

Hope For Our Nation

Topical

Objective: Impress upon people the need to examine their relationship with God.

Reading: Judges 2:16-22.

Introduction:

1. The reading from Judges depicts a common pattern followed by people in regard to God.
2. This pattern can be seen throughout the history of Israel. It is a cycle; People engage in increasing sin until God abandons them and, without God's help and guidance, they get in big trouble. Then in repentance, they cry out for help and God rescues them. Then it starts all over again. Scholars call it the Deuteronomic Cycle, but they could call it the "human cycle" as we all seem prone to is. When folks are blessed and comfortable they stop thinking about God and righteousness and drift into sin again. It happens with the Nation Israel, and it happens with individuals.
3. If we look to see where our nation is in this pattern, I would suggest we are well into the "drifting" stage. If this is true, we certainly don't want what comes next in the pattern. Perhaps we can learn from Israel's history and not follow that part of the pattern.

We need to determine what we can do to help our nation to not lose God's blessing. (WHAT?)

Let's look at where we stand in this repeated sin cycle and what we can do to hold on to God's blessings.

First, let's get an

I. Historical perspective of the pattern;

A. Nation drifts from devotion to God. Sin

1. They seem to simply forget about Him and go off doing their "own thing".
2. Recurring theme; Judges 21:25, ***"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."***
3. They devoted themselves to false concepts of God, to revelry and to following animal lusts and instincts rather than genuine spirituality like God would direct them.
4. They stopped taking time for "church" and were not all that real about it when they did put on a church face.
5. How many attend church in our time?
6. How many are genuinely devout? How many are "sort of Christian" and "sort of worldly" – meaning a tendency to do what they feel at any given moment instead of concern for righteousness, holiness and faithfulness to the name of God!

B. God leaves them on their own. Abandonment.

1. Romans 1:24-28, ***"Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. ²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ²⁶ For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷ and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. ²⁸ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,"***
2. God threw up His hands, let them go their own way! So each did what was right in their own eyes.
3. Tolerance of all manner of sins, because no-one cared (or dared) to call evil, evil.
4. How long before God washes His hands of us? We are a nation founded on belief in God and religious freedom – "One Nation Under God" on our money and in our Pledge of Allegiance.

C. They experience trouble and oppression. Punishment.

1. Judges 2:11-15, ***"Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals, ¹² and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who***

were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger. ¹³ So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroth. ¹⁴ The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. ¹⁵ Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed.”

2. What is our focus on? What has replaced devotion to God in the United States generally?
3. Who is God? Who is Christ? Isaiah 9:6, “...**And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.**”
4. What can you expect when ignore the Wonderful Counselor or He leaves?
 - a. Trouble. With families. With nations. With politics.
5. What can you expect when you lose the help of the Mighty God?
 - a. When He provided wisdom to our leaders, we were in good shape.
 - b. When He fought our battles, we were victorious.
 - c. When diseases rampaged, He could heal us
 - d. When God washes His hands of us and gives us over? No longer does these things?
6. What can you expect when the Eternal Father washes His hands?
 - a. I am afraid it goes beyond physical well being here, it enters eternity.
 - b. We are talking about losing eternal souls and abandonment to Hell.
7. What can you expect when the Prince of Peace abandons us?
 - a. My guess would be war and devastation.
 - b. My guess would be stress from all directions. Strife, bullying, hunger, destitution, malice, oppression. My guess would be anarchy and Great Tribulation.
8. I would expect that we can expect punishment; Romans 1:8, “**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...**”

D. The people cry out for help. Repentance.

1. This generally takes the form of a “Judge” – that is, a very strong leader who points the people, or part of the people in the right direction.
2. There was no separation of church and state in Israel’s time as we know it today.
 - a. There were politicians and there were religious leaders, but the religious leaders cared about the welfare of the nation and the politicians understood they needed God to succeed.
 - b. Good, effective religious leaders were God-fearing, worshipping people.
3. Who will lead us today? Which politician will bring this nation back to God?
4. Where are WE HEADED at this moment in this regard?
5. Sometime it was a tribe instead of whole nation. Perhaps it will be many small groups turning back to God, Will it be you? Your congregation? There needs to be repentance before;

