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THE
PRAYING MOTHER.



MY DEAR FEMALE FRIEND—The subject on which I now address you, although perhaps novel in its nature, is one with which are intimately connected your own eternal welfare, and that of those young immortals whom you have been the instrument of bringing into the world. The Lord God has conferred an honor upon you in making you a mother ; but with the honor, high and very awful responsibilities are connected, in consequence of sin. Each child that you bear is born in sin, an heir of wrath, alienated from the life of God, prone, from the very womb, to go astray, and therefore needs pardon in the Saviour's blood, and sanctification by his Spirit, to prepare it for admission into the kingdom of heaven. But it is only through the use of means that this blessed change is either to be sought or expected ; and in the use of these means, you, as the mother, are appointed by the Head of the Church, to occupy an honorable and prominent part. In making you a mother, and giving

you a living child, the Lord God solemnly addresses you, in the language of Pharaoh's daughter to the mother of Moses, "Take this child and nurse it for me." And while it is the solemn admonition of Him who gave you existence, and afterwards gave you an offspring, "Train up a child in the way he should go," there is no part of this spiritual nurture more profitable, or more important, than FAMILY RELIGION, devoutly performed in their presence.

It is readily acknowledged that the discharge of this duty is incumbent first on your husband, as the God of nature originally ordained him the head of the family. If, therefore, this exercise has hitherto been neglected by him, tenderly expostulate with him to commence it. Tell him that it is a most *reasonable service*; that it is a small tribute of gratitude to the beneficent Being who formed you into a family relation, who is sparing you together as mutual helps and comforts notwithstanding daily imperfections, and is crowning you with many marks of his goodness. Tell your husband that the "loving-kindness" of Jehovah to you and your dear children is "better than life;" and that this loving-kindness must be sought, if it is expected; but that his frown is more dreadful than death. Remind him of the example of David, who "returned from offering burnt-offerings and peace-offerings in the tabernacle, and blessed his household," 2 Sam. 6 : 17-20; of Abraham, who "commanded his children and his household after him, to keep the ways of the Lord," Gen. 18 : 19; of the patriarch Job, who "rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings for his children," Job 1 : 5; of Joshua, who piously resolved, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," Josh. 24 : 15; of Cornelius, who "was a devout man, that feared God with all his house, and prayed to God always." Acts 10 : 2.

Consider, and ask your husband to consider, the following portions of Scripture: "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just." Prov. 3 : 33. "The light of the wicked shall be

dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out; terror shall make him afraid on every side; his confidence shall be rooted out, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors; his children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them." And how dreadful is the imprecation of an inspired prophet! "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." Jer. 10: 25. After you have reviewed these passages of Scripture with the husband of your bosom and the father of your beloved offspring, affectionately ask him whether there is nothing awful in these denunciations of a holy God; of that Being, who is not only mighty to save, but terrible to destroy. Ask him if he does not secretly tremble, while he lies down at night under this threatening, that "the curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked, and his children are far from safety;" whether his soul does not recoil at the thought, that one of these dear pledges of your conjugal love shall be an outcast from the favor of Jehovah, and doomed for ever to the endurance of his wrath, through your neglect.

But if neither arguments nor entreaties will prevail with him to erect the domestic altar, and call upon the name of the Lord in your family, remember, that a more undivided responsibility devolves upon *yourself*. Neglect not yourself to pray with and for your children. Your own chamber may become to you and yours a Bethel—the consecrated place where God shall reveal his saving mercies. Suppose that your husband appeared altogether regardless of the *temporal* interests of the household; that he made no exertions for obtaining the means of feeding, or clothing, or educating them, would you, therefore, feel excused from doing any thing for their support? Would not his indolence or inattention rather excite in you a deeper solicitude for their welfare, and rouse you to double diligence in devising schemes for promoting it? And surely, if, through his negligence, your anxiety is increased about their interests

