

THE DUTY OF PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN

A DISCOURSE BASED ON

PROVERBS 22:6

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A Word to the Modern Reader from Adventist Heritage Ministry

This sermon on child training by Alexander Proudfit is valuable in its own right. It holds special, additional interest, however, because it played a direct role in converting WILLIAM MILLER from being a deist to being a Christian.

The story is told by Sylvester Bliss in his *Memoirs of William Miller* (though Bliss slightly misspelled the author's name as "Proudfoot"). *Tell It to the World* retells the story this way:

September 11, 1816, rolled around, the second anniversary of the victory at Plattsburg [at which Captain William Miller had helped defeat the British]. A public dance was scheduled; a sermon, too, on the night before. The visiting evangelist sent the people home bathed in tears. A revival was on and the dance was off. Next Sunday it was Miller's turn to read again [in the local Baptist church], this time a homily in Proudfit called, "The Duty of Parents to Their Children." *Overcome by emotion in the middle, he could not make it to the end.*

Miller's awakening conscience soon afterward led him into deep Bible study and the discovery, he says, "of just such a Saviour as I needed." The Scriptures "became my delight, and in Jesus I found a friend."

Alexander Proudfit was a resident of the same Washington County in which Miller's home was located. He became fairly well known for his published

sermons, which evidently found use not only for private devotions but also as material a deacon could read when his pastor was unavailable on a Sunday morning. Miller, though not a deacon, was often asked to read such a sermon in the absence of the pastor at his local Baptist church in Low Hampton, New York.

In the spring of 1816, Miller had caught himself taking God's name in vain, a habit that he had greatly disliked among his fellow soldiers while in the army. Recognition of himself as a sinner plunged him into despair. Now, in September, as he read this particular sermon on parental duties, his native honesty combined with his new responsiveness to the Holy Spirit to prevent him from teaching his neighbors what he did not practice at home. He melted into tears and left the pulpit before the sermon was done.

As you read the sermon for yourself, you might like to try to locate the point at which you think Miller felt he had to quit.

And perhaps you would like to ask yourself the question, "Could I in honesty read the sermon from beginning to end in front of my own congregation?"

N.B. This reprint has sought to reproduce the spelling and punctuation of the original, including anomalies.

SERMON VIII

PROVERBS 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go.

THE Hebrew word which is here translated *train up*, has a variety of significations, and is therefore translated differently in different places. Sometimes it signifies to *dedicate* or *consecrate* from common to sacred uses, as the Jews dedicated by prayer and thanksgiving their private houses, and as Solomon solemnly consecrated the temple to the living God. Sometimes it signifies to *train* or *discipline* as the soldier is taught the science of war, and reduced to habits of order and obedience to his superiors. Abraham is therefore represented as arming his *trained* servants, those whom he had instructed and disciplined in the art of war. There is another translation given to this word which is perfectly agreeable to the original, and adds much to the emphasis of the expression. "Train up a child at the mouth, or entrance, or beginning of his way." This phrase in the boldness of eastern style expresses that early concern which parents should manifest for the spiritual interests of their offspring: They ought to see that their first step be taken "in the narrow way which leads to everlasting life;" that they should be early directed

to the choice of religion as their honor, and interest, and happiness. The sooner that religious instruction is poured into their opening powers it is usually the more successful, because the first impressions are the most deep, and lasting.

In order to assist parents in the discharge of a duty equally pleasing and important; a duty which they owe to God who has honored them with an offspring, to the church which these children under their admonition; may hereafter adorn, and to their children, themselves I will attempt,

- I. To illustrate the import of the injunction, and
- II. Point out the obligation under which parents are to perform the duty recommended.

