

A DISHONOR TO HIS FATHER.

– 2 CHRONICLES 33:1-13. – JULY 30. –

Golden Text: – "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." – Prov. 14:34.

APREVIOUS lesson showed Hezekiah to have been in many respects a model king – obedient to God and faithful. This lesson evidences the fact that good men and loyal to the Lord may be poor fathers, careless of their responsibilities to their children. Alas, that it is so to this day, and that even amongst the children of God, begotten of the holy Spirit, there are some who still fail to acquire the spirit of a sound mind in this particular.

The Scriptural declaration is, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6.) The thought seems to be that if the plastic mind of a child be properly cared for, properly impressed with the principles of righteousness, that impress cannot be wholly effaced even though the child might temporarily try forbidden paths of sin. Would that this important matter could be clearly discerned by all of the Lord's people, and that all could realize that in bringing children into the world a serious responsibility is undertaken, a responsibility which cannot be shirked, a responsibility which no right-minded person would desire to shirk.

If this thought could be impressed upon all readers of ZION'S WATCH TOWER it surely would profit them and their children greatly. Indeed we are glad to know in various ways that the Truth is having great influence in the lives of WATCH TOWER readers and also upon their families. This is the practical outworking of the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of a sound mind, the spirit of love and truth and righteousness. May it abound more and more, telling not only in the present life in the welfare of the children, but witnessing also to

friends and neighbors a good testimony to the wisdom that cometh from above, first pure, then peaceable, easy of entreatment, full of mercy and good fruits.

HEZEKIAH'S WICKED SON

The story of Manasseh's reign is briefly told and is abominable. A boy of twelve years of age, properly reared, should have possessed considerable reason and sound sense and should have been considerably established in the ways of righteousness, in appreciation of the Lord and of the responsible position he occupied as his representative in Judah. It is a mistake that many parents make when they suppose that reasonable and sensible thoughts cannot be entertained by their children until they are twenty to thirty years of age. On the contrary, the most lasting impressions of life are frequently received before ten years of age, and the lessons should begin when the child is a month old – lessons of loving obedience to law and order, to the **[R3598 : page 220]** parental authority as representing the still higher power of the Creator. The child that does not learn to respect his parents and the proper laws and regulations of his home will be disadvantaged as respects his appreciations of his responsibilities to the Lord and his covenant laws, etc.

It is all a mistake to suppose that childhood years must be spent in sowing wild oats or even in frivolity and play. From early infancy the thought should be instilled that life is a great privilege, a great blessing, and that every day and every hour should be used wisely and should bring some returns – to the glory of God or to our own advantage or to the advantage of others. From earliest infancy each should be taught that it is a shame and a sin to kill time, to waste time, to allow hours and days to slip by without improvement, without use in some worthy manner. The child who learns to waste time or to fritter it away in a useless and unprofitable manner is being permanently injured, and if ever he becomes useful in the world must

do so by counteracting, by fighting against the wrong lessons learned in childhood.

Parents owe it to their children to lay for them the proper foundation, to see that their minds are not filled with vanities, foolishness, nonsense, and that their hours and days are not wasted, but that the child shall be sympathetically made to understand that every moment is precious as a fitting and preparation for the great work of life upon which it is about to enter. Every parent owes it to his child also to impress upon the plastic mind noble thoughts, noble ambitions and not merely selfish ones. The child should be taught in a kindly manner by word and by example that any waste is reprehensible, and that hoarding in a miserly manner is likewise censurable; that those people who have merely as the chief end of life the accumulation of money are monomaniacs on the subject, and that the only reasonable and proper course is to use all the blessings and privileges, advantages and opportunities coming to us in God's providence for our own mental, moral and physical uplift and for rendering assistances to all within our reach, in harmony with the Golden Rule and with the law of love, first for God and secondly for our neighbor.

The evils which Manasseh fostered and developed are set forth in the words of our lesson as succinctly as it would seem possible to state them and need no particular comment from us. One sentence covers the matter. "So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err so that they did evil more than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel." (R.V.) Thus in few words we are given the picture of the depth of degradation attained in a very short period – the heirs of the promises sinned more grievously than the Amalekites, the Perizzites, the Hittites and all those nations whom the Lord drove out of Canaan to make room for them, and whose iniquities, we are told, had come to the full. One lesson we might draw from this plunge into unrighteousness is that sin is constitutional derangement, that through the fall the whole

human family is prone to sin as the sparks fly upward, that it requires continual effort under the guidance of the Lord to maintain even a reasonable standing and not to go backward into sin. With such a plunge into sin in such a short time, we can readily see how some of the heathen, not helped by the Lord as Israel was, reached still lower depths of degradation, as [R3599 : page 220] is evidenced in the various heathen nations of today.

