



This Child

Shall be

Lent

Unto the Lord

“This child shall be lent unto the Lord”

YOU OWE IT TO YOUR CHILD

Every child has a right to dedication.

Your child belongs to God first.

When you look at any infant you must say, “This is God’s child. This child has come out of the Unseen. This child has been born into a redeemed world; for whom the Saviour died. This child is called, therefore, by divine mercy to the inheritance of eternal life. This is God’s supreme desire for this child.”

What you do with your child is a responsibility that only heaven and eternity can calculate.

Only God knows what possibilities are wrapped up in an infant. And without God a parent is without chart or compass in setting a course is setting a course for a child.

Nothing is more presumptuous or replete with moral responsibility for which the parent must stand trial at the final audit.

It is not a sin to be born – it is a sin to die without being born again.

There are no illegitimate souls. There may be illegitimate parents. That is for the laws of God and man to decide. But the stigma should never be placed upon the child.

“The spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

“The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father” (Ezekiel 18:20).

The whole world must recognize the dignity of a baby.

“Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Psalm 127:3).

THE CONTRACT

“As long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord” (1 Samuel 1:28).

The act of dedication does not automatically make children Christian. Hannah and Elkanah make this clear in their dedication of Samuel before Eli.

Their dependence was upon the atonement, No amount of training could ever substitute for the power of the blood.

“And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh: and the child was young. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli” (1 Samuel 1:24, 25).

Dedication is a point of beginning. It is a public commitment. The possibility of a contract exists.

An adult can have selfless, godly, overwhelming desire for his child that brings into play eternal powers otherwise untapped.

Too many adults come forward with “reserve clauses.” They favour the “he shall be lent to the Lord” loan operation through infancy and childhood – through the cycle of measles, whooping cough, and chicken pox. But beyond that they have their own selfish ideas about a son or daughter – ideas of placement and material success.

Dedication is meaningless and worthless on those terms.

It must be complete giving, as though the child had never been yours in the first place. You literally give him back. You volunteer to be expended for the purpose and pleasure God chooses to make of the child’s life.

In a way, this is what Jochedbed, Moses’ mother did with her infant son.

“She took for him an ark... and put the child therein” (Exodus 2:3).

“Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it” (Exodus 2:9).

Are You Willing to Be a Party to This Agreement?

The question resolves itself to this. Are you willing to have God take absolute possession of your baby? Will you allow Him to use that offered life to His glory in whatever manner He proposes to use it without ever again offering an objection?

That really brings you to the altar.

And that dedication must be tested. It will bring you to the brink time and again.

But it will also see you through!

When Satan would harass you and make it appear that your child in later years is swerving in his Christian allegiance, you can stand on the contract drawn between yourself and your lord that “As long as he (or she) liveth he (or she) shall be lent to the Lord.” That promise has strength that withstands the pressures of hell.

It is possible to bind your sacrifice to the altar. *“Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar” (Psalm 118:27).*

Remember! God can only implement His grace and His resources as we by acts of personal decision employ them. *“Ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2).*

Nothing is ever accomplished through wishful thinking or by taking something for granted. That can be the worst form of negligence.

Too many of today’s adults who profess to be Christians have selfish plans for their offspring. Their presentation, at heart, is an attempt to have God’s stamp of approval on plans they, themselves, generate for the child.

It will not work that way.

The only way dedication will work, parent, is to give that child to the Lord “as long as he liveth.”

That means full and complete surrender. It means a cutting away. Mary felt it. “Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also” (Luke 2:35).

Dedication occurs at that altar where final and complete ownership is debated and decided forever.

It Will Involve a Battle

A parent who has lent a child to the Lord faces the ensuing battle with supreme confidence.

When sickness attacks the child, such a parent can secure himself in faith which affirms, “This child is the Lord’s. This attack involves God. This is an attempt to thwart the will of God. I believe it will be defeated. I believe it is God’s will for me to share in His magnificent victory for this child since I am His partner in directing this child’s life.”

“I will rejoice in the face of attack and publically affirm my confidence that, ‘he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ’” (Philippians 1:6).

You expect your investment to pay dividends.

