

One of my favorite passages of Scripture is found in Hebrews 11:13-16. Concerning the great heroes of faith that are mentioned in this chapter, Paul declares, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

Jesus told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world, and that is as true today as it was then: Jesus' kingdom is not of this world, neither is it manifested in the halls of the White House or the Capitol. While the saints of the ages lived in countries that granted them varying degrees of acceptance of their faith, they always saw themselves as strangers and pilgrims in a strange land. Only in our day have those that profess to be God's people found an earthly home. American Christians have shown themselves willing to fight to Christianize this nation. In our pulpits, the Gospel has been compromised and watered down to entice people to come and feel at ease, in spite of their sin. Outside of the walls of our meetinghouses, vast amounts of energy and resources have gone to efforts to get "our people" into political positions, with hopes to change the system from within. The fact is, the system is corrupt through and through, and a nation full of wickedness and perversion needs neither a Christian politician, nor a compromised Gospel. Only when sin is manifested to be exceeding sinful, and the hearts of this perverse generation convicted, and God grants repentance to our nation both individually and collectively, can we enjoy again some of God's favor.

America was never a Christian nation, and it did not need to be so to enjoy the blessings of the Lord. However, it does require that the believers retain their identity as the Salt of the Earth. You see, God commanded that every offering be salted (Lev. 2:13; Ezekiel. 43:24). Job said, "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg? The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat" (Job 6:6-7).

Jesus showed the spiritual aspect of this truth, saying, "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another" (Mark 9:49-50). Luke recorded it thus, "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith

shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 14:34-35).

In Matthew 5:13, Jesus spake even more plainly, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

You see, the earth, being full of carnality and wickedness, is unpalatable to God. The only thing that keeps Him from utterly destroying it — the only thing that makes it bearable — is the salt of the earth. It is the faithful, righteous believers that offset the unsavory condition of the world. When God was determined to destroy Sodom and Gomorra, Abraham was able to negotiate a reprieve if as few as ten righteous could have been found there. Sadly, the Scriptures speak only of the righteousness of Lot, of whom Peter said, "[God] delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation [lifestyle] of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds" (2 Peter 2:7-8). Finding only one righteous man, God delivered him and his wife and daughters from the wrath, and destroyed the cities of the plain. Surely there were other "good" people that perished in those cities, but being a good person according to man's standards does not guarantee salvation. As Solomon warned us, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pro. 16:25).

Just as God might spare a wicked world for the sake of the righteous, God also admonished us, "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die" (Ezek. 18:24). So, as Christianity has been called out to be salt of the earth, if we forsake our identity as strangers and pilgrims, as being in this earth but not of it — if we embrace the ways of the world, and make no difference between the holy and profane — we become as salt that has lost its saltiness, and are good for nothing but to be trampled under foot of men.

Likewise, "in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:35). Even Abimelech, the heathen king of Gerar (Gen. 20:1-7), and the nation of Nineveh (Jonah 3:1-10) were spared the wrath of God by righteous repentance. As Ezekiel said, "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ezekiel 18:21).

Even as today's Christian generation assays to conquer the United States through political and economic strategies, they have embraced the American culture of greed, decadence, promiscuity, and pride. And it is not for the wickedness of the unbeliever that wrath comes upon the children of men, but for the rebellion of God's own people.

In modern Christian meeting houses, songs of victory and love are being sung and messages of tolerance and acceptance are being preached, which, while they have a semblance of agreement with God's holy word, are utterly contrary to its intent. The message of love which God manifested in the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, was never meant to enable sinners, but to convict them of their ungodliness and work in them repentance by the Spirit. The "I'm okay, you're okay" and "Come as you are" messages are, in fact, a perversion of that very message of love which they claim to honor. Jesus told the woman who was brought to Him after being caught in the act of adultery, "Go and sin no more." Yet, today's Christian leaders tickle the ears of the congregation, and give a pass to much of the wickedness that permeates the pews.

The school shootings, sexual perversion, and all manner of other darkness that blankets the once predominantly wholesome American society is the direct result of the believers' attitude of indifference to sin. This generation of churchgoers has bought into the lie that we should mind our own business and keep our faith and the truth of the sinfulness of sin to ourselves — that our faith is a private matter, best relegated to the confines of the church house walls. The "great commission" of our Lord was not just to love people, accept them, feed them and clothe them, and such like. While those things are nice, and we are exhorted to do good to all men as we have opportunity, Jesus' commission to us is, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:19-20). In Mark, He added, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

America had enjoyed the blessings of God because, as a nation, they showed kindness to His people. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, America reflected the righteousness of Jesus which shone forth through His children. Over the last few decades, Christianity's light has steadily dimmed, and therefore America's once-bright presence throughout the world has darkened terribly. While the world could at one time count on America to be, as President Reagan reminded us, "a bright city on a hill," that confidence both at home and abroad has waned and has all but disappeared.

The future is even more forbidding here than for much of the rest of the world, because we have acknowledged the great God in America since our inception. It almost seems as if Peter had America in mind when he wrote his warning, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2:19-22).

And so, Christians proclaiming themselves to be partakers of the blessing of the Lord, and desirous of His return, are facing the reality of a dire prophecy. God spoke to us by His holy prophet Amos, "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it? I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols" (Amos 5:18-23). The songs and prayers of this untoward generation of wayward Christians have become abominable in the sight of God. The incorporation of pagan traditions into the worship, including the vile celebrations of Saturnalia (Christmas) and the festival of Ostara (Easter), are solemn assemblies despised by the Almighty.

As the day of the Lord is approaching, darkness and wickedness is growing ever worse. Much like the nation of ancient Israel, modern Christianity has embraced a culture contrary to God's will, while continuing to claim to be "the head and not the tail."

In response to His people's acts of rebellion, God allowed their enemies to gain the upper hand and trouble them and conquer them. Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians and other neighbors, in turn, enjoyed times of dominance over God's chosen people. Isaiah proclaimed God's word over backsliding Israel, "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation [Israel], and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets" (Isaiah 10:5-6).

Likewise, American Christians seem powerless as liberties are being stripped away and wickedness and perversion dominate the social and political agenda in the country. Like Israel's pagan neighbors, ungodliness, all manner of sexual sins, murder, violence, deceit, theft, etc. threaten to silence the Christian voice in America.

So what do we do? "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness" (Jeremiah 13:16).

"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:1-9).