

Leaders and Character

by: Ronald L. Dart

I suppose its asking too much to hope for a national leader who would be faithful to his wife. After all it goes without saying doesn't it, that a man who cheats on his wife is a liar? And a man who would lie to his wife, well, surely he would lie to you. But it seems that the voters in this country don't care very much about that. And they are prepared to overlook it, pay no attention to it, and keep putting people back in office who have terrible records of honesty in their personal lives. But is it asking too much to expect that we have a leader who has some discretion?

You know a man who is going to lead the free world ought to be a good judge of people shouldn't he? He should be a judge of character, and he should be able to spot a four-flusher. A liar, a thief, a crook, and keep him out of his administration. Right? He also should be able to spot a woman who can't be trusted to keep her mouth shut. Why should we have to suffer a national leader who can't keep his women out of our face? Why do we have to be continually exposed to the embarrassment of leaders whose sex lives keep making the front pages of our newspaper? And why should we trust a man like that to handle the foreign affairs out a nation, when he can't handle his own love affairs? Don't get me wrong, we need moral leadership, but if we can't have moral leadership can't we at least have leadership with enough shame to keep its immorality behind closed doors and under control?

But we only have ourselves to blame, you know? We decided two major elections ago that character in the leadership of this country doesn't matter. Maybe we just thought that if the press didn't think it was important, then it must not be important. On the other hand, maybe the press thought, "Well the people don't care about this they don't think it's important, so why should we think it's important?" The press called it The Character Issue. And by that they made the character of the leader of the free world, the character of a man who has access to enough weaponry to destroy all life on the planet. They made that a mere campaign issue, like abortion and Social Security reform. Why is it that we don't think the character of this man is the most important thing about him? What difference does it make if he campaigns against abortion if we have no idea whether he has the courage of his convictions or the character to fight for them? What in the world does the man stand for? If he's a liar you can never know. He'll tell you what he thinks you want to hear, he'll tell you whatever he has to tell you to get elected, and then when he is elected he'll do what feels good today. That's the way it goes.

In a leader, character is everything. Without it nothing else is constant, nothing else stays put. Now you know I've always heard it said and you have to, that those who cannot

learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them. Now I'm not a prophet, but I can read the prophet's, and I know what God has done before, God will do again. I know this, because God has character. And God's character doesn't change.

I've gone back and read the prophet's with this in mind and I've come to realize that God doesn't change, and human nature doesn't change, and history keeps repeating the same patterns over and over again. Because men keep making the same mistakes over and over again. There was a city in the past, that God looked upon, that God loved and cared very much about. And a city that sold itself to do evil in God's sight. There's a passage in Jeremiah the fifth chapter that I'd like to read to you and comment on in relation to what's going on in our own nation right now as we speak. In Jeremiah 5:1 God speaks to Jeremiah and says look, "Run back and forth through the streets of Jerusalem and see if you can find someone. Look in all the streets, look in the broad places. See if you can find a man, if there is any that executes judgment and seeks truth. Then I'll pardon it, I'll pardon the whole city. If you can just find me that man." Now there's a challenge for you. Make diligent search, run up to Washington D.C., go down this street up that straight, go through this building go to the other building. Look and see if you can find a man, if there is anyone that executes judgment and really seeks the truth, then I'll pardon the whole blasted city with that one man in mind. Is there anyone in public life who will tell you the truth? The whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

You see the problem is, that good judgment which is what we are looking for here. Good judgment depends on honesty, it depends on character. Because if you don't have a constancy of your own character, if you don't know who you are, if you don't know what you are. If you don't stand someplace, if there aren't any places that you'll say, "I'll go this far, and no further." You've got no basis upon which to judge other people. You've got to stand still, to see an incoming fastball. You've got to have your eyes focused on the thing, you can't be moving around all over the place, and have a platform to hit it. And the same thing is true of every kind of judgment. You have got to have an internal compass, and internal constancy or you'll never know where you are. And when we are led by men who will lie to their wives and children, how on earth do you think we can trust them to judge the land? I've concluded that I would rather vote for a man whose policies I disagreed with, but who had character. Because at least I would know what I had, he's a man you can talk to, he is a man you can debate with, he's a man you can argue with. And he is a man who is trying to do things based upon what he sees and believes to be right. And you can depend on him to do what he says he will do, and not do what he says he will not do.

