

The Joy of Holy Households

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that true and abiding joy in Christian households flows from salvation, faith, and the presence of God, transforming families into sources of blessing and spiritual light.

Scripture: Psalm 118:15-16, Psalm 103:3, Isaiah 54:13, Genesis 12:2-3, John 1:9

Topics: "Christian Joy", "Family Salvation", "Faith and Grace"

Description

In "The Joy of Holy Households," C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound spiritual joy that salvation brings to Christian families. He highlights how this joy transforms households into places of peace, blessing, and influence, encouraging believers to shine their light beyond their homes. Spurgeon passionately calls for faithfulness in one's family and community, emphasizing that true happiness is found in God's grace rather than worldly circumstances.

Transcript

"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." Psalm 118:15,16.

A BELIEVER in Christ is not long without finding joy. He is in the land which flows with milk and honey and he will get a sip of sweetness very soon. Like Nicodemus, he comes to Jesus in the dark, but the sun is rising. When he casts himself at the foot of the Cross, his dawning has begun and, before long, he will walk in the Light of God—being justified by faith, he will have peace with God. And not only so, for he also learns to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also he has received the Atonement. This joy is in him and abounds, so that he belongs to a happy people. It is true that all Believers are not equally happy, but they have, each one of them, a right to be exceedingly glad. Some float upon a flood-tide of joy, while others drift upon the ebb, but they are all in the same stream and it is bearing them on to the ocean of perfect happiness. All who trust in Christ as they ought to do, will find a measure of this joy springing up within them, keeping company with the new life which the Holy Spirit has created. Ours is peace which passes all understanding and joy unspeakable!

This joy is contagious—it spreads like a sweet perfume. The happy man makes others happy. The man who is full of the blessedness of God overflows for others. Music is not alone for him who makes it, but for all who have ears. The happy man's influence is first felt at home—he goes home to his own family a converted man and they soon perceive the change. He tells them of what the Lord has done, but even if he did not do so, they would soon discover by his gentleness, his love, his truth, his holiness, that

something remarkable had happened to him! His actions, his words, his temper, his spirit are singularly altered and those around him can see it! He is glad and, before long, they are glad, too. When the man is better, everybody who belongs to him is the better for his improvement. When the man's own heart rejoices, he distributes joy, even as Christ's disciples when they received bread and fish from the hands of their Lord, divided them among the multitude, "and they did all eat, and were filled." I trust that many of you, dear Friends, who are my associates in the Church of God, feel this to be true in your own cases, as I am sure I must confess it to be true in mine. To the glory of God's Grace I must give the testimony. Our own God of blessing has blessed our families.

Certain Believers, however, spread joy through a large number of families—not only those to which they belong according to the flesh, but among all the families of Zion they scatter comfort! David, for instance, when he went forth and smote the enemies of his nation, caused great rejoicing in all the tabernacles of Israel. All the chosen people shared in what the champion of the Lord had done. When any man is blessed of God so that he can teach the Word, and preach it with power, he sheds joy over all the families with which he comes in contact. Aspire, dear Brothers, to shine widely, as a candle set upon a candlestick gives light to all that are in the house! First, see to it that you are truly saved, yourselves, then cry to the Lord for your own kin and labor for them till they are all brought to the Redeemer's feet!

And then let your light shine throughout the neighborhoods wherein you dwell. It is a poor lamp which cannot be seen outside its own glass. Shine down that street from which so few ever go up to the House of God! Shine in that factory where the mass of the workers sit in darkness! Shine in that bank where few of the clerks are walking in the Light of God! Pray that you may be not merely night-lights to comfort some one sick person, but like those new gas lamps which are placed at the crossroads and make a grand illumination all round! It may be that the Lord has placed you in a trying position on purpose that you may be of more service than you could have been under more comfortable circumstances. We ought to be happy to be where we can make others happy. It should be our will to do the Lord's will by being useful to our fellow men. We must not value our position according to the ease it brings to us, or the respectability with which it surrounds us, but by the opportunities which it affords for overcoming evil and promoting good.

