

KEENER THOUGHTS

OCTOBER, 2012

SETTING OUR HOUSE IN ORDER

And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father. (**2Sa. 17:23**)

*In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. (**2Ki 20:1**)*

We have a biblical account here of two men who are facing death, and concerning whom, setting their house in order is mentioned. In one case, the sinful act of suicide is planned. I have tried to help clean up the emotional heartache and confusion caused by suicide on several occasions. I am persuaded it is one of the most selfish actions a human being can take, whether it is taken for revenge, which is often the case, or whether it is done out of spite, or for relief from physical pain or desperation, it is a wrong action. Ahithophel was a counselor to King David, and apparently a good one. He was grandfather to Bathsheba, and it is likely that David had alienated Ahithophel from himself by the sin concerning Uriah. Ahithophel would have thus, necessarily, been an old man at the time of his suicide. He was probably acting out of anger, or defeat, or perhaps, fear of King David, since he was part of Absalom's rebellion. In any case, he was sensible enough to set his household in order, whatever that involved. At least, I am constrained to respect the fact that next to his last sinful action he set his house in order. On the other hand, Hezekiah was warned of impending death which he did not desire, and was instructed by God, through the prophet Isaiah, to set his house in order. In both of these cases, we learn something that we should be aware of every time we consider our own death. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph each set their houses in order before death, and

so should we. This is a reasonable part of responsible living.

Preparation to die is not mere resignation to death's reality. Even the fool knows that death is pending. But proper preparation to die includes setting our house in order, and it is usually one of the duties of responsible living.

In our men's Sunday School class, we have been going through a series of profitable lessons concerning preparation for death, or at least considering the impending fact, and imminence, of our death. Some great quotes of good men have been read, which are very profitable. However, I have been driven to realize that death is not just a private matter between us and God. Of course, it is ultimately between each individual and God. However, the statement that *"You gotta walk that lonesome valley; You gotta go there by yourself,"* is only a half truth. When you come to death's door many people who are not the one dying are, in fact, sharing that event with you. I have shared the last day of life with a lot of people, and a day in the last week of life with a much larger number. I have also sat with many families, children and widows, who shed a thousand unnecessary tears because the departed had not set their house in order. Have you heard a widow trying to talk above her weeping, and saying *"I fear my husband is in hell,"* or a Christian saying through their tears, *"I fear my brother, is in hell tonight."* I have, and it is a dreadful experience. It seems to me that someone did not set their house in order. What a comfort it is to me, as a minister, to hear a family say, as they weep softly, *"We know he is with the Lord."* *"He was a good father,"* or *"She was a wonderful mother."* However, I have heard widows say of their dead husband, *"I am so angry with him, I just don't know what to say."* That is usually not because he is dead, but because he did not set his house in order.

I am sure there is yet a lot more than just eternal issues involved in setting our house in order. Should I fare sumptuously every day, and die leaving my wife a penniless widow? I expect that comes short of Christian responsibility. Perhaps in some situations it cannot be helped, but generally I think Christian responsibility goes somewhat further than that. While none of us knows the future, and cannot hedge against all eventualities, it is, nevertheless, true that *"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished."* (Pro. 27:12) I know that some may say, *"Well I just have to leave that in the hands of the Lord."* That is, of course, ultimately true, but there are some responsibilities God places in our hands. For instance, if I saw a man who only sat in the shade, and

read his Bible and prayed all day, every day, and never worked to feed his children, when he told me he just left that in the hands of God, I would think him an imbecile or a hypocrite, I certainly could not count him a well-taught, dedicated Christian. In a normal situation, I should try to make reasonable preparation not to die with a heap of unsecured debt, and a wife, or a wife and family, if my children are yet young, who had no way to turn.

I do not know when my death shall come. If I knew that I would die within a year, I would try to sell our home, and make living arrangements which would not require much maintenance of my wife, after I was gone. However, if we have five or seven or ten years to live, our present arrangement is much more enjoyable, and practical, so we continue this situation for the time at hand. Not only so, but I still live to preach, so we plan our living arrangement around that. It seems that considering what I know, or do not know now, I believe, and pray, that my house is in order. I pray that as that may change, God will give my wife and me wisdom to make the alterations that will **keep our house in order**. Of course, beyond that we must trust Him.

--FLK