

WRITINGS OF WALTER CHANTRY

by Walter Chantry

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Walter Chantry, compiled for study and devotional reading.

6 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. S. BAPTISM AND COVENANT THEOLOGY
2. S. Joy Beyond the Cross
3. S. Man's Will-Free Yet Bound
4. S. Myth of Free Will
5. S. Take Up Your Cross
6. S. The High Calling of Motherhood

S. BAPTISM AND COVENANT THEOLOGY

BAPTISM AND COVENANT THEOLOGY by Walter J. Chantry No Baptist begins to seek an answer to the question "Who should be baptized?" by studying the Bible's doctrine of the covenants. Rather, he begins with New Testament texts which deal directly with the term "baptize." In a later study of Covenant Theology, he finds confirmation and undergirding of his conclusions.

1. In the New Testament, we discover the nature of baptism defined. In the definition, something must be said about the person baptized. Its central significance is that the one baptized is said to be savingly joined to Christ. We agree that the definition in the Westminster Confession of Faith is essentially biblical: "Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life . . ." (Chapter XXVIII)

2. In every clear New Testament example, the person baptized made a credible confession of faith in Jesus Christ prior to receiving the sacrament. This has been called the Baptist's argument from silence. But that is an unfair charge. To refrain from a practice on which the Bible is silent is not wrong. But to build a positive practice on supposed but unwritten premises is to build on silence.

Every New Testament text cited to support infant baptism appears empty apart from a strong predisposition to find such texts and presuppositions to impose upon them.

A) Amazingly, Matthew 19:13 : "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," has been used frequently by serious theologians to support infant baptism. We share the indignation of B.B.Warfield who said, "What has this [verse] to do with infant baptism?" Some point has been made of the related passage in Mark where Jesus is said to bless the children, and note has been taken of his placing his hands upon them. But, again, we find no solemn ceremony in this passage indicating that the children were acknowledged to be in the covenant of grace. Prayerful calling of God's blessing upon any child would be most natural apart from such restricted significance.

B) Acts 2:39 has also been pressed into service to support infant baptism. "For the promise is unto you and to your children . . ." Usually the sentence is not completed. But the Scripture goes on, "and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." The context has in view specifically spiritual promises, namely remission of sins and filling with the Holy Spirit. These promises cannot be said to attach themselves to all the crowd before Peter (the "you " of the text), but only to "as many as the Lord our God shall call." They could not be said to belong to "all that are afar off", but only to "as many as the Lord our God shall call." If that phrase qualifies the first and third parties mentioned, it must also qualify "your children". The promises do not belong unto the children of believers apart from effectual calling. Only those children who receive this saving

grace of God may be conceived of as being heirs of the spiritual promises.

C) Household baptisms are called upon, by paedobaptists, as evidence of infant baptism in the New Testament. There are four references: Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48), Lydia (Acts 16:1-40), the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:1-40), Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:1-31). None of the references say that infants were in these houses. Finding infant baptism here is built upon the dual assumption that there were infants in the houses and that household must have meant every individual in the household without exception. The last of these is a road we Calvinists have been down with the term "world " in Scripture. The first is very untenable. But the two together cannot be held; for we find in the Bible itself, the pattern of these household baptisms. All Cornelius' house gathered to hear Peter's preaching. The Holy Ghost fell upon all--they all received the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. Then, all were baptized. Paul first preached to the jailor's household. Then, all were baptized. After the baptism, all rejoiced believing in God. Hearing the Word and believing upon that preaching can scarcely be attributed to infants. No doubt, the same pattern adhered to other cases of household baptisms. In Lydia's case, there is the most doubt that a woman in business would be nursing an infant. The Bible does not tell us she had a husband, let alone children. Infant baptism can be found here only by those most anxious to do so.

D) 1 Corinthians 7:14 is another favorite verse. There we are told that children are "holy". The text does not have even vague reference to church membership or baptism. It is talking about mixed marriages in which one spouse is a believer and the other is not. The question is whether such a relationship is proper, moral, or holy for those who were converted after marriage to the unbeliever. Paul reasons from the obvious to the doubtful. It is obvious that your children are not bastards. They were born in wedlock. They are holy. Therefore, it ought to be clear to you that your marriage relationship is holy. Don't feel guilty about it or wish to be free from your obligations. If the word "holy" suggests a covenant relationship or cultic purity, making the children proper objects for baptism, then the unbelieving spouse is also a valid candidate for the sacrament. The verb "sanctify" has precisely the same root and signification as the adjective "holy." And it is the holiness of the spouse that the passage belabors. With such appalling lack of New Testament evidence for infant baptism, those who support such a practice have rapidly retreated to Old Testament texts and an argument from the unity of the covenants. The practice of baptizing infants of believers is founded on Old Testament Scripture, or upon texts of the New Testament where suitability for baptizing infants is read into them with a predisposition and presupposition drawn from the Old Testament.

I. HISTORIC COVENANT THEOLOGY AND INFANT BAPTISM The argument has hung upon a syllogism that goes something like this: There is a unity between the Old and New Covenants. Circumcision in the Old is parallel to baptism in the New. Infants of believers were circumcised in the Old. Therefore, infants of believers should be baptized in the New. Many tell us that this syllogism is so strong that New Testament silence is a major argument in favor of their position. The New Covenant is so like the Old, and baptism so parallel to circumcision, that unless the New Testament absolutely forbids the baptism of infants, it must be practiced. As B.B. Warfield said, "It is true that there is no express command to baptize infants in the New Testament, no express record of the baptism of infants and no passage so stringently implying it that we must infer from them that infants were baptized. If such warrant as this were necessary to justify the usage, we would have to leave it completely unjustified. But the lack of this express warrant is something far

short of forbidding the rite; and if the continuity of the church through all ages can be made good, the warrant for infant baptism is not to be sought in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament where the church was instituted and nothing short of an actual forbidding of it in the New Testament would warrant our omitting it now."

1. Immediately we Baptists raise our first objection. There is here a serious hermeneutical flaw. How can a distinctively New Testament ordinance have its fullest--nay, its only foundation--in Old Testament Scripture? This is contrary to any just sense of Biblical Theology and against all sound rules of interpretation. To quote Patrick Fairbairn in *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, "There cannot be a surer canon of interpretation, than that everything which affects the constitution and destiny of the New Testament church has its clearest determination in New Testament Scripture. This canon strikes at the root of many false conclusions and on the principle which has its grand embodiment in popery, which would send the world back to the age of comparative darkness and imperfection for the type of its normal and perfected condition." If you allow Old Testament examples to alter New Testament principles regarding the church, you have hermeneutically opened the door to Rome's atrocities. It is upon such rules of interpretation that the priest and the mass have been justified. We find the clearest expression, of that which is normative for the New Covenant's ordinances, in the New Covenant relation.

2. Beyond this, there is a theological flaw. It is nothing new for Baptists to adhere to Covenant Theology. They have done so since the Seventeenth Century. We conceive of God's dealings with man in a covenantal structure. We believe that every covenant made with man since the Fall is unified in its essence. In all ages there has been one rule of life--God's moral law. God's standard of righteousness was the same before Moses received the Ten Commandments, and it is the same today. There has been but one way to salvation in all historic covenants since the Fall. The Gospel by which Adam was saved is the same as that by which we are saved. Genesis 3:15 declares a salvation that is wholly of grace through faith in Christ. The basic differences between the covenants of history in these essential matters are those of Biblical Theology. The promises of the Gospel have become more clear with each succeeding age of revelation, though the promises have been identically the same. The moral law has been more fully expounded, though never changed. So we agree about the unity of the covenants recorded in the Bible. But paedobaptists have been negligent in defining the diversity in the administrations of the Covenant of Grace. As dispensationalism has erred when it has failed to see the essential unity of the covenants since the Fall, many serious errors have arisen from a failure to acknowledge diversity in these historic covenants. An example may be seen in the Reformers' failure to distinguish church and state. In the administration under Moses, the church was coextensive with the state. In the administration of Christ, the extent of church and state are not to be thought identical. In the Mosaic economy, magistrates administered the church and prophets made their authority felt in government. In the Christian administration of Grace, a strict sense of the church separate from the state must be maintained. We must define the diversity as well as the unity.

