

# Scriptural Truths

## E-Mail Meditations

The Lord Will Come . . . Perhaps Today . . . Behold, I Come Quickly . . . Rev. 22:7

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### Fathers

#### Introduction

From early days in secondary school I recall the whole school assembled together. A senior boy would read a passage from the scriptures, then we would sing a hymn, and then dutifully repeat that which it commonly called, "The Lord's prayer". I suppose the majority of us boys (it was an all boy's school) just went through the motions because the teachers were watching. This leads to an interesting question, "Is God the Father of the unsaved individual, who is an enemy of God?" (Rom. 5:10). The answer is a "yes / no" answer. God is our Father by creation. He is the source of all life (Acts 17:24-29). However, God is our spiritual Father only when one is born into His family. The Lord spoke to the Pharisees and told them bluntly, "Ye are of your father the devil" (Jn. 8:44). God, by creating them, was their Father but they were still sinners needing redemption. The question each individual must ask is, "Is God my Father due to being His creation, or is God my Father spiritually" through the acceptance of the substitutionary work of Christ at Calvary? Untold millions will be in Hell for all eternity who repeated the Lord's prayer religiously, but have never known God as their Father spiritually.

It must be close to twenty years ago a brother said, "When children go astray from the Lord it is always the father's fault"! I was astounded and very quickly reminded him that, "God is our Heavenly Father so is it because God is a faulty Father His children go astray?"

How often many of us have heard the words of Solomon repeated, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). This is then followed by the supposed truth that if a child is brought up in the Biblical way and under the sound of the gospel then at some point in their life the individual will come back to it. The passing of time has shown that to be a false interpretation of the scriptures. Many parents have, with broken hearts, learnt that their children, despite being given a spiritual grounding, the child at some point cast the whole subject away and wanted no part of it. I know that children, now adults, use all sorts of excuses so as to have no responsibility for their own doing. They say things such as, "My father was too strict"; "we were made to go to gospel meetings"; "I was never allowed to do what other children did". While these things may be true, nevertheless the individual makes their own choices and one of those choices is whether to go in the ways of God or not.

- a) David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14), called "the sweet Psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1), yet look at his family. His son Amnon was a rapist; Absalom usurped David's throne and slept with his wives; Adonijah usurped his brother Solomon's throne; and Solomon violated every law God made for a king. Was it David's fault that his sons turned out to be the way they were? Of course not.
- b) In this day when so called counsellors etc. are blaming the parents for the failures of their sons or daughters, it is time the responsibility was put where it belongs, on the children themselves. True, a child can be led away by a parent but not all are. I know a situation where there are marital problems and because the father was a traveling

teacher and often away from home, the daughter was told that she was abandoned and that now makes life difficult. This is a great wickedness by the counsellor. There is a need to be careful lest we lay on fathers a guilt trip and a grief they ought never have to endure.

### What is a good Father?

This is a very difficult question to answer. It would be easy to say that those who neglect the caring for their children in matters of clothing, nutrition and protection are not good fathers (1 Tim. 5:8). However, things must be looked at more deeply. Is it possible the father has a bodily ailment whereby he is unable to work and provide, and thus the children go without? Perhaps in today's economy he works hard but wages are not enough to provide all these necessities. Or, if a father provides the best for the children in clothing, nutrition and protection but neglects spending time with them, is he a good father? It is my thought that unless one knows all the circumstances it is very hard to determine if "So in So" is a good or bad father. Perhaps, except for extreme situations, that is not our decision to make.

A better question is, "What is a biblically good father?"

- a) Another consideration is when I, as a Father, stand at the Judgment Seat, how will the Lord evaluate me as such? As I read the scriptures I find a number of fathers who, in some aspects of their lives, were good role models for today's fathers. For instance, those we will consider in this paper are:
  - i) Noah
  - ii) Jehonadab
  - iii) Solomon

### Noah

The scriptures record that he was a just man (Gen. 6:9) and perfect in his generations (Gen. 6:9). Hebrews informs us that he moved in the fear of God and prepared an ark to the saving of his house (Heb. 11:7). His life was a condemnation on the world (Heb. 11:7). The godly life of this man and his work for God gave weight to his warnings of divine judgment. Despite the wickedness of the world they lived in (Gen. 6:11-13), Noah's conviction was so deep and His belief so affected His life that his wife and sons and daughters-in-law all believed the message of judgment from God. Happy is the parent when all the children are saved and have accepted the escape from the coming judgment on the world.

