

## LEAVING GOD?

### Message 1

INTRO: In the last while a number of things have come my way, and as I prepare for some other messages on several chapters of Scripture, I felt burdened to speak on what I see. Martin Luther King junior said, "I have a dream." Well, every once in a while I have a burden. When I read the OT and I come across this phrase, 'the burden of the Word of the Lord came...' I cringe. I feel for the man of God upon whom that burden comes. That burden, if it is from the Lord, comes when the people of God have backslidden to such an extent that God will have to send warning. And almost all people who backslide into sin hate exposure and reproof. And the man of God who is a true mouthpiece for God endangers his well-being or acceptance among those who profess to be God's people when he delivers that message.

I will be speaking from Isaiah 57:11. Turn to it. As I was translating the NT into Plautdietsch, a dialect of Low German, a while ago several passages in the NT gripped me. And then I was sent a note by sermonaudio that someone had commented on the divorce and remarriage messages that I had done, and I checked it. Sermonaudio always asks if I am OK with leaving a comment on the sight. And someone running a sight called "7 Times Around The Jericho Walls" critiqued all the divorce messages, and in the beginning, they quoted Isaiah 57:11, and it gripped me. It is a picture of our day.

Look at the verse. It says, *And of whom have you been afraid, or feared, That you have lied And not remembered Me, Nor taken it to your heart? Is it not because I have held My peace from of old That you do not fear Me?* This verse just got hold of my heart. Isaiah speaks directly to our day. I think that Isaiah gave the last part of his book during the reign of King Manasseh. He was one of the most wicked kings Judah ever had, and he reigned 55 years; longer than any other king of Judah. Israel had left God.

I had planned to speak on Isaiah 57:11, then I got an article on truth, and pondered it in light of other things that were coming together for me. That brought another passage in Isaiah to mind.

That is Isaliah 59:14 which says, *Justice is turned back, And righteousness stands afar off; For truth is fallen in the street, And equity cannot enter.* The relationship in these two verses is clear to me. And so on Good Friday I spoke on Pilate's words spoken on the day he condemned Christ to die when he said to Jesus, "What is Truth?"

I gave this title to the messages I want to do now: *Leaving God?* It seems to me, that leaving God is closely related to leaving truth. Today, professing Christians, whether they are true Christians or not I do not know, but those who profess to be Christians are leaving God in very large numbers. Many are not denying Christ. No, they continue to profess to be Christians, but now they have new light. There are claims from time to time of a new reformation. But, rather, many are leaving, or have already left the one true God. The sad thing is, they don't know it. They think they are now on a more enlightened path. Like a lost man walking in circles in the forest, so they think they are walking a straight line, but they are not. Many others have left already, but they too still claim to be Christians.

A.W. Tozer, who lived from 1879 to 1963 wrote a tract called, "The Old Cross And The New." He saw what was happening back in his day, and I wonder what he would say today. I am sure you can find this tract on the internet and to save time I won't read it here. But you will hear him saying what I just said. He said the new cross makes a way for Christians to have the world and be a Christian at the same time. That is much more true today than it was when he wrote the Tract.

Let me give you an example of leaving God in our day. A few years ago a rank liberal wrote a book. Publishing companies wouldn't print it because they thought it would not sell. It was published May 2007 and has sold 1.1 million copies and has been on the top of the New York Times, Publishers Weekly and USA Today best seller list for a long time. It has been compared to John Bunyan's book "The Pilgrim's Progress." And what book is it? A book, beyond all doubt, inspired by demons. It is called *the Shack*.

And if one can read the book, "The Shack" as hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of Christians have, or have now watched the movie made from the book, and found it a comfort, and it did

not cause nausea, one is either in the last steps of leaving God or one has left Him already; if in fact one ever knew Him in the first place. Anyone who thinks that to be a strong statement, I am fully convinced he or she does not know the God of the Bible. For anyone who knows the God of the Bible, that book is so blasphemous everyone who starts to read it should be so shocked that they are caused to warn everyone else about it.

