

America Revival Or Ruin

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When I was a little boy in the 1950s, things were different in America back then. I remember this country when Hollywood had censors, politicians had a conscience and America had a moral compass. Hemlines were lower and morals were higher and sin was called sin and not social disorders. Of course, we didn't have the technology that we have today. Back then if you said Microsoft they thought you were referring to your mattress. And we didn't have wifi. We had hifi. It was a time when only women wore earrings and only sailors had tattoos. I remember America when it still had a strong work ethic and business abounded in honesty and integrity and a man's word and handshake was as good as gold. And I remember in America when a parent did not have to worry about what their children saw on TV and marriage was between a man and a woman. There was such a thing as shame in society back then. I remember America when the Church still had authority and there was still a fear of God in the land. I remember a nation that stood on biblical principles and looked to God for guidance and to the Church for direction. It was ok to pray in public school back then and the 10 Commandments were publicly displayed. And if any Atheist cried out against it, there were more than enough Christians to shout that person down because God had the majority in the nation back then. And I remember an America that was looked up to by other nations and we were a country that held on to the principles of our founding fathers and old glory was never stomped on and set fire to because we respected too much what it stood for. Back then there was such a thing as a weekly prayer meeting in the church and people actually came to pray. And they weren't embarrassed to cry when they prayed and they prayed loud and long and did so until they grabbed hold of God and the fire fell and consumed the sacrifice. The Church back then didn't operate on money and manpower, but by God and Holy Ghost power. Back then the Church influenced society instead of society influencing the Church. And I remember preachers who preached about the blood and the cross and they warned that hell was hot and a future judgment awaited all mankind. Those kind of preachers weren't afraid of men, but they sure feared the almighty.

I keep using the word remember because all I have is my memory of these former things. Today America is facing ruin and only a heaven sent revival will save this nation from complete destruction.

You see, Christianity was always meant to be counter cultural. In the New Testament when the Church met the world there was a clash because the Church went in one direction and pagan society went in the other. Now they travel side by side and there is just a rub between them.

We wanted to reach the world so we brought the world into the church. Where has it gotten us? It has only corrupted the house of God. When the people of God begin to drift away from the heart of God, then God will send remedial judgments to call his people back to him.

My message today is entitled, "America: Revival or Ruin." It is about the remedial judgments of God and we want to begin in the book of Amos, Amos chapter three and four.

Amos was a fiery prophet of God whose main message was judgment. God's timetable was up and the people of God would not return to him, so he sent a series of judgments upon them, remedial judgments and each one was stronger and harsher than the previous one. God was trying to get their attention, but they refused to listen. Is God trying to get our attention today? Is America under the chastisement of the almighty? Have we not turned our backs on God and in this country today?

You know, 9/11 was a wake up call, but most everyone went back to sleep. God is still in his mercy trying to get our attention. But the timetable is quickly running out. This is the most critical time in the history of this nation, because if things don't drastically change and there is a turning of this nation back to God, then there will be no nation to turn. It will be gone.

Look at ancient Rome and their military might that ruled the world with an iron fist. Can you fear an Italian army today? No. It is laughable. America is now laughable in the eyes of the world.

Well, look in your Bibles at Amos chapter three verse three. What does it say?

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"¹

Can you walk with God and still hang on to your wretched sins? Can you name the name of Christ and live like the devil? If you want to walk with God you must turn from your sins and pursue a life of holiness. God is holy. God's Word declares without holiness no one shall see the Lord.

The problem with Israel here in Amos they had quit walking with God. They preferred their sins over God. They turned their back side to God. And yet they still believed they were all right in God's eyes, that God had somehow adjusted himself to their wicked ways, that he tolerated their sins because of his great love for them. God as angry with

¹ Amos 3:3.

the Jews and God is angry with the church member who claims to be Christian that still hangs on to his sins.

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”²

Can they?

Picture in your mind the story of Elijah and his contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. He was up against 450 prophets of Baal, remember that? Elijah built an altar and challenged the prophets of Baal to call on their gods to consume the sacrifice and their gods didn't show up. Finally Elijah began to mock them and said that perhaps their god was on vacation. But listen to what Elijah said to the assembled crowd that day.

