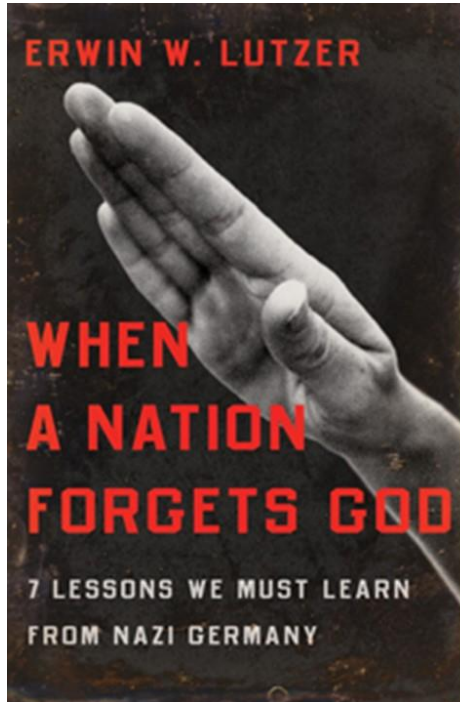


When A Nation Forgets God – Bible Study  
Dr. Paul Jehle - Lesson 7 - October 28, 2020



## When a Nation Forgets God

*Lessons we must learn from Nazi Germany*

A Bible Study utilizing the book by  
*Erwin Lutzer*

Lesson Seven – *We must exalt the Cross in the Gathering Darkness*

Dr. Paul Jehle

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## Review of Lessons One through Six

- God is Sovereign over all - *if man sovereign; we lose liberty*
- Individuality (choice) marks a Biblical and *free economy*.
- Self-government is maintained when God *internally governs*
- Stewardship of ideas is primarily an *individual responsibility*
- Sowing and Reaping is illustrated by *parental responsibility*
- Christian Character, or being *transformed into the image of Christ*, is God's ultimate goal, for that kind of Church the Kingdom of God is manifested. The method of this maturing often comes *though suffering and pressure within and without*

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## The Biblical Principle of Covenant

- Genesis 2:24 – *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh*
  - Adam recognized Eve was “bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh”
  - He was then joined (cleave) to her in holy matrimony
    - Leave and a root of Cleave is to *impinge* – *make an incision* – CUT OUT
    - The other root of Cleave is *adhere or join* – JOIN IN
- This Biblical principle, introduced in Genesis, highlights:
  - Building internal unity by cutting away all but priorities – seeking the highest common denominator possible internally – in ideas
  - Working together in union externally – in actions

*Our union of action is only as strong as our internal unity of ideas*

3

**LEAVE**



Sanction

*To cut off or out... willingness to give up some freedom...*

**CLEAVE**



Sanctity

*To cling to, stick like glue*

**ONE FLESH**



Redemption

*To become one*

**Unity**



**Union**

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## The Practice of Biblical Covenant

### Internal Unity (unity of ideas)

- To identify priorities (calling)
- To cut out unnecessary detours
- Internal unity of principle
- Sanctity/Sanction – form a bond

### External Union (concert of actions)

- Keep our eye on the main thing
- Stay within one's limits
- External harmony of action
- Redemption – fulfill calling

■ *...for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*” - Matthew 18:20

■ *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace... till we all come in the unity of the faith... unto a perfect man.*” – Ephesians 4:3, 13

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## Positional and Experiential Truth

### Position - unity

- Who we are in Christ
- Our confession
- Our promises – profession
- Saved by grace
- The Lordship of Christ – essentially giving up personal autonomy in order to manifest the Kingdom

### Experience - union

- How we live
- Our lifestyle
- Our delivery – character
- Confirmed by works
- The Church functionally manifesting Christ's Kingdom - doing together what we could never accomplish by ourself

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## The Deception of Discord and Conformity

*Six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination... one who sows discord among brethren. – Pr. 6:16, 19*

*Cast in your lot among us, let us all have one purse... do not walk in the way with them... - Pr. 1:14-15*

*Discord – Disagreement... contention; strife... produces angry passions... litigation*

- Sowing seeds of self-importance
- Ideas carelessly used
- Avoid scrutiny to gain favor

*Conformity – Likeness... in form or manner; resemblance; agreement; congruity*

- Going along with no agreement
- Expression suppressed
- A show of unity (no opposition)

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## Why is the Cross a Symbol of Covenant?



