



“The Effects of Rejecting God”
Judges 8:22-10:5

Idea: In our rebellion and rejection of God, He offers grace.

Intro: *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!* – Psalm 33:12

The Bible clearly teaches that the blessing hand of God rests upon the people who call upon His name. Thus, it would seem wise to seek God. Unfortunately, what we are seeing in America today is not a move toward God but a continual move away from Him. Research conducted by Pew Research Center in 2014 revealed that “nones” – a label used to refer to those who self-identify as atheists or agnostics, as well as those who say their religion is “nothing in particular – now make up roughly 23% of the U.S. adult population. That number is up from 16% when a similar study was conducted in 2007 by Pew Research.

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/13/a-closer-look-at-americas-rapidly-growing-religious-nones/>

What is most striking about the “nones” is that 78% of them were raised as a member of a particular religion before shedding their religious identity in adulthood.

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/08/24/why-americas-nones-left-religion-behind/>

What is causing this growing trend of secularism in our country? I believe the reason this is happening in our nation is because it is happening in our churches. As more and more churches turn from God our nation turns from God. When those standing behind the pulpits begin to reject God, then those setting in the pews likewise will reject God. The result will be a nation that has rejected God, and the consequences will be devastating.

“When people stop believing in God, they do not believe in nothing. They believe in anything.”

– G. K. Chesterton

This is exactly what we see taking place in our country. We believe in anything and everything but the Truth. We have rejected God; therefore, His hand of blessing is being removed from America. This is only happening, however, because the church has rejected God. Thus, God’s hand of blessing is being removed from His church.

This reality raises a serious question that we must consider?
What are the effects of rejecting God?

Inquiry: In Judges 8-9 we learn that Gideon shunned position but kept power. His son Abimelech had position but not power. Both men were ruled by the flesh and from the flesh reaped corruption. From their lives we discover the effects of rejecting God.

“If we are not willing to be governed by God, we shall be ruled by tyrants.” – William Penn

1. When you reject God others are deeply affected. (8:27)

After Gideon defeated Zebah and Zalmunna of Midian, he took the crescent ornaments from their camels. He also asked every man for the earrings from their spoil. From all of that gold Gideon made an ephod and set it in Ophrah. By doing so he led his family back into idolatry. The ephod became an object of worship to a people only one stage removed from polytheism and obliterated one of the characteristics of Israel's faith, the prohibition of images.

I believe it is safe to assume that Gideon had no intention of departing from the Lord, much less lead his family and the nation to depart from the Lord. Like Aaron and Jeroboam and their calf images, Gideon's image unintentionally led the people away from God.

Appl: Just like Gideon's sin, your sin and its consequences are not isolated to you. The ramifications are far and wide.

*8 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 9 You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 10 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. – Deut 5:8-10
(Ex 20:5; 34:7; Num 14:18)*

Part of the judgment of God upon your sin is the reality that your sin is passed on to others. It becomes generational as it is passed on to your children. It becomes associational as God removes His hand of blessing and protection from your business, church, and

ultimately the nation. Your sin may be conducted in secret, but the effects of it are played out in the public.

2. When you reject God immorality takes over. (8:29-35)

Gideon was a polygamist as many people were in that day. Most of the characters in the Old Testament were polygamists, but in no way does that mean God condoned such behavior. In fact the testimony of Scripture is that polygamy was the cause of much grief within the families who practiced it.

Gideon was a man of faith. He believed God and was greatly used to defeat Midian. Pride, however, took control of his life. The taste of victory caused him to trust in his ability rather than God's ability. That slight rejection of God resulted in ever-increasing immorality. He took many wives as well as a concubine from Shechem. Gideon's Shechemite concubine was most likely a Canaanite and a worshiper of Baal. The temple of Baal-berith was in Shechem. Baal was a fertility god, and the worship practices were incredibly immoral. By taking this woman as his concubine, Gideon embraced the immorality of Canaanite worship. This is why the Holy Spirit instructs the believer through the Apostle Paul to not yoke ourselves with unbelievers. Read 2 Cor 6:14-18.

The result is almost always devastating for the believer. Rarely does the believer lead the unbeliever in the relationship closer to God. Instead, the unbeliever usually draws the believer's heart away from God and into sin.

We also see Gideon's immorality in the fact that he set up a house for himself. He had told the people of Israel that he would not be their king (8:23), but what we see is that he set up some sort of dynastic house. This is indicated by the way he separated himself from his

father's house (8:29) as well as the name he gave his concubine's son. The name Abimelech has multiple meanings depending on the context. The most probable meaning, though, is "my father is king."

