

The Family

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Date: 08 November 2020

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! One has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.

In the fear of the Lord, one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge. That is the authoritative word of God.

Have you ever faced a problem that is so big that you had trouble thinking about anything else?

Maybe an ache or a pain. You know, as I get older, these things happen.

They keep persisting, and that dread of getting therapy or surgery and beginning that whole rehab process just kind of searches you through life.

[1 : 09] Or maybe a required math class where your grade is rapidly plummeting and you're having trouble listening in every other class. Or maybe a week in Nevada, slowly counting vote after vote, leaving you wondering, what is going on?

Those problems we all face. In the early 1940s, Britain faced just such a problem. Nazi Germany, as you know from the Second World War, had invaded and occupied France.

And as expected, they then moved across the channel and began bombing the island of Great Britain. In September of 1940, German bombers blitzed through enemy lines and bombed the city of London for 57 consecutive nights.

While Germans dropped literally tons of bombs, Winston Churchill, the prime minister of Britain, hunkered down and led the nation and directed the war from his underground bunker, later dubbed the Churchill War Rooms.

Churchill famously refused to back down. He refused to retreat, even as bombs are going off overhead. He refused to give into despair. He did not spin his wheels in frustration.

[2 : 24] He kept his eyes focused on taking down that bad man. That was one of his famous nicknames for Hitler. He wanted to take out that bad man and his evil Nazi regime.

In the nation of Britain, they followed his lead, and they stood their ground. They refused to back down. They were prepared way ahead of time. They were given gas masks. People often carried them to work or carried them to the supermarket or carried them to church or something like that. And then they were too challenged to stand their ground, and they did. And I just wonder that question, what made the difference? That's one of those questions I always want to ask of history. You know, how did Churchill do it?

You know, as the threat of Nazi Germany continued to grow, they're making their way across France. As they invaded there, and they're getting closer and closer to the island of Great Britain, how did he not become consumed with the threat?

How did it not paralyze him? Well, several weeks ago, I read an article that may uncover the secret to his stand. I think we have a picture of it.

[3 : 29] Is that there? Yeah. Okay. It's a to-do list from Churchill's War Rooms.

Now, a to-do list. You might think I'm losing my mind. But it's not just any to-do list. If you look there at the top, you can't quite see it, but it's circled right there at the top. D-Day to-do list.

So it's not just a to-do list from any day. It's a to-do list from D-Day, the most pivotal day in World War II.

And you think, what's that got to do with anything? Well, hopefully we'll figure out. I think what it says to me, and spoke to me powerfully, is kind of face your enemy, get a good look at him. Okay? That's what Churchill did.

And then get your head down. Don't give in. Don't give up. Don't let your enemy keep you from doing what you need to do. Put your head back down and keep doing the small things that secure the win in the end.

[4 : 29] Now, this week may be one of joy to you. Trump has gone home, and his tweets will not annoy you for four more years.

I mean, I'm honestly a little bit relieved by that. We have the first female vice president. Seriously, maybe that's a joy to you, and it's certainly a historic moment.

For others of you, this week may be one of despair. What's going to happen to our country? Is Joe Biden really our president? Isn't he already planning all these executive orders that he's going to bring down right after January 20?

For others of you, this week may be just plain frustrating. Why did this take so long? Did Joe steal the presidency? Is Trump trying to steal it back?

What's going on? Who stole what? You know? Because everybody's telling us. I get texts from people telling me who stole what every day. I thought this week was going to make it all clear.

[5 : 32] Now, wherever you land, I don't care where you land. This week must not cause you to be distracted from what really matters.

It's time for us to return to our to-do list. It's time for us to put our heads back down. It was a long year. It's time for us to pray.

It's time for us to give attention to God's Word. It's time for us to unite with others around the gospel of Jesus Christ and not their political stripe. It's time for us to evangelize. And one of the things Proverbs wants us to do is it's time for us to build the family.

The family is the building block of society. And biblically, it's a vital means of filling the earth with the glory of Jesus Christ. And according to Proverbs, it is something we must not be distracted from.

So my main point this morning is be calm and devote yourself to building a godly family this world can never take away. Be calm and devote yourself to building a godly family this world can never take away.

