

pare our children. When parents neglect their children's spiritual development it is the epitome of the highest form of child neglect there is.

"And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children." (Isa. 54:13; KJV)

Trends

Twenty abortion facts you need to know, here are the first five:

- ☞ Every abortion kills an innocent human being.
- ☞ Every human being is a person.
- ☞ Beginning at conception, every pregnancy involves two or more bodies.
- ☞ The right to not be killed supersedes the right to not be pregnant.
- ☞ Poverty, rape, disability, or "unwantedness" do not morally justify abortion.

—Abortionfacts.com

Psalm 139:14: *"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;"*

Sentence Sermons

"The right to control your body does not include the right to destroy somebody else's." —Unknown

Proverbs 6:16-17: *"These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood,"*

News & Notes

Pray for the African brethren. *The are suffering due to riots, loss of property, persecution, etc. Please consider donating if you're able!* 1 Jn. 3:17

Pray for sister Wilma Cardwell. *She's a great encouragement to all!*

Please pray for Lana May. *She is really suffering due to her health issues.*

Pray for all our members who do not attend regularly. *Try to give them words of encouragement!*

Pray for the all our young people. *They too face many trials and temptations.*

There are many needy saints, including preachers! Can you help?!

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Words of Life

Westside
church of Christ

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68



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The Captivity of Sin

Craig Thomas

Today's **Thought for the Day** comes from Psalm 126. In this short psalm the author speaks of the joy associated with Israel's return from captivity. Perhaps he is speaking of the return from the seventy years of Babylonian captivity. Paul reminds us of the importance of God's dealings with Israel in the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4):

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (KJV)

It is so critical for us to be diligent students of the Old Testament. I remember the words of a preacher I heard one time who said this as an admonition and encouragement to study the Old Testament: "The LORD must surely have loved the Old Testament because He gave us so much of it." The Old Testament is chock full of examples for us to follow and for us to learn not to follow. Again, Paul puts it like this (1 Cor. 10:11-12):

"¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

So, what is God's purpose in the story of Israel's captivity and their return from it? There are many things to be learned. However, I believe the primary point is that sin has consequences as does confession and repentance from sin. Sin separates us from fellowship with God (Isa. 59:1, 2). Separation from God is a horrible experience for the person who has the wisdom and tenderness of heart to contemplate their awful situation. David lamented about it using these words (Psa. 38:2-8):

*"² For Your arrows pierce me deeply,
And Your hand presses me down.*

*³ There is no soundness in my flesh
Because of Your anger,
Nor any health in my bones
Because of my sin.*

*⁴ For my iniquities have gone over my head;
Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.*

*⁵ My wounds are foul and festering
Because of my foolishness.*

⁶ *I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly;
I go mourning all the day long.
⁷ For my loins are full of inflammation,
And there is no soundness in my flesh.
⁸ I am feeble and severely broken;
I groan because of the turmoil of my heart.”*

What a terrible burden we needlessly bear because of our sins! Especially since the LORD is like the prodigal's father whose greatest hope and desire was for his lost son's repentant return (Lk. 15:11-32). The prodigal came to his senses, expressed “godly sorrow” (2 Cor. 7:10) and returned to his loving father confessing and repenting of his sin. In other words, he was delivered from the captivity of sin and restored to fellowship with his father. David speaks of this restoration and the joy it brings in Psalm 51:10-12:

*“¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
¹¹ Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
¹² Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.”*

If you are in the captivity of sin, you can be restored to the Father's fellowship and experience what the psalmist describes here in Psalm 126:

*“¹ When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
² Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
'The LORD has done great things for them.'
³ The LORD has done great things for us,
And we are glad.”*

Children Are a Heritage

Craig Thomas

Today's **Thought for the Day** comes from Psalm 127. This short psalm contains two points I want to explore. I explored the first yesterday and will explore the second today. In verses 3-5 we read:

*“³ Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
The fruit of the womb is a reward.
⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So are the children of one's youth.
⁵ Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them;
They shall not be ashamed,
But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.”*

Here in the NKJV, verse 3 describes children as a “heritage.” A “heritage” is a gift received through inheritance. Our children are a great blessing from the LORD. The LORD is so gracious toward us especially as we consider, that due to our sin, we deserve absolutely N-O-T-H-I-N-G! Yet the LORD graciously blesses us with this great blessing. Our children also represent a piece of us. A piece of us that will live on after we are dead and gone. A piece of us that will reflect on our character and integrity when we have returned to the dust.

It is so sad to contemplate that many parents take their children for granted. Some even abuse them and torment them. Some neglect them and see them as a nuisance. Perhaps the saddest of all situations are Christian parents that do not take their children's spiritual development seriously. Sadly, I have had contact with many such parents. Almost without exception, such parents do not take their own personal spiritual development seriously. They habitually miss services. They themselves do not regularly study their Bibles nor engage in diligent prayer in their own personal lives. Naturally, the children's spiritual development is greatly stunted. Why? Because parents have the greatest influence on their children of any person in their children's lives. That places a tremendous responsibility on parents. Paul admonishes us as parents when he said (Eph. 6:1-4):

“¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ³ ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’ ⁴ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

I passionately believe the vast majority of parents desire to raise responsible, well-mannered, and well-behaved children. Children with these qualities do not come by accident. Children are the most serious project we as parents will ever engage in. It takes a lot of work and diligent prayer on our part to raise children that love, serve, and respect us and others, and do so willingly. And even more importantly, it takes a lot of work and diligent prayer to raise kids that love, serve, and respect the LORD willingly and with their “whole heart.”

Personally, I am blessed with two such children. I'm not “tooting my own horn” because I know I'm not always a perfect parent. But I've never taken my children's development in any realm for granted, and especially their spiritual development. Despite my own lack of perfection, I can honestly say I've put their spiritual development as my top priority and so has my wife.

There are many things involved that are necessary to raise children properly. Describing all of them is beyond the scope of this short article. However, one thing is certain: their spiritual development is paramount! It is the most important aspect of raising children because it has eternal ramifications (for both the parents and the children!). The most important aspect of their spiritual development is not necessarily encouraging them to read the Bible or to pray, and certainly not for them to listen to us pontificate about spiritual values. No, the most important aspect of their spiritual training is to see Christ living in their parents!

By far one of the saddest situations I have had to deal with over the years as a gospel preacher are parents that come to me wringing their hands over their unfaithful children. “Preacher, we've lost our children!” they lament. “What went wrong!” Nine times out of ten the answer is simply this: “Your children followed your example. You never took your own spiritual development seriously, so why would you expect them to do so?!” I know there are no guarantees in life. I've seen some cases where parents “lost” their children despite their best efforts. However, that's certainly the exception, not the rule. Solomon said (Prov. 22:6):

*“Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it.”*

Our children are a gift from God, they are our legacy that lives on after us. At the judgment we will give the LORD an answer for the way we raised them. It is incumbent upon all parents to not only prepare ourselves for eternity but also pre-