I think that many Christian people would be wise to hesitate before they move from the place where they now are, even though it would be very agreeable to them to live in a more reputable locality. I say that they might hesitate to relocate because if they were gone, the very Light of God in the place would be quenched and the hope of many poor sinners would be removed. Salt can never do so much good in a box as it can effect upon meat which otherwise would corrupt. A pilot on shore may be very clever, but he cannot be useful unless he goes to sea. A river is a blessing in England, but it is beyond measure prized in Egypt or the Sudan. The Scriptures speak of "rivers of water in a dry place." Let us pray that we may be such men and women that we may bless our own households and then may be so located in Providence that, to the utmost of our capacity, we may be channels of blessing to an ever-widening circle of which we are the centers. Oh, for a share in the benediction which fell on Abraham, "In blessing I will bless you." And again, "I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing." And yet again, "And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

We will now press more closely to the text and we notice in it, first, that there is joy in the families of the righteous. The text says so and experience and observation confirm it. And secondly, this joy should be expressed. 'The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.' Then, thirdly, this joy concerns what the Lord has done. "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the

Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

I. First, there is JOY IN THE FAMILIES OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

Thank God that is divinely true. Once, Paradise was man's home and now, to the good man, his home is Paradise. I may say that, to some extent, this is in proportion to the salvation that is found in the family. If one or two persons are converted out of a large family, it is a thing for which to praise God, that He takes "one of a city and two of a family," to bring them to Zion. Yet the joy will be rather a soft melody than an exulting harmony. If the wife shall be converted as well as the husband, what a comfort it is to them both! Now will two parts of the music be taken up and the hymn will be more sweetly sung. If two horses in a chariot pull together, how well it rolls along, but if one backs and the other pulls, there will be discomfort, if not mischief. I have seen two oxen in a yoke and I have marked how the true yoke-fellows seek to accommodate each other, so as to lie down together, rise together and move in step together. Where it is not so, the pain and inconvenience make it hard plowing.

If the husband and the wife are both converted, a larger joy is yet within their reach, for they will begin to pray for their children. Those who are born to them will be their anxious care till they are also born unto God. They will have great delight when one of their dear ones says, "I have given my heart to Christ," and is able to express his faith in Jesus and to give a reason for the hope that is in him. It will further fill their cup of pleasure when another comes, saying, "I would be numbered with Christ's flock." Many among us can say, "All my children are children of God—they go with me from my table to the Lord's Table. I have a church in my house and all my household are in the Church." Here is a picture, a pattern, a paragon, a paradise! We may say what a minister of Christ once said of his spiritual children, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the Truth of God." It is better, dear father, dear mother, that your boys and girls should be heirs of God than that you should be able to make them heirs of a vast estate! It is better that they should be good than great. Better that they should be gracious than famous.

If they are married to Christ, you need not fret about finding them husbands—and if they serve the Lord, you need not worry about their businesses. While you live, they will be your comfort, and when you die, you will leave them in better hands than your own! Their future is well secured, since it is written, "Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth." I think it is generally true that the joy in a family is very much in proportion to the Grace which is in its members. Circumstances and peculiar trials may cause exceptions to the rule, but in the main, it will hold good. Seek, then, the salvation of the whole of your household!

Here it would be a sad omission if I did not say that it is a greater joy when the saved circle includes not only the parents and the children, but the servants, also. A gracious, faithful servant is a great comfort. And to be surrounded by those who fear the Lord is one of the choicest blessings of this mortal life. We ought not to be content, so long as a single domestic in our house is unconverted. The nurse-maid, the girl who comes in for part of the day, the boot-cleaner and all who are employed occasionally for extra work should be thought of by the mistress and the fellow servants. We should pray that all who set their foot over our threshold may have a name and a place in the house of our God. Why should it not be? May we not often chide ourselves that we have been forgetful of those who minister to our comfort? Oh, that all who serve us may serve God! May all who wait at our table, eat bread in the Kingdom of our Father! And may all who dwell under our roof have a place in the many mansions above!

