

Everyone Responsible For His Own Deeds



Foundations (Day 332)
by Derek Prince

Yesterday we saw how there are two stages in which God's judgment takes place: time and eternity. We looked at an example of God's judgment in time when He warns people that idolatry affects the generations after them. At the same time, God tells us that He is showing mercy to many descendants of those who love God and keep His commandments. In order to obtain a complete picture of God's total judgement, however, we must also consider the many passages of Scripture which deal with God's judgement in eternity. A very clear picture of this is given in the following message of the Lord to His people Israel through the prophet Ezekiel.

> "The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, 'What do you mean when you 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,' says the Lord God, 'you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. 'Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.'" (Ezek. 18:1-4)

This passage indicates that, when God through His prophets rebuked Israel for their backsliding, the people tried to excuse themselves by placing the blame for their condition upon the sinfulness of preceding generations. They implied that the national decline of Israel in their day was due to the sins of their ancestors and so God could not justly hold them responsible for their present moral condition. However, God, through this message by Ezekiel, entirely rejects this form of excuse.

Although national decline may have been brought about by the failure of preceding generations, God warns them that He holds each one of them individually responsible for his own moral condition and that each one of them will be judged – in eternity – solely for his own character and conduct, and not at all for anything that his ancestors may or may not have done. This warning is repeated yet more emphatically a little further on.

> "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the

son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." (Ezek. 18:20).

The whole application of this passage is individual and personal. "The soul who sins shall die." This is not the judgement of a nation or a family; this is the judgement of each individual soul – the judgement by which the destiny of each soul is settled for eternity.

Devotional

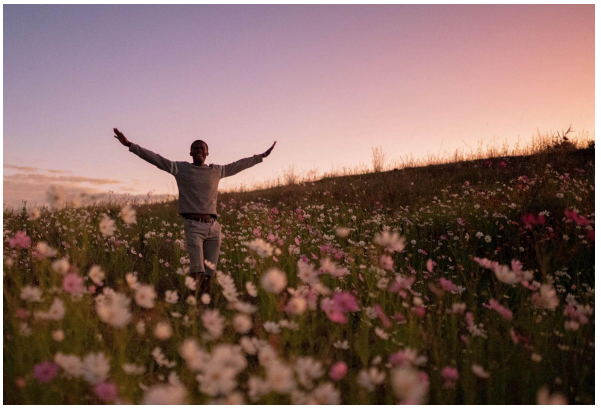
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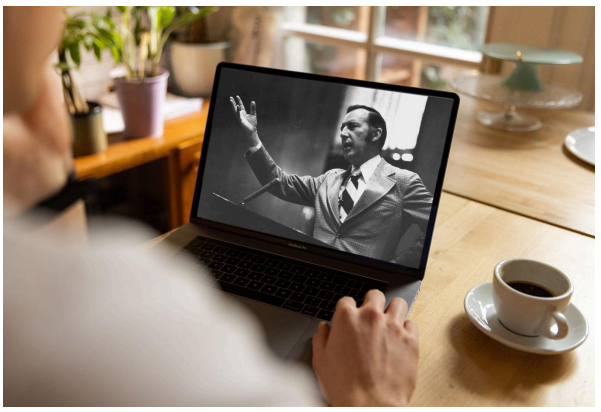
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