Well, God continues in Jeremiah 5: 2 and says, "Though they say, so help me God, surely they swear falsely. The land is full of perjurers. You get them in court, they put their hand on the Bible, their right hand in the air, and they say, "Yes, I'll tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help me God." And then they'll lie in their teeth. You can't depend on them to tell the truth, even under oath God says. Jeremiah then responds and says, "Oh, Lord. Are not your eyes upon the truth, you have stricken them but they

haven't grieved. You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than a rock. They have refused to return." Well I looked at this Jeremiah says, well these are the poor. They are the foolish, they don't know the way of God. They don't know his judgment. I know what I'll do, I'll get to the great men. I'll speak to them for they have known the way of the Lord and the judgment of their God. Well, I suppose that makes sense. Jeremiah would say, "Oh these poor stupid people, what do they know, there is no point talking to them. I know, I'll go to the great men. Surely these will listen, and understand. But no, they won't listen either. To Jeremiah's dismay, he had to say but these have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds. And the means by that is they have broken off Gods yoke. They will no longer listen to God, they won't follow in his ways. Now, this cause is going to have effects. And Jeremiah says, wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them. And a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them. A leopard shall watch over their cities. Now hold on a minute, he's not literally talking, I think about lions and wolves and leopard's. These are symbols of nations and peoples, these are symbols of great evil in society and the world at-large. He is basically saying, through poetic imagery, a wolf of the evening shall spoil them. Leopard's will watch over their city. Everyone that goes outside will be torn in pieces. Because their transgressions are many, and their back sliding are increased. This is a description of Jerusalem in Jeremiah is day. But the thing fits our people today so closely that its nerve wracking. In fact there are times when you read Jeremiah, you have this eerie feeling that he is speaking directly to our people. Now in the 20th century.

And continues to say through Jeremiah, "How shall I pardon for this? Your children have forsaken me and sworn by them that are no gods. When I fed them to the full then they committed adultery and assembled by troops in the harlots houses. They were like fed horses in the morning, everyone neighing after his neighbor's wife." From top to bottom, all they could think about was who they could get in bed with next. Your children have forsaken me! Well I guess that's just too bad isn't it? And we look at it and we say, "Well you know, I don't understand this. They were such nice children, how have they gone in this direction? How is it that every time things work out in their life, when everything is going good they just turn away from God, they visit the harlots. They sleep with one another's wives. I don't understand this." Well I understand it, and you do too if you'll take a moment to think about it. Our children have forsaken God, because we didn't really teach them about God.

How long has it been since we were allowed to teach children about God in school? How long has it been since we've been allowed to tell them in the public school, that there is right and there is wrong? That God defines what is right in what is wrong, and it works. It makes your life work or it makes your life come apart. How long has it been since you could do that in school? Now, do you want to hear a blood curdling warning from God to a people who act this way? "Shall I not visit for these things saith the Lord? And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Well, we aren't that nation that he spoke to at that time, but he is putting this out as a matter of principal. And remember, God has character

even if we don't. He doesn't change with every fashion, every fad. And he says, "Do you think that I'm not going to avenge myself upon a nation like this one?" Think about that I'll be right back.

The message of the prophets is clear enough. You can only allow this moral depravity to go so far and then you're going to pay for it. And you're going to pay for it big time. Now don't get me wrong, this doesn't depend on God getting mad at us and coming down here and slapping us around. That's not what I'm talking about. What I'm talking about is, that when you keep on lying, and you keep on cheating, and you keep on deceiving. You begin to lose track where truth is, your judgment becomes shot, you can't make Wise decisions. When that type of thing starts happening to you as a nation, as a people, your society is not long for this world. Well where do the prophets say it goes from here? What can we expect of God in the future as he walks around and sees what's going on down here. Jeremiah 5:10 "Go upon the walls and destroy, but don't make a full end. Take away her battlements for they aren't mine. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt treacherously against me saith the Lord. They have belied the Lord, they have said, "Oh it's not God, evil is not going to come upon us. We're not going to see the sword or famine." And the prophets shall become wind. Gas. And their word is not in them, and thus shall it be done to them.

