

LEAVING GOD?

Message 3

INTRO: Our subject is leaving God. Leaving God is a very real, ever present danger for every true believer. It is a personal danger. The danger of a church or the danger of a whole denomination. My wife was listening to Vance Havner, a preacher from the old school, whom you can listen to on sermonindex. Let me recommend Leonard Ravenhill on that site as well. Now according to these preachers, who lived not too long ago, the majority of professing Christians are not saved. The danger of professing to be a Christian without truly being born again, is danger is as great, or greater than leaving God. As my wife was listening to Vance Havner I jotted these two quotes down.

He said, "The majority of church members give no evidence of ever having been born again." Then he said, "I could have led some people to the Lord if they hadn't joined a Church." Those who have become church members and have not truly been born again are, according to the words of Jesus, twofold more the child of hell.

When one leaves God one is in the same danger. It is a danger that ever lurks before the Christian. I have been translating Paul's epistles. Recently I was working on Galatians. Listen to how he begins this letter:

6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

No letter of Paul's starts like this one. And he marveled that having just come to Christ, they were already turning away to a different Gospel. Wherever the truth was preached, within a short time there were false versions. It has always been like that, and it still is today.

Add to these dangers that we are ever bent towards sin, and this becomes a very grave danger. We are ever in danger of allowing sin in our lives and when we do, Satan already has a hold on us in such a way as to more easily intimidate us so that we begin to fear man and the opinions of man more than God. Personal sin also wants to cause us to lie about God. We are ever so ready to

excuse our sin, and once we do, we are on the path to leaving God.

We saw in the last message that when we have a wrong picture in our mind of who God is, we may think we are worshipping the one true God, but in fact we have become idol worshippers. We may have a god in our minds who is not nearly as far off the mark as the god of the Shack is, and yet already be worshipping a god, who is not the One given in the Bible. When we think of God, and we have in our minds a god who does not match the God of the Bible, we have a false God and we are lying to God and about Him. And that brings us to the next points in our passage.

b. Not remembered God

So, let me take us back to our text now. It says:

And of whom have you been afraid, or feared, That you have lied.. We have looked at that. Now consider the next point Isaiah makes, ...you have lied And not remembered Me...

When we are intimidated by man and fearful in any way, we are slowly being led to where we will lie about God. And if we live in any personal sins, we are even more easily intimidated but man and his views and opinions. When we do not deal with sin in our own lives, we begin to create a god in our minds that comforts us in the things we should not be involved in. And when we thus lie by setting up a false god in our minds, we go the next step of our passage. Isaiah says, "And you have not remembered Me..." You have lied, and not remembered me. This can happen in less than one generation! Experience shows that over and over again. It is high time that we remembered God once more, I mean the true God of the Bible.

Now let me say here, that the crucial area involved in all this in the Christian is what the Bible calls the heart. There is no word in the Hebrew Bible or the Greek NT for the mind as we use it in English. When both Testaments want to speak of the

whole thing we call the mind, they call it the heart. I will not take time to explain this morning, but in that teaching is some of the true psychology of man according to the Bible. The NT does have very important words for parts of the heart or mind, but none that covers the whole mind as we use it. But the mind is the key thing for man. And not remembering God has to do with the heart of man, or the mind. Since the heart of man is depraved and wants to go off the path continually, forgetting God is a natural problem of the heart, or mind, if you like. And then, if we live in any sin, that increases the problem.

Now our text for this morning says, "And you have not remembered Me." Herein lies one of the Christian's great dangers, forgetting God. You see, as soon as we are intimidated or become fearful of something other than God we begin to forget the real God. It is ever the tactic of Satan to strike fear in man's heart. You can see this in countries like Iran or groups like the Palestinians or Hezbollah and all the anti-Israel nations and if you listen you will hear big swelling words of intimidation. Things have not changed from the Senacharibs of the OT to modern times. Fear and Intimidation are used to make you feel little and useless. The same thing happens in churches. And when we give in, the next step is forgetting God.

And in our text we see that Israel had not remembered God, that means they had forgotten Him. Forgetting God is part of the process of leaving Him. Let me say a word about forgetting as related to our personal lives. Sometimes forgetting is in order and sometimes it is not. (3:13). There are things in our past that, having once been dealt with and put under the blood of Christ, we need to forget. Forgetting does not mean erasing. Paul talks in Philippians about forgetting those things which are behind. Many of these will plague the mind of those who have lived in sin. And here is

the question: How can one forget those things that want to crowd back in. If you have come to any age you will understand what I am talking about.

