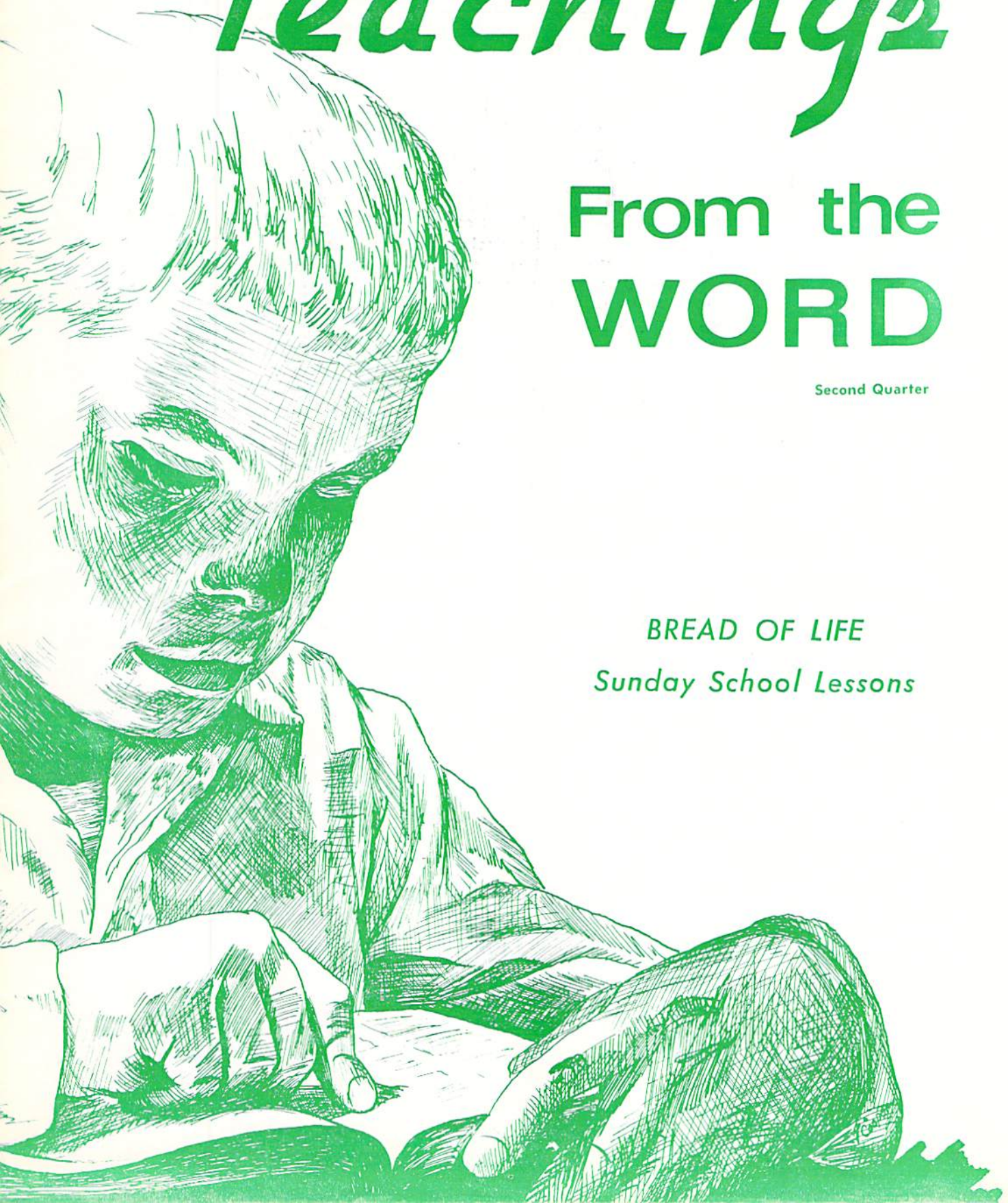


# *Teachings*

From the  
**WORD**

Second Quarter

*BREAD OF LIFE*  
*Sunday School Lessons*



BREAD OF LIFE  
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS  
TEACHINGS FROM THE WORD

**T**HIS is the second quarterly in the series of Bible studies called "Teachings From The Word." Covering the Bible in one year, this study emphasizes the doctrinal truths found in God's Word. It follows the historical narrative of the Bible and presents the doctrines as they appear in that sequence. The period of history covered in this quarterly runs from the division of the land of Canaan to the Babylonian captivity of Judah.

A secondary purpose of this particular series of lessons has been to follow the historical narrative of the Bible by using the lesser known and studied characters and events of the Bible. Thus, for example, Caleb and Othniel are used to cover the conquest and division of Canaan. Similarly, the period of the early kingdom of Saul and David is studied from the standpoint of Jonathan and Joab. Studies on Caleb, Othniel, Ruth, Eli, Jonathan, and Joab are covered in the first five lessons of this quarterly.

A recent survey in a large Sunday school in which teachers were asked to list the subjects they most would like included in a curriculum revealed a strong partiality to Proverbs. In a surprising response teacher after teacher listed Proverbs first or second in interest. No other single subject or book received such demand in the survey. This is quite natural since Proverbs is one of the most practical books of the Bible. Many make it a practise to read Proverbs through once each month taking one of its thirty-one chapters each day of the month.

At the point in Bible history when the reign of Solomon would be covered, four lessons are inserted which give teachings taken from among the most famous of his writings — his Proverbs. The subjects covered are "The Fear of the Lord," "Wisdom," Abomination to the Lord," and "The Tongue," Proverbs does not present each of these subjects in a separate section. Random references to any one of these subjects will be found throughout the book. An excellent method of studying a particular subject is simply to write out each and every statement made in Proverbs or any other book of the Bible about that subject. With a good concordance such an approach takes less time than imagined and this comparing of Scripture with Scripture is quite illuminating.

The last four lessons of this quarterly are entitled "Prophets and Kings," Each covers a different segment of the period of history known as the time of the "divided kingdom." Since prophets played a dominant role in this portion of history, they are studied right along with the kings in whose reigns they ministered.

The prophetic books belong to the dark ages of God's people. Instituted in Samuel's time, the period of the prophets covered about five hundred years. In about the fourth century B.C. the voices of the prophets were silenced until John the Baptist, the greatest of all prophets. The prophets spoke fearlessly to kings and people alike of their sins and failures.

There are seventeen prophetic books in the Old Testament. Five are called "major" prophets and twelve are called "minor" prophets. This distinction is not made because of their importance but because of the amount of material written in each of them. Two of the major prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, are included in these lessons. The prophetic ministry was not limited to those men whose names appear on their books in the Bible. It will be seen from these lessons that there were many prophets in Israel and Judah who spoke God's Word.

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## CALEB AND OTHNIEL

## DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Numbers 13
Tuesday:	Numbers 14:1-24
Wednesday:	Deuteronomy 1:19-36
Thursday:	Joshua 14
Friday:	Joshua 15:13-19
Saturday:	Judges 1:1-20
Sunday:	Judges 3:1-11

## MEMORY VERSE:

*Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's forever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God (Josh. 14:9).*

## INTRODUCTION:

A leader of the tribe of Judah, Caleb had been one of the twelve mature and responsible men of Israel selected to spy out the land of Canaan (Nu. 13:6). Each of the twelve was a "ruler" of his tribe and quite possibly one of the group of seventy who had previously been selected to assist Moses in ruling the people (Nu. 11:16,17). Their report after spying forty days was wholly accurate in its assessment of the situation. A difference in the light of which these facts were seen resulted in a failure to take the land and a consequent forty years of wilderness wanderings. Only Joshua and Caleb supported the position that God would give them the land despite the giants. After a five-year period of conquest under Joshua, Caleb was ready to take his land (Josh. 14:6-10).

## LESSON NOTES:

*Caleb:* While both Caleb and Joshua were of the same mind regarding the conquest of Canaan, it was Caleb who was the more outspoken. When the people heard of the children of Anak as well as the might of the Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, and Canaanites, they began a great commotion of protest and fear. It was Caleb who attempted to still the people and who encouraged them to go in and take the land (Nu. 13:30).

The issue can be considered as being between the "grapes of Eshcol" and the "giants of Anak." These are the contrasting factors shown in Numbers 13 and 14. Naturally speaking, the "giants" were too great for the small band of wandering Israelites. Set against this is the fruit of the land as represented by the grapes of Eshcol which everyone agreed was magnificent and which all longed to have. But to secure the grapes the giants had to be defeated. Blessings are always surrounded by difficulties, and they are achieved by overcoming the difficulty. The greater the difficulty, the greater the blessing.

Granting the power of the enemy, Caleb's argument was, "If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us" (Nu. 14:8). This is a key verse in the lesson. Fully aware of the enemy, Caleb saw the Lord as a great force and as one who delighted in His people and who would defeat the enemy for them. He didn't shrink from the task which admittedly was

formidable. He knew the Lord would be with them and wanted the people to go forward in that confidence.

