

"THE NATION THAT FORGOT GOD"

This sermon was preached by the Rev. C. J. Hollandsworth, pastor of the First Vanguard Presbyterian Church, Raleigh, N. C., over Radio Station WPTF, September 24, 1933.

Read Deut. 32:1-20.
Text: Deut. 32:15—"But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness: Then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his Salvation."
Subject:—"THE NATION THAT FORGOT GOD."

What a perfect picture of the man or the nation who becomes prosperous and feels his own self-sufficiency, his own ability to take care of himself. He always becomes proud and forsakes his God and lightly esteems the Rock of his salvation. Isn't that a perfect up-to-date picture of what has taken place in our country in recent years? Did we not grow fat and prosperous like Jeshurun and then became proud and self-sufficient; then we kicked and forsook the God of our salvation. No nation was ever so proud and boastful of her wealth and greatness as we, and many came to feel that we did not need God, that we could get along without Him.

Then suddenly amid our pride and boastfulness and security, the whole bottom dropped out and for the past few years we have been in the midst of a sore depression. Life of hopelessness, despair or utter bitterness. Now that we are coming out—at least many say we are—it is well that we remember what brought on our troubles, lest we fall into greater sin. As we stand upon the threshold of a new day, I am afraid we have not learned our lesson, that we have not gone deep enough, that we have not repented of our sins and returned unto the true and living God. As we look back over recent years and contemplate the future, it is well that we recall some of the things that have brought us into the valley of depression. Of course we cannot hope to name all the things that have helped to add to our woe and shame.

In the first place I believe that economic paganism has been one of the steps that has led us down to our great sin. We are all more or less familiar with the kind of business ideals and practices that have been in vogue within the last quarter of a century. We know quite well that greed and selfishness and speculation, and the get-rich-quick-policy and the doctrine that "business is business," and that if it is necessary to crowd the little fellow to the wall in order to attain one's purpose, all right. I say we know how this has held sway over our business life. Many people have been perplexed and troubled in recent years about such policies. The church must reveal God's will and God's way in these things. The story is told that in a certain community they were holding revival services, and a merchant prominent in the town was endeavoring to persuade a small tradesman to become a Christian. "I cannot become a Christian," said the small tradesman. "I have a rival across the street. I know a trick that will put him out of the running, and I am going to use it. How can I be a Christian?" "Oh, said the reassuring merchant, "that is business. By the laws of trade your business must be run. The Christian life lies in another realm." It is the church's business to sound forth a message setting forth Christian ideals for all of life. No part of life belongs to the devil. The church must guide in the building of the Kingdom of God upon earth where His will shall be done on earth as it is done in Heaven.

In regard to business, the world has known just three rules of action. The savage says, "What is yours is mine; I'll take it." The pagan says, "What's mine as mine own; I'll keep it." The Christian says, "What's mine is yours; I'll share it." The first we dismiss as being out of the question for any civilized nation. The second is economic paganism; it has been dignified for a long time with the title of economic efficiency. The economist says, "Hands Off" to the moralist. And so man was allowed to pursue his ruthless way although it crushed the weak to the wall. Much of our business in recent years has been without Christ. The laborer has not been given a square deal. When vast corporations have been able to amass colossal wealth and millions go hungry and naked, how else can you describe such a system other than pagan and wicked. Christ must be put into our business. He is our only hope.

A religion which does not keep men from stealing the money of the poor through bank failures; which allows man to clean his neighbor up on the stock exchange; which does not prevent man from taking advantage of his brother, is vain religion. It is not the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, because it displays no love for man. Have we learned our lesson here? I fear not. For that same old spirit of greed is still abroad in our land.

The following example from Dr. David Christie's little book, "The Service of Christ," will illustrate what I mean. In his life of Frederick the Great, Carlyle tells how Miller Arnold and his wife had been ruined because of a certain Baron, whose estate lay higher up the stream, who had diverted water to make a fish pond, so that there was not enough left in the stream to turn the miller's wheel. Not being able to pay his rent in consequence of his mill being rendered useless, he was evicted from his home. He went

to law, but the judges gave him no redress. He was persistent with petitions to the King, until, after endless delays, the King himself made personal enquiry and took particular notice of the case. When he had thoroughly sifted the matter, he sent a command to the Chancellor, "Attend me here at 2:00 P. M. with the three Judges who signed in Arnold's case." As they stood like criminals before him, the King struck the official document again and again with his hand and said, "In the King's name! My name to such a thing! I will make an example of you which shall be remembered; Out of my sight!"

