

Will We Return - Judges 10:6-16

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Learning The Lessons Of History*

1. Ask teens what their favorite subject is in school,
 - a. math, science
 - b. auto shop, PE
 - c. lunch
 - d. only rarely, history
2. I remember back to jr. high and high school
 - a. history class was boring
 - b. dreaded it!
3. But now, I love reading history
 - a. a fascinating subject
 - b. in fact, taught it at a private school last year
 - c. great, marvelous
 - d. I determined I wasn't going to make something that was so exciting, boring and turn kids off to the study of history
4. There is a maxim of history that has been oft repeated —
5. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it

B. *Judges*

1. That is one of the lessons we learn from Judges
2. We read that the people of Israel kept turning away from God, kept falling under the domination of their enemies, knew great hardship, cried out to God, who came to rescue them
3. But with each new generation of Jews, this process would start all over again
4. 7 times in Judges we read this cycle of events
5. It gets a bit repetitious as we read about their failure to remain faithful to God
6. But it provides a great backdrop to tell about the lives of those men and women that God used to bring deliverance to Israel = those people we call the Judges
7. These men and women, stand in bold relief against the darkness of their time

C. *Today*

1. Ch. 10 - Once again we read the sorry tale of Israel turning away from the Lord and their oppression by their enemies
2. Today, want to take a look at the text before us,
 - a. draw out some principles
 - b. and then see if these things to speak to us today

3. Last week, I mentioned that Judges reveals that God not only deals with people as individuals, He also deals nations
4. Are there principles we can learn from Judges about the way God dealt with Israel, that will inform us about how God may deal with our nation?

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 6

{6} **Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him.**

1. So far in our study of Judges we have never heard such a sweeping charge leveled against the people of Israel
 - a. before we read that the Jews had turned to Baal and Asherah
 - b. or she turned to this or that god of the Canaanites
 - c. but this is the first time that we read she turned to all the gods of all the peoples around her.
 - d. this is *wholesale* apostasy
2. The picture the writer presents is that the Jews weren't just casually wandering away from Yahweh — they were purposefully abandoning Him
 - a. three words are used to describe her apostasy
 - b. they *served* the baals and asherahs
 - R to serve as a slave
 - R they swore allegiance to these false gods
 - R they bound themselves to them
 - R by sacred religious rituals that were so immoral and depraved it would turn your stomach to hear of them
 - c. they *forsook* the Lord
 - R with purpose and intent they turned their backs on God
 - R an act of divorce
 - d. they did not serve Him
 - R opposite of what they were doing with baal and asherah
 - R they refused loyalty to God
 - R they cut the bonds God had forged with them
 - R they would not observe His commands and law
3. They were rushing headlong into the arms of idols; any idols, all idols!
4. The best picture for this is to think of a rich man who purchases a worthless, burned out shell of a woman from a cruel slave market
 - a. he washes her, clothes her, and marries her

- b. then he takes her home and gives her a mansion
 - c. all the days of their early marriage he showers her with luxury and love
 - d. because she had know nothing but slavery all her life, it is hard for her to adapt to her new lifestyle
 - e. but the man is patient and slowly but surely, she learns to walk with him in the glory of his wealth and power
 - f. one day, as they are traveling through the city, they pass through a slum zone
 - g. the woman is shocked by what she sees; people sleeping in the gutter, homeless children, drunks, drug addicts
 - h. they return to their mansion, but the images of the slums haunts her
 - i. sometime later, she decides to revisit the area
 - j. walks the sidewalks and talks to the people
 - k. she has turned in to quite a good looking woman and many are attracted to her
 - l. someone offers her a drink from a dirt bottle, she takes it
 - m. another offers her a pill, she takes it
 - n. now, under the influence of alcohol and drugs, she is enticed into a dark room where she is used by several men
 - o. some hours later, her husband, sick with grief finds her lying on the sidewalk
 - p. when he tries to pick her up to put her in the car, she lashes out and slaps him
 - q. he stands up in shock while she tells him to leave her alone — she has decided to stay here and live with these people
 - r. and then, to prove her intent, she stagger to her feet, walks over to a dark and shady wreck of a man, gives him a long kiss and takes a long swig from his bottle
 - s. finally she looks over her shoulder at her husband and smiles as if to say, “ I want to hurt you.”
5. This is not really too far from what Israel did to God
 6. She turned from Him to the bankrupt gods and gross sins of the nations around her
 7. Why would they do this?
 - a. God had been so good and faithful to them
 - b. He delivered them from slavery in Egypt
 - c. He gave them a rich land
 - d. He made her from a race of slaves into a mighty nation
 - e. but ever her heart was wandering from Him
 - f. why? how could it be?
 8. Really, I don't think we need to look too deep
 9. God was unseen, invisible; even gave command that Israel was not to make any image to represent Him