*Conquest:* Because he "had another spirit with him" and followed God wholly, the promise was made to Caleb that he would not only live to see the land conquered but that he would inherit that land on which his feet had trod (Deut. 1:36). Specifically this was later taken to mean that portion of land which offered the Israelites their greatest fear and was directly responsible for their defeat, the land of the giants of Anak (Josh. 14:13-15). Note that Caleb did have to endure forty-five years of waiting and had to wander in the wilderness until the faithless generation died. Also note that when it was time to inherit the land, Caleb had to fight for it and defeat that same enemy. But with the help of the Lord, Caleb drove out the sons of Anak.

Courageous and bold leaders inspire and attract other courageous and bold men. Such was the case with Othniel. Offering his daughter for a wife, Caleb called for someone to drive out the inhabitants of the neighboring town of Kirjath-sepher (Jud. 1:11,12). Othniel, the son of Caleb's younger brother, responded to the call and took that land.

Later, when the Israelites departed from God's ways and were brought into bondage, God used Othniel to be the leader of His people and to deliver them (Jud. 3:1-11). Thus he became their first "judge."

*The Lessons:* Caleb and Othniel were both men who were willing to take a stand even when everybody else had a different opinion. It took a great deal of courage for Caleb, who was supported only by Joshua, to stand up before *all* the people of Israel and tell them the Lord would give them the land if they trusted and obeyed Him. His was definitely the minority and unpopular opinion, but he was bold to express it. Large numbers of people believing a certain opinion does not make that opinion right. God's Word is the only true test of a belief. God today needs and is looking for boys and girls who will believe His Word and stand upon it regardless of what others believe or how unpopular it may be.

Much of the success or failure in the Christian life stems from attitude. The "different spirit" which Caleb had was largely one of attitude. Faith and confidence pervaded his being every moment. He made up his mind to follow God *wholly*, come what may. This does not mean that he ignored or minimized the enemy. It means rather that his attitude was one of looking always at the greatness of God instead of the greatness of the difficulty. A "can do" attitude of positive faith accomplishes more than a "can't do" attitude of unbelief and despair. If God be for us, who can be against us?

While the Christian walk is certainly one of joy and blessing, the "land" we inherit is not without contestants. The Christian life is a constant warfare over the enemies of the soul. Progress is contested at every step. A valiant fight is necessary to secure the blessings God has for us. It is not enough to long for the "grapes of Eshcol" and wonder why God does not give them to us. It is necessary to defeat the "giants of Anak" first. But the Lord delights in us and will give the victory. Likewise, ground gained is quickly lost unless a vigilance is practiced. Carelessness such as the Israelites got into after Joshua's death resulted in loss. Faithful service and obedience bring the blessings of Canaan. Fear and carelessness bring defeat.



## IN THE DAYS OF THE JUDGES

### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Judges 17
Tuesday:	Judges 18
Wednesday:	Judges 21
Thursday:	Ruth 1
Friday:	Ruth 2
Saturday:	Ruth 3
Sunday:	Ruth 4

### MEMORY VERSE:

*In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25).*

### INTRODUCTION:

Following the death of Joshua and the "elders that outlived Joshua," the Israelites entered a four-hundred-and-fifty-year period known as the "days of the judges." Settled in the land of their inheritance, the Lord was obviously interested in establishing a government over the Israelites in which He was King and Captain. Otherwise He would have appointed a successor to Joshua as He did to Moses. Such a government is called a "theocracy," where God rules directly over his own people. Later when they asked for a king, they were rejecting this direct rule of God (1 Sam. 8:7). During the days of the judges, the Israelites failed in serving God. The summation of this entire period of history is succinctly given in Judges 2:10-23.

### LESSON NOTES:

*Failure:* The days of the judges were days of failure. Anarchy and lawlessness abounded as "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jud. 17:6; 21:25). This phrase, repeated so often in Judges, is the keynote of the book and points out the reason for failure. Rather than obey God's commands, each one did whatever he pleased.

Compromising with evil and turning to idolatry were the causes of the Israelites' failure. When they were about to enter the promised land, the Israelites were commanded to drive out all the inhabitants of the land (Num. 33:51-53). This command they openly defied and refused to obey (see Jud. 1:21,27,29,30-33). They felt they had gone far enough when they put the Canaanite "to tribute," or slavery, and would "not utterly drive them out" (v.28).

Such compromise led to idolatry. Instead of serving God only, they were taken up with the gods of those people they failed to drive out. This led to weakness and defeat. The degree to which this idolatry went is seen in the story of Micah (Jud. 17,18). Worship of the true God was freely mingled with the worship of idols. Naming his own son as his priest, Micah went ahead and did what he pleased in the matter of worship. Later, he considered himself exceedingly fortunate to come across an unemployed Levite. Promptly seizing this golden opportunity, he offered the Levite room and board to be his private priest. Then in self-satisfac-

tion and self-deception he said, "Now I know that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest" (Jud. 17:13). While such religious trappings may make a man feel satisfied and comfortable, they only add to his damnation.

*Ruth:* That the story of Ruth should follow immediately the story of the Judges is indeed a welcome relief. Furthermore, to realize that the lovely and tender events of this story actually took place during the days of the judges reminds us that though the nation at large was failing God miserably, there were still some upright individuals such as Boaz in the land (Ruth 1:1).

Ruth became part of the family of God through some interesting twists and turns. Though a descendant of Lot (see Gen. 19:37,38), as a Moabite she was of that people of whom the Lord forbade His children to marry. Despite this, she became the wife of an Israelite; soon after she was widowed.

Ruth saw something in Naomi and her people which made her determined to stay with her and make Naomi's God her God. In all the world there are no words as beautiful and forceful as the words of devotion which Ruth spoke to Naomi (Ruth 1:16,17). Naomi was quite a mother-in-law as well as a witness for God to elicit such commitment from an unlearned Gentile woman.

The essence of the book of Ruth is its picture of redemption, communion, and rest. Boaz, the kinsman who "redeemed" Ruth, fulfilled a three-part obligation which God's law had provided for those in need. First of all, it should be noted that "redeem" means to "buy back," "buy again," or "re-purchase." The first obligation of the "kinsman" was to redeem or buy back the inheritance of a poor relation if he sold it to pay a debt (Lev. 25:25). As a second obligation, he was to buy back the impoverished person should that person have been sold into slavery (vv. 47-49). Finally, the law provided that should a man die without any child to carry on his name, the kinsman was to marry the widow and raise up children who would bear the name of the original husband (Deut. 25:5,6). It was from this union of Ruth and Boaz that the line of Jesus sprang. It is interesting to observe that Obed, the son of Boaz, was more Gentile than he was Jewish, since his mother (Ruth) was entirely Gentile and his father (Boaz) the product of a Jewish father and a Gentile mother (see Matt. 1:5).

*The Lessons:* Separation from godless associates is one of the first requirements of the believer. Light and darkness can have no communion or fellowship (2 Cor. 6:14). Christians cannot mix with the world. They must keep close to God and make war against sin and unrighteousness. In Judges we see how a false toleration of a corrupt people resulted in the undoing of God's chosen people. Idolatry results from putting the things the world enjoys first in our lives.

This lesson can also be turned inward. The Canaanite can represent the "enemies" in our heart and life. If we refuse to drive them out completely, they will soon enslave us. The Christian is to be delivered from impatience, bitterness, discouragements, a quick temper, a sharp tongue, etc. It is not enough just to control these enemies; God has promised to utterly drive them out.

The days of the judges were days of great mercy  
(Continued on last page)



## ELI

### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	1 Samuel 1:1-18
Tuesday:	1 Samuel 1:19-28
Wednesday:	1 Samuel 2:1-17
Thursday:	1 Samuel 2:18-36
Friday:	1 Samuel 3
Saturday:	1 Samuel 4
Sunday:	1 Kings 2:12-27

### MEMORY VERSE:

*For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? (1 Timothy 3:5).*

### INTRODUCTION:

"Like priest, like people" is an expression which is familiar and true. Those responsible for the spiritual guidance of a people influence, by their own actions and conduct, those in their charge. Very little is said in the book of Judges on the condition of the priests during this period. This omission plus the general apostasy of the people points out the lack of real spiritual leadership from the priesthood. Perhaps the passing of the high priest's office from the family of Eleazar to that of Ithamar, both sons of Aaron, is additional evidence of some failure in the priesthood. God was prepared to establish this office in Eli's family forever had he honored God in all things (1 Sam. 2:30).

### LESSON NOTES:

*The Priesthood:* Josephus tells us that Uzzi was the last of the family of Eleazar to hold the position of high priest. It was Eli, a descendant of Ithamar, rather than Zerariah who succeeded Uzzi (see 1 Chron. 6:6). Eleazar was the son of Aaron, the first high priest appointed in Israel. As such, he, as well as the eldest son from his family in each generation, inherited the office of high priest. Nadab and Abihu, the two eldest sons of Aaron and upon whom the office of high priest should have successively fallen, were destroyed by their "strange fire" (see Lev. 10:1,2). So the high priest's position fell to Eleazar and his sons. Subsequently, it unexplainably shifted to Eli, a descendent of Ithamar, the fourth son of Aaron (see 1 Chron. 6:3).

