

Articles by Richard Burson

Richard Burson

All material used by permission of the author, as published on
plymouthbrethren.org.

Also online at <https://plymouthbrethren.org/author/22>

KEE Ministry Library · Faithful Men
kee-ministry-library.netlify.app

Choosing a Life-Companion

Choosing a Life-Companion

Richard Burson

Richard Burson is not one to ape at being an armchair psychologist. He is Director of the youth camp operated by the assemblies in Kansas and Missouri. This article is the outcome of his experiences with the many young Christians who visit the camp at Hutchinson, Kansas, during the summer months.

Most young people have some idea of the kind of person who would be desirable for marriage. The thoughts expressed in this paper are for the purpose of encouraging a Christian in higher ideals relative to courtship and marriage, and to guide him into further thought on the subject of choosing a mate. The subject is treated in a general way so as to be applicable to persons of very different backgrounds.

That God expects youth to actively seek a life-companion seems evident from the very wording of Holy Scripture. The Book of the Proverbs contains much wholesome advice to young people and puts the matter of seeking a wife thus: "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord" (18:22). The youth who desires marriage seeks an honourable experience and can expect the blessing of God. Seeking guidance from our loving Father in Heaven upon one's association with others, expecting His blessing as one chooses a life-partner makes all romance deeply spiritual and enriching in Christian experience.

Love for another person is a deep human emotion, an experience to be treasured and nurtured. The time to settle standards of conduct, and to fasten the ideals required for a lifetime partner should come before seriously looking for a mate.

It should be settled once for all that a Christian youth should consider marriage only with one of like precious faith. A simple reading of 2 Corinthians 6:14 would convince the believer that he must not link himself with an unbeliever. No Christian can anticipate any true joy in Christ in his marriage unless he is subject to the expressed will of God in this matter. This in the most important consideration of all. One must remember that an unsaved person is in rebellion against God. No matter how beautiful or cultured; the unbeliever is lost. The young person who has made the matter of a life-partner the subject of consistent and persevering prayer is not the one who marries an unbeliever. From some experience in observing the conduct of various youths in matters matrimonial, it is my confirmed opinion that the young person who has been praying earnestly for a life-companion does not make the tragic mistake relative to marriage so frequently made by prayerless persons.

Attitude to Divine Things

If the attitude to things spiritual proves satisfactory, one may be free to consider further; what is the home-life of this person? Are the parents constantly arguing and bickering? Children who are the product of a home that in many respects resembles a battle-field are not likely to appreciate the peace and security offered by quiet discussion and decision by the husband. If the woman in the home makes the decisions and the man is not the

head of the home, it may affect the new home you wish to establish. Scripture emphatically teaches the husband to be head of the wife (Eph. 5:22). Any other arrangement is disobedience to the revealed will of God for His people, and can only lead to unhappiness in the home.

Attitude in Human Relations

What is the attitude of the person in whom you are interested to the other members of the family? Are love and respect shown for their parents and for younger brothers and sisters? What are the relations between him and his parents? It could be set down as an axiom that any young person who is not gratefully respectful and lovingly obedient to his parents is not mature enough to enter into marriage. The person who has no sense of a debt of love to those who have cared for him as a helpless infant, who have provided food, clothing, shelter, education, and security is not likely to appreciate your efforts to make a home for him.

Attitude To Seniors

What is the attitude of this person toward your own parents? How do your parents react to this person? No one concerned for his own future happiness will proceed with a friendship upon which the parents will not place their blessing. If your friend does not meet the approval of your parents, a frank discussion should be introduced on the subject. It is quite possible that your parents, being older and more experienced than you, have reasonable objections. Never ignore their wishes in this matter. All your activities should meet the full approbation of mother and father. You, likewise, should

submit to the same test in regard to your companion's parents. Remember, in a very real sense you marry into the whole family. If there is enmity between you and some member of your companion's family, this may later lead to strife and heart-ache in your own home. Strife can be avoided by not considering a person for marriage whose family you cannot respect and love.

Social Equality

What is the social and intellectual position of the person who impresses you? Some young persons mistakenly believe that marriage will correct social and personal faults. Nothing could be further from the truth! As a matter of fact, marriage only heightens and intensifies differences and in no way removes them. A personal habit that during courtship was only tolerated becomes unbearable after marriage because of constant, intimate association. To withhold one's opinion before marriage with the idea of changing your mate after is the wrong approach. Any changes one expects to effect in the behaviour or attitude of your partner should be fully understood before marriage. This intimate relationship does not cure any personality differences.

Parental Approval

You should actively seek the approval of your parents. A hearty attitude of generous love should exist between the two families thus being brought together. Seek not only the approval of your parents and the guidance of the Lord, but seek likewise the fellowship of the Christians with whom you associate. True believers in Christ are always happy to see young people who love

the Lord Jesus, and who love each other, marrying in the Lord.

Spiritual Improvement

Association with the person you intend to marry should make a better Christian of you. If this is the sort of person God would have you marry, your every association with each other will tend to draw the two of you closer to Christ. Any person who does not ennoble your ideals and heighten your desires to live holy and to live more devotedly to the Lord is neither worthy of your time, nor your love.

Appraisal of Self

Now, consider yourself as to your qualifications for marriage. Are you mature enough to appreciate a home of your own, and to enter happily into the work of establishing and maintaining a family of your own? Are you able to give up some smaller personal desires so as to gain the one great goal? Are you prepared to assume the responsibilities of bringing another human being into existence? Children must always be considered the normal and expected result of marriage. Marriage is the spiritual union of two persons whose very beings have been made one. Are you mature enough to lose your identity only to gain it more definitely in your union with another, and thus make two lives one life? If you can honestly say yes to these questions, you are probably ready for marriage.

When you find the person you should have, you will be given the deep assurance that this is the right person. The more you pray about it, the more you reflect upon

the matter asking God to guide you, the greater will be your assurance in the matter.

The Christian youth who waits on the Lord in matters of romance can join the Psalmist who said, "Our soul waiteth for the Lord: He is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name" (Psa. 33:20-21).

Christian Attitude of Children to Their Parents

Christian Attitude of Children to Their Parents

Richard Burson

Scripture readings: “Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Eph. 6:1, 2, 3). “Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old” (Prov. 23:22). “Children obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord” (Col. 3:20).

One of the most alarming developments in modern living is the obvious disintegration of the Christian family. It is out of alarm that I speak about this and yet I want to assure you I am not quick to push the panic button. Unless by the grace of God we can stop the alarming erosion that is taking place in Christian families, entire testimonies will be completely undermined within a short time. I direct these words to you Christian young people with loving anxiety for your betterment and the continuance of a vital Christian testimony.

I think there are three areas in which we can honour our parents: First, we should count our parents better than we are. If parents are poor and we are rich we still owe them honour. If parents are ignorant and we are educated we owe them honour. If parents are old and infirm and we are young and healthy we owe them honour. The Bible teaches, “A wise son maketh a glad

father but a foolish son despiseth his mother.” “The eye that mocketh at his father and that despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.” No Christian young person ever grows too old to honour his father and his mother. As you step into adulthood you will be freed from the obedience you were under to your parents as a young person, but in adult life you will never be freed from the honour you owe them simply because they are your parents.

Second, honour your parents by willingly helping them. Under God your parents are responsible for your being here and in large measure for whatever health, sanity, and intelligence you may have. This is a debt you should not forget and that should cause love and honour to spring up in your heart for them. When you were a helpless babe in arms your parents cared for you. It was impossible for you to care for yourself and in the early years of your life they guarded you every moment. After you were a little older they made genuine attempts to give you a better life and better opportunities than they had. By and large, all parents sacrifice for their children. Until you have children of your own you will little realize the care your parents are under for your general welfare, well-being, and success in life.

