

KOINONIA KONNECTION

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THE GEOGRAPHY OF SANCTIFICATION

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."

Colossians 3:1

How is the Christian to exercise his growth in holiness? We should all agree that personal holiness is a necessity for the people of God, as far as the Scriptures are concerned. Says Paul, "For we are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness." We have set upon us the name "children of light" precisely because we are summoned by the Gospel to a life of devotion to God.

But how do we actually grow to be holy? Does it just happen? Do we stand around and wait until some cosmic "poof" transforms us into carbon copies of Jesus? Frankly, no. That's not the way sanctification works. The presence of the Spirit, rather than pacifying us, works into us a love of holiness, which results in a mortal struggle against sin. When the Spirit arrives, war begins (Gal. 5:17).

And so, what sort of things can we actually do to further this struggle against our old rotten nature? For one thing, we can adjust the direction of our thinking. Or more to the point, we can adjust the geography of our thinking...

RECEIVING OUR INTELLECTUAL COMPASS

Allow me to remind you of an essential fact which we all tend to forget in the struggle for sanctification: personal holiness has its foundations in a miraculous work of God. The Apostle describes this Divine action in us as our

being "raised with Christ." This phraseology is rooted in an earlier discussion regarding our spiritual baptism (2:12), in which it is said that we partake of the death of Christ by our death to sin, and the resurrection of Christ by our being raised to new life in Him. And who is the author and mover of this spiritual death and rebirth? None other than Jehovah, the Great Mover of redemption: "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him (2:12)."

It is this very truth which is assumed in the first phrase of our verse: "If you then have been raised with Christ." Note the passive voice of the phrase, "been raised." As powerless objects of God's grace, while yet dead in our trespasses and sins we became active participants in the pursuit of holiness when once God had united us to the death and resurrection of Christ.

USING OUR INTELLECTUAL COMPASS

Prudent theologians tell us that once we have been awakened from spiritual death by the power of God's Spirit, we then run concurrent with that Spirit in the pursuit of holiness. In our former state, it might be said that we just "lay there," spiritually motionless. But now, we are truly made alive, and we thus begin to show all the attributes of spiritual life. Whereas we were once prostrate, we now "walk in newness of life (2:13)." Much is involved in this little word "walk." It implies all the miraculous, life-changing power of God which has become involved in our lives through faith in Jesus Christ. It seems like such a little, even timid word. But the miracle of walking expresses an act of resurrecting might beyond expression.

One all-essential element in this spiritual revolution was God's transformation of our minds. It is the mind which interprets reality, sets priorities, affirms things to be true or false, and (more to our interest here) sets the direction of one's life. When we were gathered into the family of the new life, our minds were readjusted to our new condition by the power of God. Old priorities and interpretive grids were replaced with Kingdom standards and Kingdom thinking. This was a crucial change if we were ever to become a man of God. For instance, how were we to begin the practice of faithful participation amidst God's people if our thoughts about the church remained unchanged? Or, how were we ever to practice purity in regard to our speech if the Holy Spirit had not taught our minds to regard profane language as perverse and undesirable?

And so, in light of Paul's demand in the present text, how can we hope to be "seekers-of-things-above" if our minds are addicted to worldly priorities and pursuits? We may only come to be "heaven-seekers" when the Lord points the needle of our mind's compass toward heaven and its concerns. This is one of His many gracious acts when He raises us up with Christ.

THE DIRECTION OF OUR INTELLECTUAL COMPASS

Our text reads, "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." Having established that God's grace makes those of us who are his "seekers of things above" by a radical, spiritual renewal, we are left to ask a foundational question: What are these "things above?" Precisely what does the Apostle expect us to be seeking?

Consider the words of the Rev. Davenant¹ in his commentary on the letter to the Colossians, as he explains the meaning of the phrase "things above": "By [this] we must understand, in the first place, the kingdom of heaven, or the beatific vision of God, and those pleasures to be hereafter enjoyed with Christ our Head and the

blessed angels...But secondly and consequently, we must understand those gifts of grace which are the seeds of this desired glory, as faith, love, holiness, and all those means by which, as by an intermediate path, God would have us proceed to this mark of heavenly glory."

In short, to "seek heavenly things" is to occupy our minds with the pursuit of all those godly virtues and experiences which are normative to heaven and eternal life, and which even at present are poured out into the life-experience of the redeemed by the presence of the Holy Spirit (cf. vv. 2-10). To seek the "things above" is to draw down to our present life the realities of our heavenly citizenship and the eternal future of worship and virtue which will be normative to that citizenship.