They say, "Well, the evil that's come up on us is just bad luck. It's just time and chance, it's not God. God isn't doing anything to us maybe our luck will turn around tomorrow." Luck folks, has nothing to do with it. The reason why God gives us a law is because if you live according to the law your life will work. If you live the other way, your life will come apart. That's why God says thou shalt, and thou shalt not. And he sends along the prophets to tell you what's going to happen, so that when it takes place you'll look up and say, "Well, maybe, maybe it was God after all."

"Wherefore, thus saith the Lord God of Hosts. Because you talk this way, behold I will make my words in your mouth fire. And this people would, and it shall devour them. I'm going to bring a nation upon you from afar, Oh house of Israel. A mighty nation, it's an ancient nation. A nation whose language you don't know. You don't even know what they said. They are all mighty men. They will eat up your harvest and your bread which your sons and your daughters should have to eat. They'll eat up your flocks, and your herds. They'll eat up your vines and your fig trees. They'll impoverish your fenced cities wherein you trusted, with a sword."

Yeah, they are going to destroy you. This happened to Jerusalem and to Israel. They were warned about these things and they would not listen. They kept on living in a deceitful, lying, adulterous fashion. And finally, they were invaded. Their cities were besieged, their crops were destroyed. And they did not believe that it could happen to them any more than we believe that it could happen to us. They trusted their weapons system, their defense forces. But they were defeated, they were defeated by their own ways. And they were

defeated in the end because God had had enough and finally decided it was time to bring them down. Nevertheless, in those days saith the Lord I will not make a full end with you. And he didn't, with Jerusalem. Part of them went into captivity, but the city remained for quite some time after that. Until it went captive again. And finally there was hardly anyone left in the land.

It shall come to pass when you shall say, "Why does the Lord our God do all these things to us?" Then you Jeremiah shall answer them, "Like as you have forsaken me and served strange Gods in your land, so shall you serve strangers in a land that is not yours." Now I can hear them whining and complaining, that they had not forsaken God. And yet they were liar's, they were chasing other men's wives. They worth thieves, they were murderers who filled the land with violence. They corrupted their country, they corrupted their society, all their sociological structure came apart. One of the prophets said that you abound with the children of strangers. And what that means is, you don't know who the daddy's of these children are.

As one woman who was giving birth in a hospital room one night, when she had been taken there to the emergency room. They asked her for the name of the father for the birth certificate, she says well I don't know. He just came in the window and he had his hat on, and I didn't see who it was. And he left. This was a child of a stranger.

Your land is full of them God says. Now declare this in the house of Jacob. And publish it in Judah, saying hear this you foolish people who are without understanding. Who have eyes and can't see and have ears and can't hear. I think this is just as apt to us as it was to them. We have eyes, and we can't see we will not allow ourselves to believe what our eyes are showing us. We will not allow ourselves to believe what our ears are hearing. We hear these things, we know these things and we keep on denying it. Don't you fear me saith God? Are you not going to tremble at my presence, who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree? And though the waves toss themselves against the sand. They can't prevail, though they roar they cannot pass over it. Don't you know I did that?

But these people have a revolting and rebellious heart. They are revolted, and gone. Now I'm telling you all this in the perspective of first of all, looking at what happened to ancient Israel and to see where they were. And then to look at ourselves and say this could apply as much to us as it ever did to them. That we have a revolting and rebellious heart. And that we have also revolted and are gone. And if you really want to know why I would say that well just take a look at public life. Take a look at what you see on television on Sunday morning when the politicians come on to talk about world affairs, foreign affairs. And to talk about all the things that they are planning on doing in terms of Social Security and Medicare and so forth. Look for someone who will tell you the truth. Look for a man with judgment, look for someone to come on the air and say, yes and no to the questions that are being asked. And say we will do this and we won't do this and you can depend on their word. There is no one. There is no one because we have abandoned the basic standard of

morality. **THE LAW OF GOD!!!** And it's not because we don't know what it is. It's not because we don't know where to find it. I mean there is a judge down in Alabama, that put the ten commandments on the wall in his courtroom. And what did the powers that be say? They said take it down, we don't want to see that up there.

