TITLE: (Lowering the Standard)

TEXT: Prov. 14:12; John 14:6 & 1:1-4,10,14; Heb. 13:8; Deut. 12:28-32; Jere. 1:5; Ps. 139:13-14; Gal. 5:13; 1 Co. 6:9-11; Mt. 7:21-23; 2Chr. 7:13; 1 Pet. 4:17

INTRODUCTION: **Prov 14:12 (NIV) There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.**

 I read an article several years ago that spoke about some of the problems that we are facing in many of our public schools, particularly schools within the inner city.

 The major problem seemed to be that many young men and women graduating from high school in some of our major cities could not even read the diplomas they received at graduation.

 The problem seemed to be that the schools were so overcrowded and class sizes so large that many kids just slipped through the cracks….If a child couldn’t make the grade, instead of holding that child back and making them repeat the class they would just pass them on to the next grade.

 Some schools adopted this philosophy and as a result we have had many kids graduate from high school basically illiterate.

 There are many that graduate from high school today with a reading equivalency of a second or third grader!

 Statistically, the illiteracy rate has gone up drastically in the United States in recent years. We have the highest illiteracy rate in the western world, the Western Hemisphere!

 Why?

 Do you want to know the easiest way to pass a test or to have someone else pass a test? Lower the standard!

 Have a problem with kids making the grade in the classroom ---Lower the standard so everyone passes! Just move them on and hopefully someone else will be able to correct the problem next year!

 This philosophy of lowering the standard is not just confined to the public education of our children in this nation.

 As a Nation, We have adopted this philosophy in many, if not most, of the areas of our day to day life.

Just take a look around….

We have more crime today than at any other time in our nation’s history…We have in fact become # 1 in the world in violent crime.

 Why? For the most part, I believe it is because we have lowered the standards of justice and of punishment for crime.

 Again, one of the major problems seems to be overcrowding. The Jails and prisons are so full that someone who has committed a serious crime and is sentenced to 50 years in prison may in reality only serve 5 or 10 years..

 For the states that still have the death penalty for when someone is convicted of a heinous crime against society and sentenced to death, by the time they exhaust the appeal process, which sometimes can take 15-20 years, when they finally are executed for their crimes, no one remembers what their crimes were. So it loses its deterrent effect on crime….

 The purpose for Punishment for crime is as much for deterring others from committing crime as it is for punishing the criminal.

 We have lowered the standard for justice in our nation so we have an increased crime rate.

 Look at the area of general morality in our nation.

 America is number 1 in the western world in teen pregnancy, # 1 in the western world in sexually transmitted decease! # 1 in the world in divorce, #1 in the world in illegal drug use, #1 in the world in voluntary, non-therapeutic abortions.

 Why? Because we have lowered the standards of moral behavior, of right and wrong in our nation.

 I think we have a good example of a nation that has lowered its standard of acceptable behavior in what we witnessed as a nation several years ago.

 A sitting president of the United States commits adultery and fornication in the White House with a young White House intern about the same age as his daughter.

 Wags his finger on prime time TV to the American people and says that he didn’t do it. Lies under oath to a Federal grand jury. ( and by the way he was fined $90,000 by that federal court judge for giving false testimony ) He then lies while under oath in giving testimony in a civil deposition, and he not only remained in office, but while all this was going on the polls told us that his job approval rating was something like 70%!

 How could that be?

The answer is simple---We, the American people, have lowered the standard of acceptable behavior for our elected officials. Every year that standard seems to get lower and lower.

 What we are really saying when we say that the nation has lowered its standards is that we as a people have lowered our standards.

 I mean, it just seemed like the thing to do, right?

 The philosophy of the day----

 We all need to just get along. So let’s assign civil rights to sexual lifestyles such as homosexuality and lesbianism!

 After all morality is not an absolute, I mean Everyone has their own standard of right and wrong behavior so let’s make it legal for a woman to kill her unwanted unborn child if that is what she chooses to do.

 If the moral standards seem too high for **all** of us to attain, then it only seems right to lower the standard so everyone passes, so everyone feels good about themselves, right?

 God says:

 **Prov 14:12 (NIV) There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.**

Lowering the standard is a way that seems right to man, but in the end it will lead to death!

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**1a2) to die (as penalty), be put to death**

**1a3) to die, perish (of a nation)**

1a4) to die prematurely (by neglect of wise moral conduct)

 By our neglect of wise moral conduct in America, by lowering the standards of morality in this country, are we calling down a death sentence upon our nation?

 I want to look at two identities of Christ Jesus this morning…

 First…

John 14:6 (NKJV) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Jesus said: I am the way, I am the truth and I am the life!

