

# The Christian Home - A Training Ground

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please turn with me now to Proverbs chapter 1, the passage we read, the book of Proverbs chapter 1, and beginning at verse 8, we'll look at these verses down as far as verse 16.

Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching. It's very obvious to us all, no doubt, that the Christian view of the family is very much under huge attack today.

It's not new, but it's certainly very prominent. And we have to understand, of course, that when we change the biblical view of marriage, for example, which has happened in our own experience in our nation's history recently, and when that has been led by those in government, both at Westminster and also in Edinburgh, when you change marriage and the meaning of marriage, you inevitably change the meaning of family.

Whenever you change any of those things which are basic to the family, in other words, marriage itself between a man and a woman, which is what the Bible, of course, defines marriage as, then you obviously have a redefinition automatically of what the family is.

Because if you look at family in a way that follows a change in the concept of marriage, you no longer end up with the biblical unit that the family is, as described in the Bible, you end up with something else.

[ 1 : 45 ] Of course, there are themselves changes inevitably, where you don't have in every home a father and a mother. You find inevitably in the providence of God, single parenthood, single father, single mother, through some providence or other that has led to that.

We're not talking about that. These things are themselves inevitable as well in human life. But what we're saying is that, in the normal sense of it, a family is made up of parents, father and mother and children, though we find also, of course, that there is an exception in that some parents remain childless.

These are the things in the providence of God that we learn to accept and deal with. But the biblical definition of family is this, that you have parents and children together as a unit in society, and that that unit itself is basic to the structure of society, so that the well-being of the family and the well-being of family life is itself important to the wider society that's made up of many families.

And, of course, we know that one of the reasons, one of the main reasons, if not the main reason, why this trend has come about, why this opposition to the biblical idea of family has come about, is because the Bible is being displaced, and is largely displaced from the thinking of people in our society, and even of those who are in control or in government as well, so that those who formulate the laws of our society don't have, or many of them don't have, the idea of the Bible's definition of a family in their minds when they come to think about family things and family well-being, and things like marriage or the well-being of children.

It's much more from a secularist point of view. But the Bible tells us that not only is the family important, but it tells us a number of ways in which are reasons for which the family is to be regarded as important.

[ 3 : 57 ] And one of the things we're looking at today, the main thing today is that the family is actually a training ground, especially for the way our lives develop from childhood through to adolescence and into adulthood.

The family is a training ground for children for the development and shaping of their lives, spiritually and morally, and in practical understanding of the world in which they live.

That's where the main emphasis in the Bible is as to where children develop in their lives. It's in the family setting. It's the training ground. That's, for example, the word that's used by Paul in Ephesians chapter 6, as you remember, where Paul, in that passage from chapter 5 onwards in Ephesians, deals with the family unit, speaking firstly about husbands, wives, their relationship

together, their responsibilities, their privileges.

Then he comes in 6 to deal with children. Children, obey your parents and the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother. He joins it to the fifth commandment. And then he says, Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

And that word instruction is literally the word training. Bring them up in the discipline and training of the Lord. It's there for their shaping, for their moral good and their well-being.

[ 5 : 27 ] That's, he says, what the family setting is about. And there's much in Proverbs on this very whole theme, on this whole theme of family and of family life, and on the issues that affect families, on the importance of the family, the development of things within the family, and in the family setting.

And what we're looking at today is basically two things. First of all, how this passage deals with the importance of home teaching. And secondly, the avoidance of bad company.

Now these things, of course, are not limited to children or to young people. We want our young people to understand these things. We want them to develop properly, of course. But these things, in principle, apply to every stage of human life.

It's always important in human life to avoid bad company, not to keep regularly bad company. It's always important, in every stage of human life, to participate in home teaching.

not only in the giving of instruction, but also in receiving the benefits of being asked things in our homes as parents, that we are then obliged to reply to and help children in the understanding of.

[ 6 : 48 ] Of course, the family setting is a training ground, too, for parenthood. Because when we set out in life, and children come along, we're not experienced in it.

We have to learn that. It's something that we also have to apply to ourselves, that we need to be trained in bringing up our children, just as our children need to be trained as they are brought up.

