Cartoon of men talking to each other

Description automatically generated

***Another Perspective***

**Session 6**

**8-9 April 2024**

**The On-Going Problem of High Places –** Lysa TerKeurst has pointed out the fact that tolerating high places was a flaw that caused many of Israel’s kings to be led into sin and that caused many generations of Israelites to grieve the Lord. It was a national sin, and yet one that they seemed to be blind to. It is a sin that is difficult for us today, in our western culture, to relate to. We would like to learn the appropriate lesson from what we are reading about this problem in Scripture, but what is something equivalent in our own culture? As I have been pondering this question, here are some thoughts that have come to mind:

* **There is such a thing as a “national sin”**, i.e. one that involves almost everyone in a given culture. Reading through the book of Leviticus has made this clear. Moses recorded what the Law required for various people if they sinned unintentionally. There were specific sacrifices required for a priest, for a leader, for an ordinary individual…and then he said, “Now if the *whole community* of Israel sins…so that they violate any of the Lord’s commands and incur guilt by doing what is prohibited, then *the assembly* must present a young bull as a sin offering. When the sin they have committed…becomes known, they are to bring it before the tent of meeting.” (Leviticus 4:13, 14)
* Hundreds of years later the apostle Paul would warn Titus that he should be aware of **widespread sinful habits on the island of Crete** and take steps to deal with them. Paul wrote, “[Someone] has said that Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. This testimony is true!” (Titus 1:12-13)
* So what about America? **Is there some sin (or sins) that is so prevalent and ubiquitous that we don’t even “see” it**…so commonplace that it lacks shock value? Perhaps we share one with the ancient Cretans, i.e. gluttony. Certainly the size of “individual” portions served at almost any restaurant nowadays would easily feed three people, and being significantly overweight is a—dare I say, “wide-spread”?—problem recognized by the medical community. But we shy away from thinking of this as a real sin. Or maybe we *would* say it is sin, but probably not one that we feel compelled to confess on behalf of our nation. But are there other sins that are so familiar that they just seem like part of the landscape instead of bringing us to our knees in broken-hearted confession?
* I am reminded of something that the gentleman who led Tom to Christ shared with us on one of our furloughs. He is—or was—a postman, and one day he had to deliver some letters to a bar. He could hardly see when he first walked in, but his eyes adjusted to the dim light by the time he handed the letters to the owner. When he came back outside, he was shocked at how bright the sunlight seemed—and he realized just how dark the bar had been. His comment was that this incident is an illustration of how “dark” our culture has become. It has happened so gradually that our spiritual eyes have “adjusted”, and we don’t even realize how dark it is. Perhaps we won’t, until the day when the Lord returns, and the brilliance of His holiness will make it evident. But we can be praying that the light of the Word would shine into our hearts and make us aware of specific evils and lead us to confessing them on behalf of our nation.
* Let us spend some time this week in soul-searching and confession. Here are two examples of “prayers concerning national sin” that you may find helpful: Daniel 9:1-19 and Nehemiah 9:1-37.