- The Vertical beam symbolizes our covenant with God; the horizontal our covenant with each other
- The Two tables of the Law – first four with God; second six with man
- In both cases, a cutting out of sin and a focus on Christ's work builds unity and leads to greater harmony together

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## How do we honor the Cross?

Lutzer - *'Bonhoeffer... was attempting to awaken the church to its responsibility at an hour when its witness and strength was most sorely needed. He insisted that if the church stood upon Christ as the rock, 'the church will not be taken from us'*

*...let us return to Holy Writ... for the times, which are times of collapse... may well be for her a great time of building... Confess! Confess! Confess!' he pleaded.... This young who was not duped by der Fuehrer's intentions, gave a radio address in which he warned that when a people idolize a leader, 'then the image of the leader will gradually become the image of a 'misleader.'*

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## Bonhoeffer's Warning against Pride

*Bonhoeffer kept reminding anyone who would listen that the church has only one altar before which it must kneel and that is the altar of the Almighty. He contrasted the proud Nazi agenda with the humiliation of Christ on the cross. 'God's victory means our defeat, it means our humiliation; it means God's mocking anger at all human arrogance, being puffed up, trying to be important in our own right. It means the Cross above the world... the cross of Christ, that means the bitter scorn of God for all human heights, bitter suffering of God in all human depths, the rule of God over the whole world... we kneel before the altar and say, "Lord on the Cross, be thou alone our Lord, Amen.'*

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## Bonhoeffer's Warning against Pride

*Bonhoeffer warned that if the church should ever substitute one Lord for another, if the cross of Christ was replaced by any other cross, the Gospel would be betrayed and the church judged...*

Bonhoeffer wrote *"It is becoming increasingly clear that what we are going to get is a big, popular national church whose nature cannot be reconciled with Christianity, and we must be prepared to enter upon entirely new paths which we shall have to tread. The conflict is really Germanism or Christianity..."*

*Bonhoeffer saw clearly what we in America have not yet grasped; that for us as Christians... on one side is a deteriorating culture and on the other side of the divide is the cross of Christ...*

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## The Power of the Cross

- The Early Church
  - No political base in Roman Empire
  - Totally foreign to every other "god"
  - No Freedom of Religion
  - But it did have the message of the Cross and resurrection of Christ!
- The Gospel brought down the Roman Empire, and Christianity became more influential than any other religion in only 400 years!

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## Early Church Growth – first 400 years

- 30 AD – 20 Christians  
(Conversion of Paul)
- 60 AD – 1,280
- 100 AD – 8,389
- 150 AD – 36,000
- 200 AD – 157,000
- 250 AD – 676,000
- 300 AD – 2,923,000
- 312 AD – 3,857,000  
(Conversion of Constantine)
- 400 AD – 29,478,000
- 2020 AD – 70,000+ per day around the world!

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## Transformation of Roman Culture

- Unique nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ
  - *One God, exclusive due to the cross*
  - *All-encompassing worldview – seamless garment*
  - *A kingdom mission from the inside-out; bottom-up*
- Christianity leavened the Roman culture...
  - *Hearts of slaves, women, children and poor changed!*
  - *A sense of community, health, heaven/hell, martyrdom...*
- The Gospel is the power of the Cross and Resurrection

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## The Nature of Preaching the Cross of Christ