The priests ministered in the things of God on behalf of the people. They were the ones who offered the sacrifices for the people. The high priest was the sole mediator between God and man. Yearly he entered the Holy of Holies alone to make atonement for the sins of the people and to receive the tokens of God's forgiveness.

As a priest, Eli's personal conduct appears beyond reproach, though during his administration the priesthood fell to new lows in immorality. Eli's failure rested in his permissive attitude towards his sons. His rebuke of their sins was so weak as to make no impression (1 Sam. 2:24,25). The submissive and meek response to God's judgment is evidence of the weakness of his character. Failure to restrain his sons resulted in judgment upon his house (1 Sam. 3:13).

*Eli's Sons:* Very little need be added to the Biblical account of Eli's sons. As priests they were greedy and self-centered, seeking to serve themselves rather than the people of God. Abusing their position as priests, they served their own selfish ends. True, the priests were entitled to eat and live off the offerings of the people. But Eli's sons abused this privilege and were unjust in their treatment of the worshippers. They made themselves "fat" by taking from the people "the chiefest of all the offerings of the people" (1 Sam. 2:16,29).

Because of the sons of Eli, men came to abhor the offering of the Lord. Sacrifices and offerings should be a pleasant experience and brought with joy and peace. It should not be a burden. Woe unto those ministers who make the service of God an awful burden of heaviness and drive people away from worship.

In addition, the immorality of the sons of Eli became a byword in Israel. Committing gross immorality before the Lord was an example which made the Lord's people to transgress. No doubt they used the sons' behaviour as an excuse for their own immorality (1 Sam. 2:23,24).

Eli's house was to be judged for the iniquity which he knew and failed to restrain (3:13). Cut off from the priesthood (2:33), it was prophesied that those of Eli's house would one day beg to be priests that they might have a morsel of bread (v. 36). The fulfillment was accomplished in two stages. First, Eli's sons were slain in battle when they foolishly tried to invoke the presence of the ark of the covenant as a "good luck" charm (4:3). Then many years later, a descendant of Eli's supported the wrong man in a political struggle and was cut off from the priesthood (1 Kings 2:27).

*The Lessons:* It is plain that Eli's failure to adequately correct and restrain his sons was viewed by God as a failure to honor Him. In other words, he put his sons' wills and desires before the Lord's. By giving place to their own way and not enforcing God's will he dishonored God. He honored his sons before he honored God (1 Sam. 2:29). As is so often the case, the Lord's words of judgment held out an offer of blessing as well as a curse. God promises to honor those who honor Him while promising to "lightly esteem" those who despise Him. Honoring God and putting Him first in all things of life is as important to a child as to a father (see Matt. 6:33).

In Eli's case, it was a failure in the very calling that was his as a priest. His job was to draw people's attention to the Lord by his own example of putting God first in all things and honoring Him. Since he did not honor God above all things, how could the people be expected to do any better? Priests and ministers of God set the standard of godliness by their own example. Likewise, this is true of all Christians. As the "lights of the world set on a hill," it is our example the world watches and from which it derives standards of supposed righteousness and holiness. We can never expect the world's standard to be any higher than ours. Each of us is a "priest" in God's kingdom, and we should look to ourselves and examine the example we set.

Many people are prone, as Eli's sons were, to do "something religious" in a moment of difficulty, hoping that it will cause God to be favorably disposed toward them. This is a normal reaction of human nature, one

(Continued on last page)

# JONATHAN

## DAILY READINGS:

<i>Monday:</i>	1 Samuel 14:1-33
<i>Tuesday:</i>	1 Samuel 14:34-52
<i>Wednesday:</i>	1 Samuel 18:1-16
<i>Thursday:</i>	1 Samuel 19:1-10
<i>Friday:</i>	1 Samuel 20:1-17
<i>Saturday:</i>	1 Samuel 20:18-42
<i>Sunday:</i>	2 Samuel 1

## MEMORY VERSE:

*And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle (1 Samuel 18:4).*

## INTRODUCTION:

Never did a kingdom begin with more promise but end in greater failure than that of Saul's. An absolute demand by the populace that they have a king led God to give them their wish (1 Sam. 8:6-9). Chosen by God, Saul was anointed by Samuel, and his reign began amidst great triumph (1 Sam. 11:15). It was not many days later when the headstrong and self-willed characteristics of Saul caused God to reject him as king (1 Sam. 13:13,14 and 1 Sam. 15:26). Lost in this rejection was the future reign of Jonathan, the son of Saul and heir to the throne.

## LESSON NOTES:

*Jonathan:* During the reign of his father, Jonathan showed traits which were contrary to his father's. Where Saul was self-centered and petty, Jonathan was kind-hearted and good-natured. He was not bothered over self-glory. He was devout, putting the glory of God and His kingdom over self-interest.

As the prince of Israel, he was extremely popular with the people. Several times in military crisis he showed his calmness, faith in God, and exceptional prowess. Arch-enemies of God's people since the judgeship of Samson, the Philistines were constant threats to the Israelites throughout Saul's reign (1 Sam. 14:52). Leading a small detachment of soldiers, Jonathan "smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba." When Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land to announce this victory, all Israel heard that Saul had smitten the garrison (1 Sam. 13:3,4).

The strength and subjugation of the Israelites by the Philistines is evident in their success in disarming the Israelites and the overwhelming size of their army. In the day of battle no swords or spear were in the Israelite's armament, for the Philistines controlled all the "smiths" (vv. 19-22). Most of the Israelites had hid themselves in caves; others had joined forces out of expedience with the Philistines (14:11,21). It was in this environment that Jonathan expressed his faith in God by telling his armour-bearer, "It may be that the Lord will work for us; for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few" (1 Sam. 14:6). Surprising the enemy garrison, Jonathan won another great victory for Israel.

Later in the day when it became known that Jonathan, in ignorance of his father's foolish command, had taken some food to eat, Saul insisted that as a transgressor of his command, Jonathan be slain. So great was his popularity with the people, however, that they demanded the king reverse his decree (vv. 27,39, 44,45).

*Jonathan and David:* Unknown to Saul, Samuel had gone to Bethlehem to anoint a young shepherd boy to be the next king of Israel. Saul knew nothing of this anointing in those days when this young man came and single-handedly slew the champion of the Philistine army, Goliath. Instantly David became a national hero, and soon the object of Saul's envy and murderous intent.

Though he was considerably older than David and though he had absolutely nothing to gain by befriending him and had almost every reason in the world not to befriend him, Jonathan's "soul was knit with the soul of David. He loved him as his own soul" almost from the minute he met him (1 Sam. 18:1). Entering into a mutual covenant with this young man David, Jonathan stripped himself of his robe, his garments, and his sword and gave them to David (v.4). Obviously this act was an early acknowledgement by Jonathan that David was to be king in Israel instead of himself. There was absolutely no envy or jealousy when he so stripped himself (1 Sam. 23:17).

David and Jonathan were very similar in many respects. Jonathan's statement, "It is one to the Lord to save by many or by few" is not unlike David's testimony, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, . . . will deliver me out of the hand of the Philistines." This likemindedness drew them together. Later, in times of greater stress, this friendship was strengthened as Jonathan was used to strengthen David's hand in God.

*The Lessons:* The differences between Saul and Jonathan were the differences between defeat and victory. Saul panicked when the people became restless and when Samuel seemed to delay his coming. Taking action in this frame of mind and in disobedience to Samuel's command was his downfall. On the other hand, Jonathan had a calmness and faith which was rooted in his belief in God's power. The nervousness of the people or the exceptional power of the enemy did not affect his faith in God nor diminish his belief that God could grant victory in any circumstance. "Only an armour-bearer," and he, moving forward in the name of the Lord, routed the enemy. Victory never depends on our own abilities or power, only on our faith in God's power and willingness to believe Him.

Few men have enjoyed the solid friendship which David enjoyed with Jonathan. In his own words, Jonathan's love passed "the love of women" (2 Sam. 1:26). It is a rare feat for two men as nearly equal in national prominence as David and Jonathan, where one actually displaced the other as the heir-apparent to the throne, to get along without a trace of envy or jealousy as these two did. Add to this the fact that Jonathan's own father was at enmity with this young upstart, and one sees the depth of Jonathan's character. He rejoiced in David's rise though it was at the cost of his own prominence. In addition, he was as absolutely faithful to his father, though his actions grieved him,

(Continued on last page)

## JOAB

### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	2 Samuel 2
Tuesday:	2 Samuel 3
Wednesday:	2 Samuel 11
Thursday:	2 Samuel 14
Friday:	2 Samuel 20
Saturday:	2 Samuel 24
Sunday:	1 Kings 2

### MEMORY VERSE:

*And the Lord shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing thereof, to wit, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah (1 Kings 2:32).*

### INTRODUCTION:

If Jonathan represents the finest in friendship, then Joab stands for the type of man whose friendship is to be avoided. The son of David's sister Zeruiah, Joab joined forces with his uncle at the time David was a fugitive from Saul. Eventually, he assumed the position of "commander" or "captain" of David's host. This position took on real importance and influence following the death of Saul. Civil war between the followers of David and those who crowned Saul's son as king gave occasion for Joab's first act of cruelty in the new kingdom.

