

## **The Impact of Christian Parents**

Proverbs 20:7; 2 Timothy 3:15

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There are different human instruments God uses in bringing people to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord uses ministers and elders, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, friends and co-workers, and even complete strangers at times. But it seems to me that those to whom the Lord has appointed the greatest influence in leading people to the Savior are Christian parents.

Parents, our children are corrupted with sin from the very moment of conception. They are not free of guilt, but have been infected by us with sin. The fact that we as parents have been the agents of our children's spiritual corruption and death should provide the greatest motivation on our parts to lead them to the only One who can heal them of the terminal disease of sin, namely Jesus Christ. We as parents cannot save our children from sin and condemnation. The Church cannot save our children. Baptism cannot save our children. Only Jesus Christ can save our children, for only He died to rescue believing sinners from the holy wrath and condemnation of God.

Dear Christian parents, your influence for good in leading your children to Christ is far greater than that of my own. Consider how much more time you have with your children. Consider the nearer, loving relationship you bear to them. Consider how well you know your children. Consider how God has sovereignty placed your children in your home to be under your care and supervision. But just as your influence may (and ought to) be used for their good, so it may (but ought not to) be used for their harm. Parents can also be the greatest means of turning their children away from the Lord Jesus Christ through their hypocrisy, ungodliness, and worldliness. Dear parent, what power of influence God has entrusted with you in leading your children to Christ. How are you using that influence?

From our text this Lord's Day, let us consider the following two main points: (1) The Character of a Just Man; (2) The Reward of a Just Man.

### **I. The Character of a Just Man.**

A. Before considering the blessing that comes upon the children of a just man, it is necessary that we first understand something about the character of that just man who is the agent of such a blessing to his children.

B. What does Solomon mean by a "just man" in Proverbs 20:7?

1. He means not only the father, but also the mother when he speaks of a "just man." For mothers as well as fathers are appointed to be instruments of blessing to their children. Consider how Timothy received such rich blessings through his Christian mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 3:15). The masculine gender is often used generically in the Scriptures for both male and female. Thus, we are speaking of a just father and a just mother who become a channel of blessing to their children.

2. A second distinction that should be made from our text is that Solomon speaks distinctively of Christian parents and not all parents indiscriminately (i.e. only those parents who are "just" or justified before God). God declares here in Proverbs 20:17 that only Christian parents are a blessing in this sense to their children. Solomon not only intends to exclude non-Christian parents from being a blessing in this sense to their children, but even excludes nominal Christian parents as the means of blessing their children in the sense used in Proverbs 20:7. Certainly non-Christian parents or nominal Christian parents may convey various blessings of common grace to their children (for example, certain moral values, financial

wealth, intellectual and physical abilities, self-discipline etc.), but they cannot convey the blessings of which Solomon here speaks. Only parents who are “just” or justified can convey these blessings to their children.

a. Although we speak so often of what it means to be just or justified before God, I would emphasize it again, for I never weary of proclaiming the gospel as I pray you never weary of hearing it.

(1) Justification is not a change of a sinner’s nature, but a change of a sinner’s status before God from guilty to righteous (i.e. justification does not make the ungodly righteous, but rather declares the ungodly to be righteous). Whereas before being justified the sinner was condemned by the holy Law of God, after justification he is forever removed from the condemning wrath of the Law of God.

(2) Justification is not a process that takes time, but an immediate act of God declared in the courtroom of heaven as soon as the sinner receives by faith alone Christ and His perfect righteousness as his own. At that instant the believing sinner is perfectly justified once and for all time. Those who are justified by God can no more lose Christ’s righteousness than Christ can lose His own righteousness.

(3) Justification is by faith alone in Jesus Christ. No one has ever been justified or judicially pardoned by God through repentance, love, or new obedience. To the contrary, acts of true repentance, love, and new obedience are the fruit of justification and not the precursor to justification. It is faith alone that looks outside of oneself to Christ and His righteousness as his only hope of eternal salvation.