[6 : 41] We're going to break this out in four points. The first one is the family is where godliness is first seen. The familiness is where godliness is first seen. Now, what is a family? I mean, in this culture, we might need to define what a family is.

A family, according to my understanding, biblically, a family is meant to be one man and one woman, faithful to one another, and committed to raising godly children.

Maybe that's the most basic definition. But one man, one woman, faithful to one another, committed to raising godly children. Obviously, in a fallen world, families do not always have one man or one woman for any number of reasons.

They're still families, but are much more challenging than god designed. The family, as you know, biblically, is not man's idea. When god created man and woman in the garden, he joined them together.

One plus one equals one. In marriage, causing them to come together intimately and to bring forth children for a specific purpose, to fill the earth and multiply it, to dominion.

[7 : 41] And in a way, I mean, I think, to raise children that fear God and work to fill this fallen world with what is pleasing to God. The book of Proverbs wonderfully affirms this understanding of marriage.

We see in Proverbs 31, right before it launches into the Proverbs 31 woman, it says, An excellent wife who can find she's far more precious than jewels, the heart of her husband. Trust in her, and he will have no lack.

And so you see a monogamous marriage. You see one man committed to one woman. You know, there's all that politically polygamy in the Old Testament. And the Bible's not trying to commend polygamy there.

That is sin that God forbore with. He forbore with those sins. He's not commending that. And so we see in Proverbs that the wonderful affirmation of one man and one woman committed to one another.

But we also see the picture of the family. The family is where godliness and the fear of the Lord is first seen. That's what we saw in Proverbs 14, 26.

[8 : 38] In the fear of the Lord, one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge. There's something about the fear of the Lord that spreads more powerfully by sight. Before children

learn about the fear of the Lord through their ears, they're supposed to learn about the fear of the Lord through their eyes.

One of the most powerful verses on parenting in Proverbs gets this just right. Not that I'm judging the scriptures, but it affirms this as well.

Train up a child in the way he should go. When he's old, he will not depart. Now, everybody knows that one, right? Well, the Hebrew word translated for train up there is related to the word that's used of rubbing the upper palate of a child's mouth with dates or something like that to prepare them to learn how to suck and to eat.

So it's training them up and preparing their palate to help them eat, to get comfortable with taste and comfortable with eating. You know, we do a similar thing. We pull out that rice cereal or whatever for a baby, and you begin to put it in their mouth, and we all laugh when they stick their tongues out, and they don't like it.

But you're kind of beginning to introduce them to what food's like. And as soon as they get older, you're showing them good food and much good food, and you just love showing them all this food. And also, it's why Asian and Indian and Hispanic children can eat much more spice than us because they were raised on it.

[10:06] Now, I was raised as a corn-fed white boy, and then I married an Asian lady, and this whole culinary world opened up to me, and it was so wonderful, and I left my mashed potatoes behind.

Almost literally. I still eat them, but I like that other stuff. But the way is, you know, you're supposed to cultivate your child's palate. This side of the cross, what we're trying to cultivate, what we're trying to train up our child in, train up your child in things of God, and the good life of living full tilt for Jesus Christ.

That's the taste bud you're trying to form. Train up your child in the things of God, and the good life of living full tilt for Jesus Christ. Now, to obey this command, you must be dedicated to living full tilt for Jesus Christ.

The first principle of parenting in Proverbs and in the Scriptures is your example. That's what I'm getting at. There's an old proverb, a Chinese proverb, children learn more by the eye than by the ear.

Every educator knows this, right? That's why we're worried about groupthink. That's why we're worried about peer pressure. Because we learn more by watching the lives of others than we do by hearing them speak. We learn more by watching and doing.

[11:26] And this is why, you know, in so many ways, this is why the book of Proverbs doesn't come to us in loose, disconnected sayings for the church or for the classroom. The book of Proverbs doesn't come to us like that.

It comes to us in the family. It situates us in the family. We're teaching about life and the fear of the Lord and biblical wisdom comes from those we watch every day.

It comes from our mother and father. The wisdom incubator, the wisdom educator, the wisdom classroom is not the university.

It's not the newspapers or the books we read or any of those things. The wisdom classroom is in the family. That's where he situates us. And so the first and most important principle of parenting is your example of living full tilt for Jesus Christ.

The idea is that if you are real, it will cover a multitude of sins and failures. If you are not, it will unravel all you say with your mouth.

