

STARTING OUT RIGHT BUT ENDING UP WRONG

Jeremiah 2:20-28

Introduction: Jails and prisons are full. Everyday the news is filled with stories of hate, violence, crime, acts of hurt and murder. What is wrong with these people? What happened to them? Were all of them raised in such atmospheres? Perhaps you know somebody who started life out in a healthy, safe, even Christian environment but has turned out to be a person filled with violence, hate, indifference and drugs. What happened to that person? God started Israel out in every right way but so often they would go astray, they would go away from God, they would even replace Him with idols and other gods. They started out right but ended up wrong. How often you and I can identify with that situation. We, too, have often gone astray after being started off in the right direction by God.

I. GOD STARTS US OUT RIGHT (vv20-22)

1. It is always God who takes the initiative with people.
 - As it was with Adam, with Israel, and with every single believer.
2. It is always God who makes the covenant.
 - I will do this and that, but you must do so and so.
3. It is always people who break the covenant.
 - Israel would act like an animal in "heat" in going after other gods.
 - We, too, leave God out of our plans, out of our lives, replacing Him, forgetting Him.
4. People forget that their acts of disobedience, rebellion, sinfulness cannot be erased or deleted or are of no significance to God.

II. PEOPLE ATTEMPT TO JUSTIFY THEIR DISOBEDIENT ACTIONS (vv23-24)

1. Sometimes people outright deny their guilt.
 - As did Cain, Israel and as we do today, "who me?"
 - People live without any concern for their Church or the lost, yet they say they are not guilty, they've not done anything wrong.
2. People overlook or excuse their guilt.
 - It was not exactly unlawful.
 - I felt like doing it, what's wrong with that?
 - Every one else was doing it.
3. Then people blame others for what happened.
 - Adam did, it was the woman you gave me.
 - What's the big deal, nobody got hurt.
 - It wasn't really intentional.
4. People look only at the outside, the immediate result of their actions.

5. However, God sees the real guilt, the real facts, the hidden things.
 - To God, all sins are very open.
 - To God, people live in continuous rebellion
 - God sees the lives of people from their birth throughout their lifetime.
 - God sees through mere "professions," acting, put-on's, playing, etc.
 - Only when a person gets into real trouble do they slow down enough to actually hear God or turn to Him for help.
 - All of God's entreaties, invitations and warnings have little effect.
 - The only time people feel guilty in going away from God is when they get caught.

III. PEOPLE LOOK EVERYWHERE EXCEPT TO GOD (vv27,28)

1. When in a state of ease, all is going well, people don't need God.
 - People don't seek God.
 - They don't acknowledge God.
 - People have their friends, so they don't need God.
2. However, when trouble comes:
 - People forget all their "friends" and call upon God.
 - People want immediate help, relief from God.
 - When all is well again and they don't need God anymore, they laugh at their past weakness.

IV. REPLACING GOD IS A DANGEROUS THING TO DO

1. Replacing God with things, people, interests, brings disappointment in life.
 - There is no real satisfaction.
 - Life is like a broken cistern.
 - Time is wasted, lost for the temporal things.
 - Troubles become unbearable.
 - There is no place of comfort in times of trouble.
2. People should consider the consequences of having only things and people like themselves to turn to in times of trouble.
 - Of what use are things and friends when one is standing before God?
3. What if God actually refused to hear a person's cry for help and he/she had only that which he/she had traded God for? (v28)

V. BEFORE REPLACING GOD, STOP AND REALIZE WHAT YOU HAVE

1. You have a God who loves you and is merciful.
2. You have a Savior who died for you.
3. You have a Church family who loves you.

4. Think about what you have done, are doing to God, to Jesus, to your Church.
5. What value have you put on God, the Lord Jesus, and your Church?
6. Face it, Things are more important to you than anything or anybody else.
7. You will have wasted your life for what?
8. You will reap exactly what you have spent your life planting/sowing.

CONCLUSION:

1. Are you at ease about your present, current lifestyle?
 - Think you have plenty of time to get things right with God?
2. Are you concerned about your sins at all?
 - If so, call on God right now, get things corrected, be at peace with God.
3. If you are a Christian, then you started your new life right, but how are you now? Are you still living as God started you out? Is God still central in your life?
4. If you are not a Christian, then God is a stranger to you but wants you to become a part of His family and has sent His Son, Jesus, to make that possible. Your part is to believe in Jesus and to surrender your entire self to Him. He will do the rest.