### LESSON NOTES:

*Abner's Death:* Joab and Abner each held a similar position in the opposing armies. Abner, who had been Saul's loyal "commander-in-chief," supported his son, Ishbosheth, as king. At Abner's suggestion the men of both sides agreed to engage in a cruel and senseless contest. Within moments this escalated into a large-scale battle in which twenty of David's men and three hundred and sixty of Ishbosheth's men were slain. Included in David's twenty was Asahel, Joab's brother, who was slain by Abner in self-defense. Joab, David's "commander-in-chief," vowed to avenge this death (2 Sam. 2).

Joab lived by the sword. Peace and union in the land were not the overriding goals of his life. Quite pointedly, Abner asked Joab, "Shall the sword devour forever? Knowest thou not it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long shall it be, then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren" (v. 26)? Never one to listen to a reasoning voice, Joab, though he called off his forces for that day, never weakened in his determination to resolve the matter of the kingdom by bloodshed.

Through a falling-out with Ishbosheth, Abner sought to come over to David's side. Deep in his heart he knew that God wanted David to be king and sensed the folly of fighting against God. Every man will ultimately see the futility of supporting a cause which he knows inwardly to be contrary to God's will. His overtures to David were kindly received. When Joab found

out that David had allowed Abner to depart in peace, he was furious. Pursuing him, Joab ambushed Abner and slew him. David mourned this death greatly and absolved himself of all blame. For this act of murder Joab was to pay with his own life (2 Sam. 3).

*David and Joab:* If David showed an early weakness as king, it was in his refusal to deal strongly with Joab. A dominant personality, Joab had more influence on David than David had on him, even though David was king. Often David bemoaned, "The sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me!" (v. 39).

David should have dealt with Joab according to the law when Joab murdered Abner. His only action was to absolve himself of guilt and fix the blame on Joab. Apparently Abner was well liked by the people, for David's mourning of a "great man" pleased all the people.

Though David lamented Joab's blood-thirsty character, there was a day when it was convenient to have a man like Joab around. Uriah the Hittite, because of his devotion to the "ark" and his comrades in arms, refused to be party to David's clever scheme to cover his own sin. The only course left was to have him conveniently slain. Joab's cunning and clever mind read between the lines of David's letter, and his perfect manipulation of David's plan for Uriah's execution gave him a great deal of self-satisfaction (2 Sam. 11:21).

Joab continued his career of slaughter. Though he effected a reconciliation between David and Absalom, he later slew him contrary to David's orders. Then when he was replaced by Amasa as captain of David's host, he coldly executed his rival (2 Sam. 20:9,10). Finally, he supported Adonijah's rebellion against Solomon after David's death. Upon this act of treason, Solomon obeyed David's death-bed command and had Joab slain for the death of Abner (1 Kings 2:5,6,28-34).

*The Lessons:* Considering the bloodshed which fills the Old Testament and the warfare which was a part of David's reign, one may be caused to wonder where Joab's sin was any greater than the sin of others. Perhaps David's own words hold the key: Joab "shed the blood of war in peace" (1 Kings 2:5). It was unnecessary for him to deal in those matters the way he did. A long civil war which Joab promoted was not God's way of establishing David's reign. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). Joab appears to have been completely insensitive to the things of God anyway. He lived by the sword and, as a result, died by the sword (Matt. 26:52). The sword is always bitterness in the latter end.

Joab's strong, forceful desires dominated David's more lofty ideals. Only in the case of Uriah did David stoop to Joab's methods, and in that case David's action greatly displeased God. Joab was not bothered in the slightest by his involvement in this matter. It was his manner of life. Friends we pick will dominate us and influence our conduct unless we make our own principles known and stand firm for them. It is better to part company with one who has different principles than to run the risk of compromising our own. Had David dealt decisively with Joab early in their association, Joab either would have changed or left David. The loss of Joab would not have been a hurt to David. Associations must be carefully made. We cannot help but be affected by the ideas and principles by which others mold their lives.



## THE FEAR OF THE LORD

### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Proverbs 1:1-19
Tuesday:	Proverbs 2:1-9
Wednesday:	Proverbs 3:1-12
Thursday:	Proverbs 9:1-12
Friday:	Proverbs 15:16-33
Saturday:	Proverbs 22:1-17
Sunday:	Proverbs 23:1-17

### MEMORY VERSE:

*The fear of the Lord tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil (Proverbs 19:23).*

### INTRODUCTION:

Fear is one of the most common emotions of man. It was one of the first feelings Adam experienced following his sin (Gen. 3:10). Whenever the subject of fear is discussed, we most naturally think in terms of this emotion which haunts mankind. Consequently, when the Bible speaks of "godly fear" or "the fear of the Lord," we apply our ideas of fear in general to what the Bible discusses in a much different sense. Also, fear of God as promoted by the medieval church where God was constantly pictured as angry and vengeful is not the "godly fear" spoken of here. A true fear of the Lord is a delightful and happy experience.

### LESSON NOTES:

*The Fear Of The Lord:* Securing a crisp definition of the fear of the Lord is a difficult and elusive task. All attempts fail as words become inadequate to frame a proper definition. The best beginning is the simple Bible definition that the fear of the Lord is the hatred of evil (Prov. 8:13). It is the proper understanding of our relation to God and our duty to Him as our Creator which constitutes the fear of the Lord.

This wholesome fear is a reverence and respect which a man feels in the presence of a superior being. For example, it can be likened in a lesser degree to the awe one might have in the presence of a king or a president. Godly fear implies humility and submission, not out of a fear of the consequences, but out of love and respect.

Fearing the Lord is always connected with obedience (see Deut. 13:4). It means that we accept His ways as good and righteous and desire to please Him by walking in His paths. Job defines it as follows: "the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28; see also Psa. 111:10). Obedience also brings increased knowledge and understanding of His will. Fearing the Lord is obeying His Word.

*Instruction and Correction:* Godly fear does not come naturally to the human heart; it must be sought after and developed. Sinful man is in rebellion against God and has no natural bent or desire towards know-

ing His will or doing it. Only the Lord can give us a heart that will fear Him forever so that we depart not from His ways (Jer. 32:39,40).

Following his opening remarks on the purpose of the book of Proverbs to impart wisdom, instruction, righteousness, judgment, equity, and discretion, Solomon launches into his teaching of knowledge by stating, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7) Immediately he proceeds to discuss the virtues of obedience and taking instruction and correction, especially as it applies to the teachings to parents. Repeatedly throughout the book of Proverbs, Solomon reminds us that correction is a necessary part of teaching the fear of the Lord and that receiving instruction is a step in the direction of having the fear of the Lord. Parents are admonished to correct their children (Prov. 22:6,15). Children are exhorted to receive instruction (Prov. 2:1-5; 3:1; 4:1). The Lord's chastening and instruction are a sign of His care and love and are designed to teach us His way (Prov. 3:12).

Going hand in hand with the teaching on the fear of the Lord is the wise counsel to remain separate from sinners and evil influences (Prov. 1:9-19). How necessary for boys and girls to be taught to avoid the enticements and associations of the bad boys and girls in school, the neighborhood, and to refrain from walking in the way with them (v. 15). Sinners are not to be envied; walking in the fear of the Lord all day long brings riches, honor, and life (Prov. 23:17).

*The Lessons:* A submissive, humble, and learning spirit is the fear of the Lord. Desiring to know His will rather than walking in our own wisdom is godly fear (Prov. 3:7). One of the greatest problems of mankind is the attitude on the part of each generation that they know more than their elders. This attitude is contrary to the fear of the Lord. By the same token, it behooves parents to so live in the fear of the Lord themselves that their own conduct will command respect and demonstrate to their children the substance behind their words.

All true knowledge begins and has its end in the fear of the Lord. No man is really educated, no matter how many degrees he holds, if he neglects the teachings of God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Prov. 9:10). It is the instruction of wisdom, the receiving of God's Word (Prov. 15:33). Hiding the Word of God in the heart and seeking His knowledge is true wisdom. This wisdom is to be sought after as for a hid treasure (Isa. 33:6). He that seeks it shall be rewarded.

"The fear of the Lord tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil" (Prov. 19:23). It is the "fountain of life" (Prov. 14:27). None of the riches of the world can compare with a knowledge of God's ways (see Prov. 15:16; Matt. 16:26).

The subject of the fear of the Lord is addressed to the children of God. The Holy Spirit writes to "my son" in Proverbs. The ungodly know only the fear of a sinner in the presence of a righteous God. Godly fear is for the godly. To His own children, the Lord sums up the subject with "Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13).



