

Can America's Spiritual Decline be Reversed?

I invite you to think with me of a nation in spiritual decline. The nation that I'm referring to, in large measure, had turned away from God. This nation had also declined socially, politically and even economically. Along with this, the people were heavily involved in the worship of idols—i.e., they were putting other things and people ahead of God in their lives. Does this sound familiar? Although this may seem to point to America and even some of our leaders at the present time, I'm actually referring to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament leading up to its fall into captivity to the nation of Assyria in 722 B.C. I want to call attention in this article, not to the unfaithfulness of America as a nation, but rather to the unfaithfulness of many Christians in America to God and his word.

The history of the children of Israel and the punishment they received should make us pause and think. Sadly, not only the leaders but also the people were consistently disobedient to God's command to be faithful witnesses of his goodness to the nations around them. At that time, the prophet Hosea was used of God to point to the spiritual decline of the nation and the need for repentance because the people—in many ways—had forgotten their covenant God.

The book of Hosea records the primary contributing factor to the decline in the spiritual lives of the people of God. Listen to these words from Hosea 4:1: "Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel, for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land." And then just a little further in verse 6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..."

Sadly, there are far too many today who know very little about God as he has revealed himself in his word, the Bible. A recent survey of 3,000 people who say they're Christians points to a lack of basic understanding of key biblical doctrines. For example, to the statement, "An individual must contribute his or her own effort for personal salvation" 48% of those surveyed said that they 'agree strongly.' Rather than believing our salvation is all of God's grace in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9), nearly half of those surveyed believe that they must contribute to God's perfect work of salvation.

To the statement: "Even the slightest sin deserves damnation" 62% 'strongly disagree.' Only 11% of those surveyed recognize the true nature and consequences of their sin in light of God's holiness. Another question pertained to the person of Christ. When asked if Jesus is truly God and has a divine nature and if Jesus is truly man and has a human nature a strong majority of 62% agree. Yet, when asked if Jesus is the first being created by God 53% believed that this was true. This reveals some major confusion about the person of Jesus.

Just as the Old Covenant people were called to be witnesses of the faithfulness of God to the nations around them, Christians are called to be witnesses to the goodness of God and to salvation in Jesus Christ. We cannot save anyone ourselves but we can tell them about Jesus and pray that God would be pleased to open the eyes of their hearts to see the beauty of the gospel of grace. Since we need to continue to grow in our knowledge of God all our lives it's

imperative that we're connected in membership to a healthy, local church. We cannot grow properly apart from regular fellowship in the family of God. If the people of God truly desire to see our nation and our world change for the better the Church must seek to be obedient to her calling to witness to Jesus Christ in word and deed.

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