

We began last week to consider the apostle's exhortation to parents [and especially fathers]—if you remember we divided the text into two parts—a negative—“and you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath” and a positive—“but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord...”

Within this positive instruction we are first told what to do—“but bring them up” and how—“in the training and admonition of the Lord...”—we are to bring our children up in [or by] the training and admonition of the Lord—thus the apostle first tells us what to do and then how—we are to bring them up [we are to nurture them]—in [or by] the training [discipline] and admonition [instruction] of the Lord...

The word translated “training” means “discipline” and the word “admonition” to “verbal instruction”—thus child rearing or nurturing entails corrective discipline and verbal instruction—how are we to nurture our children but by discipline and instruction...

Thus there are three words within this text—nurturing, discipline, and instruction—don't get confused by the various translations—the 1901 [ASV] has it best—“and, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord...”

It is my intention to consider these separately—this morning—“bring them up [or nurturing]”—this evening—“in the training [or discipline]” and then next week—“and admonition of the Lord [instruction]...”—thus our subject this morning [taken from the words ‘but bring them up’] is—parental nurturing...

- I. Simply explained
- II. Practically applied

I. Simply explained

1. The single Greek word translated—“bring them up”—literally means—“to nurture unto maturity”—it refers to a tender nurturing, cultivation, or caring...
2. It is in contrast to the negative—“fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but nurture them [bring them up]...”
3. Implied in the word is the idea of nurturing unto maturity—of rearing or raising-up—of caring for unto completion...
4. Thus our English translations render it—“bring them up”—that is—nurture them unto completion or maturity...
5. There is to be an intended goal—a finished product—nurturing or child rearing—has a beginning and an end...
6. In the Greek text the verb is active and in the present tense—this simply means—bringing-up children is an active work that takes time...
7. Wayne Mack—“The active voice indicates that children do not automatically grow up to be what God wants them to be...the present tense indicates that this is a task in which parents must be constantly involved...”
8. Thus essential to this word “bring them up”—are the two related concepts of loving and caring—or tender rearing...
9. We could paraphrase the text—“and fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath—but tenderly mature them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord...”
10. This Greek word is only used twice within the NT Scriptures—here in our text and again in Ephesians 5 and v29...
11. Eph.5:28-29—“so husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church...”
12. Our word is found in v29 and translated “nourishes”—Paul couples it with another word meaning “to cherish” or “tenderly care for...”

13. This describes how we natively care for our own body—we nourish and cherish it—we tenderly nurture it unto maturity...
14. This is also how Christ treats the church—He nourishes or nurtures it unto maturity—He cares for it unto completion...
15. V29—“for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church...”
16. That is—He nourishes and cherishes her—He cares for and loves the church—He tenderly and patiently nurtures her unto maturity...
17. He goes behind merely feeding or nourishing her—but He tenderly nurtures her—He cherishes and loves her...
18. This is how we are to treat our children—we are to nurture them—but not merely or primarily their bodies—but their souls...
19. Thus the word means more than merely raising or bringing up—but entails the idea of tender care and loving nurture...
20. While this Greek word is found only twice in our New Testaments—it is found within the Greek translation of the OT...
21. 2Sam.12:1-3—“then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich *man* had exceedingly many flocks and herds. 3 But the poor *man* had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him...”
22. It must be admitted at the outset—that the nurturing within this passage concerns a lamb told in parabolic form...
23. But I want to suggest that within this passage we learn two things are that essential to true parental nurturing...
24. Notice [a] caring—that is—there’s the idea of provision or care, v3—“but the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him...”
25. The word rendered “nourished” in the Greek OT is the same word translated “bring them up” in Ephesians 6:4...
26. It here refers to all that was necessary to grow the lamb—primary to the provision of food and water—he nourished or nurtured the lamb...
27. This is essential to parental nurturing—to care or provide for our children—to grow or nourish them unto maturity...
28. Yet—because our children are both physical and spiritual beings [unlike lambs]—we must nourish [nurture] both body and soul...
29. We are to care for the whole child—we are to nourish them—we are to feed them on the law and on the gospel...
30. Notice [b] loving—“and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him”—it was reared in the context of love...
31. He manifested tangible expressions of love and affection—he did more than merely care for its physical needs—but he loved it as a daughter...
32. Thus the idea of tender and affectionate care is essential to parental nurturing—the expression of tangible and evident love...
33. The mere provision of physical and spiritual needs is not enough—but we must do so with tenderness and love...
34. This militates against the mechanical approach to parenting—the mere provision of needs divorced from tender affection...
35. Thus essential to parental nurturing are two things—care and love—providing for all the needs of the child within a loving and tender context...