## WISDOM

## DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Proverbs 1:20-33
Tuesday:	Proverbs 3:13-35
Wednesday:	Proverbs 4:1-13
Thursday:	Proverbs 8:1-18
Friday:	Proverbs 8:19-36
Saturday:	Proverbs 16:16-33
Sunday:	Proverbs 29:1-18

## MEMORY VERSE:

*For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 2:6).*

## INTRODUCTION:

Solomon, the author of Proverbs, was by Biblical and worldly standards an exceedingly wise man. Upon his coronation as king of Israel, he received at his request a special gift of wisdom from God. He is thus eminently qualified to write on this subject. In the New Testament, wisdom is not only listed as one of the nine gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:8), but it is also shown as something to be prayed for and to be liberally received by *all* believers (James 1:5).

## LESSON NOTES:

*Proverbs*: Proverbs is wisdom. The writing of this book was undertaken by the wisest of men to give "prudence" to the simple, and knowledge and discretion to the young (Prov. 1:4). Solomon had an uncanny insight into human nature. His collection of Proverbs gives us the benefit of this insight.

Not all of the Proverbs originated in Solomon's mind; some are a compilation of sayings from others (see Prov. 4:4; 30:1; 31:1). A good measure of wisdom is knowing the truth and being able to evaluate the merits of someone else's experience. The wise man accepts the wisdom of the ages. We learn from others and should not be adverse to accepting the wisdom of others.

Proverbs contains wisdom for practical day-to-day situations. Not only does Proverbs deal with our relation to God but includes as many pithy sayings concerning our relation to man. Containing practical common sense, they shape our character and conduct. They deal with our everyday conduct in business, family, and social relations.

The word rendered "proverb" means parable or authoritative saying. Short, witty, easily memorized, proverbs teach moral truths by comparison and contrast.

*Wisdom*: Wisdom issues from the Spirit of God and comes through a knowledge of His Word (Prov. 1:23). Having God's Spirit and mind imparts true wisdom.

Wisdom is related to the fear of God. It is described as beginning with the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7). Godly fear is the *attitude* of pleasing God; wisdom is *knowing* how to please Him. One is desiring to do God's will, the other is knowing it and doing it. Wisdom is given through the fear of the Lord (Psa. 111:10). Simply stated, it is obeying God's Word.

Wisdom is a practical attribute. It is understanding the right thing to do in a given situation. There is a school of thought called "situation ethics" which teaches that *any* action is proper if done with a motive of love and which results in consequences favorable to the doer. In other words, the end justifies the means. Wisdom teaches an absolute standard to be applied in all situations, giving the *morally right* thing to do in God's eyes.

Wisdom brings happiness (Prov. 3:13), which in today's society is almost totally lacking. Anyone who desires to know the virtues and blessings of wisdom needs only to read the third and fourth chapters of Proverbs carefully. All of the things that man craves for are to be found in wisdom. Riches (3:16), honor (4:8), and long life are found by following the counsel of God. It is more precious and more to be coveted than money, jewels, and land (3:14,15). It is "good doctrine" (4:2) which teaches us godliness as well as how to walk safely and lead a satisfied and contented life. "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). "The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools" (Prov. 3:35).

*The Lessons*: The repeated and almost urgent pleas in Proverbs to accept wisdom, to seek wisdom, to long for wisdom underscores the aversion the natural man has to these things of God (1 Cor. 2:14). "Get wisdom, get understanding" is the repeated cry (Prov. 4:5) for we are all inclined to be smug and satisfied with our own supposed wisdom. "There is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 16:25). Wisdom must be chosen and a determined effort made to accept His counsel and not to refuse His reproof (Prov. 1:25). How wise we are in our own conceits! A refusal to accept wisdom not only robs us of the ways of pleasantness but brings destruction (Prov. 1:31-33; 29:1). Pray for a heart tender towards His Word.

All of the things to be desired in the world are not to be compared to wisdom (Prov. 8:11). The very plain teaching of this lesson is that those who desire this wisdom and seek after it shall receive it. Failure to receive means failure to seek. To the very young it says, "Those that seek me early shall find me" (Prov. 8:17). The ways of the Lord are simple enough for a child to understand. It is the Lord that giveth wisdom (Prov. 2:6), and it is not attained in some mystical, hard-to-attain method, but by simple knowledge of and obedience to the precepts and commands in His Word.

Wisdom takes the form of not only knowing what the Bible says about a given situation but having an ear to the "inner voice" of God. For example, when Nehemiah was before the king and had an opportunity to make his wishes known, he breathed a quick silent prayer and God gave him help in choosing the right words to petition the king (Neh. 2:4-8). A parent or businessman faces many situations where practical wisdom is needed to deal with a matter. God grants wisdom for such occasions as we request it. We have a greater than Solomon for our Saviour, even Jesus Christ, who is the "wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24,30). In Him are all the treasures of wisdom hid (Col. 2:3). Moreover, He is made unto *us* wisdom (1 Cor. 1:30), and He will impart wisdom liberally as we ask Him (James 1:5).



# ABOMINATION TO THE LORD

## DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Proverbs 6:1-19
Tuesday:	Proverbs 11:1-14
Wednesday:	Proverbs 11:15-31
Thursday:	Proverbs 16:1-15
Friday:	Proverbs 17:1-15
Saturday:	Proverbs 20:1-14
Sunday:	Proverbs 20:15-30

## MEMORY VERSE:

*These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Prov. 6:16-19).*

## INTRODUCTION:

"Abomination," as defined by Webster, means "anything hateful and disgusting." It is something vile, unpleasant, and loathsome. An exceedingly strong word, "abomination" is applied to that which is very bad and highly offensive. Such a review of the word's meaning gives some indication of how strongly the Lord feels about those things He calls an abomination unto Him. The use of this word is not restricted to the King James Version of the Bible. Both the Amplified Version and the Revised Standard Version translate the same word as abomination.

## LESSON NOTES:

*Abominations:* Foremost among those items which the Lord despises is pride. Pride is detestable, for it lifts a man higher in his own estimation than he ought to be. It makes him think he is better than his fellows, and it blinds him to his true condition in the sight of God as a sinner. The greatest stumblingblock to salvation is man's refusal and failure to accept his need of a Saviour. In addition, it is pride which causes us to rebel at all the teachings of the Bible. "All the ways of man are pure in his own eyes" (Prov. 16:2). A proud heart and a haughty spirit lead to disgrace (Prov. 11:2).

All of the declarations of those things which the Lord hates are so clearly set forth in the Bible as to need no further explanation. Lying tongues, hands that shed innocent blood, hearts bent on wicked imaginations, malicious gossips, and those who sow disunity among brethren are all clearly understandable to us (Prov. 6:16-19). It remains only to make these teachings relevant to our own lives. These words are a mirror of our hearts, not somebody else's.

Purity of mind and life, for example, need to be seen in the context of our current day-to-day environment. God's standards never change. His standard of morality and abhorrence of immorality are the same as they ever were. There is no such thing as a "new morality" in God's sight. How graphic does Proverbs describe impurity: "Like a gold ring in a swine's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion" (11:12). Outward beauty is folly without an inward purity.

*Deception and Integrity:* The book of Proverbs is exceedingly practical. It proves that the Bible is as up-to-date as the "morning newspaper." Take the subject of business ethics and integrity. Proverbs is a businessman's guide for business conduct, a housewife's standard for shopping, and a child's rule for behavior in school.

When the Bible says, "a false balance is an abomination to the Lord," it refers not only to butchers and delicatessen clerks but to all men and women who deal in the business world. The upright are always guided by integrity, not expedience. Riches will not profit in the day of wrath. "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice" (16:8). Cheating the time-clock is as bad as a thumb on the scale. Honesty and truth in salesmanship and merchandising are the same as a "just balance" (6:11). Misrepresenting a product, distorting a claim, glossing over deficiency for the sake of gain are all deception. Bribery should have absolutely no part in a Christian's conduct (17:8).

"Bread" gained by deceit is sweet to man, but afterward his mouth is full of gravel (20:17). Requisitioning company property for private use is stealing in the same sense as outright burglary. Cheating, whether it be in school on a test, in a business dealing, or with the government on taxes, is a "false balance" and a severe abomination to the Lord.

*Other Lessons:* "Even a child makes himself known by his acts" (Prov. 20:11). Deception practised as a youth will become part of the character and will issue in greater deceptions as an adult. Little lies become bigger lies. There is much the young can learn from Proverbs. Laziness, for example, is as much despised by God as some of the other items discussed (see Prov. 6:6-11). Laziness is a misuse of time and opportunity. Those that love sleep or those who refuse to work in season will have nothing and come to poverty (Prov. 20:4; see also 10:5; 10:26; 18:8). This holds true spiritually as well as materially. The slothful will not inherit the land.

Generosity always has its reward. Many have experienced, not only in tithing, but in other matters also, "One man gives freely, yet grows the richer; another withholds what he should give and only suffers want."

It is an even greater abomination for "kings" or those in positions of responsibility and leadership "to do evil." By example, they lead others astray.

The wisdom of the Proverbs is lost unless we apply the injunctions to our lives. Honesty and purity in all things bring blessing and life. Christianity must affect our daily lives. The devil tries a man just as hard in his daily business as in his faith or his lusts. Not the least of the Christian's difficulties is to keep a high standard of honesty against unscrupulous competition. Nothing can substitute for the approval of God on our conduct.