So when Paul says, "Forgetting those things which are behind..." what does he mean? How can one do that? Now listen carefully: forgetting in this way does not mean to erase. We cannot do that. If we could, we would likely repeat the same sin over and over again. It means to not let it dwell in your mind. Don't let it run your mind. If you let it dwell there, it will rule you and possibly ruin you. One must learn to put these things out and replace them by thinking on godly things. The book of Philippians is helpful here. Here it is helpful to pray and ask God to help one to not let these things run our lives by thinking about them. This is a constant battle for those who have lived in some deep sin.

So there are things that want to recall themselves to our minds uninvited and we need to put them out. Turn to 2 Corinthians 10. The devil is capable of throwing them in your face again and again, but Christ overcame the devil and so may we. Learning to do spiritual warfare is very crucial in this. Look at verses 3-6:

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (or fleshly) but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Through Christ we can overcome in the mind, we can have the victory.

But then there are things that want to slip out of our minds, and not recall themselves to us any more. Here too, Satan may play his part. Let me give you an example. We know that we should seek the kingdom of God first. But one may let himself into work too much, or money, or sports, or fishing, or hunting, or worse yet, into some sins; and then these things will be instrumental in crowding good things out. So one might find oneself having trouble reading the Bible, spending time in prayer, and going to church etc... And when we are taken over by other things, God wants to be crowded out so our minds do not recall Him.

The devil is our enemy. He is our adversary. He will seek to scare us, intimidate us, until we begin to leave God. And if we do not leave God, especially in a time where the spiritual state of Christians is as low as it is today, the devil will strike fear in our hearts in order to intimidate us and cause us to forget God. Let me show you this in Isaiah 59:14-15. Isaiah wrote:

14 Justice is turned back, And righteousness stands afar off; For truth is fallen in the street, And equity cannot enter.

What happens when truth falls in the streets in verse 15:

15 So truth fails, And he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.

Anyone in a society where truth fails, and he or she departs from evil and stands for truth, such a person makes himself a prey. A prey to whom? To those of the post-truth society, whether they be in or outside of the Church. And we become intimidated.

We have plenty of these in the church. What do they say? We should all be able to get along as Christians. We shouldn't have this kind of division against one another. Division is so bad. Sure we don't agree with all that's going on but we must learn to respect each other and get along as Christians and so on. Well, I agree, as long as that is possible, and sin does not enter the picture, I believe in getting along as best we can as much as possible. If we continue to get along when sin enters, leaving God is inevitable.

But when you take a stand against wrong, you will be painted every kind of intimidating picture the devil can hurl against you, and he will even use professing Christians to do that! Anyone who thinks this is not true, take the Bible, read it, and then live what it teaches. Separate yourself from Christians who are living in sin and you will discover the truth of this.

You see, here there is something these folk do not realize, something the Bible is clear about. It is this, not everyone who says Lord, Lord is a Christian. But who are these that say Lord, Lord and are not saved? Some are very hard to recognise. According to Jesus, they say they had cast out demons and had done many wonderful things. As a matter of fact, when you get in the low swing of Christianity such as we are in today, not many at all, of those who claim to be Christians are truly Christians. How can you get along with all of those? Jesus said there would be 'many' like this. And how can you live in unity in such a case? And if one does, the Christianity ebbs lower and lower. And the question is, "Of whom have you been intimidated? Who has made you afraid? Why do you not remember God?" When it comes to taking a stand with professing Christians, fear sets in.

Because churches do not exercise church discipline and we have come under such teachings as

unconditional love, many modern churches sit full of unbelievers. By the way, there is some truth in such teachings. That is the problem. Listen to Leonard Ravenhill again: "The majority of church members give no evidence of ever having been born again." Today, many who want to find a place to worship where biblical standards are maintained, they find themselves are hard put to find such a church.

Let me mention something about the seeker friendly church. One church is finding another church growing more than they are. And they check to see, what they are doing. Oh, you know what they are doing? When somebody new comes into the church, immediately somebody is there to invite them for lunch or to befriend them and so on. And oh boy, these newcomers begin to feel good about that and they begin to tell other people. If you want more members, make people feel good about who they are when they come into your church. Don't preach convicting messages, for heaven's sake. You'll drive these seekers away. You see, they are seeking God, so it is thought, and so we become seeker friendly. How the church makes you feel, that is most crucial. How much truth is preached, well, the most important things first, please.