[12:29] Here's why. Your child won't taste what you don't taste. Your child won't love what you don't love. Your child won't live for what you don't live for.

You will not. Children are wonderful at sniffing things out. You will not fool your child. If you talk a lot about Jesus but spend the bulk of your time and money building your dream house or dream life, don't be surprised when they don't talk a lot about Jesus.

Now, I had a really close friend who grew up in a Christian family, a pro-life, pro-family family. But we were very close.

He always wondered where his parents stood, really stood on Christianity. He saw things that didn't add up. He came to a head when he was in college.

He had a college girlfriend and did what he shouldn't have done and he got her pregnant. He came home. He told his parents. And they encouraged him to have her get an abortion.

[13 : 34] Turning their back on what they believed to maintain a manufactured image. His girlfriend miscarried. But he still hasn't recovered.

From seeing through his parents' faith. Archbishop Tillison says, To give children good instruction and a bad example is but beckoning to them with the herd.

With the herd. Yeah, with the herd. Let's spell that. To show them the way to heaven. While we take them by the hand and lead them in the way to hell. Now, I realize a few things are going to land on you like this.

It's very searching. What are our children learning about dependence upon God by our habits of prayer?

What are our children learning about how to treat their spouse by the way we talk to ours? What are our children learning about the fear of God?

[14 : 47] Now, if you get this, you'll be devastated. I mean, you'll be so desperate. That's the one thing I love about our baby dedications. It is sort of a dedication of the baby.

But in so many ways, it's a dedication of the parents. Lord, help us. You know, we're crying out because it's such a tall order and it's so sobering. And yet, I think it can be so releasing.

Children are not after a show. They're not after a performance. Fathers and mothers who perform lose their kids' respect. They don't gain it.

I mean, my friend's example, the wonderful example, they didn't win it. They lost it. They couldn't have been brought lower in his eyes. And so, children are after a real-life broken example living full tilt for Jesus Christ.

So, it is searching, but it can be freeing. Secondly, the family is where godly wisdom is first taught. Godly wisdom is first taught.

[15 : 48] Fathers and mothers, teach your children the wisdom and the fear of the Lord. That's kind of repeated throughout Proverbs. Proverbs, you know, I mean, and you know, when you begin to have a baby, it's all fun and games.

And you know, we had fun. We had, you bring this baby, sorry. When you have the baby, it's all fun and games. But parenting gets overwhelming quick. If any of you have been parents, you know.

You get into parenting thinking all you need to do is love your kids and keep them from the boogeyman. And before long, parenting gets distracted with many other things. You must make sure they're athletic, but you don't want them to be too athletic.

So, you keep them well-rounded. Keep them in the advanced classes. And don't forget about their social skills. Because no one wants that kid that can't talk to anybody but himself. And definitely can't talk to strangers.

And while you're at it, let's talk about diet. Let's talk about sugar. And parenting just gets overwhelming with all these things. One author said it so well. There's so many rules and expectations of parents. Parenting may be the last bastion of legalism.

[16 : 46] Not just in church, but in our culture. We live in a permissive society that won't count any sin against you as an adult, but will count the calories in your kids' hot lunches. I keep hearing that kids aren't supposed to eat sugar anymore.

What a world! What a world, he says. My parents were solid as a rock. But we still had a cupboard populated by cereal royalty like Captain Crunch and Calchocula.

In our house, the pebbles were fruity. And the charms were lucky. The breakfast bowl was a place for marshmallows, not dried camping fruit.

Our milk was 2%. Sometimes if we need to take an edge off a rough morning, we'd tempt fate and chug a little vitamin D. Now, it's not wrong.

Get your kid on a ketogenic diet or something like that. It's not necessarily wrong, but in the end, it can distract you from what's most important. Teaching your children about the things of God. The Proverbs just lays into us with this.

[17 : 49] Proverbs 1, 8, 9 says, Hear, my son, your father's instruction. Forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.

Turn with me to Proverbs 22. You're in 14. It's just a couple chapters over. Proverbs 22. Look in verse 22. He says, Actually, it's not 22.

It's 23. Listen. Yeah, yeah. 23, verse 22. Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she's old. Buy truth and do not sell it.

Buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding. It's just a metaphor. Buy this from your parents. That's what it's saying. The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice. He who fathers a wise son will be glad in him.