Third, show honestly and openly that you love your parents. The older your parents get the more they need to be shown the love of their children. You may feel that as a young adult your parents feel no need of your love but this is not true. The parents whose children are adults very much need the love of their children. God has shown His judgment against disobedient children in the Scriptures in such cases as Hophni and Phinehas

and in the case of Absalom. Isaac and Rebecca were deeply grieved by the behaviour of Esau, and the Scripture indicates that this sorrow for their son followed them to their graves. David cried out, "Oh Absalom, Absalom, would to God that I had died for thee. Oh Absalom my son, my son." He wept bitterly and refused food.

I have spoken these things to you who are Christians and who have Christian parents. Now just a word to those of you whose parents are unbelievers. You too must honour your parents although you cannot follow their example, you must honour them and you must love them. You must pray for them. You must be especially obedient to them and in a particular way let them know that you love them deeply and if they do not respond to your love you must continue to love for Christ's sake. You must learn to speak wisely and meekly and avoid preaching to them or nagging at them. They are your parents and they must not be belittled.

May God bless you as you read over these thoughts and consider your position as a Christian young person in a society that is in total rebellion against God.

Christian Marriage

Christian Marriage

Richard Burson

“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18). Marriage was instituted by God. The Lord Jesus indicated that marriage was divinely ordained when He said, “He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female.” Marriage is a provision of God for every generation since the time of Adam. Matthew Henry in commenting on Genesis 2:22, said, “The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to top him; not out of his feet to be trampled on by him, but out of his side to be equal to him, under his arm to be protected, near his heart to be loved.” We can say that marriage is heavenly in origin for the first marriage was performed by God Himself in the uniting of Adam and Eve.

Marriage always indicates that a vow has been taken before a third party. The record of the first marriage implies that God performed a simple ceremony: “God ... brought her unto the man... and blessed them, and called their name Adam ... (Gen. 2:22 and 5:2). Adam respond to this with the words: “This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” God, ever thoughtful of His people, took advantage of this occasion to further instruct Adam, and all men, by saying at that first marriage, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.” Obviously, God had other generations in mind for Adam had no father or mother to leave. Later,

Adam acknowledges Eve as a gift from the Lord for he said, "The woman whom Thou gayest to be with me... (Gen. 3:12). Until God brought her to Adam and blessed them, and then gave them the same name, Eve was not his wife. Such custom has obtained ever since. Similarly, the sanctity of marriage is acknowledged by governments today, and is protected by laws.

God forbids physical union before marriage vows are taken. "Let marriage be had in honour among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4, A.S.V.). One of the greatest contributions Christian men and women can make toward a happy marriage is their chastity.

Monogamy

Marriage as planned by God was monogamous. God created only one woman for Adam. Fidelity to one partner is expected in marriage. The vows read in the usual ceremony declare that "forsaking all others" each must cleave to the other alone. The Lord Jesus said, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." He taught that marriage must not be considered lightly, for it must be accepted as indissoluble except in death.

The Vows

The "forsaking all others" should be understood by the parents: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh" (Matt. 19:5. Gen. 2:24. Mark 10:7. Eph. 5:31). This in no wise teaches that adult children, upon being married bear no more responsibility toward their parents. In Matthew 15:4-6, the Lord Jesus teaches that

sons should provide for their parents' needs. It is the experience of many that when affection for a wife or husband has matured and expanded their capacity for devotion, they love and appreciate their parents more. Notwithstanding, one's relationship to his partner in life must take precedence over his natural loyalties to his parents.

The marriage ceremony asserts that the couple are to remain together "for richer, for poorer." Judge Landis of Denver once said that many marriages fail because of financial problems. The woman has a perfect right to know the income of the man she intends to marry. She can hardly be expected to live within the limits of his income if she does not know these. Pretence as to income or earning ability must eventually lead to disillusionment. To be perfectly candid at this point is the only honest procedure and will contribute to future happiness. Occasionally, after marriage a young husband loses the ability to earn a living. Troubles unpredicted may occur. The marriage pledge remains inviolate throughout all these changes. It is under such unimagined trials that one must seek grace from God to maintain the attitude of the heart true and fixed, and to maintain the affections as warm and constant as formerly. To chafe under circumstances is to destroy one's inward peace and to sour one's disposition.

It must ever be remembered that the marriage pledge is as binding in sickness as it is in health. The marriage vow, in the promise, "In sickness and in health," anticipates these human experiences, and provides for the stability of the home in sickness and sorrow.

Kindred Spirits

There is much more than the union of two bodies in a marriage. It is very sad when nothing more than physical union is expected. Christians who marry, and in some degree non-Christians, are spiritually united to each other. Dr. M. H. Frank, M.D., Ph.D., says, "No marriage is worthy of that name unless it is based on mutual love and unstanding. Love is the "holy grail" of marriage, the altar on which two souls meet; the precious jewel around which cluster all that is noble, inspiring and uplifting in the souls of the partners; the heart, encompassing all cares and delights, all joys and sorrows that agitate this human relationship. If this jewel becomes clouded by whatever cause, the marriage ceases to exist as an ideal and beautiful effusion of souls and continues merely on the merits of its legal and formal side. Love is not merely the instinctive desire of physical union, which has for its object the propagation of the species; it belongs to the mind as well as the body; it elevates, innervates, and purifies every sentiment, every feeling, and in its highest and purest form is a divine institution."

In the Bible God uses the marriage union of human beings to portray the love of Christ to the Church and the unity of the Church with Christ. This exalts marriage to a very high plane; we should, therefore, think of marriage as the union of kindred spirits.

The Christian Family

Marriage, because it is a deep spiritual experience, has a direct influence on one's future activities and associations with the people of God. For this reason, as well as for others, one should ascertain the will of the

Lord in the matter. H. Ernest Mar-son said: "Your marriage will either lead to qualification or disqualification for service in the Church. Marriage is the divine provision for a life of fellowship, of holy fellowship in prayer, and praise, and service for God... When husband and wife are workers together with Him, then the one compliments the other, and together there is a more complete service for their Lord."

Where God is given His rightful place in the lives of a newly married couple, the marriage will not be based upon human emotions. Emotions, like all things human, are subject to change without notice. Where God is truly acknowledged and where God is honoured, one can say the marriage is founded on the Word of God, in the wisdom of God, and by the power of God. Such marriages do not end in the divorce courts.

There must be daily fellowship with God as well as with each other in Christian marriage. The daily waiting upon the Lord together, the frequent praying together in regard to difficulties, assures the continuance of wisdom, love, and patience. The home should be the centre for Bible reading. Prayer complimented by godly behaviour makes the home a hallowed retreat from the cares and frustrations of the world.

C. H. Spurgeon said that the tranquility and pleasure of the family were greatly increased by the use of matrimonial arithmetic. By sharing their disappointments, sorrows, and griefs, a husband and wife divided their trials by two; and by sharing their joys and successes, they multiplied them by two. There is a rare wisdom in this advice.

Godly Order

A marriage that is in accord with the Word of God places the husband as head of the home. The wife is taught by Scripture to be subject to her husband, and the husband is to love his wife (1 Cor. 11:3, 8, 9. Eph. 5:22). Both husband and wife must recognize this God-given authority in the home. Where a spiritual husband is acknowledged as head of the house, the wife enjoys the security and protection every normal Christian woman seeks. The husband who loves the Lord Jesus, his wife, and his children will temper his divinely delegated authority with love and consideration. He will not provoke those whom the Lord has entrusted to his care (Col. 3:21).

It is not the intention of the Lord that every believer marry. Some indeed may find that it is the will of God that they remain single (1 Cor. 7:8). In a family there are cares and problems which are constantly arising; when one is married these claim attention. Work for God is often more speedily performed by persons who are unfettered in any way by family responsibilities. In this respect, each person must ascertain the plan of God for his life.

