



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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JUMP START #310

Ezekiel 18: 14- “Now behold, he has a son who has observed all his father’s sins which he committed, and observing does not do likewise.”

Ezekiel 18 is a powerful chapter. It tells us that each person is responsible for their self. The punishment and guilt of sin is not passed from one generation to another. Neither is the righteousness of others transferred. Each person is responsible for their self.

-v4- The soul that sins will die.

-v17- he will not die for his father’s iniquity, he will surely live.

-v20- the person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, Nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the Righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.

The good side of all of this is that you may not have had award winning parents. In fact, your parents may have failed at parenting. Dysfunction, sin, neglect and abandonment are all too common in homes today. That does not mean that you will be that way or that you are responsible for the failures of others, including your parents. That’s good news. It’s hard enough on this journey without having to carry the mistakes and burdens of others.

The down side of this is that we are responsible for our self. You may have had great parents who loved the Lord and sought his ways. Your parents may have been active in God’s church. Your dad may have served as a leader or even a preacher, but that doesn’t mean his goodness transfers to you. You are responsible for you. Every person must have their own relationship and every person journeys with or without the Lord.

Our verse today is part of a series of three generations. It begins in v5, where Ezekiel says, “but if a man is righteous....”. In verse 10, the prophet writes, “ Then he may have a violent son who sheds blood...” He is talking about the righteous man from verse 5. This is his son. Verse 14, our verse, begins, “Now behold, he has a son...” this is talking about the man from verse 10. This is the 3rd generation. Grandpa is verse 5, dad is verse 10, and son is verse 14. Grandpa was righteous. Dad was bad. The son becomes righteous, like grandpa.

Ezekiel’s point through all of this is that each is responsible for themselves. Grandpa’s righteous ways won’t transfer to his son, nor will the son’s wicked ways be held against the grandson. Each is responsible.

What is interesting about these three generations is that we see this in Bible history, especially the kings. Hezekiah was a good king. He was righteous. His dad was pitiful. Hezekiah's son was wicked. We see this in David's family. David loved the Lord. Most of his children were worthless spiritually.

What is also interesting is that we see this today. Mom and dad, grandma and grandpa would never miss a service. They love the Lord and do what they can. But the generation that follows has chosen a different path. They never darken the doors of the church. They eat without prayer, their Bibles are rarely opened, the thought of the eternal doesn't come on their daily radar.

That is a most interesting thing to me. Two or three generations that share the same name, mannerism, looks and love each other, but are so different when it comes to the Lord. Why is it? Did one generation have a bad experience? Was one generation too strict or firm? We can debate the reasons, but it finally comes down to every person making their own choices. That's it. Some are content to live day to day in the material world, ignoring the spiritual side of things. Others thrive on Jesus.

I expect even in most of our families we see some of what Ezekiel was describing. The hearts of the righteous are broken by those that reject God. They don't realize what they are missing. We continue to pray for them. We continue to always love them. We continue to look, as the prodigal's father did, for their return.

One other thought here: if the guilt of the wicked father is not passed on to the sons, then neither is the sins of Adam, our first father passed on. A person is not born guilty or sinful. This Ezekiel passage is one place that shows that. If the sins of any father cannot be passed on to the son, then that would include Adam.

We are what we choose to be. Circumstances, home life and associations all have influence but the bottom line is, we choose the path we take. How about you? It's time to stop blaming parents, poverty, lack of education or a zillion other reasons and take responsibility. You can be righteous. You can be strong in the Lord. It's not easy, but it can be done. You have to spend time with the Lord. You have to make righteous choices. You determine the direction you will go. Now, how about it? About time to get at it, don't you think?

Roger Shouse

Some additional thoughts:

Monday- Gen. 3:11-19

Tuesday- Ex. 32:19-24

Wednesday- Matt. 12:36,37

Thursday- 1 Cor. 3:8

Friday- Col. 3:25

Saturday- Rev. 2:23

