witherspoon, has ever yet been given for our Savior's distinguishing John the apostle by particular marks of affection, except that he was the youngest of the twelve. (See Witherspoon's Sermons, vol. 4.)

And here it will not be amiss to observe, that the very expectation itself which I am now encouraging, has considerable influence in attaining the desired end. Is it not one of those means which God frequently uses in the salvation of the children of his people? In a thousand instances we perceive that, when God intends to bestow a great and signal benefit, he first excites a cheerful expectation and desire. Do we not learn from his Word that the chief qualification, if so it may be called, for receiving many of his favors, is the earnestness of our desire, and the firmness of our expectation of them? Generally speaking, the most hopeful parent will be the most successful one. A mind paralyzed with despair, or even benumbed with

despondency, is likely to do very little in the way of beneficial exertion. It is an old, but it is a very true proverb, "He that thinks he works for a song, is not very likely to sing at his work;" and it may be said concerning religion, as well as of everything else, that hopelessness and liveness are a wedded pair. Hence, when the bosom of the Christian parent beats high with the pleasing expectation of seeing his efforts crowned with the salvation of his child, what fervor does such a hope impart to his prayers! what delight, what animation, what patience, to all his exertions! On the other hand, how dull, laborious, and irksome are those endeavors which are carried on with a fearful despondency of success!

But now, what shall I answer to the objection which some, perhaps, may oppose to all that I have said, by asking, "Is not this reasoning against fact; for do we not see the children of many eminent believers living 'without God and without hope in the world?' Do we not read of such instances in Scripture? Was it not the case with the very child for whom the prayer which forms the text was uttered?"

It is painful to force the wounded spirits of those who are conscious of sinful neglect, to bring sufficient arguments to confute this objection. Many, I am persuaded, are feeling all the agony of a bleeding heart, in seeing their children walking in the broad road to destruction; to whom it may seem an unnecessary and wanton renewal of their anguish, to hear it said that the dagger which wounded them was their own neglect. But, for the instruction of others it must be declared, that many, very many of the instances alluded to, may be traced to parental delinquency.

Look into the practice of Christian parents in general, and you will not search long without finding various obstacles to the success of religious education. By how many are the means of instruction totally neglected, with how many more is it nothing else than a lifeless form; a part of the employment which is destined to fill up the hours of the Sabbath not devoted to public worship! The relaxation of domestic discipline with some; the opposite extreme of undue severity in others; the limitation of instruction to principles, while their influence on the heart and character is disregarded; the unsuitable temper and conduct of many

who impart the best instructions; the neglect of choosing proper companions, schools, and situations in life for children; these, and various other sinful defects are sufficient to account for a very large proportion of the cases, to which I have been directed by the objection.

And if you refer to the examples produced from Scripture, in which the children of the righteous knew not the God of their fathers, you will find some glaring impropriety in parental conduct. Who can wonder to read of the crimes committed by Hophni and Phinehas, when he recollects the want of discipline in Eli's family? Who is surprised to hear the sorrowful accents of David's confession, "My house is not so with God," when he considers the awful backslidings of that great man, and reads, besides this, "that he had never displeased the wicked Adonijah, by saying, why have you done so?" Did not a wicked Esau descend from a partial father, and Simeon and Levi from an indulgent one? And with respect to Ishmael, his circumstances were so peculiar that his future conduct forms no objection whatever to the principle which I have endeavored to establish.

Still, however, it must be admitted that there are not a few instances in which the most judicious system of education has been quite unsuccessful. The most affectionate discipline, the most scriptural instructions, the most holy example, the most fervent prayer, have sometimes proved no obstacles, or at least but ineffectual ones, in the career of a profligate child. And where this is unhappily the case, we can only recommend to such afflicted parents the consolation of David, who, even upon this dark and dismal cloud, saw as it were the beautiful colors of the rainbow, the emblem of the covenant, and exclaimed, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." Such cases only prove that God is a sovereign in the distribution of his favors, but do not at all destroy the connection which he himself has established between the means and the end—they do not disprove the sentiment as a general principle, but only prove that it is not an invariable rule—they excite just so much fear as is sufficient to preserve our hope from degenerating into unwarrantable

presumption.

I will now **CONCLUDE** by addressing—

1. Those parents who altogether neglect the religious education of their children. Unnatural fathers! wicked mothers! I address you as the advocate of those whom you are solemnly bound by every tie of nature and religion to conduct to the highest bliss of which their nature is susceptible, but whom your cruel neglect abandons to the most horrid misery which they can possibly endure. This is a species of cruelty to be found no where else in the whole universe but in your bosom; every other creature teaches its young to seek the highest good which their nature can enjoy, and to exercise the chief faculties of which it is capable. "The sea monsters draw out their bosom to their young. The eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings. The young lions roar after their prey and seek their meat," taught by the parent beast; while you habitually neglect to instruct your offspring in everything which can establish and perpetuate their real felicity.