Half-Heartedness

FFF 9:4 (Apr 1963)

Half-Heartedness

Richard Burson

“Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart,” 2 Chronicles 25:2.

I suppose that, when you read this portion of the Word of God, you may have wondered what more could be asked of a man than simply “doing right.” Plainly this man Amaziah is said to have done right. Can more be asked than that a man do right?

This is the very point of difference between the genuine believer and the half-hearted unbeliever. Right here is the dividing of the ways. Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord BUT not with a perfect (or whole) heart. God is not interested in what we do so much as in what we are. God is not interested only in the end results: He is infinitely interested in how we achieved the results. Halfheartedness will never do. To be right in a lifeless, aimless, heartless way is to be dead wrong so far as God is concerned. To do right without the whole heart is marked by God as a serious blemish. Right actions in the sight of the Lord must be prompted by a love for the right. Here is where many fall into the same category as Amaziah.

Amaziah never had a sleepless night over his sins and failure. Amaziah was one of those shallow persons who conforms to the thing that is right never dreaming that principles must be involved with the heart. Amaziah is

one of those people whose activities and ideas are hedged in by what another's conscience dictates as being the right thing. Reading William Laws or Saint Augustine or Lancelot Andrewes brings into sharp focus the lack of depth of much that passes for Christianity today. I would call this shallow thing "Amaziah Christianity." I like what Wm. MacDonald says in his little booklet, "True Discipleship": "Prayer that costs nothing is worth nothing because it is the result of CHEAP Christianity." There you have it. That is Amaziah Christianity. Cheap Amaziah Christianity. Have you ever read the heart searchings of Augustine in his Confessions? He plumbs the depths of his own heart and sin, and then in an ecstasy cries out: "Oh Thou, my tardy joy" and then adds so feelingly: "For Thy omnipotency is not far from us even when we are far from Thee." Beloved, such are not the words of an Amaziah.

The moment Christian profession becomes a part-time avocation (or even pass-time) the very essence of Christianity has been lost. Christ becomes the sole passion of the believer or the compromise path of Amaziah is taken. We should note that Amaziah is not mentioned in the genealogy of Matthew, chapter one. Many things he did were right, but his half-heartedness struck him from the list of worthies in our Lord's genealogy. The living God with whom we have to do ALWAYS looks beyond the activities to the heart. The heart is the very place where Amaziah failed. His heart was not full of the love of God. Listen to me: a great deal of what is done in the Name of Christ the Lord can be done without love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance, goodness, faith. Beware of activities that ignore or belittle these virtues that are

the fruit of the Holy Spirit of God. We could say that Amaziah was a man of great ideas and small heartedness. Amaziah's heart never kept pace with his hands and feet. Amaziah was a man with an immature heart. God will have us be "all out" for Him or He will have none of our activities be they ever so right in themselves. Amaziah could have been wrong in many ways and have had a heart full of love for God, and he would have been a great man of God. Look at David. Look at Jacob.

The very name "Amaziah" teaches us a lesson when contrasted with his life. His name means "Jehovah is mighty" and yet when we read his history and see the battles he lost and the tragedy of his end, we must conclude that the Life the man lived denied the name he bore. My dear young people, live every moment to the hilt with awareness of the Name you bear.

One is reminded of the words of Bonehoeffer: "The way to misuse our possessions is to use them as an insurance against the morrow. By trying to insure for the next day we are only creating uncertainty today." The person who has whole-heartedly committed all his possessions to God can say: "With Him I have lost all, and with Him I have found all." This and nothing less than this is the wholeheartedness God wants from His people.

To an Amaziah, the words of the Lord, "If any man come after Me let him deny himself," would not be acceptable. Occasionally people say to me, they have done nothing really bad. This is not enough in the sight of God. There must be positive right with a heart devoted to Him. A spiritual vacuum will not do. The whole heart must be in

the pursuit of God and His righteousness. The whole life and every department of it must be entirely for God.

There must be a positive desire to serve Him and Him only. All the motives in the life must be brought to the cross of Christ, and there the world must be crucified to the believer. Then we will do what is right and have a heart perfect before God.

God preserve us from repeating the history of Amaziah.

Increase Our Faith

Increase Our Faith

Richard Burson

“And the apostles said unto the Lord, “Increase our faith.” Luke 17:5.

Who said this? The apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. Men who knew Jesus Christ intimately and personally. Surely if these men who lived in His very personal presence needed to pray for more faith how much more do we who are removed by so many years from the day when He walked in this world, and who have none of the physical proofs that they enjoyed. We learn from these men that they were unashamed of their need for more faith. They were honest with themselves and with Christ concerning their need. This is the only way to make spiritual progress. The thin veneer of pretended piousness will never last. Shame on the Christian who has never confessed his need for more faith. To acknowledge one does not want more faith is to admit having no faith.

To whom did they say this? To the Lord. Faith is a free gift from God. No one can muster faith in Christ simply by stirring himself up to believe. You may believe your history teacher that way, or you may accept certain facts of logic in this manner, but this is emphatically not so in spiritual matters. God gives us the very faith with which we believe in Him. “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.” It is a gift we can ask

for. We don't get faith by working — that is the mistake of so many sincere people.

Why did the apostles ask for more faith? The occasion was when Christ had been telling them that if a brother offended seven times in a day and came seven times asking forgiveness he must be forgiven. You wonder then why the apostles asked for faith. Why didn't they ask for humility? or the spirit of forgiveness? or love? or patience? Well, the apostles simply knew a principle some of us have never got into our hearts; what we need is not more knowledge or more patience or more humility, but more faith. They knew that if they had more faith they could forgive an offending brother seven times in one day and if they had not more faith they would never forgive the brother.

All Christian graces spring from faith. Show me an unforgiving Christian and I will show you one who has little faith. Show me an unloving Christian and I will show you one who has no faith. You see, faith brings me to Christ. Faith keeps me right there. You just get ideas of the "higher life" out of your head, and get a few ideas of the lower life in there. You and I have enough high ideas; we need a few lowly ones. We need to know how dependent we are upon Christ for very move. High-life people can do so much they need Him hardly at all. These apostles were lowly men. They saw they could never love, could not have patience and could never be forgiving except Christ gave them faith. True faith in Christ produces the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forgiveness.

Lions

Lions

Richard Burson

“My soul is among lions” (Psa. 574).

The lions in our verse are the adversaries of the soul. The world and all that is in the world that is opposed to God is meant. The path of wandering and fellowship with unbelievers who scoff at Christ and the Word of God is meant. The soul that is consciously among lions truly enjoys the fellowship of other believers. When lions are known to be about, you do not need to call the flock together: the flock instinctively clings to each another when there are lions. The soul among lions will be driven closer to God. The very proximity of danger makes the tower of safety more evident. We do not need to push ourselves to pray when the danger is imminent. Matthew Henry said once: “Short prayers are long enough.”

In the story of *Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan, Christian was approaching the Palace Beautiful where there was warmth and welcome and refreshment. Just as Christian was approaching the Palace Beautiful, he met two lions who roared at him. He stood trembling in the path. A man named Watchful heard the roar and saw Christian and called to him in a loud voice: “Stay in the middle of the path. The lions are chained and cannot hurt you if you stay in the middle of the path.” Christian stayed in the middle and safely passed the lions. It took a lion on either side of the path to convince Christian to stay in the middle. Lions serve God’s purpose. God uses

even the terrible roar of the lion to force a believer into the place where He would have him. He uses the roar of the lion to awaken the sleepy Christian who has strayed to the edge of the path.

When your soul is among lions, remember that you have a lion with you. Don't forget the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. He is fiercer than any lion you will meet on the road to the Celestial City. He is strong, brave and true. The other lions are afraid of Him.