Furthermore, if one uses many or the most recent English Bible translations, and especially such paraphrases as the, "The Message", and one does not have major concerns, it would seem to me one must be either ignorant; one is leaving God, or one never knew Him at all. I could list numerous other things. You say, "Hold it. You are judging!" Yes, I know. It is a pastor's work to make many judgments. There is only one question: Is the judgment right or not? Jesus commanded us to judge. Did you know that? In that most quoted verse on judgment, "Judge not that you be not judged", it is hypocrites that are in view. Study the context. Listen to the words of the Master of the universe in John 7:24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." The Master of the universe said that. He said, Judge! That is an imperative. Only, He said, make sure it is righteous judgment. So it must be based on the Word of God and it is the solemn duty of any pastor to do this.

I want to set a question before us for these few messages. It is this: Am I leaving God? Am I on the way away from Him and don't realize it? Or am I possibly already gone, while I still think I am walking the right path? This is a fearful possibility. If you will read through the OT you will find that more times than when God's people were standing strong for God, they were either leaving God or had already left.

In the time of the Judges there were seven cycles of blessing, backsliding, bondage, brokenness and then they started all over again with blessing. A high came only once in a while, and then there were years of slow digression. In the time of the kings, there were 20 northern kings and 20 southern kings, and most of the time they were going backwards. Of the 40 kings, 8 might be considered good kings. You see, it is a high, and then a long time of backsliding. In the Church, we are in a low of lows today.

I am not giving this message because I think some of you are leaving God, although it may be. I am giving this message to encourage you to stay strong, and to help us see the value of such a knowledge of God which brings a healthy fear of Him. Furthermore, when one realizes the state in which society and the Church is, it can be a comfort to know that one is not weird. That is what Satan whispers from time to time, to those who stand for truth.

I ask you, how do people leave God? How do people leave truth? When the move away first begins, it starts off little by little. It is increment by increment. It is the same way as one grows. Leaving God begins little by little. I was taught a principle in Bible school, on how to change a group of people. If you want to change the direction of a church, this is how you do it.

The teacher who taught this spelled this word on the blackboard, very slowly. G-o s-l-o-w-l-y. Go slowly. When a person leaves truth or leaves God, this is how it happens at first. Once the movement has begun then it begins to pick up a little speed, and a little more, until truth falls in the street. When wrong views once pick up speed, it then becomes a tidal wave. It is unstoppable. Pure, open, honest, lovers of truth get steam rolled. Truth falls in the street. Those who enter spiritual life at that point get caught up in the movement, most likely having had a very shallow start in the first place and they change at a phenomenal speed.

I think that leaving truth is the precursor to leaving God. As long as truth remains a determining factor in society, corruption from God is not likely to happen. Once truth is abandoned, abandonment of God is a certainty. We are there today. Most who are my age and even a little younger, when they consider where we are, cannot believe what has happened in such a short time. What is coming, unless we have a genuine revival, can hardly be anything but much worse.

I have told you about a certain conference I was at many years ago. I was manning a booth and did not get much of the conference. And then one day I stepped into the conference room and heard just a little of what the speaker was saying and I have never forgotten what he spoke of. He spoke of living between the steps. You see, on rare occasions in history past,

God took a step on earth. God may have drastically disciplined His people, or a great revival came. The sense of God was so real the unbeliever could sense it. He said, "Something has happened to God's people." But then the time goes away, and then for a long time, it seems, God is silent. He doesn't say a thing. One would think that truly, God is dead, or He doesn't care. That is living between the steps. That is where we are. And soon, maybe when most have forsaken God, God will take a very great step. All the true Christians will vanish. That is my hope and my confidence. But right now we are living between the steps. It seems that God is asleep.

Well, Isaiah, in the latter end of his time said that truth is fallen in the streets. Charles Ryrie says Isaiah lived between 740 and 680 BC. If Jewish tradition is right, Isaiah died at the hands of Manasseh. It is said he was sawn apart by a wooden saw. The OT hall of faith, Hebrews 11, speaks of those sawn asunder. That might be a reference to Isaiah. And in these last chapters, Isaiah unburdens himself and it is possible that doing this is what brought his life to a martyr's end. Possibly Manasseh had had enough of a prophet who did nothing but reprove his tremendous wickedness. Manasseh was born, according to MacLintock and Strong, in 709 BC. In the beginning of his reign he co-reigned with his father, Hezekiah, which began in 697 when Manasseh was 12 years old. Isaiah wrote during the time of Manasseh's reign and would likely have been around 30 years old when he killed Isaiah. Manasseh reigned longer than any other Israeli King, and he was also the most wicked. There is one redeeming factor to his life. He sincerely repented before he died. God had taken a step in Israel, and punished wicked king Manasseh, and when God punished him, he repented.