II. Practically applied

A. Nurturing is wholistic

1. By this I mean—the nurturing incumbent upon fathers—is a nurturing that concerns the whole of the child...
2. Fathers are to—“bring them up”—that is—bring them up in the totality of their being as image bearers of God...
3. Thus parental nurturing entails the nourishing of the entire child—all that our children are as image bearers of God...
4. Notice [1] we are to nurture them physically—here I mean that parents are to have a concern for the overall physical nourishing and upbringing of their children...
5. What does this entail—well it at least means we teach our children the importance of a healthy diet and physical exercise...
6. They say 2 out of three children are overweight in our country—physical education has been dropped from many public schools...
7. The majority of children in our day—spend the majority of their time eating junk food and playing on the computer...
8. Thus I suggest that within the work of parental nurturing—there is the need to nurture them or bring them up—physically...
9. Notice [2] we are to nurture them socially—here I mean parents are to nurture their children with an eye to their social development...
10. They need to learn how to be polite and friendly—how to show kindness to strangers—and how to behave around others...
11. Brethren—I’m convinced we live in the midst of a generation that has little or no social skills—the ability to mingle sociably with strangers...
12. Notice [3] we are to nurture them spiritually—this of course is the greatest need of our children—and it frightens me—how many parents overlook it...
13. Thus brethren—let me put it as plain as I can—spiritual nurturing is the very heart and soul of parental nurturing...
14. Now I have purposed not to say anything on this point for the simple fact—I intend to talk about it tonight and both services next week...
15. Thus parental nurturing is wholistic—it concerns the whole child—his physical, socially, and spiritual development...
16. Now let me pause and ask you—which one of these would you forgo—their physical, social, or spiritual growth...
17. Yet—they need to be put into their place—they must find a proper proportion as found within the pages of Holy Scripture...
18. Let me illustrate—think of children as canvases with parents as artists—each child needs to be painted into an individual and completed product...
19. But there needs to be a harmony of parts—the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth must be placed in their proper place...
20. But what if we painted the face out of proportion—what if we painted the eyes or ears as large as the face and head...
21. This is how some people raise their children—they may put all of the emphasis upon their physical maturity...
22. Thus their weeks are filled up with all sorts of sports—they have basketball practice on Monday, baseball practice on Tuesday, and football practice on Wednesday...
23. Or else—other parents put too much emphasis upon social rearing—they have this social gathering on Monday, that one on Tuesday, this one on Wednesday....
24. Thus we rear up social butterflies—yet at the expense of the rest—we paint the eyes and ears as large as the face and head...
25. And what do we end up creating—disproportionate children—children whose child rearing failed to be wholistic...
26. Thus while their physical and social nurturing is important—they are but secondary to our primary goal of spiritual maturity...

27. Wayne Mack—“Whether they become successful in business, whether they become good athletes or musicians, whether they are handsome or beautiful, whether they get straight A’s in school are matters of little consequence in comparison with the matter of becoming holy and godly and mature Christians...”