Let your father and mother be glad. Let her who bore you rejoice. The idea, what I'm trying to get across, the idea is that parents, you are the first and primary disciplers of your children.

[18:47] You are called to teach them a godly wisdom in the fear of the Lord and disciple them. Ephesians 6.4 is very clear. Fathers, don't provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

That's a commandment from God. Fathers and mothers. Train them up. Discipline and instruction. Obviously, the idea is you correct them when they disobey, but the idea is more than that.

It's to bring them up, to educate them in everything they need to live a fully godly life. It's more comprehensive than just redirecting them.

Puritans used to refer to every father as the pastor of their household. Now, I think that's very right and biblical.

While families are called to live out their faith in a local church under the authority of God's word and godly leadership, the father is the nearest and most important authority in a child's life.

[19:53] Parents are to be called to be this primary disciplers of their children. You know, in so many ways, as we continue to develop as a church, this is a principle I want to maintain at all costs.

However, youth ministry appears, I've been a youth pastor before, I feel a strong conviction not to overrun or undermine a parent's authority.

And their responsibility. Now, obviously, church and parents come together to raise a child and rejoice together, but in so many ways, they're first and I'm second. We're second.

So devote yourself to the task of parenting. Proverbs 27, 23.

Know well the condition of your flock. Give attention to your herds. Parenting is one of your greatest callings and should be pursued as one of your greatest priorities.

[20:52] It must unseat many other things in your life in order to be faithful. I read a story recently about a woman named Cynthia. I'm just going to read it straight from the book because it's more well written than I would write it.

A woman named Cynthia once told me a story about the time her father had plans to take her on a night out in San Francisco. Sounds like fun. Twelve-year-old Cynthia and her father had been planning the date for months.

They had a whole night planned down to the minute. Can you imagine that, planning that with your little daughter? She would attend the last hour of his presentation. Then they would eat Chinese food, shop, catch a flick, go back to the hotel, jump into a pool for a quick swim, have a hot fudge sundae, and then watch the late, late show in bed.

That's a little much for a 12-year-old, but we'll just move on. This was all going to plan until he ran into an old college friend and business associate. It had been years since they had seen each other, and Cynthia watched as they embraced enthusiastically.

This was obviously pre-COVID. I thought it was okay. Y'all didn't. His friend said, in effect, I'm so glad you're doing some work with our company right now.

[22:10] When Lois and I heard about it, we thought it would be perfect. We wanted to invite you, and of course, Cynthia, to get a spectacular seafood dinner down on the wharf.

And Cynthia's father just responded, Bob, it's so great to see you. Dinner at the wharf sounds amazing. Cynthia was heartbroken.

Her daydreams evaporated in an instant. But then her father continued. But not tonight. Cynthia and I have a special date planned.

Don't we? He winked at her, grabbed her hand, and they ran out the door and continued with what was an unforgettable night. After her father died, she later said, who happens to be Stephen Covey?

She said, bonded. His simple decision bonded him to me forever because I knew what mattered most to him was me.

[23:19] Find ways to say that to your child again and again and again. It's an incredibly empowering thing. I mean, fathers especially, I would call you to locate time in your calendar that is reserved just for them.

It's an incredible thing to say to your child. I've carved this out. This is all you. I know I don't have much to offer, but this is all you. It's all us. We're going to eat ice. We're going to do whatever you want to do.

Just be together. Carve that out and regularly reserve it for them just so you can say, work was not first. And children, if your parents are like this, you're looking here and you're listening, man, love them and listen to them.

I mean, that's what Proverbs would say to you. If they want to teach you the fear of the Lord more than anything else, just listen up. That's what Proverbs 23, 24, and 5. Look down there with me again.

He's just saying, let your father and mother be glad. Let her bore you. Rejoice. Just listen to them and follow them. It'll be a great blessing to you.

[24 : 23] That's what Proverbs says. Again and again, you'll live long. You'll learn wisdom. You'll learn the fear of God. You'll find peace and contentment and joy. Thirdly, the family is where obedience is first required.

It's where obedience is first required. The family is where authority is learned. You know, our children are created in God's image.

They're children born into a world in which they are not the center. It's not good to organize your child's life around their wishes because that's not the way the world works. The world is God's and it's governed by his authority.

