

DANGERS OF COMPROMISE

Tuesday, July 10

Reading: Psalm 106:34-48

Psalm 106:34 *They did not destroy the peoples as the LORD had commanded them, **35** but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. **36** They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them.*

In the first season of the TV show “24” we meet federal agent Jack Bauer. In the uncertain world of espionage, he is portrayed with the rare character trait of integrity. However, some of his co-workers turn against Jack because he turned in other federal agents for bribery. In a dialogue with a close friend, Jack explains his actions.

“You can look the other way once, and it’s no big deal, except it makes it easier for you to compromise the next time. And pretty soon, that’s all you’re doing - compromising - because that’s how you think things are done. You know those guys I blew the whistle on? You think they were the bad guys? They weren’t the bad guys. They were just like you and me, except they compromised once.”¹

As Jack Bauer attests, compromise is a slippery slope that leads down the wrong path. The Israelites were a people who often compromised their belief in God. The last section of Psalm 106 describes how they compromised and the results. Upon entering the Promised Land of Canaan, God had commanded them to destroy the pagan nations that had lived there. He knew that the idolatrous ways of these nations would lead His people astray. However, Israel failed to follow God’s command and it led to them worshipping the heathen gods and even participating in their abominable practices (106:34-39). They wanted to worship the LORD AND these other gods as well. Thus they compromised their hearts by ignoring the first commandment, “I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before Me.”

God would not allow this to go unpunished. He allowed these heathen nations (whose gods they were worshipping) to come in and conquer and enslave the Israelites (106:40-46). Then they would cry out to the LORD for help and He would deliver them. But eventually they would compromise again and turn back to their idols. The ultimate result of their compromise is recorded in verse 43: “they were bent on rebellion, and they wasted away in their sin.”

The opening (106:4-6) and closing (106:47-48) of this psalm suggests that it was written during the Babylonians exile. Its warnings about forgetfulness, disobedience, and compromise were to remind the current generation not to fall into the sins of the past. He remembers how God remembered his covenant and showed mercy in the past and pleads with the Lord to save them in the present.

How we need these reminders today! The American church to a great extent seems to have forgotten its God-given purpose and wandered into disobedience and compromise. We ignore the call to “proclaim the mighty acts of the LORD or fully declare His praise” (106:2). Like Israel, we are meant to be a light to the world. Have we followed Israel’s bad example and lost our way?

¹ <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2005/july/24howcompromisestarts.html>