American Decency Association PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org

Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts

The Most Solemn Mandate

By: Dr. R.C. Sproul



I don't know how many churches say to me:

want them to believe what- gates. ever they come to believe them to experience reality evidence.

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 Lord's commandments to might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and Moreover, Deuteronomy 6 when you lie down, and times I've heard par- when you rise. You shall ents who are members of bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between

I intentionally never dis- vour eves. You shall write cuss theology or religion them on the doorposts of with mv children, because I vour house and on vour

honestly and not because What I find remarkable and when you rise. You they've been indoctrinated about this text is how by us in the home. I don't closely it places the man*want them to be slaves to a* date to teach our children parental tradition. I want to what Jesus calls the greatest commandment, on its own terms and come namely, "You shall love to whatever conclusion the LORD your God with your gates. (vv. 7-9) they are drawn from the all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (v. 5; see Such sentiments mystify Matt. 22:36–40). There is me because they are at no commandment more such odds with the teach- important than to love our ing of Scripture. Just con- Creator, but what's the very sider Deuteronomy 6:4-9: next command in Deuter-

onomy 6? That the law of God is to be on our hearts and taught to our children. The divine mandate is that parents should teach the their children. Not that the parents should send their children somewhere else to learn these things, but the responsibility is given to the parents.

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doesn't say that "you shall teach them casually, occasionally, once in a while to your children." No, it says, You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when vou walk by the way, and when you lie down, shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on

That is, these things are to be taught so diligently that they are going to be taught every single day, in every place, even in every room of our homes.

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I don't know how many times I've heard parents who are members of churches say to me:

I intentionally never dis- your eyes. You shall write cuss theology or religion them on the doorposts of with my children, because I want them to believe what- gates. ever they come to believe honestly and not because they've been indoctrinated by us in the home. I don't want them to be slaves to a parental tradition. I want them to experience reality on its own terms and come namely, "You shall love to whatever conclusion they are drawn from the evidence.

Such sentiments mystify me because they are at such odds with the teaching of Scripture. Just consider Deuteronomy 6:4–9:

Hear. O Israel: The LORD You shall love the LORD might. And these words that I command vou today talk of them when you sit to the parents. in your house, and when *you walk by the way, and* Moreover, Deuteronomy 6 when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between

What I find remarkable about this text is how closely it places the mandate to teach our children to what Jesus calls the tween your eyes. You shall greatest commandment, the LORD your God with *your gates*. (vv. 7–9) all your heart and with all your soul and with That is, these things are to all your might" (v. 5; see Matt. 22:36–40). There is they are going to be taught no commandment more every single day, in every important than to love our place, even in every room Creator, but what's the very of our homes. next command in Deuter-

onomy 6? That the law of our God, the LORD is one. God is to be on our hearts and taught to our children. your God with all your The divine mandate is that heart and with all your parents should teach the soul and with all your Lord's commandments to their children. Not that the parents should send their shall be on your heart. You children somewhere else shall teach them diligently to learn these things, but to your children, and shall the responsibility is given

doesn't say that "you shall teach them casually, occasionally, once in a while to your children." No, it says, You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when your house and on your you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when vou rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets bewrite them on the doorposts of your house and on

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I don't think there's a mandate to be found in sacred are to teach our children the truth of God's Word is a sacred, holy responsibilpeople. And it's not someonly one day a week in abdicate the responsibility ing to Scripture is the family, the parents. And what is commanded is the passing on of tradition.

age, many look upon trative. One of the judgments sacred Scripture.

of God upon the nation of It's my responsibility as Israel and upon the teachers of Israel was that they began to substitute human traditions for the Word of God, with the human traditions taking the place of Scripture. Because of that error, we may jump to the conclusion that we should, therefore, never communicate traditions.

Scripture that is more sol- Yet when we come to the solemn mandate given to emn than this one. That we New Testament, we find a distinction made between the traditions of men and the tradition of God. The ity that God gives to His Apostle Paul, for example, claims that he did not inthing that is to be done vent out of his own mind the message that he pro-Sunday school. We can't claimed to the churches and was passing on to the to the church. The primary churches-the paradoresponsibility for the edu- sis, the tradition, of God. cation of children accord- Paradosis is the Greek word for "tradition," and it comes from the same root as the Greek term for "gift" as well as the prefix para-, which means "alongside In our forward-looking of "or "passing on." Literally, the meaning of "tradition with scorn. It is dition" in the Scriptures seen as the province of is the passing on of a gift. reactionaries and conser- The gift that is to be passed vatives who refuse to get on is the gift of the knowlwith the times. But when edge of God, of what He we look at Scripture, we has revealed about Himfind it has much to say self in His Word, of what about tradition, some of it He inspired the prophets negative, some of it posi- and Apostles to tell us in

a parent and it's your responsibility as a parent to pass on that gift. If you aren't a parent, it's your responsibility to support the work of the church and those who are parents in passing on that gift. It is a great and glorious calling to lead our children into the truth of God's Word. Indeed, there is no more parents and adults in the church than to raise up covenant children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

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пſ Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

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I don't think there's a mandate to be found in sacred Scripture that is more sol- Yet when we come to the solemn mandate given to emn than this one. That we are to teach our children the truth of God's Word is a sacred, holy responsibility that God gives to His people. And it's not something that is to be done only one day a week in Sunday school. We can't abdicate the responsibility to the church. The primary responsibility for the education of children according to Scripture is the family, the parents. And what is commanded is the passing on of tradition.

In our forward-looking age, many look upon tradition with scorn. It is seen as the province of is the passing on of a gift. reactionaries and conservatives who refuse to get on is the gift of the knowlwith the times. But when edge of God, of what He we look at Scripture, we has revealed about Himfind it has much to say self in His Word, of what about tradition, some of it He inspired the prophets negative, some of it posi- and Apostles to tell us in tive. One of the judgments sacred Scripture.

ditions taking the place of the work of the church and Scripture. Because of that error, we may jump to the conclusion that we should, therefore, never communicate traditions.

New Testament, we find a distinction made between the traditions of men and the tradition of God. The Apostle Paul, for example, claims that he did not invent out of his own mind the message that he proclaimed to the churches and was passing on to the churches-the paradosis, the tradition, of God. Paradosis is the Greek word for "tradition," and it comes from the same root as the Greek term for "gift" as well as the prefix para-, which means "alongside of" or "passing on." Literally, the meaning of "tradition" in the Scriptures The gift that is to be passed

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of God upon the nation of It's my responsibility as Israel and upon the teach- a parent and it's your reers of Israel was that they sponsibility as a parent to began to substitute human pass on that gift. If you traditions for the Word of aren't a parent, it's your God, with the human tra- responsibility to support those who are parents in passing on that gift. It is a great and glorious calling to lead our children into the truth of God's Word. Indeed, there is no more parents and adults in the church than to raise up covenant children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

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