# THE TONGUE

## DAILY READINGS:

<i>Monday:</i>	Proverbs 10:1-14
<i>Tuesday:</i>	Proverbs 10:15-32
<i>Wednesday:</i>	Proverbs 12:13-28
<i>Thursday:</i>	Proverbs 15:1-15
<i>Friday:</i>	Proverbs 18:1-12
<i>Saturday:</i>	Proverbs 18:13-24
<i>Sunday:</i>	Proverbs 21:6-23

## MEMORY VERSE:

*For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body (James 3:2).*

## INTRODUCTION:

All will agree that the most overworked and misemployed member of the human body is the tongue. What man or woman is there that has not felt the awesome power of the tongue either as the target of some piercing comment or as the perpetrator of an ill-advised remark? By the same token, many have experienced the strengthening and soothing power of a "word in season." Words spoken are final. Once they have left the mouth, they cannot be recalled. Their healing or hurting powers are in force immediately. With such power at our disposal, it is well that we consider the Biblical teachings on the tongue.

## LESSON NOTES:

*Lying Lips:* Three of the seven items listed as hateful and abominable to the Lord concern the lips directly (Prov. 6:16-19). A lying tongue, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren all use the lips and tongue for their destruction. What violence can be done by the mouth! Reputations can be ruined, names sullied, men unjustly accused, irreparable divisions rendered among those who should dwell in unity, all by the words we speak.

All of us have experienced the speaking which is like the "piercings of a sword" (Prov. 12:18). Though conviction may seize us immediately as we realize the impact of what we said, it is too late. Hasty and thoughtless speaking are the marks of a fool and lead to destruction (Prov. 10:14,19; 18:6,7,13).

The tongue is the agent of hypocrisy. Many things can be said to create the proper illusion and impression to fool others. We can hide our hatred for another with lying lips (10:18). We can utter a slander behind a person's back and speak kindly to their face. We hasten to broadcast and be the "talebearers" of the mistakes of others and thus cause wounds which go down "into the innermost parts of the belly" (18:8). Deceit is practised by the tongue (12:17). Treasures can be gotten by a lying tongue (21:6), but the wicked will be snared by the transgression of his lips (12:13).

*A Wholesome Tongue:* As a fool's tongue can do severe damage, so a "wholesome tongue" can bring life. The tongue of the wise is health (12:18) and a "tree

of life" (15:4). Several items make for a wholesome tongue. Truthfulness (12:19), praises to God, words of righteousness are some of the more obvious. Others take the form of a "good word" which makes a downcast heart glad (12:25). A word of encouragement or faith spoken at the right moment can strengthen a soul in God.

A wholesome tongue is a controlled tongue, one that is temperate and just and does not react quickly to a given emotion. For example, a moment of strife can be escalated into a serious disagreement by "grievous words which stir up anger," whereas a "soft answer" which is tempered and has been thoughtfully prepared will turn away wrath (15:1).

The lips of the wise will dispense knowledge and feed man (10:21; 15:7). Testimonies of God's goodness and blessing, exhortations to the reward of trusting and serving God will bring life to many. Individual souls and the kingdom of God in general suffer great loss when we refrain from using our lips to praise and honor Him. Such a wholesome use of the tongue prevents unwholesome attitudes from growing in the soul. The good fruit of the mouth brings inward blessing and satisfaction (12:14; see also 18:20). He that keeps his mouth and tongue will also keep his soul from trouble (21:23).

*The Lessons:* The first requirement for having a wholesome tongue is a wholesome heart. The mouth speaks that which the heart stores up (Matt. 12:34). It is the mouth of a righteous man which is a well of life (10:11), and the tongue of the *just* which is as choice silver (10:20,31,32). The mouth only speaks that with which the mind and heart are filled. A fool will feed on foolishness (15:14) and ever speaks like a fool, while the wise man will feed on the things of God and be so full of God that from his innermost being rivers of living water will flow (see Prov. 18:14 and John 7:38).

Even in the believer's life, there is much foolishness which issues from his mouth. This is an indication of his weakness and lack of sanctification. The tongue is an unruly member which requires a supernatural force to bring it under submission (James 3:8). Perfection is attained by full mastery of the tongue (v. 2). That which controls the tongue can also bridle the whole body. It is no accident that when the Lord poured out His Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, He showed His power to tame and control that member of the body which no man can tame.

Much is said in the Bible about the tongue. Just in the readings associated with this lesson there are over thirty references to the tongue, the mouth, the lips, etc. It takes only about an hour to list them. Such an exercise would be a worthwhile endeavor. With death and life in the power of the tongue (Prov. 18:21), it behooves us to learn all we can about its proper and God-pleasing use. Wise and foolish men are known by the words they speak. No Christian should be satisfied until the words of his mouth and the meditations of his heart are acceptable in God's sight. Don't be discouraged over past repeated failures to control this member. It is only with His help and grace that total success will be reached. His grace is sufficient in this area also. With His help and grace our words can be acceptable unto Him.



## PROPHETS AND KINGS (I)

### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	1 Kings 11:26-43
Tuesday:	1 Kings 12:1-24
Wednesday:	1 Kings 13:1-32
Thursday:	1 Kings 14:1-18
Friday:	2 Chronicles 14
Saturday:	2 Chronicles 15
Sunday:	2 Chronicles 16:1-14

### MEMORY VERSE:

*For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him (2 Chron. 16:9).*

### INTRODUCTION:

For all his great wisdom, Solomon's reign ended in tragic failure. Ignoring God's command, Solomon married many "strange" wives and eventually was taken up with the worship of their strange gods. Knowledge of the truth, in and of itself, will not keep the soul from departing after evil. No matter what spiritual level or position a person attains, his obedience to the truth is all that matters. Even the greatest and wisest have no guarantee of triumph outside of obedience. Solomon's idolatry resulted also in tragic consequences to the kingdom.

### LESSON NOTES:

*Jeroboam and the Prophets:* The division in the kingdom was the judgment of God upon Solomon and not the work of Jeroboam. While Solomon was still alive, Jeroboam was given a prophetic promise of his own reign (1 Kings 11:31). After the split occurred, it was declared to be in accordance with the Lord's will (12:15).

Jeroboam's failures were in his eagerness to force the plan of God and his later abandonment of all loyalty to the Lord. Two things contributed to Jeroboam's pride, causing him to "jump the gun." First, being an able administrator, he was advanced quickly into a position of responsibility in Solomon's kingdom (11:28). This went to his head, and he had illusions of even greater positions, coveting, no doubt, even Solomon's throne (see v. 37). Promotions and advancements always tend to make us think more highly of ourselves than we ought. The second contributing factor was the Word of the Lord which agreed with his ambitions. However, he had also been specifically told that the kingdom would *not* be taken out of Solomon's hands until his death (v. 34). Thus his rebellion resulted in an exile in Egypt until Solomon died.

Once he had his own kingdom, Jeroboam forsook God completely. In His mercy, the Lord sent several prophets to him to awaken him to the consequences of his sin (13:2). None of them succeeded in causing Jeroboam to soften his heart towards the Lord. When his hand withered (v.4), Jeroboam was quick to ask the man of God to pray that his hand be restored (v.6).

His prayer answered, Jeroboam did not think a bit about honoring God, though he was willing to honor the prophet. Even the sickness and eventual death of his fine son (see 14:13) failed to arouse repentance in Jeroboam. Instead of calling on God, he sent his wife in disguise to the prophet Ahijah merely to "inquire" as to what would happen to his son. The ability of the prophet to discern the true identity of his visitor, though she was disguised and he was virtually blind (vv. 4-6), was also of no consequence in changing Jeroboam's heart. It is a fearful thing to harden one's heart to the Word of the Lord.

*Asa and The Prophets:* In contrast to Jeroboam's reign was the reign of Asa, the third king of the Southern Kingdom. In this kingdom, also, through the folly of Rehoboam and his son Abijah, idolatry and immorality were rampant. Asa changed that as he tore down the places of idolatry (1 Chron. 14:3; 15:8) and drove the "male cult prostitutes" from the land (1 Kings 15:12 — RSV). Not even his mother was exempt from the purge (1 Chron. 15:16).

Because he sought the Lord, he was given peace on every side and the land was free from war (14:7; 15:19). He relied on God, and the Lord did not fail him (14:11,12; 15:4). Great numbers deserted the Northern Kingdom and joined Asa when they saw the Lord was with him (v.9). Because Asa's heart was blameless and the people sought the Lord with all their heart and soul, He was found of them and gave them rest (v.15).

But even Asa later failed to trust the Lord in his need and was reprimanded by the prophet (16:8,9). So angry did Asa become with the prophet that he put him in stocks and afflicted the people (v. 10). Later in his sickness he again refused to trust the Lord (v.11).

*The Lessons:* Prophets were men who spoke for God. Their role was to reveal God's mind to the people and the king. Prior to the kingdom, God spoke directly to the leaders of the kingdom. During Saul's reign we find God speaking through Samuel, and subsequently in the history of the kingdom through the prophets in each king's reign. The greatness of their responsibilities is evident by the results of one prophet's failure to follow exactly God's commands (1 Kings 13:20-24).