in this world, should not the same consideration render you still more anxious to promote their welfare for the *world to come*? And can we imagine any thing more happily suited to impress the tender hearts of youth with a sense of their dependence on God, of their obligations to fear him, and love him, and live for him, of the purity of his law, or the enormity of sin, than family religion? When they hear their sins confessed, and their mercies devoutly acknowledged as “coming down from the Father of lights,” and altogether undeserved; when they hear portions of the Scriptures read as “given by inspiration of God,” and designed to regulate our conduct for this world, and “make us wise unto salvation” in the next, how often has the youthful heart been impressed and awed, and constrained to ask, “What meaneth this service?” and imperceptibly led to seek the Lord God of its father or mother, as its portion.

Is not the truth of these remarks confirmed by the history of the church in every age? Have not the most precious fruits been produced to the souls of individuals, and to the general interests of religion, from family instruction and devotion? It is highly probable that multitudes, both on earth and in heaven, can date their first impressions from the religion of the family, and will recollect with gratitude, through time and eternity, the admonitions received from the lips of a godly father or mother.

The late Rev. JOHN BROWN, of precious memory in the country and age in which he lived, particularly thanked God in his last moments, that he had descended from parents who maintained divine worship in the family, morning and evening; and it is a fact, which ought not here to be left unnoticed, that these blessed consequences have more frequently resulted from the instructions and prayers of *pious mothers*. SAMUEL the prophet, TIMOTHY the evangelist, ST. AUGUSTINE, in the first ages of Christianity, and GARDINER, and NEWTON, and DODDRIDGE, were all, in their turn, reared up for eminent usefulness in the church, principally through

the instrumentality of their mothers. Mr. Newton particularly mentions "that the advice which his mother gave him, and the psalms, and promises, and questions which she taught him in early life were singularly profitable after the Lord commenced a work of grace in his soul."

The following fact, which I recently witnessed, I record with pleasure, as suited to enforce upon *mothers* the duty of praying with their children. A Mr. ——, who had served in the capacity of a soldier during the late wars in Europe, came to our country with the British army in 1812, and, at the establishment of peace, settled in the immediate vicinity of the writer. Owing to the indulgence of those irregular habits which he had formerly acquired in the army, the vigor of his constitution became gradually exhausted, and his attention, during a lingering illness, was happily directed to the things which concerned his everlasting peace. In conversation with him relative to his spiritual interests, I inquired whether he enjoyed a religious education in his youth, and whether his parents prayed in the family; when he mentioned to me, most feelingly, the instructions and prayers of his mother; and the recollection of her example and counsel appeared to refresh and support his soul under the pressure of severe bodily distress.

Ye "mothers in Israel," may not these facts admonish and encourage you to *go and do likewise*? Would not your instrumentality in raising up another Samuel, or Timothy, or Augustine, or Newton, or Doddridge, or Gardiner, or another heir of glory, even in the humbler sphere of life, reward you a hundred fold, for all your toil in catechizing, instructing, expostulating, or praying *for* your children, and *with* them? And the promise is no less encouraging to you than to the mothers of that *cloud of witnesses* whom I have mentioned, and might mention. "I will pour my Spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring." Their children were as much enmity to God by nature as yours either are or can be; but through the Holy Ghost working omnipotently with their instructions, they

were called into the family of grace, and sanctified as eminent instruments of glory to God, and usefulness in their generation.

My dear female readers who have the charge of a family, what is now your resolution? If others, actuated by love to their offspring, will labor to procure for them the "meat that perisheth," will not you henceforth devote a part of each day to procure for them "that meat which endureth to everlasting life?" If the prospect of a corruptible crown may inspire with zeal in using the means which tend to insure it, what zeal can be considered too ardent in striving for a crown which is incorruptible? Let the worth of the souls of your children, and the miseries of that hell which is to be avoided, and the joys of that heaven which is to be attained, all combine to excite in you the deepest solicitude for their salvation.

