

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK SERIES

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Ancient Solutions To Current Problems

Today I want to talk to you about Ancient Solutions to Current problems. As a nation, we are prone to boast of the progress we have made in various scientific realms, including space exploration, medical science, genetic research, and many others. In the realm of communication, we can now throw our voice around the earth in seconds of time and electronically communicate with our fellows from any point on the globe with great facility. We can be justly rejoice over these accomplishments, and be thankful for the benefits we have received from them. Yet despite these achievements, it must be sadly acknowledged that in the realm of sin and depravity the course of our race is yet downward and retrogressive in its nature. With all our vaunted progress we remain sinners all, desperately in need of the Saving Grace of Him who came to deliver us from this evil world. As a church, we have grown in numbers, built nice buildings, increased our contributions, and made known our presence in the world. But in view of all this, we still face and often fall prey to problems that have troubled the people of God for centuries. In Romans 15:4 we are told that whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning. Also in 1Cor. 10:6 the scriptures tell that those things that happened in the previous dispensation of time serve as examples or reminders that we should not fall pray to the same sins as our forefathers. In fact these passages teach us that the Old Testament, no less than the New Testament, bears a precious freight of relevance to all men of all ages. Even though many of the forms and shadows of the old order have been replaced by the realities of the new institution of Christ, a proper understanding of those glorious principles revealed in the N. T. is surely enhanced by the study of the Old Testament. Matthew alone quoted the OT 66 times; and much of the book of Hebrews is written with the OT in view. The patience of OT heroes of faith provide encouragement for Christians who must struggle with many of the problems and situations which confronted them. In fact, the solution to many of our problems today may actually be found in incidents that occurred long, long ago. James, encourages us to study the prophets of old, "for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." James 5:10-11 Also, Paul refers to accounts of dismal failure in the lives of "people that serve as a warning not to repeat their faithlessness and condemnation." 1Cor. 10:1-2

"Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted." The first lesson that I want to notice is based on the principle that We Are Sometimes Responsible When Evil Befalls Us. According to Judges 6:1 the children of Israel had done evil in the sight of the Lord so the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years." When they sowed, the Midianites would come up, also the Amalekites and encamp about them and destroy their crops and produce, leaving no food or animals for their use. As a result Israel became greatly impoverished. They cried out to God, who sent a prophet. The prophet essentially said "it's your fault." I delivered from Egypt and told you I was your God, don't fear the gods of the Amorites.

But you have not obeyed my voice.” The Angel of God appeared Gideon and said “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor...” Gideon replied “O, my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about...” This represents a great lesson for us today. We also are sometimes responsible for the trouble that overtakes and overpowers us. James 1:13-15 “Let no man say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God” for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither does he himself tempt anyone...” We go to the wrong place—Like Lot We become involved with the wrong crowd—Like Peter We fall in love with the world—Like Demas Some churches leave their first love like Ephesus Some churches become lukewarm like Laodicea Some churches embrace false teachers like Pergamos “you have those who hold the doctrine of Balaam...” “you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans...” Some churches become corrupt like the church in Thyatira. (They tolerate sexual immorality, adultery etc.) All such individuals and churches would do well to learn from the people of Gideon’s day. The Lord will not bless us individually or collectively when we allow sin and evil doing in our lives. Another lesson emerging from the past is that:

We Must Eradicate Those Things That Are Wrong Before We Can Be Right With God.

Gideon was told to “Go in this might of yours and you shall save Israel...” “So he said to Him, “O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” Gideon then goes and brings an offering to the Angel of the Lord, who in turn caused the offering to be consumed by fire. Gideon then knew that he was indeed the angel of the Lord. That same night the Lord appeared and said “take your father’s young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the alter of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it; and build an alter to the Lord your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement...” 6:24-26 God was saying “you’ve got to tear down what is wrong and replace it with what is right. We cannot accept sin and please God. We cannot gloss over it as though it is not there. There has to be a change. In other words in our personal lives, we must get rid of sin. Romans 6:1-2 “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” Rom.6:17-18 “But God be thanked...” Churches that are doing wrong must change. Those supporting and teaching false doctrine must rectify the situation before they can be right. They must “tear down the alter of false teaching to be right.” They must get rid of the false practice, in order to please the Lord. God would not have blessed Israel had they continued to worship at the alter of Baal, nor will he bless us if we do the same. Another lesson we need to learn is:

The Value and Blessing of Remaining Faithful To God By Standing in Our Place and Never Wavering.

