CHRISTIAN’S TESTIMONY, Part III

Prudence and Piety have already spoken with Christian … and now it is Charity’s turn. She concentrates on his family. Her questions must have thrust into him like a dagger … “Why did you not bring them along with you?” His unbelieving wife Christiana, and their four sons, - Matthew, Samuel, Joseph, and James, - had remained at home in the City of Destruction. The sounds of their cries as He left the city must have echoed in his ears on many occasions, “Now he had not run far from his own door when his wife and children, perceiving it, began to cry after him to return; but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on crying, Life! Life! Eternal life! So he looked not behind him” (p.16).

It must have been a heart-wrenching decision to leave them behind and follow after the way that would lead to Christ … He might never see them again. As he would have continued on his journey, how often he must have longed for his family to have been with him. Indeed, Mr. Worldly-Wiseman ‘played’ on this … He suggested to Christian that he should go back for his family and bring them to the beautiful quiet and quaint little village of Morality … and he should settle down there, and go no further (pp. 27,28). Yes, Mr. Worldly-Wiseman realised Christian’s deep deep love for his family and how he longed for them to be on the journey with him.

I cannot put into words what it is like to know that you are heading towards Heaven and your family is not yet with you. You want them to be coming out to the meetings with you … You want them to love the Lord as you love Him. They love you with the deepest of love but they will not trust in your Saviour and be saved. It tears the heart from you, and you feel so incapable to do anything about their spiritual state.

You can see what lies beyond this life for them if they will not believe … but they cannot see it, and it doesn’t concern them. It is somehow made all the worse because they are such good people. They would never do anyone any harm … they would give you the last bite going into their mouth! … But as far as the Gospel is concerned, they are as hard as hard can be and they will not listen to how they must be saved. They will not believe! … What can you do?

DON’T CAST THEM OFF

You can become so involved with other Christians, you can neglect your own family. Yes, I know the things of God now take prominence in your life … but the families the Lord has made us part off are our primary mission field.
I must confess as a Pastor, the easiest people to forget are your own. It is so much more straightforward going out and sharing the Gospel with others than it is with your own. You’re living with them, you’re spending time with them, you know all about them … but they are the hardest to relate to about the Lord.

But, do you notice how tenderly Christian speaks about them? He hasn’t, - as it were, - left them back in the City of Destruction … He continues to have them very much on his heart. And this questioning from Charity highlights it even more. “Why didn’t you bring them with you?” … and he answered her weeping. The further he went on his journey … the nearer he approached his destination … the greater distance between him and his family!

While we are praying for the Lord’s work in other parts of this world, and while we’re praying for souls to be saved in the surrounding area … make it your priority to bring your loved ones before God so we can all pray for them.

Charity said to him, “You should have talked to them”. He did. “You should have endeavoured to have shown them the danger of staying behind”. He had. He had told them but they would not listen! “Did you pray for them … that they would listen to the Gospel?” Yes, he did, “with much affection”. “Did you tell them of the battle raging in your soul to be made right with God?” “Yes, over, and over, and over”. They saw his tears. They heard the trembling in his voice … as he feared for their eternal destiny. … He tried and tried and tried, to no apparent avail.

Oh, Christian, don’t cast them off! Yes, you say they mocked you and they would not believe … but don’t cast them off. Don’t stop loving them. Don’t stop praying for them. … Christian, don’t cast them off … and …

**DON’T GIVE THEM UP**

They are precious souls needing to be saved … and the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, … but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). Look at how He never gave up on you … and remember how He pursued you through all the obstacles you erected. … If the Lord can save you, He can save them also!

Christian’s wife was afraid of losing the pleasures and the friends of this world … and his children didn’t want to look foolish in the eyes of their friends … Doesn’t it all sound so familiar?! The hymn says, “Take the world, but give me Jesus, All its joys are but a name” … but as far as the unbeliever is concerned, it is too high a price! Jesus asked, Mk. 8:36 what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain
the whole world, and lose his own soul? … But that is not the way a slave to this world can see it!

