

Sheltering our Children is God's Mandate for Holiness Part 1

***“3 Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.”
(Psalm 127:3 KJV)***

* Our children are a precious reward from the Lord. He had given them to us, therefore we need to cherish that fact and be responsible toward Him in raising them in the way that God wants us to raise them. * In doing so, then we have to protect them from the dangers of the world and the polluted atmosphere of sin that is so prevalent in the world around them. * For this reason, we as true Christian parents might be accused by the society around us that we are overprotective parents.

* In modern society, it is assumed that the overprotection of children is the worst thing that can be done to the children. * Furthermore, they will say, after all, everyone knows that children must not be sheltered from the real world. Truly now a day's one of the most threatening accusations true Christian parents face is the accusation of being overprotective. * For the society does not like those who do not want their children to be exposed to all the worldly experiences. * Ultimately, if we will not respond to their critics and release our children from our oversight and allow them to do what they want to do then we will be accused of the crime of sheltering them.

Before we deal with the need of sheltering our children let us deal with our tendency to be driven by the fear of man, ***“25 The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.” (Proverbs 29:25 KJV)*** We should not be afraid or intimidated to hear the critics and the accusation of people against us as we shelter our children in order to protect them from the influences of the world around them. Actually every Godly parent will be asked about their Christian attitude in raising their children and will receive from the people of the society the following question: ‘What about socialization?’ When people ask this question, what they are wondering about? Are they worried that our children will not be capable of displaying lifelong servanthood characters for the glory of God? They are not. They are shocked that we are not intimidated at the thought of our children being different and odd from everyone else.

What these examiners want to know is whether or not our children are learning to fit in with their peers. What I mean with their peers are the other children around them. At first glance, this seems a healthy consideration. But what does the Bible call it when God's people fit in with their environment? Paul addressed this directly when he said, ***“1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:1-2 KJV)*** Paul his appeal was that we should not conform to the pattern of this world. We and our children should not conform to the pattern of this world. We and our children should not do things to be similar to those who are in the world.

Too often now a day Christians seems intimidated by the world. They don't want to be noticed as odd with the culture. They want desperately to fit in. But our conformity is not motivated by

servants' hearts but from cowardice, fearfulness and worldliness. Paul wrote, ***“16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16 KJV)*** We should not be ashamed to practice the instructions of God's Word and make them alive in our families and in the life of our Godly children. We should not be ashamed from the accusations of not being socialized.

God made each of us, including our children, to be unique. Furthermore, we are not to minimize, but maximize our distinctiveness from the world around us for the glory of God. We are not to try masking our uniqueness beneath a front wall of timid conformity. We are to shine as Jesus said: ***“16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16 KJV)***

What did Paul meant when he described our non-conformity with the world as holy? The Word holy, literally means ‘set apart’, ‘separated’, and ‘consecrated’. ***“17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (2 Corinthians 6:17-18 KJV)*** God desires for His people to be different from all other people. We need to be completely different from the people of the world around us.

Like Paul, Peter also spoke about God's mandate to holiness, and not to be fashioned to the former lusts, ***“14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:14-16 KJV)*** We cannot be holy and we still conformed at the same time with the world. We have to be separated from the world. God is calling us to be holy and not to conform to the pattern of this world. Peter went further, describing us as ***“9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (1 Peter 2:9 KJV)***

One of the most remarkable examples of those identified as holy were those who took the vow of a Nazirite. God summarizes the intent of the specific Nazirite regulations by saying, ***“8 All the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD.” (Numbers 6:8 KJV)*** During the period of a Nazirite's vow, he was to be different from everyone else. He was supposed to look different; for he could not cut his hair. He was even supposed to have a different diet; for he could consume nothing from a grapevine. His whole lifestyle was supposed to be out of synchrony with the rest of society. The Lord intended for these Nazirites to be holy, eccentrics, living among the rest of the people. He called this being holy! And now He calls us all to be God's special possession and peculiar people.