 What Jesus is saying is this: I am the way to the Father; I am the truth of the Father and I represent life in the Father and no one comes to the Father except through Me…

 In John Chapter 1 Scripture says this about Jesus:

 **John 1:1 (NKJV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

**2 He was in the beginning with God.**

**3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.**

**4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.**

**10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.**

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

 Jesus is the Word, the logos of God!

 Jesus is the Logos, Gods Word in the Old Testament and He is the Logos, the Word of God in the New Testament!

 Hebrews 13:8 tells us that Jesus is forever the same!

**Hebr 13:8 (NKJV) Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, today, and forever.**

Jesus is immutable, He doesn’t change! Jesus is the Word of God so the Word is immutable also! It’s absolute truth, its absolute rightness; it is an absolute standard for righteousness that does not change..

 **There is a way that seems right to man but in the end that way leads to death, to destruction!**

 God knew that it would be impossible for man to maintain an absolute standard of righteousness, of right living, on his own so He gave us an absolute standard to live by.

 He has given us the righteous standard of His written Word.

 And He has called us to live our lives by that standard. He has called us to live by the standard of Jesus.

 Because Jesus is the only way to God. Jesus is the absolute truth of God and Jesus is the only way to eternal life with God..

 God has this admonition and these promises for all who live by the standards that He has established and set forth in His Word….

 **Deut 12:28 (NIV) Be careful to obey all these regulations I am giving you, so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the LORD your God.**

First the admonition… **Be careful to obey all these regulations I am giving you…**

Be careful to live, not by your standards, the standards of this world, but live your lives by My standards!

 Then the promise for our obedience…. **so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the LORD your God.**

If we want to see true prosperity in our life, in the lives of our children and in the life of our nation, then we need to Live our lives according to Gods standards, not our own!

 Duet 12: 29 The LORD your God will cut off before you the nations you are about to invade and dispossess. But when you have driven them out and settled in their land,

**30 and after they have been destroyed before you, be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, "How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same."**

31 You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods.

**32 See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.**

 Did you catch that?

You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates.

 Have we in America come to embrace the false gods of this world by lowering the standards that the one true God has set for us in Scripture?

 The evidence says that we have done just that!

 Again, America is #1 in the world in violent crime, #1 in the world in divorce, #1 in Teen pregnancy, #1 in abortion, #1 in illegal drug use, and #1 in illiteracy!

 We didn’t get to be #1 in these areas by living up to Gods standards of righteousness!

 We got to be # 1 in these areas by lowering Gods standard, or more accurately, by replacing it with the standards of the gods of this world!

 The god of secular humanism, the god of liberalism, the god of socialism and the gods of every other ism under the sun!

 The Lord God has said:

 You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates.

 Have we lowered the standard so much that we are doing things within this nation today that the Lord hates?

 We certainly have!

 We mercilessly slaughter over 1.2 million of our unborn children each year in this nation under the banner of freedom, the banner of free choice.

 Sense Roe vs. Wade we have killed well over 60 million of our most innocent citizenry, our unborn children!

“because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods”.

 Many have justified the killing of our unborn by lowering Gods standard of life.

They say well, it really isn’t a life until after the second or third trimester, or it really isn’t a life until it is actually born----

 Even though Gods Word declares to the prophet Jeremiah…

 **Jere 1:5 (NIV) "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart;**

**I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."**

 Scripture tells us that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit while he was still in His mother’s womb!

 The Holy Spirit only indwells living souls!

 If John received the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb then John was considered a life by God while yet in his mother’s womb!

 God has blessed America with more personal and national freedom than any other people on the planet!

 But Scripture says that to whom much has been given much will be required….

 The freedom we enjoy is not a possession we own but it is a precious gift God has given us stewardship over.

 **Gala 5:13 (NIV) You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.**

 Killing our unborn is not serving one another in love! It is using our freedom to indulge our sinful nature!

 Of the 1.2 million abortions performed in America annually less than 1% are performed to insure the life and health of the mother, or for reasons such as rape or incest.

 What that means is that 99% of abortions in America are non-therapeutic in nature. In essence abortion has become no more than an alternate form of birth control.

 Which it is not because birth control prevents a new life from beginning. Abortion destroys that new life once it has already begun.

 Yet we continue to use our freedom of choice to indulge our sinful nature. For it is easier for us to abort then it is to abstain!

 We have also lowered the standards in America by trying to assign civil rights to things that Gods Word says are sexual perversions.

 Homosexuality is not what a person is it a sexual choice that they make!

 Homosexuality does not define who a person is; it defines what that person does!

 It is one of many sexual sins listed in Scripture! No better and no worse than any other sexual sin such as adultery, or fornication!

