

14 *On the habitual Remembrance of God.*

spieth out all our ways. There is not a word in our tongue, but God knoweth it altogether. *Psa. cxxxix. 2, 3.\**

The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God. O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you. *Psa. ix. 17; l. 22.*

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? Even by ruling himself according to thy word. *Psa. cxix. 9.*

Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is. *Heb. x. 25.*

Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. *Mark viii. 38.*

Whosoever shall confess me while on earth, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. *Matt. x. 32.*

\* Let young people learn this psalm by heart.

SERMON II.

THE YOUNG MAN'S DUTY TO HIS PARENTS.

EPH. vi. 2, 3.

Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise,) that it may be well with thee.

NEXT to the fear and the love of God, no duty has a stronger claim to the attention and observance of young men than the duty which they owe to their parents.

This duty is founded on the common feelings and instincts of nature. As nature inclines almost all animated beings to nourish and provide for their offspring, so long at least as they need their care, and fondly to watch over and protect them, so it is natural that their offspring should become attached to their parents, as soon as they are so far advanced in growth to be sensible of their kindness and affection. Such attachment to parents should especially be felt by man, who stands at the head of the animal creation, and whose reason should direct and give strength to the salutary instincts and teaching of nature.

You to whom I address myself should reflect, that as your parents have been, under Providence, the authors of your being, so they nourished and watched over you in the helplessness of infancy and childhood. Consider how hard they have

toiled to provide for you food and clothing, how they have denied themselves the comforts, perhaps even the necessaries, of life, that you might not want. Think how many labours, and cares, and anxieties they have undergone on your account, and for your welfare. Certainly you must be sensible that they have the strongest claims to your gratitude and tender regard, that all the common feelings of nature require you to treat them with affection and respect, require you to LOVE, HONOUR, AND SUCCOUR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.

These suggestions of nature and reason are strongly enforced in the Scriptures. You well know that the fifth commandment enjoins you to *Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* The Scriptures of the New Testament enforce the observance of all moral and social duties, not so much by temporal motives, as by considerations derived from the love and mercy of God, and from thankfulness for the atonement effected by the death of Christ. Instead of the promise of long life and happiness in this world, they hold forth the glorious prospect of eternal unfading happiness in the world to come. St. Paul however appears to enforce the observance of duty to parents by an allusion to the promise in the fifth commandment, *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.\* That it may be well with thee,—as attention to the relative duties contributes essentially to the well-being of society, so dutiful obedience to your parents will*

\* Eph. vi. 1, 2, 3.

tend materially to promote your own well-being, your own comfort and happiness, in this life. St. Paul repeats this injunction in the Epistle to the Colossians, *Children, obey your parents in all things,—observe the expression in ALL things, in all things not contrary to the divine law,—for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.\**

The precepts of the Old Testament are in strict accordance with these injunctions of the apostle. *My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.†* No ornament is more graceful and becoming to young people, than dutiful obedience to parents. So again, *Keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thy heart, and tie them about thy neck.‡* And thus in another passage of the same book. *Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.§*

This duty of obedience to parents is clearly enforced by the dictates of reason. Your parents have a *right* to your obedience, in return for their care, and trouble, and anxiety in bringing you up. Consider that their age and experience in the world render them for the most part better qualified than you can possibly be, to judge what is right, and fitting, and expedient. It is probable too, that in what they forbid, or require you to do, your good, your real interest and advantage is the object which they principally have in view.

And of this duty to your parents you must never lose sight. As it was the first lesson which you

\* Col. iii. 20.

† Prov. vi. 20, 21.

‡ Prov. i. 8, 9.

§ Prov. xxiii. 22.

were taught—or *should have been taught*—when you were children, so you should never forget it, so long as your parents' lives are continued. In this country the laws give authority to parents over their children, in all things not inconsistent with any higher obligation, until the children have attained the age of twenty-one years, or until they have, with their parents' consent, bound themselves to obey some other person. But still you must never forget—never cease—to *love, honour, and succour your father and mother*, so long as their lives are continued to them. Always treat them with affectionate respect; comply, so far as you reasonably can, with their wishes; and endeavour to soothe them under the infirmities of their declining years by your kindness and attention. *Grieve not thy father*, says the son of Sirach, *as long as he liveth. And if his understanding fail, have patience with him; and despise him not, when thou art in thy full strength.\** Make every allowance for the infirmities of old age. Bear patiently with any peevishness or quickness of temper, any failure of mind or memory, or with any of the distressing maladies which some time afflict the body in the decline of life. Let nothing overcome the love and respect which is due from a son to his parents.