You can say in days of testing: *“I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4).*

You can stand up to Satanic buffeting and say, *“For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition” (1 Samuel 1:27).*

Without this foundation you are on your own, dependant upon human skill and your own personal assets alone.

But you can have a foundation – an unshakable faith.

“The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his” (2 Timothy 2:19).

No parent is strong enough in himself. The odds are too great. But when a true heaven-and-earth relationship has been established, and you are the servant, and He is the Master, you become *“more than conquerors through him” (Romans 8:37).*

This is the difference you see in families.

I ask you to believe this. It is not the will of God for young lives to be circumvented. Jesus said so. *“It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:14).*

Yes, you can stand up to attacks upon a child who has been truly dedicated. *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).*

THE DEDICATION SERVICE

The dedication of an infant is meant to be infinitely more than a “Sunday morning baby show” at which the minister kisses the baby in keeping with the proven political custom.

It can be cheap and carnal, or it can be spiritual and strengthening.

The service should never be hurried or reduced to a ritual.

It is primarily a public declaration of responsibility by two adults, involving desire and gratitude.

Adults come to the altar of God in such a moment in a new, significant sense. They share a responsibility forever. It can never be erased. It must live with these adults day and night.

Parents who participate in such a dedication share an awesome thing. They have ventured with God. They have invoked a trust. The infant in their hands is also, in a manner, *“set for the fall and rising...of*

many” (Luke 2:34).

The entire service should be clothed with a spirit of humility.

Adults, in such moments, need all the help that the Church of Jesus Christ can afford. It should be manifest as they stand before the altar of God. The acknowledgement of each should be: “Oh God! I cannot of myself or by myself accomplish the eternal mission for this child’s life; but with Thy help it shall be done.”

It is a moment of supreme dedication.

It is meant to mark another difference in adult living. The striving for spiritual goals in the home becomes much more intensive. *“The unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice”* (2 Timothy 1:5).

Every act, every gesture, every domestic and personal habit are engraved upon the child. The adult must accept full credit for the imprint. The edition will never be proofread, revised, or corrected before the public is offered a view of your child.

The task is gigantic. It should bring you to your knees. It is fitting that you should stand before the altar with the infant. You need all the help you can get for the experiences ahead of you.

The preacher, in the name of Jesus, must meet you at this altar. Every parent in the audience should sense the eternity of the moment that is upon you. There is a grace and a power ready to be released if they are appropriated at such a service. The Son of God was not without this benefit.

“And [Simeon] came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God...

“And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them...”

“And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher: she was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:27, 28, 33, 34, 36-38)

The Nurture and Admonition of the Lord

At this moment adults invoke at God’s altar and before God, the ability to *“bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4).

Nurture means to feed and to care for during growth. Only an act of God can change your nature, but you can nurture that nature. The adult is responsible for the child’s nourishment. The upbringing is in your hands. It is up to you to avail yourself of every agency.

Will the infant lack affection? Will the child be spoiled by indulgence? Will the child bring the adults to a deeper understanding of life? No wonder *“Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart”* (Luke 2:19).

Every moment you are making decisions, “admonitions,” that must affect the developing character of the child. You need a sense of guidance as never before. Little wonder you come to the altar with as great a request as you will ever bring: “Lord, help me to be Thy parent, the kind of parent that meets with Thy approval.”

“The meek will he guide in judgement: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psalm 25:9).

The fact that you come forward, in the sight of witnesses, is a personal declaration. It signifies your faith in the Christian way of life. It says affirmatively, “I cannot raise this child in my own strength. God does not ask me to. I need help, and I may secure help. This task that I have

volunteered is meant to be on a partnership basis.”

“*Ask, and it shall be given you*” (Matthew 7:7).

THE PARENT’S RESPONSIBILITY

But you have a part to play!

Dedication is not abandonment.

A real part of this altar experience is your acceptance to act as an instrument under God for the training of the child. That will be the full justification you must feel when you act to deny the child of some whim of fancy which you know to be contrary to the will of God for the child’s life, or would weaken, were you to surrender to the child’s will, the call and direction of God upon the child.

You are the trainer.

There is no escape from that.

That is the position you voluntarily accept when you stand before the altar of infant dedication.

“*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it*” (Proverbs 22:6).

