

2. The same vicious cycle

12/8/2005

True Christian church have never swung the literal sword to eliminate people who disagree with the Christian faith. But we do have the obligation before God to maintain a separate walk so we won't become defiled by those who disagree with us. We must seek by prayer, witness and loving persuasion to win those to Christ who as yet haven't trusted Him.

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

2 Corinthians 7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence of God. (NIV)

The Jews eventually became so accustomed to the sinful ways of their pagan neighbors that those ways didn't seem sinful any more. The Jews then became interested in how their neighbors worshiped, until they themselves started to live like their enemies and imitate their ways.

For believers today, the first step away from the Lord is "friendship with the world (James 4:4)". The next step is to "love the world (1 John 2:15)" and gradually become "conformed to this world (Romans 12:2)". This can lead to being "condemned with the world (1 Cor 11:32)", the kind of judgment that came to Lot, Samson and king Saul.

In Mark 2:15, Jesus was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples. When the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors, they challenged Jesus. So was Jesus having friendship with the world? No, He was being a friend to sinners like we were. There is a tremendous difference between a friend to sinners and a friend to the world.

James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

As we already studied last week, we find out that the Israelites didn't drive out the Canaanites and all the foreign tribes as the Lord instructed them. The author is flashing back what he narrated already in a good old Hebrew writing fashion in more details.

A. REMORSED, NOT REPENTED

Judges 2:1-6 Then the Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you. 2 And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? 3 Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side and their gods shall be a snare to you.' " 4 So it was, when the Angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept. 5 Then they called the name of that place Bochim; and they sacrificed there to the Lord. 6 And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land.

In the Old Testament, the “Angel of the Lord” is generally interpreted to be the Lord Himself, who occasionally came to earth (a theophany) to deliver an important message. It was probably the Lord Jesus Christ (Christophany), the second Person of the Godhead, in a temporary pre-incarnation appearance. The fact that God Himself came to give the message shows how serious things had become in Israel.

When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Joshua in Joshua 5:13-15, the Lord brought a message of encouragement. But this time He showed up to the Israelites with a message of punishment.

Israel disobeyed the Lord and not only spared the Canaanites and their godless religious system but also began to follow the enemy’s lifestyle themselves.

By their disobedience, the nation of Israel made it clear that they wanted the Canaanites to remain in the land. God let them have their way, but He warned them of the tragic consequences. The nations in the land of Canaan would become thorns that would afflict Israel and traps that would ensnare them. Israel would look to the Canaanites for pleasures but would only experience pain. They would rejoice in their freedom only to see that freedom turn into their bondage.

Many people who have addictions didn’t start with the idea that they would be under bondage of whatever they are struggling with. They thought they could handle it. They thought they would enjoy it and not get hurt by it. Wrong!

Their sorrow was because of the consequences of their sins and not because of the conviction of the wickedness of their sins. It was a shallow and temporary sorrow and remorse that never led them to true repentance.

B. THE NEW GENERATION IN ISRAEL

Judges 2:7-10 So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which He had done for Israel. 8 Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died when he was one hundred and ten years old. 9 And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. 10 When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.

How important it is for each new generation to recognize and appreciate our great God who helped to build and protect their nation! It’s disturbing when “revisionist” historians debunk the truth with their own ideology. The American educational systems is just doing that. They are literally rewriting the American history by subtracting Christianity.

True Christianity is not biologically transmitted. It must be caught by each new generation, by the new generation having their own personal relationship with God and seeing His works on their behalf.

A good example of that is PKs. Generally pastors’ kids are well known for their rebellious attitude toward God.

C. FORGETTING THE WORD OF GOD

Judges 2:11-13 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals; 12 and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who

had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. 13 They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

Why would anyone want to trade a personal, real, living God for a false god that is the figment of man's imagination? Because there is something within us that is afraid of the real God we need. We would rather serve a god of our own creation than a real, living God we can't control.

When we forget the Word of God, we are in danger of forsaking the God of the Word, which explains why Israel turned to the vile and vicious worship of Baal.

What was the attraction of Baal and Ashtoreth worship? The bottom line with Baal was personal wealth and sex for Ashtoreth. These idol worship appeals to human fleshly desires.

Israel did not see their idolatry as forsaking God, but they probably just thought they were adding a few gods along side of the God of their fathers. But we serve a very jealous God, who demands exclusive worship from us.

God isn't just something we add to our lives. He wants to become our lives. And He will not have us adding other gods to our lives. We are said to be in a marriage type relationship with God and we are not allowed to say "Well, I love you, but let me also add this lover and that lover. I can love you all!" God wants one spouse to meet all our marital needs. He is the one God who can meet all our needs.

My wife has a Glock Model 27, a 40 Caliber handgun. If I come up with that kind of stupid idea, she would simply shoot me and notify Pastor Chuck Smith that Joonho Kim is no longer with Calvary Chapel.

D. GOD'S WRATH UPON THEIR SIN OF IDOLATRY

Judges 2:14-15 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. 15 Wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity, as the Lord had said and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

Had the Jews obeyed the Lord, their armies would have been victorious. But left to themselves, they were defeated and humiliated.

The purpose of all this, was so that when Israel was greatly distressed, they would turn their hearts back to Lord. God's goal wasn't punishment, but repentance.

As long as we obey the Lord, we would be strong. But when we walk out of His will, the God's protective hands will not guard us and He will allow us to be defeated.

E. PEOPLE'S SIN AND GOD'S ABUNDANT GRACE

Judges 2:16-19 Nevertheless, the Lord raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. 17 Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the Lord; they did not do so. 18 And when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered

them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. 19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.

The Israel people wasted their suffering. They didn't learn the lessons God wanted them to learn and profit from His chastening.

God's desire is that we stay in a constant relationship of dependence on Him. The ultimate example of this is Jesus.

John 5:19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner."

The Israel people's sin was their own doings. They couldn't blame it on anyone or anything else. In the same way, our sins are our own. We don't learn it from God, but comes from our own corrupt natures.

'Stubborn', also translated as 'stiff-necked', is a word that was also applied to Israel many times during the Exodus.

God delivered His people by raising up judges, who defeated the enemy and set Israel free. The Hebrew word translated "judge" means "to save, to rescue." The judges were deliverers who won great military victories with the help of the Lord. But the judges were also leaders who helped the people settle their disputes.

F. YOU WANT IT, YOU GOT IT

Judges 2:20-23 Then the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers and has not heeded My voice, 21 I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, 22 so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the Lord, to walk in them as their fathers kept them, or not." 23 Therefore the Lord left those nations, without driving them out immediately; nor did He deliver them into the hand of Joshua.

Israel wanted these Canaanite nations around, so God will give them the worst punishment He can think of: He will allow it.

If we want something that is not in God's will for us so bad, He will grant our wish. Then we would drink the bitterness of the consequences of our own dumb stupid sin.

The cycle of disobedience, discipline, despair and deliverance is seen today whenever God's people turn away from His Word and go their own way. If disobedience isn't followed by divine discipline, then the person is not truly a child of God. Because God chastens all of His children.

The Book of Judges is the inspired record of Israel's failures and God's faithfulness. But if we study this book only as past history, we'll miss the main message completely. This book is about God's people today.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) We should not cheat ourselves by settling for less than what God has for us.

If we do, God will allow us to experience the bitter harvest of settling for less than His best.

2) To follow our God, we must be grateful for what He has done for us. Otherwise, we would be looking for other so-called gods to meet our fleshly desires.