Paedobaptists have unconsciously recognized a difference between the Old Testament and New with respect to the constitution of the church and subjects of their ordinances. In the Old Covenant, adult sons and servants were circumcised, and thus incorporated into the visible church. Now, only the infants of believers are baptized. In the Old, children came to the Passover at a very young age. Now small children are not admitted to the Lord's Table. Whence this change? When

the principle of diversity is formulated, it will exclude infants from the sacrament of baptism. Jeremiah 31:31-34 is pivotal to expressing the diversity of covenant administrations. It is quoted in Hebrews 8:1-13 and again in Hebrews 10:1-39 to prove that "Christ is mediator of a better covenant." There is an emphatic contrast made in Hebrews 10:31-32. The differences are so striking and dramatic that one covenant is called "new" and it is implied that the other is old. The Jews under the Old Covenant were warned that revolutionary changes would be made. The covenant in force was inadequate except to prepare for the New. So surpassing is the glory of the New, that it should lead them to look for the demolition of the Old. The passage suggests two vital distinctions ushered in by the effusion of the Spirit. This effusion made a change in administration possible. The first difference is found in Jeremiah 31:33. The Old Covenant was characterized by outward formalism. The New would be marked by inward spiritual life. This is not an absolute distinction but it is a marked contrast. Of course, there was spiritual religion and heart commitment to God in the Old Testament. Abraham's faith would put ours to shame. We must wonder if any but Christ Himself ever equaled the prayer life of David addressed in the Psalms. Moses spoke to God as face to face. Yet, these are refreshing streams in the midst of Old Testament attention to outward, formal, national religion. There is a mass of outward rules, a history of formal religion, a ponderous identification of church and nation. Relatively little attention is given to inward life. If a man is circumcised, he is counted a Jew. If he is conformed to outward practices, he is called clean and welcome at the ceremonies of worship. Paul tells us that this system of religion was like the strict tutor who tells a child what to do at every turn. But the New Testament church is come of age. It is, by way of contrast, inward, spiritual and personal. Certainly there is outward formality in the New Covenant, but it is minimal; and the most formal ceremony calls attention to the inward. The New Testament presses personal self-examination everywhere and constantly makes spiritual application of its truths. There is a notable shift to questioning experience of grace at every point.

Jeremiah 31:34 suggests the second distinction. There will be a marked contrast in the knowledge of those in the New Covenant. As the coming of the Spirit will add a new dimension of life to the church, so He will add a new dimension of light. "From the least to the greatest" in the New Covenant will know the Lord. The subject matter of their knowledge will not be shadows but the living reality of Christ. The mysteries hidden in the Old will be made known to them. The manner of instruction will shift from repetitious ceremonies, for they will all know the Lord. So then, we will expect the New Covenant to stand in contrast with the Old in that its members have greater life and light. This diversity is nowhere more evident than in the ceremonies of worship. New Testament worship presents us with a most striking contrast with Old Testament ordinances. This can be illustrated by looking at the Lord's Supper, which finds a counterpart in the Old Testament Passover. The great spiritual truth of redemption by blood is figured in the Passover, but it is somewhat obscured beneath an outward and formal atmosphere. Then, too, the ceremony mixes the figures of personal redemption and national deliverance. Even those who had no acquaintance with spiritual redemption observed it. This they should have done; for their national life arose from the historic event remembered. Very young children came to the Passover as participants that, by it, they might ask the significance and as they grew older, come to understand the redemption figures. (cf. Exodus 12:24-27, etc.) In the New Testament, things are quite different. 1 Corinthians 11:23-30 gives instruction for the most formal ceremony of the New Covenant. Here very young children must not come. Only the "worthy" with "discernment" are welcome at the feast

remembering our redemption. It is not marked by any of the nationalism of the Old Covenant. Each person is charged to "examine himself" before daring to partake. He must find himself "worthy"--a personal recipient of grace. He must have "discernment"--that inward, spiritual light that peculiarly marks this covenant. Light and life are prerequisites of joining this most outward and formal act of worship. The same is true of the waters of baptism. This ceremony does not desert the New Covenant's pattern to revert to the Old. It belongs to those who are "worthy" and have "discernment". Repentance and faith are everywhere demanded as prior conditions for baptism. To summarize: IN THE OLD COVENANT, ALL THAT WAS SPIRITUAL WAS IDENTIFIED WITH AN OUTWARD NATION. IN THE NEW COVENANT, ALL THAT IS OUTWARD IS IDENTIFIED WITH A SPIRITUAL NATION.

3. Then, there are a number of exegetical flaws in the paedobaptist theology.

A) Many have reasoned thus: "Infants of believers were circumcised in the Old Covenant. Therefore, infants of believers should be baptized in the New." Though in Abraham's case faith preceded circumcision of his children, this cannot be said to be the rule of the Old Covenant rite. There were times when faith in the subjects of circumcision or in their parents was all but ignored. In the time of Joshua, an entire nation was circumcised in a day. There was no concern for personal election or personal faith. It was clearly administered as a sign of the outward privileges in belonging to the elect nation. Circumcision was never withheld because a parent had no faith. Even when the prophets denounced the Jews for being uncircumcised in heart, they did not suggest that the sons of these unconverted Jews be excluded from the rite of circumcision. To attempt to find a warrant for seeking faith in the fathers of those who are baptized in these Old Testament texts is wholly unsatisfactory.

B) It is also said that just as baptism is a sign of heirship to the spiritual promises of grace in the New Covenant, circumcision was a sign of heirship to the same spiritual promises in the Old. This is only partially true. Baptism is a sign of spiritual blessing in Christ and only that. Circumcision, too, depicted unity with Christ in His death and heirship to spiritual blessings (cf. Colossians 2:11-13). But there was more to its significance. The distinctive aspects of the covenants cling to their signs just as surely as the common elements of the covenants do. In the Lord's Supper and the Passover, redemption by blood is signified. Yet, they differ in this: The Old ceremony suggested the outward and national aspect of that administration. The New ceremony stresses the inward and personal aspect in its administration. So circumcision could be given to 13-year-old Ishmael, who, Abraham was assured, would not be a partaker of the spiritual blessings. But for him and other non-elect Jews, it was proper by circumcision to be identified with the outward aspects of blessing and administration. It was proper to be circumcised as the literal seed and heir of the literal land and as one by whom, according to the flesh, the Messiah would come, while not being of the spiritual seed and heir of heaven. Baptism has no merely earthly significance. There are no blessings figured in it that can be conceived of apart from an experience of grace.

C) Much weight has been placed on the formula "Thee and thy seed" in Genesis 17:1-27. Paedobaptists insist upon an outward, literal significance of the term "seed." In their scheme, the New Covenant counterpart to Abraham's seed is the physical offspring of believers. This is done while totally ignoring the fact that the New Testament says a great deal about the Covenant with Abraham, for it is central to New Testament religion. Romans 4:1-25, Romans 9:1-33, and

Galatians 3:1-29 and Galatians 4:1-31, especially Galatians 3:7, belabor the point that believers, and believers alone, are the seed of Abraham. These texts further insist that the promises which are spiritual and eternal belong to no physical seed.

Romans 9:1-33 discusses Abraham's immediate, physical offspring. Some were of the flesh; some of the spirit. There was a personal election within the family election. Abraham could not look upon his own immediate seed as heirs of the promises. "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." (Romans 9:8) How can believers today lean upon the promise to Abraham which is clearly interpreted in the New Testament and find for themselves a greater expectation for their children than Abraham had a right to? The New Testament is not silent about this seed. It tells us they are believers alone!

4. Lastly, there are practical flaws in the paedobaptist theology. Those who sprinkle infants are on the horns of a dilemma. Either they must tamper with the definition of baptism to make it signify something less than personal spiritual union with Christ as the Bible clearly teaches; or they will be driven to teach infant salvation or presumptive regeneration. If the first course is chosen, one must also corrupt the New Testament view of the church and its discipline. If some who are less than saved are properly to be considered as members of Christ's body, there is a great deal of stress with the New Testament's view of membership and fellowship. If the second course is chosen, one's pedagogy will be affected. How are parents and pastors to address the children if they are viewed as joined to Christ? Unfortunately, much paedobaptist literature written for children reflects a tendency to address them as believers, not as in need of evangelism. Note the interesting historic dispute on this subject by paedobaptist theologians J.H.Thornwell and R.L.Dabney on one hand, and Charles Hodge on the other.

II. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

I can sympathize with students who are wrestling with the problem of baptism. I can remember when I wished to be convinced of the paedobaptist position. There would be many practical advantages. Another forceful factor is the great history of godly men who were paedobaptists, especially the Reformers and Puritans. But as history gave me the problem, so it has suggested a solution. Paedobaptism is clearly tied to sacralism in church history. After Constantine and his associates succeeded in getting across the idea that church and state are coextensive, baptism identified a person not only as a member of Christ's church but also as a citizen of the state. The Anabaptists in the Middle Ages were not so concerned about the subjects and mode of baptism as they were about the purity of the church. Believer's baptism has always naturally followed the concept of a believer's church. When Zwingli worked closely with Anabaptists (whom he later helped to condemn to death), he had a rather different view of the church from that which he adopted later. Consequently, he had a believer's baptism view. But when he moved to the concept of a state church, he vigorously defended infant baptism.

So, too, in England. So long as the concept of a state church reigned, there was very little interest in a baptism position. But as soon as the separatist movement arose, the Baptists emerged naturally from the paedobaptist midst. Just as the sacralist principles were drawn from the Old Testament improperly, so the retreat from national religion to family religion has rested upon Old Testament practices. Once the constitution and discipline of the New Testament church has been rightly conceived, the hangover of infant baptism must fall away.

These are issues over which we do not wish to lose fellowship with paedobaptist brethren. Yet, they are principles which we will not jettison for the sake of fellowship.