1. Parents ought to train up their offspring by an early surrender of them to Jehovah in the ordinance of baptism. The attention of the pious Jews was early directed to the dedication of their children in the rite of circumcision. Soon after the birth of Samuel we hear Hannah devoutly resolving, "I will bring him that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." Zachariah and Elizabeth the parents of John, and Mary the mother of our Lord on the eighth day presented their children to the living god in that ordinance. And although under the christian dispensation there is no day particularly specified on which our

offspring should be offered up in baptism, yet unquestionably the first opportunity should be embraced. Baptism is as positively enjoined upon us, as circumcision was upon the Jews; the promise is no less explicit to us and to our children *now*, than it was to them and their children *formerly*, and as the light is clearer under the present than under the former dispensation, the neglect of our duty in this respect is more offensive to God and more dangerous to the souls of our children. There is no weight in the objection frequently urged "that the baptism of infants is not expressly commanded in the New-Testament scriptures." It is enough to mention that circumcision, the initiating seal of the covenant, was early improved for their seed by the believing Jews, and it therefore follows by obvious, undeniable inference that baptism, the initiating seal of the same covenant, should be early improved for their seed by believing Gentiles. There is no positive command for sanctifying, as the christian sabbath, the first day of the week, yet all christians unite in the observation of that day, because it was uniformly kept holy by our Saviour and his apostles, and is not the baptism of infants enforced by the same high authority? Were not "Lydia and her household, the Jailer and his household" baptized by those very apostles who received their commission from our Lord immediately before his ascension? Would to God that the mournful neglect of this

duty on the part of parents arose merely from scruples of conscience about the propriety of the institution: There is reason to apprehend that it arises rather from a spirit of deep stupidity and slumber which has rested upon the churches: There are many parents who discover almost no concern for their own souls, therefore it is not to be expected that they can either feel or manifest much concern about the souls of their offspring.

2. We ought to train up our children by early teaching them the great principles of religion. Gradually as the powers of the mind begin to unfold, and the child appears capable of reflection, it should be taught in the most plain, impressive manner, the leading doctrines of salvation. The human mind is essentially active, and must be employed. It is not more natural for the body to breathe than for the soul to reflect, and unless diligence is exercised to give to the thoughts of children a proper direction, they are in danger of becoming wanton, vicious, and a prey to every temptation. Parents should therefore aim at impressing upon their minds some conceptions of the living God; endeavoring to inform them that he is a being infinitely great, that he is always present with them, and therefore acquainted with their thoughts, and words, and actions; they should also teach them the near relation in which the great God stands to them as their Creator by

whom their bodies and mind were formed, and from whom were derived all those powers of both by which man is so much exalted above the beasts of the field: Children should also be early made acquainted with their fallen condition by nature, that they are "conceived in sin," born under the curse, and therefore "children of wrath:" In attempting to make them acquainted with their disease by transgression, parents ought also to exhibit the infinite remedy which grace has provided; that the Father "sent his own Son to be the Saviour of the world;" that the Eternal Son in order to become a suitable Saviour took to himself our nature, sustained that curse to which we were exposed, and hath "made peace by the blood of his cross;" that he is now "able to save to the uttermost" any of the human family who apply that redemption which is in his blood, and that he particularly invites "little children" to come to him for salvation. Youth ought thus to be taught in the most obvious, familiar manner the first principles of our holy religion, and probably this instruction cannot be given with a greater probability of success than by question and answer. This mode of imparting divine truth was early introduced into the church, and perhaps has been a principal means of propagating the true doctrine from age to age. The apostle Paul exhorts Timothy to "hold fast that form of sound words which he had heard," and he thanks God in behalf of the

Romans that "they had obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which they had received," and he also speaks of being "nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine." It is therefore evident that the attention of parents ought very early to be directed to the spiritual instruction of their offspring. It is mentioned as the privilege of Timothy, and also the honor of "his mother and grand-mother" that from "a child he knew the holy scriptures," and Solomon also relates to the honor of his Father; and as a pattern for the imitation of parents in succeeding ages, "he taught me also, and said unto me, wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom and with all thy getting, get understanding: Exalt her and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honor, when thou doest embrace her."