And so the other church finds out what this one is doing and they begin doing that. And so you can go to church growth seminars and this and that and the other thing. And do you know how important sound doctrine is then? Do you know how important godly living is then? Am I down on being friendly to people when they come? No, not at all. I am down on not being real, and not being more concerned about godliness than good feelings. I am down on doing such things to gain more adherents.

I expect that some people church hop, because they don't get the respect or pampering they feel they ought to get. They are not really seeking truth..

The danger is that in such people you have a self-seeker, not a God seeker. Here is what happened to the church some years ago. There came a time when the church began to try to, and here are the words, to meet people's felt needs. Here is how it worked. Find out what people want and then give them what they want. I sat in a seminar that taught this. And when the church did this, everyone was made to feel like somebody, when in actual fact they needed to be told what they really needed. And the movement became known as the seeker friendly church.

People do not want standards? They are tired of standards? No problem. Take away the standards. They want to wear whatever they want to wear when they come to church? No problem. People don't want doctrine? They say, "Doctrine divides?" No problem. Take away the doctrine and do book studies and steer clear of any doctrine that might get people's hackles up. And you see what question must be asked: Of whom is that church being intimidated, or of whom has it become afraid? Did the seeker friendly approach work? It was phenomenal!

And when we use these tactics, this question needs to come to us: Of whom have you been afraid? You feared that other church is going to get bigger than you? You feared they would get some of your people? Here is the Lord's question for Israel: ***And of whom have you been afraid, or feared..?***

Leaving God is related to one's relationship to other people. The fear of man is probably the most common fear of all fears. The fear of God, today, just as it has always been, is without doubt, the least common. But it is the fear of God that is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. Now look at the beginning of our verse: *Of whom have you been afraid?* Now look at the end of our verse, *Is it not because I have held My peace from of old That you do not fear Me?* The fear of man is the beginning of the loss of the fear of God.

Now I ask you, how long does it take from the time when a nation is godly until it forgets God? Well, it depends on a lot of things, but let me tell you one thing, at the very beginning, it does not happen overnight. Something insidious has been going on for some time before it gets to this state.

When you have Christians flocking to buy the book 'The Shack' or now, to see the movie; or to use the modern translations like 'The Message' and numerous others, something insidious has been happening for a long time already.

Let me tell you something further. The voice that cries out against leaving the true way, whether it is in the early stages of leaving or the later stages, is an unwelcome voice. Here was the job of the prophets. Here is why the prophets were killed. It may well be that when Isaiah prophesied the later section of his book they are in the time of King Manasseh. Jewish tradition says Isaiah was sawn apart with a wooden saw because he had said he had seen Jehovah. In 6:1 he says, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple."

It would seem very strange that Manasseh would kill Isaiah because he said he had seen the Lord, when Manasseh was a very wicked man. But it would make perfect sense. Those who are leaving God make themselves look spiritual in the process. If this is what Manasseh did, it is a trumped up charge, but it sounds spiritual and godly. That is how it often works. Accusations are made against the godly that sound spiritual, but it is a cover-up for personal sin. These types of charges are not new to us. If that tradition is in fact true, the man that should have been sawn in two was the one that was responsible for cutting in two the one who should

have lived, and he may have done it under the guise of being spiritual.

And so, when God remains silent for a long time, and man becomes intimidated by man, it begins to affect his relationship to God. He begins to do strange things, never realizing what he is doing. He begins to lie about God, then he forgets Him. He does not remember the God of the past. Oh dreadful cycle, but it happens again and again.

Turn to Deuteronomy 8. Just before Israel arrived at the Jordon River, when they had almost completed their wilderness wanderings, Moses gave them the book of Deuteronomy. We could read the whole book this morning, and it would be this: When you enter the land, do not forget God! Over and over they are told not to forget and over and over they are told to remember God and what happened to them in the past.

Listen to what God said in Deuteronomy 8, just before Israel entered the promised land, when they were at the Jordon River, before they took Jericho, and entered the promised land. We begin in verse 18:

18 "And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

19 "Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.

20 "As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God."

What had Israel forgotten? They had forgotten who God is. You see, you cannot liken God to anything,

anywhere. Whenever one can, one has a false god.
Look at Deuteronomy 4. We begin in verse 13:

13 "So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

14 "And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess.

15 "Take careful heed to yourselves, **for you saw no form** when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire,

Now let me make an insert here, those who have read the Shack or watched the movie, have seen a form. This is idolatry! Verse 15 again:

15 "Take careful heed to yourselves, **for you saw no form** when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire,

16 "lest you act corruptly (what happens when you have a false god? Corrupt actions!) and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female,

17 "the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air,

18 "the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth.