S. Joy Beyond the Cross

Joy Beyond the Cross by Walter Chantry

"And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." (Luke 18:29-30)

Confronted with the unrelenting demands of the cross, some begin to think of Christianity as a grim and undesirable existence. When a truth lies ignored and forgotten, great emphasis must be given to it. But emphasis on "daily" self-inflicted pain sounds austere if not gruesome. Gospel calls to take up one's cross may seem to be an invitation to take pleasure in self-abuse. It must then be made manifest that our wise Lord's demands cast no bitter pall over the Christian life.

Mention of self-denial is essential if we are to be faithful to any who are attracted to the benefits associated with trusting the Lord Jesus. Danger lurks for those who do not carefully count the costs of forsaking this present world to follow him. Enchanted with the bright prospects of the kingdom of God, some receive its announcement with JOY. But "when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by they are offended" (Matthew 13:21). To avoid misrepresentation and to turn men from apostasy our Lord must clarify the reality of losing one's life to enter his kingdom.

Still, in our Lord's view, his own cross was not all bleak. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that he "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." Even when his soul was troubled from taking full measure of the terrors of Golgotha, the only Saviour of sinners never lost sight of the joy beyond. Travail of soul would bring satisfaction. He would gather great spoil by his cross (Isaiah 53:11-12). "Wherefore (because he became obedient unto the death of the cross) God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (Php 2:9-10). just so, the only lasting and fully satisfying joys for any man lie on the other side of a cross.

Luke 18:18-30 preserves an outline of our compassionate Lord's interview with the rich young Ruler, and of a subsequent discussion occasioned by it. "Come, take up the cross and follow me" were Jesus' final words to the seeker (Mark 10:21). Abhorring the cross of denying self its beloved riches, the young man sadly abandoned the great Prophet. This inquirer would not inflict pain on himself in order to find eternal life. He desired heaven and all the pleasures of earth too. Then, it seems, the disciples sensed Christ's disappointment with the departure of the sinner. As if to encourage our Lord, who himself was feeling the painful cross of spurned love, Peter spoke. "We have left all, and followed thee." Some men do not snub the cross, but will deny themselves, esteeming companionship with Christ a great boon at any price. Peter meant to console our noble Lord. But a selfless Jesus turned the occasion into an opportunity to comfort his disciples. Attention was given to the blessedness of those who suffer for the kingdom of God's sake. Not one man has ever sacrificed for his Lord without being richly repaid. If the cross is only contrasted with

earthly pleasures lost, it may seem hard and threatening. But when the cross is weighed in the balances with the glorious treasures to be had through it, even the cross seems sweet. As Samuel Rutherford wrote, "Christ's cross is the sweetest burden that ever I bore; it is such a burden as wings are to a bird, or sails to a ship, to carry me forward to my harbour." Or as the self-denying apostle wrote, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Perhaps the most astonishing part of our Lord's teaching to the disciples on this occasion was his reference to "this present time". Blessings for the cross-bearing servants of Christ are not all reserved for another world. Though their great inheritance is "reserved in heaven" for them (1 Peter 1:4), God has granted his people a foretaste of heaven "in this present time". A clear comparison is drawn, "manifold more in this present time", "more" than was left behind of houses, lands, parents, brothers, wife or children! The man who has denied self for Christ can never say he is a loser by it, even if the comparison is merely between benefits in this world as compared with losses. Careful auditing of each Christian's ledger arrives at confirmation of this balance: "manifold more in this present time". Though the pains of self-denial are nonetheless real, the fraternity of the cross is a bright and cheery society even now in life on earth.

Often our Lord grants manifold more in kind. More is given of the very object sacrificed. Peter had left all to follow Jesus. He had left a quiet fishing village for a tumultuous life of constant pressure by the crowds. He never again returned to the tranquil life of a fisherman. Yet he received a peace which the world cannot give (John 14:27). Peace with a reconciled God, peace concerning the future, and peace flowing from the assured presence of the Son of God, filled his soul.

Peter was severed from a beloved father and other relatives. Many Christians have lost the affection of parents in confessing Christ. Some have been cut off from brothers, sisters and friends. Yet who are more deeply loved in the church than those who have paid the dearest price to declare their faith boldly. Saintry old men become fathers and older women mothers to the cross-bearer. What a vast number of brothers and sisters await him at the Lord's house! How many have found fellowship in the assembly of the redeemed more intimate and gratifying than a home lost for Christ's sake. We are replete with "manifold more" in this present time.

Some Christians have found that a financial cross awaits them. It was this expectation which the "Good Master" had set before the rich young ruler. His actual loss of gold would have been felt. But had he taken up the cross, thereby losing houses or lands, he would have received 'manifold more'. This is not a crass materialistic promise that our Lord will eventually multiply the bank account of any who follow him. But "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Psalms 24:1). And the God of all the earth has promised to add food, clothing and all other needs to those who seek first his kingdom (Matthew 6:33). Rich men have seen their riches take wings and fly away. Some who once were wealthy are at this very moment destitute. But David could say, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalms 37:25).

Whatever your losses "for the kingdom of God's sake" it will not take much imagination to discover "manifold more" in kind given to you. With that in the background our Lord adds even greater bliss, "and in the world to come life everlasting." Ah! the world to come!

Ugly as the cross appeared in Gethsemane, do you think our Lord Jesus regrets his cross? While he sits upon the throne of God, around which many angels, the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders and thousands of spirits of men render perfect worship to him and sing "Worthy is the Lamb", can there be any fretting over the cross? Do you imagine that those who live in his glorious presence complain of crosses? When Stephen walks in his resurrected body in the heavenly Jerusalem where God himself shall dwell with him, how light an affliction will his stoning seem to be! If in this life Paul could say, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18), then a thunderous "Amen" will brush aside crosses as nothing in glory.

Count it as a profound truth which Christ taught: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12). Some become hypnotized by crosses. Their eyes are riveted on the cost of self-denial. Or they grumble that others have not such heavy crosses as they. Then comes the temptation to abandon the cross as the rich young Ruler did. Our Lord counsels, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad"— think of your reward in heaven! You have joined the noble ranks of the prophets. joy in his kingdom comes with a cross. Most of those who fail to experience the joy of the Lord have refused to take up a cross!

Taken from *The Shadow of the Cross*, © 1981 by Walter Chantry. Used by permission of Banner of Truth, Carlisle, PA.

S. Man's Will-Free Yet Bound

Man's Will-Free Yet Bound by Walter J. Chantry For more than fifteen hundred years the Church has engaged in a heated debate over the freedom of man's will. The major issues came to general attention in the early fifth century when Augustine and Pelagius did battle on the subject. Through medieval times the nature of man's freedom received a great deal of attention. As they studied the Scriptures, Bernard and Anselm made significant contributions to the doctrine of the human will. In the sixteenth century the freedom or bondage of the will was one of the chief issues dividing Reformers and Roman Catholics. To the mind of Martin Luther, it was the key to his dispute with Rome. In the seventeenth century the nature of man's freedom was at the heart of the debate between Arminians and Calvinists. The conflict surfaced again in the eighteenth century during the Great Awakening. Finney's approach to revival in the nineteenth century led the church astray through a misunderstanding of the human will. So too the nature of man's will continues to bring intense disagreement between Reformed and Fundamentalist believers.

A proper understanding of the content of the gospel and the use of GOD-honouring methods in evangelism are dependent on one's grasp of this issue.

Some theologians, both Arminian and Calvinistic, have been quite lucid in their discussions concerning man's will. Others, for example, Jonathan Edwards, have soared into the lofty clouds of philosophy where many a believer faints in the thin air of difficult logic and complex thought. But none is so refreshingly clear as our holy LORD. His instruction on the subject is laced with vivid illustrations to assist our groping minds:

Matthew 12:33-37 says, 'Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.' In this passage are three verbal windows through which the light of Christ's lesson passes. Each presents a familiar scene. (1) A tree that has fruit - Matthew 12:33. (2) A man who brings treasures out of a chest - Matthew 12:35. (3) A stream that overflows from a fountain. This last is rather more obscure than the first two, but it is suggested by our LORD's choice of words in Matthew 12:34. The word 'abundance' suggests superfluity or overflow.

I. Man has a will and that will has a certain freedom. Our LORD clearly teaches that man has a power of choice. It is important to begin here to disarm opponents of all the foolish accusations that have been brought against the Biblical doctrine of man's will. Every man has the ability to choose his own words, to decide what his actions will be. We have a faculty of self-determination in the sense that we select our own thoughts, words, and deeds. Man is free to choose what he prefers, what he desires. No one ties fruit on a tree's branches, not even GOD. The tree bears its

own fruit. Evil men sin voluntarily; they take evil treasures out of their chests, that is, evil words and deeds. Righteous men are holy by choice; they select good treasures, that is, good words and works. The person who is speaking and acting is completely responsible for his moral behaviour. This power of the will is a vital part of human personality. It always exists in you and me and in all to whom we witness or preach.

