

THE DOWNFALL OF ISRAEL

Introduction: Judges 2:1-6

1. The consequences of compromise are serious and severe.
 2. 2:2 – Disobedience
 3. 2:3 – Separation from God
 4. 2:3 – Punishment from enemies
 5. 2:3 – Danger of greater compromise
 6. 2:4 – Sorrow and weeping
 7. Compromise with God's enemies and their error always leads to one's downfall.
 8. Consider four things that led to Israel's downfall...
- I. Following the Leader (2:7-9)
- A. Clearly, the children of Israel were to follow both Moses and Joshua.
 - B. In fact, while Joshua lived and led the people, they followed him faithfully and obeyed the Lord.
 1. Let it be emphasized that there is great value in good leadership.
 2. The example that Joshua set before the people of Israel was a mighty motivation for their submission to God's will.
 3. God's people still need great leadership today.
 - C. However, the Israelites should have matured enough to follow God with or without a leader like Joshua.
 1. They should have been followers of God, not man.
 2. We must do the same (Acts 4:19; 5:29; 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1).
 3. What if the church followed Peter (Galatians 2:11-14)?
 - D. Consider the parallel between this time in Israel's history and the Christian's life in the church.
- II. Forgetting to Love (2:10)
- A. This is one of the saddest verses in the Bible.
 - B. It is possible that the faithful generation forgot to love their children by not teaching them about God.
 1. They had been instructed clearly about their duty (Duet. 6:6-7).
 2. Perhaps they became lazy or lax in their duty.
 3. Perhaps they took for granted their children's spiritual education.
 4. Perhaps they expected the priests to do it for them.
 - C. It is possible that the unfaithful generation forgot to love their parents and God by not allowing themselves to be taught God's Word.
 1. Some refuse to listen (Matthew 13:15; 2 Timothy 4:4).
 2. Some refuse to obey (Exodus 7:14; 1 Samuel 8:19).
 - D. We have a responsibility both to teach and to be taught.
 1. Elders (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3)
 2. Preachers (2 Timothy 2)
 3. Parents (Ephesians 6:4)
 - E. If we do not do these things, we have forgotten to love.
- III. Forsaking the Lord (2:11-13)
- A. Forsaking the Lord is a sign of ignorance.
 1. Had this generation known of God and His works, they could have been as faithful as their parents' generation.

Judges 2:7-23

2. When one refuses to follow the Lord, it is a sign that they truly do not know Him and His goodness.
 - B. Forsaking the Lord is a sign of ingratitude.
 1. Consider the fact that God had brought them out of Egypt.
 2. Consider the fact that God had given them the land of Canaan.
 3. How could they repay God's kindness with rebellion and sin?
 - C. Forsaking the Lord is a sign of idolatry.
 1. Man will worship something.
 2. If he does not worship God, he will create his own gods in his own image and become a worshipper of himself (cf. Romans 1:18ff).
 3. How could Israel forsake the God of Heaven for the false idols of the Canaanites?
 - D. Forsaking the Lord is a sign of immorality.
 1. Notice that Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.
 2. Notice that Israel provoked the Lord to anger.
 3. Rejecting God always leads to sinful practices (or, vice versa).
 - E. Are we guilty of forsaking the Lord?
 1. How is our knowledge of God's Word?
 2. How are our study habits?
 3. How thankful are we for God's blessings?
 4. How often do we put other things before God? (Cf. Heb. 10:25)
 5. How are dealing with temptation and sin?
- IV. Failing to Learn (2:14-23)
- A. Because of their sins, God was angry with Israel.
 - B. In His righteous anger, God allowed other nations to punish His people.
 - C. Yet, in His mercy, He remembered them and raised up judges to help.
 - D. Sadly, Israel refused to learn from the sins and their mistakes.
 1. They refused to listen to the judges.
 2. They refused to give up idolatry.
 3. They refused to keep the commandments of God.
 - E. Thus, God allowed some of the Canaanites to remain in the land to test His people and to prove their faithfulness.

Conclusion:

1. Thus, we see what led to the initial downfall of the children of Israel.
2. This began the "cycle of the judges" and the further decline of God's people.
3. It would not be until their captivity in Babylon that Israel finally gave up idolatry.
4. Maybe, like the children of Israel, we need to break the cycle of sin.