And these people, God said of Israel, they don't say in their heart let us now fear the Lord our God that gives rain. Gives the rain, former and latter, in its season. He reserves unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. No, they don't say that. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withheld good things from you. Why? Because you have no character! And the lack of character of the people, is reflected in the lack of character in the leaders. When you watch NBC and ABC and CNN and you see these people talk about the character issue. Well how much attention should we pay to the character issue? After all, this is an intelligent man he's a very able man, he has a lot of background in foreign policy. He knows a lot of the things that we ought to be doing in this country. He can give us advice. He can give us understanding of these things. He can make wise decisions. No he can't!! Not if he doesn't have character. For if the man doesn't have that stiff backbone that we call character, he will not stand when the times get hard. Think about that again, and I'll be back in a few moments.

For among my people are found wicked men. They lay wait like he who sets snares. They set a trap, they catch men. This is Jeremiah talking. And mind you, Jeremiah is neither Republican nor Democrat, don't make that mistake, he doesn't care. He's after all the people in government, in his time, in his place, who were corrupt. As the cage is full of birds, he says, so are their houses full of deceit. They have become great, they've waxed rich. They've waxed that. They shine, they are so well to do. But how did they get there? They got there by lies and by deceit. Yea, they over pass the deeds of the wicked. Do you know what he is saying here? He's saying, they will look over the deeds that wicked people do. Why would they do a thing like that? Because it pays. That's all. Because it enhances their power. Because it allows them to stay in office, they'll overlook nearly anything if they think it's in their best interest.

Forget about their character, and forget about the character of the country. They don't judge the cause. They don't judge the fatherless. They prosper. The right of the needy they do not judge. And I'll tell you, there are times when I've become a little ill listening to all the protests of these people. About wanting to take care of the fatherless and the needy and the poor of the country. When the decisions that they make day in and day out are dominated, not by what they really care about the people. They are dominated by what works for them politically. Once again God asks this question. Shall I not visit for these things saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on a nation like this? A wonderful and a horrible thing is committed in the land. The prophets, the religious leaders, the people who ought to be standing up and telling the truth, prophecy falsely. And the priests bear rule by their means. And the people, well, the people love to have it that way. So, we have met the enemy and he is us. It's our fault, we are the ones. We have made this society, collectively,

what it is. You may sit there and wash your own hands and say, I am clean. I haven't done it. I am a man of character. I tell the truth. But here we are, as a nation all of us together, rolling over. And Jeremiah 6: 10 he says, "To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Behold their ears are uncircumcised, they are closed up. And they can't hear. Behold the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach, they have no delight in it." Sure, you get up in the news media, get up and start talking about things from the perspective of the Bible, then no one wants to hear you. Well I realize you are listening, you are hearing what I have to say, at least you stayed with me this far. And the fact that you have stayed with me this far means that you are willing to listen to the Bible. But most people, most people simply are not.

You open up the Bible, you talk about God, and you become a reproach. Someone to make fun of it, and they sure have no delight in what God has to say. Therefore, Jeremiah said, I am full of the fury of the Lord. I am weary with holding it in. I will pour it out on the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together. For even the husband and the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days. And their houses shall be turned over to others. With their fields, and their wives together. For I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord. For from the least of them, even to the greatest of them. Everyone is given to covetousness. And from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. When Jeremiah speaks of the prophet and the priest he is speaking of the leadership of the country. For him all the way from the religious leaders, all the way to the priests, all the way to that King. From one end to the other there was no honesty in the land. No character, no firm center somewhere that people could stand on and trust in. They, that is these religious leaders, have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly saying. "Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

And here comes one of the most discouraging damnations of our society today that I could ever read. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they weren't ashamed! Neither could they blush. You know, the sense of shame is gone. It's a terrible embarrassment to have our leaders chasing bimbos around the White House. We all have to chuckle over it and vote for people of small character. We aren't ashamed of them. We no longer have the capacity it seems, to blush. And so God says, therefore they shall fall among them that fall. At the time I visit them they shall be cast down. Who will be? Prophet? Priest? King? From the least to the greatest they shall all fall.

And why not? The story of Israel's corruption is written in Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Hosea. The problem is that the story of their corruption runs parallel to our own. In the end God says, stand you in the ways and see. Ask for the old paths, ask where is the good ways and walk there in it. And you'll find rest for your souls. But they say, no we will not walk that way. These are the losers. But for you and your family it doesn't have to be that way, because you were born to win. Until next time this is Ronald Dart.

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