3. This duty ought to be discharged by the administration of suitable, and seasonable correction. The *rod* is as really an ordinance of God as prayer, or instruction, or any other institution of religion, and when applied in a prudent, rational manner, is perhaps not less conducive to the true interests of youth. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Again, "withhold not correction from the child—thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." This same inspired teacher mentions in another chap-

ter; "the rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." It is worthy of observation that in this, and other places correction and instruction are recommended together, and if we would employ the rod with success it should upon all occasions be connected with becoming admonition. The fault committed by the child should be deliberately presented to its view, with its various aggravations; the offender should be solemnly warned that every "sin is a transgression of the divine law," and exposes the transgressor to the wrath of God, both in this world and in the next; the child ought also to be admonished that sin, if persisted in, will bring it to reproach among men, while it exposes to the wrath of an infinite God. The mind should thus be prepared by suitable instruction and warning before the rod is applied. A very useful commentator remarks on this passage, "if reproof answers the end without the rod, it is well: but the rod should never be used without reproof." And a late, celebrated writer* mentions that "some pious parents have made it an invariable rule, as soon as their children could read, never to correct them, until they had read over all the passages of scripture which command it, and generally accompanied it with prayer to God for his blessing."

*WITHERSPOON'S Letters on Education

I already mentioned that correction was an ordinance divinely appointed for reclaiming the young offender; it ought therefore like all other divine institutions to be employed in obedience to the command of God, and with a humble dependence on his blessing for its efficacy: But perhaps there is scarcely any part of their conduct in which parents so generally and mournfully err as in the correction of their children. The rod is rarely taken up by them except when they are under the influence of angry passions; they then chastise their children rather as merely animal than rational beings who are to be reclaimed by rational methods; the child under such treatment is induced to believe that the chastisement was administered rather to gratify a vindictive spirit than to promote its temporal or spiritual interests, and the consequences are often deplorable in the extreme. The dispositions of the young are soured, their affections become alienated from their parents, and instead of being recovered to the paths of virtue, and religion they are often driven to greater enormities in vice and impiety. I have no doubt but many promising children are lost; sacrificed to themselves, to their connexions, to the church, and to society, by the rash, untender, injudicious conduct of parents in their government: But on the other hand, the rod when seasonably applied; when accompanied with suitable advice convincing the child that it is

inflicted from a sense of duty, and with a concern for its real interests; more especially when it is accompanied with prayer to him who can crown it with efficacy, the rod thus administered is a happy means of humbling the pride of the heart, of subduing the stubborn will, of producing filial affection, and training up the young for usefulness on earth, and happiness in heaven. Very probably many when advanced in life, and who are rendered eminent ornaments of the church can trace back their recovery from the paths of vice, perhaps their first serious impressions to the rod applied by the hand of a prudent parent.

4. This duty of *training* up children is to be discharged by adding suitable example to instruction and correction. This is a principle in which mankind are so universally agreed that it might be considered as unnecessary to enlarge upon it. The old adage, "that example teaches better than precept," is eminently true in relation to children who are naturally prone to imitate; particularly to imitate their parents with whom they are generally conversing, and for whom they entertain a more than ordinary respect. Indeed, all parental instruction unless enforced by becoming example will expose not only the truths taught, but parents themselves to the scorn of their offspring. How must the person, and the admonitions of a father sink in the estimation of his children if they are

obliged occasionally to take care of him under the influence of intoxication, or if they know that he violates the marriage covenant by acts of uncleanness? In vain does he caution them against swearing if he himself is profane; or exhort them to love their neighbors if he evinces his own enmity against them by injuring their property, or defaming their character when opportunity offers: In vain does he admonish them to "remember the sabbath day and keep it holy" if he wantonly wastes that day in idleness, or loose, carnal conversation: Can he rationally expect by all his instructions to infuse into their minds habits of reverence for the ordinances of religion if he neglects the worship of the sanctuary, or shortens or omits the devotions of the family for some trifling inconvenience? Can he successfully impress their souls with the belief that "godliness is great gain;" that the "ways of religion are ways of pleasantness and that all the things which we can desire are not to be compared to it," when the duties of christianity appear rather a drudgery than a delight to himself; when he seemingly seeks excuses for neglecting them, and when the cares of this world appear to occupy his thoughts as if there was neither heaven nor hell? Be not deceived, beloved parents, if ye would *train* up your children in the way they should go you must not merely *instruct*, but your *actions* must correspond with your *instructions*. Would you lead