And now, how do we come to do our walking on an intellectual level? How does our mind come to walk? To discover the answer from our passage, let us focus on the word "seek."

To seek a thing means to pursue it, to set one's thoughts and efforts upon it. The thing sought becomes a priority superseding all other priorities...it becomes the Great Priority. Imagine you are hunting deer. It's possible that your "seeking efforts" will, for a time, remain somewhat casual and careless. You listen to the birds. You pause occasionally to delight yourself in the scent of the air. You may even lose track of the conscious knowledge that you are hunting at all, as you set your mind on some task you have to complete at home or at work. Though you may carry a rifle under your arm or a bow upon your back, you're not really hunting. Or better, you're hunting, but you're not really seeking.

-continued on back cover

¹ John Davenant, Bishop of Salisbury, England from 1621-1641. Appointed by James I as a member of the Church of England delegation at the Synod of Dort.

FAMILIES IN FOCUS

THE DUTIES OF PARENTS - PART 5



10. TRAIN THEM TO A HABIT OF ALWAYS SPEAKING THE TRUTH.

Truth-speaking is far less common in the world than at first sight we are disposed to think. The whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is a golden rule which many would do well to bear in mind. Lying and prevarication are old sins. The devil was the father of them--he deceived Eve by a bold lie, and ever since the fall it is a sin against which all the children of Eve have need to be on their guard.

Only think how much falsehood and deceit there is in the world! How much exaggeration! How many additions are made to a simple story! How many things left out, if it does not serve the speaker's interest to tell them! How few there are about us of whom we can say, we put unhesitating trust in their word! Verily the ancient Persians were wise in their generation: it was a leading point with them in educating their children, that they should learn to speak the truth. What an awful proof it is of man's natural sinfulness, that it should be needful to name such a point at all!

Reader, I would have you remark how often God is spoken of in the Old Testament as the God of truth. Truth seems to be especially set before us as a leading feature in the character of Him with whom we have to do. He never swerves from the straight line. He abhors lying and hypocrisy. Try to keep this continually before your children's minds. Press upon them at all times, that less than the truth is a lie; that evasion, excuse-making, and exaggeration are all halfway houses towards what is false, and ought to be avoided. Encourage them in any circumstances to be straightforward, and, whatever it may cost them, to speak the truth.

I press this subject on your attention, not merely for the sake of your children's character in the world--though I might dwell much on this--I urge it rather for your own comfort and assistance in all your dealings with them. You will find it a mighty help indeed, to be able always to trust their word. It will go far to prevent that habit of concealment, which so unhappily prevails sometimes among children. Openness and straightforwardness depend much upon a parent's treatment of this matter in the days of our infancy.

11. TRAIN THEM TO A HABIT OF ALWAYS REDEEMING THE TIME.

Idleness is the devil's best friend. It is the surest way to give him an opportunity of doing us harm. An idle mind is like an open door, and if Satan does not enter in himself by it, it is certain he will throw in something to raise bad thoughts in our souls.

No created being was ever meant to be idle. Service and work is the appointed portion of every creature of God. The angels in heaven work--they are the Lord's ministering servants, ever doing His will. Adam, in Paradise, had work--he was appointed to dress the garden of Eden, and to keep it. The redeemed saints in glory will have work, "They

rest not day and night singing praise and glory to Him who bought them." And man, weak, sinful man, must have something to do, or else his soul will soon get into an unhealthy state. We must have our hands filled, and our minds occupied with something, or else our imaginations will soon ferment and breed mischief.

I know well that punishment and correction are disagreeable things. Nothing is more unpleasant than giving pain to those we love, and calling forth their tears. But so long as hearts are what hearts are, it is vain to suppose, as a general rule, that children can ever be brought up without correction.

Spoiling is a very expressive word, and sadly full of meaning. Now it is the shortest way to spoil children to let them have their own way--to allow them to do wrong and not to punish them for it. Believe me, you must not do it, whatever pain it may cost you unless you wish to ruin your children's souls.

And what is true of us, is true of our children too. Alas, indeed, for the man that has nothing to do! The Jews thought idleness a positive sin: it was a law of theirs that every man should bring up his son to some useful trade--and they were right. They knew the heart of man better than some of us appear to do.

Idleness made Sodom what she was. "This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her" (Ezek. 16:49). Idleness had much to do with David's awful sin with the wife of Uriah. I see in 2 Sam. 11 that Joab went out to war against Ammon, "but David tarried still at Jerusalem." Was not that idle? And then it was that he saw Bathsheba--and the next step we read of is his tremendous and miserable fall.