 Scripture says that all sexual activity outside the confines and covenant relationship of marriage which Scripture defines as a union of one man and one woman is sexual immorality, it is sin!

 Yet we find whole Church denominations that have lowered the standard so much that they will place those openly practicing sexual immorality in their pulpits…

 Even though the absolute standard of God’s Word says:

1Cor 6:9 (NIV) Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders…… will inherit the kingdom of God.

**11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

There is forgiveness available for all sins through repentance and acceptance of Jesus as Lord.

 **Prov 14:12 (NIV) There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.**

It seems right to man to lower the standard so that everyone can get into the kingdom of God…

 It may seem right to man to lower the standard but in the end it will lead to death…

 This is what Jesus was talking about when He said…

 **Matt 7:21 (NIV) "Not everyone who says to me, `Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.**

**22 Many will say to me on that day, `Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'**

23 Then I will tell them plainly, `I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

We will not gain entrance into the Kingdom of God by our political correctness; we will only enter the Kingdom of God if we have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by having made Him the Lord and Savior of our life!

 If we have allowed, are allowing, Jesus to be the Lord of our life then we will not try to set our own standards, but rather we will strive to live our life by the standards that He has already established!

Aristotle **“***Tolerance and apathy are the last virtues of a dying society.”*

 It seems most times when we are tempted to lower the standard we do it in the name of tolerance!

 It has gotten to the place that we will tolerate just about anything in America---except God!

 The people who seem to cry the loudest for a tolerant society, themselves have no tolerance when it comes to Christianity or to God!

 Tolerate sexual immorality, tolerate the holocaust of abortion, tolerate alternate lifestyle no matter how immoral it may be, but don't tolerate God in our classrooms or public places!

 Church, We do need to be tolerant of each other but not lower Gods standard of righteousness to the place where we become tolerant of sin! Especially in our own life!

 God has this answer for a people that have found that they have lowered and lived by a lesser standard then what He has established for us to live by…

 The answer for a people who have done what has seemed to be right in their own eyes and then found that it has lead them closer and closer to destruction…

 **2Chr 7:13 (NIV) "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people,**

14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

**15 Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place**.

 You know, I have always thought if God were ever going to judge America what better way to do it than through our prosperity, our economy. Isn’t that the idol that many bow down to in our nation?

 Our government has spent trillions of dollars on welfare and stimulus to our economy that has done little to help the economy recover.

 Is what we see going on economically in our nation today and the plague of covid-19 just bad luck, or poor management by our government, or is it part of the judgment of God?

 I don’t know!

 I do know that we as a nation are doing things that would make it awful hard for God to bless us as a nation.

 Do you think that America needs the healing hand of God upon our land today?

As singer songwriter Carmen once said:

 America’s dead and dying hand is on the threshold of the Church…..

 Folks we have the answer to our nation’s problems.

 We have Jesus!

 We hold the future of America in our hands! Whether our nation will rise or whether it falls I believe depends on you and me as the Church, the Body of Christ.

 By how we respond or fail to respond to what God wants to do in our lives!

God has said:

14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

 We have been blessed with a very unique form of Government in that it is a government of the people, by the people and for the people…..

 If America isn’t working as well as it once did, and it is in fact headed on a collision course with disaster, then it is because of we the people!

 How do you change the course of a nation?

 By changing the people that comprise that nation!

 How do you do that?

 One person at a time ---and it has to start first with us!

 As the Church, as individual believers, as those who are called by His name, the name of Christ, we need to humble ourselves before God! We need to pray and seek the face of God in our lives! We need to turn from our wicked ways! We need to live our lives according to His standard of righteousness, not our own!

 Then we need to demand that those we elect to represent us in government hold themselves accountable to those same standards.

 What is the standard that you and I are living by today? The standards of the society in which we live, the standards of this world, the standards of men?

 Or are we living by the standards that God has established for us in His Word?

 There will always be an easier way that seems right to man and that easier way is always reached through compromise, through lowering the standard….And if we follow that way it will always be a way that will ultimately lead toward death and destruction….

 Jesus said: I am the way and the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through Me….

 Jesus is our sure hope as individuals and Jesus is our sure hope as a nation today.

 To choose Jesus. To live our lives, not by our own standard but live our lives by His standard.

 Have you chosen Jesus? Have you chosen to give him Lordship of your life, and are you committed to live your life by the standards that He has set forth for us in His Word?

Church, the buck stops here!

1Pet 4:17 (NIV) For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God;

Duet. 7:14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Prayer----

Psal 51:10 (NIV) Create in me a pure heart, O God,

and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me from your presence

or take your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation

and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,

and sinners will turn back to you.