This applies not only to us but to our children. The world wants them to fit in and become socialized. God wants them to come out from the world and to shine before men. Some Christians oppose this view and argue that our children must be salt and light in the world. They are wrong in the way they believe how to be salt and light is to mingle with the world. But, the opposite is true. Salt loses its savor through leaching, through dissipation. Light is dimmed by proximity to shadow producing obstacles. We will lose our saltiness and our light when we are yoked with the non believers and the people of this world and try to please them.

One of the best examples of this holy peculiarity was the Nazirite, John the Baptist. He dressed peculiarly, peculiarly ate, peculiarly talked, and his whole lifestyle was eccentric. Was John the Baptist well socialized? Not! He was raised in isolation as an only child. He lived out in the wilderness, away from civilization. But was he salt? Yes! He was recognized by his stinging salty message! His message was harsh, hard, and cutting. Was he a light? John the apostle wrote, ***“8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.” (John 1:8 KJV)*** Jesus said about John, ***“11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.” (Matthew 11:11 KJV)*** Yes, John the Baptist was a light for God in the world, but how? By being so separated from the world that the people were attracted so much to him.

We need to pray and worked out that our children shall be socialized like John. Certainly, we train them to exhibit social graces to enhance their current and future servanthood. We need to desire them to fearlessly confront the world with a Gospel they not only speak the message but live boldly.

Another accusation leveled against dedicated Christian parents is that we are raising naive children. We are charged with not letting them see the real world. Opposite to the word naïve, is to have children who are streetwise and smart rebels in contradiction to the Word of God and the teaching of Jesus, which is a perversion of God's ideal. What the world labels naïve, the Bible calls pure. Jesus said, ***“8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8 KJV)*** In other words, if we have pure hearts, our attention will always be directed to what God is doing. Paul wrote, ***“15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.” (Titus 1:15 KJV)*** God calls us to raise holy children. They are to be different from the world and to be marked by purity. Not to get involved in dirty jokes, watching television programs and shows, YOU-tube, and not to get involved in pornography and immoralities. We are called to live in holiness and raise our children to live in holiness.

The real issue and struggles is in our children's hearts. Their heart should be pure and clean. Paul wrote, ***“17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” (Galatians 5:17 KJV)*** Paul was writing to Christians. * We must recognize that it is not enough for our children to be born again, but to live in holiness. Holiness is the result of sanctification. * One aspect of cooperating with the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work is that we must purpose to make no provision for the flesh. ***“14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Romans 13:14 KJV)*** What does it mean to not make ***“provision for the flesh?”*** There is a war ongoing between the flesh and Spirit within each of us and within each of our children and therefore we are not to provide wrong atmospheres and temptations, neither for ourselves nor for our children to be infected with this evil world.

Jesus taught us to pray to our Heavenly Father, ***“4 And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.” (Luke 11:4 KJV)*** Why should we seek to be spared temptations? Some of us are confident of our ability to resist temptations, so we welcome the conflict. But Paul directed Timothy not to engage temptations in a fight, but to flee from temptations as he told him: ***“22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call***

on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (2 Timothy 2:22 KJV) It is not enough to commit ourselves to abstain from sin; we must even avoid the temptations, making ***“no provision for the flesh.”*** We can easily see the fault in a drunkard who has been delivered from alcohol, still hanging out in front of a pop. But, do we fall into the same trap in less obvious ways? Or do we make provision for our children's flesh through such things, as their playmates, toys, reading wrong materials, listening to bad music, watching evil television programs, YOU-tube, Facebook, other social media, and so forth? Yes. Therefore we need to be convicted if we are failing to sanctify, consecrate, and set apart our children as the Lord intends. * Through the provisions we make for their flesh, we are making our children vulnerable to temptations. While we are asking our Heavenly Father to ***“lead us not into temptation,” (Matthew 6:13 KJV)*** we are leading our children into temptations. Jesus said, ***“7 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” (Matthew 18:7 KJV)*** He introduced this by warning, ***“6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6 KJV)*** We might use these Scriptures to those who conduct such abominations as immoralities, stealing, abortion, child abuse, and so forth. But now also God is speaking more to parents who have the mandate to protect their children from ungodly influences. This becomes particularly clear when we continue through the next few verses and find Jesus commanding us to pluck out, cut off, and cast away whatever causes us to sin. * Children suppose to be the parents of the Godly children of the future to come. Therefore we need to protect them from being corrupted by the prevalent influences of evil. * If we need them to reach virgins at the time of their weddings, then we need to protect them from the evil influences of the world. This mandate is given in the context of children, ***“6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! 8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. 9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. 10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 18:6-10 KJV)***