And the world is also governed by numerous authority structures. We submitted to one this week in a new president. Employees have employers.

Students have teachers. Fast drivers have police officers. The home is to be a miniature world where authority is learned. Where children learn how to honor and respect those over them.

[25 : 29] It's meant to be this little incubator that prepares them for the world out there. I mean, the biggest problems when you see in the news out there, that's not the way the problem started. The problem started in the home where they need to learn this.

And so the family is where authorities first learn. It's so right that children receive unconditional love. It's so right that children find unchangeable acceptance in their parents. But children should also find unquestioned authority in their parents.

No one chooses their parents. No one chooses where they're born. Yet scripture calls them to obey them. Not because of their education or their intelligence or performance, but because of the commandment of God.

Why is it this way? So that they might learn. It's interesting. In a couple of Paul's letters, Romans 1 and 2 Timothy 3, Paul includes disobedience to parents.

Along a list with murder, adultery, killing, stealing, whatever. Disobedience to parents. I mean, I always thought that. It's really funny. I mean, come on, Paul. I mean, you know, is that really what you can pull up? But I think the idea, what he's trying to say is that it began a long time ago.

[26 : 36] Like the murderer doesn't just pop on the scene because he's looking for something fun to do. It began with disobedience. And so the family is where authorities first learn.

The family is where obedience is first required. Parents must require obedience. It's not enough for parents to say words of wisdom. Parents must command children to obey wisdom.

That's what Scripture commands them. So parents must uphold it. Biblically, obedience should be without delay, without discussion, and without disgust. Now, you think that's too high.

Well, Paul said the same thing to slaves in Colossians 3 and Ephesians 6. In thinking of obedience, in the early years, freedom should be limited.

And obedience required through clear directions and regular enforcement. As they get older, children should be given freedom and responsibility. When necessary, they should be pulled back for training.

[27 : 37] There's a simple diagram. I'm going to show up just because I think it'll help you. It helped me. Do we have that diagram? No?

Oh, we do. Maybe. Tell me if it comes. I'll send it to you.

Don't worry about it. We'll keep moving. But in so many ways, I think the diagram, I'm trying to think about whether I should diagram this out for you. Oh, there it is. Technology. You love it when it works. And you don't when it doesn't.

So the cultural pattern is give your kid tons of freedom when they're zero. You know, not really zero. But, you know, when they're really young, give them tons of freedom. What do you want? You want peas?

Let's not do peas. You want pizza? No. You know, you give them tons of freedom. And then gradually, when they turn a teenager, you freak out. So you start yanking back on them. I saw you smoking. So you're on restriction for six months. The biblical pattern, though, is restrict the freedom early.

[28 : 37] And extend it out later. I think that's so helpful. It's the reason parents freak out when their kids are teenagers. Because a good teen is formed when they're zero to three, actually.

At least that's what I'm hoping for. You know, so in our little years, when our kids are completely dependent upon us, do we really need to ask them what they want to wear? What they want to eat? The little years are exhausting, but they ought not be perplexing.

Parents, then, must require or must discipline for disobedience. Now, the book of Proverbs is very clear about the rod. You can preach on parenting.

You've got to address this. Proverbs 22, 15. Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him. 29, 15. The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

23, 13, and 14. Do not withhold discipline from the child. If you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with a rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.

[29 : 48] Now, let me make a few comments. The rod of discipline is not punishing your child. It's not making them pay for a crime.

They spill a drink, you get a spanking to pay for the crime. It's not retaliating against your child. It's not getting even. It does not glorify God.

It's not getting even for their disobedience or for embarrassing you in public. It's also not your right to an uncontrolled anger. If you're more angry because your child has sinned against you than you are because he or she has sinned against God, you're out of line.

The rod of discipline is, according to scriptures, when parents use spanking in a careful, timely, and controlled way for the purpose of rescuing their child from disobedience and restoring them to obeying God.

The rod of discipline is when parents use spanking in a careful, timely, and controlled way for the purpose of rescuing their child from disobedience and restoring them to obeying God.

[31 : 00] So the goal is not punishment. The goal is not retaliation. The goal is certainly not your venting of anger, but rescue, restoration, bringing them back into wisdom and the fear of the Lord.