So the whole thing depends, in many respects, on the teaching and on the principles that Scripture gives us. So let's look at, first of all, the importance of home teaching. You notice here, in verse 8, how it's put, Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching.

In other words, it's the responsibility of father and mother, or father or mother, whichever it is, in our home setting, whether it's one parent or two parent family, the responsibility lies with that parent, or parents, to actually transmit the teaching, of those things of God, to their children.

It doesn't actually say here, Hear, my son, the instruction of your Sunday school, or, neither does it say, forsake not your day school's teaching.

[ 8 : 07 ] These things are important. Our day school is important. The education we receive is important. We should never take it lightly. We should be thankful for it, and for the quality of it.

The instruction we get in Sunday school is important, where we hope things are broken down for us, in regard to the teaching of scripture, and the important things of the gospel. But none of these places, neither the Sunday school, nor the day school, is the primary place, where our children are taught, where the instruction, that God wishes to pass on to us, for the development of our life, it is in the home.

While this is addressing those children, those young people, it does, by implication, leave the instruction, and make the instruction, important for the parent to give.

It's their responsibility. And that's why, nothing should really interfere with that. Nothing should interfere with, whether it's from government, or from other agencies, nothing should interfere with, the parental rights and responsibilities, to teach their children, those things that are necessary, and particularly in regard to Christian teaching, especially in regard to those things, that are important, as far as the gospel is concerned, as far as our soul is concerned, as far as our moral understanding, and well-being, and development is concerned.

It comes from the scripture, through the parent, onto the children. That's the development, that the Bible itself, sets out so clearly for us. Now of course, that means that, our training ground, in the home, is more than just, taking formal sessions, with our children, so as to teach them, things from the Bible.

[ 9 : 57 ] That's important, these formal sessions, if you can put it that way, where you have family worship, where you have people gathered, where the family gathers, to read the word together, to have prayer, and also praise, where these things, themselves, ought to have a place, in our home, and of course, that's such a good thing.

But then, the Bible doesn't confine, the teaching of our children, spiritual things, to those times. It's interesting, if you go back to, the way in which God, had structured the life, of the people of Israel. That in the book of Deuteronomy, where in many ways, Moses is recalling, the mind of the people, as they're preparing to go into, the promised land.

He's recalling, the things that God gave them, and the important principles, and precepts, that he left with them, so that they would pass these, on to their children as well.

In the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 6, for example, you find in verses 4, to 7 there, the following, in chapter 6, of Deuteronomy, verses 4, to 7.

[ 11 : 10 ] Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words that I command you today, shall be on your heart.

You shall teach them diligently, to your children. And you shall talk of them, when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise.

And there, as in other similar passages, the Lord was actually setting, before the people of Israel, the need, to instruct their children, in more than just, formal sessions of teaching.

And you notice there, the emphasis, on when you eat, when you sit down at a meal. Because, consistently in the Bible, you find that, that is one of the main things, that a home should have.

A family round, a family table, and as they share, in that family meal, so the conversation, shares the things of God. That's the ideal.

[ 12 : 14 ] That's what the Bible, sets out for us, the basic image, of what family life, should be about. And it's no accident at all, that you find elsewhere, in the Bible, fellowship around, family tables, or fellowship, around a table, of believers.

It's no accident, for example, that you find, the communion, described as the Lord's table. You gather around, the symbols, of Christ's body, and blood.

You gather around, things which represent, the Lord, in his death. You gather, to eat bread, and to drink, from the cup, physically. But as you do so, you're doing something, spiritual as well.

And you're doing it, at a table. You're doing it, as a family. The things of, the family, and the home, carry, carry on, into the church, so that, basically, the same things, as apply, in the family, in many ways, also apply, in the church's setting.

So that we gather, as a spiritual family, the household, of God, is one of the ways, in which the Bible, describes it. Why does it call it, the household of God?

[ 13 : 24 ] Because it is, a spiritual household. We come together, to eat spiritually, from the things, of the gospel. We come together, to share together, the things of the gospel.

We come together, as a spiritual family, to enjoy, the privileges, that God has given us. And just as you find, in the home, so there is a, prominence given, to teaching, in the church setting, as well.

Especially so, through the preaching, of the gospel, and through, our fellowships, of discussion, in the gospel. So there is, the importance, of home teaching, in the responsibility, of parents.