Such being the suggestions of nature and right reason, such the express injunctions of the Scriptures, it is painful to see young men and women,—often indeed mere boys and girls, long before they have attained the age of maturity,—presumptuously setting up for themselves, and treating the wishes and even the commands of their parents with disregard; sometimes they receive

\* Ecclus. iii. 12, 13.

their injunctions or their advice in sullenness, and sometimes openly rebel against it. Headstrong and unruly, they determine to have their own way, to follow their own wills, their own lusts and appetites. Perhaps, if their parents enforce their commands with some degree of warmth, with some angriness of language, these self-willed young persons even go so far as to give them angry language in return. Hardly any thing can be more blameable, more revolting, than such behaviour. A real Christian must not return *railing for railing* to any one; but to hear a young man render railing for railing to a parent, to hear him use, perhaps injurious language, perhaps even curses and imprecations, to one to whom he owes his being, and to whom he ought to look up with respect and reverence, is indeed most dreadful. Let such young people remember, and reflect upon the awful threatenings denounced in the word of God against disobedient children. *The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.\** Let them reflect too upon the punishment of the disobedient son in the Mosaic law. *If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die.†* Again,

\* Prov. xxx. 17.

† Deut. xxi. 18—21.

*Every one that curseth his father or his mother, shall surely be put to death.\* And again, Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother.†*

These three latter passages, it is true, are taken from that law which, in the letter, is not binding upon us; and the passage from the book of Proverbs is expressed in a manner that is highly figurative. They all however proceeded from God himself, and show the heavy displeasure and indignation of God against those who treat their parents with disrespect. Let young people remember also, that in the New Testament those who are *disobedient to parents*, and *without natural affections*, are ranked with *haters of God* and *covenant-breakers*, and the perpetrators of the greatest enormities.

One branch of your duty to your parents consists in *succouring* them, in helping them in every way, and, so far as you can, in ministering to their wants, in increasing their little stock of comforts. There are, I trust, many instances of young men in the labouring classes, who take pleasure in thus *requiting their parents*; who are glad, out of what they earn when they are at their full strength, to make some return to their parents for their trouble and expense in rearing, in bringing them up. But, on the other hand, there are, I fear, too many young men who think they are at liberty to spend upon themselves all that they can get, who perhaps waste in drinking and other indulgences that money, a small part of which would materially add to the comfort of their parents. Some of them, too, long before they have attained the age of twenty-one years, if they chance to earn a little more than is sufficient for

\* Lev. xx. 9.

† Deut. xxvii. 16.

their bare maintenance, seem to think that they have a right to separate themselves from the parents' family, in order that they may spend all they earn upon themselves. This is a great mistake. So long as a young man is under the age of full maturity, and residing in the same family, his father has a legal control over his earnings. And even after that age, the voice both of Scripture and of nature would suggest to a son that he ought to do all in his power to add to the comforts of his parents, that he ought to deny himself any indulgence, rather than suffer them to want. It is indeed most unnatural and disgraceful for a young man to spend upon his own lusts, perhaps in drinking with riotous companions, that money which ought to relieve those from whom he derives his being. You may remember the censure cast by our Saviour upon those who refused to give such assistance to their parents, upon pretence that the money which they could spare was *corban*, that is, devoted to the services of the temple, destined to religious uses. Such conduct he calls *setting aside the commandments of God*. But how infinitely worse is it for a young man to refuse to *do ought for his father or his mother*, in order that he may spend all upon himself, may consume it upon his own lusts!

You, I trust, will never be guilty of such disgraceful conduct. You are bound by the voice both of nature and of Scripture to *love, honour, and succour* your father and mother. By complying with their suggestions you will promote your own well-being, your own credit, and comfort, and happiness in this world, and will do that which is *right and well-pleasing to the Lord*.

*The Prayer.*

Almighty Father, I humbly pray thee to dispose my heart at all times to love, honour, and succour my father and mother. Incline me dutifully to attend to their instruction and advice, and to receive their reproofs with meekness and submission. Enable me to bear with all their infirmities, whether of body or mind, and make me willing to minister to their necessities, and by all the means in my power to contribute to their comfort and happiness. Grant this, O Lord, for the sake of thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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(From Jenks.)

O Lord, my heavenly Father, I humbly beg thy blessing, grace, and mercy, upon my parents. Cast them not away in the time of old age; forsake them not when their strength faileth them; but have compassion on their infirmities, and help them in all their weaknesses. O remember not against them any of their former iniquities; but according to thy mercy remember them for thy goodness' sake in Christ Jesus. Grant that true wisdom may ever be with them; that their hoary heads may be found in the way of righteousness, and their souls be ever precious in thy sight. The longer they live in this world, make them still the readier to die, and the fitter for life eternal. Be thou the strength of their hearts and their portion for ever, through Jesus Christ.

*Texts to be committed to memory.*

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. *Eph. vi. 1, 2, 3.*

Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. *Col. iii. 20.*

My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. *Prov. i. 8, 9.*

Keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thy heart, and tie them about thy neck. *Prov. vi. 20, 21.*

Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. *Prov. xxiii. 22.*

The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it. *Prov. xxx. 17.*

Every one that curseth his father or his mother, shall surely be put to death. *Lev. xx. 9.*

Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. *Deut. xxvii. 16.*