

Home Truths.

BEING MISCELLANEOUS ADDRESSES AND TRACTS,

BY THE

REV. J. C. RYLE, M.A.,

*Honorary Canon of Norwich,
Vicar of Stradbroke, and Rural Dean of Hoxne, Suffolk..*

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EIGHTH SERIES.

"If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 COR. xiv.

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Boys and Girls Playing.

ZECHARIAH VIII. 5.

“The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing.”

THE text at the top of this page is about things to come. God tells us what there will be one day in the streets of the city of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem, you all know, is a very famous place. It was the chief town of the Jews. It was the city where David and Solomon lived. It was the city where Christ died on the cross, and rose again. All boys and girls who read the Bible know something about Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was once a very grand, rich town. In all the earth there was no city like it, when the Jews feared God. But the sins of the Jews brought ruin on Jerusalem. It is now a poor, decayed, dirty place, and a sorrow to all who see it.

But a day shall yet come when Jerusalem shall be once more a grand and beautiful place. The Jews will one day repent and serve Christ, and return to their own land. Then the good times of Jerusalem shall come back again. It shall be once more a great, rich, and prosperous city. And then will the words of the text come to pass: “The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing.”

Dear children, there are two things I want you to learn out of this text. You see God tells us that in the holiest, best days of Jerusalem, there will be “boys and girls playing in the streets.” He tells us this, and does not say that it is wrong. Let us see what we can make of this.

I. Learn, for one thing, that *God thinks about boys and girls, and notices what they do.* He does not only tell us about the men and women of Jerusalem. He makes mention of the “boys and girls.” He tells us it will be a good time when there are many of them, and a good time when they play in the streets.

Some folks do not care to see children, and say there are too many of them in the world. These folks are not like God. The great God in heaven loves children. He knows that there will be no men and women by and by, if there are no children now. He says in the Bible, “Happy is the man who has his quiver full of children.” Folks who do not like boys and girls, and are cross with them, ought to remember that they were once children themselves.

There is much about children in the Bible. Read the histories of Ishmael, and Isaac, and Benjamin, and Moses, and Samuel, and Abijah. Read the Proverbs of Solomon, and see how often that wise man spoke of children. Read the Gospels, and see how Jesus Christ noticed little infants, and took

them in His arms and blessed them. Read the Epistles of St. Paul, and see how he speaks of children. Those things were written for our learning.

Dear children, remember all this, and do not forget it. You are never too young and too little for God to take notice of you. You are never too young or too little to begin thinking of God. Are you old enough to be naughty? Then be sure you are old enough to be good. Are you old enough to talk? Then be sure you are old enough to say your prayers.—Are you old enough to learn to say bad words? Then be sure you are old enough to learn texts.—Are you old enough to know and love your mother? Then be sure you are old enough to know and love Jesus who died to save your souls. Boys and girls, remember this first great lesson. God takes notice of you. Mind that you take notice of God.

II. Learn for another thing from our text, that *God allows boys and girls to play*. He does not tell us that the streets of Jerusalem shall be full of boys and girls sitting still and silent and idle. He tells us that the boys and girls shall be playing, and He teaches us that playing is not wrong. Some good people seem to think that children should never play at all. They tell us that all games are sinful, and that boys and girls should always look very grave, and never laugh or be merry. They make a great mistake when they say this. God tell us that in the good times of Jerusalem “boys and girls shall play in the streets.” Then play in moderation cannot be wrong! Play suits the age of boys and girls. They cannot be always learning lessons or working. Their minds are not strong enough for this. They are not like old people. They must have some time every day for rest and exercise. Play helps children to grow healthy and strong. Their bodies will never be well if they are sitting still, or standing from morning to night. They need all their limbs to be exercised while young, if they are to be healthy men and women when they are old. It is natural to a child to play. The boy or girl that does not like play, is generally not well.

Play teaches children to bear and forbear, and to put up with disappointments. They cannot always win the game, and have their own way. Play makes them active, and keen-witted, and ready for anything. They cannot succeed in games of skill, unless they keep awake. The great Duke of Wellington used to say that he learned to win the battle of Waterloo when he was in the playing-fields of Eton College.

Play makes boys and girls learn better when it is over. They come back to lessons sharper, and quicker, and more clever, than if they sat reading and writing all day long. Brains, and nerves, and mind are all better for play.

Play of any kind is better than idleness. "Satan always finds some work for idle hands to do." If boys and girls have not some nice games to take to after school, they are quite sure to get into mischief.

Dear children, you see that I am a friend to your playing. I am not ashamed of being so, because I see that God approves it. God allows us to do anything except sin, and play in moderation is not sinful.

I shall now finish my sermon with four bits of advice to boys and girls, which I hope they will think about and not forget.

(1) For one thing, in all your play remember the eye and ear of God. He sees and hears everything. Dear children, say nothing you would not like God to hear; do nothing you would not like God to see.

(2) For another thing, in all your play keep your temper. Be kind, and cheerful, and unselfish, and good-natured, even when you lose the game. Dear children, never fly into a passion. Whatever you play at, keep your temper.

(3) For another thing, do not neglect work because of play. Let all your play help you to learn better, and to be a better boy or girl, both at school and home. It is quite true that "all work and no play makes a dull boy." But I believe it is no less true that all play and no work makes a stupid, useless man.

(4) In the last place, never forget even in your play, that all true happiness comes from Christ. If you want to be happy boys and girls, love Christ, and make Him your chief Friend. Christ is the giver of light hearts and peaceful minds. The happiest child is the child that loves Christ most.

There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.

We do not know, we cannot tell, What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us He hung and suffered there.
He died that we might be forgiven, He died to make us good,—
That we might go at last to heaven, Saved by His precious blood.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.

Oh, dearly, dearly has He loved !
And we must love Him too,
And trust in His redeeming blood,
And try His works to do.