B. Nurturing is domestic

1. By this I mean—nurturing is to take place within the context of the home—the home is to serve as a nursery wherein children are reared or raised up...
2. Our homes are to be safe environments wherein our children are tenderly reared up—by the discipline and admonition of the Lord...
3. MLJ—“There is no more important influence in the life of a child than the influence of the home. The home is the fundamental unit of society, and children are born into a home, into a family. There you have the circle that is to be the chief influence in their lives....”
4. 1Thess.2:7-12—“but we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children. 8 So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. 9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. 10 You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; 11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, 12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory...”
5. Here the apostle helps us to see how parents are to act within the home—he [in a sense] played the part of a mother and father...
6. Because the church is a family—there are similarities between the two—there are parallels between a church and family...
7. Thus within the church at Thessalonica—the apostle played the part both of a tender mother and an admonishing father...
8. Notice v7 and v11—“we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children...as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and changed every one of you, as a father does his own children...”
9. Now I want you to notice a very important principle—[1] both parents are necessary to effectively nurture a child—or put another way—it takes a mother and a father to bring up children...
10. Now brethren—while that statement may sound like commonsense—it is being challenged in our day—as two men or women want to bring up children...
11. Or else—single parents want to bring up children—now I know that at times this is necessary—for no fault or desire of the mother...
12. But it is a distortion of the purpose and plan of God—for He has established homes as consisting of a mother and father...
13. For notice the peculiarity of each parent—mothers are gentle and cherishing—fathers are instructive and extortive...
14. Both are needed if there is to be balanced domestic nurturing—which one would you do without—the gentleness of a mother or the instruction of a father...
15. But fathers I want you to notice—that tenderness is not reserved solely to mothers, v11—“as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children...”
16. Fathers are to exhort, charge, and comfort their children—they are to nurture them by comforting and consoling them...

C. Nurturing is unto maturity

1. By this I mean—parental nurturing or child-rearing has an intended goal or aim—and that goal or aim is Christian maturity...
2. In short—our goal or aim is maturity—we labor to bring up our children that they would be mature Christian men or women...

3. Parental nurturing begins at the child's birth and is normally completed at marriage—when the child [young adult] leaves father and mother and clings to their spouse...
4. Or perhaps another way of putting this is—parental nurturing is unto adulthood—or until our children are full grown...
5. Eph.4:11-14—“and He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting...”
6. Within vv13-14 we have a contrast between “a perfect man [fullgrown or mature man]” and “children”—the church as a whole is to be brought to maturity...
7. We as a church family are to strive for maturity—that every individual person would be brought up to spiritual adulthood...
8. But this passage is better understood not with reference to individual congregations—but to the church as a whole...
9. Thus the maturity referred to in v13 will not be achieved until the Day of Judgment—when Christ returns for His bride...
10. Notice how this maturity is to be achieved, v11—“and He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints...for the edifying of the body...”
11. The exalted Head of the church—has given spiritual fathers to the church for the express purposes of maturing the church...
12. Thus parents are to nurture [raise-up] their children—to be Christian wives and mothers, husbands and fathers...
13. Brethren—this is our goal—this is our divine commission—and this task usually continues until the child marries...
14. This can be illustrated in Heather and Samson—who were nurtured or reared up by their parents to be a Christian man and woman...
15. This process began when they were born and it ended when they were married—Mr. and Mrs. Detwiler labored to present their daughter as a mature Christian woman...
16. A woman prepared to be a wife and mother—likewise, Mr. and Mrs. Dubina labored to present their son as a mature Christian man—prepared to be a husband and father...
17. Does this mean that all parenting ends at marriage—no—but it does mean—that the task of bringing them up is finished [or at least in the general sense]...
18. This can again be illustrated in pastors—who have been given as fathers to bring up and mature the church until the wedding feast...
19. 2Cor.11:1-2—“oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ...”
20. Most of you know Jewish marriage was in two parts—betrothal—which began the marriage—and the wedding feast which consummated the marriage...
21. Christians are wed or betrothed to Christ when they believe—yet this marriage is not consummated until Christ returns...
22. Thus the task of the gospel minister—is to ensure that every Christian is presented to Christ on that day as a chaste virgin...
23. It is the task of elders [within the context of the church] to nurture every Christian—presenting them as mature to Christ at the wedding feast...
24. Thus fathers [who are shepherds or pastors within their homes]—are to labor to bring up each child—to present them chaste and mature on their wedding day...