

Trends

"While America still boasts of being a 'Christian nation,' in the area of private religious practice 'Christianity' is in a state of serious decline. Today, church attendance is at an all-time low, and the number of Americans who profess to being Christian is rapidly dropping. Young people in particular are dropping out of church at an astounding rate, and significant numbers are abandoning Christianity altogether—calling it irrelevant to real life."

—"Why Is 'Christianity' Failing in America?"

Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people."

Sentence Sermons

"America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves."

—Abraham Lincoln

Deuteronomy 28:1: "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth."

Psalms 107:33-34: "33 He turns rivers into a wilderness, And the water-springs into dry ground; 34 A fruitful land into barrenness, For the wickedness of those who dwell in it."

News & Notes

Pray for the Filipino and African brethren. They are suffering due natural and manmade disasters. Please consider donating if you're able! 1 Jn. 3:17

Pray for sister Wilma Cardwell. She's a great encouragement to all!

Please pray for Lana May. She is really suffering due to her health issues.

Pray for all our members who do not attend regularly. Try to give them words of encouragement!

Pray for the all our young people. They too face many trials and temptations.

There are many needy saints, including preachers! Can you help?!

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Words of Life

Westside
church of Christ

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68



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Has America Sailed Past 'Redemption Point'?

Craig Thomas

In today's **Thought for the Day** I want to address the situation in our nation and what it might mean. In future **Thought for the Day** posts I will address more specifically what I believe a Christian's response should be to the current situation. Please bear with me as this post is longer than usual.

There is little doubt our nation is in upheaval and even perhaps at a "tipping point": covid crisis, rioting and looting in many major cities, uncertainty swirling around the recent election, new lockdowns, cancelling of the holidays, etc. Personally, I have quit watching the news or visiting popular conservative websites. The news is just too depressing, and it distracts me from my focus on God. Furthermore, the political and societal corruption in our nation is off the charts. It seems in recent years this corruption has increased exponentially. Its maddening the guilty parties are never punished. For example, since the 2016 election demonic forces from the top of our federal government to the mainstream media, big tech, Hollywood, academia, the corporate world, etc. have been relentlessly and recklessly determined to drive President Trump from office using "any means necessary"—the truth be damned. In my opinion, whether you like Trump or not, all these schemes and intrigues amount to an attempted "soft" coup d'état. Yet those responsible are not held to account, at least not so far. And I'm not holding my breath they will ever be held accountable! At least by man.

I have heard many conservative commentators who have religious scruples calling for prayer and repentance to save our great nation. I have not one iota of dissent with that strategy. We always need to pray for our government regardless of its righteousness or wickedness (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-4) and, personally, we must live righteous lives (Prov. 10:30). So, what will God do with our nation? God holds all nations responsible to fulfil His purposes (Rom. 13:1-7) and to exhibit righteous behavior (Prov. 14:34). God rules in the kingdoms of men as David writes in Psalm 22:28: "For the kingdom is the LORD's, and He rules over the nations." When nations, due to their unrighteousness, exhaust God's longsuffering (cf. Matt. 23, esp. vv. 37-38) He overthrows them. The same is true for individuals (cf. Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). The Old Testament is littered with dozens of nations that experienced the right-

eous wrath of God and were overthrown by His providential hand (cf. Isa. 10, 13, 14-23). Has our nation exhausted God's longsuffering? Is His providential hand moving events to accomplish our destruction?

Does our nation deserve His wrath? Think about this: Since the Supreme Court legalized (!) abortion in 1973 an ocean of "innocent blood" has been shed with over 63 million precious children ripped from their mother's womb. And our nation wrings its collective hands over several thousand covid deaths?! What

"Surely at the commandment of the LORD this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed; for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the LORD would not pardon."

