

**August 21, 2010**

## **God is Judging Christendom Because of the *Wandering Unrepentant***

We've noted previously that we live in a senior mobile home park in Colorado Springs. When we came here from northern Arizona in 2002 after sharing the Hebraic foundations with Native Americans, we received prophecies that God was going to "hide us out in Egypt" for a time. This relative seclusion is exactly what we've needed in order to produce the variety of videos and other materials that we now have available on our website.

"Egypt" does have its irritants! This summer we and our immediate neighbors have been plagued by two feral cats that frequently howl at various times throughout the night. Sleep eluded us for over a week. Also, a squirrel has attacked our deck furniture, ripping out the stuffing for her nest. There are various means to rid ourselves of the animals, and we've been implementing them. Our problem, however, isn't just the wildlife and what they're doing, but other neighbors who think they're being caring by feeding these critters! Many people don't realize that because of feral cats, many song birds have disappeared in this country, allowing insect populations in some areas to escalate. And, feral cats are also rabies carriers.

There is a spiritual lesson in this that the Holy Spirit showed us. It has to do with confronting sin today. In the earliest faith communities there were three ways you could leave: **1. *You could be sent forth.*** If you were sent forth, you'd normally have letters of introduction to indicate your good standing as a follower of Jesus (see Acts 15:23;28:21; 1 Corinthians 16:3). **2. *You could die.*** **3. *You could be excommunicated for unrepentance.*** Since people fellowshiped with others in their own neighborhood, if you were excommunicated, that fact would be common knowledge (as would be the previous two ways as well).

In 1983, when I (Mike) began counseling religious leaders during our 10 years at a retreat center in Connecticut, I developed a list of about 45 unrepentant people who wandered from one congregation to another in our area. (The list comprised individuals whose names came up at our monthly clergy breakfast gatherings and in the course of conversations with congregational leaders.) Each of these people was very divisive and self-serving, creating hostility and alienation among members (see 2Timothy 2:23-26). When the leadership of one body became aware of what these folks were doing and confronted them did they then move on to the next congregation. What surprised and grieved me was that when any of the divisive started to attend a new faith community, not one of the clergy contacted the previous congregation to find out *why* that person left.

One morning I handed out my list to the clergy group and in so doing, a hidden motive in the hearts of many of them was exposed. The reason none of them contacted the prior congregation about a divisive individual was the **sin of competition**. Each man

was happy to have the difficult person because he was convinced he'd do better with them than the previous leadership had. When each of them saw the names of the various people who'd passed through their congregation and owned up to the damage done by them within their flock, their own sin of competition was exposed, along with their toleration for sin in their congregations as well. Leaders who'd let the "wolves" enter and leave their congregation realized that they'd failed a particular responsibility as shepherds: ***"You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost"*** (Ezekiel 34:4; see also Matthew 18:15-17).

### **The Messiness of Confronting Sin**

The failure of so many within westernized Christendom to deal biblically with the unrepentant is similar to our problem with the cats, the squirrel, and the people who feed them. When we uphold communal righteousness according to God's Word by confronting the unrepentant (Matthew 18:15-17), we appear narrow-minded or "legalistic" by those who extend "fellowship" to the unrepentant and receive them without question.

In our neighborhood we're taking action to end the cat-howling and destruction of property by the squirrels. Taking biblical action is also what the righteous must do with the unrepentant in their midst so that they might repent and be restored to fellowship with our Father. We who enjoy having our prayers answered so that our testimonies attest to our Father's glory must confront the unrepentant even if it gets "messy." Our Father is grieved when we resist doing this, for as He says through Peter, judgment begins with the family of God (1Peter 4:17). Furthermore, ***"If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"*** (1Peter 4:18).

Ezekiel clearly articulates our responsibility to warn our brothers and sisters who are bent on living unrighteously: ***"When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself"*** (Ezekiel 33:8,9). James as well offers this admonition to Jesus followers to warn those whose ways are sinful before our holy God: ***"My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins"*** (James 5:19,20).

Perhaps you fear the possible messiness of confrontation so you resist confronting the sins of those with whom you fellowship. You mistakenly think you're being "tolerant" or "loving" by allowing them to hurt themselves or others close to them through their actions. But do you fully understand how you're failing others by your disobedience? Let us shed some light on the issue. The other night we saw on the news how the Taliban were helping flood victims in Pakistan. We went online to find out where the Taliban gets

its funding. This is what we found at several reliable websites:

**"The United States military is helping fund both sides of the war in Afghanistan, knowingly financing a Mafia-like collection of warlords and some of the very insurgents American troops are battling, according to Afghan and American officials and a new Congressional study released today."**

Unbelievable! We're giving money to our enemy to kill our own men and women! How ludicrous! This hurts us even more because we personally know and pray for military personnel who are fighting in Afghanistan. Take a lesson from the stupidity of this government's policy: According to God's words spoken through His prophet Ezekiel, if you refuse to confront the sins of those you fellowship with, the other person will die in their sins but God will hold you accountable. Do you really want to find out the consequence of *not* being an authentic brother or sister in Christ toward this person?

The worst of God's judgment on this nation is yet to come. Our collective personal and communal repentance may yet cause Him to relent. Remember, our holy *and* merciful Father was willing to save Sodom if 10 righteous people could be found (Genesis 18:32). Tragically, 10 couldn't be found and the results were horrifying. And this isn't an isolated instance but rather a warning to us today of the wages of ongoing unrighteousness (see 2 Peter 2:4-9; 17-22)

Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, God challenged the prophet Jeremiah, ***"Go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, look around and consider, search through her squares. If you can find but one person who deals honestly and seeks the truth, I will forgive this city"***(Jeremiah 5:1). Since our God doesn't make idle promises, it appears that not one person could be found who dealt honestly and sought the truth.

Do you seek the truth?

- Would God consider you one of the righteous who love Him and intentionally pursue a life that pleases Him?
- Would He count your family among the righteous?
- Would your faith community be included with the righteous?

If you can't answer an emphatic "YES!" to all three questions, then you are part of the problem of the coming judgment when He's calling you to be part of the solution. Isn't it time for you and those who will join you to return under the blood of Christ through repentance? Perhaps our Father will "pass over" you and those with you who live repentantly—or, as with Daniel's three young companions, He'll strengthen you to endure patiently whatever befalls you because you do love Him and live with obedient trust.

Again, Peter's warning to us today: ***"If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"*** (1 Peter 4:18).

**Mike & Sue**

P.S. If you're unfamiliar with the level of purposeful intensity our Lord Jesus calls for and empowers in those who belong to Him, we'd like to suggest two spiritual classics for you. The first is ***In His Steps*** by Charles M. Sheldon which captures the fervency we need as we seek and do our Lord's will.

The second book is ***Hinds Feet On High Places*** by Hannah Hurnard which reveals the pilgrimage aspect to our salvation and how we all must leave the familiarity of our stronghold-based relationships in order to genuinely follow the Shepherd of our souls. It also wonderfully reveals the issues each of us must face in our sanctification into Christ's character on our way to our salvation. (We've written a discussion guide entitled, *Going to the High Places*, to accompany this book. It's a free download on our website.)