Judges 6:36 “So Gideon said to God, If you will save Israel by my hand as you have said...” As further proof that God is with him Gideon takes a piece of fleece and puts it on the threshing floor; and says “if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand as you have said.” And so it was. Then Gideon said “do not be angry with me, let me speak just one more time: Let me test just once more the fleece, let it bow be dry only on the fleece, but

on the ground there is dew." And so it was. As the enemies of God began to gather to oppose the children of Israel, Gideon accepted the challenge from God and blew a call to arms. The people responded. Gideon and the gathered host camp by the well of Herod, while the Midianites camp in a valley not far off. When God saw that 32,000 men had gathered, He felt that was too many. The temptation to boast of one's own strength might cause them to over look the supernatural work of God in this matter, hence the reduction in force. All who were inclined to fear and thus be easily startled or who might fear and tremble over the prospect of danger were allowed to return home. Ten thousand did. But, 22,000 were still too many. They were led to the water and told to drink. Those who dipped and cupped water in their hand and drank from it were to be separated from those who penetrated the water with their mouth and drank directly from the water source. The latter group consisted of only 300 men. That was sufficient, however, for the Lord. When time for the attack came, the 300 were divided into groups of 100 each. Each took jars of earthenware (pitchers). These jars were nontransparent, so that the torches placed inside would be out of sight. There was united action. Each was not left to himself as to how they would proceed. The watch was a period of the night in which certain men were placed on duty as a guard. The usual arrangement was to divide the night into three watches of four hours each. The first was 6-10 PM, the second 10 to 2 am, and the third 2-6 am. The beginning of the middle watch would be 10 to 2 am. At this time that Gideon and his men approached the camp of the Midianites. When the signal was given by Gideon the three companies acted simultaneously. There was first a blast from the trumpets. Then they broke the jars. This resulted in three hundred torches suddenly appearing flaring out in the night. Then came a united shout from all the men "the sword of the Lord and Gideon." The surprise attack had the desired effect. The host of the enemy broke rank and sent up a cry, then fled.

What The Church Today Can Learn From This Incident. 1. We Don't Have To Be In The Majority to be Successful. The Lord didn't need 32,000 men in order for the Midianites to be defeated. In fact there is a danger that when we do have the majority, we may attribute victory to that instead of the Lord. 1 Sam. 14:6 "Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by few or by many." Mt. 7:14 "...few there be that find it." The lesson to be learned is that even though we are small by comparison, that is no indication of right or wrong, nor is it an indication of failure or success. The numbers do not matter it is doing the will and work of God that counts. 2. The Necessity Of Every Person Doing Their Job Judges 7:21 "And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled." A. We need church leaders that stand in their place. Elders, who feed the flock and watch for false teachers, false teachers and trends in that direction. Men of strong will and dedication. Men who will not be swayed by a minority who want ease and pleasure or by people who want their "ears tickled" and their conscience soothed, men who will speak out against departures from the faith in a clear and forceful manner. Acts 20:28 "Take heed..." Gal. 1:10 "I marvel that ye are so soon..." B. We need Preachers who will stand in their place, preachers who will preach the truth even when people don't want to hear it.

2Timothy 4:1-2. Preachers who will warn, reprove, and rebuke Preachers who will encourage, commend, and back the faithful even in the face of opposition and conflict. Preachers who are more interested in the truth and advancement of what is right, than in the advancement of their own personal reputation and success. C. We need parents who will stand in their place and teach and train their children Eph.6:1-2 Parents who will not give in or back up in the face of evil trends, popular opinion, and the naysayers of our time. Parents who love their children and what is right more than what is popular and generally accepted by the masses.

3. The Value and Necessity of Being United. When the signal was given by Gideon the three companies (all 300 men) acted in concert. They were united. It was their united action that brought the results. Had they acted independently "on their own" or out of step with each other, they would not have been successful. We will never advance the cause of truth, Settle difficult issues or problems Be the kind of light that we should be Or march forward with the confidence we need, until we are united. We must work together. Psa. 133:1 "Behold how good and pleasant..." i.e. "delightful" Eph. 4:3 "Endeavoring or "trying hard" to keep the unity into which the Spirit leads..."

Where is the evidence that division results in the resolution of problems? Where is the evidence that division dissolves issues? Division is a sin 1Cor.1:10 hence cannot possibly be view as a scriptural answer to any problem. There can be no real success or accomplishments until and unless we "work together." These are indeed valuable lessons learned from the past.