10. Their worship was to be based on faith in His revelation of Himself in word rather than image
11. They wanted a religion that appealed to their senses
 - a. they wanted something to see
 - b. they wanted something to touch
 - c. the religions of Canaan were all about seeing and touching, and hearing and smelling and tasting
 - d. and because that's what Israel wanted, its what she went after
12. A large movement in the Christian church to move away from the ministry of the word to experience
 - a. teaching is de-emphasized
 - b. experience is exalted
 - c. so we have the explosion of the signs and wonders movement
R desire to see, hear, *feel*
 - d. now we see a new movement of people
R laughing uncontrollably; too uptight, need to let go
R roaring like a lion; too timid, need to get mighty
R barking like a dog; too dignified, need to act like a fool
 - e. but that's what it all is = foolish
13. Nothing wrong with experience
 - a. we need experience
 - b. but experience must come under and after the ministry of God's word
 - c. otherwise, what are we going to use as the guide for what experiences are valid and which are not
 - d. satan is a master counterfeiter
 - e. if we do not give first place to God's word, how will we know what is counterfeit and what is genuine?
 - f. Paul, Peter, and John all warned the church to test experiences against the revealed will of God
14. Israel's error is alive and well, not only in America, but in the church

B. Vs. 7-9

- {7} So the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon.**
- {8} From that year they harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for eighteen years; all the children of Israel who were on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, in Gilead.**
- {9} Moreover the people of Ammon crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah also, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was severely distressed.**

1. God was angry with Israel for her apostasy
2. Don't think that because He was angry he no longer loved her
3. Anger does not negate love, not at all
4. In fact, it was because of God's great love for Israel that He was angry with her
5. He knew the path she had chosen for herself ended in ruin
6. True love demands anger at whatever brings pain and torment to that which is loved
7. Like a wayward child, Israel needed to be taught that turning from God means turning to ruin
8. So God used the instruments of Philistia and Ammon to correct Israel
9. Philistia along the western coast; Ammon lived on the east of Jordan
10. Like two millstones, they ground Israel from both sides for 18 years

C. Vs. 10-14

{10} And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!"

1. Why did it take Israel so long to cry out to God
 - a. we read in v. 8 that they were oppressed for 18 years
 - b. why so long to call out to God?
2. Because along with the idols went the idols priests
 - a. these false ministers lied to the people
 - b. they blamed the problems on other things
 - c. they may even have said baal and asherah were testing the sincerity of the people
 - d. they drew attention away from the real cause and tried to distract the people from the root of their distress —
 - e. their forsaking of God
3. Finally, when they have exhausted all other solutions, they turn to God again
4. Why is man so wayward?
5. Why are so many people who are going through such tremendous trouble willing to look anywhere but to God?
6. This should be a clue that man's REAL problem is his sin and rebellion against God

{11} So the LORD said to the children of Israel, "Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines?"

{12} "Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand."

7. School time!
8. God gives them a little history lesson
9. "Haven't I always been there for you? Have I ever, ever let you down?"

{13} "Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more.

10. The failure was not God's
11. It was the people - they had forsaken God
12. Not only that, they had flaunted their rebellion in His face by cleaving to the savage and perverse practices of Canaan
13. So God tells them - "You wanted to be on your own. So be it."

{14} "Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress."

14. At first this seems cruel
15. God tells them, "Let the gods you lust so for, let *them* help you. After all, you wanted them so much you were willing to leave Me. Okay, go for it. Live it out. You made your bed, sleep in it. You fixed this meal, eat it."
16. Isn't it interesting how so many people will have nothing to do with God when their lives are going well —
17. But as soon as trouble besets them, they begin to *blame* Him for their distress?
18. It's as though God is expected to bless them and make life smooth sailing - like that's His job!
19. And then when things get rough, they want to accuse Him of the trouble
20. I got news for people like that: It is not God's job to make life smooth
 - a. God doesn't exist for us
 - b. we exist for Him
 - c. and when trouble comes, people need to realize that it comes because of our sin, our stupid choices, our own blunders

D. Vs. 15-16

{15} And the children of Israel said to the LORD, "We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray."

{16} So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.