19 "And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.

Why did God give such commands? As soon as you do not remember God and have God in any form in your mind, it is not the true God! And what happens when you have some form in your mind? One lies about God and next one forgets Him. And when one who has known Him forgets Him, he is worse off than if he had never known Him.

Turn to Psalm 50.

16 But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to declare My statutes, Or take My covenant in your mouth,

17 Seeing you hate instruction And cast My words behind you?

18 When you saw a thief, you consented with him, And have been a partaker with adulterers.

19 You give your mouth to evil, And your tongue frames deceit.

20 You sit and speak against your brother; You slander your own mother's son.

21 These things you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; But I will rebuke you, And set them in order before your eyes.

Now who is this that thinks God is altogether like man? Look at the answer in the next verse:

22 "Now consider this, you who forget God, There is the answer! Forgetting God does that to man! We go on:

Lest I tear you in pieces, And there be none to deliver:

23 Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God."

Now I ask you, if we cannot have any idea in our mind in the way of a form, how then can we know Him? Well, this is what Israel has forgotten. This is what we are forgetting today. There are two major ways by which we can know God. First, we can know Him by His actions and secondly, by His attributes. We learn God's attributes in special revelation; the Word of God. But we are also able to learn some of His attributes through His actions. I will not take much time here. If you wish, you might listen to our messages on God on sermonaudio. You could hardly do a more important thing than to get to know Him, and you can only know Him as much as you know Him in His attributes and His actions.

But listen to Romans 1:18-20:

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

19 ¶ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse...

So if we know God by His attributes and actions, we now ask, just what is an attribute? If we know God by His attributes, what is that? One dictionary said an attribute is a quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or inherent part of someone or something. So we might say that such or such a person is creative; or kind; or gentle, or quarrelsome etc.. These are inherent qualities. They are general characteristics. So let us consider first some of these attributes of God that do not have to do with morality. We will only look at some

of these very briefly. Let me recommend again the messages on God on sermonaudio.com.

1. His Attributes

a. Amoral attributes

- Self Existence

Let us consider first that God is self existent. He does not need me or you or the universe or anything else to continue to exist. He is self existent. People have often tried to make some engine or something that will run on its own power. It has alluded everyone who tried it so far. Only God is like that. This is what the name Jehovah is all about. If that is true, consider what that does to every god set up in man's mind. It obliterates, in reality, all of them to nothing. He alone is God and He is self existent. Israel had forgotten this God.

- Spiritual

He is a spiritual being. He does not have a body. In John 4 Jesus said that God is a spirit. If you get any mental picture of God when you think about Him, then that is not God.

- Invisible

Furthermore, He is invisible. We cannot think in the invisible. We are enclosed in a universe of material, and cannot step outside of it in this life.

- Living

Then He is a living God. This is incredible. Why? All other gods are not alive. They do not live. They do not even exist.

- Omnipresent

Then He is omnipresent. What does that mean? He is everywhere present at one time!

Israel had forgotten this. It is easy for us to forget. No matter where we go, what we do, He is there. There is no place to hide from God, but in our mind. And if we do that, we have, as the proverb says, our head in the sand.

- Omniscient

Then He is omniscient. He knows everything. There is not a mosquito in the world, no bug, no insect, no animal, and no human being that He does not know everything about them. It is staggering, but it is so.

- Omnipotent

Then He is all powerful. Think of this, in six days He created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. And a little girl said, "What took Him so long?" Do you know why it took seven days? Everything in creation is a lesson, just as the seven days are. Every attribute of God we consider, when one seeks to understand it, one's mind simply spins out. So it is with every attribute. God says His thoughts are above ours as far as the heavens are above the earth. We cannot measure that yet, not even in light years.

- Immutability

He is immutable. That means He cannot change. When you read the Bible and you learn there who He is and how He operates, that will never change. So Scripture says of Jesus, He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Everything changes, but God does not. The Shack has a god so unlike the God of the Bible, that to anyone who reads the Bible, this book should come as a total shock.