#### I. THE CONTEXT OF OUR TEXT

Turn now to Isaiah 56. We want to begin with the immediate context of Isaiah 57:11. Isaiah, in our chapter, is writing at a time such as we have today. We begin in verse 9:

*9 All you beasts of the field, come to devour, All you beasts in the forest.*

In the next verses he tells us what the leaders and shepherds of God's people were like in at that time:

*10 His watchmen (the shepherds or leaders of Israel) are blind, They are all ignorant; They are all dumb dogs, They cannot bark; Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.*

11 *Yes, they are greedy dogs Which never have enough. And they are shepherds Who cannot understand; They all look to their own way, Every one for his own gain, From his own territory.*

12 *"Come," one says, "I will bring wine, And we will fill ourselves with intoxicating drink; Tomorrow will be as today, And much more abundant."*

1 ¶ *The righteous perishes, And no man takes it to heart; Merciful men are taken away, While no one considers That the righteous is taken away from evil.*

2 *He shall enter into peace; They shall rest in their beds, Each one walking in his uprightness.*

3 ¶ *"But come here, You sons of the sorceress, You offspring of the adulterer and the harlot!*

4 *Whom do you ridicule? Against whom do you make a wide mouth And stick out the tongue? Are you not children of transgression, Offspring of falsehood,*

5 *Inflaming yourselves with gods under every green tree, Slaying the children in the valleys, Under the clefts of the rocks?*

You see, they have already left the true God. We go on:

6 *Among the smooth stones of the stream Is your portion; They, they, are your lot! Even to them you have poured a drink offering, You have offered a grain offering. Should I receive comfort in these?*

7 *"On a lofty and high mountain You have set your bed; Even there you went up To offer sacrifice.*

8 *Also behind the doors and their posts You have set up your remembrance; For you have uncovered yourself to those other than Me, And have gone up to them; You have enlarged your bed And made a covenant with them; You have loved their bed, Where you saw their nudity.*

9 You went to the king with ointment, And increased your perfumes; You sent your messengers far off, And even descended to Sheol.

10 You are wearied in the length of your way; Yet you did not say, 'There is no hope.' You have found the life of your hand; Therefore you were not grieved.

Now comes our verse:

11 "And of whom have you been afraid, or feared, That you have lied And not remembered Me, Nor taken it to your heart? Is it not because I have held My peace from of old That you do not fear Me?

12 I will declare your righteousness And your works, For they will not profit you.

13 ¶ When you cry out, Let your collection of idols deliver you. But the wind will carry them all away, A breath will take them. But he who puts his trust in Me shall possess the land, And shall inherit My holy mountain."

14 And one shall say, "Heap it up! Heap it up! Prepare the way, Take the stumbling block out of the way of My people."

15 For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

16 For I will not contend forever, Nor will I always be angry; For the spirit would fail before Me, And the souls which I have made.

17 ¶ For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry and struck him; I hid and was angry, And he went on backsliding in the way of his heart.

18 I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also lead him, And restore comforts to him And to his mourners.

19 *"I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near," Says the LORD, "And I will heal him."*

20 *But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*

21 *"There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked."*

1 ¶ *"Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins.*

2 *Yet they seek Me daily, And delight to know My ways, As a nation that did righteousness, And did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; They take delight in approaching God.*

3 ¶ *'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?' "In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers.*

4 *Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, To make your voice heard on high.*

5 *Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the LORD?*

6 *"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?*

Here we have the immediate context of our verse. We see what a day it was in which Isaiah wrote our verse. They had left God. And in verse 11 Isaiah explains how this happens, and this is our text.