1. There is a vast difference between the prayer of Israel in v. 15 and v. 10
2. In v. 10, their prayer was one of reluctant admission of their sin
 - a. they knew they had sinned against God

- b. but they cried to Him because of their suffering, not their sin
 - c. in other words, there was admittance of guilt but no repentance
 - d. they merely wanted to get out of trouble, not out of sin
3. You occasionally meet people like this
 - a. God will confront them with their sin by chastening them with trouble
 - b. rather than repent of their sin, they merely confess their error
 - c. they try to patch things up just long enough to get out of trouble
 - d. but then when trouble eases, they continue on in their sin
 4. Ben had a problem with materialism
 - a. he would buy all kinds of stuff
 - b. went in to serious debt
 - c. caused problems in his marriage
 - d. maxed out credit, couldn't pay the bills
 - e. wife and he fought a lot over it
 - f. she began to tell him if he didn't stop, she was leaving him
 - g. so, in desperation, he admitted his spending habits were out of control
 - h. he asked her to forgive him and together they set up a budget and cut up all the credit cards
 - i. at first, he stuck to the budget and they paid off a few bills
 - j. when His wife backed off her pressure on him and the bill collectors stopped calling, he once again started buying toys for himself
 5. You see, Ben never really repented of his materialism, which was the real problem
 6. He only admitted to the outward sin of over-spending
 7. Soon he was back in debt and his wife went to stay with some friends for a while
 8. Now, alone in the quiet of his house, filled with a bunch of worthless things that he has learned can never bring satisfaction, he realizes how wrong HE has been
 9. He has lived with the lie that things make you happy
 10. He has a complete change of heart
 - a. not only does he confess his sin to God and call his wife to admit it to her -
 - b. he returns much of the stuff to the stores where they credit him for the merchandise, and he holds a huge garage sale to sell as much as he can to pay off his debts
 11. The difference this time is that Ben has repented; he's had a change of mind and direction about his sin
 12. That is what Israel did here; in v. 16 we read that not only did they confess their sin, they repented and put away the idols
 13. It was then that God heard from heaven and set about to deliver them

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Individuals/Nation*

1. Each of us can learn much from Israel in these verses
2. Even though we call ourselves Christians, have we set up other gods?
3. Warnings against idolatry not only fill the OT, they fill the New
4. John ends his first epistle, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."
5. You see, we think we are too sophisticated to fall to the worship of idols today because we misunderstand what idols were
6. Being the modern enlightened people we are, the idea of bowing down before some figure of stone or wood is absurd
7. What we fail to understand is that in the ancient world, the people who worshipped idols didn't think the figure was itself a god
 - a. they knew it was just a hunk of stone or a log
 - b. they saw it as merely a symbol, a representation of a god who would favor them if they served him
 - c. their gods were gods of prosperity, health, power, and pleasure
8. Idols are alive and well in our world today
 - a. many are the idols of the American scene
 - b. people worship prosperity, the temple of prosperity is the local mall
 - c. people worship health, their temple is the local gym
 - d. people worship power, their temple is the local theater
 - e. people worship pleasure, their temple is the local restaurant, ice cream store, resort, and anyone of a thousand other places that caters to the sensual
9. But not only does this passage speak to us as individuals, it speaks to us as a nation
10. God dealt with Israel as a nation because He had made a national covenant with her to be His special people
 - a. they were His people
 - b. and He was their King
11. America is not like Israel
 - a. God made not covenant with the US like He did with Israel
 - b. but you know what, our Founding Fathers made a covenant with God
 - c. they formed this nation on the principles of His word, they asked Him to bless this nation, and they dedicated it to His glory and service
 - R not just for their own time
 - R but for all later generations
 - d. do you think God holds this nation accountable today for the covenant of they made?
 - e. I do!

- f. over and over in the bible God calls men and women to fulfill their vows
- g. while the US is not Israel, it is still a nation in covenant with God
- h. and He will correct us when we do evil in the sight of the Lord, serve idols, forsake Him, and then flaunt our sin before His face

B. *The Present Distress*

1. I do not need to quote statistics to you about the trouble of our nation
2. We are under distress
3. As Israel of old, the people of God are in retreat
4. The godless rule and are in control
5. Our freedoms are slowly but surely being taken away
6. Foreign nations and businesses are taking greater advantage of us
7. We are beset with trouble
8. Why then are we so slow to confess our sin and repent?
9. Well, because there are so many false prophets who are telling us things aren't as bad as they seem
10. They tell us the cause isn't really that we have turned from God
11. No, they say the problem is that we are *still* holding on *to* Him.
12. When will we awake from our spiritual slumber, confess our sin, put away our idols and serve the Lord once again?
13. No one but God knows if our nation ever will
14. All we can do is make sure *we* have