Whatever tasks, we are about, in the home, we should regard, ideally as tasks, where there is something, there that we can use, to pass, spiritual teaching, on to, our young people, our children. Even if they don't ask, it is our responsibility, nevertheless, to pass it on. And if they don't ask, then Israel, you see, had that, responsibility also, on the parents, that they would, train their children, to ask.

[ 14 : 34 ] And to ask things, in regard to, what does the Passover mean? What's the meaning, of this Lord's Supper? Why do we go to church? Why do we need, the Bible anyway?

What are the main things, taught in the Bible? So many things, that you can just, as you're going through, with a meal, as you're, sitting with the children, afterwards, as you're out for the day, as you're going for a walk, whatever it is, here's the Bible telling us, the home teaching, is absolutely vital, to our spiritual development.

It's the responsibility, of parents, but, there's also, responsibility, of children, in that response.

Responsibility, lies with the children, with the parents, primarily to teach, and the response, of the children, is also here.

What he says, hear my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not, your mother's teaching. Now I'm sure, that many of us, will agree, that while, the father in the home, ideally, is the person, that is, taking the lead, nevertheless, in many respects, it is, a mother, who has the ability, to pass on to children, in a way that we fathers, very often don't have, but pass on to, their children, things which

they will then remember, and apply to, in life.

Why is it, so very often, that, while we, undoubtedly miss, our father, when they pass from us, it's even more the case, that we feel the passing, of a mother, so acutely.

[16:17] Why is it, that it's so often, when we ourselves, come to, think of certain crises, in our lives, it's so often, not what would my father, have done, but how did my mother, teach me, what did my mother say, what did she actually, instill in my soul, what would my mother, have done with this.

It's so often, the case with us, that, that's how it is. Well here is, hear my son, your father's instruction, forsake not, your mother's teaching. They're being put, on the same level, in regard to that.

And when it says, hear, it means, listen carefully, listen attentively, do it seriously, do it honestly, don't pretend, to listen.

That passes into, the church setting as well, we're all children, in the spiritual sense, and when God, is speaking to us, through his word, this is just as important, for us as adults, as it is for children, in the home, my son, hear a father's instruction, hear your God's instruction, listen to what God is saying, listen carefully, don't just be, do it as a matter of, of form, don't just do it out of habit, don't just do it, for the sake of doing it, do it for eternity, do it for your soul's sake, do it for your spiritual development, do it for the increase, of your understanding, do it for the pleasing of God, all of that is bound up with it, but as far as children go, as well, it's there, hear my son, your father's instruction, and don't forsake, your mother's teaching, don't turn aside from it, follow out that path, because he's going on, in a minute to speak about, the avoidance of bad company, but the hearing, includes more than, just listening carefully, because in the old testament, especially the word hear, carried with it very closely, almost bound up in it, the idea of obedience, and in fact, it's true isn't it, that you haven't really heard, something properly, unless you've gone and done, what's required of you in it, when we hear God's word, then it's implied in that, that we do what God says, that's also true, in the teaching of the home, it's not just, listening without ears, you remember how Jesus, so often, put it as the prophets, indeed put it as well, this people hears, with their ears, there may indeed be a hearing, for our intellectual understanding, but what God is saying to us, don't just hear, in the sense of, a keen, attentive listening, go and do, what I'm telling you, you remember Jesus, when he, spoke in a similar way, in chapter 6, and verse 46, to people, who were following him, people who were listening, to what he was saying, people who, knew that there was something, different about him, but he turned down at one time, and said this to them, why do you call me,

Lord, Lord, and do not do, the things which I say, now who could put it, stronger than that, that was the Lord himself, who knew people's hearts, and who knew, that their listening, was just an outward listening, just a physical listening, or a mental listening, but they had no intention, of really following, through with doing, the things, that they were hearing him saying, as he spoke to them, why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and do not do, the things which I say, you could say that, a parent could say that, to their child as well, why do you call me, father, why do you call me, dad, why do you call me, mom, and do not do, the things, which I say, so, the response, of children, is one of, doing, what is, being instructed, what they're being instructed, to do, or to not do, what is not right, for them to do, and the result of that, is quite remarkable, for, in verse 9, you find it, there in a picture, for they are, a graceful garland, for your head, and pendants, for your neck, in other words, the instruction, that the Bible, gives us, the teaching, that the home, passes on to children, are spiritually, things, which, beautify, our lives,