Yes, they know that pleasures are but for a season. If they are involved in the world’s pursuits, they know their enjoyment will ‘dry up’ … but they keep going on anyway, - Christian’s wife stayed at home and kept her friends. His children enjoyed playing with their friends and growing up doing all their friends did. Just because Christian wasn’t with them, it made no difference to their spiritual condition.

Did they not hanker after him? If they did, it wasn’t mentioned. They definitely didn’t hanker after what he had been telling them. They didn’t pay any attention to anything he said to them concerning their spiritual destiny.

And then it made Christian look in on himself and start to blame his own weaknesses. We can all do that … Maybe if he had been a better father, “I cannot commend my life, for I am conscious to myself of many failings therein”.

The devil often comes and tells us how useless we have been. If we were a better father or mother, a better husband or wife, we would have had more of an influence on our families for Christ. Yes, the devil ‘might have a point’ but the Lord could work in spite of our poor testimony … And while it is true we mustn’t give up on our families … it is also true we mustn’t give up on what the Lord is doing in our own hearts … Christian, don’t cast your family off … Don’t give them up … and …

DON’T YOU GIVE UP
As Christian considered his family again … maybe he was the obstacle. Maybe he didn’t always ‘handle it’ correctly. Maybe he went at it the wrong way, “I think I may say that if what they saw in me did hinder them, it was my great tenderness in sinning against God, or of doing any wrong to my neighbour”. … Maybe if I hadn’t been as forthright, “They would tell me I was too precise [puritanical = ‘precisionists’], and that I denied myself of things (for their sakes) in which they saw no evil”. … Maybe what they saw in me was not what they needed to see … and I became a stumbling-block to their salvation.

Do you ever think like that? … I shouldn’t have lost my temper. I shouldn’t have been as quick to judge. I should have kept silent … And the devil comes and he reminds us of we are already too aware, - we’re weak, we are so prone to failure … and he piles on top of us how we fail in the Lord’s work …
And he takes great joy in seeing us almost giving up on ourselves and on our witness. “Oh, what can I do for Christ if I can’t even get my own family to believe?!” And the eternal salvation of that same family for whom you have been praying for many years is the greatest burden the Lord has placed upon your life. … Don’t give up praying for them, and trusting in the Lord to show His hand … not only in their lives, but also in yours!

Often we need to remember what kind of a God we believe in. His ways are not always our ways, neither is His timing always our timing. He brings about situations in ways we could never imagine.

Christian couldn’t have known, - yes, - his wife and sons would follow him along that path … and when they arrived at the Palace Beautiful they requested to stay in the same chamber as he stayed in, - the chamber called Peace, - … and their request was graciously answered. They grace of God determined they would follow in his footsteps. God granted Christian the privilege of seeing his family come on to the same road he travelled.

It is a reminder that God has a plan for all of His people, and we can trust that it will include those whom we love … for surely those whom we love must also touch the tender heart of God. Remember how Mephibosheth was loved by David because of David’s love for Mephibosheth’s father, Jonathan. Surely if an earthly king would show such grace towards an earthly relative, it gives us hope that God would look in mercy and salvation upon our loved ones. …

The devil is out to discourage us … and he tries to pick away at that which is closest to us. We mustn’t fall for his mischief. He’s a defeated foe, - everything he plans falls into line behind God’s almighty plan. God’s plan is the greater. In the event, Charity identified Christian’s family with Cain who was given the opportunity, but rejected it. She also assured him that his witness before them, - even in those early days, - had been a warning to them, and so he was innocent of their blood (Ezek. 3:19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.)

**CONCLUSION**

It’s a simple study and yet a very personal one … **Don’t cast your family off** … **Don’t give them up** (Don’t give up on them) … **Don’t you give up** … Keep committing them to the Lord, and keep trusting in His power to save them, as He has already saved you. Amen.