

## THE TRAINING OF CHILDREN

### CHAPTER 4: GODLY PARENTAGE

1. You say that a godly parentage is the first condition of that training which will be successful in making the children true servants and good Soldiers of Jesus Christ. Will you explain what you mean?

We mean that the parents should both be converted and wholly devoted to God before the birth of the children, in which case there is little doubt that the children will come into the world with tendencies in favour of goodness. Just as we see children inherit the bad tendencies and passions of bad parents, so the children of godly parents must inherit dispositions, tempers and appetites favourable to lives of goodness and self-sacrifice.

There is nothing with which we are more familiar than the transmission from parent to child of physical qualities, such as peculiarity of features, tones of voice, colour of hair, eyes, and the like; also physical appetites, such as tastes for particular kinds of food, for strong drink, unnatural tendencies to uncleanness, and a hundred other things.

We are also familiar with the fact that mental qualities descend from parents to children. For instance, clever parents will be likely to have children, not only clever, but gifted in the same direction as themselves.

We know also that parents transmit their peculiar temperaments to their children. Thus you will find them sanguine, nervous, bilious, or melancholy, after the fashion of father or mother, or both conjoined.

And it is equally certain that moral qualities are transmitted – such as tendencies to truth or falsehood, generosity or selfishness, honesty or dishonesty, and the like.

2. Does not this notion contradict the doctrine of inbred depravity, or the indwelling sinfulness of children?

Certainly not. The children of godly parents, in common with the children of wicked parents, notwithstanding all the advantages of the former over the latter to which we

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have referred, are nevertheless born into the world with tendencies which, if left to themselves, will invariably lead them into a life of selfishness and rebellion against God. Nevertheless, in the degree of evil inclination with which children come into existence, there is manifestly a very great difference. The children of holy parents must have a far better chance in the race for the heavenly goal than the children of sensual, drunken, unclean, selfish worldlings, or of unprincipled cheats and thieves.

3. Is there anything in the Bible which seems to teach that the children of godly parents have any special advantage over the children of the ungodly?

Yes! God is set forth from the beginning as delighting to show himself strong and gracious on behalf of the children of those who have loved Him and kept His commandments and stood by His people.

Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations. – Deut. 7:9

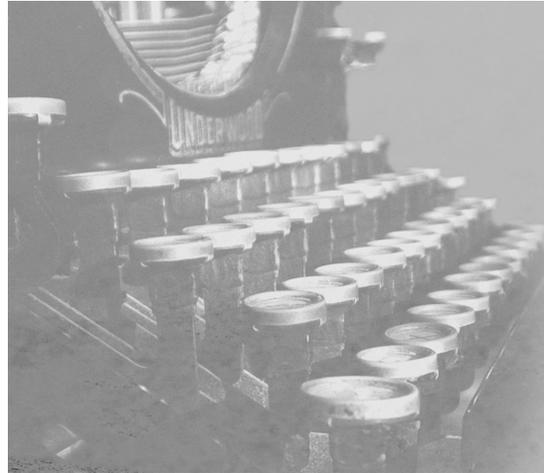
And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father; fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed, FOR MY SERVANT ABRAHAM'S SAKE. – Gen. 26:47.

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. – Is. 44:3.

And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed. – Is. 61:9.

4. Is it absolutely necessary, then, that children should be born of holy parentage, in order to their becoming holy?

Oh! dear no. It is doubtless, as we have remarked, a very great advantage; but God is very merciful, and when parents are converted after the birth of their children, they



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must at once give themselves right up, without reservation, and set about complying with the conditions hereafter named. If they then enter on the business of the training with all their might, they may count with certainty upon His loving co-operation, and consequently upon success.

5. Should not the consideration of the advantages flowing from a godly parentage be a great encouragement to young people to serve God early in life, and then, if in The Army, only to enter into marriage relationships with Salvationists, whose whole souls, like their own, are filled with the love of God and man?

Of course it should. This is God's royal method of multiplying His people, and making a hardy race of saints and Soldiers, equal to the task of conquering the world.