[20:54] I don't know, about the men folks here, but I know, most of, the women's folks, would, think of jewelry, as, beautiful, when you look at, a diamond, pendant, or, here, a garland, which is like a tiara, when you see, that made out of, proper precious diamonds, stones, that are really valuable, and expensive, to buy, when you find these, around a woman's neck, or, in a woman's hair, it's an image, of beauty, you admire that, it is beautiful, these sparkling jewels, are themselves, beautiful, and they beautify, the person, in that sense, who comes to wear them, and what, God is telling us here, is that this instruction, that comes from, the Bible, and, is given to us, by our parents, is a, an instruction, which beautifies, it's to make our life, beautiful, we have to do away, with the idea, that you meet so often, today, that the Bible, is a bad thing, for you, that the Bible, actually brings, a certain, ugliness, into your life, that you really want, just to, push this aside, and, not really, follow literally, the teaching, of the Bible, even though, that was okay, centuries ago, if you want to be, a beautiful person, do what's good, in your own eyes, don't be afraid, to actually follow out, what your own conscience, says is right, and wrong, what your own understanding, tells you, be yourself,

well,

God is saying to us, yes, if you want to be yourself, you've got the liberty, to do that, but what God is saying, is, be what you ought to be, not what you yourself, want to be, what you ought to be, is, what God says, is right, and what God has given us, if only more, people in our society, would understand it, what God has given us, in the Bible, is instruction, that beautifies life, that beautifies life, that brings about, a certain, God like shape, to our understanding, and to our life, and its practice, that's why it's described, as a graceful garland, and pendants, for your neck, they're not, literally that, but they are spiritually, and morally, who is a beautiful person, well, you don't look at, a person's face, although there's, physical beauty, as well,

I'm sure, but a beautiful person, is primarily, one who's beautiful, from the inside, who reflects, the beauty of God, and of the truth of God, and of the holiness of God, and some of the perfections, of God, as these are, reflected, and mirrored, in a life, that's obedient to him, that's a beautiful life, why did the psalmist, want to, be all day, in the temple of God, as much as he could, to, to admire, the beauty, of the Lord, why did he want to, admire the beauty, of the Lord, because he wanted, to be like him, Psalm 34, they looked, to him, and they were enlightened, or you could say, they were beautified, the more we follow, in the path, that God sets us, not out of slavish obedience, not out of a, sort of negative, doer, negative kind of life, but out of love, for God, out of love, for his truth, and love, for his people, and love, for his laws, and love, for his days, that's a life, that's beautiful, and being, increasingly beautiful, in the way it lives, it will be like a garland, a graceful garland, on your head, and pendants, for your neck, the importance, of home teaching, responsibility, of the parents, response, of the children, and the result, in a beautiful life, and secondly, briefly, there is the avoidance, of bad company, two things, in that, firstly, the temptation, to follow, the ungodly, there it is, in verses 10, right through, really to verse 19, but he says, my son, if sinners entice you, and by sinners, he means, here people, who don't really, want to be obedient, to God, people who want, to dismiss, the teaching, or the instruction, that God gives them, if sinners entice you, do not consent, if they say, come with us, let us lie, and wait for blood, let us ambush, the innocent, without reason, like Sheol, or like death, the grave, let us swallow them alive, and whole, like those who go down, to the pit, we shall find all, precious goods, we shall fill our houses, with plunder, throw in your lot, among us, we will all have one purse, my son, do not walk, in the way with them, hold back your foot, from their paths, we are always being tempted, to follow the ungodly, in their thinking, in their conclusions, in their lifestyles, and that's even, for adults as well, but it's here addressed, particularly to young people, not, to actually keep, bad company, that doesn't mean, you lose your friends, when you become a Christian, doesn't mean you turn your back, on people who are your friends, it doesn't mean, you don't mix with people, it doesn't mean you don't, actually still hold, good relationships, with people, your own age, if you're a Christian, and they're not, that's not what this is saying, but it does mean, that you don't live your life, the way they do, that you don't keep company, with them, so that you share, in the things, that they do, ordinarily, or for most of their lives, what they're saying is, what it's saying is, if sinners entice you, do not consent, now, there's a series, of wrongs, all tied up here, to this invitation, come with us, verse 11, if they say, come with us, then he ties together, a number of things, that are wrong, that are connected, with this invitation, to follow, those who do wrong, and those who, are sinners, those who are ungodly, and one of the things, you find is that, sin is made to look,

