

The Bali Attack – a Meditation - 2

Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and prosperous ease; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.

We read previous time those words from Ezekiel 16, and found that the passage forms a rather accurate description of our land. I indicated last time that I intended today to reflect further on this passage of Scripture and what it says about Australia's health.

Sodom: everybody knows the city perished because of God's judgment on her sexual licentiousness. Why, then, did the Lord not come straight out and mention Sodom's sin as we all know it to be, that sin of 'committing abomination', homosexuality? Why mention first her pride and her fullness of food and her prosperous ease and even her refusal to support the down-and-outers *before* mentioning her sexual immorality? The answer to this question is very instructive for Australia's future – and our own.

Fullness of Food

"Fullness of food" is a rich blessing from God. In fact, the Lord promised precisely this to His people Israel when He mentioned what riches He would give on covenant obedience (Lev 26:5). The same is true for the "prosperous ease" God mentions in our text; it is a blessing God promised to Israel on covenant obedience (Lev 26:5c). Let no one begrudge the Sodomites (or Australians) their prosperity and their ease.

But the thing is that these people of Sodom had exalted themselves, had attributed to themselves the majesty and greatness that belongs to God, and so refused to submit to God's instructions; they considered themselves on top of the ladder and so could set their own standards of right and wrong. If now you mix such an attitude with "fullness of food", what do you get? You get a *love affair* with material possessions. Material wealth, "fullness of food", is –I repeat– a blessing. But when God gives material wealth, the Lord wants people to use it as *His property*, for "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Ps 24:1). That means specifically: use it to build *God's* kingdom, glorify *His* Name. But once people become proud, become a god to themselves so that one serves the self and sets his own rules for what is acceptable behavior, then the "fullness of food" God gives is abused. For that prosperity is used for *self* instead of for God is used for *own pleasure*, own comfort, fulfilling own appetites. It is called *materialism*.

Prosperous Ease

The same is true in relation to the 'prosperous ease' Sodom enjoyed. Prosperous ease in itself is a great blessing. Paul even tells Timothy that he is to pray "for kings and all who are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life" (1 Tim 2:1f), and that's the life of ease mentioned in our text. But again, if your attitude is characterized by pride, by being god to yourself so that you make your own laws and look out for your own interest, you invariably abuse the ease and peace God gives – and use this peace and leisure not to build up God's kingdom but to do your own thing. If God then also gives material prosperity, it follows

logically that depraved people use the peace to enlarge their personal wealth and comfort and pleasures more and more.

Interconnection

Do you see the *interconnectedness* here? To the humble, those who place themselves *under* God, fullness of food and prosperous ease are delightful blessings – to be enjoyed *and directed to the upbuilding of God's kingdom*. But for the proud, those who see themselves on top of the ladder, fullness of food and prosperous ease are a dangerous mix, a fertilizer to make the lust of pleasure inherent in every person grow more and more.

Precisely *that* is what has happened in the last years in our land. Submission to God there is not in Australia; there is instead pride, being gods to ourselves, setting our own rules for acceptable behavior. God has given our land fullness of food and prosperous ease. The combination of the three –pride, material prosperity, and ease– has produced the culture as we see it in our land today where Australians have ample opportunity to live out their passions with one another, be it in embracing comfort and luxury, be it in traveling to exotic resorts, be it in sexual promiscuity. That people of our land, particularly the young, travel by the thousands to Bali and then let themselves go in the pubs and clubs of Kuta (with its 'jungle juice' and heavy music and licentiousness) is simply the pride of our text abusing to the extreme the fullness of food and prosperous ease God has given Australia.

Poor and Needy

Let's take it now a step further. For after "pride and fullness of food and prosperous ease" God also mentioned that the people of Sodom showed no compassion to the poor and needy – and so offered no hospitality to the two men of Gen 19. That, of course, is the logical consequence of pride abusing fullness of food and prosperous ease. For if I set myself up as god for myself so that I set the rules for what is acceptable behavior, and if I abuse God's gifts of material prosperity and peace to build my own kingdom, to satisfy my own desires, then the poor and the needy are a nuisance, a bother I don't want. So instead of helping them I ignore them, send them away.

And that too is precisely what we've seen in our land. While fullness of food and prosperous ease makes our land the envy of millions around the world (who themselves live in abject poverty), our country is willing to accept only a few thousand refugees per year –and why so few?– because receiving too many refugees will *lower our standard of living* too much. Similarly, vulnerable children are killed by the thousands in our land because these unborn babies are unwanted, are a threat to the freedom and comforts of the mothers who carry them and the fathers responsible for them.

Abomination

Ignoring the poor and needy is not the only fruit of this pride-mixed-with-prosperity-and-ease. This pride-mixed-with-prosperity-and-ease invariably leads also to all manner of sexual perversions. That's logical: if your world is as big as yourself, and you use the material abundance God gives to satisfy your own desires, why should you suddenly deny yourself when it comes to sexual desires?! Satisfying your desires with each other is the *ripe fruit* of the snobbishness and selfishness that was learned from the way Sodom handled her material prosperity and ease of life.

And no, seeing this immorality as the ripe fruit of the pride that initially dominates the sinner is not limited to this passage of Scripture. The Holy Spirit makes the identical connection in Romans 1 when the apostle describes the sins of man that lead ultimately to sexual perversion. It begins with idolatry, with pushing God aside and deciding for oneself what forms of

behavior are acceptable.

God is God!

But see now: the God whose greatness and majesty Sodom ignored, yes, claimed for itself, *remained that great and majestic God!* The Lord demonstrated His greatness by reaching dramatically into Sodom's prosperous and licentious existence, and ending it suddenly. Vs 50: "Therefore I took them away as I saw fit." That's a reference to the fire and brimstone that fell on the people of Sodom in the midst of their partying. Notice the Lord's use of the word 'therefore'. That is: God has placed a logical connection between giving oneself to blatant sin and attracting the judgment of God. Sodom tasted that connection.

On what grounds will Australia escape?! In fact, over the generations our land has heard of God's grace in Jesus Christ *and rejected that gospel*. Must it then not go worse with Australia than it did for Sodom? (cf Mt 11:23f). Truly, the explosives and fires of Bali did not come by chance, but were as much God's work as were the brimstone and fires of Sodom. God will not be mocked!

It is so imperative that our land repent of its pride – and therefore of its love with self that leads to neglect of the vulnerable and needy as well as to sexual immorality. People are *not* on top of the ladder, but God is.

May the Lord grant that the events *He* unleashed upon Australia move many in our land to repentance, and to acknowledging that the Lord is God – and so receiving forgiveness of sins in the blood of Savior who died to wash away every sin imaginable.

In one final meditation on Ezekiel 16:49,50 I propose to reflect on the significance of Bali for ourselves as Christians.

The Bali Attack – a Meditation - 3