Look on the dear young immortal, whether son or daughter, as you nurse it in your arms, or nourish it at your breast: look at it, I say, and reflect, that it is an heir either of wrath or of reconciliation; that it is a candidate either for glory or reproach, and that through everlasting ages. As you see your children advancing in the journey of life, from year to year, recollect that they are performing a journey to the eternal world; and aim, by your counsels and instructions, to reclaim them from that broad road which issues in death, to that narrow way which leads to life everlasting. When you are feeding their bodies from day to day "with food convenient," remind them of that "*living bread* which came down from heaven," and constitutes the life of the soul. When you are clothing them with raiment which your hands have spun, or wove, or fitted for them, and which will soon decay, tell them that there is a robe of righteousness provided by the Surety, provided at the expense of the travail of his soul, and dyed in his own blood, which, put on by a living faith, will adorn and enrich them for ever. When, in the evening, you are laying them in bed, remind them of the sleep of the grave, of which the

bed is an emblem, and that they must awake hereafter, either to the resurrection of life, or of damnation.

In this manner be instant in season and out of season, calling up their attention to the great interests of their souls, and of their salvation. Read to them occasionally instances of early piety recorded in the Old and New Testaments, with the advantages resulting from it, and let them commit such portions of Scripture to memory. converse with them, and act towards them under the impression of the truth, that they would not be profited by gaining the whole world, and losing their own souls; and that, on the other hand, all neglect, or reproach, or suffering in the present life; are nothing, compared with the prospect of glory hereafter.

Whether you leave your dear children learned or unlearned, whether you leave them with or without a fortune, in high life or in humble life, are questions of little importance; but O, how necessary is it to leave them with understandings instructed and established in the truths of religion, with memories enriched with the promises of the Gospel, and hearts impressed with the fear of God, constrained by his love, and ever willing to spend and be spent in his service. Should you be instrumental in bringing a single child to the saving knowledge of Jesus now, and to the enjoyment of heaven hereafter, the gain would be greater than the acquisition of a continent or a world. Yours would be the honorable, the benevolent office of rescuing an immortal being from the curse of sin, from the dominion and derision of Satan, from horrors of conscience, from the torments of hell; to live for ever with God, with Christ, with angels, and with all the spirits of the just, to be perfectly happy in the admiration of his perfections, and the full fruition of his love.

With these few and very familiar remarks, *ye mothers in Israel*, I now leave you. While employed in writing them, I have occasionally poured out my soul on bended knees, imploring the Father of mercies to crown them with

his blessing. See that you mingle the reading of them with frequent and fervent supplications, that he would seal these truths upon your consciences and hearts. Lay aside this Tract, and on the bended knee implore God that he would render you faithful to the trust which he committed to you in making you a mother; pray fervently that he may never permit a son or daughter, whom he has given you, to perish through your neglect, and thus their soul be required at your hand.

Most of you who read this short Tract, and I who am now writing it, will never see each other on earth; but the manner in which you improve it will be known in that hour when God shall "judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." A solemn reckoning must then be rendered by me for the manner in which I have written, and an account equally solemn must be rendered by you for the manner in which you have improved these friendly suggestions. I have been constrained occasionally to pass, in imagination, from family to family, where the father is living without God, or even the form of his worship, and inquire with what emotions the mother rose from the perusal of this Tract; to see whether the tear began to flow, whether the sigh of solicitude for her offspring was gently breathed, and whether the holy resolution was formed, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;" whether, with Abraham, she was ready importunately to expostulate, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" or with the woman of Canaan, "O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy upon me."

To the God of all grace I earnestly and affectionately commend you. That your house may be literally a Bethel, "sanctified by the word of God and prayer," and that your beloved offspring, under the Divine blessing accompanying your instructions, may grow up ornaments to the church, comforts to you in this world, and your eternal glory in the next, is, and shall be, the prayer of your willing servant, for Jesus' sake.