GOD never forces men to act against their wills. By workings of outward providence or of inward grace, the LORD may change men's minds, but He will not coerce a human being into thoughts, words or actions. When GOD in His holy wrath sent the Israelites to drive the Canaanites from their land, He also sent hornets against them. There is a children's song which tells the story of these hornets stinging the Canaanites, causing the pagans to flee the land. The chorus then sings:

GOD never compels us to go, Oh no, He never compels us to go;

GOD does not compel us to go 'gainst our will, but He just makes us willing to go. When Saul was converted, the LORD did not compel him to edify the church instead of persecuting it. He added a new factor of inward grace in his soul, consequently Paul changed his decision. GOD may renew the will but He never coerces it. The Westminster Confession is very careful to assert the liberty of the human will. When it speaks of GOD's eternal decrees, we are told, 'GOD from all eternity did . . . freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is GOD the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.' When discussing Free Will, the Confession begins, 'GOD hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil.' Neither by creation nor by subsequent acts of GOD are man's decisions made for him; he is free to choose for himself. This sort of freedom of the will is essential to responsibility! Having a will is a necessary ingredient to being morally accountable. This is clearly implied in our LORD's words in Matthew 12:36-37 : 'I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.' A man can be condemned only because the words are his own. He was free to bring them out of his treasure chest. They were the overflow of the fountain of his own heart. They are the fruits of his own tree of nature. No one imposed the words on his lips. He chose them. Society, companions, parents cannot be blamed. Idle words are the product of the man's own will.

It is vital for every minister to appreciate the importance of man's will. For in evangelism the will must be addressed. In preaching the gospel we are not only to shine the light of truth upon darkened minds. We are also to appeal to men's perverted wills to choose Christ. Faith is as much an act of the will as it is of the mind. When by the Spirit a mind understands essential truths, by the same Spirit the will must trust Christ. Repentance is a selecting of good and a refusing of evil. Volition is central to faith and repentance.

Indeed, in conversion, a man must make a decision. We shy away from that term because in modern jargon a 'decision' has come to be identified with an outward expression, such as raising the hand or going forward to the front. While such external acts have nothing to do with forgiveness of sins, the heart must make a decision to be saved. When Christ stood to cry 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink,' He was soliciting a willing choice of Himself as satisfying drink for the soul. GOD urges all sinners to come just because they may come. And it is

our duty to inform the sinner that he has a warrant, a right to choose Christ. Beyond this, we must assure him that he has a positive duty to embrace the Saviour. The great guilt of sinners under the gospel is that they will not come. Christ complained in John 5:40 : 'Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.' And to Jerusalem He sobbed, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not !' There is in the unregenerate hearer of the gospel an obstinate, wilful choice not to come. Hence it is that in flaming fire Christ will come to take vengeance on them that obey not the gospel [2 Thessalonians 1:8]. In the free exercise of their uncoerced wills men have rejected the Son of GOD. In speaking of responsibility we have implied nothing regarding ability, as will be seen below. But the point is that men have wills which must be addressed as powerfully and directly as their minds and emotions in gospel preaching. Men must be confronted with their responsibility. 'This is the work of GOD, that ye believe into Him whom He hath sent' [John 6:29].

II. Man's Will is not a Sovereign Faculty. Although man does have a will, it is neither independent of all influences nor supreme over all other parts of his personality. This is the next point to be seen in our LORD's teaching.

Pelagians, Roman Catholics, Arminians and Finneyites have all held one common view of the nature of man. They suggest that the will of man is in some way neutral, that it exists in a state of moral suspension. It is their understanding that with equal ease the will can choose good or evil; it can receive or reject Christ. With only degrees of difference and variety of explanation, this is their common opinion. Pelagians have taught that the will is neutral because man's heart is morally neutral. Arminians, on the other hand, acknowledge the human heart to be evil. But they suggest that prevenient grace has hung the will upon a 'sky hook' of neutrality from which it can swing either to receive or to reject the gospel. The common ground, however, is this idea of neutrality. The will, they tell us, is disinterested. Ultimately this controls their entire view of conversion and of sanctification.

It will be noted that our Master taught that the human will is not free from the other faculties of the heart. Far from the will reigning over a man, the will is determined by the man's own character. It is not raised to a position of dominance over the entire man.

Man is like a tree. His heart, not his will alone, is the root. There is no possible way by which the will can choose to produce fruit contrary to the character of the root. If the root is bad, the tree is bound by its very nature to produce evil fruit. Man is like a person standing alongside his treasure chest. There is no possibility of bringing pure gold out of a box filled only with rusty steel. The contents of the heart determine what words and deeds may be brought out. Far from being neutral, the will must reach into the heart for its choices. Every thought, word and deed will partake of the nature of the treasure within. Man is like a stream which cannot rise above its source. If the fountain is polluted, the outflow will be evil. If the source be sweet, the stream will not be bitter and cannot choose to be so.

These three illustrations alike contain the same lesson. What a man is determines what he chooses. Choices of the will always reveal the character of the heart, because the heart determines the choices. Men are not sinners because they choose to sin; they choose to sin because they are sinners. If this were not so, we could never know a tree by its fruits, nor could we judge a man's character by his acts. In modern times we observe rockets fired so that they escape

from the earth's gravity. To accomplish this there is a great complex of electrical wires all woven into one control centre, called in the U.S. 'Mission Control.'

According to the Bible, the heart is the Mission Control of a man's life. The heart is the motivational complex of a man, the basic disposition, the entire bent of character, the moral inclination. The mind, emotions, desires, and will are all wires which we observe; none is independent but all are welded into a common circuit. If mission control is wired for evil, the will cannot make the rockets of life travel on the path of righteousness. The will cannot escape the direction of thoughts, feelings, longings and habits to produce behaviour of an opposite moral quality. 'Will' may be the button which launches the spacecraft. But the launching button does not determine the direction. Direction is dependent upon the complex wiring system.

If the will were able to make decisions contrary to reason, and to the likes and desires of the heart, it would be a monster. You would find yourself in a restaurant ordering all the foods you detest. You would find yourself selecting the company you loathe. But the will is not a monster. It cannot choose without consulting your intelligence, reflecting your feelings, and taking account of your desires. You are free to be yourself. The will cannot transform you into someone else. This is most profoundly true in the moral and religious realms. When the mind is at war with GOD, denying His truth; when the emotions hate Christ His Son; when the desires wish GOD's law and gospel were exterminated from the earth; the will cannot be in a position to choose Christ. If it were, a man would not be truly free to be himself. Here is the tragic truth about man's will. While free from outward coercion, it is in a state of bondage. It is not in a state of neutrality. It is not a lever with which to move a man's personality from sin to righteousness, from unbelief to faith. This brings us to the third element in Christ's words.

III. Man's Will is in Bondage to Sin. The chains which bind a man's will to sin do not result from the actions of the Omnipotent GOD. The binding chains are the man's own depraved faculties. The prison is his own nature. Our LORD's rhetorical question in Matthew 12:34 brings this home with force: 'O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things?' Our wise LORD is suggesting that a man must speak as he does because of what he is. To sinners He was saying 'You are unable to choose good words because you possess an evil heart. If the tree is bad, if the treasure chest is filled with evil things alone, if the fountain is bitter, your will cannot produce good words [fruits, treasures, overflow].' At this point there are very many scriptures which attest to a man's bondage to sin by his own nature. To mention but a few - Jeremiah 13:23 : 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil;' John 6:44 : 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him;' Romans 8:7 : 'The carnal mind . . . is not subject to the law of GOD, neither indeed can be.'

Pelagian, Arminian and modern Fundamentalist support for the moral and spiritual freedom of the will usually centres on one point. We have admitted that man has a responsible freedom. He is free to be himself. He is held accountable for his words and deeds, especially for his receiving or rejecting Christ. On all of this we agree. They use this toehold to argue that the will is not in bondage to sin but has the power of contrary choice. It can do either good or evil, at least when confronted with the gospel. They insist that the responsibility of the will to choose Christ implies ability of the will to choose Christ.

There is no scriptural defence of this belief, none that I have ever seen in print. The argument is completely philosophical. It runs as follows: If a man cannot do good, it would be unjust to punish him as evil. Furthermore, if a sinner cannot repent, it would be foolish to command all men everywhere to repent. GOD is not foolish and He has commanded repentance. Therefore men are able to repent.

We can only reply that those who applaud the powers of the will with such arguments have not read the Bible very carefully. To maintain their philosophical premises they will have to argue with Christ their LORD. For our Prophet tells us in verses 36 and 37 of our text that in the day of judgment men will be held responsible for their evil words. Yet in verse 34 our Teacher tells the very same men that they cannot speak good words because they are bound by their evil character.

Lazarus in his tomb had no ability to respond when our LORD commanded, 'Come forth.' The man who had been impotent for 38 years had no native ability to obey when Jesus commanded him to take up his bed and walk. Nor have modern sinners ability to believe when we preach. 'This is his commandment, that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ' [1 John 3:23]. When a sinner refuses to come to Christ, he is guilty because he has made a free choice. It reflects his own state of mind, feeling and attitude toward GOD and His Son. He has acted voluntarily without coercion. It is his decision. But the poor sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, could not do otherwise, being evil. It is not necessary for him to have a neutral will, or the ability to do both good and evil, for his action to be held accountable before the Judge of all hearts.