Now we advance a step and remark that the joy which is here alluded to, is mainly spiritual. To fear God tends to make a man happy in every way—mentally, physically, socially, as well as spiritually. It is light to the eyes, music to the ears and honey to the mouth. It is universally a sweetener. The ordinary work of life runs easily when the wheels are oiled with Divine Grace. It should be an ambition that our house should be a temple, our meals sacraments, our garments vestments, ourselves priests unto God and our whole life a sacrifice to His praise. There are households where the Lord Jesus is the Master both of master and servants—and the Holy Spirit is the presiding Spirit in the whole economy of the house. Difficulties that disturb others never occur there, for love prevents them. All are gracious. All are anxious to be good, to do good and to get good. Consequently, jars and strifes are unknown. Little differences are never allowed to grow into disputes. Envy, bickering, clamor and evil speaking are put away. Though these spring up even among those who are of the same kin, yet gracious hearts will not tolerate their existence. Each pays due consideration to each—proper places are kept according to New Testament rule and the result is that the Angel of the Lord is in the house, the devil sees the mark upon the door and dares not enter—

"Blessed is the man that fear

And delights in the Lord!

Wealth, the wealth which truly cheer,

God shall give him for reward.

And his children,

Shall be blest around his board." Yes, the chief joy in the tabernacles of the righteous is a spiritual one! A joy of the father because he is saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. A joy of the mother because she, too, has had her heart opened, like Lydia, to hear and to receive the Word. A joy of the dear children as they offer their little prayers and as they talk of Jesus, whom their soul loves. I do not know that I ever have a greater joy than when, sometimes, I have to receive a whole family into the Church! Five came to see me at one time, from one house—quite a company of boys and girls. It is delightful to see our beloved offspring early in life giving their hearts to the Lord! Happy mothers, happy fathers, happy brothers, happy sisters where the Lord works so graciously! May you long continue to praise and bless His name for this singular blessing, if you are partakers in it! I know none of my father's family, or of my own, who are unsaved and, therefore, I can lead you in the song!

This kind of joy, while it is spiritual, is not dependent upon external circumstances. It hangs not on wealth or honor. The joy of the Lord will be found in the palace of a prince, if the Grace of God is there, but far more often it flourishes in humble cottages and lowly rooms where Christian men are dwelling who toil hard for a livelihood and often feel the pinch of poverty. They said of old that philosophers could be merry without music and I am sure that it is still truer of Christians that they can be happy in the Lord when temporal circumstances are against them. Our bells need no silken ropes to set them ringing, neither must they be hung in lofty towers! If our joy depended upon heaping together gold and silver, or upon the health and strength of all the members of our family, or upon our rank and pedigree, we might go to our beds weeping and awake in the morning blinded with tears. But as our joy springs from another well and the precious drops of it distil from a purer fountain, whose streams flow both in summer and winter, we can bless God for a constancy of satisfaction! Steady is that flame of joy which burns in the tabernacles of the righteous, for it is fed with holy oil. God grant that we may never dim its luster by family sins towards God, or by negligence in our duties to one another—but may the sacred lamp of holy joy continually shed its

radiance upon us from generation to generation! May it be said of our habitation, "Jehovah Shammah"—"the Lord is there."

I heard of a wealthy man who had a large number of houses in various places. He owned a fine estate in the country, surrounding a magnificent mansion. He kept up an establishment at the West-End, a retreat by the seaside and a shooting-box in the Highlands—and he would often travel on the Continent. He wandered from house to house and was never known to stop more than a few weeks in any one residence. He told a friend that he was trying to find peace of mind in some one or other of his houses. What a vain quest! He might as soon have found the philosopher's stone, or the universal solvent! I have known many persons who had only one room and that but poorly furnished, yet they found peace of mind there because they carried it about with them!

Happy is the man who wears the emerald of peace upon his bosom, even though it is not set in gold. Blessed are they whose peace is like a river, having a source far away in the hills and a stream clear as crystal, continuous, ever-deepening, ever-widening, moving silently onward toward the ocean of boundless happiness! Yes, it is not where we are, but what we are. And it is not what we have, but where we have it—whether we have it in ourselves or in our God—that proves whether we are truly blessed. Peace is the best possession for an individual, the richest estate for a family and the fairest legacy for descendants. Where the salvation of our Lord Jesus comes, peace and joy are sure attendants! Therefore is it said in our text that "the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous." Made righteous in character, we may more than ever feel the temporary nature of our earthly sojourn and so may dwell rather in tabernacles than in mansions. But we are honored by the companionship of these two heavenly guests—salvation and joy—and, therefore, we envy no Caesar on the Palatine Mount, no monarch in his palace of marble!

