

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

by

Norman V. Williams

Copyright © 1952

CHAPTER SEVEN

FUNDAMENTAL CONTENT OF CHILD GUIDANCE

II Timothy 3:14-17

SALVATION

ROY A. BREHM SAYS, "Obviously the child's Christian experience begins with the acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. Although he may be a good child, say his prayers, read his Bible, attend Sunday school and church and always obey his parents, he still needs the Saviour, as he recognizes himself to be a sinner and therefore in need of a Saviour, he then receives Christ into his heart. Thus he has a new life, Christ's own life and righteousness, to take the place of his own self-righteousness. This is the root and foundation of all further experience and growth in grace for all time and eternity."

We may say at this point that the receiving of Christ in the heart is the cornerstone of every happy, harmonious, and spiritual marriage. It is noteworthy that of all the divorces that are granted every year around the world, there will be relatively few divorces granted to couples where both profess to having received Christ into their hearts. When we see this truth, we realize how important and vital a step it is when one opens up his heart and invites the Lord Jesus to come in and abide forever. Christ comes in and brings new life, His own life, and in that new life of Christ there is all the grace, power, and understanding needed to make one a success, whether in marriage, business, or any other area of life.

Parents sometimes wonder if the little children under five are not too young to open their hearts and receive Christ. We think not, and for evidence we would like to quote an excerpt from a devotional message Roy Campbell gave before a prayer group. He said, "When my little grandson Larry was slightly over four years of age, he took the Lord Jesus as his personal Saviour. For about a year or so before that, he had shown a terrible dislike for radio broadcasts of a religious nature. When he heard a hymn over the radio he would shout, 'Shut that thing off!'

"One day when he was convalescing from an illness, he reluctantly agreed to his grandfather's reading a gospel story to him. The story told of a little girl, about Larry's age who had accepted Christ as her personal Saviour. The grandfather realizing the appropriateness of the occasion stopped reading and said with bated breath, 'Larry.' Larry looked up. 'When I reach out my hand to you, will you take it, showing that you here and now receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour?'

“Larry hesitated only a split second and then reached out his hand to his grandfather and said, ‘Yes, I do.’ Four years have passed and Larry has never once shown any dislike of hymns or religious programs to this day. He prays his own prayers, remembering always his little brother and the others in the family. Although he still is young, it is noticeable how he leans toward God and his Saviour.”

“Four years have passed, and just recently Larry did something that attests to the reality of his salvation. Mr. Campbell goes on to say, “Larry and his little brother Hal, who is two and a half, were out playing in the yard. Their mother, noting the unusual silence, went out to investigate and found them both on their knees on the floor of the garden swing, heads bowed and eyes closed. As the mother approached Larry looked up and said, ‘Mother, Hal’s a Christian. He just gave his heart to Christ. I asked him if he would and he said, “Um-hm.”””

Mr. Brehm says, “However great may be his joy and peace through having received the Lord Jesus Christ into his life, all too soon he is likely to be in distress as he finds thoughts, desires, and feelings within him that are anything but Christian. He is not likely to speak of them.”

He may fear that his experience was but a passing emotion; or if he really was saved, that he has already lost his salvation. It is exceedingly important that he be shown from the Word that when he received Christ’s life, the divine nature, he still retained the old nature, the sinful self-life with which he was born and which came to him through Adam. Also, that it is along this line in his inner life that the allurements of the world and the temptations of Satan seek to lead him astray.

As he realizes the power of Satan, the world, and his own self-life, he may be tempted to give up the battle, submit to living a defeated Christian life, or even go back to the world. With nothing but failure in the face of the presence and power of sin, the only way to victory is surrender to the wonderful indwelling Saviour who alone is able to counteract the self-life. Yet what a terrific struggle so often precedes that surrender! It is surrender not only for victory over the power of sin, but surrender of the life, all that one is and has, all that he hopes to be and do, for God’s use and glory.

How your child needs your prayers and counsel and encouragement at this critical time! He needs to see that his defeat makes blessed victory possible, in that he now sees how hopeless it is for him to try to keep himself in his own strength. Also, that just as fully as he rested upon Christ for his salvation, so he must trust Christ to keep him in victory over sin. This should be a very definite transaction of surrendering himself, spirit, soul, and body to Christ that He may truly be the Lord of his life.

At the very moment of complete surrender to Christ, he should be led to take a step of faith to believe that the blessed Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ who came into his life when he was saved, now fills every part of his life which he has surrendered to Christ. With wise, spiritually-minded parents to guide him through this exceedingly important spiritual crisis, and standing upon such Scriptures as John 7:37 and Ephesians 5:18, he is now in a position to make tremendous strides in growth in grace.

Little ten-year-old Carol Bird had great longings to be holy. Her father says, “We often spent long evenings over the Word, speaking together of the one way of deliverance from sin and self, therein so clearly revealed: a present salvation, here and now, through the death of Jesus for us and through our union with Him in that death.”