them to hate "the very appearance of evil" you must convince them that it is odious to yourselves not only by talking against it, but by avoiding it: If you would persuade them that religion is "the one thing needful;" that it is "more to be desired than gold, and worthy of all acceptance;" you must convince them by your own pleasure in speaking of it, and in attending its duties that it is the chief source of rejoicing to yourselves: If you would impress them with a veneration for Jehovah as a Being infinitely great, you must convince by your own conduct that "your flesh trembles for fear of him," or would you inspire them with love to Him as infinitely good they must discern from your own conduct that your own love to him is supreme. Would you persuade them to obey the second great command of the law which is to "love thy neighbor as thyself" you must convince them by shewing all respect to the character of thy neighbor when absent, and to his feelings when present that you are interested in his welfare. He therefore who expects to "bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" must enforce his instruction by suitable example: He should aim upon all occasions at conversing and acting before them as he desires to form them for conversation, and action. It was a maxim among the Romans that "nothing impure should be seen or heard within the walls where children are lodged."

From these few remarks on the manner in which our offspring should be *trained up* we proceed,

II. To consider our obligations to attend with fidelity to this duty.

1. Our obligation arises from the authority of God who has particularly enjoined it. While it is his pleasure to separate a people for himself in our guilty world, this purpose he usually accomplishes by family instruction as the principal means. Through the prudence and diligence of parents the plant ordinarily receives its first cultivation which is designed to adorn the vineyard on earth, and is destined to flourish hereafter in the paradise above. No doubt much may be done, and has been done, by a skilful, conscientious ministry for promoting the spiritual interests of youth, but probably more may be done by the prudence and fidelity of parents, and upon the latter the Head of the church has more immediately enjoined this service. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Parents possess advantages for directing their offspring to the choice of religion and virtue, which are not enjoyed by others. Being constantly present with them, they become acquainted with their different dispositions, with those lusts which are most like-

ly to predominate in future life, and have thus an opportunity of early eradicating or restraining those lusts; they may be often instructing and advising them, reproving their little follies and vanities, or cherishing any serious impressions which are produced in their minds. The Lord God may therefore be considered as addressing each parent or head of a family in the following manner; "I have set thee a watchman over this household; I have committed to thy care these young immortals that they may be trained up for my service, and at your hand will I require their blood if you are unfaithful to the trust; but in the zealous, and persevering discharge of thy duty, I leave thee this encouragement, that, when they are old, they shall not depart from the paths which in obedience to my command thou mayest recommend:" Jehovah who has positively enjoined this duty, promises a liberal reward even to parents themselves in performing it. "I know Abraham," saith God, "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; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."

2. The obligation of parents to discharge this duty arises from a concern for the spiritual and everlasting interests of their children. As the instruments of their existence, they are reasonably

bound by every possible method to promote their real welfare; and very probably that affection which parents have for their offspring, and that solicitude which they feel for their future condition was designed by the Author of our nature to render the duty of instructing them more easily discharged: Through the powerful influence of parental fondness, to watch over their children, to instruct, to expostulate with them, and to correct them for their misbehaviour, which would otherwise be merely a duty, and might often be considered a drudgery, becomes a delight. While the divine authority binds them to this service, affection to their offspring, and a concern for their prosperity hereafter prompts them cheerfully to perform it. There is another circumstance which renders this duty more easily, and conveniently discharged on the part of parents, that is, the long period during which their children remain dependant upon them. In this respect man may be considered an exception from almost every other part of the creation. The offspring of the fowl continue only a few weeks in a state of minority, until they attain to the perfection of their nature, and become capable of managing for themselves. The offspring of the various orders of animals in general remain dependant on their dam only a few months, until they throw off their subordination, and begin to look abroad for their own provision: But in the family of man children continue dependant upon

their parents nearly one third of their duration in this world; they ordinarily arrive at the age of sixteen, or eighteen, or even twenty years before they become matured either in body or mind, and are capable of managing for themselves: During this long period parents are invested with authority over them, and considered their teachers and guardians: They have thus a full opportunity, by precept, by example, by correction, by admonition to inform their understandings, to improve their hearts and *train them up* to habits of order both in the church and in society.