Anselm is very helpful on this matter. This medieval theologian points out that if ability to sin is necessary to true liberty or responsibility, then GOD is neither free nor praiseworthy. For the scriptures teach us that GOD cannot lie. Similarly, saints in glory will be neither free nor responsible; for in eternity the LORD's people have confirmed righteousness. Anselm goes on to show the Biblical emphasis of freedom. True liberty rests in the ability to do good whereas he that does sin is the slave of sin. If true liberty rests in the ability to do good in GOD's sight, then the highest liberty rests in the inability to do otherwise. This highest freedom belongs to the sons of GOD in glory. How Biblical were Anselm's insights! No doubt Anselm's thinking has influenced the Westminster Confession's wording in the chapter 'Of Free Will.' For it says that Adam 'had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and wellpleasing to GOD.' Yet this freedom was mutable, subject to change. Man could and did lose his liberty in the sense of being able to do good. This is not the same as a man's liberty to be himself. 'Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or prepare himself thereto.'

Bernard was very near the truth when he wrote of our condition in Adam: 'The soul, in some strange and evil way, is held under this kind of voluntary, yet sadly free necessity, both bond and free; bond in respect of necessity, free in respect of will: and what is still more strange, and still more miserable, it is guilty because free, and enslaved because guilty, and therefore enslaved because free.'

We have seen that man is free to be himself and therefore is enslaved to sin by a wicked heart. And this brings us to the most profound truth regarding the salvation of souls. It is crucial to our

preaching. It is vital to saving impressions in our hearers.

IV. Man's Will is not his Hope. Our LORD has taught that the tree must be made good. Man must be renewed in his entire character. He must have a new heart to bring forth good fruit; the will cannot make the tree good; it may only exercise liberty to be what the tree already is. The will cannot reload the treasure chest with a new kind of goods; it may only freely bring forth what is there. The will cannot cleanse the fountainhead; it may overflow only with the waters available in the soul.

Any gospel preaching that relies upon an act of the human will for the conversion of sinners has missed the mark. Any sinner who supposes that his will has the strength to do any good accompanying salvation is greatly deluded and far from the kingdom. We are cast back upon the regenerating work of the Spirit of the living GOD to make the tree good. Unless GOD does something in the sinner, unless GOD creates a clean heart and renews a right spirit within man, there is no hope of a saving change.

While we address the wills of men in gospel preaching, they are wills bound in the grave clothes of an evil heart. But as we speak, and the LORD owns His word, sinners are quickened to life by divine power. His people are made willing in the day of His power [Psalms 110:3]. All who are adopted as sons of GOD were 'born not of the will of man, but of GOD.' [John 13:1] We stand to preach with no power to make the tree good. The 'trees' before us cannot make themselves good, so no gimmicks or policies of men can persuade them to make the change. But our glorious GOD, by inward, secret, transforming power, can make the tree good, the treasures good, the fountain good. Thus all glory be to GOD and to the Lamb! Salvation is of the LORD!

S. Myth of Free Will

Myth of Free Will by Walter Chantry

Most people say that they believe in "free will." Do you have any idea what that means? I believe that you will find a great deal of superstition on this subject. The will is saluted as the grand power of the human soul which is completely free to direct our lives. But from what is it free? And what is its power? THE MYTH OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL FREEDOM No one denies that man has a will—that is, a faculty of choosing what he wishes to say, do, and think. But have you ever reflected on the pitiful weakness of your will? Though you have the ability to make a decision, you do not have the power to carry out your purpose. Will may devise a course of action, but will has no power to execute its intention.

Joseph's brothers hated him. They sold him to be a slave. But God used their actions to make him a ruler over themselves. They chose their course of action to harm Joseph. But God in his power directed events for Joseph's good. He said, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20). And how many of your decisions are miserably thwarted? You may choose to be a millionaire, but God's providence is likely to prevent it. You may decide to be a scholar, but bad health, an unstable home, or lack of finances may frustrate your will. You choose to go on a vacation, but an automobile accident may send you to the hospital instead. By saying that your will is free, we certainly do not mean that it determines the course of your life. You did not choose the sickness, sorrow, war, and poverty that have spoiled your happiness. You did not choose to have enemies. If man's will is so potent, why not choose to live on and on? But you must die. The major factors which shape your life cannot thank your will. You did not select your social status, color, intelligence, etc.

Any sober reflection on your experience will produce the conclusion, "A man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). Rather than extolling the human will, we ought to humbly praise the Lord whose purposes shape our lives. As Jeremiah confessed, "I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

Yes, you may choose what you want, and you may plan what you will do. But your will is not free to accomplish anything contrary to the purposes of God. Neither have you any power to reach your goals but that which God allows you. The next time you are so enamored with your own will, remember Jesus' parable about the rich man. The wealthy man said, "I will do this; I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods... But God said to him, Fool! This night your soul is required of you" (Luke 12:18-21). He was free to plan but not free to accomplish; so it is with you. THE MYTH OF ETHICAL FREEDOM But freedom of the will is cited as an important factor in making moral decisions. Man's will is said to be free to choose between good and evil. But again we must ask, from what is it free? And what is man's will free to choose? The will of man is his power to choose between alternatives. Your will does decide your actions from a number of options. You have the faculty to direct your own thoughts, words, and deeds. Your decisions are not formed by an outside force but from within yourself. No man is

compelled to act contrary to his will, nor forced to say what he does not wish. Your will guides your actions.

Yet this does not mean that the power to decide is free from all influence. You make choices based on your understanding, your feelings, your likes and dislikes, and your appetites. In other words, your will is not free from yourself! Your choices are determined by your own basic character. The will is not independent of your nature but the slave of it. Your choices do not shape your character, but your character guides your choices. The will is quite partial to what you know, feel, love, and desire. You always choose on the basis of your disposition, according to the condition of your heart.

It is just for this reason that your will is not free to do good. Your will is the servant of your heart, and your heart is evil. "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). "No one does good, not even one" (Romans 3:12). No power forces man to sin contrary to his will, but the descendants of Adam are so evil that they always choose the evil. Your decisions are molded by your understanding, and the Bible says of all men, "Their senseless minds are darkened" (Romans 1:21). Man can only be righteous when he desires to have fellowship with God, but, "No one seeks for God" (Romans 3:11). Your appetites crave sin, and thus you cannot choose Good. To choose good is contrary human nature. If you chose to obey God, it would be the result of external compulsion. But you are free to choose, and hence your choice is enslaved to your own evil nature.

If fresh meat and tossed salad were placed before a hungry lion, he would choose the flesh. This is because his nature dictates the selection. It is just so with man. The will of man is free from outside force but not from the bias of human nature. That bias is against God. Man's powers of decision are free to choose whatever the human heart dictates; therefore there is no possibility of a man choosing to please God without a prior work of divine grace.

What most people mean by free will is the idea that man is by nature neutral and therefore able to choose either good or evil. This simply is not true. The human will and the whole of human nature is bent to only evil continually. Jeremiah asked, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil" (Jeremiah 13:23). It is impossible. It is contrary to nature. Thus do men desperately need the supernatural transformation of their natures, else their wills are enslaved to choosing evil. In spite of the great praise that is given to "free will," we have seen that man's will is not free to choose a course contrary to God's purposes nor free to act contrary to his own moral nature. Your will does not determine the events of your life nor the circumstances of it. Ethical choices are not formed by a neutral mind but always dictated by your personality. **THE MYTH OF SPIRITUAL FREEDOM**

Nevertheless many assert that the human will makes the ultimate choice of spiritual life or spiritual death. Here the will is altogether free to choose eternal life offered in Jesus Christ or to reject it. It is said that God will give a new heart to all who choose by the power of their own free will to receive Jesus Christ.

There can be no question that receiving Jesus Christ is an act of the human will. It is often called "faith." But how do men come to willingly receive the Lord? It is usually answered, "Out of the

power of their own free will." But how can that be? Jesus is a prophet. To receive him means to believe all that he says. In John 8:41-44 Jesus made it clear that you were born of Satan. This evil father hates the truth and imparted the same bias into your heart by nature. Hence said Jesus, "Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me." How does the human will jump out of man to choose to believe what the human mind hates and denies? To receive Jesus further means to embrace him as a priest—that is, to employ, and depend on him to sue out peace with God by sacrifice and intercession. Paul tells us that the mind with which we were born is hostile to God (Romans 8:7). How can the will escape the influence of human nature which was born with a violent enmity to God? It would be insane for the will to choose peace when every bone and drop of blood cries out for rebellion.

Then too, receiving Jesus means to welcome him as a king. It means choosing to obey his every command, to confess his right of rule, and to worship before his throne. But the human mind, emotions, and desires all cry out, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). If my whole being hates his truth, hates his rule, and hates peace with God, how can my will be responsible for receiving Jesus? How can such a sinner have faith?

It is not man's will but God's grace that must be thanked for giving a sinner a new heart. Unless God changes the heart, creates a new spirit of peace, truthfulness, and submission, man will not choose to receive Jesus Christ and eternal life in Him. A new heart must be given before a man will believe, or else the human will is hopelessly enslaved to evil human nature—even in the matter of conversion. Jesus said, "Marvel not that I said to you, you must be born again" (John 3:7). Unless you are, you will never see his kingdom.

