

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

October 30, 2016

"They Walk As Their Fathers Taught Them"

by Frank Himmel

Jeremiah was a straightforward spokesman for God. By means of a host of word pictures, the prophet plainly pointed out Judah's problems and called for change.

One of Judah's failures was that people followed their parents' example instead of God's instruction. The Lord lamented, "They have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it, but have walked after the stubbornness of their heart and after the Baals, as their fathers taught them" (9:13-14). Sin persisted generation after generation because people repeated the conduct they saw while growing up. Likely few even questioned whether it was right or beneficial.

The problem of generationally repeated error by no means ended with Judah's captivity. It is still a major obstacle to obedience. Consider three applications.

Family

The demise of family life is foundational to many of our nation's problems. First, we have lost sight of what

a proper family unit looks like. Divorce is so common that couples celebrating silver and golden anniversaries are considered odd. Now, increasing numbers do not even bother with marriage; they consider it optional, really of little importance. The recent legalization of homosexual marriages only further blurs the picture. Children who grow up in these dysfunctional arrangements think they are acceptable, and they repeat the practices.

Even in homes where the structure is right, behavior often is not. Dads and moms constantly bicker and argue. At times they literally fight. They might not speak to each other for days on end. Wives undermine their husbands' headship, and husbands abdicate leadership or are heartless dictators. Small children rule by means of pitching fits to get their way. Teens' immorality is winked at, and in some cases it is even encouraged. Aging parents are regarded as burdens; they are neglected or relegated to institutional care at the first opportunity. Home is indeed an asylum, but not in the good sense of that word! Again, children who grow up in such circumstances are likely to think all families act this way, thus they will continue this pattern of misbehavior.

Business

The Bible is clear. God expects us to work for a living, live within our means (and that includes setting aside enough to share with others), and pay our bills. ▶



Some are too lazy to work; they opt to live on hand-outs instead. Evidently, they think society or relatives owe them subsistence. Solomon observed that lazy people can always find an excuse (Proverbs 22:13).

Unable or unwilling to distinguish wants from needs, many are living beyond their means, awash in debt. Often that translates into inability to pay one's bills. And in far too many cases, that inability is viewed nonchalantly. Some respond as though it is their creditors who are at fault, that there is something out-of-line in a lender expecting to be repaid.

Is it any surprise that children who grow up in such homes lack a good work ethic or financial responsibility? More than likely they will "walk as their fathers taught them."

Religion

Jeremiah's first application of this principle was to Judah's religion: they passed idolatry from generation to generation. Idolatrous worship was exciting, perhaps more so than Jehovah's arrangements. Its loose moral standards were doubtless appealing. Young people may well have observed fervent worshippers and sincere priests. And because gods were as plentiful as cities and altars as plentiful as streets (11:13), it was likely difficult to imagine that so many people could be wrong. Therefore, children followed their parents' erroneous example, despite the fact that it contradicted the first commandment of the Old Covenant.

Likewise, so many popular religious ideas and practices in our day are nowhere to be found in the New Testament: denominationalism, salvation by faith only, infant baptism, instrumental music in worship, celebration of holy

days, church-sponsored dinners and recreation, etc. Nevertheless, scholars say it is all correct, teachers seem to be sincere, worshippers are engaged, and churches following these paths are growing. How often does it occur to those who grow up in this environment to question the legitimacy of existing religion in the light of God's word? Our faith must be based on what is handed down by God, not by man (Romans 10:17).



Conclusion

Jeremiah's appeal to Judah was, listen to God, return to His standard before it is too late. Were he alive today, his message would doubtless be the same. ■

*Come study the book of Jeremiah with us,
Sunday mornings at 9:30 and
Wednesday evenings at 7:00*

Service Leaders for the Week			
	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Greg Winget	Howard Moore	Howard Moore
SONG LEADER	Carlos Garcia	Frank Himmel	Greg Winget
OPENING PRAYER	Steven Turner	Adam Gibson	
LORD'S SUPPER			
BREAD	Greg Winget	Greg Winget	
CUP	Mark Clifton	Mark Clifton	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Albert Lee Harrison		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Brian Wilson	Gary Hagler
CLOSING PRAYER	John Baucom	Josh Baucom	David Gray