

The Home And The Congregation

Introduction. In Deuteronomy 22:8, God was concerned enough with His people, Israel, to provide injunctions concerning the building of their houses. The typical house of that day had a flat roof which served as a porch, where the family could ascend in the evening for quiet communion with each other.

God had specifically directed them in the construction of “parapets” around the perimeter of the roof. A parapet was simply a wall, as much as three feet in height, to serve as a protection against falling over the edge.

Every congregation and home needs a parapet or battlement. All need fortification against foes. The inspiring and strengthening of our homes and congregations is a matter of grave importance. To me, nothing is more beautiful than seeing a congregation full of families who love worshiping God together. It is not surprising that the children in those families grow up to be faithful Christians who in turn strengthen the Lord’s church and are a blessing to the community.

I. ***What A Good Home Can Do For A Congregation***

A. A good home can raise its children well.

1. The church has the responsibility to teach every creature (Mark 16:15), but it is not the primary responsibility of the church to rear children. That responsibility belongs to the home.
2. The church can supplement and reinforce the teaching done at home, but it cannot, in two or three hours a week, provide all or most of the teaching a child needs. If the child is left merely to what the church can teach within a few hours a week, it is most likely that child will fall away (Deuteronomy 6:1-9).
3. A child must not only be taught but trained. This means he must be shown how to live and act. He must be corrected when he blunders and praised when he does well. Only a good home has the time, love and patience to nurture a child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).
 - a) Children are a heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127:4); they are to be reared for Him. The verb “bring them up” has to do in the first place with bodily nourishment (5:29) and then with education in its entirety.
 - b) Paul mentions two aspects of such domestic education.
 - (1) “Nurture” in the Greco-Roman world meant strict discipline; what Paul is referring to here is training in righteousness.
 - (2) “Admonition” is correction by word of mouth. Remonstrance and reproof are implied, but also advice and encouragement.

4. Well-taught, well-trained, well-disciplined children are essential to the present and future health of the church, but only a good home can produce such children.
- B. A good home can provide stability and strength.
1. The members of a good home can be counted on. They know who they are. They have in the home been given a sense of belonging and a sense of worth.
 2. The members of a good home are not so weighted down with their own doubts and hangups that they are useless to others. They are solutions rather than problems. They are able to serve, not just be served.
 3. A good home provides its members with a supply of strength and love that can be shared with others. A good home produces those who become the workers and leaders of the congregation.
 4. Great members, teachers, preachers, elders and deacons are usually the products of good homes. Paul honored Timothy's childhood home. It was a home where unfeigned faith dwelt and where the scriptures were taught (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15).

II. ***What A Good Congregation Can Do For A Home***

- A. A good congregation can provide teaching and counsel concerning the home.
1. The fact that God blesses faithful families should be sounded from every pulpit. The Bible is unquestionably our greatest source on how to maintain a vital, healthy family life (Acts 20:27). The congregation is here to edify and there are a number of ways in which edification is accomplished (Acts 11:22-23; Colossians 2:18-19).
 - a) The church edifies through worship (Hebrews 10:25; 1 Peter 2:5; James 5:16).
 - b) The church edifies through faithful teaching (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9).
 - c) The church edifies through discipline (1 Corinthians 5:6-8; Romans 16:17-18; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; Titus 3:10).
 - d) The church edifies by maintaining and encouraging a full program of good works (2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:15-17; 1 Timothy 6:17-19).
 - e) The church edifies through the proper love and consideration of the members for each other (1 Corinthians 12:25; Ephesians 4:29-32; Colossians 3:12-15).
 2. God has always blessed those who encourage their family to fear Him. One can almost feel the regard that God had for Abraham when God spoke of Abraham's influence for his family (Genesis 18:19).

3. Christians can also bear one another up in times of difficulty and trial (Galatians 6:2). When a brother or sister is laboring under a load they cannot shoulder alone, I must support them (2 Timothy 4:16-18).
 4. Financial setbacks, depression, marital conflicts or any number of problems can undermine and even crush a Christian home. When a congregation is filled with caring, sympathetic and burden-bearing people, the families are strong and there will be closeness (Philippians 2:19-21).
- B. A good congregation can provide a good example.
1. When a congregation is full of Christians who take their purity and morality seriously, it exhibits a wonderful example for the members of a family. Parents and children should see members of the church who abhor what is evil and cling to what is good (Romans 12:9).
 2. A congregation also needs to provide an example of faithfulness and good works. Families need to see strong, faithful brethren who are at every service and who truly put God and His kingdom first (Matthew 6:33).
 3. Older Christians who have raised families which contained faithful Christians can be a great source examples for young families (Proverbs 16:31). They have made the successes and mistakes necessary to raise children in a faithful manner.
 4. Young adults and their children will continue to be influenced by the world when it comes to faithfulness or unfaithfulness. When we let our faithfulness and good works shine through, it will be a bright spot that will glorify God and help the church remain strong (Matthew 5:16; 1 Timothy 4:12).

Conclusion. William Gladstone, the Prime Minister of England, once said, "Tell me what the men of England are doing on Sunday, and I will tell you what the future of England holds." The future of the Lord's body rests, in a large measure, in the future of our families. Likewise, the future of our families rests, in a large measure, in the future strength and faithfulness of the Lord's body. The two are tied inexorably together by precept and principle. To weaken one is to weaken the other. To strengthen one is to strengthen both. Let us see the importance in each providing for the other.