But for the kind instruction of some benevolent stranger, or the mere accident of their falling into association with others better taught than themselves, your children would to this hour have remained almost entirely ignorant that they had a soul, or that it was necessary to make any effort for its salvation. "You would not have your love for them suspected; but wretched indeed are those children who share only in a solicitude which asks, 'What shall they eat; what shall they drink; or with what shall they be clothed?' What is the body to the soul? What is time to eternity? What is it to dispose of them advantageously in life, and leave them unprepared for death; unprovided for a new, a never-ending, a changeless period of existence? Are you the instruments of bringing these hapless beings into existence--only barbarously to sacrifice them? Such parents are more cruel than Herod. He slew the children of others, these slay their own. He only destroyed the body, these destroy the soul." (Mr. Jay.)

Permit me to mention to you one of the cruel practices of

the ancient Carthaginians. They had a detestable idol, to which they offered up their children in sacrifice, and which was so formed that an infant put into its hands stretched out to receive it, would immediately fall into a gulf of fire. The mothers themselves performed the dreadful rites, by giving their own offspring into the hands of the idol, and always thought it an unfortunate omen if the little victim were offered weeping, and therefore by apparently fond kisses and caresses endeavored to extort a smile at the dreadful moment when it was given into the hands of the hideous image. You shudder at the recital. You call such parents savage monsters.

But pause for a moment, and enquire if there be nothing like this in your conduct. Is not sin an idol more dreadful still? Are not its hands ever stretched out to receive its unhappy victims? Is there not a gulf of fire below, to receive them as they drop from its grasp? Are you not sacrificing your children to this dreadful idol? Is not all your concern for their temporal interest, while you neglect their souls, only a cruel solicitude that they may pass smiling into the hands of the destroyer?

Imagine, said Mr. Flavel, that you had carried the plague into your family, and lived to witness your children lie dying by the walls of your house, surely if not possessed of a tiger's heart, such a spectacle must pierce you to the very soul. Oh consider! that very scene, only of a moral kind, is before you—your children are infected with the plague of the heart, and they derived the disease from you. Yes, they have derived from you a depraved nature, and can you witness them with indifference sinking into eternal death through the malady which they caught first from you? Can you be satisfied to have been thus accessory to their ruin, and now make no effort by religious instruction to stop the spreading contagion? What cruelty! What barbarity!

If nothing else will move you to a consideration of this subject, permit me now to direct your view forward to that time when the guilt and punishment of such neglect will be felt in all their tremendous weight. The solemn period is rapidly approaching when you must meet those very children at the bar of a justly offended God, whose souls

form no object of your present regard. It will be a dreadful interview. No language can describe, no imagination can conceive the horrors of that scene when they, dreadful idea, shall be your most violent and bitter accusers. In addition to all the weight and torment of your own curse, what unspeakable anguish will your hearts feel when such language as this issues from the lips of your now loving and beloved child. "There stand the guilty beings whom I once honored as my parents, but whom I now execrate as the murderers of my immortal soul! Cruel monsters! Is this the end of your parental affection? See to what misery of your own offspring you have been instrumental. What avails it now that you provided for me a fortune? Riches, honors, pleasures, are now forever gone. Why did you keep me in fatal ignorance of true religion? Why did you choose for me only such companions as would be fellow-workers with you in the dreadful business of my ruin? When did you ever admonish me to seek the Lord? Had you attended to my soul, as you ought to have done, instead of training me up in the way of ignorance, pride, and wickedness--I might have now been with yonder happy throng, and not thus branded with the infamy and horror of the divine curse. Since you have dragged me into the vortex of perdition, you have only brought me to be your eternal tormentor; for while I feel any sense of the happiness which I have forever lost, or of the misery to which I am forever condemned, I shall never cease to execrate the names of those who had so large a share in my damnation!"

Avoid this dreadful scene! Escape, I beseech you, this terrible accusation! But ah! what can I expect from you, with respect to the souls of your children, while your own soul is neglected, abandoned, and despised! Here the mischief begins. You see no danger in your own condition as a sinner, and are not likely to see any in theirs. You feel no joy, you perceive no beauty, you estimate no worth in religion, and how can we expect that you should recommend it to them. Ignorant, you cannot teach; blind, you cannot guide; dead, you cannot animate. In your own pursuits the salvation of the soul is the last object of desire and exertion, and it is not probable that you will make it the first in your attention to them. Begin, then, I entreat you, this vital, this important, this necessary duty--by fleeing to the Savior for that mercy

which you have hitherto despised. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved and your house." Do not, I beseech you, by neglecting religion, as with the same fatal dagger, commit suicide on your own soul, and murder on the souls of your children. But rather like Noah, enter into the ark provided against the deluge of divine wrath, taking with you your sons and your daughters.