E. Rescue. Restoration and deliverance.

1. When the people genuinely turn to God, He saves them historically.
2. Yet there comes a time when He washes His hands, when it is too late for that. In the Wilderness Wandering, the spies brought back a “bad report” and the people feared to do what God said, so all that generation died in the wilderness. They tried to repent, but it was too late.
3. Alcoholics’ Anonymous saying is true here; “*I know I have one more good drunk in me – I don’t know if I have another recovery left.*”
 - a. Our nation certainly has the ability to depart from God one more time; but will God rescue us one more time yet?
 - b. What will the punishment be? How severe? Who will be hurt?
 - c. How long before restoration? Will there yet be another restoration if we fall this time?

We have gone the way of our “fathers”. Our nation’s spiritual focus has drifted. One nation under God has drifted. Teaching morality to our children has stifled and drifted. We are in trouble.

III. What can be done?

- A. The potential for healing is still here.

1. This is the message of hope in the Prodigal Son story.
2. 2 Chronicles 7:13-15, ***"If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people,"¹⁴ and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.¹⁵ "Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place."***
 - a. We must humble ourselves – This means stop relying on our own military only on our own technology, on our own arrogant strength.
 - b. We must turn to Him in prayer – with open, honest hearts, acknowledging our sins and asking His help.
 - c. We must seek God by trying to learn His ways and His nature and His instructions.
 - d. We must repent – turn from our wicked ways – recognize sin as sin, stop doing things that are unacceptable to Him. Even if the nation says it is okay. It is not okay.
3. God is looking for purity, truth in devotion. He is looking for humility and the "obedience of faith".

B. Acknowledge the sins of our "fathers."

1. Here is what they did in Nehemiah's day; Nehemiah 9:2, ***"The descendants of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers."***
 - a. They had thought they were a strong nation, under the protection of God, but they were carried off into captivity.
 - b. Not until they acknowledged how they had drifted by following the ways of ungodly nations, not until they acknowledged how their "fathers" had drifted, were they able to be restored.
2. Daniel 9:16, ***"O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us."*** Understanding how we got to this point may help us get back to where we need to be, but the sins of our "fathers", are not just their sins –they are our own sins now!
3. "Fathers" being leaders, mentors, politicians, spiritual leaders, parents. Where they have missed the boat in following God, puts us where we are now, but if we are in the wrong place ourselves, we need to acknowledge that.
4. Stop following their errors. Because "everybody does it" or because you always see it accepted on television does not make it okay with God.
5. Search out the Truth. Take a personal stand on truth!

C. Look to your own relationship with God.

1. The only one you can really change is you. The only one you can really correct is you.
2. Look to your own personal devotion to God in Christ.
3. Revelation 2:4-5, ***"But I have this against you, that you have left your first love."⁵ "Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent."***
 - a. We need to look at where we ought to be compared to where we are.
 - b. Now is the time for personal repentance.
 - c. Renew your personal devotion and zeal. Renew your own priorities. Reopen your heart.
4. Perhaps others will see the light shining in your example, and follow.

So What?

The message, the motivation to bring healing and security to our nation, is for each to return to God, to repent of any sins and render genuine and renewed devotion. *The Biblical call here is for each to examine their own relationship with God and return to Him.*

Closing Prayer:

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Judges 21:25

- B. God leaves them on their own. Abandonment.
Romans 1:24-28

- C. They experience trouble and oppression. Punishment.
Judges 2:11-15 Isaiah 9:6 Romans 1:8

- D. The people cry out for help. Repentance.

- E. Rescue. Restoration and deliverance.

III. What can be done?

- A. The potential for healing is still here.
2 Chronicles 7:13-15

- B. Acknowledge the sins of our "fathers."
Nehemiah 9:2 Daniel 9:16

- C. Look to your own relationship with God.
Revelation 2:4-5

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