

FORGET ME NOT

Galatians 1:6-9

INTRODUCTION

- A. Senior moments –
 - 1. Leaving a room only to forget what you were going for?
 - 2. Names and faces – introductions?
 - 3. Can't remember what you are going to the store for?
 - 4. Birthdays and anniversaries?
- B. Why are we so prone to forget? Psychologists tell us that forgetting occurs at an alarming rate.
 - 1. Much of what we "forget" we never even hear because we don't pay attention.
 - 2. Over 50% of what we do hear and pay close attention to is forgotten within minutes.
 - 3. The small piece of memory that remains is likely to be distorted in some way – what we remember does not always correspond with what actually happened.
- C. The news gets even worse: Sometime our problem is not forgetfulness but the motivation to recall.
 - 1. The child caught jumping on the bed for the 10th time in the last hour may claim to have forgotten his mother's warning. In reality, he didn't forget ... he just didn't want to remember.
- D. The book of Judges is a textbook on human forgetfulness.
 - 1. The amazing capacity of the Israelites to forget God.
 - a. Judges 3:7, "...*forgot the Lord their God.*"
 - b. Jdgs. 8:34, "...*did not remember the Lord their God.*"
 - 2. Perhaps they didn't pay close attention in the first place.
 - 3. Perhaps, in time, they forgot what He commanded them to do.
 - 4. Perhaps they just weren't very motivated to remember.
 - 5. They spent many miserable years proving man's poor memory affects not just his ability to recall names and anniversaries, but to remember his God as well.

I. A PATTERN IS ESTABLISHED.

- A. The Template for Judges, Chap. 2.
 - 1. This chapter sets the theme for the book.
 - a. It is a pattern which will recur throughout the remainder of the book.
 - b. We not only learn a little of the Israelites, but about ourselves as well.
 - c. If we think we are any different, we are fooling ourselves.
 - 2. A leader Dies, Judges 2:7-9.
 - a. As long as Joshua lived, the people served the Lord.
 - b. However, no leader lives forever.
 - c. When this man, so committed to God and obeying His commands dies, the people react in a way characteristic of us all.
 - 3. Apostasy Occurs, Judges 2:10-13.
 - a. A new generation did not know God.
 - i. It wasn't that they had not heard what God had done for their forefathers in Egypt or in the wilderness or in the land of Canaan.
 - ii. They had heard. They just forgot what they heard.
 - b. In the course of one generation, they forgot God and quickly began to do evil in His eyes.

- i. A wholesale apostasy takes place among the Israelites.
 - ii. In less than 25 years, the Israelites go from complete consecration to God to complete apostasy.
- 4. God Punishes, Judges 2:14-15.
 - a. God's anger brings punishment on His people.
 - i. Just as God had used the Israelites to punish the Canaanites, now God uses the Canaanites to discipline His people.
 - ii. They were defeated in battle and harassed by raiding parties.
 - b. They were "severely distressed" (vs. 15).
- 5. God Saves, Judges 2:16.
 - a. God raised up new leaders for His people.
 - b. These men, who listened to God and obeyed His commands, delivered the people from their enemies.
- 6. Judges 2:17-19. The same pattern time after time.
 - a. God raises up a leader.
 - b. The people return to the Lord, for a time.
 - c. The people forget God once more.
 - d. God punishes His people until, He raises up a leader.
- B. The Pattern Followed Throughout the Judges.
 - 1. Othniel, 3:7-11.
 - a. Joshua has died, the Israelites forget God, 3:7.
 - b. Oppressed for 8 years, Othniel brings peace.
 - 2. Ehud, 3:12-130.
 - a. Othniel has died, the Israelites forget God [did evil in the sight of the Lord (3:12)].
 - b. Oppressed for 18 yrs., Ehud brings peace.
 - 3. Deborah, ch. 4 and 5.
 - a. Ehud has died, the Israelites forget God, 4:1.
 - b. Oppressed for 20 years.
 - 4. Gideon, ch. 6-8.
 - a. Deborah passes from the scene, the Israelites forget God, 6:1.
 - b. Oppressed 7 yrs., Gideon brings peace.
 - 5. Jephthah, ch. 10-12.
 - a. Abimelech dies, the Israelites forget God, 10:6.
 - b. Oppressed 18 years, Jephthah brings peace.
 - 6. Samson, Ch. 13-16.
 - a. Abdon dies, the Israelites forget God, 13:1.
 - b. Oppressed 40 years, Samson brings peace.

II. LESSONS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE OF ALL TIMES.

- A. Apostasy is the Rule, Not the Exception.
 - 1. The Israelites kept forgetting God.
 - a. You would think they would finally learn their lesson!
 - b. The point of the book – they kept forgetting!
 - 2. Is the New Israel [the church] any different?
 - a. We are just as liable to forget as they were.
 - b. Though we hear all the stories about what God has done for our forefathers, we are no more likely to remember than they did.
 - 3. Apostasy is the Rule, not the Exception, for God's people.

- a. Apostasy shouldn't surprise the church. It is only a matter of time unless we are very much on our guard.
 - b. The early church as example:
 - i. Galatians 1:6
 - ii. 2 Timothy 4:3-4
 - iii. Within only 25 to 35 years of Christ.
 - c. Apostasy is only a generation away. All it takes is the failure to instill a burning love of God in the hearts of those who will take the reins when we are gone.
- B. God Disciplines Those He Loves.
- 1. We marvel at the patience of God.
 - a. God never gives up on His people.
 - i. I would have when they were complaining in the wilderness.
 - ii. I would have after about the 3rd or 4th bout of forgetfulness.
 - iii. But God never gives up. He becomes angry with them. He is disappointed in them. But He never gives up.
 - b. Even when they forget Him repeatedly, when they rebel and follow other gods, God continues to draw them closer to Himself.
 - 2. God's discipline is designed to bring His people back.
 - a. God consistently punishes His people in this book.
 - i. Wars and famine and poverty on them.
 - ii. Labor under foreigners who make them miserable.
 - b. But, like a father who loves his children, God's intent is not to cause suffering, but to bring about repentance. He wants His people back.
 - 3. The same rules apply to the Church today.
 - a. Hebrews 12:6-7, 11.
 - b. When we find ourselves in the worst crises, when everything is going wrong and we want to give it all up, perhaps it is time to think about returning to God and recommitting ourselves to His Lordship.
 - b. Discipline is a sign of God's continued love, not of His abandonment. It is an invitation to return to Him and live under His blessings.
 - 4. If apostasy is the rule rather than the exception, it might be equally true that discipline is also the norm. God's discipline shouldn't surprise us. It is a warning that things are not as they should be.

CLOSING

- A. Apostasy, the rule, not the exception.
- B. Be sure that we are walking in the ways of the Lord.
 - 1. John 15:5, 7, 10
 - 2. We abide in Him, by abiding in His Word.