Christian joy, whether in the individual or the family, can be abundantly justified. Believers can always give a reason for the joy which is in them. As Christian households, why should we not be glad in the Lord? If God is pleased with us, we may well be pleased with Him. If the Lord rejoices over us, ought we not to rejoice in that fact? God Himself calls us a happy people—let us not live as if we would falsify His Word. See, my Brothers and Sisters, whatever your temporal troubles may be, all things are working together for your good—may you not, therefore, rejoice evermore? Though every drug that is put into the mixture may be bitter, yet the whole potion is salutary. Though each event may seem to be against you, yet the whole course of Providence is for you in a Divinely wise and gracious manner. Nothing occurs in your family history, whether of birth or death, of coming or departure, of loss or of gain, of joy or of sorrow, of sickness or of health, but what shall produce, in the end, the highest good! Judge not each wheel, but watch the outcome of the whole machinery. To me, it is a happy thought that not a grain of dust in the March winds, nor a drop of rain in the April showers, is left to chance, but the hand of the Lord directs all! And therefore I am confident that neither in the little nor in the great shall anything really harm the man who dwells under the protection of the Most High.

Beside this, we rejoice in forgiven sin. This is the first blessing of which David sings in the 103rd Psalm and it is the preparation for all the rest. If sin is pardoned, all bitterness is past, for this is the real wormwood and gall of life. Now that Goliath of Gath is smitten in the forehead, the rest of the Philistines are of small account. When sin is gone, the black cloud which threatened an eternal tempest is removed and the sun scatters the rest of the clouds as it disperses the morning mist. Even death has lost its dread when sin is gone—it is a bee without a sting and we look to find honey near it! If it comes into the house and takes away our dear ones, they are with Christ, which is far better! And when it bears us away, our

death will be gain, for, "so shall we ever be with the Lord." As the whole of life receives another color when sin is pardoned, so does Death, itself, look otherwise to the Believer in Jesus! That solemn business is so altered that we may even—

"Long for evening to undress, That we may rest with God."

What is there on earth to trouble you who fear God? "Why," you say, "we could tell you of a thousand trials!" Yes, but when you had done, I would tell you that there was no ground for being troubled about any one of them, for it is written, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." "No good thing will he withheld from them that walk uprightly." And again, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or to come; all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." "They are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them." Therefore, let us take care that we are not as the Egyptians when they shivered in the darkness which might be felt, but rather as the people were in the days of Solomon, when they ate and drank and made merry, and peace was without end.

I would ask any of you young people who are newly-married and just starting in life, how can you expect happiness unless you seek it in God? You have given your hearts to one another—oh, that you had given your hearts to Christ as well—for then you would be joined in One from whom you can never be separated! If you are one in Christ, you will have surer grounds of union than natural affection can afford. There will be a brief separation of the body when one of you is taken Home, but you will meet again and dwell forever in the same Heaven. Unions in the Lord are unions which have the blessing of the Lord. See to it that you begin as you mean to go on, namely, with that blessing which makes rich and brings no sorrow with it. If your home is to be happy, if the children that God may give you are to be your comfort and your delight, first let your own souls be right with God. If the Lord is the God of the parents, he will be the God of their seed. The God of Abraham will be the God of Isaac and He will be the God of Jacob, and He will be the God of Joseph, for He keeps His faithfulness from generation to generation of them that love Him. He does not cast off His people, nor their children, either. If you are an Ishmael, what will your children be? If you are far from God, how can you hope that your posterity will be near to Him?

