

Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, February 9, 2014.

Good morning to you all.

"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. And, ***ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.***"
(Ephesians 6:4)

These emphasized words "ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" are what I am focusing on in this sermon. As servants of the Most High God, it is an imperative that we take clear hold on our duty as pertains to those children whom the Lord our God has seen fit to bless us with. We know they are a great gift, because it is written:

"Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate. (Psalms 127:3-5)

We have many parents of children, younger and older, in this blessed body. We swim in an ocean of opinions, ranging from vain to abominable, about the proper approach to take in the upbringing of children in this most froward generation of humankind. Further, we are not ignorant of Satan's devices and we see those devices employed on many fronts as it pertains to indoctrinating our children in service of His Majesty. Worse still, we know that the scarlet colored beast, upon which the great whore rides in Revelation 17, is prepared to devour our children and thereby bereave us and make us falter in wholly trusting in the Lord our God.

These realities make us very sincere and sober about learning what our duty is to God, in the matter of how we interact with and instruct our children. I submit to you all here, and all those whose ears our Father may open in these last, dark days, that a proper view of these words written to the Church at Ephesus will provide you with plenary wisdom to do this important and blessed work. Let me begin by laying down a propositional foundation. When you break this verse into grammatical clauses you find a imperative dichotomy, to wit:

"ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath:" (Side A)

"but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Side B)

The proposition is that if you are on one side of this dichotomy, you cannot be on the other side. That is, if you fail to bring your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord you -- by necessary implication -- are provoking those children to wrath. Otherwise stated, to the degree that you draw back, hesitate, cavil, or resist the work of nurturing and admonishing your children in accordance with the plain standards set forth by the Lord your God ... you can absolutely expect an equal degree of wrath to be provoked in that child or those children.

The force of this proposition drives a parent to act "betimes", to wit:

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." (Proverbs 13:24)

The word "betimes" means right when it is needed, without concern for the convenience of the timing because you very well understand the horror of the necessary implication of these heavy words:

"Because sentence against an evil work is not **executed speedily**, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

That is, if you are just too stinking busy with your fluffy life or humanistic notions of how to approach a child ... and not rather applying the standards of God to the matter ... that you wait; you postpone; you see how it goes; etc. you're guaranteeing that the deceitful and desperately wicked nature in that child's heart (Jeremiah 17:9) will become fully set in him or her to do more and worse evil! Now we're getting at something.

So, I propose that we proceed in our examination of this passage from the foundation that we have a clear dichotomy, so that we will tend to run from the one side (provoking our children to wrath) and rather take comfort and use the safe haven we find in the use of our Savior's lessons in nurturing and admonishing our children.

Briefly about this word "provoke", which refers to the concept of calling a person forth, stimulating them forth, exciting or inciting to action. This passage does not express a prohibition against "provoking", and in fact it is necessary -- as expressed throughout scripture, and in this very place -- to engage in provoking behaviors. For example, we are instructed:

"And let us consider one another to **provoke** unto love and to good works:"
(Hebrews 10:24)

And our brother Paul declares his great desire for his Jewish kin to be saved by his own provocations and that of the example of Gentiles' having faith, to wit:

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, **for to provoke them to jealousy**. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: **if by any means I may provoke to emulation** them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. (Romans 11:11-14)

And in our text passage it is without doubt that part of raising up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, will require our provoking our children to serve the eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God. Rather, it is the provoking of those children against the peace of God that passeth all understanding, and rather toward an abiding wrath against, and consequently from the Father of Spirits, in whose hands their life is held.

Understanding our duty negatively -- that is, what we should **not** do in the raising of our children -- is good and necessary. When we stand neutral, however, looking about to see simply what we should **not** do -- it will make us more at risk of failing in our duty and seeking light from our own understanding. Therefore, I will spend some time now examining the affirmatives contained in this verse.

What shall we do with our children ... every day ... as Moses wrote:

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

These words of Moses, instructing the Children of Israel as they were receiving the things contained in the law during that dispensation, are a good place to begin an understanding of that two-fold mandate of Ephesians 6:4, to wit: "bring them up in the *nurture* and *admonition* of the Lord". What are these concepts, "nurture" and "admonition" as that applies to your daily lives and interactions with your children. More importantly, how are they understood in contrast to provoking them to wrath?

Because it is a much better understood -- I think -- concept in this body, I would like to start with a detailed look at the duty of parents to admonish their children in a manner that is "of the Lord." Simply put, admonition is the process of putting an individual on a settled ground (in his or her mind) regarding expectations in a matter. What does God Almighty expect of you? Since it is put so simply, one can begin to know how to admonish children by reading those words we love from Ecclesiastes, to wit:

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

So, when you are looking for a list of relevant items to put onto the table, next to dinner -- you have eleven baseline items to choose from, with which you may feed your children (as necessary or relevant, based on words or conduct coming from the child), since we know very well that:

"It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."
(Luke 4:4)

Let us examine these eleven efficiently, as a concession to the principle that the mind can absorb only as much as your backsides will tolerate your seats.