Nebuchadnezzar ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than it had ever been and had the three Hebrew children thrown in. Men perished from the horrible flames as they threw them into the fiery furnace. Later Nebuchadnezzar looked in and was amazed to see not three but four men walking in the fire as if strolling through a park surrounded by green grass and lovely shade trees. One of these looked like the Son of God; He was the Son of God.

Daniel was thrown into the den of lions; he was a man of God, so God kept him from the lions. What a testimony Daniel was because of the deliverance he had experienced from God! Are you in the midst of lions? Remember Daniel! Remember the fiery furnace! You will be delivered even as Daniel and be a better man for the experience.

There is certain behaviour we must learn in dealing with lions; some simple rules of thumb that all believers should know. Never irritate lions. Some seem to have the knack of keeping the lions upset and angry. A large sign at Swope Park says: "Don't tease the animals. Don't feed the lions." Good advice! Don't tease them. You will not become too friendly with them, of course, but you

must not cause them unhappiness or unnecessary pain. Another simple rule for lion-walking in this world: Don't act like a lion. When the lion roars out threats and terrors, don't you roar back. Simple rule, isn't it? You can laugh all you want, but many a believer who finds himself among lions has taken up the tactics of lions — roaring right back. Nothing sounds quite so hollow as imitating the roars of a lion. If lions have any sense of humor, they must enjoy the feeble attempts to roar like them. Frankly, I don't know much about lion-taming, but I am told —strictly from reading I learned this — that lions respond to a firm hand, courageous heart and kindness.

The kind of lions which trouble us need to be met with a firm hand and a courageous heart. Don't be a coward when lions are about.

I read a story of Mary Slessor the intrepid missionary who, single-handed, turned back two tribes of warriors and stopped an inter-tribal war. Once Mary met a lion coming toward her on the path. She was alone. Mary didn't even know how to aim a gun. She had an umbrella which she aimed at the lion and prayed to God to help her, and looking the beast straight in the eyes, she said firmly (Mind you, with nothing but an umbrella between her and the lion.) "Get out of here in the Name of the Lord Jesus." The lion stopped in his tracks and sniffed at the point of her umbrella. Nothing daunted. Mary repeated; "Get out of here in the name of the Lord Jesus." The lion turned and ambled away through the bush leaving Mary alone. Mary didn't go home and brag about her faith. We would not know her story except through men who had come upon the scene. I suppose it was all in the day's work for Mary Slessor, taming lions.

Don't ever turn your back to a lion. He will strike you down with one fell swipe of his awful paw.

My Well-Beloved

My Well-Beloved

Richard Burson

A Believer in the Lord Jesus always applies things to himself or to his Saviour. This verse obviously applies to Christ. There are two things we should note: Christ is like a bundle of myrrh “unto me” — He is all to the believer.

Myrrh is a perfume. The fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ should fill our lives. It’s fragrance should make us different from all who are about us. So different, in fact, that men will want to know what makes our lives so full and complete, so filled with satisfaction and joy. The fragrance of Christ will take the edge out of unfair decisions and will give the believer solace in times of disappointment.

Myrrh is also known for its healing qualities. Our Lord Jesus Christ has a healing balm for all the hurts and frustrations this world offers the believer. He is risen with healing in His wings. Do I hear filth and ribaldry on all sides? Then I turn to Christ for the healing of my wounded soul. Do I miss being with the people of God on the Lord’s Day? Then turn to Christ and there will be healing in abundance. Do I feel pain and distress at the way men ignore the claims of Christ upon their lives? Then turn to the Lord Jesus for healing and consolation.

Myrrh is said to be a preservative. The Lord Jesus will keep His own in all circumstances. Perhaps it is His will that I see death — He is still a bundle of myrrh to me. He will preserve me through death. Perhaps it is His will

that I be tested and tried — He is a bundle of myrrh to me. He will preserve my life through it all. The Lord Jesus can and will care for His own.

Someone has said that myrrh is a disinfectant. I do not know if this is true or not, but I do know that Christ acts as a disinfectant to the believer who is exposed to the contagions of this world. Christ inoculates the believer against all the evil that surrounds him. Christ cleanses from all sin. “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Then we may wonder why the composer of this song spoke of myrrh as a “bundle.” Perhaps four reasons suggest themselves to us: First he would remind us of plenteousness, Not just a pinch of myrrh but a bundle of it. The Lord Jesus Christ is plenteous in mercy and grace. Whatever I need in Him I find. Whatever my short-comings may be Christ fills them to overflowing. Christ Jesus is inexhaustible. He is infinite. He is all. Secondly the bundle might also suggest to our minds variety. Christ is all things to all men, prophet, priest, king. I will find in Him all the promises fulfilled for me. I will find in Christ the Word of God made real as I read of His walking and talking in this world. I am glad we have a high priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities. The Lord Jesus Christ is the priest we need to intercede between God and us. Some men need a ruler — one who will administer justice and who will right the wrong. Christ is the King to some men. He can be all these to us and much more. He can be the lover of our soul, the satisfaction of our desires, the fulfilment of our needs. Thirdly, the bundle might speak to us of preservation. We are kept by the myrrh and the bundle of myrrh

reminds us we are in a bundle of life with Christ. We are not left to our own devices. We are with Christ in all He does and He is with us in all we do. We are inescapably tied together like a bundle. Isn't it good to know that nothing — absolutely nothing — comes to me but that it must get through the "bundle of myrrh" to reach me? I am covered by the hand of Christ and whatever comes to me must first get past Him. This is consolation in times of perplexity. Fourth, the bundle of myrrh might suggest specialty. He chose me. He elected me, I belong to God because God did this for me. I look at other men and realize they are no different than I, and I am no different than they. Our basic needs are all the same. Our general responses are identical. What they want, I want. What they need, I need. Why? Then I can say, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me." The man next to me may only use the name of Christ as a swear word. Why is Christ loved in my heart and rejected in the heart of another? Well, we must get back to the choice God makes; "Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you and ordained you..." There is the reason. I would hate Him if He had not changed my heart. I would spurn His love if He had not caused me to love Him.

All these things being true, I am reminded of the little song dedicated to D. L. Moody and written by Will Houghton;

Love this world through me, Lord,

This world of broken men.

Thou hast loved through death, Lord.

Oh, love through me again.

Souls are in despair, Lord,

Oh, make me know and care
When my life they see, may they behold Thee.
Oh, love this world through me.

Obedience in the Home

Obedience in the Home

Richard Burson

There is a beautiful lesson on the obedience of children to their parents in the story of the Lord Jesus at the temple, found in Luke 2:48 through 52. After His parents had found Him, we read: "And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." It is this spirit of subjection to parents, we are thinking about.

Matthew Henry, who was himself a model of obedience to his father, remarked on this verse: "Though His parents were poor and mean, though His father was only His supposed father, yet He was subject unto them; though He was strong in spirit and filled with wisdom, yea, though He was the Son of God, yet He was subject to His parents; how then will they answer it, who, though foolish and weak, yet are disobedient to their parents?"

Young people sometimes feel they should not obey their parents because they may know more than their parents. Notice verse 50 of our chapter: "And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them." Christ certainly knew more than His parents. He did not let their ignorance cause Him to have a spirit of insubordination. The fact that He knew more than His parents was no cause of jeering or of impatience on His part.

Indeed, their very ignorance only gave Him further opportunities to be loving and patient with them. There

is no evidence that the Lord Jesus Christ ever drew the attention of any person to the lack of general knowledge on the part of His parents. There has never been another family where the intelligence gap has been so great as between Christ and His parents. The example of the Lord Jesus in His attitude toward His parents should be a graphic lesson to modern youth.