To return to my first point, the people of God are a happy people and their families are happy families. If I have any Christian person here who complains, "I am not happy at home," I would like to inquire, "Is that your own fault, dear Friend?" No, do not be angry, I am bound to ask the question, for I often find that those who complain of unhappiness in their own homes are the main cause of that unhappiness! Most creatures see according to their nature and men often get into their bosoms what they measure out to others. When I meet a man who cries, "There is no love in the Church," you may turn that expression into plain English and read it thus, "There is no love in me." When a person says, "Everybody at my home is wrong except myself," you feel sure that he has kept his eyes open to the faults of others, but has never really seen himself! If you wear colored spectacles, all things around you will be colored.

"Alas," cries another, "I am not happy, though I long to be so." Do you know, dear Friend, the secret of obtaining happiness? The answer is very simple—do not attempt to make yourself happy, but endeavor to make others so. Be cheerful and cheer those about you. I bless God that I never fell into the delusion that there is virtue in a rueful countenance. Some may think it well to be "miserable sinners," but surely it is better to be happy saints! Carry sunshine about with you in all ill-weather. Do not think that in godliness, drive will be equal to draw. A frown may benefit a few, a smile will influence more. A famous French statesman had such a dreadful countenance that a boy once asked him whether his face did not hurt him.

Surely some very "proper" people might be asked the same question, for they habitually wear such gloom about them that one would think that all was night within! Let it not be so with us, but let the light of the love of God be round about our path causing flowers of cheerfulness to spring up on every side! There are enough weeping willows by all our streams—I would they were full of water-lilies. More Grace would enable us to glory more in the Lord and rejoice with more constant joy. So much for our first witness—there is joy in the families of the righteous.

II. Secondly, THIS JOY SHOULD BE EXPRESSED—"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous."

We should put a tongue in our joys and let them speak! The voice should be heard daily, from morn till eve, and till the silence of sleep steals over all. But it should never fail to sound forth in the daily gatherings for family prayer. It should be a happy occasion when we meet to read the Word of God and to pray together. It is well if we can also sing at such times. Matthew Henry says, concerning family prayer, "They that pray do well. They that pray and read the Scriptures do better. They that pray, read the Scriptures and sing a hymn, do best of all." Herein he was wise and gracious as usual. I wish that his words received more attention. If you cannot compass the last of the three good things, mix the praise with your prayer by making it more full of joy and thankfulness than is usual. Never let the domestic devotion degenerate into a dull formality, but throw a hearty living delight into it, so that there shall be joy in drawing near unto the Lord and not a weariness. Where there is no family prayer, we cannot expect the children to grow up in the fear of the Lord—neither can the household look for happiness.

Perhaps some of you have not begun family prayer, for you have only lately been converted. Commence it at once, if possible. Let not this day end without an attempt at it. But I hear a man say, "I never did pray aloud." Then begin at once, my Brother. "But I am afraid." Are you afraid of your wife? That assuredly is a great pity—I am very sorry for your manhood, for she is the last woman of whom you should be afraid! "Oh, but I should break down!" That might be no great calamity—a break-down prayer is often the best form of supplication. May not this objection arise from pride? You do not like to pray before your family unless you can do it well and so receive their approbation. Shake off this spirit and think only of God, to whom you are to speak! Language will follow desire and before long you will have to be more afraid of your fluency than of your brevity. Only break the ice! Pray the Lord Jesus to cast out the dumb spirit and He will set you free from its power. If the husband will not lead the devotion, let the wife do it, but let no day pass without family prayer—a house without it is without a roof—a day without it is without a blessing!

Do you say to me, "Alas, dear Sir, my husband is not converted"? Then, my dear Sister, endeavor to have prayer with the children and pray, yourself. I remember, when my father was absent preaching the Gospel, my mother always filled his place at the family altar, and in my own family, if I have been absent, and my dear wife has been ill, my sons, while yet boys, would not hesitate to read the Scriptures and pray. We could not have a house without prayer—that would be heathenish or atheistic!

