

# SANCTIFIED ATTENTION OF COVENANT YOUTH

*by Rev. G. Lubbers*

"Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom: and with all thy getting, get understanding."

Proverbs 4:1,7

This morning I am going to begin this little chapel address by telling you two stories which contain a gem of wisdom.

The first is about the Scotchman, who was very frugal, up to the point of the ridiculous. We might call him stingy; he did not prefer to spend his money but to save it. He did not like the word "pay". When this man's son returned from high school he was told that the son would be ejected from the classes unless he paid attention. This incensed this Scotchman to the point that he took him out of that school; he would not have his son *pay* attention. Such are some parents, short-sighted and foolish beyond words. They will not insist that their sons and daughters pay attention to God, His Word, His ordinances; their children need not honor the teachers and all who are in authority over them, including these very parents themselves. That is my first gem of wisdom. Ponder it a bit, will you?

I have still another gem of wisdom in my quiver this morning. This is a little anecdote concerning a mule, a very stubborn one, you must know. You must know that this little account of this mule belongs to the yarns of yesteryear. But it has a worthwhile point, young people. In those good ol' days plows were not drawn by huge tractors but were laboriously pulled by the faithful horse and the wary mule. But mules were tough and they took care of themselves. A certain farmer acquired a mule from a former owner and was assured upon purchasing him that he was a willing worker. However, when the new owner hitched this mule to the wagon the animal refused to listen and did not tighten a tug. No cajoling by this new owner availed; it all fell upon deaf ears. When complaint was made to the former owner the good man was assured that this mule had all the qualifications of a good worker. He came down to show how to

get some work out of the lagger. He took a fence-rail and not too gently brought it upon the head of the mule, who thereupon shook his head and bent into the traces. The explanation of the erstwhile owner was: you have to get the mule's attention. Ah, that was the little secret! Now this does not at first flush seem to have much of heaven's wisdom in it, nor does it seem to apply to students here in Covenant Christian High. It might seem a bit out of good taste here in your honorable assembly this morning.

We read in the Bible, do we not, "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have not understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, else they will not come near to thee". Such are the wicked who have many sorrows and disobedience. And so my little home-spun yarn has a bit of wisdom in it which also the Bible teaches.

For we are to attend to know understanding. We must be such, who pay attention; we must be those whom the Lord guides with His eye; we must pay attention and give good heed to what the Lord says. He teaches the way in which we must go. We are to obey and give heed to the Lord.

Perhaps I may say just a few words to you this morning about sanctified attention of covenant youth.

I am deeply aware this morning that I am not addressing a cross-section of American youth, young men of this present world, who are without God and without hope in the world, but that I am addressing young men and women who confess that Christ is their Savior, and that they believe in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Fact is, that I am addressing young men and women, who have been baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. You have been baptized into the body of Christ, have you not? Furthermore, for a few years you have been carefully nurtured and instructed in the fear and understanding and wisdom of God. Holy vows have been uttered by your parents, when you were yet babes-in-arms; then your parents promised solemnly before the face of God to instruct you to the utmost of their power in the Christian aforesaid doctrine! At your mother's knee, before you can remember, you were already taught to give attention to what she told you. My task this morning is very weighty to instruct such an audience of select students. Do you not agree?

The term "to pay attention" means: "To attend to get understanding". I have looked up the meaning of the English word "attention" in the dictionary. The term suggests to our

mind the word "tension". Attention is the mind reaching out. When we put tension on a rope we stretch it out, do we not? Attention is the mind reaching out for instruction and knowledge. It indicates a definite direction of the mind and not mere aimless pursuit. We live in days when men speak of the "head-shrinkers". Really that is not what psychiatrists do. But that is what they are sometimes called. That is not said of school teachers. They are not head-shrinkers, but head-stretchers; mind-stretching they do, you must know. How well I remember that my students in the little seminary on the island of Jamaica said at the end of a very busy day in school: "Rev. Lubbers, I feel like my mind got stretched today". Good and prolonged attention is effort; it is hard work, indeed! Well, what did your father send you to school for?

Fathers were teachers in the time of the Bible. They still are *THE* God-appointed pedagogues and not the State, not the teachers in the final analysis either. Fathers are to be such teachers, whether they understand this calling of theirs or not. Paul writes, "Ye Fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the fear and nurture of the Lord." That is the Bible! Christian teachers must not merely direct your attention to some facts, some data which the mind must process. The fathers and teachers in our school do and must have their sights high. They would have you get "understanding".

