

CRUCIFIED TO LIVE

“I am crucified . . . nevertheless I live”

by

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

PAUL AND THE PARENTAL HEARTH

“Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32)

We could wish for a more complete biographical account of Paul, especially as touching upon his early home life. What material is extant is more transcendental than documentary, and inferential comments permit too readily of speculation. There is ample suggestion, well-founded, to support the thought of exceptional training. Our acquaintanceship with any derogatory aspect of his life, before conversion, is restricted to his bitter aversion to the Christian people and their position.

This, in a sense, was complimentary to the strictness of his Jewish teaching. His schooling indicated home encouragement, and his connection with Jewish leaders bespoke for him the best of moral standards. If what he advanced as counsel to others is a concomitant to his own ideals, then, he was the possessor of the highest principles which, basically, result from proper attention in those more tender years. One thing is evident: when Christ entered his life and the Holy Spirit endowed him with heavenly wisdom, he gave to men the most thorough advice regarding the home.

Paul propounded love as the premise of home building.

The basic principles of better behavior issue from a quality known as love. It is love in its many manifestations which furnishes the endearment, the patience, the sympathy and the kindness which combine to make home ties strong and enduring, and friendships true and abiding. It is love which enables diverse personalities to delight in the continued company of one another.

Husbands are directed toward Christ for the standard of headship, the authority of which is to be exercised in love. In fact, love is the power that operates a home as evidenced in providing, in protecting, and in promoting. Paul was pointed in his exhortations to the head of the home. **“Husbands,”** said he, **“love your wives even as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it . . . so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies”** (Ephesians 5:25, 28). This is a holy standard. Christ set His love upon His bride (the Church) in eternity past and gave His life for her redemption.

Now, He prepares her eternal abode and provides her an incorruptible, unfading inheritance. With tenderness, He promised to care, to cleanse and to come for her. Then, the Apostle turns to the companion and mother-to-be, adding his timely counsel: **“Let the wife see that she reverence her husband”** (Ephesians 5:33).

If there is disunity between the husband and wife, who are the makers of the home, there can be little promise of developing any of the finer characteristics of home life. In a more general manner, the Apostle applied the principles of love to the whole family. He had a workable formula for the surmounting of differences which rise from varying dispositions and affected temperaments. It was this:

“Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Paul prescribed pre-marital compatibility.

Marriage is a decision of consequence. He who knows the end from the beginning has sounded forth in clarion notes the warning against ill-advised and inevitably dangerous procedure in marital anticipations. We have not only the advice of Paul on the subject, but his firm commands as well—instruction Divinely inspired.

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,” was his unequivocal statement. This does not refer exclusively to the subject at hand, but it covers the matter with unquestionable pertinence. Compatibility, according to this precept, does not consist merely of corresponding ideals, or like morals, or similar training nor yet of membership in the same church. The word **“ye”** denotes born-again people.

This is Christian instruction; and, therefore, the counsel of God for His own dear people. However well-mated a couple may seem to be, it is a flagrant violation of the Divine will for a Christian to become yoked in marriage with one who rejects salvation and thereby tramples underfoot the blood of the Son of God. At once Divine favor is eclipsed.

Marriage is ordained in the very laws of our being, but, He Who ordained this relationship, clearly and emphatically insists that it is to be **“ONLY IN THE LORD”** (I Corinthians 7:39).

Paul enunciated these words with force, but many Christians have deliberately ignored them, choosing rather the affections of an unbelieving partner in preference to the honour and blessing and companionship of the eternal God. Where there is spiritual incompatibility in marriage, there is at once an imperfect foundation on which a couple tries in vain to erect a proper superstructure. Domestic difficulty, child delinquency and divorce, all are attributable to misapplication of the Divine regulations governing marriage and its attendant responsibilities.

Those who close their eyes and stop their ears to heavenly counsel must inevitably prove that **“the way of the transgressor is hard.”** One thing is clear despite the reasoning of blinded love: God firmly forbids a believer to marry an unbeliever.

Paul proposed prenatal ponderings.

