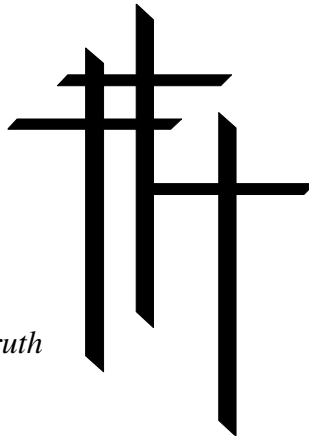


Timely Messenger

*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*



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SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT

by Charles W. Wages

The Bible clearly teaches that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” There is no doubt but that God is interested in children growing properly in grace and knowledge. Spiritual attainment is not something to be grasped after for personal or selfish gain, but to know God and to fulfill His purpose for our lives.

Just as an athlete exercises in a gymnasium so should the Christian be actively engaged in God’s world. This activity should not be just “beating the air,” but actually participating in vital, worthwhile endeavors in accordance with God’s will and Word. Four things that aid in spiritual attainment will be briefly discussed. The order in which they are given does not necessarily reflect their relative importance.

Concentration

Concentration or in-

tense interest in what a person is trying to accomplish is of utmost importance to attainment of goals. The apostle Paul states in Philippians 3:13, “this one thing I do,” in reference to “pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Then again in Colossians 3:2, he says, “set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Concentration of the sun’s rays on a combustible material will set it ablaze. In like fashion, if we give our strict attention to something for God, it will bring results.

Abstaining

Abstaining or holding off from partaking or participating in certain things is important to spiritual attainment. Sometimes things we don’t do are just as important as things we attempt to do. In our over-indulged generation, the thought of restraint or self-denial is rejected by most people. The truth concerning abstaining, as taught in the Scriptures, is not confined to marriage and food,

but principally concerns “holding off from” evil, religious doctrine. For instance, in 1 Thessalonians 5:22 we are admonished to “abstain from every form of evil.” When we consider that one of the major characteristics of this present evil age is “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Tim. 3:5), we conclude that God would have us not partake or participate in religious error. Even the Gentiles were instructed by the apostles at Jerusalem to “abstain from meats offered to idols.”

Nourishment

Nourishment, of the proper sort, is important to spiritual attainment. It is common knowledge that the Bible uses items of physical food to teach some of its greatest spiritual lessons. Our Lord did this time and time again. Bread, meat, milk and honey are just a few examples. But we understand the Word to tell us of a more important form of nourishment. Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:6:

“If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto, thou hast attained.”

In Colossians 2:19, we are instructed that our nourishment comes from the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” (Col. 2:19)

Someone has said that we should take this spiritual nourishment and

- Study it through,
- Pray it in,
- Put it down,
- Work it out, and
- Pass it on.

Attitude

A proper attitude is absolutely necessary to spiri-

tual attainment. The wonderful passage found in Philippians 4:5-9 is so appropriate when we think of our attitude and what it should be.

“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” (Phil. 4:5-9)

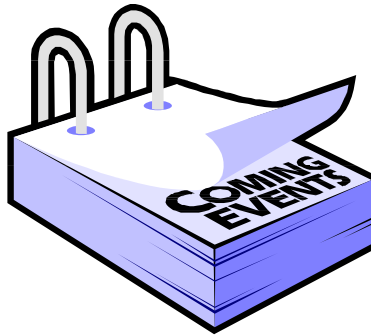
We need to read and re-read this passage. We might say our attitude could be found in three respects:

- Our attitude toward God and His Word.
- Our attitude toward other people.
- Our attitude toward ourselves.

It follows that if our attitude is proper and the way our Lord would have it, we will attain spiritually for the glory and honor of our Head.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:12

Looking for that
blessed hope,
and the glorious
appearing of the
great God and
our Saviour
Jesus Christ.
—Titus 2:13



FAMILY BIBLE CAMP

July 4-8, 2005

Our Family Bible Camp will be held July 4-8 this year at Camp Copass in Denton. The theme this year is: "Our Blessed Hope." This camp is for all ages. See the included information and registration form for more details.

Timely Messenger

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Gregg Bing — Editor

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in this matter!*

UNLESS THE LORD BUILDS THE HOUSE

By Gregg Bing

Continued from last month

“Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it ...” (Psalm 127:1)



In this series, we have been looking at God’s principles for building a godly home (or family) as found in Colossians 3:18-21. Last month we began looking at the responsibilities God has given to parents. While the Scriptures clearly indicate the importance of both parents being involved in the lives of their children, God actually places the responsibility upon the fathers. In Eph-

sians 6:4, fathers are told:

“... Do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

The expression “bring them up” speaks of raising or rearing children, providing for their needs. Husbands and fathers are responsible for providing not only the physical needs of their family, but, more importantly, their spiritual needs. There are two key aspects to how fathers are to “bring up” their children: training and admonition. Each is qualified by the expression “of the Lord.” The training and admonition in view here is spiritual in nature, that which centers around the Lord and His Word.

Training

The word “training” (“nurture” in the KJV)

is from a Greek word which means child training or instruction. It involves all aspects of bringing a child to spiritual maturity: education and instruction, but also discipline, correction, and chastening.