It is true that young people often have greater learning than their parents. The youth should humbly remember that the reason he has had such remarkable advantages in learning is because his parents and other adults of their generation have willingly taxed themselves so as to provide much greater advantages in the field of education than were enjoyed by the previous generation. The thoughtful youth will not scorn parents who have not had as great educational advantages as he has enjoyed. Rather, a spirit of submission and thankfulness should be his attitude.

The Scripture teaches children to obey their parents "for this is right" (Eph. 6:1). No better reason could be given. All disobedience to parents is wrong and God-dishonouring. No line of thinking can be taken up that will make deliberate disobedience to parents right. No young person can expect the blessing of God upon his activities unless his life is subject to his parents.

This is not to say that the youth does not have a will of his own. Christ had the strongest will of any person who has ever lived. But with His strong will was humble subjection as a counter-balance. The very strength of His will makes His filial submission all the more beautiful. This is true of every young person who determinedly obeys his parents. Nothing seems sadder

than the youth without a strong will. John Newton said: "If we expect to see embers in old age, we must expect fire in youth." The strong will lends character to the life, purpose to activities, resolve to intentions. To see the youth of strong will consistently submitted to his parents in the fear and love of God is good to behold—in the Scripture "this is right."

Parents are sometimes wrong. Mary and Joseph undoubtedly made as many erroneous decisions as the average parents today. Erroneous decisions are because of a lack of information, because of prejudices or a combination of the two. The Lord Jesus Christ had all the information on every subject, and yet He did what His parents told Him He should do.

Parents should note that the Scripture states: "He was subject to THEM." The parents were agreed as to what was being carried out in the family. The parents were united in their decisions. No one blames youth for not obeying when the parents are not agreed on what is expected of the child.

The youth will notice the attitude of the mother: she kept all these sayings in her heart. Obedience never goes unnoticed. Just as Mary stored up in her heart the sweet submissiveness of the Lord Jesus, and loved Him all the more for it, so your mother notices, approves, and appreciates your obedience.

The fifty-second verse shows growth: Jesus increased in wisdom—growth of mind, and in stature —growth of body; in favour with God and man—growth in acceptance. Undoubtedly, the Lord Jesus was one of the most popular young persons among the older generation

of His day in Nazareth. His submissiveness to His parents made older people love and respect Him.

The more they saw Him and His submissiveness, the more they appreciated Him. Thus He grew in favour with man. His obedience was noted approvingly by God. On three occasions God spoke from Heaven saying He was well pleased with the Lord Jesus Christ. His increase in wisdom and stature only made it more obvious that He was obedient to His parents.

Matthew Henry said: "Young people, as they grow in stature, should grow in wisdom; and then as they grow in wisdom, they will grow in favour with God and man."

As we read this story of the Perfect One, may our lives be measured and our hearts convicted of the vast difference that at times exists between this pattern family and the Christian family today. May both parents and children seek wisdom and help from God to live lives that will honour His Name.

Righteous Amid Unrighteousness

Righteous Amid Unrighteousness

Richard Burson

“And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation” (Genesis 7:1).

God said that Noah was righteous. It would not be difficult for you to get some fellow student to admit that you were righteous, for to be good in the eyes of other folk is neither difficult nor remarkable. People are people and all have the same fundamental weaknesses and faults. Basically one can say that all of mankind has the same sort of goodness as well as badness. It is not infrequent that one sees human goodness and is thankful for it, but this human goodness is not nearly as deep nor as easily attained in the life as the righteousness of God. When we are told that God said Noah was righteous, we are being told that the holy, thrice holy God, Who cannot countenance sin, has judged that man's character in the whole and has found the man righteous. This is a far cry from the judgments of puny man. Righteousness truly begins when we learn we are sinners and depend upon God to do something in our lives; then righteousness begins.

Some of you talk about being “saved,” and, yet, you know nothing of the righteousness of God in your lives; it is just so much religious talk. How sad to use words of Scripture and empty them of meaning and power in our lives!

Well, you will notice that God said where and when Noah was righteous: “In this generation.” Nearly anyone can live a Christian life when surrounded by fellow believers; it would be downright difficult to be outstandingly bad while you are surrounded by other Christians. To be a man of God when you are surrounded by scoffers, is the acid test of Christianity. Noah stood that test and God said that he was “righteous in this generation.” Look at how few people of that generation believed —only eight souls. Noah was surrounded by unbelievers and unbelievers are often scoffers and often make life miserable for believers, especially when the unbelievers outnumber the believers by several times over.

Noah was probably the butt of many a joke. They would ask if he were going to make himself a sea ship. They may also have poked fun at his family for believing the preaching of their father, but Noah was righteous in that generation. It was his own wicked generation in which he lived a righteous life. You will never be able to live righteously except in your own wicked generation. Perhaps you had thought that if your environment were better then you would be better; Noah’s testimony puts a lie to all this. No, you are going to be righteous only when you get to a place where you want to be righteous before God. When you want His righteousness more than anything else in your life, then He will fill your life with Christ, Who is the righteousness of God personified.

Notice, God says: “I have seen righteous...” Sometimes we get the idea that we are trying to live for God, and we are really wanting God to live out through our lives and none seems to notice it at all. God notices it. “Thee

have I seen righteous.” God sees the attempts we make to let Him rule our lives. People about us are more conscious of the defeats and failures. God notes the attempts to let Him rule. He gains ground even when we fail Him. Failures in the life of the true Christian only tend to make one more dependent upon the source of righteousness.

Sometimes the righteousness of God is like one kernel of corn in a great pile of chaff. Yet God sees that kernel of corn. Most of us see the chaff. God sees the kernel of corn. The Lord wants the chaff to decrease and the corn to increase. But He can look at your efforts to let Christ rule your life and say, “Thee have I seen righteous in this generation.” Take heart. He sees. He knows your heart. He is the final judge of your life and actions. Live for God. It pays.

Running The Christian Race

Running The Christian Race

Richard Burson

“Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” Hebrews 12:1, 2.

Notice three things about the Christian race: 1. It is “set before us.” 2. It is “run with patience,” and 3. It is run “looking unto Jesus.”

Let us consider these three important features in the Christian race.

The Prescribed Course

Paul tells us the race is set before us. It is a prescribed course made evident by the Word of God. When young people do not read the Word of God for themselves and do not look to God to speak to them from His Word there are always problems in the life that cannot be solved. The young believer who enquires “Why can’t I do this?” or “What is wrong with that?” is always the person who is not reading the Word of God for himself and allowing the Word to speak to his own heart.

If you are going to run this race you have no choice as to the course. The course has been laid down for us in the Word of God, and either you run on the track or you are

out of the race. I well know there are difficulties in the course. Have you ever seen the obstacle course for trainees at Ft. Riley? It is made up of barrells, logs, fences, barbed wire, ditches, mud and a river to cross. The men who can run through all that are deemed strong enough to go on in the army.

God has an obstacle course. The trouble with some softies is that instead of enduring as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, they have come to the first obstacle, and have sat down beside it and prayed about it; looked over it; have talked to others about it; but the obstacle is still there and so is the believer.

The way to get across an obstacle course is by starting out and letting nothing stop you. John Bunyan has a character in Pilgrims Progress who was on his way to the Celestial City. This remarkable fellow was named Mr. Ready-to-Halt and he struck up a conversation with Mr. Greatheart who asked him how he progressed toward the Celestial City. The reply of Mr. Ready-to-Halt shows the depth of apprehension of Mr. Bunyan as to the pilgrimage: he has Ready-to-Halt reply: "When I can, I walk; when I can't walk, I crawl; but I do not stop from walking or crawling toward the Celestial City." That's it. He was in the race for sure and that is the kind who always win. That is the determination which shows that Christ means something to the believer. When he can't walk he crawls. He does not stop in despair at the obstacles. He does not consider his own lameness; he goes on. There was an African Christian who wrote a poem about the Christian life and the first of the twelve-stanza poem was:

Go on, go on, go on, go on,

Go on, go on, go on,

Go on, go on, go on, go on,

Go on, go on, go on.