The period of parental expectancy is a time of deliberation. “*Deliberation*” means to weigh *in mind or to carefully consider*. Who knows, but God, the many and varied thoughts which fill the mind of an expectant mother? During these months of waiting, the mother-to-be cannot but dream of happy, holy experiences with and for the one she carries so near to her heart. A Christian woman would think Christian thoughts, pray for Divine blessing, and hope for spiritual joy. The unchristian woman thinks, too, and dreams, as well, but how can she have Christ in her thoughts when she does not have Him in her heart? What she plans and what she does is without the consciousness of God’s presence and blessing.

Paul, by heavenly direction, delineated many important factors which merit careful consideration.

When the Corinthian Christians sought his advice relative to marital relations (I Corinthians 7:1), he prefaced his answer by inquiring, “**What? know ye not your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?**”

To weigh this fact in mind is a certain solution for many problems in all eras. In keeping with this query is the additional instruction, “**Be filled with the Spirit**” (Ephesians 5:18).

What tonic of greater potency could be found to stimulate the soul to more pleasant frames than to be flooded with the presence of God? Then, the Apostle called for unceasing prayer, cleansing of heart and mind, the study of the Bible, circumspect behavior and joyful melody in the heart. The husband was specifically required to love his wife “**even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it.**”

This was designed to promote sympathy and faithfulness so necessary for the trials incident to child-bearing. Together, the Christian parents should envisage their offspring serving the Lord. A mother of six missionaries is said to have repaired to a quiet trysting place on the day of her wedding where she prayed most solemnly, “O Lord, I am not prepared to give birth to one child that will not honour Thee.” This is what makes homes Christian.

Paul proffered postnatal considerations.

The postnatal period is a time of dedication. Hannah is one of the best illustrations available. Let us note her own statement which was uttered when she went before the Lord to worship, “**For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord**” (I Samuel 1:27, 28).

The dedication of children is not a ritualistic formality, but a humble demonstration of parental desire to place at the disposal of the Giver all that He has entrusted to them. Its real significance inheres in the hearts of the parents and not in the appearance of the act.

When once it is said, “**Lord, this child is thine,**” then it is incumbent upon the parents to do all in their power to create the right atmosphere and to provide the proper encouragement for the child’s development in Christian ideals.

It proves to be a good psychological gesture to apprise the children in later years of that act of their dedication to God. This can be accomplished in story to the small children and by kindly reminders to the older ones. It is even appropriate and often profitable to pray in their hearing for its fulfillment.

We recall, with pleasure, the testimony of a man to the effectiveness of this procedure. He related how his mother wrote a poem and placed it in the front of a gift Bible to him. It read, in part:

“I gave you to God in your cradle, my boy,
I have taught you the best that I knew;
And as long as His mercy permits me to live,
I shall never cease praying for you.”

The cover of that Bible was worn and the pages were torn; in fact, the mother’s writing was scarcely legible, but it had served its purpose. With moistened eyes, the man added, “Mother has long since gone to glory, and I have wandered far and wide, but her message lingers still.”

Paul knew what proficient imitators and keen observers are little children. Thus, he counseled, “**Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth**” (Ephesians 4:29). He also urged that parents “**walk circumspectly**” (Ephesians 5:15), which means, that from every conceivable angle, the life should be commending in character.

A child is a realist. He notices far more than is revealed. A certain little lad left his toys one day to ask his mother, “Does God look like daddy?” The mother, attempting to gain her equilibrium, lost through this abrupt and unexpected question, enquired as to why her son was seeking this knowledge. His explanation was simple. He was merely wondering, “Does God always have a cigar in His mouth?” Doubtless, the most indelible impressions are those registered in early, formative years. Thus, the Holy Spirit is emphatic in His didactical directives. The parents’ submission to each other is qualified by the phrase, “**in the fear of God**” (Ephesians 5:21). With this qualification accepted and applied, neither would distrust the other. Then, peace and pleasantness would permeate the home, fellowship and joy would ingratiate the environment and children would find the atmosphere conducive to proper development.

Paul pressed the matter of parental concern.

The children of a family can be agents of joy or the producers of sorrow. Obedience is the deciding factor. Thus, it is a Divine command that children obey their parents in the Lord. Obedience is the product of honour. Perhaps that is why a promise is added to the Lord’s command for children to honour their parents. Malachi said, “**Honour is due unto a father**” (1:6). God rewards honor by honoring (I Samuel 2:30).

Paul explained how honour is elicited from children by the parents. **“And ye fathers,”** he urged, **“provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”** (Ephesians 6:4).