There will be frequent occasions for holy joy in all Christian families and these ought always to be used right heartily. Holy joy breeds no ill, however much we have of it. You can easily eat too much honey, but you can never enjoy too much delight in God. Birthdays and anniversaries of all sorts, with family meetings of various kinds, should find us setting life to music right heartily. Moreover, it would be well if our houses more generally resounded with song. It drives dull care away, it wards off evil thoughts, it tends to a general exultation, for the members of a household to be accustomed individually and collectively to sing. Of course, there must be common sense in this as in all other things, but as worldlings are able to sing

songs, we might, with no more difficulty, sing Psalms. I have known some very happy people who were always humming Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. I knew a servant who would sing when washing and she said it made the work grow lighter. It is a capital thing to sing when you are at work. Keep on "tooting" a little, if you cannot sing—that is a word I got from an old Primitive Methodist. I used to meet him in the morning. He was toot— toot—toot—tooting as he went along the road. When he was at work in the field, it was just the same. I asked him what made him always sing. He replied, "Well, I don't call it singing, it is only tooting—but it is singing to me, it is singing in my heart. I sing in this fashion because I feel so happy in the Lord. God has saved me and put me on the road to Heaven, why should I not sing?" What a noise we sometimes hear from the wicked when they are serving their god! They make night hideous with their songs, and shouts, and blasphemies! Then why should not we make a joyful noise unto the Lord our God? I recommend you to try, in your own houses, to literally Praise the Lord with your voices in holy song.

If you really cannot sing at all, yet the voice of rejoicing and salvation may be in your tabernacles by a constant cheerfulness, bearing up under rain and poverty, losses and crosses. Do not be cast down, beloved child of God, or, if you are, chide yourself about it and say, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance." Joy is the normal condition of a Christian. When he is what he should be, his heart rejoices in the Lord. Does not the Apostolic command run thus, "Rejoice in the Lord always"? If you ever get outside that word, "always," then you may leave off rejoicing—but that you cannot do! Therefore obey Paul's injunction, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." Heap the joys, one on top of the other— joy and rejoice—and then rejoice yet again!—

"Why should the children of a King Go mourning all their days?"

Why should not the children of the King of Kings go rejoicing all their days and express their joy so that others shall know of it, too?

Ah, dear Friends, if we were to go into some people's houses where God is not known, we would hear a very different sound from the voice of rejoicing and salvation! There is the drunk's horrible voice that grates upon the ear of her whom he promised to love and cherish, but whose life he makes unutterably miserable, while even the little children run upstairs to get out of the drinking father's way! It is an awful thing when a house is like that and there is many a house of that kind. And in other places, where there is no drunkenness, there is many a man without the fear of God who comes in and blusters and bullies as if everybody had to be his slave. There is a woman, perhaps, who is a careless and dirty, making the home wretched through her gossip and idleness—and driving all idea of happiness far away. These things ought not to be and they must not be. God grant that your house may not be like that, but may whoever comes into your house be compelled to know that God is there—and to know it mainly by the fact that you are a happy, joyful, cheerful, thankful

Christian, speaking well of God's name and not ashamed in any company to avow that you are a soldier of the Cross, a follower of the Lamb! God give you more and more of this spirit in all your households! The whole Church shall be blessed when every family is thus made happy in the Lord and in His great salvation.

III. I close by briefly noticing that this joy of holy households IS A JOY CONCERNING WHAT THE LORD HAS

DONE.

You see, dear Friends, that I have a text which is too large to be handled in one sermon, so we must have the remainder another day. But I must ask you to notice the song the holy households sing. It is this—"The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." It is a threefold strain—we and our children have learned to bless the Triune God. "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end! Amen."

How we should joy in God, in our families, when we think of all that He has done in conquering sin and Satan, death and Hell! Christ has led captivity captive. Therefore let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. In that great victory of His upon the Cross, truly the right hand of the Lord was exalted, the right hand of Jehovah-Jesus did valiantly on our behalf—and for that we ought to forever be glad and to praise His name!