Political Paganism
The second cause of our trouble has been political paganism. That spirit of paganism that expresses itself in international relations. Suppose we tried Jesus Christ in our international relations, what a change it would bring over the world. But instead of that the pagan spirit still prevails in us by high tariff laws, by hatred and mistrust and preparation for wars. Such a policy knows nothing of human brotherhood. Its pitiful slogan is "My country, right or wrong." Again we have exposed our pagan spirit within our own borders in the way we treat people of other races. We have gone about with a spirit of superior air. We have not always given him justice at the bar. And in many instances we have failed to treat him as a brother for which Christ died.

But perhaps our political paganism has been greatest exposed in our political corruption. What true citizen of America does not hang his head in shame as he thinks back over recent years of all the political corruption from the smallest hamlet to the greatest metropolis of our fair land. No civilized nation has ever exposed so much moral rottenness in its political life as ours. So fearful has been the waste and robbery in our government that today our nation fairly staggers under the burden of taxation. Have we learned our lesson? I fear not. It is not this same spirit of greed and selfishness engrained in the hearts of men and women today? We have not repented of our sins. What public official do you know who has robbed his government, that has made a public confession of his sin? Not one! Oh, I fear we are still too proud and we have not suffered enough.

Paganism In The Social Life
The third cause of our trouble has been our pagan social life. The moral let down in our social life since the World War has been terrific. The wild rage for pleasures at whatever cost. We have swept aside the sanctity of the home and church, and made the laws of our land a national joke. Take a glance at the low moral tone in our social world today, and you are bound to agree with me that much of it is none other than pagan. What do you see when you look at modern society? Why, much of it is rotten to say the least. You know quite well that much of so called society today is none other than the fumes of Hell. Indecency, loose living, drinking, gambling, and immorality. The philosophy of the present day pleasure world may be summed up in this statement—"You need not be good; Just be careful." In other words, anything you can get by with is O. K. just so you don't get caught. Surely when a nation loses its moral fibre and becomes sensual and crazed for all kinds of wild pleasures, there is nothing left for that people but a great crash. We built on sand and when the floods came, down went the house. Have we learned our lesson? I greatly fear not. The fever of excitement still courses through our blood and we feel that we must be doing something, that we must be thrilled, that we must be going somewhere. Professor Thomas Huxley used to tell a story of an Irish car driver who was asked where he was going, who answered, "Sure-an' I don't know, but I'm going at a great pace." There is no question about the pace at which we are traveling. There is a question about the direction.

Forgotten God
Last but not least we have forgotten God. We have politely bowed God out of our business, our politics and our social life. In the Old Testament history we find that every time Israel went off into idolatry after strange Gods, some national calamity fell upon the people—internal strife, pestilence, famine, invasion and captivity. Every time the children of Israel became prosperous, they forgot God and became very wicked. The disaster would come upon them in the forms of what we call today "depression", and then they cried unto God and God was good to them and lifted the trouble and brought back prosperity. This happened seven distinct times in the period of the Judges. I want to commend that ancient document to those who think they have outgrown the Old Testament. Let me urge you to take that Bible from its hiding place and read especially the book of Judges, and see how up-to-date it is. In those seven distinct periods of depression which occurred about every forty years, you will find it stated in this striking way. "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of God and served Baal, and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other Gods, of the Gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them and provoked the Lord to anger." You will look in vain to find a more striking parallel than this ancient record to our own modern world.

Today we look back to 1928 when everybody had jobs, money, fine clothes great days of prosperity, and the nation did evil in the sight of God and forgot God, and behold our calamity! The temple services in Jerusalem went down because the people neglected the house of God, and no longer respected his worship. That is the trouble with us today—religious worship has declined. The influence of the church is waning because you, instead of giving your influence to an increase of church attendance, are spending your Sundays sleeping late, entertaining and visiting friends, fishing, autoing and having a good time in general. God has given you six days to do your work; you have used six as you chose and then stolen the seventh which he reserved for Himself. Yet some people wonder why all this trouble has come upon us. Listen again to another ancient document, Jeremiah 2:13: "Be astonished, O ye Heavens, at this and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, said the Lord. For my people have committed two evils: They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and hewed them out cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water."

