

## Great Carelessness and Great Compassion.

Judges 10:6-16.

Sunday afternoon, June 26, 2011.

### I. Great carelessness.

- A. Unlike previous incidents of apostasy in the book of Judges, things really get bad this time around.
  - 1. In previous episodes of backsliding Israel served the Baals and the Asherahs leading to the Lord's chastising hand in the form of some enemy that oppressed Israel.
  - 2. This time around Israel does not only serve the Baals and the Asherahs, but also the gods of the Syrians, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and those of the Philistines.
  - 3. To top it all off they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him at all. Vs. 6. They served every imaginable kind of god, but not the only true and living God; Him they forsook altogether.
- B. If you were a pagan nation, ignorant of the true and living God, you might be able to get away with doing so, at least for a while.
  - 1. The apostle Paul explains in his address on Mars Hill in Athens in Acts 17 that the times of such ignorance on the part of pagan nations, God overlooked in time past. Acts 17:30.
  - 2. Yet even such patience and forbearance would come to an end in the gospel era as God now commands all men everywhere, by the preaching of the gospel, to repent and to believe.
  - 3. Perhaps it was the fact that all the pagan nations around Israel could worship all manner of gods, seemingly without consequence, that emboldened Israel to try to do the same.
  - 4. However, here we learn that if you are God's special people, a people called by His name, and the custodian of His special revelation, then a whole different set of rules apply; covenant blessings and curses.  
The Lord would simply bypass the ignorance of the pagan nations, but not so with the willful blindness of His own special people. With them He deals in discipline and in His displeasure.

#### Application:

So it is still. If you are a part of the covenant people of God, either externally by being a part of the visible church on earth, or internally by a work of God's regenerating grace, or hopefully both, God deals with you according to a different set of rules than He does with those who have never heard His name. When backsliding from His covenant God deals with you along the lines of His Fatherly discipline and displeasure.

The NT draws this contrast for us between those who are part of God's covenant community and outsiders in Hebrews 12:7,8. God's children partake of His discipline; those outside His family the Lord simply passes by.

- C. This unusually large and bold apostasy was met on the Lord's part with double adversity. Two enemies instead of one; the Philistines in the West along the

Mediterranean Sea, and the people of Ammon in the East from beyond the Jordan River. By these Israel was severely distressed.

## II. Is this repentance?

- A. Israel cries out to the Lord in their distress, even adding confession of her sins: “We have forsaken our God, and served the Baals.”
- B. The Lord, in answering Israel’s cries, is counteracting a common evil and misperception in the hearts of even His own children.
  - 1. This perception reduces our faith to a “bomb shelter” religion.
    - It sees God as incredibly naïve and hopelessly soft...
    - And therefore, of course He will be there for you in the hour of your need.
  - 2. This perception reduces God to a sort of cosmic vending machine into which you drop a few tokens of repentance, and before you know it He spits out the relief you presently crave.
  - 3. This perception says: “ just go your own way in life, and whenever things get too bad, you can always fall back on the Lord.”
- C. The Lord makes a difference between a prodigal son who comes to his senses and desires to return home, and the adulterous wife who pleads for her husband’s security until she finds the next lover who will take her on.

## III. The Lord’s discipline.

- A. In dealing with Israel the Lord teaches them that a soft view of Him, and bomb shelter religion will not stand.
- B. He tells them: “Go cry to the gods you have chosen; let them deliver you; I will deliver you no more.”
- C. He shows them that they are in danger of becoming an abandoned people. The tragedy of God’s people has multiple layers to it.
  - 1. They know the true and living God, for when things go badly, he is the only one they run to.
  - 2. They have become so accustomed to the Lord bailing them out that they have developed a low view of Him, and they take Him for granted.
  - 3. They have come to despise the Lord’s goodness and mercy, even in the act of seeking it out.
- D. So they are made to do without the Lord’s mercy (at least for the time being.)

## IV. The Lord’s compassion.

- “And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.” Vs. 16.
- A. We should be slow to tie the Lord’s mercy to Israel’s repentance. The Lord’s complaint was not of Israel’s repentance, but that they always returned to other gods following their repentance.
  - B. Furthermore our text does not tie the Lord’s compassion to Israel’s repentance, but to the fact of Him not being able to endure the misery of His people any longer.
  - C. Our hope is therefore not so much in the sincerity of our repentance, as it is in the intensity of the Lord’s compassion. Especially those who experience a lively sense of the Lord’s severity should meditate on this picture of their God.