3. Parents are obligated to the faithful discharge of this duty from a regard to their own future comfort. How animating amidst the various afflictions of life would be the prospect of leaving an offspring to adorn the church, and bless the world when they themselves must be removed from it; to reflect that the void which is made by their departure will probably be filled up by the succession of their children in their place? How pleasing must it be beyond expression for a loving parent to look forward in imagination, and behold a son or daughter seated hereafter on the right hand of the Judge among the nations of the saved, to hear them publicly acknowledged as having occupied with fidelity the talents entrusted with them, and then invited to that kingdom which was prepared for the righteous from everlasting. Surely heaven

to parents would be enhanced, all its joys and glories rendered inconceivably more precious by this prospect of participation. If Paul pronounced the believing Thessalonians his *joy* and *crown* merely because they were converted by his ministry, although otherwise strangers to him, what interest must the fond father or mother feel in the salvation of their offspring of whose existence they had been instruments, and who became endeared to them by long intercourse, and the most intimate fellowship; whose interests were thus so nearly blended, and rendered almost the same with their own. Surely this prospect, we should suppose, might have the influence of a thousand arguments exciting and animating parents to a becoming zeal in the spiritual *nurture* of their offspring: It might give fervor to their daily supplications *for* them; it might add earnestness to their expostulations *with* them, and lead them to look with a holy anxiety for the precious fruits in their conversion; it might render them in a great measure indifferent about every thing concerning their children, excepting their souls, and their everlasting welfare; it should animate them in imitation of the great apostle to "travail as in birth, to endure all things for their sakes that they might be brought to obtain salvation in Jesus Christ with eternal glory.

From this doctrine as thus illustrated, we may infer—

1. The very important, and responsible station which parents occupy in relation to their children. They are constituted by the great God as their spiritual *overseers*, and the immortal destinies of their seed are in a certain sense committed to their trust, a trust which must be regarded as equally interesting, and arduous, and honorable. It may be considered as a distinguishing glory conferred upon any that they should have an offspring. Children are therefore pronounced "an heritage of Jehovah," and the "fruit of the womb" is represented as "his reward." But it is a much more distinguishing honor conferred upon parents that they should be ordained the spiritual guardians of their offspring, and employed as instruments to rear them up for glory to God, and usefulness to their generation. Paul devoutly "thanks the Lord Jesus Christ that he counted him faithful putting him into the ministry," and called him to "preach to fellow-sinners the unsearchable riches of Christ." But this honor in some degree have all parents, being intrusted with the spiritual education of their children, and appointed to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." They may be considered as occupying the station of "ambassadors for Christ, praying those" who are committed to their charge "to be reconciled unto God." And should they succeed in this embassy and their expostulations be effectual for

restoring a son or daughter from the wretchedness of their fallen state it will be a monument to their honor more imperishable than either marble or brass: Each child or servant brought to salvation through their instrumentality will be a jewel in the crown not only of Jesus the Mediator, but in their own crown; it will secure to them, through the exceeding riches of divine grace, a residence among those who having "turned sinners to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever:" And are there not promises without number in behalf of their children which may encourage parents to a holy diligence in "reproving, and rebuking, and exhorting them. The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed to love the Lord thy God—that thou mayest live: I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever for the good of them, and of their children after them."