very attractive, and the Christian life, is made out, to be very unattractive, because here are things like, well you're going to have lots, if you follow with us, you're going to have, a lot of precious goods, we'll actually fill our houses, with plunder, we'll all have one purse, there's all the, this that we're going to gather together, we're going to share out the spoils, whereas if you stay, on that path, of being a Christian, you're not going to have, any of these things, you're not going to have, the liberty to do, as we're doing, and you notice, there's also in it, there, even a reference, to violence, come let's lie, and wait for blood, let us ambush, the innocent, without reason, violence, is really about, doing your own thing, casting off, restraint, not listening to laws, or regulations, it's interesting, isn't it, that, those who are bullies, think that, resisting, the temptation, to evil, is just being a softy, and it gives, a good deal, of pleasure, to somebody, who wants to be a bully, that they can actually, be a bully, that they can bully, other people, that they can control, and manipulate, their lives, that's why bullying, is such a serious issue, in schools, or in, in homes, or wherever it is, bullying, is something, where people, try to take charge, of other people's lives, and that's what the invitation, is here, look after your own life, but be in charge, and if necessary, bully other people, to

get your own way, and we have to teach, our children, and we have to understand, ourselves, that resisting, evil, resisting wrong, resisting sin, resisting, the path of the ungodly, is not being weak, it's the bully, who's weak, he's giving in, to sin, he's giving in, to his own, inclination, to what is wrong, it's a lot more, strength required, to resist, sin, to resist, doing the things, that bullies do, a lot more sin, a lot more, strength required, to resist the invitation, come with us, when it comes from the ungodly, a lot more strength, required to avoid, bad company, than it is to fall in with it, and when somebody tells you, are you really a softy, if you don't go along with us, and you're really a softy, if you give, if you give, if you yield, to those teachings, that Christians believe, you're just being soft, why don't you resist, these things, with us, and follow the ways, of the world, well remember children, remember adults too, that when you say, no to sin, that's when you're acting, strongly, and courageously, and boldly, not when you give in to it, that's what Satan, wants you to do, it's much easier, to do that, in many respects, and to hold out, and to resist, and that's why, it's saying to us here, that the avoidance, of bad company, is so crucial, when it says things here, like, come, let's exercise, our own abilities, our strength, let's ambush the innocent, let's, let's take control, of these, softy people, of these, people who want to be, true to God, let's, let's deal with them, let's ambush, let's lie in wait, with, with intent, of taking over their lives, or controlling them, or manipulating, all of that is in there, as well as the, dishonesty, and the greed, that's there as well, we shall, find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses, with plunder, throw in your lot, among us, we shall all have one part, you see, the emphasis there, on greed, on materialism, on living for the things, of this world, and just pack your life, full, of all the things, that the world can give you, of all the things, that the ungodly can give you, just run along with us, and we'll guarantee, you'll have a full life, you'll have a life, full of the best things, of this world, even if we get them, by dishonesty, by cheating, never mind, who's going to find out, who's going to deal with us anyway, there's no eternity, there's no God, we're masters of our own lives, if we're not found out, that's it, what's wrong with that, well what's wrong with it, of course, is that it is wrong, in the eyes of God, and the penalty, has to be paid somewhere, as the passage goes on, to actually tell us, but there's all sorts, of false promises too, throw in your lot, among us, we will all, have one purse, yes, life's not like that, is it, have you ever seen, in films, a reflection of, what human life, is really like, when thieves, promise one another, that after they've done, the heist, or the robbery, or whatever, it'll be shared out equally, doesn't work that way, human nature, doesn't want to give things, away equally, the promises of the world, are empty promises, nothing is equal, in the ways of sin, we have to teach our children, that the only promises, that are going to be kept, are God's promises, that the only one, is going to be faithful, to his promise, is God, he's always true, to his promise, and that's why, the avoidance, of bad company, includes such things, as that, the temptation, to follow, the ungodly, is packed full, of all of these things, that are, to sin itself, to our sinful self, so attractive, [ 33 : 46 ] God is saying, don't do it, come, don't give in, to the invitation, come with us, by all means, witness, to your non-Christian friends, by all means, go as far as possible, to show them, why it's important, for you to be a Christian, but what it's saying is, when they then say to us, well come and join us, do the things, which we do, and you can do your Christian, things as well, don't do it, listen to your father's, instruction, forsake not, your mother's teaching, and then there's secondly, in saying no to sin, here, where it says, do not consent, and, do not walk, in verse 15, do not walk, in the way with them, because, there's a tendency, on our part, that, perhaps you would think, that, well it won't do any harm, just to, just to involve myself, a little bit, in the way, that the ungodly live, and, maybe that way,