Read John 1:12-13. It says that those who believe on Jesus have been "born, not of the will of man, but of God." As your will is not responsible for your coming into this world, it is not responsible for the new birth. It is your Creator who must be thanked for your life, and if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Who ever chose to be created? When Lazarus rose from the dead, he chose to answer the call of Christ, but he did not choose to come to life. So Paul said in Ephesians 2:4-5, "When we were dead in sins God has quickened us with Christ (by grace you are saved)." Faith is the first act of a will made new by the Holy Spirit. Receiving Christ is an act of man just as breathing is, but God must first give life. No wonder Martin Luther wrote a book entitled *The Bondage of The Will* which he considered one of his most important treatises. The will is in the chains of an evil human nature. You who extol the free will as a great force are clinging to a root of pride. Man, as fallen in sin, is utterly helpless and hopeless. The will of man offers no hope. It was the will choosing the forbidden fruit that brought us into misery. The powerful grace of God alone offers deliverance. Cast yourself upon God's mercy for salvation. Ask for the Spirit of Grace that he may create a new spirit within you.

S. Take Up Your Cross

Take Up Your Cross by Walter Chantry

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." (Luke 9:23-24)

Only one entrance may be found to the Kingdom of God. There is a narrow gate set at the head of the path of life. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 8:14). No one with an inflated ego can squeeze through the door. There must be self-effacement, self-repudiation, self-denial even to become a disciple (a student) of Jesus Christ. Our Saviour made his demand quite clear by explicitly requiring self-denial. He then re-emphasized the point by using a vivid illustration of renouncing one's self—an illustration he would soon seal with his blood, "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross". Six times in the Gospels our great Prophet refers to his followers' taking up a cross. It was one of his favourite illustrations of self-denial. At other times he would speak of selling all, or of losing one's life.

"Cross" is a word that first brings to our minds the picture of our Lord on Calvary. We think of him bleeding while fastened to an instrument designed to inflict an agonizing death. Then perhaps we expand the idea of taking up a cross by thinking of Stephen who was stoned to death, or of Peter and John, who were beaten and put into prison, and of other martyrs across the ages. In the light of such courageous physical suffering, the Christian at ease may say to himself, "I don't have any cross to bear". Perhaps this repeated demand of Christ even brings alarm to your consciences as you read it over and over in Scripture.

Some who call themselves "Christian" in fact have never taken up their crosses. Being ignorant of the experience of self-execution, of self-denial, they are of necessity strangers to Christ. Our Lord himself intended his illustration and his demand to deepen alarm in such individuals. If this is your condition, then there can be no relief to conviction but in taking up your cross and following him.

Others, however, are true servants of Christ but feel a sense of dismay through a misunderstanding of our Lord's demand. It is quite possible to have taken up your cross and not to know it. Careful examination of our Lord's meaning will then be an encouragement. In either case, the subject is vital to you. Your Master's life was dominated by a cross. He has called you also to a life with a cross. This clear gospel note is so easy to forget in flabby Western society. With a great chorus of custom, advertisement and temptation this world is beckoning you to a life of self-indulgence. Your flesh is drawn to that appeal, and will fall in with the world's suggestions. But the Lord of glory has called you to a life of self-denial, to a cross. The demand of bearing a cross is universal. It is made of all who follow Christ, without exception. Our Lord addressed these words "to all", not to a select few who walked nearer to Christ. Mark 8:34 indicates that this mandate was not issued to the twelve alone. It was spoken 'when he had called the people unto him with his disciples'. The cross is required for "any man" who will go after him. There are no peculiar cases

released from this necessity. Repeatedly our Lord was emphatic that none could be considered his disciple in any sense unless he bore a cross. "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:38). Again in Luke 14:27 our Saviour turned to a multitude following him, to insist, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple". It is an absolute impossibility to be a Christian without self-denial. Whether you live in a Christian land or in a culture hostile to God's Word, you must bear a cross. The only way to avoid the cross is to follow the world to hell. As Luke 14:24 explains, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it". The "for" indicates a connection with the preceding verse. Religion without self-denial will not endure the judgment.

It is this most obvious aspect of our Lord's teaching which has been forgotten or ignored by modern evangelism. Anxious to bring sinners to life, peace and Joy in the Lord, evangelists have failed even to mention that Christ insists upon denial of self at the outset. Having failed to pass on our Lord's requirement, and forgetting it themselves, evangelists have never questioned whether their "converts" with self-centred lives are true followers of Christ. Assuming that it is possible for a man to be self-indulgent and yet heaven-bound, Bible teachers look for some way to bring ego-centric men to a higher spiritual plane. Then self-denial is taught as the requirement for a second work of grace. But our text will show that unless a man lives a life of self-denial, he has not received a first work of grace.

Those who save texts demanding a cross for "the deeper life" have cheated their hearers in evangelism. Without a cross there is no following Christ! And without following Christ there is no life at all! An impression has been given that many enter life through a wide gate of believing on Jesus. Then a few go through the narrow gate of the cross for deeper spiritual service. On the contrary, the broad way without self-denial leads to destruction. All who are saved have entered the fraternity of the cross. Christ's summons to a cross is perpetual. Self-denial is not an initiation-fee, once paid and for ever forgotten. Old Christians as well as new converts must bear a cross. One's cross is not a disposable item of Christian experience but a life-long burden in this world. This conversation apparently took place after Caesarea Philippi. It was near the end of our Lord's earthly ministry. Almost three years earlier, Jesus had called the disciples. We read a partial account of the call in Luke 5:1-39. When they began to follow the Messiah, there was a painful price of a cross to be weighed. For Peter it was leaving a beloved father and abandoning a good fishing business in a quiet village. For Matthew it was turning his back on the lucrative tax bureau he directed. Throughout more than two years there was the painful experience of poverty, tumult and disgrace in following the Master. Now, as they near the completion of their training, our Lord holds before them the expectation of a cross. Whether you have walked with Christ one year or forty, you must deny yourself still.

You will notice that the text uses the word "daily". For a true believer the cross is ubiquitous, lifelong, a daily weight. There is but one depository of the cross, that is the cemetery. We shall not carry the pain of self-denial into the celestial city. But our Lord holds out no hope that the cross will cease to afflict us in this life. It is "daily", for "any man". You must ask yourself, "Am I bearing a cross today?" As has been suggested, the cross is painful. The term "cross" has lost all significance if the element of dreadful suffering is taken away. Our Lord endured the most cruel pangs ever inflicted upon a man. But we must recognize that the cross represented inward as well as outward pains. To our perfect Lord the inward torture of the cross was far greater than the

outward.

Hebrews 12:2 teaches us that Jesus "endured the cross, despising the shame". The shame was much more painful to his noble dignity than were the nails and the bleeding to his body. Some have failed to estimate what the cross was to him: the confusion of being made sin before the Father, the embarrassment before his enemies of open judgment by a righteous God. The shame of nakedly identifying with filthy transgressions before men, angels and God, cut his sensitive soul to the quick.

Inward suffering must be the focus of our Lord's teaching in this passage. Our cross is not merely physical suffering. Stephen was not stoned "daily", yet the Saviour said we must bear a "daily" cross. Even in the worst of times apostles were not imprisoned "daily". There is a cross to bear on the best of days as well as on the worst. Peter carried a cross during civil peace as well as in times of strife. A failure to comprehend that inward pain is the worst part of the cross has led some believers to misunderstand our Lord's demand of a daily cross. It is this misunderstanding which may lead to unnecessary alarm and dismay when true saints read our Lord's demand. You may bear a cross unseen by all but your heavenly Father. How often a pastor is surprised to learn of the cross borne by members of the congregation, through trials never imagined by him. The deepest pains of the cross are not publicly visible.

Furthermore, taking up your cross is an intentional act. In every passage which records our Lord's mention of a cross for his disciples, he commands them to "take it up". The Lord does not force a cross upon any man against his will. He does not strap the cross to a man's back. There are great afflictions for God's people which are imposed by providence. Irresistible sufferings may be the hand of chastisement or of refining mercy. These are trials but not crosses. A cross must be taken up by the one whose self is to be denied painfully.

It was a voluntary submission on Christ's part which brought him to Calvary. "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:18). Armed soldiers could not seize him. The Son of God delivered himself into their custody. just so is the daily cross of his disciples. It is the conscious choice of a painful alternative motivated by love for Christ. It may be preceded by an inward struggle similar to that which our Lord knew in Gethsemane. But it is a voluntary choice.

Lastly, the taking up of a cross is mortal. It is deadly. Death on the cross may be very slow, but a cross has one objective—it ruthlessly intends to bring death to self. Two parallel ideas in John 10:23-24 show us that our Lord has this in mind. "Let him deny himself". Put to death self-importance, self-satisfaction, self-absorption, self-advancement, self-dependence. And "whosoever will lose his life for my sake". That's it! Death to self-interest because you serve Christ's honour! Even capitulation of those things which men call legitimate interests, for God's glory!