The sixth chapter of Romans, and similar Scriptures, were read and prayed over until the truth of the experience in Galatians 2:20 was realized: “**I have been crucified with Christ.**” Of the very real and blessed experience of which her father thus speaks, we have a sweet record in the flyleaf of her Bible: “I truly died with Jesus, and I put away my old Carol on the cross with Him on the fourth day of October, 1903, and I mean to live by His help, for Him all my life, not I, but Christ. This was not when I was converted.”

Hudson Taylor went through this terrific conflict of which Mr. Brehm speaks. Almost all Christians go through this struggle, and many never go on to real victory but backslide into a life of defeat, discouragement, and indifference to the things of God. But Hudson Taylor went on to realize that fullness of the Christ-life within, and it was this realization that brought the struggle to an end.

Mr. Taylor wrote of the letter that proved to be the light-bearer he needed to resolve the deep conflict and unrest of soul:

The part specially helpful to me is: “How then to have our faith increased? Only by thinking of all that Jesus is and all He is for us: His life, His death, His works, He Himself as revealed to us in the Word, to be the subject of our constant thoughts. Not by a striving to have faith, or to increase our faith, but a looking off to the Faithful One seems all we need.”

Here, I feel, is the secret: not asking how I am to get sap out of the vine into myself, but remembering that Jesus is the vine, the root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit, all indeed. Aye, and far more too! He is the soil and sunshine, air and rain—more than we can ask, think or desire.

Let us not then want to get anything out of Him, but rejoice in being ourselves in Him, one with Him, and consequently with all His fullness. Not seeking for faith to bring holiness, but rejoicing in the fact of perfect holiness in Christ let us realize that inseparably one with Him this holiness is ours, and accepting the fact, find it so indeed.

Later he said, “I have not to make myself a branch—the Lord Jesus tells me I am a branch: I am part of Him and have just to believe it and act upon it.

“If I go to the bank in Shanghai, having an account, and ask for fifty dollars, the clerk cannot refuse it to my outstretched hand and say that it belongs to Mr. Taylor. What belongs to Mr. Taylor my hand may take. It is a member of my body and I am a member of Christ and may take all I need of His fullness. I have seen it long enough in the Bible, but I believe it now as a living reality.”

Hudson Taylor was anxious for his children to know early the liberating power of this great truth. Writing to Miss Blatchely, who was caring for his children, he said,

I do long for them to learn early, and, once for all, the precious truths which have come so late to me concerning oneness with and the indwelling of Christ. These do not seem to me more difficult of apprehension than the truths about redemption. Both need the teaching of the Spirit, nothing more . . . Try to explain these most sweet and practical yet simple truths to the children, and do draw out their desire for these things . . . **“Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.”**

Faithful co-operation with the Spirit in life and the daily walk will make it possible for Him to probe down into the inner recesses of the child’s nature and bring to light the evil characteristics of the self-life. And with his consent, the Spirit will put them to death through the experience of his daily life (Galatians 5:24). If ever he needs the sympathetic and prayerful guidance of godly parents around the family altar, it is at this period of his experience.

The great objective of all that has preceded this point is that the very life of Christ might be formed in him (Galatians 4:19). As he makes room in his life for the Holy Spirit, the Spirit makes room for Christ. As he permits the Spirit to crucify his self life, the Spirit will form within him the Christ-life (Galatians 2:20). Christ will be formed in his inner life on a spiritual basis just as truly as the Lord Jesus was formed in the Virgin Mary on a physical basis.

Then as the blessed Holy Spirit makes Christ real to the heart and life we pray with unceasing desire the prayer of Mrs. C. H. Morris:

Nearer, still nearer, close to Thy heart,
Draw me, my Saviour, so precious
Thou art; Fold me, oh, fold me close to Thy breast,
Shelter me safe in that “Haven of Rest,”
Shelter me safe in that “Haven of Rest.”

Nearer, still nearer, while life shall last,
Till safe in glory my anchor is cast;
Through endless ages, ever to be,
Nearer, my Saviour, still nearer to Thee,
Nearer, my Saviour, still nearer to Thee!

The whole work and objective of the Holy Spirit in His ministry to the believer is to make Christ all and in all. It is this that explains many of the otherwise strange and severe experiences God’s children pass through. To show the child this “bright” side of “dark” experiences before they come to pass is the blessed privilege of parents.

Kittredge in explaining this experience says: “It is a truth, which we generally learn only with added years, and as the fruit of divine chastenings, that our wealth and our happiness come not from the outside, but are a heart possession, received only from the liberal hand of a spiritual experience, and that in proportion as we are stripped of visible comforts and joys, we grow rich in inward sources of joy, which more than compensate for these light and momentary afflictions.