—2 Kings 24:3-4

hypocrites we are! The Old Testament tells us the shedding of "innocent blood" is something the LORD will "not pardon" (2 Kgs. 24:4). When we add our nation's political and social corruption to this bloodthirsty, grievous, and sordid mess, we should understand our nation's appointment with God's wrath

is not a matter of "if" but "when." I would like to believe prayer and repentance could stave off God's judgment of our nation at least temporarily (cf. Gen. 18:16-32). So, I will pray to that end and encourage you to do likewise.

I recently prepared a class on Ezekiel chapters 8 and 9. Those chapters were written after the first and second captives had been taken from Judah to Babylon in 605 and 597 B.C. In fact, Ezekiel was one of the many taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. (2 Kgs. 24:14; Ezek. 1:1-2). Judah and Jerusalem had been repeatedly warned by God to repent or face doom (e.g., Jeremiah's 40+ years of preaching). These people should have known better since they had seen their northern brethren carried away by the Assyrians as punishment for similar transgressions a little over a century earlier (Jer. 3:6-10). God's next move was to send the Babylonians against Judah and Jerusalem for a third and final time with horrific consequences. The Bible records a nearly two-year siege that culminated in 586 B.C. (2 Kgs. 25). The gravity and extent of the siege was evidenced by the people of Jerusalem resorting even to cannibalism (Lam. 2:20; 4:10; Ezek. 5:10).

Sadly, all this destruction, devastation, and degradation was avoidable. Time and time again, even unto the eleventh hour, God called these people to repentance through the preaching of the prophets (cf. Jer. 22:1-9). Furthermore, the message of the prophets was not new, for God had warned of such potential punishments from the nation's conception (cf. Deut. 28). But all of God's words and all the preaching was to no avail as the people hardened their hearts, stopped their ears, and seared their consciences (Ezek. 3:7; 1 Tim. 4:2). As a result, God's patience and longsuffering were finally and totally exhausted. There would be no more calls to repentance; no more divine hand extended in tender mercy; no more prophets sent to preach the thunderous message of doom or the compassionate and tender message of potential forgiveness. Instead, God said, "Therefore I also will act

in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them." (Ezek. 8:18) In his commentary on the book of Ezekiel, Jim McGuiggan said, "Judah had passed 'Redemption Point.'" (Ezekiel, p. 10) What an amazingly pithy statement describing their situation of utter hopelessness! (cf. Matt. 13:42; 24:51; 25:30)

No doubt God gave these people their just deserts. However, Ezekiel was still bowed down with grief as the slaughter even extended to the women and children (Ezek. 9:6). The text tells us Ezekiel fell on his face "and cried out, and said, 'Ah, LORD GOD! Will You destroy all the remnant of Israel in pouring out Your fury on Jerusalem?'" (Ezek. 9:8) I believe Ezekiel reacted as any true and tender-hearted man or woman of God would react. Jeremiah expressed this attitude when he said, "My eyes overflow with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people." (Lam. 3:48) Even God, who sends such judgments, takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezek. 33:11).

There are so many lessons we can learn from these passages. And certainly, the LORD expects us to learn from it! "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Rom. 15:4) "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." (1 Cor. 10:11)

Everyone needs a frequent and clarion wake-up call to the ultimate reality that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Sooner, rather than later, we all (including nations) may pass beyond our own "Redemption Point." A point beyond which we find only troubled waters and treacherous shoals; a point beyond which there is no mercy

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . ."

—2 Corinthians 5:10-11a

but only "a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:27). The deceitfulness of sin can easily lead us to sear our conscience and steer our spiritual ship beyond that fateful, peril-filled point! This applies to both people and nations. You and I, and our great nation, need to be reminded often and vividly of this unsavory, but profoundly important fact: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10:31)

I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. So, what does God have in store for the United States of America? Will it be thumbs up or thumbs down?! Is our nation experiencing a wake-up call from the LORD or is it God's death knell? I don't know and I am not about to "whittle on God's end of the stick." However, I do know this: Each of us must clean up our own lives and live in righteousness so we are not contributing to our own personal judgment nor the judgment of our nation. Let us be part of the solution and not the problem (cf. Gen. 18:16-32). And "men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Lk. 18:1).