## II. THE CONTENT OF OUR TEXT

### A. The Process Of Leaving God



1. As related to man

We now want to look at the content of Isaiah 57:11 to see the process of leaving God. He writes: *And of whom have you been afraid, or feared, That you have lied And not remembered Me, Nor taken it to your heart? Is it not because I have held My peace from of old That you do not fear Me?*

Why had Israel left God? Why do they not fear Him? We get from our text that God has been silent for a long time. By being silent here is not meant that He did not speak. He was speaking through Isaiah right here. But man cannot hear speaking that well. God has to speak by action. The Ecclectic notes on the Online Bible say, "On only four of its sixteen occurrences does 'silent' (Vhasa) refer to silence from speech. Its majority meaning requires or implies inactivity. Over what period can it truly be said that the Lord seemed inactive while his people pursued other gods and flirted with political alliances?"

So God says to Israel in the first part of the verse, ***And of whom have you been afraid, or feared..*** I think we might translate, "By whom have you been intimidated, or of whom have you been afraid?" When God is silent, and the fear of God subsides, the fear of man sets in. Here is the process of leaving God as related to man. When ever God is brought down, man is exalted.

While God was silent something insidious crept in among God's people. The fear of man was setting in. It is ever the tendency among God's people, when He keeps silent, to slowly drift from God. They begin to be enticed by man. And the more man is enticed by man, the more man's enticement grows, and the duller the ears of God's people become.

We are in a day when God has not spoken for a long, long time. Oh, He has spoken through many good men, but it is talking. Talking is not dangerous. Living

like you talk is. When the twin towers fell, all of a sudden churches were filled to overflowing. But it didn't last long. You have seen a child. He gets in this mood and it is as if he cannot help himself. He asks for trouble, and no amount of verbal warnings bring him to his senses. And finally the parent has had enough, maybe has even gotten a little warm under the collar as well. Out comes the switch, and if the parent is a good parent, the pain inflicted is enough to drive this mood entirely out of the child. After the spanking, when mom or dad says something, the child can hear again. It was the action, not the words that finally got through. Just so it is with God's people. And if there is no switch, the child is encouraged on to ruin. So it seems to be with God's people as well. The Bible says that whom the Lord loves He chastens. The Psalmist said in Psalm 119:67, *Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.* Can you identify? I can.

So our verse says, ***And of whom have you been afraid, or feared...?*** You see what God is saying is somebody has intimidated you. And you have been caused to move from your faith in God because you have been intimidated or afraid of someone. You have feared someone. Whom have you feared?

Why is the Church where it is today? As I see it, what has happened in denominationalism is that the Bible Schools have been instrumental in taking pastors in training off the path. In the past most Bible Schools started off well. But Bible schools were dependent on students to be able to keep going. Some Bible school began to drop standards to gain students. Other schools, intimidated by these looser standards, and who saw these other schools gain students, now through intimidation or fear, dropped their standards. Parents who had known certain schools, and knew that they stood for things, sent their young people. But many did not

realize what was happening inside. Many of these students became pastors.

These pastors, and very often what were called youth pastors, brought their more liberal life-styles and thinking into the churches. The more liberalized youth went back to schools wanting more liberal standards, and the progression was ever downward.

Churches, on the other hand, competed with other churches for more members by dropping their standards. The doctrinal statements of these churches, by which one might have known what a church stood for at one time, remained the same, but the practice kept changing. Old people in the churches were challenged to accept these new standards, or leave. But out of fear and intimidation, they remained in the churches. They dropped out of being involved in the churches, but they continued to go. Many ran from one church to another, and finally just adjusted. And thus, through fear and intimidation, life-styles in the churches dropped.

Singing choruses and contemporary music became the main diet of singing in the church. Modern versions began to be accepted as soon as they came off the press. Pastors, to remain relevant to the age, used these newer versions. Older people were frustrated, but things had slipped out of their hands because they had failed to take a stand. Now all they could do is sit beside and watch a younger generation take over. And I ask, is it possible that the older generation's failure to take a stand on divorce and remarriage had a hand in bringing the church to this state? It could well be.

Many denominations did not mind conservative churches in their denomination as long as those conservatives did not voice themselves on such issues as divorce, or women pastors, and now homosexuality. They knew it is only a matter of

time and those churches will follow suit. It only takes time. Go slowly. The one thing that is not acceptable is any voice that dared express their concerns and dared to point out the direction of the conference.