Have we learned our lesson? I am fearful lest we come out of this great national calamity, not having learned its lesson. Are not our hearts still hard and our eyes still blind. I can see no signs of a great revival of true religion as yet. Men and women are still selfish, still self-seeking, still seeking political favors for enrichment of their own pocketbooks, still pleasure crazed and going after strange Gods. We have not returned unto God. How long has it been since you have seen a man in your church whose face was bathed in hot, penitent tears because of wrong doing? There can be no great revival of religion without a praying church. We are not a praying church today. We are not agonizing in prayer. How long has it been since you have observed a mother's face bathed in tears over the lost condition of her boy or her girl? Oh how few are really concerned about the conditions as they exist today. No, we have not returned to God. Look at the empty pews in our churches Sunday after Sunday. What church do you know of today that is crowded Sunday after Sunday, and people begging for standing room? Oh, to see this whole nation turn to God in a great national repentance of sin! We have not felt our guilt and shame. We are still a very proud and self-sufficient people. When will this weary nation learn that it cannot long survive without God. What a tragic statement, "Without hope and without God!"

Can there be any real economic and social recovery without the consciousness that we have sinned and sinned against God. We have heard much of economic evil, political evil and social evil of late years, but my friends, it is time we recognized that all sin is against God. We need to cry out as David did when he had committed his great sin, "Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." Also with the prodigal son, on his return to his Father's house, "Father I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee."
If we are to see any permanent and lasting recovery, we have got to get

back to God. Otherwise we are coming out of this depression as the people in days of the Judges, only to lapse back into pagan living.

I have been praying that our great President would send out a call to America for a spiritual recovery. A definite call to prayer and repentance. Who else today is better situated than he, when he has the whole Nation's backing and confidence? If only he would challenge our people to repent and return to the God of our Fathers, then and only then will you see any lasting recovery. Oh, I wish that somebody who is in a position to do so would place on the President's desk every morning for the next thirty-days, this great clarion call from 11 Chron. 7:14: "If my people, which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." But I declare unto you that this is the new deal that we need today, and we are not going to get very far without it either. Notice how simple and yet how profound it is, "If my people shall humble themselves." Don't we need that? "Shall pray," don't we need that? "Seek my face," don't we need that? Then what will take place? Why, just what we are all seeking—namely, spiritual and economic recovery. "Then will I forgive their sins and heal their land." I can see no other help for us. God help us to repent and to return with all our heart to Him.

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Having qualified as administratrix of the estate of J. L. Terry, deceased, late of Person County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of the said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned administratrix on or before the first day of June, 1936 or this notice

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will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment. This the 1st day of June, 1935.

Mrs. Sallie Terry, Administratrix
EXECUTOR'S NOTICE

Having qualified as Executor under the last will and testament of the late L. H. Lunsford, deceased, this is to notify all persons holding claims against the estate of said deceased to present them properly itemized to the undersigned on or before June 4, 1936, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate are hereby requested to make prompt settlement with the undersigned.

This June 4, 1935.
H. T. Lunsford, Executor

ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE

Having qualified as administrator of the estate of Hosea Allen, deceased, late of Person County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before May 9th, 1936, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment. This 9th day of May, 1935.
Ruben F. Allen, Administrator

ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE

Having qualified as administrator of the estate of Wm. James Mise, deceased, late of Person County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before April, 30, 1936, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment. This 30th day of April, 1935.
Virgie Mise, Administrator.

NORTH CAROLINA PERSON COUNTY
In The Superior Court

Mrs. Nannie H. Mitchell, administratrix d.b.n. of A. J. Mitchell, deceased, Plaintiff,

vs
Vernon M. Mitchell, Ollie Powell Mitchell, Ora Mitchell Parker, H. A. Parker, W. G. Mitchell, Ruby C. Mitchell, V. C. Mitchell, Helen Mitchell, Defendants.

The defendants above named will take notice that an action entitled as above has been commenced in the Superior Court of Person County to sell the lands of which A. J. Mitchell, deceased, died seized and possessed for the purpose of creating assets to pay the debts of the said intestate A. J. Mitchell, and the said defendants will further take notice that they are required to appear at the office of the Clerk of the Superior Court of Person County, at Roxboro, N. C., on or before the 24th day of June, 1935, and answer

demur or otherwise plead to the petition and complaint now on file in the Clerk's Office or the plaintiff will apply to the Court for the relief demanded in the said petition and complaint.

SUE C. BRADSHER, Clerk Superior Court.
This the 23rd day of May, 1935.

Business Directory

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