2. Is such, beloved parents, is such the honor of your station, is such your encouragement to persevere in discharging its duties, shake off that sloth which you may have formerly indulged, crucify that worldly temper which may have chilled your ardor in promoting the spiritual interests of your offspring: Hereafter let their usefulness in time, and their glory through eternity be your only anxiety respecting them. Look occasionally upon each individual under your care,

whether male or female, whether bond or free, as destined for an immortal duration; reflect that they must soon die, and be judged, and pass to an unchanging abode; look forward through the ever revolving ages of eternity, and present them to your imagination as unutterably blessed in the enjoyment of Jehovah, or damned in hell "with the devil and his angels," and then say, does not all your solicitude about securing for them the riches or honors of this world instantly give way to a solicitude about the infinitely more important realities of the world to come? Do not all the wealth and glories of the present state, compared with the concerns of a future state, appear insignificant in your estimation as a single grain of dust contrasted with a mountain, or a drop of water compared to an ocean? And remember that their future destination, under God, depends much on yourselves. "Train up a child in the way he should go," is the declaration of Him whose word is more stable than the everlasting hills, "and when he is old he will not depart from it:"* But without diligence on your part you have no promise for them either of grace here, or glory hereafter.

*"I knew a pious and judicious minister who affirmed that we did not give credit to God's word, if we did not believe the certainty of the promise, as well as the obligation to the duty, he was of opinion that every parent when he seemed to fail should conclude that he himself had been undutiful, and not that God had been unfaithful."—*Witherspoon on the education of children.*

Permit me again to recall to your attention a consideration already noticed, which may animate you to diligence in the discharge of this duty, that is, your own peace and consolation hereafter. What a pleasure would it afford you, when forewarned by the infirmities of age of your approaching dissolution, to reflect that you leave behind you a seed for the service of the Lord *your* God; some who will appear as witnesses for him when your lips are silent in death; who will occupy a seat in the sanctuary when your bodies are gathered to their fathers, and who will assist in relieving the poor, and in promoting the interests of society when "your labors of love" must have ceased forever? Although naturally dead, yet with such a prospect, you might expect virtually to *live* in your posterity, *live* to the glory of God, and to the real advantage both of the church and the world. It was to David when admonished of his departure from the service of the earthly sanctuary, a source of the most refined, substantial joy that Solomon his son was to "reign in his stead;" that he should erect a temple for the worship of Israel's God, and thus prove instrumental in perpetuating his name in the world; and Aaron, the high priest, appeared cheerful in stripping off his pontifical garments, and resigning his office in the church when he knew that he should be succeeded by Eleazer his son.

I have only to remark, that if you expect to

succeed in training up your offspring for the living god; to see them your *joy* now, and your *crown* hereafter, you must live as you exhort them to live; you must aim at giving emphasis to every admonition by a correspondent example. How contemptible does that minister necessarily become in the estimation of every discerning hearer who exhorts others to "crucify the flesh, and follow after holiness," while he himself is the willing slave of corruption; and children are more shrewd to discern whether there is a consistence between your exhortations and your general deportment than you imagine: Nay, such often is their aversion to God and his service, that they would willingly find a pretext in your irregularities for rejecting your admonitions. Convince them, therefore, by a conscientious discharge of every duty in the closet, and family, and sanctuary, that "the kingdom of God is not in word but in power:" Endeavor also, by honesty in all your dealing, by tenderness to the reputation of others, by gentleness of spirit, by a readiness to forgive those who offend or injure you, by submission to your Fathers will under the evils of life, to convince them of the excellence of christian principles by the excellence of their fruits in your own lives; that "the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated; without partiality and without hypocrisy."

