

Glorifying God

Have you ever been involved in a discussion as to whether parents have the ability to motivate their children to obey God or not? I have and I know there are brethren who teach that we cannot really do that. Basically, they teach that all we can do is put the truth before our little ones and it will be each child who determines his own destiny. This is a comforting remark to those who have children who never obey the Gospel. Certainly, none of us deny that our children will have to make their own decision of salvation; i.e., it cannot be forced. But is it true that all we can do is to put the truth before them? I wonder what is meant by that.

Parents (normally young parents) have often asked me questions concerning raising children and there are usually two or three points of priority that I stress. One of them is in being consistent. Consider that principle as we study.

Do you recall that Jesus, as He came to the end of His life, prayed to the Father (John 17:3-4). He knew He would die the next day and He summarized what His life had meant to God. "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Have we ever meditated over the way in which Jesus glorified God? Remember, He was getting ready to die. It was just a few hours away and at this moment He is able to say, "I have glorified Thee". How did He know He had glorified God?

The way in which Jesus glorified the Father, was in obedience. He said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do". In other words, Jesus said He had accomplished the work of making God known to man (compare verse 3). Jesus brought to mankind a true knowledge of God. Whatever we want to know about God -- simply look at Jesus. For example, how does God treat the sinner, feel about sin, or think about a certain situation? Look at Jesus' attitude, His teaching or His example and we will have our answer. But there is another point we can draw from this text.

Now, if you or I want to glorify your God (and isn't this our task; cf. Eph. 1; Rom 8:20ff; etc.), then you accomplish the work that God has given you to do. Isn't that what Jesus did? That is, you find the abilities that God has given you and you take advantage of the opportunities that God has given you. You do the thing that God put you on earth to do. For example, if you are a woman, you have a different function than a man. If you are a man, you have a different function than that a woman. The point is that some of us have ability in one area while others have it in another. But God expects us each to take whatever ability we have and use it with the strength that He has given us. "If any man speak, {let him speak} as the oracles of God; if any man minister, {let him do it} as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Pet 4:11)

Now, consider that everyone of us one day will be on our own death bed (if the Lord hasn't returned). At that time, we will want to pray as did our Lord. And we will have the opportunity of making that statement He made, "I have accomplished..." But will we be able to make it when we consider the life we have lived?

To be able to make the Lord's statement at our death is the goal we must seek to instill within our children, from an early age. How we stress to them that they need good jobs. And we take them fishing and we enjoy vacations. We make all the sacrifices to run them around to this practice and to that meeting. We school them in academics and see to it they take their music lessons. Our lives are so filled. Our teenagers then see the things money can buy and they want the jobs that will give them this. On their own, they are motivated to study and learn. They see the pleasures of this world and they are motivated to seek them.

How frequently is the task we each have before God pushed aside by parents and young alike? As parents, have we understood that from the moment we brought that little life into this world, we were responsible to get it to understand and fulfill its God given best to accomplish the task God has for it? Oh, we teach it; say it. Yes, we take them to services, but is it in our life and in their life; i.e., "in the doing of it"? Too often, we appear to think that at some magical moment our children will as adults start the "doing" of Christ filled living. No, it should have been the "doing" from the time they were toddlers. From those years, have we consistently in teaching and example helped our children accomplish God's will? Have we taught them that God's work is their primary concern, even while children? Is this consistent with the way we live?

Have we trained our children so that we will be able to pray when we are near to death, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Have we so implanted that vital thought into the minds of our young so that they too will happily pray, "Father, I have glorified you. I have used my life for that purpose. I have used my abilities in service to you." That is an awesome statement that our Lord was able to make. Yet, if we walk in His footsteps and use Him as our example, we ought to be able to make that statement.

In life, whatever it is, and of all the thousands of things that each one of us do and live, nothing matters other than living and using our life to glorify God. How insignificant are sports, dress, and all the things we fill our children's lives with. I know of no greater tragedy then to bring young into this world so that they spend eternity regretting the life they lived. Again, it is worth every effort so that my child on his deathbed will be able to say, "I used my life, my abilities, my time, my personality, my knowledge, my family, my wealth, my home for you, God." Our Master was able to say it. Paul was able to say it (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Will I be able?

It brings grief to my heart to see young people come to services and sit on back rows (as if to get as far from the activity as possible). Where did they learn that idea? Many of these do not participate. Some even play or sleep (by the way, they are not the only ones). Even if not on the back row, others want to sit behind their parents (and for what reason?) It grieves me to see young people come to spiritual classes, rowdy, never prepared, not caring. We sound the warnings but are often scoffed. I wonder, why don't these parents care? What can they be thinking? Then in a few short years, I

learn what they were thinking. I hear them say, "I did all that I could, I raised them properly, I brought them to church, ..." Did we do all that we could? Yes, only God will judge them, but how many of us may be losing our children without cause?

How often a young mother will have a baby book which records, baby's first step, baby's first solid food, baby's first toy, baby's first spanking, and so on. She may place a lock of hair within its pages and the footprints of her prized little one. She has so many dreams and aspirations for that one she cherishes. I have great sympathy and compassion with such parents who have children who do not obey the gospel. I don't claim to know the answers nor why it was so. And folks, I would not want to add one undue weight of guilt upon parents of unbelieving children, but at the same time, let me implore young parents and grandparents. Never for one moment forget, that little life that is brought into this world should be trained and taught that the most important goal in life is giving God his best; to do his task for God. Instilling this into his heart won't be accomplished easily. It will require more than making sure he sits inside a building of the church at a specified time or that he gets his Bible lesson. It requires effort, consistency and priority. For example, it may mean (or may not) he must forego some athletics, scouts, entertainment, etc. If at the tenderest of ages, we are consistent in emphasizing what his life's dream should be--shall we not normally expect to see him prosper in the Lord? Help him from those earliest of years to learn, know, and pray to accomplish his own task before God. Else, how many of us will look back on cherished baby books and mourn that our child should never have been born? May God help us and may we help each other so that we will never have to feel that pain.

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