Now, you may have experienced abuse at the hands of your parents under the banner of spanking. If you experience uncontrolled anger, unexpected and sudden lashes for disobedience, I did not glorify God, and I'm sorry.

Really sorry. It's deeply reprehensible. That's bad, really bad. When people in authority use authority.

To abuse and hurt like that. So I'm sorry. A few encouragements. And then we'll move on from this awkward subject, I guess.

Begin requiring obedience and spanking for disobedience as soon as willful unruliness of disrespect appear in your child's actions. Now, you can come talk to me afterwards if you want more thoughts.

[32 : 20] But, you know, usually it's 18 months or something like that. You don't have to rush to it. You know. When's the moment? Oh, no, we're too late.

No, no. There'll be plenty of time. Folly's bound up in their heart, and you'll have plenty of time to drive it out. Make your rules clear and constant. Now, some people accuse me of changing the rules as I play the game, but that's not cool to people.

Unless I want to win, but that's not the point. So don't change the rules in the house every day. Think about this. In the garden, there was lots of yeses and one no.

No. But the no was a big one. It was an N-O capital, you know, and they paid for it. So be consistent. You know, if they disobey, respond in the same way every time.

Don't repeat yourself. Don't count to three. Just discipline them. And if the goal is rescue and restoration, keep the focus on the heart.

[33 : 26] I mean, outwardly obedient kids, anybody can do that. But kids that love what is good is much different.

And that's what you want. I know that's what you want. So keep your focus on the heart. Fourthly, the family is where life is deeply and often unalterably shaped.

Life in the family is where, or the family is where life is deeply and often unalterably shaped. You know, the family shapes life deeply. In the South, we're pro-life.

We're pro-family. Pro-family values. You know, we have three principles we live by. God. Y'all can complete this country. And family.

But that doesn't mean we do family right all the time. Proverbs 22, 6. Train up the child in the way he should go. Even when he's old, he will not depart from it. The family is meant to be the place.

[34 : 32] What that's trying to say? The path is formed there, right? But also a path is formed there. It's meant to be a place where children find the path they are to walk on for the rest of their life. It's meant to be a place where children find the path to walk on, a path of safety and security in a world of division and insecurity for the rest of their life.

Sometimes they do. Praise God. Sometimes they don't find it there. Sometimes there's no one there to teach. Many homes are missing.

Dad or mom are both. Sometimes they're both there, but may as well not be because they don't have time. Still other times they are there, but pull their children away from walking in the way of wisdom.

It may be a mother who never found in you what she wanted to find. It may be a father who has never had time to throw the ball. It may be a brother who humiliated you when his friends were around and acted like things were normal when they weren't.

It may be a mother-in-law who is always on your case for you to do more. It may be a family where loyalty to the family and family gatherings is more important than loyalty to anything else.

[35 : 47] That's not good. Wonderfully, in the New Testament, the Bible calls the church a family for just situations like that. The church is a household.

We're no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints and members, that is, brothers and sisters, of the household of God. The church is a place where you can find people to do what your family never did.

You can find people that lead you in the way of wisdom and the way that your family never did. And it doesn't have to condemn your family, but it does open up the way of wisdom for you.

The church is a place of spiritual fathers and mothers. You may not have children of your own. I don't know that. You may not have children of your own, but please do not miss the opportunity to be spiritual fathers and mothers.

We think about Timothy. Remember he talked about his grandmother Lois? You know, he talked about his grandmother and his mother who were so important in nurturing his faith. But his father is not mentioned. He was Greek.

[36 : 47] He's not mentioned. But Paul says, you are my son, Timothy. And he ministered to him in such a wonderful way. I don't denigrate that. Every Christian has someone in their life just like that they have to thank.

I had one I called this week, David J. Vickery. He always would insert that J, so I always do it back to him. But in Greenville, South Carolina, he was a father to me. I don't know where I would be in a ditch somewhere if he hadn't been a father to me.

So you can find it there. But the family, when pursued in the fear of God, can leave a legacy for good that endures long after we're gone. You know, I don't like the word legacy, I must admit.

But so often it's about what we do. I just want to leave a legacy, you know, okay? I don't. In the way you're talking, maybe tied to money or something like that.

But the Proverbs lays out a legacy that's just way more better. It's way better. Proverbs 14, 26 says, In the fear of the Lord, one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.