Then let us think of what the Lord has done for each one of us individually. We were captives under the dominion of sin and Satan, but He brought us out with a strong hand and with a stretched-out arm, even as He delivered Israel from the Egyptians. Then our sins pursued us and we were ready to despair—but the Lord again worked our deliverance and plucked us from the hands of our mighty foes and set us gloriously at liberty! Truly, "the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

Since then, the Lord has helped us in Providence and delivered us from fierce temptations and made us to stand steadfastly when the adversary has thrust at us that we might fall. "The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." As I look back upon my own life, I never know where to begin in praising God and, when I begin, I am sure I do not know where to leave off. "O my Soul, you have trodden down strength!" In your case, also, dear Friend, the right hand of the Lord has been exalted in giving you strength in the midst of weakness and helping you in spite of your many falls and failures. Can not you, each one, in your separate sphere see something that the right hand of the Lord is doing for you? Do you not, therefore, think that your families ought to ring with joyous songs of thanksgiving?

When the work of the Lord is prospering, when you go home from a Church meeting after many have confessed their faith in Christ. When you see the pool of Baptism stirred by many who have come to be symbolically buried with Christ. When you see the Church breaking out on the right hand and on the left, new mission stations and Sunday schools being opened, and more workers busy for the Master, should not your hearts dance for joy as you sing, "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly"?

And when you see great sinners converted, when the drunk leaves his cups, when the swearer washes out his filthy mouth and sings the praises of God. When a hardened, irreligious, skeptical man bows like a child at Jesus' feet, should not our families, as well as ourselves, be made acquainted with it, and should it not be a subject for joy at the family altar? I am sure that it should be! And when you hear the missionaries reporting their success. When the heathen turn to the Lord and the nations begin to receive the Light of Christ, should we not, then, have a high day of jubilee and say, "This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"? I want our families to participate more and more in the joy of the great family of God till our little families melt into the one great family in Heaven and earth, till our separate tribes become part of the one great Israel of God, till we and all our kith and kin are one body in Christ and praise that Lord who is our glorious Head!

Ah, dear Friends, but we must each one begin by exercising personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Some who are here do not yet know the Lord. You cannot make other people happy while you are, yourself, without the true secret of happiness! Yet you wish to be a fountain of blessedness to others, do you not? You do not desire to do them harm, do you? Yet you good moral people who do not yield your hearts to God do a great deal of mischief if your conduct leads other people to say, "It is quite enough to be moral and upright—there is no need for us to go to Christ, to confess our sins and to receive from Him a new heart and a right spirit." You make them talk thus by setting them such an evil example!

As for you who go in and out of the House of Prayer by the year together and scarcely ask a blessing upon your meals, much less call your children to your knee to tell them about Christ, remember that you will have to meet those children at the Day of Judgment. What will they say to you parents if you neglect their souls? You work very hard, perhaps, to earn their daily bread and to put clothes on their backs, and you love them very much, but that is a poor love which loves only the body and does not love the real child, the soul that is within! If, in the middle of the night, someone woke you up and said, "Your Johnny is not at home," there would be a stir in the house pretty quickly! There would be no sleep for you if little Johnny was out in the cold. I wish that I could wake up some of you parents who are saved, but who have children who are not converted. Pray that they may be saved before they leave your roof!

The other day I saw a woman who came to join the Church and her great sorrow was that her children were all ungodly and she could not speak to them, now, as once she might have done when they were in her own house. She never sought their salvation, then, and that time was over, for they were men and women grown up and they paid but little respect to a mother's word. I always like to hear what two children told me only a fortnight ago. One said, "I found peace at my mother's knee," and the next one said, "I found peace with God at my mother's knee." A mother's knee is a charming place for a child to find the Savior—let your knees be thus consecrated till your children shall there draw near unto God! Will you not take them individually and pray with them, and speak to them about their souls? If you do, I think that I can venture to promise you that you shall succeed in almost every case!

Whenever I hear of the children of good people turning out badly, if ever I have had an opportunity of searching into the cause, there has generally been a good reason for it. I heard of a minister's sons who were all bad fellows, but when I began to look into the life of the family, I wondered how that minister dared enter the pulpit at all, for his own character was not such as would be likely to lead his children to the Savior! It may not be so in every case, but I believe that where there is family prayer and a happy home, and a holy example, and much earnest supplication with and for the children, Solomon's declaration is still true, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

O dear Friends, may my text come true to all of you! The Lord grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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