My Dear and Beloved: Sometimes as the people and the world around us look at us as odd because of the way we shelter and protect our children for Jesus that should not offend us. Certainly, the word odd has negative associations that none of us want to identify with. But sure if we live according to God's direction, the world will accuse us of being odd of the world, and out of synchrony with the society. But we should not become defensive and deny that. Rather, we should accept and glory in such accusation and even prove them correct. You see, what the world calls naïve the Bible calls pure. We should prefer to have naïve children than to have the streetwise, and rebel children the world is reproducing today.

In addition, who says sheltering is bad? In the Scriptures the term shelter is never used for something bad, but for good. For example, the Psalmist glories in God's shelter, saying, ***“3 For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. 4 I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.” (Psalm 61:3-4 KJV)***

The Hebrew Word for ‘shelter’ is ‘Machaceh’, and it has the following meaning: refuge, or shelter from rain or storm, from danger and falsehood. It is repeated in twenty places in the Bible. Below are some of these Scriptures:

“8 They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter.” (Job 24:8 KJV)

“1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1 KJV)

“2 I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. 9 Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation.” (Psalm 91:2, 9 KJV)

“18 The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.” (Psalm 104:18 KJV)

“5 I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.” (Psalm 142:5 KJV)

“26 In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.” (Proverbs 14:26 KJV)

“6 And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.” (Isaiah 4:6 KJV)

“4 For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.” (Isaiah 25:4 KJV)

Let us pray

My prayer: Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins, who was buried and rose from death to give me eternal life. Lord thank you for the encouraging message that I received from your Word to help me to overcome all the critics and the accusation that I received from the people around me, and to persevere in raising my children and sheltering them from the dangers of the evil world around them.

Come now to God, and repent and renounce your sins, Repent and renounce your pride, feeling ashamed of people, the fear of man, and being easily intimidated. Renounce your doubts and lack of faith. Repent of your worldliness and your love to material things, and being conform to the pattern of this world. Repent of your delay obedience and your non submission to God’s will and plan. Repent of doing your own will and plan and not the will and the plan of God. Repent of being yoked with non believers and spending much time with your friends, and on the Media, News and games. Repent of your lack of reading the Bible and life of prayers. Lord forgive me, I repent and renounce the following sins

Lord I commit myself to apply all what I received in this message in the life of my children; to shelter them from the threats of this world and the evil environments around them. Lord, I commit myself to read your Word and to implement in my life and the life of my family and children, and not to conform to the pattern of this world. Lord provide for me and shield me and deliver me and my family and children from the evil one so we will continue to serve you and do your will.

Lord, thank you for my Brothers and Sisters who got delivered from the fear of man and from all doubts and accusations. Lord as they committed their lives to you use them to serve you and set them good example to others to know you and follow you. Lord uphold them with your grace and give them perseverance to finish the task you entrusted to them to do. Lord solve their problems and continue to provide all their needs so they will continue to serve you.

Lord help us as your church and guide us to continue to teach your people and all the families in the church and our disciples those principles of your Word of how to shelter their children and to protect them from the dangers of this evil world. Lord help us to continue to train parents how to do that and to raise their children in the fear of the Lord. Lord refill us with the Holy Spirit and give us the Spiritual gifts that we need in our lives to go on and evangelize, and make disciples and train workers to go and plant more Bible studies and congregations for the church. Lord fulfill the vision of the church, ‘Multiplication in peace with implementing the Whole will of God.’ Lord bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be with us and free us from harm so that we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all in Jesus name, Amen.

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