“This statement may be ridiculed by the man of the world, and may excite surprise in the mind of childhood and youth, to whose joyous vision life is one long, cloudless summer’s day; but there is a large family of tried and suffering children of the Father, who know the sweet value of sorrow by the richness of the fruitage which has followed the pruning, and who can whisper through the tears, **‘It was good for me that I was afflicted.’**”

What are these “guests of the heart,” whose voices sound clearest when the voices of earth are hushed, and in whose companionship we find a solace and balm for disappointment and trial?

Memory is one of them, and with this guest we wander through all the paths of former years and hold communion with the friends of “*auld lang syne*,” until at times we almost forget the present with its shadows, as we live in the sunshine of the past.

Hope is another guest, ever pointing to the brightness which comes after the storm, to the rest which will be sweeter after the weariness, to the reunion of loving hearts in the home where links are never broken since “no one ever goes out.” And with memory and hope as guests within, the face of the one turned backward to the joys that once were ours, the face of the other illuminated with the glory of the joys of the near future, the paths we are treading grow less rough and dreary, and we begin to sing even “in the night.”

Peace is another guest, and the deeper the waves of sorrow, the more precious does this guest become. The ocean has its tempest-tossed billows, which seem mad in their fury, but only the ocean has its quiet depths far below the billows, unruffled by the storm. The Christian’s peace is not in the absence of waves of sorrow, but it is a profound calm which is experienced only under the waves.

Aspiration is another guest. When we walk in the sunshine of worldly prosperity, self-love too often absorbs our thoughts, and we are content with our earthly possessions, thinking little of spiritual beauty and power. But sorrow turns the eyes away from self, by robbing us of these possessions, and then out of the desolateness of our souls arise longings for a higher, grander soul-life, and we learn the rich meaning of the prayer, “Nearer, my God, to Thee! Nearer to Thee!” and thus, upon the rounds of our grief, we climb up toward the perfect stature of a complete sanctification.

But of all the “guests of the heart,” the chief, the most beautiful, is Jesus, the heart’s King, the elder Brother. And sorrow reveals His preciousness, perfects His fellowship, makes His love a soft pillow and a rapturous joy. Surrounded by human friendship, satisfied with earthly riches, Jesus is valued only prospectively, for what He will be in death and in the judgment. But when earthly supports are taken away and we lean hard upon Him, then we know His sustaining strength. When in the silence of bereavement we cry, “**Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth,**” then we know the richness of His comfort and the fullness of His grace.

It was through the experience of the “**loss of all things**” that Paul grew up into the mighty passion of that cry of love, “**That I may know him.**” And so God in every age has stripped His children of one earthly treasure after another until the burdened heart has had “Jesus only” to rest upon, and then “Jesus only” has become the heart’s passionate longing; to know Him, the loss of all things has seemed a joyous privilege. In the fellowship of this divine Guest of the heart, we shall find our heaven begun below, a heaven whose perfect bliss will be ours when awaking in His likeness we behold Him face to face. Till then, we will covet the sorrows which bring Him closer to our hearts and through whose chastening we grow up into His likeness.

Let the young seek the fellowship of the godly. How fortunate are those youth who have the inestimable blessing of living in a godly family, hearing and hearkening daily (in the family altar) to a wise man's learning (Proverbs 16:23; I Kings 10:8); or who are in fellowship with a true, Bible-believing church, where each imparts from his store of divine wisdom for the increase and edifying of the members of Christ's body (Ephesians 4:15-16; Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24). How vitally important that our young people be taught from the tenderest years around the family altar and on all possible opportune occasions to be in fellowship with those who fear God and keep His commandments (Psalm 119:63; cf. Proverbs 19:16; 2:20)!

SERVICE

The child should be trained for service. The precious values of salvation are not to be selfishly enjoyed, but are to be passed on to others by faithful witnessing, deeds of kindness, and words of encouragement. The Christian is to be first a possessor, then a bearer, and lastly a sharer. No blessing reaches its fulfillment in a life until it is shared with another needy life.

The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said, "**O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged**" (II Corinthians 6:11).

The apostle's heart and life was opened to share his blessings with the needs of others; he was not closed up to a selfish enjoyment of God's blessing, thus to become a dead sea with every blessing turned to bitterness and corruption.

TRUST

A picture memory brings to me;
I look across the years and see
Myself beside my mother's knee.

I feel her gentle hand restrain
My selfish moods, and know again
A child's blind sense of wrong and pain.

But wiser now, a man gray grown,
My childhood's needs are better known;
My mother's chastening love I own.

Gray grown, but in our Father's sight
A child still groping for the light
To read His works and ways aright.

I bow myself beneath His hand:
That pain itself for good was planned,
I trust, but cannot understand.

I fondly dream it needs must be
That as my mother dealt with me,
So with His children dealeth He.

I wait and trust the end will prove
That here and there, below, above,
The chastening heals, the pain is love!

— John G. Whittier

~ end of chapter 7 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