I'll be able to keep up, my friendship, with them more, and therefore, be able, to influence them, a bit more, when it comes to me, speaking about, my Christian things, I have to remember, sometimes, that, the most effective, Christians, are those who say no, not the ones, who go, a certain distance, in the ways, of the world, and in worldly living, that doesn't make, an effective Christian, at all, the world will see, through that, your non-Christian friends, will see, you shouldn't be doing, these things, we're doing them, but we're not Christians, you shouldn't be doing, these things, you shouldn't be swearing, you shouldn't be, involving yourself, in things which, as a Christian, you know are wrong, what it's saying is, here, don't walk, in the way, with them, don't, have them, as best friends, don't let them, take you, into their, their confidence, don't participate, in, what they do, as worldly people, in the ways, of sin, in the ways, of the world, we don't influence, people best, when we go, so far, in the ways, of the world, and then think, we can draw back, we influence, people best, when we say, no I can't do that, and here is why, here is why, it's important

to me, as a Christian, and I want you, to understand, it's not that I hate you, it's not that I dislike you, as a person, it's just that I have to be, true to God, and this is why, and this is, the benefit you have, in the Bible,

God doesn't just tell you, things by way of command, he explains why, all the commands, of God, are accompanied, by explanations, of why it's good for you, to follow this way, why it's bad for you, not to do it, that's why, the Bible is, so valuable, we need to have, our lives then, guarded with, these teachings, with these instructions, that God has given us, you all know, I'm sure of, the great wall of China, some of you, have maybe seen it, for yourselves, you've certainly seen, photos of it, well, the great wall of China, was built, as a defense mechanism, and of course, it's a vast wall, it's so long, that you couldn't, possibly think of, any enemy, coming to invade, the people, on the other side, of the wall, who built it, for their defense, you couldn't imagine, them coming, well, we'll just go around it, because you'd have to walk, hundreds and hundreds, of miles, to go around it, it's also very thick, it's also very, very high, it was built, to protect, it was built, as a defense mechanism, and it has, gates, all the way through, the length of it, at certain places, where, guards, were deposited, when that, wall was, was actually being used, as a defense, it was very difficult, to get through the wall, but it could be done, and, you know what the most effective, way of getting, through the wall was, not climbing it, not trying to break it down, you just, bribed the guards, at the gate, you gave them something, to let you through, very effective, very simple, that was the easiest way, to get through, the great wall of China, that's how it is, with our lives as well, don't accept, the bribes of Satan, keep your soul intact, and sinners say, come with us, don't consent, avoid bad company, beautify, beautify your life, with God's teaching, that's why, he's given us, this bible, let's pray, oh lord, we thank you, for the benefit, that we have, from your word, and we pray, that you would apply, to us, by your holy spirit's power, we need lord, that your spirit, should open our hearts, our mind, to give us the will, to apply your word, to all issues in life, teach us, we pray, to walk in your ways, and help us, to resist, the evil one, and every temptation, we meet with, that seeks to take us away, from the path of obedience, to you, we ask lord, that you would, each day, teach us, to follow your word, and its direction, and help us, as we do so, that our lives, may be, morally, and spiritually beautiful, and pleasing, to yourself, in all of these things, lord, accept our thanks now, for Jesus sake, amen.