2. Christian parents! you whose greatest felicity in the possession of children is derived from devoting them to God, and training them up for him, I earnestly admonish you to go forward in this good work. A variety of motives might be adduced to urge on your persevering and vigilant exertions; but I will now name only one, and that shall be, the prospect and consequences of success. What if God should hear your prayer! What if Ishmael should live before him! What if you should soon encircle in the arms of affection, children doubly yours-- yours by the ties of nature, and also by the bonds of saving religion! O with what sacred raptures of delight will you mark the dawn of reason, followed by the day of grace! O to see the character of the man gradually forming under the influence and guidance of true piety! What new pleasure will you derive from all your fellowship with your children, when you realize in them your fellow soldiers in the Christian combat, your fellow laborers in the Christian employ, your fellow travelers in the Christian pilgrimage, and your fellow heirs to the Christian inheritance. Now you feel considerable joy in leading them in your hand to the house of God, and hearing them join the sacred melody of the service, with lisping and perhaps unmeaning praises; but what is this to the joy which you will experience when you hear them exclaiming from choice, "I was glad when they said unto me let us go up into the house of the Lord!"

What new pleasure and interest will you find in our social meetings for prayer, when your own sons are the leaders of your devotion, and your advocates with God! With what fresh relish will you partake of the sacred Supper, when the very next guests at the table are your own children! With what pleasing emotions will you bow before the family altar, when you seem to hear the sincere and fervent Amen responding to your petitions from the lips of your worshipping

offspring! What delight will thrill through your soul, when in your own closet you hear the soft murmurs of their secret devotions, sounding like the sweet fellowship of God and man! And when many a heartbroken parent sees his profligate son issuing forth to the midnight revel, or reeling home with the vacant stare of the drunkard, and the lascivious appearance of the debauchee, you will see yours retiring to commune with God, or descending from the mount, with his face shining with the glory of Jehovah.

Should prosperity be your lot, and a kind Providence bless all your exertions, with what pleasure will you lay up the overplus wealth, after religion and humanity have received their proportion, recollecting that it is for those who will not squander it away in the pleasures of sin, but who will use it in part for the support of the Gospel and the alleviation of human sorrow. Or should adversity be your inheritance, how soothing to all your griefs will it be to hail to the sorrowful abode your own children with the language of Scripture, "How beautiful are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings, who publishes salvation, who says your God reigns," and thus receive the consolations of the Gospel at their hands.

Should God call you to weep around their dying beds, and close their eyes in death, you will assuage the anguish of separation, by recollecting that a few more rolling years will unite you with them, to part no more. Or perhaps you may be called to take the precedence in death and glory; then I see you struggling amidst the agonies of dissolution, yet cheered and supported, not only with the near approach of all those brilliant prospects which faith holds up to your view, but also with the sweet assurance that your children are following on in the same road to endless rest. I see you in your last encounter, as you fall beneath the stroke of death, smiling, through joy, that your sons are nobly fighting in the same field and under the same banner.

The progress of time soon sends your children after you. One after another you welcome them to the celestial city, and conduct them into the presence of the Lamb; until at length, the happy number all arrived, I see you presenting the dear objects of parental affection, and the sweet reward

of parental duty, before the presence of his glory, with this grateful and adoring language, "Behold I, and the children which you have given me." O what imagination, in its most vigorous sallies, ever yet could form any tolerable conception of the bliss which attends the meeting of a family in heaven! Like shipwrecked mariners who have survived the fury of the storm, assembling on the shore of safety, with what mutual and delightful salutations will they congratulate each other! There they shall meet beyond the power or the fear of separation; there they shall renew their accustomed communion, without any of those imperfections which disturbed it upon earth; there they shall feel their mutual attachment drawing them closer to each other, as they draw nearer to the central point of their affection; there they shall adore and triumph together, with the innumerable company that encircle the throne forever; and there, as united fires brighten each other's blaze, and as many concordant sounds make the finer harmony, so their union in bliss will make the heaven of each the more delightful. "It will be joy which no eye has seen, no ear heard, and which has never entered into the heart of man to conceive!" Amen.

[HOME](#)[QUOTES](#)[SERMONS](#)[BOOKS](#)