Gideon had told Israel that God would rule over them, but he quickly began live as though he ruled over them. In doing so, Gideon rejected God. His rejection opened the door for immorality to take over and reign in his life.

Appl: When you begin to throw off the authority of God over your life immorality will replace the void. You will begin to allow things in your life that you would have never allowed before. The result will always be a steady encroachment of immorality. (Rom 1:18-32)

3. When you reject God faith and integrity are abandoned. (9:7-21)

Abimelech abandoned his brothers by going to his mother's relatives in Shechem and persuading them to reject the rule of Gideon's 70 sons. The men of Shechem gave Abimelech 70 pieces of silver that he used to hire worthless men. Then they went and slaughtered the sons of Gideon on a stone.

The only son to escape Abimelech was Jotham. He stood across the valley from Shechem on Mt. Gerizim and protested the shameful treatment of the house of Gideon by proclaiming a parable to the men of Shechem. His focus was on the worthless Abimelech who could offer no real security to them. Instead he would be the means of their destruction. Jotham stated that if their actions were honorable then their relationship with Abimelech would be mutually cordial, but if the situation was otherwise they could expect mutual destruction. His word was prophetic.

17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. – Rom 10:17

The Word of God is truth. When you reject God, you reject truth. When you no longer are a person of truth, then integrity begins to fade. Abimelech and the men of Shechem did not act in good faith and integrity toward Gideon's house because they had rejected God.

Appl: The 10 Commandments lay out the parameters for being a man or woman of faith and integrity. We are to love God and love others. We are to have no other gods. We are not to lie, murder, or steal. We are to be satisfied with what we have, understanding that they are gifts from our good God. Therefore, a man or woman who lives under the authority of God will be a man or woman of faith and integrity. The person who has rejected God will likely be a person of questionable character.

4. When you reject God, His judgment is released. (9:22-57)

God is holy and just. He will not and cannot allow sin and rebellion to go unpunished. We see his immediate judgment against sin and rebellion in Eden. When Adam and Eve rebelled by eating from the forbidden tree, God's judgment was swift and severe. Man's relationship with God was severed. Death entered history. The Bible declares that His wrath is upon all those who reject Him.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.
– Rom 1:18

God judged the sin of Abimelech and Shechem. He brought the evil of both back upon them (9:56-57).

7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. – Gal 6:7

When you sow sin, you will reap judgment. Your sin will find you (Num 32:23).

5. When you reject God, He is gracious. (10:1-5)

Sin is great, but God's grace is greater! (Rom 5:20) As chapter 10 begins we discover God's grace being poured out once again upon a stubborn and rebellious people. Not only did Abimelech and the Shechemites deserve the judging hand of God, but also all of Israel. They had not stopped walking in rebellion against God. After every deliverer, the people departed from the faith and ran to Baalism. Here, however, God gives them two judges who ushered in 45 years of peace and prosperity.

Not much is known of Tola or Jair. The simple description we are given of Tola is that he lived, governed, died, and was buried. The simplicity suggests an orderly and stable tenure after his deliverance of Israel. Jair's significance is derived not so much from his heritage or lineage but from his progeny and the inheritance left to them. Jair had thirty sons who rode 30 donkeys and ruled 30 towns. The image conveys a picture of peace and prosperity.

Appl: The justice of God demands that sin be punished. It is illogical that God would forgive your sin, much less patiently stand by while you reject Him and engage in immorality. But that is exactly what God does. He is patient toward you.

9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. – 2 Pet 3:9

The beauty of the gospel message and the patient grace of the Savior baffles the angels. They can't understand why the Lord would love such a rebellious people as us, yet He does. You and I may reject God, but His affection is set upon each one of us.

Conclusion: Our culture may be moving toward a complete denial of God, but that will never change the reality that He exists. You can self-identify as “nones,” but there will come a day when it will be impossible to deny that there is a God to whom we are accountable. On that day, however, it will be too late. The judgment verdict for your sin and rejection of the God who created you for Himself will be made, and you will be cast out of His presence for all eternity. You will be sent to a devil's hell to exist in eternal torment. That is the payment for your sin (Rom 6:23a).

The good news is that does not have to be your fate because God the Son offers you a free gift of eternal life (Rom 6:23b). In your rebellion Jesus offers you grace, so today if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts (Heb 3:15). Stop running and rejecting Truth. Turn from your sin and turn to Jesus. He is patient not wishing for any to perish but for all to experience His gracious forgiveness.