

## Learning To Honor

When was the last time you "heard" a child express honor unto their elders? In Lev. 19:32, Jehovah said, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and thou shalt fear thy God: I am Jehovah." The implications of this passage are quite sobering: respect for old age is directly connected with the fear God.

There are several reasons why we should honor the hoary head: They have carried the burden of labor: all that we have we inherited. The freedoms we enjoy today were given to us by those who fought to secure them: their freedoms from those before them, they from those before them, and so is the life of man. As independent as we might like to feel, we are the product and recipients of many years and many lives. It has been said of Napoleon, as he invited a lady to move out of the way of one carrying a heavy weight, "Respect the burden, madam." Those among us who have "fought the good fight" and contended "earnestly for the faith" and preserved for us the opportunity to hear the word and obey it, are worthy of our honor. The hoary head also provides us with the benefit of having the wisdom of experience. Men who have lived their lives in faithful servitude to the Lord have much to offer.

In 1 Tim. 5:3-4, the scriptures say, "Honor widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow hath children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show piety towards their own family, and to requite their parents: for this is acceptable in the sight of God." To show piety is to show worth-ship. Our existence is a result of another's sacrifice to see to it that we were provided for when we could not provide for ourselves. The Lord says, you "requite" it, i.e., pay it back. Paul puts it this way, "Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom is due; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Rom. 13:7).

Pay what is due. This principle was a major part of the old law: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee" (Exod. 20:12), and applicable in the new: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:1-3).

Honor for the hoary head begins at home. A Chinese proverb that states, "If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world," recognizes the honor due to our parents and teachers, i.e. "If there is righteousness in the heart ... " children will not lose sight of the extreme indebtedness we owe our parents. Therefore, the scriptures say, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right" (ibid).

So, where is the breakdown? Why is it that the young of our society do not honor the hoary head? A lack of honor is not new: as Elisha "went from thence unto Beth'-el; and as he was going up by the way, there came forth young lads out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou baldhead; go up, thou baldhead. And he looked behind him and saw them, and cursed them in the name of Jehovah. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two lads of them" (2 Kgs. 2:23-24). Beth'-el was the seat of calf worship, which had been introduced by Jeroboam when the kingdom divided. Elisha, having the mantle of Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:13), which marked him as a prophet of God (Zech. 13:4), was ridiculed by the youth of Beth'-el. They showed a lack of respect for his age and his office. Not one or two or even a dozen, but over forty youth. Was it simply an isolated act of a group of malicious youth or did they express the language and attitude of their parents? Showing piety is a learned response (1 Tim. 5:4). When the young fail to show piety, when the young fail to honor the hoary head, the question needs to be asked: from whom have they learned it?

As children of God, the godly are to be actively working to break the cycle of sin that separated them from God. To be "transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2). Will not those who are transformed nurture their children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (Eph.6:4), exhorting, encouraging and testifying to them as to how they should walk (1 Thess. 2:11-12)? If you do not teach your child to honor the hoary head, then they will not learn to honor ... you. ret