The other eleven verses were the same as the first! That man may not have been a poet but he had grasped one of the basic principles of Christianity. Go on! Keep going on for God.

Patient Running

The second thing we learn about this race is how it is to be run. It must be run with patience. We all need the grace of patience. You cannot run this race otherwise. If the race is not run with patience, it is not counted as part of the race. When we are unhappy with God or His people, we are not running the race set before us. When people try to deter you or when they provoke or injure you, a good opportunity to bless them has presented itself.

When Peter walked, his very shadow fell on some and they were blessed and helped. Peter cast a shadow which shows that he was walking in the light. No one casts shadows unless walking where the light shines. I suppose the thing we are the least conscious of is the shadow we cast. A man running a race would not be occupied with his shadow. We can be a blessing even in little inconsequential things if we are going along in the light of God's Holy Word.

The Race Setter

The only way to run with patience is found in the next verse: "Looking unto Jesus." There is no other way to run the race. Consider His obstacle course. Did He turn

aside to some easier path? No, He went on to do the will of the Father. He said “Without Me ye can do nothing.” With Him constantly guiding and supporting, this race can be won. Don’t look at the spectators. Don’t look at other runners. Look unto Jesus.

Strength and Courage

FFF 8:1 (Jan 1962)

Strength and Courage

Richard Burson

Courage alone is not worthy of admiration. Wild animals often show fearless courage and fight to the death. This courage, exhibited by animals, is merely physical courage, and, unfortunately, is displayed by unbelievers often in their behaviour to one another. While, under certain circumstances, physical courage may merit some commendation, it is not the type in which God takes delight. A courage prompted by the truth manifesting itself in a sincere desire for righteousness is the kind of courage God wants in His people.

A courage that resulted from a love of the truth was shown by Daniel. In spite of the evil ordinance of wicked men, he continued his daily habit of prayer to God. This same type of courage endured the test when he was cast into the den of lions.

The sure conviction that he had been called of God, and that he had acted as led of the Lord was the source of the courage that strengthened the Apostle Paul. Through it he faced judges and kings, and fearlessly witnessed for the truth of the Gospel of Christ.

The knowledge that God had spoken directly to them gave courage to unlettered fishermen, and gave them boldness to face angry and unjust judges with these words: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we

cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). God had called them and commissioned them to represent Him; with this confidence they received the indomitable spirit to face the august Sanhedrin. "There is no source of courage like that which flows from the consciousness of serving God, and the consequent assurance that He will sustain and help His servants" (Wm. Blalkie). That is why God spoke to Joshua, saying, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein: for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous and then shalt thou have good success" (Jos. 1:18).

Matthew Henry commented on this passage: "If any man's business might have excused him from meditation and other acts of devotion, one would think Joshua's might at this time." God instructed Joshua, because of the great work he was beginning, relative to the importance of meditation upon His divine Word. The Lord knew that he would experience the need for strength, wisdom, and vigour which result alone from fellowship with God. In all the centuries of Church history, those who have been a blessing to the people of God have been the men and the women who have meditated daily upon the Word of God. There can be no spiritual progress or prosperity without this. A perfunctory reading of the Bible without regular meditation will not feed the soul or fortify the inner man for spiritual conflicts. God instructed Joshua in the way of courage by stating, "Meditate therein day and night."

When we reflect upon the Word of God, we become convinced as to what is right. The veracity of what is the

right action under varying circumstances comes only from regularly consulting the Scriptures and meditating upon them. Uncertainty breeds the hesitancy that is indicative of lack of courage and conviction.

Yet, it is not enough to have the courage of one's convictions; one may know that he is right, and, in spite of all, proceed to the detriment of the cause of Christ. Alexander Whyte said, "Hoist the banner of truth, but be certain your flagstaff is love." Life is only experienced as the believer daily finds fellowship with God through His Holy Word. "God is love." Everyone who knows God has enjoyed His love in some measure.

When Joshua was advised to "observe to do all that is written," he was driven back to the Word of God as the source of all truth. The Word of God is of value to us only in the manner we practise daily the truth we learn from it. If Joshua "observed to do all that is written," he could be sure of courage to speak to others. Courage to thus speak results from the resolute determination to employ that which we know to be right. Joshua's meditations upon the Word of God instilled into his mind the will of God; strengthened him to perform this will, and to make future conquests.

It was not idle rhetorics on Peter's part, for who better than he could give instructions in this very matter, saying, "Add to your faith courage." Nothing is more effectual in producing confidence than trusting the call and the command of God, and feeling fully assured of it in one's own conscience.

When God speaks to Joshua, "Have not I commanded thee?" He refers to the commands given in verse eight. On the basis of those instructions and Joshua's acting

upon them, God makes the promise, saying, "The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

Constant companionship is promised to the man who obeys God, the man who courageously acts upon the promises of God. "The Lord thy God is with thee." The presence of God is the realest experience in the entire pathway of life.

F. E. Marsh makes this comment: "Thou art with me: He is above us to guard. He is underneath us to support. He is before us to lead. He is at our right hand to protect. He is within us as a companion and comforter. He never leaves us nor forsakes us. He is faithful that promised. 'The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest'."

Needing no other armour than this, the presence of the Lord, Joshua went forth and conquered. The people, through their valiant leader, were brought into the place of blessing that God had intended for them. Joshua was the means of bringing God's people into submission to the divine will; consequently, he brought untold blessing upon them. All this was the simple end of meditating upon the Word of God and the following of its precepts wheresoever they might lead.

"When we are in the way of our duty, we have reason to be strong and courageous; and it will help very much to animate and embolden us if we keep our eye upon the divine warrant, and hear God saying, 'Have not I commanded thee?'" (Matthew Henry).

God grant that more of His dear people may be given the desire to meditate upon and to obey His Word, and to lead His people gallantly in their rightful victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Strength imparted

Strength imparted

Richard Burson

“He Would Put Strength In Me” (Job 23:6)

Job, before God, was a righteous man who hated evil. He was a man who realized his weakness in the performance of any good. That is why he said, “He (God) would put strength in me.”

Strength for Duties

The first reason why God strengthened Job was in order that he do his duty. It is not always easy to do the right thing, but God is willing to give the strength to do that which is proper. Actually, we are so weak that unless strengthened by His almighty power, we are unable to do what we should. Somehow our duty seldom appears glamorous. Generally speaking, that which is out of the routine appears easier and more natural than following the dictates of the Word of God as it enlightens our minds and our paths. Do not forget the maxim of Matthew Henry, “God’s commands are His enablings.” By this, he simply meant, If God puts a hill of difficulty across your path, He will also give you the strength to climb the hill. God is no hard taskmaster; with each command, He would give the strength to obey.

Strength for Suffering

God strengthened Job so he could suffer for Him. No one could endure suffering for the Lord Jesus were it not for the divine strength imparted. There is an account well

worth reading in Fox's Book of Martyrs of the death of two young Christians. Blandins was a mere girl and Ponticus a boy of only fifteen; yet, these two suffered horribly at the hands of their wicked tormentors. They, nevertheless, suffered so heroically for Christ that some of the spectators were converted to the Lord. Finally, both were killed and thrown to the lions. The outcome of their testimony was that one of their tormentors came to a knowledge of the truth, and eventually sealed his own testimony with his blood. The days of open persecutions could come again, if they do, let us remember this verse, "He would put strength in me."

Strength for Temptation

Job received divine strength in such a manner that he refused to do wrong, A Christian has no real difficulty in distinguishing between right and wrong, but sometimes the Christian has difficulty in refusing the wrong and doing the right. God would put strength in him in order that he whole-heartedly embrace only the right.