Verily, I believe that idleness has led to more sin than almost any other habit that could be named. I suspect it is the mother of many a work of the flesh--the mother of adultery, fornication, drunkenness, and many other deeds of darkness that I have not time to name. Let your own conscience say whether I do not speak the truth. You were idle, and at once the devil knocked at the door and came in.

And indeed I do not wonder; everything in the world around us seems to teach the same lesson. It is the still water which becomes stagnant and impure: the running, moving streams are always clear. If you have steam machinery, you must work it, or it soon gets out of order. If you have a horse, you must exercise him; he is never so well as when he has regular work. If you would have good bodily health yourself, you must take exercise. If you always sit still, your body is sure at length to complain. And just so is it with the soul. The active moving mind is a hard mark for the devil to shoot at. Try to be always full of useful employment, and thus your

enemy will find it difficult to get room to sow tares. Reader, I ask you to set these things before the minds of your children. Teach them the value of time, and try to make them learn the habit of using it well. It pains me to see children idling over what they have in hand, whatever it may be. I love to see them active and industrious, and giving their whole heart to all they do; giving their whole heart to lessons, when they have to learn; giving their whole heart even to their amusements, when they go to play. But if you love them well, let idleness be counted a sin in your family.

12. TRAIN THEM WITH A CONSTANT FEAR OF OVER-INDULGENCE.

This is the one point of all on which you have most need to be on your guard. It is natural to be tender and affectionate towards your own flesh and blood, and it is the excess of this very tenderness and affection which you have to fear. Take heed that it does not make you blind to your children's faults, and deaf to all advice about them. Take heed lest it make you overlook bad conduct, rather than have the pain of inflicting punishment and correction.

You cannot say that Scripture does not speak expressly on this subject: "He that spareth his rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. 13:24). "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18). "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child: but the rod of correction shall drive it from him" (Prov. 22:15). "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 deliver his soul from hell" (Prov. 23:13,14). "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest, yea, he shall give delight to thy soul" (Prov. 29:15,17).

How strong and forcible are these texts! How melancholy is the fact, that in many Christian families they seem almost unknown! Their children need reproof, but it is hardly ever given; they need correction, but it is hardly ever employed. And yet this book of Proverbs is not obsolete and unfit for Christians. It is given by inspiration of God, and profitable. It is given for our learning, even as the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians. Surely the believer who brings up his children without attention to its counsel is making himself wise above that which is written, and greatly errs.

Fathers and mothers, I tell you plainly, if you never punish your children when they are in fault, you are doing them a grievous wrong. I warn you, this is the rock on which the saints of God, in every age, have only too frequently made shipwreck. I would fain persuade you to be wise in time, and keep clear of it. See it in Eli's case. His sons Hophni and Phinehas "made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." He gave them no more than a tame and lukewarm reproof, when he ought to have rebuked them sharply. In one word, he honoured his sons above God. And what was the end of these things? He lived to hear of the death of both his sons in battle, and his own grey hairs were brought down

with sorrow to the grave (1 Sam. 2:22-29, 3:13).

See, too, the case of David. Who can read without pain the history of his children, and their sins? Amnon's incest, Absalom's murder and proud rebellion, Adonijah's scheming ambition: truly these were grievous wounds for the man after God's own heart to receive from his own house. But was there no fault on his side? I fear there can be no doubt there was. I find a clue to it all in the account of Adonijah in 1 Kings 1:6: "His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" There was the foundation of all the mischief. David was an over-indulgent father--a father who let his children have their own way--and he reaped according as he had sown.

Parents, I beseech you, for your children's sake, beware of over-indulgence. I call on you to remember, it is your first duty to consult their real interests, and not their fancies and likings; to train them, not to humour them--to profit, not merely to please.

You must not give way to every wish and caprice of your child's mind, however much you may love him. You must not let him suppose his will is to be everything, and that he has only to desire a thing and it will be done. Do not, I pray you, make your children idols, lest God should take them away, and break your idol, just to convince you of your folly.

Learn to say "No" to your children. Show them that you are able to refuse whatever you think is not fit for them. Show them that you are ready to punish disobedience, and that when you speak of punishment, you are not only ready to threaten, but also to perform. Do not threaten too much. [Some parents and nurses have a way of saying, "Naughty child," to a boy or girl on every slight occasion, and often without good cause. It is a very foolish habit. Words of blame should never be used without real reason.] Threatened folks, and threatened faults, live long. Punish seldom, but really and in good earnest--frequent and slight punishment is a wretched system indeed. [As to the best way of punishing a child, no general rule can be laid down. The characters of children are so exceedingly different, that what would be a severe punishment to one child, would be no punishment at all to another. I only beg to enter my decided protest against the modern notion that no child ought ever to be whipped. Doubtless some parents use bodily correction far too much, and far too violently; but many others, I fear, use it far too little.]

