

# What Are the “Wicked Ways” of the American Church?

Today is the National Day of Prayer, and for decades the same call to pray for our nation has gone out across America. We ask God for revival, focusing on this promise found in 2 Chronicles 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.”

Even though this verse tells us that God will heal our land if God’s people, who are called by his name, would “turn from *their* wicked ways,” we focus on the sins of the world—abortion and sexual immorality, in particular. Yet God said *his people* needed to turn away from *their* wicked ways. What were the wicked ways that displeased God in ancient Israel, and importantly, what are the wicked ways that displease God in the modern church?

A few verses after the promise to heal the land in 2 Chronicles 7, God describes the sin that causes his disapproval. He says Israel would be plucked up “by the roots” and “cast out” of his sight to become a “byword among all nations.” (2 Chron. 7:20, KJV)

Why?

Because the people worshiped other gods. He answered them:

“...Because they forsook the Lord God of their fathers...and laid hold on other gods, and worshiped and served them: therefore he brought all this evil upon them.” – 2 Chron. 7:22, KJV

The ancient Israelites were UNFAITHFUL to God, but the people didn’t even realize they were sinning! God used the prophets to explain how they had betrayed him. The prophet Hosea, for example, was told to marry a woman who would have lovers on the side. This was a symbol of the relationship between God and Israel. Although Israel was still in a covenant relationship with God, and they still did all the ritualistic blood offerings, burnt offerings, Sabbaths, incense, new moon festivals, etc., the prophet Ezekiel said when they built “high places” to other gods, this was the equivalent of a woman going out to a city square and opening her legs to everyone that passed by. God was so grieved that he cried out:

“How long will my people be incapable of purity?” –Hosea 8:5, NIV

Jeremiah, the “weeping prophet,” also prophesied the heart of God when he asked:

“What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they have gone far from me?” –Jer. 2:5, KJV

(What person who has been cheated on hasn't felt the same grief and pain?) God had blessed Israel with "plenty," and yet they had "defiled" the land (Jer. 2:7, KJV). The temple priests, the pastors, and prophets had nearly all turned to other gods. They were apostate.

### **WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH AMERICA AND THE MODERN CHURCH?**

1 Corinthians 10 says that what happened to ancient Israel was written as an example to the church. Paul described how God led his people out of the bondage of Egypt and how the people drank of the spiritual Rock (Christ), and yet they still lusted after idols. Then Paul gave this warning to the church:

"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come." – 1 Cor. 10:11

He then admonishes the church to "flee from idolatry" (1 Cor. 10:14).

### **HOW DO CHRISTIANS PRACTICE IDOLATRY TODAY?**

Sadly, we do it the same way the ancient Israelites did it. We keep our outward relationship with God and add other lovers on the side. We go to church. We carry the name of God, yet we add to the faith, corrupting it with things that conflict with the Word.

Incidentally, this has happened throughout church history! The early church had to contend with the Judaizers (who added Old Testament law to Christianity) and the Gnostics (who added extrabiblical dreams and revelations to the faith). As an apologist, I'm often challenged to defend the failures of church history—[the Inquisition](#), [slavery](#), [colonialism](#), [Nazism](#), etc.—and I realized it was at those precise moments of failure that the church was UNFAITHFUL to God. They didn't keep the faith pure. They blended outside views with the Gospel and created an unholy and lukewarm blend. The result was war, division, and suffering of the masses! The root determines the fruit that will be produced. When Israel began worshiping other gods, they became greedy and cruel, and when the church became unfaithful, they became evil too.

But you might argue: the church never built high places or worshiped idols made out of wood or stone! No, but Paul explained that we are still commanded to pull down the high places. The weapons we fight against are no longer carnal, or fleshly, but the way we pull down strongholds now is through "casting down imaginations [the NIV says, "We demolish arguments"] and every *high thing* that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor. 10:5, KJV).

In the letter to the Ephesians, he explained this spiritual battle also: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in *high places*" (Eph. 6:12, KJV). The "high places" are now the regions of the mind and intellect where Satan wars against the truth.

The easiest way to destroy the truth is to blend it with something else and create an entirely new entity. It's a form of sedition, a subtle way to cause rebellion and betrayal. The only solution is a call to purity and holiness (a whole and undivided heart).

### **WHAT ARE THE WAYS THE CHURCH IS BEING UNFAITHFUL TODAY?**

1. **We've corrupted the Gospel** with other ideologies, philosophies, "truths," or beliefs. Think about the church of the last decades. We've blended biblical truth with psychology, science (such as evolution or quantum theory), business principles, mammon (through the prosperity gospel), philosophy (through Critical Race Theory), new revelations, dreams, and visions (such as *The Final Quest*), fiction (such as *The Shack*), other religions (COEXIST), environmentalism, Old Testament law, political ideologies, and on and on. This list is not exhaustive.
2. **We've joined with other religions** to bring about peace, prosperity, and the transformation of society or culture. This was the root of the sin of ancient Israel. They worshiped the gods of the surrounding tribes *alongside* their worship of Yahweh. Baal promised new life, prosperity, and security to his worshipers, so the Israelites joined in. They never denied God, they just blended with the other gods . . . and it broke God's heart. What is the source of our peace and prosperity? Is it unity with other religions, like a modern-day Tower of Babel, or is it faithful love toward God and his Word?
3. **We've added mystical experiences to the blood of Christ.** Why do we need to add our own religious efforts to the sacred way provided by Jesus? Contemplative prayers, soaking prayers, labyrinths, the "silence," centering prayers, and breath prayers are all ADDITIONS to the Gospel. They are equivalent to the ["strange fire"](#) offered by Nadab and Abihu to the blood offering of the lamb.
4. **We've embraced a slew of false prophets and false teachers.** These men and women claim to be hearing from God, yet their prophecies seldom come true. Why do we need these extra-biblical revelations from God? Why do we need the signs and wonders (as found in the heretical book *The God Chasers* by Tommy Tenney)? Just like the Pharisees, the Word isn't enough. Christians run off after these lying signs and wonders. But Jesus called them adulterous for this!

These are just some of the "wicked ways" of the modern church. All of them point to a divided heart, but Jesus said that the greatest and first commandment was to "love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, and with *all* your soul, and with *all* your mind" (Matt.22:37-38, KJV). Israel went through a time of revival when King Josiah discovered the lost scrolls (the Word) and obediently destroyed all the high places. This was pleasing to God, and the prophetess Huldah revealed God's heart of grace towards Josiah:

"Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD." – 2 Chron. 34:27, KJV

Is YOUR heart tender toward God. Do you have a divided heart and mind? The American church, just like ancient Israel, needs a true revival of holiness unto the Lord. God is still crying out:

"How long will my people be incapable of purity?" – Hosea 8:5, NIV