Sadly, so often parents, particularly fathers, can be so taken up with providing for their children's sports, pleasures, education, etc., there is a neglecting of the spiritual side of their children's salvation. As parents we ought to be involved in our children's interests but when it comes at the expense of their spiritual salvation, the cost is too high. The dreadful truth is that there will be fathers in heaven whose children will languish in the caverns of the damned, under the wrath of God for all eternity. Sadly, there are fathers whose lives are a dichotomy. They profess salvation, go to church, carry a large bible to church, but in reality it is never opened at home, nor do the children ever hear them pray for their salvation. Gone are the days of the "family altar" when fathers gathered their children around them instructing them in the lessons from the scriptures and reading and praying with them. Many fathers have abdicated their spiritual responsibility and left the spiritual side of their children to 40 minutes in church in Sunday School, if that is done at all. The spiritual training and instructing of the children is mainly, but not always, the father's responsibility, but does not exclude mothers.

### Jehonadab

Jehonadab had an enormous impact on his sons, the "sons of Rechabites," and for several generations after him. His children, at some point, were made aware of his joining with Jehu to destroy the wicked family of Ahab (2 Kgs. 10:15-27). Jehu slew Jerhoram, the first of Ahab's sons (2 Kgs. 9:25); then he slew Ahaziah, Jerhoram's brother, another son of Ahab (2 Kgs. 9:27). He then encouraged the killing of Jezebel, Ahab's wife (2 Kgs. 9:30). He then went after all the other sons and slew them (2 Kgs. 10:4), then the great men of the city who sided with Ahab were slain (2 Kgs. 10:10). The entire family of Ahab was slain (2 Kgs. 10:11). Moving to Ahaziah's area he slew his brethren (2 Kgs. 10:13-14). It was after these slayings Jehu met Jehonadab who joined Jehu in the removing of Baal out of Israel by slaying all the prophets of Baal and destroying all the images. Thus the entire house of Ahab was slain at the command of the Lord (2 Kgs. 10:30). Jehonadab united with Jehu to fulfill the command of the Lord. What a lesson for fathers to teach and live by, the importance of keeping company with those who are obeying the Lord (1 Cor. 15:33) and having no fellowship with those who live contrary to God. I have eight grandchildren and as I write this I ponder, "What sort of an influence do I have on them, and will it ever go beyond them?" It is a very sobering consideration.

Furthermore, he had the respect of his sons, and they by accepting his wisdom obeyed him. For some reason they were forbidden to build houses, plant vineyards, or sow seed (Jer. 35:6-7). Since these rules were given during the reign of Jehu it meant that this man's influence on his family lasted over 200 years. Jeremiah was instructed to set a test for

Jehonadab's offspring. Under the instruction of God he prepared a table with glasses of wine set before them. The purpose was to see if they would obey that which their forefather had spoken 200 years earlier (Jer. 35:1-11). They refused, and by their refusal to drink wine, God compared their obedience to an earthly forefather with the disobedience of God's people to His laws. What an influence this man had on his family. Surely, as fathers, it would be lovely to leave such an influence on our children, not only on our immediate children, but for future generations.

## **Solomon**

When we think of Solomon it brings to mind a man who began exceedingly well. He built the temple for God but tragically ended badly. In his lifetime he authored two books, Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes, and the book of Proverbs was written by another, recording the observations and lessons Solomon taught to his children. It is my understanding He spoke the Proverbs when he was in middle to advanced middle age, for in it he constantly warns his son about the dangers of harlots. Thus, his son was a young man of marriageable age, but young enough to be instructed by his father. There are several lessons we can learn from Solomon as a father.

- a) In reading the Proverbs, it cannot be missed the numerous times he says "My son" (ch. 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:10, 20; 5:1, 20; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1; 19:27; 23:15, 19, 24:13, 21; 27:11; 31:2).
  - i) He speaks to his son telling him the necessity of listening and obeying the instruction of father and mother. Then he states the reasons why. He does not just tell his son what he ought to do but informs him how it is beneficial (ch. 1:3-5). This he repeats often (ch. 2:1; 4:10, 20; 5:1; 6:20; 7:1).
  - ii) He warns the son about who not to keep company with (ch. 1:10, 15).
  - iii) He warns about despising the chastening of the Lord (ch. 3:11).
  - iv) He warns of the danger of accompanying a prostitute (ch. 5:20).
  - v) He warns of being a surety, a guarantor (ch. 6:1, 3).
  - vi) He exhorts him to seek wisdom (ch. 23:15, 19).
  - vii) He is an example to follow (ch. 23:26).

## **Concluding thoughts**

I recall my father's example when we were little children. Playing with other children we heard words other children would say and then say them in the home. When Dad heard us say that which we had heard, he would call us to himself and ask, "Did you ever hear daddy saying that word? Did you ever hear mommy say that word? If mom or dad don't say it, then be a good boy or girl and do not say it again". He was a great example. Now I am not only a dad but a grandfather, and I still go back to his words on many matters and thank God for the memory and example of "dear old dad".

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