Beware of letting small faults pass unnoticed under the idea "it is a little one." There are no little things in training children; all are important. Little weeds need plucking up as much as any. Leave them alone, and they will soon be great. Reader, if there be any point which deserves your attention, believe me, it is this one. It is one that will give you trouble, I know. But if you do not take trouble with your children when they are young, they will give you trouble when they are old.

-by J.C. Ryle

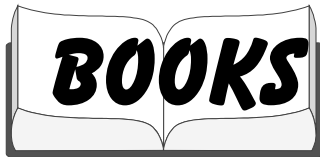
YOUTH'S CORNER

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK
ACTS 18:1-4,18-21

Priscilla was Aquila's wife. The Bible says she helped her husband in their business. She also helped Paul share the gospel. What type of business did Priscilla and Aquila own? Cross out all the letters that are shown five times or more. Unscramble the remaining letters to find the answer.

G	J	V	P	D	H	C	V	J	T
A	D	F	N	G	L	B	H	G	F
H	J	V	P	B	F	Q	T	J	C
P	F	B	D	E	Q	K	J	Q	D
F	Q	B	V	H	L	B	H	C	P
E	C	L	V	C	M	H	D	Q	R
G	L	V	B	L	F	P	S	G	L

(from Acts 18:1-3)



BOOKS IN REVIEW

Will My Children Go To Heaven?

by Edward N. Gross

Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing

177 pages

This book was written to give hope and help to believing parents. Many Christian parents wrestle with questions regarding the salvation of their children. Does God love my children? Does His Word reveal His desire to save them? Can my prayers and actions really make a difference in their lives? Is the raising of children and their salvation a matter of uncertainty? In this wonderful book the author seeks to give Biblical answers to these questions that will give parents hope, help and confidence in the Lord's promises. It will encourage the reader to be reminded that God's promises are to us and our children, that God works through families, and his promises are sure and need to be believed. After setting out the foundation for the salvation of our children, namely God's grace alone, he reminds parents that God's means of working his salvation in the lives of covenant children is through the diligent duty of parents. This includes chapters on the instruction of parents, the discipline of parents, the example of parents, and the prayers of parents. He then gives some instruction to fathers and mothers, and concludes with a word of encouragement for parents who fail. All parents would benefit greatly from reading this book.

-submitted by Cope Jonkman



MISSION SPOTLIGHT

OPEN DOORS

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die."

Rev. 3:2

Millions of Christians around the world face daily the possible destruction of their property, their families and their very lives. For over fifty years, Open Doors has pursued a singular purpose: to stand with the persecuted church... building their courage, meeting their needs, sharing their stories and championing their faith.

Bible & Literature Distribution

Our ministry continues to put Bibles, commentaries, evangelistic tools, training materials, hymn books and other Christian literature - over 6.9 million pieces last year - into the hands of persecuted believers.

Leadership Training and Assistance

Through the years, Open Doors has learned that training and encouraging pastors and church leaders is the most effective way to support strong, healthy local churches, especially among those facing persecution. We help these brave leaders study and teach the Bible in a way that brings the courage of truth to their people.

Christian Community Development

In order for God's people to remain as a light in the darkness of persecution, individual Christians must be able to live and work in these environments. We help strengthen Christian communities so that they can continue to share the love of Christ and bring the gospel to their neighbors.

Prayer/Presence/Advocacy

Our persecuted brethren cry out for our prayers - not for comfort and escape - but to testify to the grace and faithfulness of God. Open Doors equips believers to stand with the persecuted in

prayer, and takes teams around the world to encourage and pray directly with brothers and sisters under pressure. Our Advocacy program enables ordinary Christians to seek justice for the oppressed by influencing those in positions of political power.

Ugandan Pastor Says "Thank You" for Support from Open Doors

In this firsthand report, Pastor Stephen shares how Open Doors played a strategic role in his ministry...which is now leading thousands to Christ.

Back in the '70s, when Idi Amin was closing churches and murdering people, I was one of the youngest pastors who had ever pastored in Uganda. I was 18 and had an underground church of about 100 people.

A couple of pastors and I had an opportunity to meet Brother Andrew in Kenya. He opened up his heart to us and said, "We are going to help you." I was one of those young pastors who got a chance to be supported for what we were doing in Uganda.

We were given \$30 a month...and that was a lot of money! I was also given a bicycle, and that was a great blessing because I could run around and visit the churches we had in different locations around Kampala.