Yes, understanding! That is the object of our attention. For understanding is synonymous in the Bible with wisdom. The Bible does not speak of "education", does it? The terms used by the Holy Spirit are "instruction", "understanding", and "wisdom". This means that the first interest of the teacher is not that every one becomes the valedictorian of the class. There can be only one. But all must obtain understanding and wisdom, which are rooted in the fear of the *LORD*. And each must attain to the level of his or her God-given talents and ability. We come to understanding and wisdom by the grace of God. The Holy Spirit is the great teacher who leads us into all truth. Do not fail each day to pray for this teaching of the Spirit. Ask and you shall receive. He gives this instruction, wisdom and understanding to those who with hearty sighing ask for it without ceasing. Without ceasing!

Let me explain a bit about this term "understanding" in the Bible. To have this understanding you must not merely know a lot of facts, but you must know God in childlike love and fear. Only

when you love God, His Word, His precepts and commandments, do you get understanding and wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the *principle* (the beginning) the fountain-head of wisdom. Now don't forget my little yarn about the mule, which had no understanding and who must be driven with bit and bridle. That is the way the wicked are. Such we must not be. We must be driven with the inner impulse of the love of God. Driven by the inner impulse of the love of God you do not merely have natural light and thus know more than the mule - a brute beast. He does not know that two times two equals four, does he? The natural, unregenerate man does know this. He has natural light. But he does not know this spiritually. When he must say that two times two equals four for God's sake and for the love of his neighbor, then if he sells he says: two times two equals eight. He keeps the truth down in unrighteousness. He lies. He does not have wisdom and understanding. He only has the wisdom of this world, worldly understanding which ends in man. He is, in the things of God, like a horse and mule. Such you must not be here in school under the tutorship of your teachers.

You have by this time felt and are aware that "attention", sanctified attention is gift of God. It is His gift to His covenant children. But here is an area where we must overcome Satan, our arch-foe who goes about as a roaring lion. Satan does not mind that we pay attention. He objects to *sanctified* attention, wherein God is all in all. He says, "Give good attention, be very ambitious, get the highest marks; rise and shine and bathe yourself in your own glory." Satan loves excellency for excellency's sake and for vain-glorious reasons. But God loves excellency on a sanctified plane. Here we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Do you understand this difference between what is sanctified and what is on the low plain of the selfishly sinful? I pray to God that you do! For all subjects are in the last analysis concerned with teaching us something about God.

This means that paying attention is prayerful attention. Well may we pray to God for such godly attention. This is true of you as class, teacher and as individual student. I have learned long ago that my "study-room" is more than a place of mental gymnastics; that it is above all the place where I wrestle to pay attention to God as He speaks to me in His Word, by means of other gifts, which are in the tomes on my shelves. All our subjects and studies call for prayerful, sanctified attention:

English, Church history, mathematics, chemistry, etc, all are books of God from which to study the power and wisdom and glory of God. That is understanding and wisdom. Yes, that is wisdom which is the principal thing. All subjects teach us God's virtues, His wisdom, justice, goodness, His infinite exactitude! That is why there are *rules* of grammar: subject and predicate; speaker and speaking and thing spoken. All becomes such that it intrigues us, and stimulates our interest and curiosity. The entire school curriculum then is wonderful, challengingly great. We search for true knowledge and get understanding and wisdom.

Hear ye children!

Such attentiveness must be stimulated too. Even as we need exercise, bodily exercise to stimulate growth and appetite, so we need all kinds of stimuli to study well. We need to hear good music to stimulate interest. To stimulate interest in the starry heavens of God we need to study mathematics and astronomy. However, we also need to bear in mind what the Psalmist says about these stars: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork." We need to read the book of creation in the light of the book of the Word of God as contained in the holy Scriptures.

We need mental stimulation to have spiritual stimulation. The natural is ever first and then the spiritual. The natural does not negate the Spiritual, but serves as *its vehicle*. We do need the spiritual to give sanctified attention. Sometimes we need the stick of threatening over our heads, and need to be corrected. We have sinful flesh. Laziness is sin and is the area where the Devil works havoc. Be not deceived! We can be such dullards, betimes. We are then in need of the treatment accorded the horse and the mule which have no understanding. Teachers must be severe then, must they not? That is love and that is understanding. They would have you reach for that which is now unattainable: i.e., perfection. Fathers must correct their children. That is loving understanding which the silly teaching world of our day does not grasp. When our report card shows that we have *not* done our best we need to be called on the carpet. We must then, as christian young people, ask the Lord for forgiveness for our squandering His time.

Let me close with the best part of my little talk.

"Therefore get wisdom and with all your getting get understanding."