This thing of grudgingly refusing the wrong, yet all the time eyeing it hungrily, is no refusal at all. I once knew a boy in High School who refused to go to a school dance, but who sat at home all evening wishing that he had. His refusal was not genuine; he was not acting upon Christian principles as led by the Holy Spirit. Had he really sought strength from the Lord, he likely would have forgotten all about the dance, and would have thoroughly enjoyed something else. Strong words of coercion are often the thin varnish over an avid desire to indulge. Some Christians, in their own strength, attempt to refuse to do the wrong, and they fail. Remember! "He would put strength in me."

Strength for Conflict

God strengthened Job that he might have power for conflict equal to that of his enemy. The ruler of this present evil age is stronger than we. He is evil as well as strong. We cannot, we dare not, face him in our strength. We must receive an infusion of strength from another source, from some one else: "He would put strength in me." When Satan attacks with all his might, we must remember the statement of Job, "He would put strength in me." When all around seems to be swept away by the torrent of devilish machinations, let us remember: "He would put strength in me."

Some may be saying, "Yes, but how do I get this strength?" God's strength is made perfect in human weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). Let all cling to Him; trust Him. "Hope thou in God." He never gives strength while we still feel that we can do something for ourselves. When He sees us utterly helpless, then we may be assured individually, "He would put strength in me."

Remember! "When we were yet without strength, ... Christ died." God will work for each one if each comes to the place where he wants God to manifest His strength in personal human weakness.

The Presence of God

FFF 14:3 (March 1968)

The Presence of God

Richard Burson

My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up (Psa. 5:3).

It was George Mueller who said, "Before I go into the presence of fellow-men, I must get into the presence of God." The faithful life of Mueller should be the average life of faith and it is to our shame that he is so outstanding. The simple faith of George Mueller should be the general mean of Christian experience instead of the outstanding case. Every Christian should be a George Mueller so far as prayer is concerned.

Our Psalmist had learned that while the dew was still on the grass, while the day was fresh and new, before the cares of life and decisions of the day had dulled his spiritual appetite, was the time to come into the presence of God. The very routine of life tends to lessen the sensitiveness of the soul of the believer. The temptations of the day loom large in our thinking as the day wears on. Before routine and temptations we can come to God seeking inspiration and strength. Coming fresh to God before the cares of life have weakened or puzzled us gives opportunity to pour out the heart in prayer in unfettered freedom. It is this early morning liberty in prayer to which the missionary-poet Amy Carmichael referred when she wrote: "Let me not sink to be a clod: Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God." Wm.

MacDonald has caught this very truth in one of his most lucid paragraphs: "God seems to place a special value on prayer when it costs us something. Those who rise early in the morning enjoy fellowship with the One who likewise arose early to receive His instructions for the day from His Father.... Prayer that costs nothing is worth nothing; it is simply a by-product of a cheap Christianity."

The manner in which the believer may come into the presence of God is stated: In the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee." Prayer must be specific. It is astonishing that some true Christians believe that prayer is something that simply happens to believers. Christ directly taught His disciples to pray. The disciples were aware that prayer is something we need to learn for they asked the Lord Jesus to teach them to pray. The consciousness that they did not know how to pray is the very first step in learning to pray. Paul says that believers know not how they ought to pray. The dependence of the disciples in coming to Christ with their request that He teach them the art of prayer is the attitude of heart necessary to become a scholar in the school of prayer.

When the Psalmist speaks of directing his prayer to the Lord, he was thinking of order and aim in prayer.

As one would organize his thoughts, analyze his need, decide what was essential to the occasion, and then make a reasonable presentation when coming before an earthly potentate, so the believer must be orderly in coming to God. This in no way overrules the Holy Spirit of God leading a believer in prayer. It is sadly true that some believers appear to accept that a careless, off-hand

attitude in coming before God in prayer is indicative of relying on the Holy Spirit to lead us in prayer. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The more the believer considers his need before coming into the presence of God, the more his mind will be ordered and the more certainly may he depend upon the assistance of the Holy Spirit in praying. Only such organizing of my thoughts can be called directing my prayer unto Thee.

There is such a thing as ejaculatory prayer — simply calling out of necessity and urgency as a child calls its parent when sinking in fear. This is not the type of prayer on which the true believer thrives. Prayers during emergencies are unorganized by the very urgency of the moment. Such praying is genuine and must not be minimized but is outside the present consideration.

We should notice the attitude of the man who let God hear his voice in the morning and who directed his prayer to Him. The attitude is a heavenward gaze, a hope in God: “I will look up.” The Revised Version puts it: “I will keep watch.” This watchful attitude is the result of the early morning watch and the directed prayer. As the believer comes from his early morning trysting-place with God, he is consciously looking up. “I will keep watch.” Everything throughout the day takes on a different perspective if God heard the voice in the morning. A careful watch is set for the entire day — all its activities and decisions — when prayer has been directed to Him. Aware of a fresh contact with Heaven, the believer approaches the day’s work with renewed zeal and with a desire to make this day count for God. Believers who spend time with God in the morning are those who work best with other people under trying

circumstances throughout the day. I will look up all day long. As I look up I begin to see things as God sees them. Some things previously thought important lose their importance. Some things of little importance become of great moment because of that upward look. When the soul has been in the presence of God, the sweet submissiveness of that hour carries the believer through a world filled with trials and heartaches.

God help us daily to join the Psalmist in the experience of getting into the presence of God.

Watch Ye Stand Fast

FFF 14:2 (Feb 1968)

Watch Ye Stand Fast

Richard Burson

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13).

John Chrysostom who was a pupil of Diodorus of Tarsus preached a remarkable sermon on this text, which I would like to quote in epitome: “He said, ‘Watch’ as though they slept; ‘Stand’ as though they were rocking to and fro; ‘Quit you like men’ as though they were playing the coward; ‘Let all your things be done in love’ as though they were in dissensions. And the first caution refers to the deceivers viz., ‘Watch, Stand;’ the next, to those who plot against us, ‘Quit you like men;’ the third, to those who make parties and endeavor to distract, “Let all your things be done in love,” which is the bond of perfectness and the root and fountain of all blessings.” Chrysostom died in 407. If I did nothing more than report to you the above sermon, you would have food for thought.

In the day when the Apostle Paul wrote, battle was done hand-to-hand. Soldier directly faced soldier. It was a struggle to the very death. The personal valor of a leader could turn the whole tide. A General coming bravely among the men who loved and respected him and who shouted out commands and encouragements, could bring victory out of what appeared to be overwhelming defeat. Paul calls to the Corinthians and

to you and me today as a brave General marshalling his forces against a mighty foe: "Watch you! Stand fast!"

Christians are exhorted repeatedly in the New Testament to watch. The warfare is incessant and the watching must be constant. What is this watchfulness? How are we to define it? John Calvin put it this way: "Now watchfulness of spirit is this, when free and disentangled from earthly cares, we meditate on the things of God. For as the body is weighed down by surfeiting and drunkenness (Luke 21:34) so as to be fit for nothing; similarly the cares and lusts of the world, idleness or carelessness, are like a spiritual surfeiting that overpowers the mind."

Paul said in another place: "Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober." Peter advised: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." John taught: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die..." All three of these men of God saw that watchfulness was imperative to Christian testimony. Matthew Henry observed "A Christian is always in danger, hence must always be on his guard."

But it is not enough to be alert. Paul admonished the Corinthians to "Stand fast in the faith." He had like words for the Philippian Christians: "...That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries..."

The Corinthian Christians were surrounded by a moral situation very similar to the student on the modern campus. There were pagans all around. There were

gnostics and agnostics. There were amazing and amusing philosophies. There was all the international traffic of a world seaport. Corinth was a crossroad of the nations and exists to this day as an important trade centre. There was a constant flow and exchange of ideas and ideals. In the midst of these circumstances the believers were told to watch.