Now when a group of people in general begin to leave God, it is hardly noticeable at first. Then things progress, and slowly we get used to things changing. Then, finally, for some, there comes a difficult time between when it becomes a concern until it gets so bad that somebody dares to step outside of the church. It is seldom, if ever, a pleasant process. No church leaves God by announcing that they are leaving or by calling a meeting saying, "I make a motion that we, as a church, leave God." I doubt anybody leaves God and thinks, "We are leaving God and I'm going along with it." The devil is capable of weaving such a tangled web that people cannot see their way out of it. They don't think they are leaving, but they are. Slowly, little by little, death sets in. In the Evangelical Church, in America, we are leaving God. In our town, though we are not as far advanced as others, we are in the process of leaving God. We all know the illustration of the frog in the frying pan, but just like the frog we do not recognize it when it is happening. And because of fear and intimidation, we stay in.

Now in our text lie some clear principles regarding this matter of leaving God and we need to be aware of them for today, professing Christians are leaving God in large numbers.

You see, whenever Israel was leaving God, God sent messengers to warn them. And oh, what a dangerous business that is. Times of departing are unpleasant. You will have read how much men like Isaiah and Jeremiah suffered.

Are we leaving God today? The book called "The Shack" is a very clear example. If one can read

through a book like "The Shack" and not become greatly disturbed, one is not in the danger of leaving God, one has either never known Him or one has already left Him. And if anyone thinks I am overstating the matter, I can only conclude that such a person does not know the God of the Bible.

You might ask, "Well, have you read the book?" No! I read one paragraph quoted by somebody else, and a few other short quotes and that is more than I can handle to read. Someone will say, "You cannot judge a book without reading it." Let me ask you this: when you see any container with a skull and crossbones on it, and it says poison in big letters, do you judge it by its label? Or do you have to take a drink to make sure it is actually deadly? No, we are not that foolish with something like that, but we are just that foolish with books.

I think it would not be logically deniable that in general, in our secular American lives, our general populace has long been becoming liberal in thinking. In general, I think I can safely say that the majority of professing Evangelical Christianity today is thoroughly liberal. When Christians read books like the Shack and quote the Message, liberalism is steam rolling truth. And in our own community the process towards liberalism is painfully obvious. It is ever the nature of man to become so liberal that eventually a few truth seekers can no longer handle it, so that they finally break with the general trend.

But it is very much against our fallen human nature to step outside of generally accepted views. We find it extremely hard to step outside of family, never mind stepping out of generally accepted norms in society, even when those new norms are no longer anywhere near to being Biblical norms. Why is that? We are intimidated by our culture or by our family, or by something. And here is the first principle Isaiah gives to the departure from God;

intimidation and fear. But from time to time, when it gets bad enough, a few dare to step out. They are then, of course, outcasts in society. So our text says, "And of whom have you been afraid or feared..."

In the course of the history of the country we now know as the United States of America, in the beginning they were part of the British commonwealth. But eventually they began to suffer under British rule, and eventually it got so bad that they could no longer put up with the abuse. Listen to part of their declaration of independence. It says:

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.*

Now listen carefully to these words: *Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.*

I would say that the same thing holds true for churches and in the very same way. Churches that have been long established should not be left for light and transient causes. And churches today show what it further says of government: *and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to*

*which they are accustomed. End quote.* This holds so true in churches, that people stay inside larger denominations, or sometimes even smaller churches, long beyond what they should. It is not the nature of man to step outside of established norms, even when it becomes very painful. In the past 50 years you could have watched one older person after another suffer until they died within and gave up. But, you see, when those norms become biblically wrong, it is time to jump ship. So it goes on like this:

*But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. --Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.. end quote.*

We could say exactly the same thing of almost all, if not all the older denominations which were started after the Reformation of the 1500's. Only we can say this of those older denominations: very, very few people within them have the courage to leave. Very few. Why? They are intimidated and afraid.

So Roger Oakland, in his latest book calls his first chapter: *Scattered, shattered, battered, and regathered.* Many older Christians have been battered and shattered. Many older Christians have already succumbed to the pressures and sit in churches they disagree with, but it is hard to come out. They are too intimidated. And they are setting an example for the younger ones to tolerate, tolerate, and tolerate again, even though things are going wrong.

The declaration of independence then goes on to list the reasons why the American people threw off British rule, and made a move to step out on their

own. A whole list of such reasons could be listed by Christians in mainline churches today. We need not go outside of our community to find this out.