Most parents today emphasize their children’s education. They want them to do well in school; to learn reading, writing, mathematics, art, music, history, etc. While all of these things are an important part of a child’s education, if a child is to grow and mature spiritually, they must be trained in the things “of the Lord.” They must be taught the knowledge of the Lord, knowledge which can only be found in God’s Word. As parents, we need to ask ourselves: Are we as concerned with our children’s knowledge of God’s Word (2 Tim. 3:15-17) as we are their ability to do long division? Do we spend as much time teaching them the gospel of God’s grace (Rom. 1:16) as we do the history of the United States? Are we as worried about their godly character (Titus 2:11-14) as we are

about the characters in the so-called classic works of literature? The writer of Proverbs, in giving wise instruction to his children, emphasized that a home and family must be built upon a foundation of spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and understanding:

“Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.” (Prov. 24:3-4)

Fathers, it is your responsibility to see that your children are trained in the things of the Lord and His Word!

An important part of this spiritual training involves discipline. Often, when people see this word “discipline,” they think only of punishment. Though punishment is often needed, the goal of discipline is training; it includes chastening and correction so that a child can learn from the experience. The need for discipline in children is pointed out in

the book of Proverbs.

“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.” (Pro. 22:15)

“The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” (Pro. 29:15)

While the use of the term “rod” may bring to mind physical punishment, the focus is on correcting and instructing the child, imparting wisdom and thus driving away the foolishness that is a part of the child’s nature. A child that is left to himself, one who is sent away with no rebuke or correction, will bring shame upon himself and upon his family.

In our “modern world,” many believe that discipline is cruel and abusive. Certainly physical punishment (spanking, for example) can become abusive if misused or taken too far, however, a parent who truly loves their children will be careful to discipline them when it is needed,

just as the Lord disciplines us as His children.

“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.” (Pro. 13:24)

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction; for whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.” (Pro. 3:11-12)

While training is a vital part of bringing up children, there is another aspect to consider as well: the admonition of the Lord.

Admonition

The word “admonition” literally means to set or place in the mind. It also involves training, but primarily through words, words of encouragement, reminder, and warning. We see the word used in 1 Corinthians 10 where Paul, in verses 1-10, describes Israel’s sins against God in the wilderness and God’s subsequent judgments upon

them. Paul then tells us:

“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” (1 Cor. 10:11)

While these things actually happened to the people of Israel, they serve as examples to us. They were written for our “admonition;” to teach us, to remind us, to warn us of the consequences of such sin against God.

Parents are usually diligent in teaching, warning and reminding their children about the physical dangers in the world around them: things such as touching a hot stove or running in front of a moving car, as well as the dangers of alcohol, drugs, sexually transmitted diseases, etc. However, most parents, including some Christian parents, give little thought about teaching, reminding, and warning their children of the spiritual dangers of “this present evil age” (Gal. 1:4) in which we live. Parents,

particularly fathers, need to admonish their children about Satan and the deceitful methods he employs (Eph. 6:10-12), about the evils of the world system in which we live (1 John 2:15-17), about the danger of conforming to the world (Rom. 12:1-2), about the false teaching they will be hear (1 Tim. 6:3-5), about the importance of guarding our minds and hearts (Phil. 4:4-9), etc., etc., etc.

These are dangers which affect not only our children’s lives here on earth, but their lives for all eternity. Paul stressed to the Colossians:

“Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” (Col. 1:28)

It is vital that we preach (or proclaim) Christ to our children; not a religious system or denomination with its creeds and traditions, but this wonderful Person who is our Savior and Head! If they are to become spiritually mature

in Christ Jesus, our children need to be warned and taught “in all wisdom.” Parents, fathers especially, this is your responsibility!

Effective Methods

What is the most effective way for parents to train and admonish their children? The answer is two-fold. To begin with, children simply need to be told these things. The book of Deuteronomy was directed to that generation of the nation of Israel who were about to enter the promised land. God reminded them of the importance of teaching their children about the Lord.

“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” (Deut. 6:6-7)

Parents do not need to setup a classroom at home

or have formal lesson plans in order to teach their children. They just need to talk to them about the Lord as a normal part of their everyday life; “When you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” All of these times are what people today like to call, “teachable moments.”

Still, there is more to teaching our children than just telling them about the Lord. Parents also need to show their children the difference the Lord can make in their lives. Fathers and mothers should be examples, spiritual role models for their children.

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, spoke of the impact his manner of life had upon his ministry of the Word among them. He compares his conduct to that of a loving mother and a godly father.

“But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gos-

pel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” (1 Thess. 2:7-12

It was not only Paul’s words and teaching that impacted the Thessalonians, but also his gentleness in dealing with them, his labor and toil on their behalf, his devout, just, and blameless behavior among them, and his genuine concern for their welfare as he comforted, encouraged, and charged them to walk worthy of the Lord. These

are the very things that children need to see in the lives of their parents.

The young man, Timothy, is a good example of one whose life was affected by the words and actions of a godly parent. Timothy grew up in a home where he was taught God’s Word.

“And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. 3:15)

But Timothy was also influenced by the example of two women with a genuine faith in the Lord.

“When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.” (2 Tim. 1:5)

Next month we look at a special caution given to fathers in Colossians 3:21.

(Continued next month)

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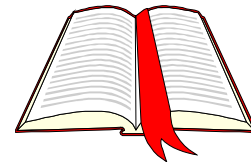
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