The blessings of seeking the Lord and of doing His will, and the results of failing to follow Him are vividly portrayed not only in the contrast between Jeroboam's reign and Asa's but between the earlier and later days of Asa. Even when our trouble is the result of our sin, turning to Him and seeking Him bring His help. Our greatest failure comes from underestimating the greatness of God's mercy. It took great courage for Asa to trust the Lord and "renew the altar," but his courage was rewarded with victory and blessing. Conversely, Jeroboam's outright refusal to acknowledge God and Asa's later departure from explicit trust led to failure. When we forsake Him, He cannot work in our behalf; but when we turn to Him, He responds to our need.

The Lord is exceedingly eager to help us. His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth looking for hearts that are perfect towards Him that He may show forth His strength on their behalf (2 Chron. 16:9). We need not implore Him and beg for His aid. He is waiting to assist the soul who trusts completely in Him.



## PROPHETS AND KINGS (II)

### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	2 Chronicles 17
Tuesday:	2 Chronicles 18
Wednesday:	2 Chronicles 19
Thursday:	2 Chronicles 20:1-19
Friday:	2 Chronicles 20:20-37
Saturday:	2 Kings 3
Sunday:	2 Chronicles 25

### MEMORY VERSE:

*Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper (2 Chron. 20:20).*

### INTRODUCTION:

Virtually all of the kings in the Northern Kingdom of Israel walked in the ways established by Jeroboam. Despite several military overthrows of the Northern kings, bringing the reign into different families, the high places built by Jeroboam in Dan and Bethel were never destroyed. Jeroboam was followed by Nadab, then Baasha, who was followed by Zimri and then Omri in quick succession. Then came the reign of one of the most wicked and outrageous kings of Israel, King Ahab. While he ruled in the north, Jehoshaphat reigned as the fourth king of the Southern Kingdom.

### LESSON NOTES:

*Jehoshaphat, Ahab and the Prophets:* Led by his wicked wife Jezebel, Ahab established Baal worship with all its blatant immorality in the north. In the south Jehoshaphat "walked in the earlier ways of his father; he did not seek the Baals but sought the God of his father" (2 Chron. 17:3,4-RSV). Two more opposite kingdoms could not be imagined. Courageous in the ways of the Lord, Jehoshaphat inaugurated a massive program of educating his people in the "book of the Law of the Lord" (vv. 6-9). As a result, he enjoyed God's great blessing (vv. 10-12).

For all his great principle and courage, Jehoshaphat had a weakness about saying "no" to anyone. After his son married Ahab's daughter, Jehoshaphat agreed to join himself to Ahab to wage war against Ramoth-Gilead. Ahab never had any use for any of God's prophets except those who told him what he wanted to hear, and these could hardly be called "God's prophets." His constant warfare with Elijah is well known. Micaiah, the son of Imlah and a real man of God, was hated by Ahab because he never prophesied good concerning Ahab, only evil (18:7).

Micaiah is one of the outstanding examples of courage and faithfulness to God's message in the Bible. It was apparent to Ahab that Micaiah was being sarcastic in repeating what all his puppets had previously prophesied. Note, they all piously claimed to be speaking "in the name of the Lord" (vv. 10,11). Warned previously that he ought to conform if he counted his life dear, Micaiah was now ordered by an enraged Ahab to speak the truth. Faithfully he gave God's words of judgment. Contradicted by all the other prophets, publicly debased, and thrown in prison with "scant

fare," Micaiah remained true to the words God gave him (vv. 26,27).

Miraculously, Jehoshaphat escaped injury or death in the ensuing battle. When he returned home, he was rebuked by Jehu the seer (prophet), who said, "Should you help the wicked and love those that hate the Lord?" (19:1,2). Unfortunately Jehoshaphat did not learn his lesson, for on two other occasions he made alliances with wicked kings.

*Jehoshaphat in Danger:* Every believer, particularly those who have been exposed to the Pentecostal-type meetings in which the Lord is manifested and His words spoken through one or several of His prophets, should make himself familiar with 2 Chronicles 20. First of all, note how the people got together and sought the Lord, with different ones ministering and all joining in, giving full expression to their feelings and needs. Jehoshaphat led the people in a prayer which came from the depths of his heart. This is one of the great examples of prayer in the Bible and should be closely studied (vv. 5-12).

Then while the entire congregation, including the *children*, stood before the Lord, God spoke in the midst of the assembly over the lips of one Jahaziel, a Levite. Following this promise of victory, all fell on their faces and worshipped Him while others praised Him with a *very* loud voice (see vv. 13-18 - RSV).

The next day Jehoshaphat gave wise counsel, "Believe in the Lord, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed" (v. 20 - RSV). Then he appointed those who should precede the army and sing to the Lord and worship Him. While they were singing and praising the Lord, He defeated the enemy. So great was the victory, they were three days in gathering the spoil. Then they returned with joy to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets and entered the house of the Lord. The victory was attributed to the *rejoicing* which they did (vv. 21-29 - RSV).

*The Lessons:* Pentecostal meetings are generally distinguishable from other types of religious services by their free form of worship. This does not, of course, mean that all meetings which follow such a pattern are Pentecostal meetings, nor would we be so narrow as to put a label on a certain type of meeting and seek only for such a gathering. The main point is that when people of God come together to seek the Lord in "spirit and in truth," desiring to hear His Word and meet with Him, He manifests Himself in the meeting. Praising the Lord with a loud voice is scriptural, purposeful, and meaningful. It should *not* be something done as a form. It unites the assembly in faith and creates a climate in which God can work and speak. It prepares the soul to receive His Word.

Prophecies in meetings are also scriptural. Whether it be by tongues and interpretation (1 Cor. 14:22-32), or by other means, the Lord does speak through His servants and over their lips. All prophets should be tried by the Bible and by the results of their prophecies. False prophets were as prevalent in the Old Testament days as they are in our days, but the existence of false prophets does not prove that there is no such thing as a true prophet. Quite the contrary. The counterfeit emphasizes the reality of the true.

Finally, though a fine king, Jehoshaphat could have spared himself much grief had he learned the lesson

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## PROPHETS AND KINGS (III)

### DAILY READINGS:

<i>Monday:</i>	2 Chronicles 28
<i>Tuesday:</i>	Isaiah 7
<i>Wednesday:</i>	Isaiah 36
<i>Thursday:</i>	Isaiah 37:1-20
<i>Friday:</i>	Isaiah 37:21-38
<i>Saturday:</i>	Isaiah 38
<i>Sunday:</i>	Isaiah 39

### MEMORY VERSE:

*What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul (Isaiah 38:15).*

### INTRODUCTION:

The prophetic ministry in Israel and Judah increased in scope as both sections of this land moved closer to the destruction and captivity which awaited them. As days grew darker, the Lord raised up stronger voices to admonish His people. In a sense, they were the "evangelists" of their day calling on the people to repent (see 2 Kings 17:13). By the time Isaiah began his ministry, the Northern Kingdom (Israel) was virtually in the grip of the Assyrians. Within several years, Samaria fell and their captivity began. The Southern Kingdom (Judah) where Isaiah ministered lasted for several more years.

### LESSON NOTES:

*Ahaz and Isaiah:* Four kings were contemporary with Isaiah. They were Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Isa. 1:1). Israel had not as yet fallen when Ahaz ascended the throne in Judah. Twelve years passed before their captivity began (2 Kings 17:9). During this time they were in league with Syria in an invasion of Judah. Additionally, Judah was raided by the Philistines and the Edomites. Many of their outlying cities were captured (2 Chron. 28:17,18). The Lord brought Ahaz low because of his wickedness (v.19). In his distress, Ahaz became more faithless (v.22).

It was at the time of this distressing crisis that Isaiah, who had been in the ministry about six years, was sent by the Lord to Ahaz with a message of hope. Faith in God would bring victory (Isaiah 7). Stubborn and defiant, Ahaz ignored Isaiah and refused to accept the Lord's sign. He sought his own way out by making an alliance with Assyria. While it helped stabilize the situation somewhat, it put him under heavy tribute to Tiglath-pileser (vv.20,21; see also 2 Kings 16:7-9).

Israel and Syria had succeeded in defeating Judah and inflicting great damage. However, through the grace of God they were unable to take Jerusalem and were subsequently forced by the Lord to return the two hundred thousand captives and the "great spoil" they had taken (vv.5-14).

*Hezekiah and Isaiah:* Though the son of the wicked and idolatrous Ahaz, Hezekiah had a heart to do the things of God. Early in his reign he re-established the

temple worship and promoted the celebration of the Passover. Letters were even sent to the Northern Kingdom inviting those interested to join in this celebration (see 2 Chron. 29 and 30).

Under Hezekiah the Assyrians threatened to capture Judah. Samaria had already fallen by now in the face of this conqueror. Like a strong machine, the Assyrian army had crushed nation after nation. Finally they encamped around Jerusalem and demanded its surrender (Isaiah 36). The dialogue between the leaders of the two nations is fascinating reading. In addition to all these troubles Hezekiah became gravely sick (38:1).