3. I cannot dismiss this subject without inviting the attention of my beloved youths. Many of you whom I now address are the offspring of the righteous, and have been favored with all those advantages which either pious instruction, or example could afford. You were early dedicated to Jehovah your Creator and Redeemer in the ordinance of baptism, and your own consciences are witnesses with what earnestness your parents have pressed you to consider the things which belong to your peace. Must you not exculpate them by acknowledging that, sabbath after sabbath, they have set before you "life and death, the blessing and the curse" urging you sometimes with tears, to choose the former as your only interest, and glory? I may venture to add that a holy God is witness of their importunity "making mention of you in their prayers night and day," that your souls might be saved at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nay, my young friends, has not a holy God often witnessed the anxiety, and agony experienced by your parents on account of your seeming unconcern and impenitence? Very probably they have occasionally poured out their souls before him in such plaintive language as this "O Lord, the great and terrible God, we presented these our children to thee in baptism; we cheerfully and solemnly surrendered them as an offering to the Father, Son, and Spirit with fervent desires that they might be thine only and everlastingly;

according to the wisdom given us we have aimed at training them up for thee, and thy service; we have taught them from thy word that "all have sinned;" that "the wages of sin is death," and that if they neglect the great salvation they *shall not*, they *cannot escape*: But O Lord, they have not believed *our report*, or rather *thy report* by our lips concerning these things: Notwithstanding all our diligence in teaching them, and all our importunity in admonishing and exhorting them they appear to remain hardened under the deceitfulness of sin; thoughtless of God who created them, of Jesus who bled to redeem them, of death to which they are hourly hastening, of heaven which is prepared as an eternal mansion for the pure, and of hell which is the final, gloomy abode of the impenitent:" I sincerely believe, my precious young hearers that the living God, and surrounding angels have often heard your father or mother, or perhaps both of them pouring forth these melancholy complaints, refusing to be comforted through a fearful apprehension that you would not be saved. If you have any reflection remaining, these things demand your immediate, deliberate, and most solemn reflection: Your privileges are, indeed great, as you are the offspring of the righteous. Promises are made to you, and may be plead by you which are not made to all, neither can be plead by all. "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee. The children of thy servants

shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." These are promises the accomplishment of which you are authorised to plead from the very circumstance that you have descended from the loins of the just, promises which may encourage you to wrestle with Jehovah for his blessing while your parents are living, and after they are dead. But be it known to you that if your opportunities are not improved your guilt will have a colouring, and your torment a poignancy from which the guilt and the torment of others will be almost infinitely remote. All the earnestness of your parents instructing and exhorting you; all their fervor in praying with you and in your behalf; all that agony which often rends their hearts by day when occupied in their common employments, or by night when sleep departs from their eyes through solicitude for your souls, these are all known to God the impartial Judge, and the fearful record will be read in your hearing before the collected millions of angels and men: I feel constrained also to inform you that since you have been warned of "your wicked ways" and besought to return and live, *besought* with all that earnestness which parental affection could inspire if you obstinately refuse, "you must die in your iniquity, but *they* have delivered their own souls:" Your blood must rest upon your own heads, and there will be none to interpose and shield you, none to offer up a prayer for you, none to drop a tear over

your misery in heaven, or earth, or hell. The arm of an omnipotent, indignant God, raised higher and higher, by all the threatenings which you have spurned, and all the forbearance which you have abused will grind you to powder when there is none to deliver.

Be admonished, my dear young hearers and readers, to arise from your security, and strive to enter in before the door of mercy is shut against you for ever. Mourn over your failures to that God whose authority you have despised, and whose Spirit you have grieved: Make confession to your holy parents for all those meltings of soul, those gloomy days and sleepless nights which your impiety has occasioned to them: Aim hereafter at healing the wounds which your former follies have inflicted by greater humility of conduct, and a more ardent zeal in working out your salvation:" How affecting beyond what language can describe would be the thought that any of you who are the children of so many prayers, and tears, and entreaties, should behold your parents on the right hand of the Judge while you were doomed to the left, or to behold them in heaven reclining on Abraham's bosom while you were tormented in the flames of hell? I shall now bid you an *affectionate farewell*, repeating a very solemn, and I think, at present, seasonable admonition: It was among the last addresses of David the king to a favorite child, and his successor to the throne of

Israel, "thou Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth the imaginations of the thoughts; if thou seek him he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."

N.B. This reprint has sought to reproduce the spelling and punctuation of the original, including anomalies.