The parental period is the time of direction and of counsel. Parental concern allows no cessation. The day of training may and does terminate, but not until children are established in the basic principles of Christian conduct and relationship. Then, in the very nature of things, when they move out from the parental hearth to find their respective places in life, a nation has worthwhile citizens, God has true witnesses, and parents experience the crowning glory of duty well done. This applies not only to the progenitors and bearers of children, but also to those who stand *in loco parentis*, for the responsibility is just as pressing on the part of foster parents. Training greatly affects destiny.

Paul indicated unusual pleasure in recalling the faith of Timothy. **“I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also”** (II Timothy 1:5).

He attributed Timothy’s zeal, in a large measure, to the example of a godly mother and saintly grandmother. Paul seemed to have had a close acquaintanceship with these maternal personalities. Their faith, to his mind, was genuine and firm. It could not be easily forgotten. He was persuaded that this same faith had been inculcated in young Timothy. It will be noticed that the Apostle was referring to a *“dwelling or continuing”* faith. He spoke about a mother’s influence evident in her daughter, and that daughter’s faith deeply implanted in the life of a son. This is but one indication of the far-reaching effect of a godly home. “Like parent, like child” is a maxim of some basic truth.

On another occasion, Paul touched on the value of Bible teaching in the home. **“And that from a child,”** he reminded Timothy, **“thou hast known the holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”** (II Timothy 3:15).

This reference yields several enlightening thoughts.

First, there was parental belief in the power of the Scriptures to make one wise.
Second, there was parental confidence in the fact that the Scriptures lead to salvation.
Third, there was careful parental attention to the teaching of Scripture in the home.
Fourth, there was application on the part of the child in learning the Scriptures.

A genuinely Christian home is characterized by the prominence of the Bible in the love and the life of the family.

Basic domestic principles are universal and immutable. Home is the rallying place of the affections, where kindred hearts become inseparably entwined about each other. It is the place where mutual compromise and loving forbearance develop a sympathy and consideration which greatly affect the whole of one’s life. It is the medium through which come the richest and truest joys of earth.

Paul was not acquainted with day schools and nurseries as a convenience for career mothers in an unbalanced economy. He contended the proper employment for wives and mothers was that of **“keepers of the home”** (Titus 2:5). They were called upon to be diligent in the care of their husbands and of their children.

If there is failure here, the home structure is threatened with collapse. Maternal home neglect is the harbinger of juvenile delinquency and adult crime. If the mother; according to the Apostle’s teaching, is **“discreet and chaste,”** then her heart becomes the child’s schoolroom and her knee his altar. Through her loving direction, the tender lessons of truth and right are taught and learned. Before the fathers, Paul laid this strong statement: **“If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel”** (I Timothy 5:8).

The Lord Jesus hallowed a humble home in Nazareth by His presence there. He was very man but not variable like man. He Faced the same vicissitudes but without vacillation. We are assured that the Lord is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works (Psalm 145:17).

Based upon these irrefutable facts, we can safely assume that His every behavior in domestic matters constituted a perfect example.

The Scriptures state that **“He went down with them to Nazareth.”** That is, He lived there, in a home, under ordinary conditions with Mary and Joseph. Many have inferred that Jesus helped Joseph in the duties of his trade as a carpenter, building and repairing, wielding the hammer and saw. This could all be true, but the nugget of truth most pertinent to our consideration is that He **“was subject unto them.”** While being obedient unto His heavenly Father (Philippians 2:8), He was also obedient to the parents of the home in which the Divine purpose had placed Him. While being submissive to God, He was subservient to man. His was a perfect example indeed.

The Apostle was striving for the loftiest of domestic ideals and the richest family benediction in his instructions for the home. His precepts were marked by accurate proportion and true perspective. He was conveying principles applicable to all people for every age.

These instructions assured, and still assure, the maximum of joy and happiness, and win for a family internal comfort and external esteem.

In brief, they simply called for a father to support his family, the wife to submit to her husband as unto the Lord, the parents to love and to train their children, the children to honour and to obey their parents, and together, to reverence, to worship and to serve the Lord.

What a happy, holy estate would be the experience of families if God’s Word were given its rightful place! The paternal hearth must prevail as the rallying place of the affections and the basic training ground for earth’s pilgrims.

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