It is now apparent that Jesus' figure of bearing a cross is an elaboration of his demand for self-denial. Bearing a cross is every Christian's daily, conscious selection of those options which will please Christ, pain self, and aim at putting self to death. It is a teaching for the recruit, not merely for the seasoned warrior. It is a requirement for entering the army of God, not merely a call to an elite corps of super-saints with a deeper life. Yet it does hold the clue as well to deepening maturity in Christ. At each stage of growth, more self-denial is required, more painful blows to self,

more reckless decision to serve the Lord Christ with consequent abandonment of one's own life. The shadow of the cross falls upon all those vital aspects of Christian experience which perplex true hearts. If only the cross were understood, many complaints would be silenced which murmur against God's providence. Many a counselling session in the pastor's study would be cut short by applying the meaning of the cross. It answers so many questions, not easily but profoundly.

If you have struggled to worship the Almighty, you will have learned that there is no satisfying communion with the Most High without a cross. Our Saviour arose a great while before it was day to draw near to his Father. Having no central heating, it is no stretch of the imagination to think that he shivered while his metabolism was still sluggish in early morning hours. Perhaps he felt the pain of prying his eyes open, for he was a true man who had spent long days and nights instructing the ignorant, convincing the gainsayers and healing the sick. He did not have a good night of sleep before his secret hours of worship. Perhaps he had to stand lest he fall asleep. Perhaps these struggles led to his sympathy for his disciples in the Garden. When they slept spirit is instead of praying, he gently said, "The willing but the flesh is weak". Oh, he had felt the weakness of human flesh! A cross greets the Christian who is determined to rise early to meet his God. It begins with the alarm clock. Self desires another hour of sleep. It is only reasonable to remain in bed since the baby woke up twice last night. But if the love of Christ burns in your soul, you would rather inflict pain on yourself than plunge into the demands of business at home and office, and end the day with the sad realization that you had not been with him in quiet at all. Furthermore, to rise early in the day you must deny self of pleasant social evenings which tend to last into late hours. And when you have managed to bring yourself to your devotions, stubborn self intrudes still. Thoughts of your affairs demand attention from your mind so that honest contemplation of the glory of God is crowded out. A thousand selfish interests prevent true prayer from ever beginning. Our Lord taught us that prayer begins when the heart cries "Hallowed be thy Name". It cannot be uttered until self-interest is ruthlessly yanked from the soul as a tooth is from your jaw. This is painful and pinching.

Preachers meet sad-eyed saints who would like them to recommend a good book on devotions, I something to pick up my drooping spirits'. The place of private retirement has grown dull or unrewarding. Often behind the request is a desire to find a new secret to approaching God's courts, a little device or an easy step back to the place of joyful fellowship with God and the Lamb. There are no such books or devices. You must bear a cross! Take aim on self. Set your sights on putting self to death. Deny self! Fast! Rise earlier! Cry with a fresh uniting of all your energies for the one purpose of knowing the Lord. And tomorrow? The cross will be there again. And if you do not choose to inflict pain on self, you will relapse once more into coldness. You will withdraw to a distance from the Lord.

Some poor creatures have stopped seeking the joys of God's presence. Perhaps you have assumed that God will not show you his glory. On the contrary, he delights to make himself known. But there is a cross at the threshold of the secret place of the Most High. To come under the shadow of the Almighty you must put self to a slow, agonizing death. The long shadow of the cross will follow you from your home to your field of service for the Lord. Faithful witnesses to Christ face dreadful pains. When you arrive at your shop, fellow workers may be gathered in a corner laughing and slapping shoulders. You know you dare not approach to join in. The subject of the good humour is filthy. During the day, as serious opinions are discussed, there is an opportunity to give

the biblical view on issues of sin and righteousness or the purpose of life. But each time you speak, you have seen rejection of yourself with your views. Each testimony for truth makes you more unwelcome. Will you be bold for truth today?

Christians are sensitive. We want to be liked and accepted. It is pleasant to be agreeable and peaceful. It is our longing to become more intimate with fellow men. Some brutes witness with an attitude of "I don't care what anyone thinks of me". That is to be callous, not gracious. As God's grace quickens in us love for men, a sense of courtesy is heightened, a longing for gentleness and peace is increased. But with all of this our Lord's honour is at issue in the discussion. The eternal welfare of men's souls hangs in the balance with their understanding of truth.

What must the Christian do if he is to witness? He must consciously choose words that pain his own social consciousness and love of peace. He must purposely drive the wedge between self and fellow workers deeper! There are no easy steps to witnessing! No painless, unembarrassing methods! You must bring men to see that they are filthy sinners under the wrath of God who must flee to Christ for mercy. That is offensive. And there is no way to coat it with honey. When a young woman explains the gospel to her mother, she may almost anticipate the cool reception. Whichever way the truth is presented, implied is the life-long error of mother. It is all a denial of her religion, her views, her life-style from a daughter. It cuts her heart like a knife. Yes, but when the sword of the Word cuts mother's heart, a sensitive daughter has at the same time chosen to drive spikes into her own flesh. Self has had to be crucified. Two hearts are broken, not merely one. As the cross casts a shadow over worship and witnessing, its shades also fall upon all service to God. Questions like, "Will you teach a Sunday School class?" become, "Will you relinquish tranquil and amusing evenings which follow frenzied days in the office? Will you sacrifice relaxation seriously to study God's Word in preparation for the class? Will you spend scarce time to pray for your students?" Each duty assumed for the good of the Church imposes restrictions elsewhere. An image of the cross is discernible everywhere in the Christian life. Our Lord was not speaking in hyperbole when he set before us a daily cross. To turn from it is to revert to the broad way which leads to destruction.

S. The High Calling of Motherhood

The High Calling of Motherhood By Rev Walter J Chantry

"But women will be saved through childbirth, if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety." (1 Timothy 2:15)

One of the greatest issues in our society today is the status and role of women. "Too often" writes Rev WJ Chantry, women have been "held in contempt... subject to verbal, social and physical abuses."

But, how are women to respond? How can a woman find a role in life which will bring real dignity and fulfilment, and stretch all her abilities to the full? Rev Walter Chantry gives an answer which would revolutionise our society if it were put into practice.

Rev Walter Chantry is Pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, USA. He is married with two daughters and a son, and is the author of Today's Gospel, The Shadow of the Cross and God's Righteous Kingdom, all published by the Banner of Truth Trust. Our generation has highlighted the oppression of women. The symptoms are not difficult to identify. Women have too often been held in contempt. Large numbers of them have been subjected to verbal, social and physical abuses. Women's magazines and social activists have pointed the finger at very serious ill-treatments which subject multitudes to misery. Our world has little difficulty describing the quandary of women. But it has completely mistaken the root cause. Consequently, women are being offered a faulty solution to their real troubles. False diagnosis usually leads to improper measures of correction. In this case the cure proposed by the world simply compounds female misery.

SCRIPTURE SPEAKS

Contrary to popular assumption, the Bible has a number of things to say very directly about this issue: Paul, in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, alludes to the plight of woman. He suggests that she needs to be saved (1 Timothy 2:15). This cannot mean salvation from sin and God's everlasting wrath. In this context Paul joins salvation to childbearing. He must have in view a deliverance from some other extremity. In fact he is referring to the circumstantial calamities which attend a woman's life. In the passage Paul gives a solution. His views are not simply a parroting of the social philosophy current in his own age. Under divine inspiration he wrote not a private opinion but the very Word of God. CREATION AND FALL "Women's rights" proponents become livid when God's directives to women are read to them from this passage: "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, she must be silent" (1 Timothy 2:11-12). "That is the very cause of woman's distress", they tell us. "She has been subject to man. We must go directly to the source of grief. Liberate woman from man's dominance". The Apostle Paul vigorously disagrees. Woman's problem is not her social position of subordination to man. That is not her trouble. The Apostle Paul first notes the reasons why full submission to man is expected of woman:

"For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:13). Man existed before woman. Woman was taken out of man. This priority of man to woman and the derivation of woman from man were not incidental details of creation. They were intended to establish human social order. Woman was made for the man [Genesis 2:18]. She was formed to fill the role of a help suited to the man. In Paradise, Eve found perfect happiness for a time in a role which was supportive of man in a social position which was subject to him. A woman's griefs, therefore, are not the consequence of her social rank but a direct result of the fall. The experience of being subject to a sin-filled husband is not identical to submission under innocent Adam. It is sin in the man which makes him thoughtless of woman and abusive toward her. Sin in woman spawns discontent with even legitimate and ideal treatment in her true role. Satan was the serpent who brought every sting of displeasure to the woman. The Apostle Paul then reminds women of the history of the Fall: And gives the reason for the curse which they feel so keenly. "And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (1 Timothy 2:14). Scripture is not here heaping all of the blame of this world's suffering and confusion on woman. If anything, man is more directly incriminated. But Paul does expect woman to understand her share of the responsibility in the Fall which has ever since plagued her.

