

because he urges us not to resist evil?

"Would not the nationalists among us attack him as a dangerous internationalist because he tells us we are all of one flesh?

"Would not the wealthy among us castigate him as a troublemaking radical because he bars the rich from entering the kingdom of heaven?

"Would not the liberals among us dismiss him as a dreamy vagabond because he advises us to take no thought for the morrow, to lay up no treasures on earth?

"Would not the ecclesiastics among us denounce him as a ranting heretic because he cuts through the core of ritual and commands us only to love God and our neighbors?

"Would not the sentimentalist among us deride him as a cynic because he warns us that the way to salvation is narrow and difficult?

"Would not the puritans among us despise and reject him because he eats and drinks with the publicans and sinners, preferring the company of winebibbers and harlots to that of 'respectable' church members?

"Would not the sensual among us scorn him because he fasts for forty days in the desert, neglecting the needs of the body?

"Would not the proud and important among us laugh at him when he instructs the twelve disciples that he who would be 'first' should be the one to take the role of the least and serve all?

"Would not the worldly wise and educated among us be aghast to hear that we cannot be saved except we become as children, and that a little child shall lead us?

"Would not each of us—in his own way—find some part of this man's saying and doing to be so threatening to our ways of life, so much at odds with our rooted beliefs, that we could not tolerate him for long?

"I wonder! I wonder if we are any more prepared for the second coming than we would have been for the first."

When we go to our homes let us get on our knees and thank the Lord for his many blessings, and our Lord Jesus Christ for his mercy and his greatness and goodness for making it possible for us, through the keeping of his commandments, to go back into the presence of God our Father and dwell with him. May the Lord bless you with every righteous desire of your hearts is my prayer, in the name of his son Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

He to whom we have just listened is President Joseph Fielding Smith.

Elder Marion D. Hanks of the First Council of Seventy will now speak to us.

Elder Marion D. Hanks

Of the First Council of the Seventy

A few days ago as I pondered this responsibility a letter arrived from an anguished parent whose child had taken a wrong turn in the road and had become enmeshed in serious trouble. About the same time a telephone call brought a request for help from a mother, under similar circumstances. That weekend the "Church Section" quoted in an article a letter from another heartbroken mother whose promising son had been destroyed by drugs. Experience recalls many such matters.

Each of these instances involved parents who had earnestly tried to do their duty, had themselves lived honorable, devoted lives, had reared choice families, had loved and found much to praise in the child who had made the wrong decisions. Nevertheless, the child had made the wrong decision.

Beyond the anguish caused by the errant child in such cases is often the added burden of censure from neighbors, and self-condemnation as scriptures are read or alluded to in classes and meetings and discussions.

What has the Church to say to a sincere parent who, like all parents, has made mistakes, but who has really tried—only to have a child disregard his teachings and example and choose another way?

Possibly no subject is more frequently and earnestly treated in Church instruction and admonition and programming these days than that of the responsibility of parents to their children. All who have association with youth and families know the importance of this emphasis, and none could question the validity of the effort.

Outside the Church, people of honest interest and goodwill feel the same and seek the same objectives.

The charge to parents to teach children

Few scriptural admonitions are more clearly or strongly given than those relating to the responsibility of parents and adults to their children and the younger generation. If we were to select a scripture that is perhaps as frequently referred to as any other by speakers and teachers, we would be reasonably safe in choosing the 68th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants, where a well-known instruction from the Lord to his children is recorded. Certain of the brethren received counsel, and instructions of general application were included. Among the choice directions from the Lord is this verse:

“And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.” (D&C 68:25.)

Parenthood, the revelation teaches, involves the responsibility to “teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.” (Vs. 28.)

My purpose today is to express my own deep appreciation of the validity and relevance of these instructions, and to say that I believe and accept them as the word of the Lord. But there is another side of this story that deserves

attention and compassionate consideration.

Potent influences upon children

We are all aware that home and parental and adult influence are of greatly persuasive importance in the lives of children. In commenting on the relationship of adult to child over this pulpit some years ago, I noted that among other things the following are true:

1. Children are inclined to be like their parents and the homes from which they come.

2. Children are also influenced by associates who come from other homes and therefore are influenced by the nature of the other homes and the parents who live in them.

3. Other adults and environments have great influence on young people.

4. Young men and women soon discover the truth about parents or other adults whose lives are not consistent with their expressed convictions in the way they live.

It is true that there are a number of examples of fine young people who rise above their home and family environments and their training and the example of the adult generation. They somehow find the way themselves and, setting high goals, manifest the determination and courage and capacity to achieve them. There are exceptions on the other side of the coin also, and it is of this that I would like to speak for a moment.

Solace for the heart-broken

What of the earnest, sincere parents who do their best to rear their family with integrity and devotion, only to see a child (or several children) choose paths leading to destinations that break the hearts of the parents? Like other parents, this father and mother, aware of their vulnerabilities and limitations, have earnestly tried to rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. As they hear the sermons and testimonies and observe the good fortune of neighbors whose children follow the established way, their hearts break and their spirits sag. They are sickened by questions they cannot answer, critical of

themselves, assisted in their own self-criticism by the sometimes unthinking judging of others.