Help was sought from the Lord through Isaiah (37:1-4). Because the Lord promised deliverance, Judah refused to surrender (5:13). This stand prompted Sennacherib to renew his threats in a letter which Hezekiah spread before the Lord (vv. 14-21). Again through Isaiah the Lord promised deliverance (vv. 21-35). Not only did the Lord miraculously defeat the Assyrians but brought a great healing to Hezekiah in marvelous answers to prayer. Both events were noised abroad and many came from far countries to visit Hezekiah (Isaiah 39).

*The Lessons:* Isaiah is another example of how the prophets lived in the mainstream of history and dealt in the day-to-day problems of the land. Though Isaiah's writings abound in Messianic prophecies of great blessing and import, they were all given in the context of his day-by-day ministry as a spokesman for God.

Though he was contemporary with one of the greatest prophets that ever lived, Ahaz promoted the most obnoxious idolatrous practises. Purposely he turned his back on God and sought the gods of the other lands who had shown their impotence in the face of invaders. Ahaz refused the evidence on which his faith could have been established. The offer God made to him is extraordinary and another example of the wideness of His mercy. It takes a determined effort to escape this mercy. Pride stood between Ahaz and complete victory. He refused to humble himself and yield to God.

Though he was directly opposite in his service to God than Ahaz, Hezekiah had similar if not more pressing difficulties. It was the way he approached the trouble that made the big difference. We see here some basic lessons on our conduct in a trial. Note how the conflict eventually centered about the ability of the living God versus the ability of the gods of this world. All men instinctively seek a higher power when problems become too large for them. It matters greatly who your God is in such a situation. The Assyrians mocked the living God as men are prone to do when they are strong. They considered Him no more powerful than the gods of the world (see Isa. 37:4,12,13). The issue was over whether there was a difference. Hezekiah prayed that God would honor His name. Whenever a trial reflects on the honor of His name and our prayer seeks to win this honor in the world, God is bound to answer. Hezekiah's prayer was answered because he prayed with this urgency. It is unfortunate that when the crisis was over he did not openly glorify God before the many visitors who came to see Him (Isa. 39). Those that put their trust in God are never put to shame. They should not therefore be ashamed to acknowledge His name in all the earth.



## PROPHETS AND KINGS (IV)

## DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Jeremiah 24
Tuesday:	Jeremiah 28
Wednesday:	Jeremiah 21
Thursday:	Jeremiah 34
Friday:	Jeremiah 37
Saturday:	Jeremiah 38
Sunday:	Jeremiah 39:1-10

## MEMORY VERSE:

*Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience (James 5:10).*

## INTRODUCTION:

The treaty which Ahaz had made with Tiglath-pileser began the forfeiture of Judah's freedom. Only through treaties, resistance, and the intervention of the Lord did Judah remain self-governing. Both wicked and righteous kings reigned in the ensuing period, the most wicked being Manasseh. During the reign of his son Josiah, Judah experienced renewed hope. Assyrian power was fading. Josiah instituted religious reform and nationalistic hopes rose. After thirty-one years Josiah's reign ended abruptly. Within twenty-five years, Judah was to succumb to the rising power of the Babylonian Empire.

## LESSON NOTES:

*Beginning of the End:* Josiah's foolish attempt to intervene against Egypt when Pharaoh-Necho was marching through Palestine, in an effort to assist the Assyrian army who was engaged in another war resulted in his death and the eventual subjugation of Judah to the Egyptians. Jehoahaz, Josiah's son, reigned but three months after which he was deposed by the king of Egypt, taken to Egypt, and then killed (see 2 Chron. 36:1-3 and Jer. 22:11,12). His brother, Eliakim, was made king by Pharaoh who also changed his name to Jehoiakim. A puppet of Necho, Pharaoh of Egypt, Jehoiakim opposed the ministry of Jeremiah.

Beginning his ministry about the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, Jeremiah had long been warning Judah of her unfaithfulness. He promised that the fate which came to Samaria a century before would come to Judah unless they turned to the Lord (Jer. 2:4). Ignoring and discrediting Jeremiah, Jehoiakim followed his own will.

During Jehoiakim's reign the Babylonian army crushed Egypt. In the process Judah was made subservient to the Babylonian ruler. After three years of paying tribute, Jehoiakim rebelled and was invaded by Nebuchadnezzar. Captives were taken to Babylon among whom were Daniel and his three friends, Jehoiachin (also known as Coniah or Jeconiah), the son of Jehoiakim, was made ruler, upon his father's death. Within three months Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem again and took him and his wife prisoners. Ezekiel was also among those taken at this time.

*The End:* It was following this captivity that Jeremiah had the vision of the good and bad figs (Jer. 24).

Those taken into exile were the "good figs" in that it was from these that God was going to raise a remnant who would heed Him and serve Him (v.6). Those left behind were the "bad figs," not worthy of salvage.

Zedekiah was the king who followed Jeconiah's brief three-month reign. Despite the subjugation to Babylon and the prophesies of Jeremiah, Zedekiah chose to listen to the words of Hananiah who prophesied the return of the exiles within two years. Dramatically breaking a wooden yoke to illustrate how Judah would break the yoke of Babylon, Hananiah's "word of the Lord" challenged Jeremiah's. Jeremiah acted out his response from the Lord using an iron yoke to illustrate the folly of Hananiah's prophecy. To demonstrate the authenticity behind his words, he further declared that Hananiah would die that year. Within sixty days he was dead (Jer. 28).

Continuing to urge the people not to resist, but to surrender to the upcoming invasion, Jeremiah met great resistance (Jer. 21). While Jerusalem was under attack Jeremiah prophesied that Zedekiah's life would be spared (34:4).

Surprisingly, the Egyptians came to life and came to the aid of Judah. When the Babylonian army withdrew, false hope arose in Judah. Jeremiah insisted that the Chaldeans would return but was not heeded. While leaving the city on an errand Jeremiah was falsely accused of deserting to the enemy and imprisoned. Because he urged surrender, Jeremiah was further accused of seeking the people's harm (38:4). For this "treason" he was cast into a cistern. Delivered from this, Jeremiah again faithfully warned the weak-willed Zedekiah. Within days the Chaldeans entered the city. Zedekiah attempted to escape and was captured. His sons were slain before his eyes and he was blinded (39:7). Thus did the kingdom come to an end.

*The Lessons:* Jeremiah's job was far from easy. Anyone who faithfully proclaims God's Word to these in rebellion against Him will find little support and much opposition. Though his words were confirmed as being from the Lord by their fulfillment (see Jer. 28:9), he was still not regarded. People will always tend to believe that which they want to believe rather than the truth which seems unpleasant. Many times Jeremiah had to fight alone against others who also claimed to have the word of the Lord. If Jeremiah's own faith wavered in the face of this opposition, it was never evident. It is not uncommon for the Word of God, whether in the Bible or given by one of His servants, to be challenged and discredited. The man of faith will not be swayed by such opposition.

Judah's history proves that what a man sows he also reaps. While many of her kings wanted to serve the Lord and many made a start, of most it is said "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord but not with a perfect heart." Many were the warnings that God gave his people. No man backslides without repeated warning. God speaks in a voice that cannot be mistaken. The danger comes from doing like Zedekiah who "humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord." Every slight, inward check from the Holy Ghost is given in love. Each rebuke from above is a call in compassion to return to Him with a perfect heart. Persistent ignoring of the "still small voice" dooms the soul to destruction.

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and longsuffering for God. How thankful we can be that God does not soon get tired of us. In spite of repeated failure, there is repeated deliverance when we call upon His name. Man left to himself will soon go astray and fail. But "looking unto Him, the author and finisher of our faith," will bring victory when we cry out by reason of our affliction, and will guarantee victory as we continue to look to Him and allow Him to reign.

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which shows the shallowness and depravity of our hearts. It is not the "ark" of God that we should rely on but the God of the ark. The Israelites were well aware from their own history of how God repeatedly responded to their calls for help despite their own failure. And He is ever willing to aid us and deliver us if we call on Him. But to rely on a fetish, symbol, procedure, or ceremony in place of seeking Him directly will not result in anything helpful. It is God, first and always, who must be honored and sought for a triumphant life.

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as he was loyal and helpful to David (see 1 Sam. 20:34). Even in death, he and his father were not divided (2 Sam. 1:23).

It is exceedingly important whom we chose for our friends. The strength of David and Jonathan's friendship was due to their similar beliefs. Each of us needs friends, and each of us can become a friend to another. But the choice of friends should be carefully made. As a true friend, Jonathan gave himself to David fully and helped him in all his difficulties because they shared a "like precious faith." "Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will do it for thee," was Jonathan's expression of friendship (1 Sam. 20:4). But more important was the fact that Jonathan strengthened David's hand in God. Choose a friend who will do this. Be a friend who can be counted on for this help. A friend who ministers in this way is a friend "after God's own heart."

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of separateness from evil company as well as he had learned the lesson of trusting God and worshipping Him from the heart.