What has happened over the years to God's people? The godly were reduced and reduced until there were very few left. When Christians take a stand against what is actually wrong, it is said that Christians are the only ones who shoot their own wounded. But that is not what happened. Christians are the only ones who hold to unconditional love so tightly that they won't discipline their own. And not only that, they have among them many false brethren, and they are tolerated.

When Jesus illustrated what the coming Church age would be like He gave the illustration of the wheat and the tares. The devil has over sown the Church with tares. Tares are look-alikes. We think they are believers because they look like believers, but they are not.

Now let me tell you something that may shock you. If we say the Christian church is infiltrated by tares, and only a few of those who profess to be Christians are truly saved, can the picture actually be this bleak? I cannot tell you what it has done to me to think this through.

Let me show you the picture. First, we have the world with 7.5 billion people. By far the majority of those are lost. We don't struggle with that because we have become used to that thinking. But let me show you how it is according to the Bible.

In the time of Noah, one research article said there might have been have 10-11 million people alive on earth. Another article estimated 5-17 billion. How many were saved? Eight! Was it really that bad? Yes! And what percentage is that? Well, even if you use a very conservative number, the percentage is so low as to put you way under the decible.



Then consider the time of Lot. He was in Sodom and Gomorah. And how many were saved? Four! And out of how many was that? We don't know. What we do know is the percentage is very, very small.

So, only a very small percentage of those in the world were saved. But how about among God's people, in the time of Lot? How many of those who were delivered out of Sodom and Gomorrah, were saved? Well, one of those turned back, and now you have three! What percentage of those delivered from the city were still overtaken by fire and brimstone? Twenty five percent.

You will remember the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. He was one prophet to their 400. Do you know what the percentage is? It is .0025. Well, Elijah was shown to be the true prophet and the 400 were all wrong. That tells us that sometimes the majority is wrong. But then Elijah became afraid of a very demonized woman by name of Jezebel. These prophets had eaten at her table and she sent Elijah a message that tomorrow he would be like one of those prophets, dead of course. And he fled in fear. Then he cried about his situation and asked the Lord that he might die.

Turn to 1 Kings 19. So let us leave the picture of the world and consider the picture of God's people in Elijah's day. How many of those in God's own nation were actually saved? We begin with verse 14:

*And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."*

Do you ever get that feeling? I am left alone? But listen now to the Lord. In verse 18 it says, *Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.*

Now if you are like I am I always thought, "Wow! Don't get to feeling too lonely. There were a lot that still lived upright lives and so it may be today." But the other day I thought, "I wonder what percentage that is out of all who profess to be God's people?" And so I calculated that there must be at least 7 million people in Israel by that time. So what percentage is that? Well, it came to .001. I thought that can't be right. I called my son in law who works with big numbers, and he said it was .001. So I thought, well, maybe there were only 5 million. What percentage is that? Well, that was .0014!

You see, out of all the world, very few are saved. But of those who professed to be Christians, very few of those were saved. Jesus said the devil sowed tares in the field. Paul talks about false brethren. Wherever he went, soon there were those who professed to be believers, but they were not.

Listen to Luke 13:23-24 as to what it will be like in the world:

*23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,*

*24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

Then listen to Jesus in the sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:21-23 as to what it will be like in the Church:

*21 Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*

*22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'*

23 *And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*

What kind of people are these? They think they are worshipping the true God. They said, "Lord, Lord." Look at what they did. They served in the Church. But what did Jesus call them? Workers of iniquity!

Well, in verses 24-27 Jesus then teaches us how to make sure we are not one who thinks he is serving Christ, but is in fact a worker of iniquity.

And today, in the Church, professing Christians are fast leaving God! It behooves us then to take stock of our own lives. I expect that at least some are or will be listening to me who think they are going to heaven, but they are not. They will wake up I hell. Oh to make sure. You see, of that small number of professing believers, there are those who are leaving God, and there are those who have already left.

CONCL: And in conclusion, here is our question: Are we leaving God? Or, am I leaving God? And if so, what is intimidating me, or of what am I afraid? This is Isaiah's first principle: Intimidation and fear. Am I afraid because I am in a very small camp? Am I afraid, because others seem to have things so easy? Am I afraid to be different? If there is any such fear in me, I may be in danger of leaving God.