- Sovereign

Then God is sovereign. The Bible, as far as I can find, never uses the word sovereign. By sovereignty is meant, not that He

determines everything that will happen, but He has the right to do what He wishes with it. And since what He wishes to do with creation is bound in His character, He will only do what His character requires. Since His character is all good, He will only do what is good. It is for this reason that sin must be punished, and no one living in sin will go to heaven.

b. His moral attributes

Then let us consider some of the moral attributes. You see, God is a Person. Jesus Christ is a Person. The Holy Spirit is a Person. And these three Personal beings are one God. That is what we call the Trinity. And as a person, He has moral qualities, and here are some of the things that He is like as a Person. He is good, completely good; He is holy, totally without sin; He is just, He does only what is right. He is wise, He is love, He is gracious, He is faithful, He is true. All of these would be hard to adequately cover in one message for each.

You see, Israel had forgotten who God is, and they were burning their babies. They would heat up the god of Moloch until he was red hot and then place their babies in his arms and watch them burn up. So horrible were the cries of these babies as their lives were snuffed out, that they had drums to drown out their cries. We get the word Gehenna from the place where that happened, and it is the word from which we get the word hell. I once would not have seen it possible that we could ever get to such a time again, but look at how we sacrifice babies today. It is horrible. That is where the trail of false gods leads to.

2. His Acts

But, not only had Israel forgotten God in His attributes, they had forgotten His

actions in the past. God told them in a book written to them, which we call the OT, that He created the heavens and the earth and that He did this in 6 days. Ponder that for a moment. Does anyone want to guess how many earths would fit in the sun? They tell me that it would take 1.3 million earths to fill the sun. Anyone know how many suns the star Antares is supposed to hold? I am told it is about 512,000,000. It is 800 times larger than the sun. In creation alone we could spend hours and hours considering the wonder of creation, and God did it in six days! You see, it is a capital crime to forget God!

Yet Israel exchanged the God of the universe for false gods, and it got so bad, that their gods required them to sacrifice their children and they were sacrificed in the fire. And the drums would roll to drown out the cries of the babies. What god had they taken? Satan! And that is the very same god that the Shack tries to tell people is the God of the Bible.

Israel had forgotten how God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, and how God had protected Israel and later brought them out of Egypt, and how God had punished Pharaoh, because Pharaoh's gods were all demons. Israel had forgotten. Israel had lied and said this god that demands the sacrifice of our babies is the right god. And today we are going to false gods. We have forgotten.

We could list act upon act that God did, and Israel had a book that told them about these, yet they had forgotten. When Josiah became king, they cleaned up their act and found the book of God once more, and there was great revival. Oh, Israel, why did you forget? Recently I was shown on FaceBook what one of the churches in our community had recently done, and I say, "They have forgotten God."

c. Not taken it to heart

But I want to make one more brief point from our verse. What happens when men sin, like they did in Isaiah's day, and God remains silent? We find out in our text. First, they had lied. This is a very serious charge. Then they had forgotten God. And last, it says, they had not taken it to heart.

Now the clauses, they had forgotten, and they had not taken it to heart, both have to do with the central part of man, the heart. When you deal with biblical psychology, you must deal with the heart. And when you deal with the heart, you are dealing with what we call the mind. Here we win or lose, or I might say, here God wins or loses, or yet again, here the devil wins or loses. The mind is key. And failing to remember is the memory part of the mind. But our text says Israel had not taken it to heart.

Our next question is, what does the word 'it' in our verse refer to? I think Gill is right when he says, "'for thou hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart?" or, "put me upon thy heart". They had failed to put God on their heart. How do you put God on your heart? Well, you think about Him. You remember who He is, or you remember what He did, or you read His book. I am always encouraged when someone says they have read through the Bible. Do you know how high the chance is that throughout the year they have had God on their heart? Much, much greater than if they had not read through! And it happened while they were not in church. That is the only time some people read anything in their Bibles.

And what would they have done, had they placed God on their hearts? They would have said, "Oh, my. We better watch out. When man got very evil in Noah's day, God finally stepped in and all the wicked people drowned. And, oh yes, look at what it says about Korah, how they were swallowed up by the earth." And when you put God on your heart again and again, you don't forget Him!

CONCL: And so, as we close, let me ask you: who is your God? Do you know Him? Get to know Him more and more. Find out what He is like. Find out what He has done. He the self-existent one, perfect, holy and righteous. He cannot endure sin. He is the one whose thoughts are as far about ours as the heavens are above the earth? He holy, holy, holy. Or are we forgetting who He is, and what He is truly like? Is your God OK with a little sin?. Is He OK if you go onto sites on the internet you shouldn't? If so, then you have the wrong god.

We need to remember Him, and put Him on our hearts to dwell on who He is. And we should have within ourselves this one great desire, and that is to be like His son Jesus Christ! To be conformed into His image. To live right, whether it be in business, the home, or the church.