You are a child of your age. You look out upon all that challenges as fresh and new. My beloved, it is not fresh and new. Someone has aptly said that the New Morality is only the old immorality with a new name and new generation. You face situations that may be startlingly new to you but they are the same issues that have always faced believers in Christ.

A letter from a soldier in the Army said in part: "I don't believe you can imagine the amount of cussing, swearing and sex jokes I've heard. It's a shame. And, not only do these boys know nothing of God, they don't want to know anything about Him. Still, God is with me and has given me the strength I need." This young man is a Christian who stands fast. I assure you the armed forces is no Sunday School convention, yet this young man stands fast in the faith.

The Corinthian people knew what it was to be attacked by enemies. They knew what it was to defend themselves from terrible onslaughts. Neighboring cities had attacked them. They had withstood. Their very survival contributed to their stability. Continuance is commended because it is a desirable attitude of the Christian experience. The early church continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. Please recall this was in the time of the house of Julian — Nero, to be

exact — and being a Christian was considered a state offence. It has never been simple and easy to be a Christian. If you have been led to believe that the Christian life is one of slumber and peace, you have been misinformed. The same vile forces you face have been faced by men and women in all areas of the Church. Loving and serving the Lord Jesus Christ brings one into conflict with the existing forces of evil.

Watch! Stand fast! Be Strong!

Weary

FFF 14:4 (Apr 1968)

Weary

Richard Burson

Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not — Galatians 6:9.

And in doing good let us not grow tired, for in due time we shall reap if we do not relax” (Confraternity edition of N.T.) “In doing that which is honorable, let us not be fainthearted, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.” Another version has it: “So let us not give up in doing what is right, for in due season we shall reap by not giving out.”

It is a good thing to stop and ask oneself just what makes me weary in well-doing? Is it because I have too much sympathy for myself? Is it because I have been listening to others who tell me to give up well-doing? Perhaps it is an attitude I have taken toward well-doing; an attitude of resignation. Going on in a resigned, lifeless, hopeless, meaningless way gives no satisfaction to the doer and one is soon weary in well-doing. It is possible to be weary in well-doing and not weary of well-doing. Sometimes such people are simply physically tired.

Some people are tired of well-doing as such because of the way they began it. Remember that spiritual warfare takes spiritual energies. The very worst thing that can happen to a believer is to attempt to carry on God’s

work in his own energy. You will soon become weary of well-doing if you are doing all in your own strength.

Do not attempt to artificially stimulate yourself into doing good. Some folk have done this to their detriment. It is a dangerous and uncertain thing to run on emotions. Yet, some Christians live in a constant state of spiritual upheaval and excitement. This is not the atmosphere that produces quietness, rest, peace, certainty. Unless you have those things you are bound to become weary in well-doing.

Some people are not weary in well-doing for they have never started doing well. It is better to start and be weary than not to start. A special promise is given to all those who do not become weary. They shall reap. They shall harvest. It is certain; God has promised. "Then be not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

“Children Obey Your Parents”

“Children Obey Your Parents”

Richard Burson

The story of the Lord Jesus Christ in the temple (Luke 2:41-52) contains a beautiful lesson of obedience to parents. After His father and mother had found Him, we are told “He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.” It is this spirit of submissiveness to parents we are considering.

Matthew Henry commented on Christ’s going from Jerusalem to the town of Nazareth with His parents: “Though His parents were poor and mean, though His father was only His supposed father, yet He was subject to them; though He was strong in spirit, and filled with wisdom, nay, though He was the Son of God, yet He was subject to His parents; how then will they answer it, who, though foolish and weak, yet are disobedient to their parents?”

Young people in our day often feel that they should not obey their parents because they think that they know more than their elders. Notice verse 50 where Luke records, “They understood not the saying which He spake unto them•” Jesus certainly knew more than His parents; yet, He did not allow that to make Him insubordinate before them. The fact that He knew much more than His parents in no way made Him arrogant. Indeed, their very ignorance only gave Him further opportunities to be loving and patient with them. There has never been another family in which the intelligence gap was as great as it was between the Lord Jesus and

His parents. The attitude of the Lord Jesus, therefore, to them is a wonderful example to the modern youth.

It is sometimes true that young people today have more learning than their parents, but they should humbly remember that the reason they have such remarkable advantages in learning is because their parents, and other adults of that generation, willingly taxed their income. The thoughtful youth will not scorn his parents who did not have similar educational privileges, but will manifest rather a spirit of submission and thankfulness.

The Scriptures teach children to obey their parents in the Lord, stating, "For this is right" (Eph. 6:1). John Calvin said in commenting on this verse: "Obedience is the evidence of that honour which children owe to their parents, and is therefore more earnestly endorsed. It is likewise more difficult; for the human mind recoils from the idea of subjection, and with difficulty allows itself to be placed under the control of another ... The obedience of children is enforced by the authority of God. Hence, it follows that parents are to be obeyed, so far as is consistent with piety to God, which comes first in order. If the command of God is the rule by which the submission of children is to be regulated, it would be foolish to suppose that the performance of this duty could lead away from God Himself. He proves it to be right because God has commanded it." No young person can sincerely expect the blessing of God upon his life unless he is subject to his parents.

This is not to say that the youth does not have a will of his own. No doubt the Lord Jesus had as strong a will as anyone who ever lived. Nevertheless, His strong will was humbly subjected to parental authority, and a

balanced personality was the result. The very strength of His will made His submission all the more wonderful. No one wants to see youth without spirit. Everyone who wishes a young person well, wishes to see him zealous and high spirited but with his will submitted to parental authority. Strength of will lends character to life, purpose to activities, and resolve to intentions. For a youth of strong will to submit to his parents provides a wonderful lesson to others, and to himself it is an excellent discipline. God Himself says, "This is right."

Parents are sometimes wrong. I am sure Mary and Joseph made as many erroneous decisions as the average parents today. Erroneous decisions are due to the lack of information or to prejudice. The Lord Jesus had all information and knowledge on every subject and knew when His parents had made wrong decisions; yet, Scriptures tell us that He was subject to them. Parents should note that the Scriptures say Jesus was subject to them. Both parents were agreed as to what was carried out. Parents cannot expect their children to obey unless there is agreement between father and mother as to matters affecting their children.

Let us notice the attitude of the mother, "She kept all these sayings in her heart." Obedience never goes unnoticed. Just as Mary stored up in her heart the loving obedience of her Son, so parents appreciate and are thankful for the obedience of their own children.

In verse 52 Luke states, "Jesus increased in wisdom," this is growth of mind; "And stature," growth of body. Christ was the Son of God when He was a little babe in Bethlehem, and He pleased the Father as a little babe. He grew into childhood and pleased the Father as a

child. When He grew into young manhood, Jesus increased ... "in favour with God and man," that indicated social growth. There is no doubt that Jesus Christ was the most popular young man in Nazareth among the adults. They could see His obedience to His parents. They recognized His love for others. The more they saw of His submissiveness, the more they respected Him. He grew in favour with man. His obedience was noted approvingly by God. Three times God said of Christ that He was His Son in whom He was well pleased. His increase in wisdom and stature only endeared Him to His parents and acquaintances. Matthew Henry says, "Young people, as they grow in stature, should grow in wisdom; and, then, as they grow in wisdom, they will grow in favour with God and man."

As we read and ponder the story of the Perfect One, may our hearts be convicted of the vast differences that sometimes exist between this pattern family in Nazareth and the professing Christian families of today. May we seek to obey our parents as Christ obeyed His.

"Honour thy father and mother; which is the first Commandment with promise;

"That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:2-3).