

[R4837 : page 186]

A GODLY YOUNG KING

– JULY 23. – 2 CHRON. 34:1-13. –

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." – Eccles. 12:1.

KING MANASSEH of our last lesson had a bad son, Amon, who reigned but two years, and was murdered by his courtiers in his own palace. His son, Josiah, the central figure of today's study, became king in his eighth year. By the time he was sixteen his heart had begun to seek after and to desire to serve the Almighty God. By the time he was twenty his religious convictions were so deep and fixed, and his authority as a king so in his own hand that he dared to begin the work of reformation. The idols and their temples and groves for idolatrous worship were destroyed. The valley of Hinnom, as already suggested, was desecrated and made a dumping-place for the offal of Jerusalem.

The temple of the Lord was repaired and cleansed of all its idolatrous defilements, and worship and praise therein to the Almighty, was restored. More than this, the king extended his influence for the destruction of idolatry into what was once the territory of the two tribes, north of his kingdom.

MISTAKE TO ASSUME THAT WILD OATS MUST FIRST BE SOWN

What a force there is in our text, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth"! What a great mistake some parents make in assuming that their children must have an experience in "sowing wild oats" before they will be prepared to appreciate righteousness and become its servants! This thought is reflected upon the minds of the young, both male and female; rarely do [R4838 : page 186] they seek to live by a higher standard than that expected of them by their parents or guardians. We have known saintly mothers to unintentionally lay snares for the feet of their children by introducing them to ways of the

world in which they themselves would not walk. Their expressed sentiment was, "I must not put upon these children the weight of the cross, nor expect of them saintship; if ever they become truly consecrated saints of God they will then know the trials of the 'narrow way' and have plenty of them."

Alas! such Christian mothers have failed to grasp the situation properly. They have failed to realize that, at the present time, there is no real happiness in the world except in the "narrow way." The "broad road" of self-gratification, pride, lust, sin, selfishness, is indeed a beautiful picture at a distance, but the picture is a *mirage* – it can never be reached – it is a *delusion*. The millions of those who throng the broad road of selfishness, pride, etc., are all bent on pleasure, seeking it with all their might; but how many of all the millions on that road have found *pleasure*? We hold that they are merely pleasure-hunters and not pleasure-finders; we hold that the only real pleasure and substantial joy in the world is to be found in the narrow way of self-sacrifice – in the footsteps of the Great Teacher – in taking up the cross to follow him – in laying down life as He laid down His – in "suffering with Him that we might also reign with Him" – in being "dead with Him that we might also live with Him."

Of those who enter the broad road, few ever turn to the narrow way. Parents, friends, Christians have given them the misunderstanding that the broad road is the one of pleasure and happiness. When they find it the reverse they naturally think that the narrow way must be much less happifying, much less desirable.

A CERTAIN SIMPLICITY AND HONESTY IN THE MIND OF EVERY CHILD

Of the few who do find the narrow way after having walked in the broad road their plaint is, "Oh, why did I not earlier find the way of the Lord, the way of Truth, joy, peace and happiness!"

Notwithstanding the depravity with which all are born, there appears to be a certain simplicity and honesty in the mind of every child. It is that principle which must be used by teachers and helpers in general, if the child is led in the right way, by which he would most quickly attain a relationship and harmony with his Creator; nor is it necessary always that there shall be a preceptor. At times, under God's providence, the message from on High reaches the heart, and draws it with seemingly little resistance. The hollowness of life is perceived, the need of wisdom from on High is recognized, and perhaps by the servant, perhaps through parental instruction, perhaps through the counsels of a friend, perhaps by a tract or a book, the young heart is shown the way of wisdom and is pointed to the Lord and to the narrow way.

We are to remember that the will is the real director of our destiny, under Divine providence, and that it is all-important to have the will rightly directed and established. Many a one is in the broad road of sin and selfishness – away from God today – who has in his make-up many good qualities entirely out of sympathy with his position and course in life. But without the will to guide, to lead, he goes downward. Similarly there are some on the narrow way who have many physical, mental and moral blemishes of heredity continually drawing them toward the broad road, but who are kept in the narrow way of the Lord, not by the self-will of the flesh, but by the power of a renewed will. How important, then, the proper directing and fixing of our wills in youth! How much greater blessing we may enjoy in the present life, and how much more adequate preparation we may thereby have for the future life!

King Josiah of today's study is an example of the proper course for every young person to take. First of all, the heart should be given to the Lord in the days of youth, before the evil days and evil experiences have come; before one shall have learned so much of evil that the remainder of life would not suffice to eradicate it. Then, like Josiah, when time shall bring us opportunities for the service of

righteousness, let us be whole-hearted in our advocacy of the right and in our opposition to the wrong, and in everything show forth the praises of our God, with the motto, GOD FIRST.