(4) Justification always issues in sanctification. Those who are justified and pardoned before God will grow in love for God, His commandments, holiness, the brethren, and one’s neighbor. There is no other option for one who is justified. Biblical justification does not lead to lawlessness, but rather leads to loving and thankful obedience to God’s law in light of the abundance of God’s free grace and mercy lavished upon us who deserved His infinite wrath and condemnation.

b. Thus, dear ones, when our text speaks of one who is just or justified, it has in view one who has embraced Jesus Christ and His righteousness as his/her only hope of eternal salvation from the condemning wrath of God. Here is a healing salve to the tormented conscience of one who asks, “How do I know whether I have done enough?” You can never do enough, but Christ has done enough to fully satisfy all the demands of God’s Law against you. You can add nothing to His perfect obedience. If you could add your obedience to Christ’s, you would instantly condemn yourself to hell for you cannot perfectly keep God’s Law even after becoming a Christian. Here is the only way to be assured that you have forever been removed beyond the reach of God’s holy wrath. Won’t you as a condemned sinner embrace by faith alone Jesus Christ and His perfect righteousness? He promises that He will not refuse any who come to Him and that He will never cast any out of this justified status who receive Him by faith alone. Do not spurn this love, for you will never find a love, salvation, or righteousness like His.

C. Now that we clearly understand who this just father or mother is, carefully note that which characterizes him/her: this father or mother walks in his/her integrity. They do not walk in their integrity in order to be justified before God, but rather walk in their integrity because they have been justified before God. With James we declare that faith without works is dead. How is faith seen and vindicated before the eyes of men? By your loving obedience to God’s good and holy commandments.

1. To walk in one’s integrity conveys the idea of walking back and forth, to and fro, in all circumstances of one’s life in sincerity and truth. It is to live a life of faith without pretense and show. Here are a number of characteristics of integrity.

a. Integrity is opposed to all hypocrisy in your life.

b. Integrity hates and despises mere outward externalism and ritualism like that of the Pharisees.

c. Integrity loves transparency and honesty with God and man.

d. Integrity rejoices in the work of the Spirit in revealing to you your sin.

e. Integrity is more interested in knowing the truth and standing for the truth than

in saving face before others when in error.

- f. Integrity freely admits when sin is committed and seeks out those offended as soon as possible.
- g. Integrity hates pride and self-exaltation, but loves humility and brokenness before God and man.
- h. Integrity does not play games with people, seeking to use people or to manipulate them for their own ends.
- i. Integrity is able to take all the words that proceed from your mouth and sign one's name to them as being faithful, honorable, and true.
- j. Integrity is a man/woman to whom promises and covenants are sacred and kept to his/her own hurt.
- k. A man, woman, or child of integrity is one who seeks to live the same Christian life before your family and before the members of the Church as you do at work or when you are all alone. For integrity knows that you cannot hide anything from God. To act as though you can hide from God is to treat God as if He really doesn't exist—it's a practical atheism of which we are all guilty to varying degrees. Christian parents who walk in their integrity in all areas of life are those who evidence before their children that their faith in Christ is not to be lived just one day of the week, but all seven days of the week. Plans, decisions, and goals in their lives don't revolve around the standard of what is most fun to do, but around the standard of what is most consistent with God's Word and what glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Now it should be noted that no parent has absolute or perfect integrity, but as Christian parents, you should be always desiring, praying, and endeavoring to grow in your integrity. You must pray that Christ give you a holy hatred for all falsehood, hypocrisy, and inconsistency in your life. And that you apply the death and resurrection of Christ in mortifying these sin in your life. This is the Christian parent who is described in Proverbs 20:7 as "The just man walketh in his integrity."

## **II. The Reward of a Just Man.**

A. Now we come to that reward which thrills the heart of a Christian parent: "his children are blessed after him." How exciting to know that the Lord promises here graciously to reward your loving desire and sincere efforts to walk in integrity before the Lord and before your children.

1. It is not, however, for the merits of the parents that the children are blessed, but for the mercy and grace of God who delights to reward integrity with kindness. You must be careful that you do not walk in integrity primarily to secure blessing to your children. That is an important reason. However, you must always walk in integrity supremely to glorify your Father in heaven, to express your love to our Savior for all His tender mercy to you, to manifest your gratitude to the blessed Spirit of God who so faithfully has applied Christ's redemption to your life, and to bring your Triune God joy by the life you live in faith and dependence upon Him.

2. Don't be so quick to lay claim to this promise for your children if you do not desire and yearn to live a life of integrity before God and your fellow man—not a life of perfection, but a life of integrity in which even when you blow it and fall, you are humbled before God and man and quickly repent and confess your sin or error. Your children in all such cases will learn as much by your sins and weaknesses as they behold the gospel of Jesus Christ living and growing in your life.