[37 : 59] I can't get over that verse. Is there anything more you want? Do you want your kids to have strong confidence? You want your kids to have a refuge?

Listen, you don't need a good job. You don't need a good background. You don't need a good education. You don't need to be well thought of in the community. You don't need a bunch of Instagram followers.

You need to fear the Lord, and your children will have a refuge for generations. I mean, that is incredible. That's what you want. That's what your children want more than anything else.

And if you fear the Lord, that's what you have. I mean, Proverbs 17, 6 says it well, too. Grandchildren are a crown of the aged. Came to Chris real early. You know, grandchildren are a crown of the age.

And the glory of children is their fathers. Unlike our culture, which discards people when they are no longer valuable to us.

[38 : 55] They reach an age where they're no longer valuable. Those who have fathers who fear the Lord glory in them. The idea is fathers who fear the Lord give their children something to be proud of.

Don't you want your children to be proud? That's what it is. They're not going to be proud of what you buy for them. They're not going to be proud of how much money you make. They're not going to be proud about what competitions you won, or what sales competitions you won, or what lands you travel to. That's not what's going to make them proud. What's going to make them proud is that you fear the Lord.

Proverbs 10, 7 says, The memory of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot. Now that's vivid.

One day, very soon, your children will be gathered around a meal after your memorial service. What will they say?

[40 : 02] Will they quietly pass around the peas and cornbread, just trying to get the meal over so they can get back to life? Or will there be pride in their heart?

Will there be a smile on their face? I mean, will the stories just flow out? Do you remember when Dad took me on that date after that loser dumped me? Do you remember how Mom would get up way before the rest of us to cook and greet us with a hug?

Do you remember how long they worked and how hard they worked, but fell asleep trying to listen to us talk about that childhood or high school crush? Do you remember how they established these unmovable things that they would not let us miss in our lives?

Like saying, I'm sorry. Like going to church. Like eating donuts. At any time possible. You know, your life will lead a legacy to your family. Let it be the fear of the Lord.

You know, wonderfully, one of the greatest legacies in the scriptures is the thief on the cross. That's what I'm going to offer to you this morning. You may come in. You may be saddled. By the end of this message, you may think, man, my example stinks.

[41 : 13] And my kids are receiving nothing from me. But you know, the thief on the cross is not remembered as a thief. He's remembered as the one who turned to the Lord in the moment.

Remember, the other one did not receive the Lord. He said, remember me in your kingdom. He said, today you'll be with me in paradise. That really, that's the promise of the gospel that comes to you this morning.

But the promise of the gospel that comes especially to parents and the role they are. You know, in so many ways, parents provide such a pivotal role in their child's life. And most importantly, in how they fear or don't fear the Lord.

And so I invite you, if you are aware that your legacy is going downhill, you can come to the gospel through the Lord Jesus Christ and begin that work of change.

I mean, in so many ways, you can come and receive Jesus freely and fully by faith and come and begin to work and to live in such a way that fears him.

[42 : 13] So I invite you. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God raised him from the dead for your sin and for mine, you will be saved. You'll be changed. Now, Winston Churchill refused to back down.

Kept his head down. He didn't give up. Didn't give in even till his death. One of my favorite little stories about him is that before he died, he lost consciousness with his wife Clementine by his side. As death threw near, he grabbed her hand and held it. He said some final words, and then his mouth was reduced to silence.

Presumably, he looked at her one last time, and then he closed his eyes, never to open them again. His body continued to weaken, his life again slipping away, but he held her hand tightly.

It sums up his life well. I pray it does ours as well. Don't get taken away by the news.

[43 : 25] Be calm. Build a godly family the world can never take away. That just keeps cascading for generations and generations to come.

You have an opportunity to affect literally hundreds of people from your line this morning in your life. Let's do it.

Father in heaven, we cast ourselves upon you. We need you. We long for families like this. Lord, I pray that you would protect us from any condemnation.

But Lord, where there is appropriate guilt, I pray that you would lead us to repentance and to a life of full sacrifice, living full tilt for Jesus Christ.

Lord, we need you. We pray where there's drastic changes that need to be made. Lord, I pray that you give us wisdom and the Holy Spirit. Pray that you guide us and direct us and keep us.

[44 : 27] In Jesus' name, amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.