- In Rome, *Christ was added to your life among other gods*
  - Everyone had a god, an idol, what is another one?
  - The concept of adding Christ, which is popular today, *simply elevates spiritual pride and religious works* which does not transform a life but merely conforms a life to certain types of behavior
- In Christ, *the Cross crucified sin and practiced self-denial*
  - We are sinners by birth, not by works...
  - The Cross frees us from pride, and Resurrection brings *humility*
  - *Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.* – Mark 8:34

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## The Cost of Discipleship, 1937 Chapter 4 – *Discipleship and the Cross*

- *Jesus must therefore make it clear beyond all doubt that the 'must' of suffering applies to his disciples no less than to himself... Discipleship means adherence to the person of Jesus, and therefore submission to the law of Christ which is the law of the cross.*
- *Only when we have become completely oblivious of self are we ready to bear the cross for his sake... if we have ceased to notice the pain of our own cross, we are... looking.. unto him.*

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## Lessons from Germany – Helmut Thielicke, 1945

*Denying God and casting down the cross is never a merely private decision that concerns only my own inner life and my personal salvation, but this denial immediately brings the most brutal consequences for the whole of historical life and especially for our own people. 'God is not mocked.'*

*...the worship of success is generally the form of idol worship the devil cultivates most assiduously... We could observe... after 1933 the almost suggestive compulsion that emanates from great successes and how under the influence of those successes even Christians stopped asking in whose name and at what price they were achieved... Success is the greatest narcotic of all.*

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## The Answer is not Political

- Os Guinness – *there is no problem in the wider culture that you cannot see in spades in the Christian Church. The rot is in us, and not simply out there. And Christians are making a great mistake by turning everything into culture wars. It's a much deeper crisis.*
- Erwin Lutzer – *At last we come to the heart of the matter; the cross reminds us that the battle is not so much between church and state as it is within our own hearts. If Christ has all of us, if the cross stands above politics and the world as Bonhoeffer has reminded us, we shall overcome regardless of the cost.*

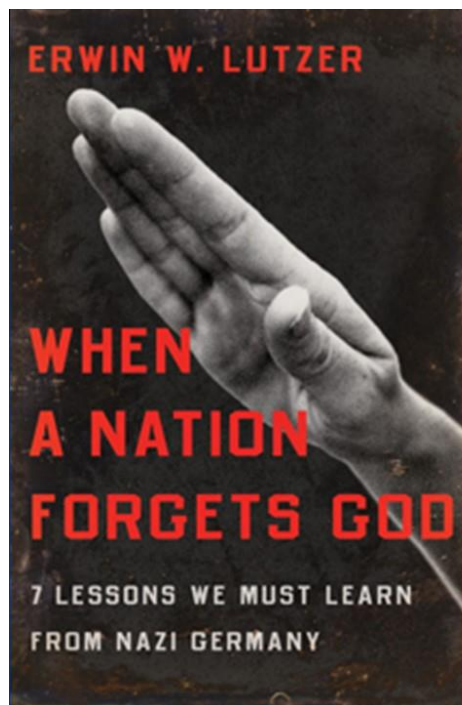
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## So how should we walk in Covenant?

- *Daily confess sin, deny self, and walk humbly with God*
- *It is more important to focus on unity of principle (cause) than unity on issues (effect), and as Lutzer concludes:*

*The Christian church has suffered throughout the centuries, and now it appears as if it is our turn. Like the early apostles, we will find that our commitment to share the Gospel will run counter to the laws of the land. At what point do we have to become lawbreakers rather than betray our faith? AT what price are we willing to take the cross into the world and identify with our Savior? How do we both love the people of the world and yet oppose the agenda of those who would crush the Gospel?*

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## Suggested Reading from Lesson Seven

- Read Chapter Six (pgs. 131-141)
  - *We must return to the preaching of the Cross and resurrection of Christ if we ever expect to see a revival transform our nation in reformation once again...*
- It is harder to cultivate a unity on principles than reacting on issues
- Endeavor to identify what God has cut out (attitudes) as a work of the cross that He might add new life!

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