What is happening today in Uganda can be traced back to what happened in the '70s. We were in a difficult situation...every day and night bullets were falling like rain and you could see people dying. We lost everything.

But God used that time to prepare us for a greater harvest in the future. The foundation for what was to come was built in those difficult days of Idi Amin.

We found that the only way to come through that time was through prayer, fasting and seeking the Lord. We read 2 Chronicles 7:14 time and again, and we interceded every day and hoped that one day the Lord would heal our land.

Now we have all this freedom and the church is going so great...everywhere you turn there are crusades and seminars-even deep in the villages! We have even touched our neighboring countries and we're reaching the whole of Africa and other parts of the world.

For the past four years I have been pastoring a church in a strongly Muslim area. Within the first year we grew to more than 100 people. In the second year we grew to 250. Now we have 500 people and 700 children! Over 50 former Muslims have been converted and baptised.

We run a feeding station to provide children with a meal and share the love of Jesus with them. More than 150 of these children are from Muslim families.

We have nine primary schools and a secondary school, so we reach about 2,500 kids from different backgrounds through the education system. The Lord is touching these children and they are coming to accept Jesus as their Savior!

We have over 50 other churches in Uganda alone, and we have church planters starting more. We have also been reaching into Southern Sudan for the past seven years. We have churches and two medical clinics there...and we're also working in Kenya, Tanzania and other areas.

The Lord has called us to reach the unreached. Where others don't want to go...that's where we go!

So the church is growing and reaching out, and people continue coming to the Lord. Many formerly strong witchdoctors and strong imams are today pastoring big churches. It's happening...the Lord is doing something!

There is a big mosque near our church and they had a conference to discuss how they can stop their people from being born-again! And when a member of the witchdoctors' association was interviewed recently he said, "The greatest challenge we are having right now is the born-again people. They are taking our strong people and binding our work."

I am so grateful for what the Lord is doing in Uganda. In the past we didn't hear about these kinds of things, but now we are seeing it time and again. President Museveni and his wife recently went to a crusade. We are excited when we hear things like this...and we know that God-the living God-heard our prayers.

It was a great encouragement to me during those terrible years of war to know that someone out there cared. That although you're going through this difficult situation, you're not alone...there is someone who is praying for you. There is someone who is standing with you and wants to help.

You came to our rescue...and because you came, it was such an encouragement. It challenged us too, because if someone came from the outside, how could we not go on with the Gospel? We had a number of opportunities to leave the country, and many did, but we decided to stay.

What you are doing is touching people all over the world. You go where not many people go...where other people fear to go. I don't think you can even comprehend how big an impact you make on those people you support. But when we get to heaven, everything will be out in the open...and you will know how many people you impacted.

You have been such a blessing. The support you gave me during those very difficult years enabled me to reach out to many places with the Gospel. I am so thankful for your ministry. May the Lord richly bless you!

THE GEOGRAPHY OF SANCTIFICATION

(CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER)

Of a sudden, however, you come upon a set of tracks. Very fresh, from what you can tell. Your body tenses. Your senses become more keen, focused. You scan the area carefully with wolfen eye to see if you can locate any trace of movement. Step by silent step you follow the trail. You have become awareness embodied. You are no longer on a casual stroll. You have become the hunter, the predator, the seeker. Before, the deer was just an idea, a vague possibility, an abstraction. Now it is a thing very real. It's no longer a prospect, but prey.

Such is the nature of the kind of seeking commanded by the Holy Spirit in the verse before us. In our age of grocery stores and restaurants, perhaps we have the convenience of converting a hunting trip into a stroll. But in a former, more wild age the hunt meant meat, and meat meant life. To seek rightly meant the difference between empty bellies and full. It was truly the difference between life and death.

Beloved, there is no grocery store where we can purchase the blessings of God. There's no restaurant where we can order the means of grace to go. The "meat of blessing," if I may call it so, is gained only by that soul who chooses to seek it with the diligence of the hunter. Even more significant than is the case with fleshly meat, whether or not we seek with attentive diligence the "things of heaven" will mean the difference between life and death, heaven or hell.

But let not the believer tremble. God, in His grace, has placed within our minds a compass which always points to the "north" of His grace and blessing. The truth of the matter is that Christians cannot help but seek heavenly matters. Heaven, and the God who sits enthroned there, is branded into our brains irrecoverably. Though we may wander from the trail here and there, in the end, Christians will find what they're hunting, for Holy Spirit Himself has "put us on the scent" of heaven.

-by Edward W. Ludt

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