Adam was not deceived. This does not clear man of all responsibility in the tragedies which have haunted the human race. Adam walked into the evil rebellion against God with his eyes wide open. He took the fruit from Eve with no false illusions. His was the deeper sin. He transgressed fully knowing what he was about. But Eve was duped by Satan. She had "the wool pulled over her eyes". There is generally in the female constitution a confiding simplicity (which can become gullibility). This characteristic perfectly suits her to the role of help-for-man just as God had designed. There is in this constitutional difference of woman from man a beauty which defines femininity and is attractive to men. The Apostle Paul's chief reason for directing woman's attention to her deception in the Fall was not to "rub it in". It was to reinforce the necessity of her being subject to man. The Fall with all of its consequences harmful to woman did not arise from her being subject to man. The exact opposite is the case! When she abandoned her role of submission to Adam, and decided to take matters into her own hands, the Fall came! Eve determined to lead man rather than follow. She became a temptress instead of a help. Stepping out of her God-given place and rebelling against the divinely instituted social order, she brought the world - and womanhood - to ruin. She is not a poor innocent victim of resulting desolations. Woman under the influence of Satan is the perpetrator of them all. Her restless defiance of man's authority is at the crux of human calamity! This world's opinion is that there should be no distinction between man and woman in the social order. If only woman were emancipated from man's rule, her suffering would cease! Such an analysis indicts God's creation order and his post-garden directives as the culprits in woman's distress. God's Word cites the precise opposite as the cause of her trouble. This is no mere academic matter. Woman's liberation from oppression and suffering depends upon finding measures which correct the root of the malady. If the disease is fed instead of combated, her last end will be doubly wretched. THE HOPE OF SALVATION The Apostle Paul does not abandon woman with an indication that her misery is self-inflicted. A promise is given from the Most High: "But women will be saved" (1 Timothy 2:15). This is not a text on remission of sins but deliverance out of sin-related suffering and oppression. Woman will triumph over and emerge from the misery and curse under which she is held by forces of evil. But how are women saved? By their joining militant organisations which demand rights equal to man's? By proving that women can "make it"

in the world of business, politics, sports, and even the pastorate? By escaping from home where she has been buried in obscurity and where so many evils have been perpetrated by abusive husbands? Never! That approach only institutionalises her rebellion against her God-given place. Her pathway to real salvation was appointed by the Almighty. It is motherhood. "She shall be saved through childbirth" (1 Timothy 2:15). The first gospel promise was given before any curse was pronounced on man or woman. And the promise wonderfully involved the means of motherhood. "I will put enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" [Genesis 3:5]. God our Maker would not allow the human race to perish. Now that Adam and Eve had sinned and Paradise was shattered, the only hope lay in God himself. "I will" is the message of grace. One means was mentioned as the instrumental course of salvation from the devil's clutches. It was childbearing! Deliverance comes, not through man's vocational efforts in the cultural mandate, but through woman's childbearing. How wrong women are when they imagine that their hope lies in imitating men's careers. As they abandon motherhood for the office and factory, they despise God's carefully designed means of breaking the devil's yoke and fleeing the miseries he has inflicted.

It is to woman, not man, that God assigned this high calling. But her hope is not identified with her political savvy, her business acumen, or her social activism. It is in childbearing! Women today are so eager to abandon "mere" motherhood to duplicate male labours. How tragic, when the hope God has given woman and for all of our race is tied to childbearing! Of course the central attention of Genesis 3:15 is upon one seed of the woman, Jesus Christ. He who was born of the Jewess, Mary, delivered the decisive death blow to the head of the serpent on Calvary. He purchased salvation for all who are redeemed.

Yet, even before Christ came, a godly seed of the woman was set against Satanic forces. Childbearing prepared the way of the Lord. When about to raise up mighty leaders, Jehovah God, often sought out peculiarly able women. Jochebed, the mother of Moses; Hannah, mother of Samuel; Manoah's wife, mother of Samson, are leading examples. Through their childbearing the course of history was wonderfully altered. Since Christ has come, a godly seed carries the gospel to all the earth to gather God's elect and hasten Christ's return. Raising a godly seed is still of the profoundest importance to the cause of God in the earth.

Adam saw at once that the most profound work of the ages - God's work of grace - is directly related to motherhood. Appreciating God's purpose, "Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living" [Genesis 3:20]. Today, through contraceptives and abortions, women can avoid the "nuisance" of having children. Using these means, they are free to seek what they think are higher and more noble callings. What relief to the forces of darkness! Nothing crushes the cause of sin like godly childbearing.

TRUE MOTHERHOOD

It is obvious that more is intended by "childbearing" than the physical process of conceiving, carrying a child in the womb, and bringing him into the world, but mothering that person is assumed. More is expressly stated by Paul. "Women will be saved through childbirth, if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety" [1 Timothy 2:15]. Conscientious motherhood cannot follow the selfish pattern of having a child only to send him off as soon as possible to a

day-care centre. Of course, at times this is essential for survival! But at other times it is produced by a selfish interest in one's own career or in acquiring more wealth. Women want to get on to more exciting things. This low view of a mother's task is damaging the church.

Many are saved out of homes in which parents did not care for their children. These have lived useful lives for the Lord. But most of the greatest servants of God who have dealt the mightiest blows to Satan's kingdom were raised in stable homes. It is almost always a mother who makes it stable. Today nothing can replace the care and training of a faithful mother. Those who lack this blessing in their childhood carry a burden throughout life. Emotional scars and character flaws from mother's neglect are handicaps in serving the Lord. Even grace at conversion does not eliminate these liabilities. Our world sets its wares before women: Look at the money you can make! A pay-cheque is an immediate and tangible reward for labour. Look at the influence and respect you can command in a successful career! There is fun and excitement in the work world - the social stimulation of interesting people, the excitement of travel, the glamour of attention from others, the intellectual challenges, and so on. But in reality these often prove to be the baubles of Vanity Fair.

God has assigned a nobler work to woman than merely to parallel man's activities. There is no more pitiful person in the world than the woman who "has it all together" in business but whose family has fallen apart. She is the epitome of energy, organisation, talent, and efficiency - only her children have not turned out well.

Loneliness and non-recognition attend motherhood for a time. But that is the perspective of this world only. How does the Judge compare the socialite, the dynamic business "success" in comparison with the mother who is selflessly training children with an eye of faith fixed on a spiritual kingdom and her hope firmly fixed upon the Lord? Some will think this is an emotional appeal to put women down once again. Rather, it is a conviction that many women have abandoned their highest dignity and hope for lesser things.

What is involved in motherhood? After birth pangs bring children into this world, there come years of life pangs. It is a mother's task and privilege to oversee the forging of a personality in her sons and daughters. For this she must set a tone in the home which builds strong character. Hers it is to take great Christian principles and practically apply them in every-day affairs - doing it simply and naturally. It is her responsibility to analyse each child mentally, physically, socially, spiritually. Talents are to be developed, virtues must be instilled, faults are to be patiently corrected, young sinners are to be evangelised. She is building men and women for God. Results may not be visible until she has laboured for fifteen or twenty years. Even when her task ends the true measure of her work awaits the full maturity of her children. Moses would be much more than an Egyptian rebel and an obscure shepherd, but Jochebed would not live to observe the consequences of her motherhood. A HIGH CALLING

If a godly mother is to succeed at this task, she must be a woman filled with faith, love and holiness. These must not be occasional, but consistent qualities of life [1 Timothy 2:15]. It is no wonder that women spurn this task, preferring the halls of government, the materialistic empire or the busy office. There is no more demanding work in all the world, no more awe-inspiring job-description than raising a godly seed! It will challenge all the genius, talent, and grace that any human being could possess. Should women be educated? Assuredly the moral educators,

psychologists, spiritual shepherds, and advisers of future generations must be well-trained!

Woman's hope, the church's hope, the world's hope is joined to childbearing with continuance in faith, love and holiness. Young women, here is a life-long calling! It is the highest any woman can enter. There is much more to it than the worldly images. Take it seriously and God will bless the generation to come.

Work at it spiritually and the Lord will give you the liberation you desire. Some day the glamour girls who leave their children in a nursery will reap their reward. They will sit in their plush houses holding fat bank accounts and will look with envy at a godly seed. This is why Proverbs 10:1 tells those who are children that "A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother". Immorality is a public shame to the mother of one who breaks God's law. Her whole life was devoted to raising her son and daughter. Father has a career as well as a home. But all of mother's eggs have been placed in one basket. Motherhood could not be a part-time hobby. If you become a fool, you will break your mother's heart. Godly women do not live for kisses and nice little gifts, but to see their children walking with the Lord in righteousness. All of a godly woman's hopes in this world are bound up with the children of her motherhood.

SIGNS OF HOPE

One of the most encouraging signs in our age is an increasing number of young women who aspire to being godly. They are serious about motherhood. They have ordered their priorities biblically and already demonstrate the traits of faith, love and holiness. But they will come under fierce attacks. "Feminist" literature will belittle them as doing nothing significant. As sacrifices mount, temptations will increase to fall in with the world's system.

Young men, to follow the Lord fully your wife will need to be reminded that you share her vision for pleasing God through rearing a family. You must let her know that you admire her labours in motherhood. And churches must combat the deluge of worldly propaganda. They must continually hold out the biblical ideal of women's service to God and humanity in childbirth, and continuance in faith, love, and holiness. In due time faithful mothers will have the seal of God blessing on their labours.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net