Colossians 3:21 (J.C. Ryle) 130386

How Should a Child Be Trained?, Train up Your Child With All Tenderness, Affection and Patience. (3:21)

I do not mean that you should spoil him, but I do mean that you should let him see that you love him. Kindness, gentleness, long-suffering, forbearance, patience, sympathy, a willingness to enter into childish troubles, a readiness to take part in childish joys — these are the cords by which a child may be led most easily; these are the clues you must follow if you would find the way to his heart.

Sternness and severity of manner chill them and throw them back. It shuts up their hearts, and you will weary yourself to find the door. But let them see that you have an affectionate feeling toward them, that you really desire to make them happy and to do them good, and that if you punish them it is intended for their profit.

Children are weak and tender creatures, and as such they need patient and considerate treatment. We must handle them delicately, like sensitive plants, lest by rough fingering we do them more harm than good.

We must not expect all things at once. We must remember what they are and teach them what they are able to bear. Their understandings are like narrow-necked vessels; we must pour in the wine of knowledge gradually or much of it will be spilled and lost. Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little must be our rule. Truly there is need of patience in training a child, but without it nothing can be done.

Nothing will compensate for the absence of tenderness and love. You may set before your children their duty — command, threaten, punish and reason — but if affection be wanting in your treatment, your labor will be in vain. Love is the one grand secret of successful training. Anger and harshness may frighten, but they will not persuade the child that you are right, and if he sees you often out of temper, you will soon cease to have his respect. Fear puts an end to openness of manner; fear leads to concealment; fear sows the seed of hypocrisy and leads to many a lie. There is a mine of truth in the Apostle’s words to the Colossians, “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged” (Col. 3:21).