

WHEN A NATION FORGETS GOD

PSALM 9:11-20

Introduction:

God is the Judge of all the earth and the Judge of all history. All men and all nations are ultimately accountable to Him since He is the eternal, Almighty God. This is the insight celebrated in this beautiful psalm of David.

In the last part of the Psalm, David writes as a prophet. He is able to see things from God's perspective. It is in this spirit that he writes of the nations that forget God.

I think the case can be made that our nation is following the example of the nations who have chosen to forget God. It is really an unthinkable thing that a nation would forget its creator, or that a nation would forget the source of its very life and prosperity, or that a nation would forget the Judge to whom it is accountable. But this is the course being pursued by our nation. To forget is the opposite of to acknowledge. To acknowledge is to worship and confess, to forget is to ignore. Actually according to recent surveys, the fastest growing religious group in our nation is the atheists.

Nations are in constant danger of forgetting God. The consequences are dreadful. It is the consequences of forgetting God that I want us to consider.

I. WHEN A NATION FORGETS GOD, IT BEGINS TO THINK
TOO HIGHLY OF ITSELF. (V. 19-20)

This danger is reflected in the prayer of David; “Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men.” When they lose sight of who God is, they lose sight of who they are. They forget that they are mere men.

1. It begins to assume that it has divine rights.

When they begin to forget that they are but men, they begin to seize for themselves the rights that belong only to God. For example: only God has the right to establish what is wrong and what is right. Only God has the right to establish the moral standards by which we should live. But when a nation forgets God, it begins to seize this responsibility for itself. Our nation has usurped this right of God.

Would you like some examples? Our judges and legislators have assumed the right to declare that marriage between persons of the same sex is acceptable though God has declared it an abomination. Our nation has declared that it is acceptable for people to live together without the bonds of marriage though God has declared it to be fornication. Our nation has declared that women have the right to abort their unborn child though God

has revealed that it is the destruction of life. We have decided that permissive sexual standards are acceptable, even for our youth.

Tragically our nation has decided that it is possible for man to build a great nation without assistance from God. We can carry on without any help from the Bible, or any petitions in prayer. This is a sure sign of a nation that has forgotten God.

2. It begins to assume that it can meet all of the needs of men.

There is another side of this truth. When a nation forgets God, it begins to replace God. God never intended that men be dependent on government. We need government in order to maintain an orderly society. But when a government forgets God, it begins to assume responsibility for its citizens from the cradle to the grave. It encourages the citizens to look to the nation to meet its need.

We spent some time in Germany last year. The pastor that I helped indicated that he pays fifty-eight percent of his income to the government in income taxes. But the government provides almost everything. The problem is that in the end government cannot successfully replace God. The communist experience in Russia should be a lasting reminder to the people of our world.

David prays that God will so reveal Himself that men will remember that they are just men—totally dependent on the eternal God for life and all that is required to sustain life.

II. WHEN A NATION FORGETS GOD, IT CREATES ITS OWN JUDGMENT. (V. 15-16)

It is true that God is the judge of all the earth. God is at work in the world right now acting as the judge of the nations. But there is mysterious element about the judgment of God upon human iniquity, especially the rebellious course of a nation. By the choices that they make, the rebellious nation creates its own judgment.

1. Violation of God's law has its own consequences.

“He made a pit and dug it out, and has fallen into the ditch which he made. His trouble shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealings shall come down on his own crown.” (Psalm 7:15-16)

“The nations have sunk down in the pit which they made; in the net which they hid, their own foot is caught. The Lord is known by the judgment He executes; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.” (v. 15, 16)

Examples of this abound in our nation. We have ignored what the Bible says about divorce and marriage, and today we are reaping what we have sown.

Many of the social problems of our society can be traced back to the instability and failure of our homes.

No one says this in the political debate we are having about the future of Social Security, but the situation is directly related to the practice of abortion in this country. There is a shrinking workforce to maintain Social Security because we have aborted a major part of a generation who would be joining the work force about now.

We chose to take God out of the schools so our schools have become an unsafe jungle to which we are afraid to send our children. We have dug the pit, and have fallen into it. Then when our children go to school, we teach them that they descended from the apes rather than that they were created in the image of God. Why are we so surprised that they act more like the animal world than that they reflect the image of God?

There is yet another area in which we may well be in trouble. The greed in this country has prompted the nation to encourage families to live beyond their means. Easy credit has taken its toll upon family after family. Do we not realize that there is a price to be paid for ignoring some of God's basic principles of finance?

2. God works through the processes to bring judgment.

God does not have to open the heavens and rain fire on the nation that forgets God. Rather He just lets the moral processes that He put in place when He created the world work their course. Sooner rather than later the consequences of forgetting God will begin to be obvious.

III. WHEN A NATION FORGETS GOD, IT WILL SOON DIE. (V,
17)

“The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”

What a revealing statement!

1. Forgetting God produces wicked behavior

Did you notice the connection between wickedness and forgetting God? Forgetting God will mean the death of healthy relationships in a society; it opens the door to all kinds of evil. .

2. The wages of sin is national death.

Sheol is the realm of the dead. Hell is the translation of this word. It probably does not refer as much to the nations being sent to eternal punishment as much as it does the nations dying. They go into oblivion.

David wrote as a prophet. The nation that he served as king died in 586

B.C. What brought about the death of the nation of Israel? They forgot God. The great nations of history have died one after another—and each of them traveled the same road to death. They became corrupt within.

IV. WHEN A NATION FORGETS GOD, THERE IS STILL HOPE FOR THE FAITHFUL. (V. 18)

The psalmist may have been contrasting “the nation” with the “nations” around them. If they were under siege from some foreign power, he may be referring to faithful Israel when he writes of the humble and poor.

1. God remembers the humble (v. 12)

“When He avenges blood, he remembers them; He does not forget the cry of the humble.”

“For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever.”

Psalm 9:9-10 (NASB95)

⁹The Lord also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, A stronghold in times of trouble; ¹⁰And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, For You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.

The Psalmist uses three descriptive words to describe a people who always have reason to hope in the Lord. He calls them the humble, the needy, and the poor. They are the ones who are ready to humble themselves under the

hand of the Lord. Even though the nation may be destroyed, even though it may die, God will save His remnant in the nation which looks to Him and Him alone for salvation and deliverance.

2. God remembers the poor (v. 18)

Especially the “poor in spirit” that our Lord described. To them God grants the kingdom of heaven. He does not turn away from those who seek Him and put their trust in Him. He is always there to help those who trust in Him. Are we seekers after God? Our coins say, "In God We Trust", but do we trust in the Lord God. Do we see Him as the hope of our nation? Do you see Him as the hope of our nation? Will we join the company of the humble seekers after His face?

Conclusion:

When you read prophetic words like these, they could cause you to despair. Let me remind you of one nation that had forgotten God. When Nineveh forgot God, God sent the prophet Jonah to warn them that their destruction was imminent. When the people of Nineveh heard the prophet, they humbled themselves. They turned from the wickedness and idolatry and acknowledged their unworthiness before God.

While this was a source of grief to the prejudiced prophet, it moved the heart of the Judge of all the earth. He extended mercy to that pagan city, and

extended the life of their nation. That incident keeps hope alive in my heart.

If there is a remnant in America who will humble themselves before God,
will not God save our nation from the destruction that it deserves?

What about you? You are citizen of this great land? Will you humble
yourself before God? Or will you join those among us who have chosen to
ignore and forget the God of all the earth?

I believe you will humble yourself before Him!