#1 Fear God! Anyone can type those two words into a search of scripture and quickly discern why it is of such value to instruct your children in this, and

specifically how failing to do so will assuredly provoke to the wrath abiding in them, and upon them from their Creator. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom (Proverbs 1:7, 9:10); it is to hate evil (Proverbs 8:13); prolongeth days, whereas the wicked's shall be shortened (Proverbs 10:27); and it brings the comfort of the Holy Ghost if you walk in it (Acts 9:31). David expressly recommends it as the first of his teachings to children, to wit:

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD."
(Psalm 34:11)

#2/#3 No idolatry! (a two-fer for our purposes)

"Thou shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them:" (Deuteronomy 4:7-9)

The child is filled in his or her heart with idols. It is the religion of today's institutions to worship yourself above all else. Your children are instructed by almost every influence in their lives to adhere to the motions of their hearts and chase vanities. The combination is lethal! It is the conflict between the heart of man and the laws of God that bring every wrath and every violence boiling out of the unrestrained creature, as is exemplified by Cain killing Abel his brother; and it begins in their youth!

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." (Proverbs 22:15)

That foolishness is none other than what we find in Psalms causes the heart to say "there is no God"! (Psalms 14:1). It is your duty to see when a child's heart is chasing idolatry, and regularly admonish in the most fundamental principle that they are to have no other gods before the King of Eternity, lest they fall in this snare and suffer the awful effects of it:

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Romans 1:21)

#4 Don't lie on God!

"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." (Deuteronomy 5:11)

Teach your children the truth about the doctrines and teach them to believe what God says about Himself and His attributes, without mixing in the vanity of your human wisdom. Teach your children as Paul instructs in Hebrews, to wit:

"Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways." (Hebrews 3:8-10)

The fits of faithless wrath that were thrown in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh is an example of what the God of Heaven finds most odious and brings about His great and perfect wrath that will issue in whole generations of trauma. It begins with the cowardice of the sloth who says "There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets." (Proverbs 22:13).

#5 No Arminianism!

"Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee." (Deuteronomy 5:12)

Part of the folly of youth is the lie that they have some intrinsic value, and the power to generate something good. It's dripped upon them continuously by the world they live in, and seeps into their spirits and boils their pride to perpetual overflow. From that pride -- and the wrath that churns within it -- cometh contention (Proverbs 13:10). A steady dose of David's reminder is warranted, to wit:

"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Psalms 14:2-3)

#6 Show them the proper standard of honor for parents.

"Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." (Deuteronomy 5:16)

It must be clear to your children that no honor is bestowed upon any human, except as is properly articulated in scripture. Honor is not to be bestowed upon a fool, even if of significant age, to wit:

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, ***if it be found in the way of righteousness.***"
(Proverbs 16:31)

To honor your parent is to recognize that parent has walked in that standard of gravity and sobriety, and in the fear of the Lord, as articulated in the duties outlined in 1 Timothy chapter three and Titus chapters one and two, for example - - and show obedience to the standards of God they have watched their parent walk in.

By walking in accordance with these standards, and by keeping clear for your children that these things are not done by the wisdom or will of flesh and blood, you teach your children how to properly show honor to their father and their mother, and save them from the wrath that boils in a child who is instructed that they must honor a rebel, even while he is steeped in rebellion, because there is a magical blood connection. This error is for the reprobates in the earth, who would not dare offend their father in the flesh, but do no honor to God, to wit:

"A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?" (Malachi 1:6)

#7 "Thou shalt not kill. (Deuteronomy 5:17) Is it necessary for me to tell this house of beloved people what internal heartache, guilt, accusing or else excusing, confusion, and wrath must necessarily possess a soul who slaughters a baby in the womb? It makes me think of this short excerpt from Dr. John Gill's exposition of Deuteronomy about the tender and delicate woman's behaviors in the straits, to wit:

"And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: **for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly** in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates." (Deuteronomy 28:57)

Gill: ... which, and nothing else, could incline her, and prevail upon her to do an action so monstrously horrid: and which she would do in the most private and secret manner; both lest others should partake with her, as well as being conscious of the foulness and blackness of the crime, that would not by any means bear the light;

Short of killing your child for your meat, how could you more quickly instruct them to wrath than to teach them to slaughter their own young for the expediency of sexual relations?

#8 No pre-marital sex, no extra-marital sex, and certainly no fag and beast sex!