B. How are the children of Christian parents who walk in their integrity blessed? Let me list three blessings.

1. First, the children of Christian parents are blessed in receiving Christian instruction and discipline. What a blessing you, dear children, have in being catechized, instructed in the Scripture, being

taught at home under the supervision of Christian parents who love you, and even correct and discipline you according to the Word of God.

a. Dear children, do not despise the godly instruction of your Christian parents. Do not reject their correction and discipline. Learn from it and be wise and live. Those children, who hate the godly instruction and discipline of their parents, love death.

b. Christian parents, realize that your instruction and discipline will be effective to the degree that you walk in integrity before them. Your children will be far more likely to walk in integrity when they see your example. Your actions will speak more loudly than your mere words. How Christian parents show their love and affection to each other will instruct them in the love of Christ for His Church. How Christian parents show their love and affection to their children will instruct them in the love of their Heavenly Father for His dear children. This instruction and discipline is to be carried out in the child's life with greater supervision while the child is in his/her minority and still under the parent's roof, but is carried out with less and less supervision as the child reaches adulthood and leaves the parent's house. The parenting that begins with little supervision while a child is young and ends with greater supervision when the child reaches adulthood will usually be met with greater problems between parent and child. The blessing of Christian instruction and discipline is to train children to become adults who have learned from God's Word and from their parents how to supervise themselves. Even as adults, Christian children, should always love and appreciate the godly counsel of Christian parents.

2. Second, the children of Christian parents are blessed in being guided into an honorable vocation and into a sacred marriage. These are the two most important temporal goals that Christian parents should have for their children.

a. An honorable vocation does not necessarily mean a vocation that makes the most money possible, but one that will be in keeping with the child's gifts and abilities and one that will provide honest labor in supporting himself/herself or a family once married, and one which may be used to glorify the Lord.

b. It is not always the case that a young man or a young woman will desire to be married. They may have the gift of celibacy temporarily or permanently. But such a gift should manifest itself not in mere self-service, but rather in serving God and others, in promoting the kingdom of God. It is not a blessing to be relegated to the pages of antiquity that Christian parents desire to guide their children into a holy and happy marriage. Children, you should welcome their involvement and all their godly counsel. Parents, you should work with your children rather than work apart from them. Preparing for marriage is not only being guided to the right man/woman, but more importantly becoming the right man/woman. Don't skip over the period of preparation for marriage, wanting to rush so quickly into the period of realization of marriage. Realization without preparation will likely lead to devastation. Take your time in looking for the right match, parents and children. Not the most beautiful or handsome match. Not the most gifted or talented match. Not the most educated match. Not the most wealthy match. But the most faithful match and where there is agreement in the truth and a life of integrity.

3. Third, the children of Christian parents are most importantly blessed in being led to the Savior. Dear parents, you can forget about the college from which your children graduated, the honors they received, the prestige they have attained in their calling, the amount of money they earn, their many gifts or graces, or their physical appearance, if they spend eternity in hell. In the final analysis, all that really matters is the state of your child's soul. Although you Christian parents cannot save your child's soul, you are still the most significant means by which God does save your child. Are you more concerned that your children have fun, eat right, or get a good education, than that they embrace the Lord Jesus Christ alone for their eternal salvation and use their lives to promote the kingdom of Christ in their callings? "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul (Matthew 16:26)? Realize that God covenanted not only to be the God of Abraham (who could believe), but

that He would even be Isaac's God (who could not yet believe). Use the divinely appointed means of grace in leading your children unto Christ: prayer, the Word, and the sacraments. Pray daily for their salvation, make them wise unto salvation through the Word, and bring them to the sign and seal of baptism where the promises made to them in the Covenant of Grace are visualized. Be faithful in training them to have their own secret worship daily when they can begin to pray and read the Scripture. Be faithful in family worship. Be faithful in corporate worship. Do not make worship or the Lord's Day appear a burden to you or to them, but rather a joy and delight. Admit your struggles in being faithful, but also confess your desire to enjoy the Lord in all His appointed means of grace. This is a blessing to your children that will not end with them, but will be passed on from generation to generation. Above all else, dear Christian parents, commit your children to Christ even if they have become rebellious and have walked away from the faith. Trust in Christ and His covenant to restore them unto Himself and to bring them back as in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Remember you cannot save your children, but Jesus Christ is able to do so and chooses to use the means of your prayers, love, instruction, and integrity to draw them unto faith in Jesus Christ. Don't give up, dear Christian parent. Don't become weary in well doing, for in due season you will reap if you faint not.

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