A parallel lesson might be drawn for the benefit of spiritual Israel. The New Creatures in Christ should realize that there is a continual warfare between the flesh and the spirit, and if the new nature yield the old nature triumphing will run a short course into sin, as the Apostle describes, saying of some that they were turned like a dog to his vomit and like a sow to her wallowing in the mire. The lesson in this connection would be that as New Creatures we must be continually on guard. We note the words of the Apostle as valuable instruction along this line, "I keep my body under, lest having preached to others I myself should be a castaway."

CHASTISEMENT AND FORGIVENESS

The Israelites under God's covenant were subject to disciplines for their deflection from the divine law, and these chastisements repeated frequently not only teach us of the perversity of the stiff-necked nation but also teach us of God's faithfulness, and illustrate to us how the judgments of the Lord bring forth a good fruitage. The judgment of the Lord as punishment for sin which came upon Manasseh eventuated in a blessing for the evildoer. When in prison in Babylon in sore distress he besought Jehovah his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers and prayed unto him.

In this we have an illustration of the principle that will go into effect in the Millennial age, only that the retributions of that time will be more prompt than they were in the days of Israel. When Christ shall be King over all the earth and shall lay righteousness to the line

and justice to the plummet and sweep away every refuge of lies, his rewards for every good endeavor and intention and punishments for every evil intention and effort will be the establishment of judgment in the world. And the record is that "when the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

Mercy is one of the grandest and most impressive features of the divine character, as the Apostle has declared, "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared." (Psa. 130:4.) If God were not forgiving and merciful we might indeed be in terror before him; but we could not love him, neither would we have the same incentives to righteousness, because if he were not willing to forgive where would be the advantage or wisdom of repentance. Manasseh's petition to the Lord and his sincere repentance secured his release from Babylon and his return to the throne of Judah. On his return to power he apparently did everything he could do to efface the results of his previous wrong course. He endeavored to root out idolatry, cleansed the Temple of abominations, restored the divinely appointed services and issued positive commands that the people should follow his example in the worship and service of the Lord. But a good tree may be more easily and quickly cut down than a new one can be grown, and so it was that the evil effects of Manasseh's reign were never thoroughly effaced before his death, and the son born during the period of his wrong course and tainted with the adverse conditions was an enemy of righteousness, who, after two years' reign, was assassinated by officers of his own household. **[R3599 : page 221]**

One of the important lessons for us to draw from this narrative is respecting the mercy of God to the truly repentant here illustrated. Many who are now spiritual Israelites were once wicked, vicious, idolators of money or of houses or of lands or of other things and alienated from God. His gracious character and readiness to forgive needs to be continually emphasized as we present the message of salvation to the members of our fallen race. Yea, sometimes this

element of God's character needs to be emphasized to those who have already become his people, but who through weaknesses of the flesh have erred or strayed into forbidden paths – "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared."

No right-minded person will conclude that because God is very merciful and of tender compassion, therefore he may be sinned against repeatedly and forgiveness be relied upon. Rather let us get the thought that even though we should be forgiven and even though God should be merciful to us to the very last extreme, nevertheless every transgression and disobedience shall receive a just recompense of reward in some way or other. He who sins suffers, even though he subsequently repent and be forgiven. The dregs and degradation effected by the transgressions of divine law persist. And this principle applies to us who now have divine forgiveness in this present time, so that many of the Lord's jewels are to-day suffering mentally and physically for sins that are past and covered by God's mercy. And the same will be true in the next age in God's dealing with the world through the glorified Christ. Sins that are past will be forgiven them as they are forgiven us, but the degradations coming to the world through sin will survive the forgiveness of sins as they do with us and they will have proportionately the more to get rid of, the more to be restored from; they will be obliged to climb from the greater depth to the glorious heights of life and perfection in the image and likeness of God.

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THE TEMPLE GOD IS BUILDING.

"Of all the beautiful lessons
With which God's book is filled,
This one, of wonderful sweetness,
Hath most my being thrilled.

Oh, wonderful care of the Father!
Oh, wonderful love so free!
To know that the Maker of all things
Careth so much for me!

"'Tis said that the temple, so stately,
That crowned Moriah's hill,
Was built without sound of hammer,
The toilers working so still.
Far off from the grand foundation
Was all the noise and strain
Of fitting one stone to another,
From base to turret's fane.

"And when all were brought together,
The stones of every size,
The columns, so strong and graceful,
Each in its place to rise –
They formed so grand a temple
As never before was seen;
So true in its great proportions,
So bright in its glittering sheen.

"Yet there is a greater temple,
And God is he who plans;
Now gath'ring his stones together
For his 'house not made with hands,'
And each 'living stone' will be there,
Which evermore, day by day,
He's fitting for this great temple,
Which will last for ever and aye.

"Our pains, temptations and perils,
Our sufferings, sighs and tears,
Are God's chisels, tools and hammers,

Until the Master appears.
Let no one shrink from the process,
Let none of the Lord's complain;
But wait with a meek submission,
'Twill not be long nor in vain."