That presumes that you know “*the way he should go.*” And you will if you are working with god toward the divine fulfilment of the child’s life.

Jesus, the Child, reminded Mary and Joseph of this fact: “*Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?*” (Luke 2:49).

It assumes that you will insist, with all that God grants to you in fortitude and wisdom, that the child go that way. It will take courage. It will take determination.

God asks you to engage in a full-time job that will tax every faculty you

possess to raise a child for His glory.

“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15).

It is your job to make an adult out of a juvenile.

This “training course” was involved in the life of Jesus Christ on earth. *“Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered”* (Hebrews 5:8).

At this altar of infant dedication you must be conscious through divine revelation of God’s unique and singular purpose for the child’s life – his particular mission. This can only be realized by a sensitive relationship provided by the Spirit of God.

“He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and show it unto you” (John 16:13-15).

Zacharias and Elisabeth knew about their infant son John.

“And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy ghost, even from his mother’s womb.”

“And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:14-17).

This is how the planet Earth can be blessed with saints.

Never doubt this for an instant!

Jeremiah reflected upon his birth. *“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”* (Jeremiah 1:5).

Paul also thought back.

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace” (Galatians 1:15).

With this sensitivity provided by the Spirit to the intention of God toward your child, you foster the call of God as it reaches the opening and widening consciousness of you child.

Eli remembered.

He counselled the youngster, Samuel: *“Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him. And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child.”*

“Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place” (1 Samuel 3:7-9).

God will use your life, parent, as a stake to which to brace your child’s life as that child is trained and matures.

Therefore at this altar of infant dedication you will have to commit yourself to henceforth live under the discipline of always affording an example to the child.

Abraham recognized this.

And the Lord said, *“I know [Abraham], that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement”* (Genesis 18:19).

This is God's requirement in extending the privilege and honour of parenthood.

“These words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7).

There is never any intermission. That child has you under surveillance at all times. One glaring error and you can leave a scar on the Child's soul for life.

So you must carefully select what you view, what you read, what you hear, where you go, what you say.

You have, by an act of dedication, assumed that responsibility.

Keep this allegiance ever before you:

“For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever” (Genesis 44:32)

THE REWARD

There is a reward.

Your greatest legacy to a child is the memory of a home in which God's will has been obeyed, His Word loved, and His Day honoured.

There is the reward given to a faithful steward. *“More over it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful”* (1 Corinthians 4:2).

And if any person is a steward, apparent is meant to be. Unfortunately many professing adults are far more careful to render an account of their tithes and taxes than they are of their homes and family.

There will be a full audit.

“And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be longer steward” (Luke 16:2).

There is a sanctity to home and marriage which insulates these from the erosion a world system imposes in day-to-day wear. God recognizes the family as an institution of His creation. You have a right to this reinforcement. And you appropriate it at the altar of infant dedication when you volunteer for unremitting service that involves time and eternity.

You enter a partnership which places at your disposal all the resources of another world. It is up to your initiative to use them. But they are there!

Samson’s father, Manoah, availed himself of such privileges.

“Then Manoah entreated the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again to us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.”

“And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her. And the woman made haste, and ran, and showed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day” (Judges 13:8-10).

It will be music to an adult who has fulfilled his obligation to a child to hear, *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant”* (Matthew 25:21).

“And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?” (Judges 13:11, 12).

Under God it is your opportunity to produce and help shape a great man

or woman. And how earth thirsts for this above all else! “*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John*” (John 1:6). It was made possible through Zacharias and Elisabeth.

That child irrevocably bears your name. It is a law of life. So make it a good one! “*A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches*” (Proverbs 22:1).

There is no equal reward this side of eternity.

Record of

Parent's Covenant

As parents of
(name of child)

We recognize this child is God's gift to our home. Returning this gift in dedication, we also dedicate ourselves before the Lord, accepting our responsibility for the life God has entrusted to our care.

We earnestly seek God's help and protection in rearing this child in the nurture and admonition of the lord.

As we present this child in dedication, we understand that our action declares we are willing to have God take full possession of our child, allowing Him to use this life to His glory.

.....
(father)

.....
(mother)

.....
(officiating minister)

.....
(Date)

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