

Mission True 2021: The Necessity of Christian Education

Psalm 78:1-8

Stuart W. Bryan

I. Thinking about the Future

II. Dark Sayings of Old

A. Give ear to My law (1-4 cf. Mt 13:34-35)

¹Give ear, O my people, to my law; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. ²I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, ³Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us. ⁴We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. (Ps 78:1-4)

Asaph summons all Israel to listen to what he has to say (1). He promises to tell us tried and tested truths that will challenge and stretch us (2). This promise was fulfilled in Jesus' teachings:

³⁴All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, ³⁵that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world." (Mt 13:34-35)

Asaph, in other words, was inspired by *the Spirit of Christ* (1 Pet 1:11). And, having been taught by the fathers (3), he urges us to entrust this ancient treasure to the next generation (4). We have a sacred obligation to do so because our kids are "their" (the _____) children. Hence, we must teach them God's _____ (*strength*) and His _____ (*wonderful works*) as well as the celebration of His person and work in the _____ (*praises of the Lord*).

B. For God summons you so to do (5-8 cf. Dt 6:6-9)

⁵For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children; ⁶That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, ⁷That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments; ⁸And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God. (Ps 78:5-8)

Asaph summons us to listen to him because *God has ordered the world this way*. The current generation must teach the next generation and that generation must teach the next, and so on (5-6). Why? The _____ of this instruction is twofold. *Positively*, this instruction is to teach our children to "set their hope in God" (7a) and "keep His commandments" (7c). *Negatively*, this instruction is to warn our children not to "forget the works of God" (7b) and not to be "like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation... whose spirit was not faithful to God" (8).

III. Principles for Education

A. The Necessity of Christian Education (Eph 6:4; 2 Tim 2:2; Jude 3)

The current generation has an obligation to value God's revelation of His character and deeds and to pass those truths on to the next generation. We are to tell our children the wonderful works of God so that they in turn can tell theirs. _____ is not optional.

B. The Respective Duties of Teachers and Students

1. The Duties of Teachers (Dt 11:18-21)

¹⁸"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ¹⁹You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ²⁰And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, ²¹that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth. (Dt 11:18-21)

a. *Treasure* God's Word (18 cf. Col 3:17)

The current generation is, first, to *treasure* the Word of God. We are to let it govern (1) our desires and _____ (18a), (2) our _____ (18b), and (3) our _____ (18c).

b. *Teach* God's Word (19-21)

Second, we are to *teach the Word of God* (19). We are to speak of them inside and outside the home (19b) as well as in our recreation and in our labor (19c). They are to regulate our homes (20a) and our communities (20b). As Martin Luther wrote:

"Therefore let everybody know that it is his chief duty, on pain of losing divine grace, to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God, and if they are gifted to give them opportunity to learn and study so that they may be of service wherever they are needed. If this were done, God would richly bless us and give us grace so that men might be trained who would be a benefit to the nation and the people... Think what deadly harm you do when you are negligent in this respect and fail to bring up your children to usefulness and piety. You bring upon yourself sin and wrath, thus earning hell by the way you have reared your own children, no matter how devout and holy you may be in other respects" (32-33).

2. The Duties of Students

a. *Receive* – listen! (cf. 78:1,3a)

b. *Respond* – in faith! (cf. 78:7)

c. *Repeat* – tell your kids! (cf. 78:6)

C. The Goal of Education

The goal of education is to train our children to combine _____ and _____ in the service of the Living God. Sacred Scripture repudiates the idea that education is value neutral. Education either serves the Lord of glory or the gates of hell. So Martin Luther warned:

"I am much afraid that the schools will prove the very gates of hell, unless they diligently labour in explaining the Holy Scriptures, and engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which means are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must be corrupt."

IV. Conclusion