What shall be said to such heart-broken parents? Is there any encouragement for them in the scriptures? What have the prophets said?

Ezekiel was a prophet during the captivity of Israel. He preached to a people to whom it was comforting to attribute their current problems to the sins of former generations. They were habituated to quoting a prophecy: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." (Ezek. 18:2.)

There is, of course, a measure of truth in this proverb, as every parent or close observer of the human experience knows. Our children do suffer in many ways from our defections or derelictions, just as they prosper from our proper instruction and our love and good example.

As Ezekiel admonished Israel he spoke these words, recorded in the 18th chapter of Ezekiel:

"The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying,

"What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

"As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel." (Ezek. 18:1-3.)

Individual responsibility

As I read the record, Ezekiel was not minimizing the sorrowful imposition of trouble in the life of a child who is deprived of the truth or misled by the faithlessness of a parent. Ezekiel was reemphasizing for Israel the great importance of individual responsibility before God and of God's impartiality in dealing with every man according to his own character. Hear these words of the Lord through the Prophet, immediately following his instruction that they no more use (or misuse) the proverb in Israel:

"Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Vs. 4.)

Repeating those last words, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," the Lord added:

Compensation for righteousness

"The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." (Vs. 20.)

Ezekiel then encouraged repentance and obedience, noting that the repentant sinner may avoid the eternal consequence of his deed through the forgiveness of the Lord. A wicked man who repents and becomes righteous will live. A righteous man who becomes wicked will die. Every man must stand before God and answer for his own choices and for his own character.

What Ezekiel said to ancient Israel, I believe we must understand and apply to modern Israel. Where homes and hearts are sundered by the resentful or rebellious bad choices of a child who is accountable and has made his own stubborn decisions, which cross in their willfulness the purposes of the parents, God understands and does not condemn the honest parents.

Jeremiah quoted and refuted the same proverb:

"In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge.

"But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." (Jer. 31:29-30.)

There is some solace for the sorrowing heart in recalling the first family of the Bible. Seeking earnestly to live obediently in response to their knowledge of good and evil, faithful parents tried to teach their children. One son understood and offered unto God an acceptable sacrifice. Another son did not or would not understand. To him and his offering God had no respect. So serious was his misunderstanding and his response that he rose up against his brother and slew him.

What of the first family of the Book of Mormon? Reared by the same mother and father in the same house-

hold, some of the brothers loved God and followed the counsels of their parents. They were loyal to their heritage and possibilities. Other sons took an opposite course. They were willful and rebellious and unresponsive to the instructions and example and entreaties of their father and mother. Repeatedly they followed their own wayward wills, to the heartbreak of their parents and to their own ultimate disaster.

The Father's compassion

If there needs be more evidence of the widespread nature of the problem and the deep compassion of the Father for those who suffer through it, consider another family in which one choice son humbly accepted the counsel and plan of his father and followed that plan according to his father's will; while another son, also an authority in the kingdom of his father, followed his own wayward will and base arrogance, rebelled against his father and his instructions, and, not content with this, induced a third of his brothers and sisters to rebel against their father and to follow him, to their own heartbreak and sorrow.

Whatever application is to be made of Ezekiel's instructions, surely there is this invitation to those in whose households there is peace and joy and rejoicing because of their posterity: be humble. Be compassionate and considerate and prayerful in behalf of those who have suffered the misfortune of a wayward child. Thank God, watch and pray, and be humble.

To those to whom the sorrow of a child unresponsive to parental instruction and example has come, be comforted. God understands. He knows what it means to have a rebellious son and wayward children. Many others understand.

Freedom and its consequences

Again let it be said that there is no disposition to minimize the importance of our doing all we can to lead and direct and inspire obedience in our children. We can tragically impose upon their lives by our failures. But let there be concern and consideration also in recognizing the principle of

agency in accountable people and the responsibility to answer for the choices that are made.

God requires that we accept responsibility for our individual decisions; he deals with every man according to his own character. He has taught us through Ezekiel not alone that every man must stand on his own and answer for his own decisions, but that God desires that all shall turn to him and live, he having no pleasure in the suffering of his children for their sins.

In a recent magazine it is quoted: "On the last six days of Passover, Jews say a special prayer—the half Hallel. Tradition has it that when the Egyptians, in pursuing the Jews, were drowning in the Red Sea, the Lord kept his angels from singing his praises, admonishing them, 'How can you sing hymns while my creatures are drowning in the sea?'"

God help us to be humble if we are blessed with children who follow the way they have been shown. God help us to be gracious and compassionate with others whose experience has not been so favorable. God help choice parents who have truly tried, but have had heartbreak, to know his love and his warmth and the gracious encouragement of his understanding heart. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Marion D. Hanks of the First Council of Seventy has just spoken to us.

The congregation and choir will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top," conducted by Jay E. Welch.

After the singing, Elder John Longden, Assistant to the Twelve, will speak to us.

Congregational Singing: "High on the Mountain Top."

President Tanner

Elder John Longden, Assistant to the Twelve, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Boyd K. Packer.