"Neither shalt thou commit adultery." (Deuteronomy 5:18)

Unless you want to instruct your children in how to go certainly to his or her destruction, instruct your child to heed the words of Wisdom:

"He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." (Proverbs 7:22-23)

We live in a cesspool society, where all the grievous pains of mind, heart, spirit, and body possess -- often to the taking of their own or others' lives -- the fornicating (fag and otherwise) monster earth dwellers. It is to the degree that drugs and alcohol are mainstays in every life -- starting from the earliest years that reprobate parents can teach their children to think of engaging in sexual activity. Why would any who profess a belief in Christ not make warnings on this subject matter ring in the ears of their children at every opportunity?

#9 "Neither shalt thou steal." (Deuteronomy 5:19). Don't hesitate to explain the rules of this pernicious folly, to wit:

"If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep." (Exodus 22:1)

They need to be taught early to keep their mangy mitts off of stuff that don't belong to them. You'll end up in jail, and have all of your possessions taken to restore the victim under the civil and criminal laws.

"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."
(Ephesians 4:28)

But, that's the easy part. Far, far more important is to teach them the danger of stealing from God Almighty and wasting the resources of His servants in the earth.

"Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. ***For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place.***" (Psalms 79:6-7)

"Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron." (Micah 3:3)

It is dangerous business to wear out the righteous souls who do the work of the Lord in the earth. It is better for that soul who creates such an affliction for one of God's little ones, to have a millstone about the neck and cast into the sea (Matthew 18:6).

#10, "Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour." (Deuteronomy 5:20). Our children are being raised in a society ... like no society before it, I'll warrant ... that fits this description:

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. **When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.**" (John 8:44)

It is our most solemn duty to teach by word and example -- in every way we are presented with -- our children to speak truth. Truth about all things temporal, as part of our duty to "give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." (1 Timothy 5:14) We see how these children of Belial will swear out criminal allegations against this little flock in a demon's heartbeat. Why would we allow the slightest hint of acting in like manner, as an example to those who we have charge over?

#11 Covetousness

"Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's." (Deuteronomy 5:21)

With the inflamed passions of youth, our children are at perpetual peril to this grievous sin of covetousness, with the wrath that boils in the utter lack of contentment with those things having been provided at the hand of our compassionate Father. I could fill the sermon with verses and expositions about this great sin, but suffice for now to understand that if it means we print it on every door post their eyes light upon, we must continually instruct our children:

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5)

These simple statements about those admonitions key to raising our children can each be more fully explored in your households, and I recommend a thorough vetting. Time requires that I move forward with the aspect of our text verse that may not be so easily discerned. What is it to bring up your child in the "nurture ... of the Lord"? This word, I submit, identifies the mechanism for delivery of the admonitions. What is the proper way to bring these blessed instructions into each unique personality over whom you have been given charge? If your manner of carrying out your admonitions is crippled with a sinful zeal or cowardice, you will have no credible hope of them doing their work. Let us consider some of the authorized modes of delivery contained in our book.

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:" (Isaiah 28:10)

We have here expressed the mechanism of patient, consistent, and deliberative instruction in what the Lord their God requires of them. This implies the duty to know your child intimately, so that you will consistently deliver the instruction in the manner best designed to be heard.

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6)

Training is hard work ... both for the trainer and the trainee! This is the step beyond simply telling. It requires you to present situational application of God's standards in a manner that lets your child see what those admonitions mean in their actual lives. No sterile, milquetoast droning here ... you're in the heat of the fight with your little ones so they smell, feel, taste, hear, and see what it is to serve the King.

"A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent." (Psalms 15:5)

"It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools." (Ecclesiastes 7:5)

These two sample verses identifies a wholly necessary method of delivering admonitions, when instruction and training will not suffice for a child bent on foolishness. Reproof and rebuke are focused applications of God's standards to the very situation presented by the child's conduct. It is here that the parents of this wicked, God-rejecting generation willingly depart from their duty, which is why we are instructed:

"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." (Proverbs 29:15)

Faithless reprobates will draw back unto perdition in this matter, but those who have full assurance of faith will rightly discern their duty and perform it. When these lesser manners of delivering admonitions fail:

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." (Proverbs 23:14)

There is a time for properly applied corporal punishment. Not a rage-driven abusive beating, but a timely and measured response to misbehavior that is not corrected with proper rebuke and exhortation.

These are all in the thoughtful continuum that Godly parents must traverse in the fulfillment of their duty not to provoke their children to wrath, but to nurture and admonish "in the Lord". And this standard is not without its antitype in the relationship that God has with His children. Some words of Elihu, spoken to my very beloved Patriarch Job who faltered under grievous affliction, shows this same continuum in how God deals with His children whom He loves.

"For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." (Job 33:14-24)

We have this glorious statement of the gradient style of admonition by God to His elect sons and daughters. Why would we doubt its value in application to those children given us by our Father to raise in His blessed instruction? I hope these words have value to you all, as you bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I love you all dearly.

Amen