“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”³

In other words, if you want to walk with God, you can't have one foot with God and with the other play footsie with the world. Notice he said “If the Lord be God.” Is Jesus your Lord or is he just your insurance policy against hell?

In Amos chapter three verse six the text reads:

“...shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?”⁴

Another translation reads, “Shall there be calamity in a city and the Lord hath not done it?”

Never in my life time has there been so many frequent natural disasters in this country one right after another. Why do you think that is? Is it global warming or mother nature? Or is it God allowing Satan to wreak havoc on our society and on our land? In the book of Job Satan brought a great wind to collapse the house of Job and removed his family and his wealth. God gave Satan permission to do it. Satan is not on the same level as God. There is not an equal war between good and evil. Satan is only a created being, a judged created being whose times is short and he knows it.

In these last days it will be so terrible you will not want to be alive if God does not send revival.

Well, let's look at how God sends remedial judgments to a people who have turned their backs on him. Look at Amos chapter four beginning in verse six.

² Ibid.

³ 1 Kings 18:21.

⁴ Amos 3:6.

“And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.”⁵

Judgment number one was that God sent a famine in the land. In his mercy he sent them a famine. But how did they respond?

“...yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.”⁶

Well, look at judgment number two. It is more severe in verse seven.

“And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.”⁷

See, you can go a week without food, but man cannot live long without water. God sent a drought to his disobedient people. Well do they turn back to him and repent and seek his face? No.

“...yet have ye not returned unto me.”⁸

You see, back then the local Jewish weather men told us here as it was just mother nature acting up again, or women nature. They would just have to grin and bear it. But they don't return to God. So he brings an even more severe judgment. Look at judgment number three in verse nine.

“I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.”⁹

God sent a financial collapse. Our economy is growing worse and worse and a global depression is on the horizon. Have we turned back to God? God is trying to get our attention. Are we paying attention or are we asleep? The remedial judgments of God when unheeded become the increasing judgments of God.

Look at how severe judgment number four is. Look at verse 10.

“I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.”¹⁰

⁵ Amos 4:6.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Amos 4:7.

⁸ Amos 4:6.

⁹ Amos 4:9.

¹⁰ Amos 4:10.

He has removed young men of the city by death. You know, take the young men out of community and your community has little future. God sends death to them, a pestilence and war. What is it going to take in America? What kind of terrible national calamity will have to fall upon this nation before it turns back to God? Will it ever turn back to God? When the Christian leaders refuse to acknowledge that God is judging America and judging the churches in America, then we have the blind leading the blind.

Pastors of former generations were wiser and preached revival sermons to turn the hearts of the people back to God. Listen to a sermon preached by a leading pastor in Boston in 1755 when an earthquake shook that city. Listen to the title of his sermon, "Earthquakes: The Work of God and tokens of his just displeasure being a discourse on that subject wherein is given a particular description of this awful event of providence made public at this time on occasion of the late dreadful earthquake which happened on the 18th of November 1755."

The text of the sermon was Psalm 18 verse seven.

"Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth."¹¹

The leading pastors in New England all preached similar sermons at that time. They called the congregations to fast and pray and repent of their sins and fall on their faces before the God of terrible majesty? Even the President of the United States had a fear of God back then and called the entire nation to a time of humiliation before an offended creator. Listen to this notice in a newspaper from 1798.

"A discourse delivered in the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia on Wednesday, May 9, 1798, recommended by the President of the United States to be observed as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer throughout the United States of America."

How much more urgent is the great need for America today? We can't look to the White House to help us. We can't even look to the Church house to help us. Who will take a stand for God in this land today? Who? It is time of the people of God to turn from their wicked ways and fast and pray and seek his holy face in repentance and humiliation or there will not be a nation left to pray in. When will the churches in this land stop playing church and get right with God and call a time of solemn assembly where the people of God cry out to God in nights of desperation and prayer? Why complain about the direction of this nation when you are not willing to do anything about it?

God says:

"Return unto me, and I will return unto you."¹²

¹¹ Psalm 18:7.

¹² Malachi 3:7.

How bad do we want him? Listen to this warning from the book of Romans.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.¹³

Let me tell you what can happen to a church. Things can get between you and God. Leonard Ravenhill used to tell a story about a friend of his who was on fire for God. Every time Ravenhill got around this man he was more thirsty for Christ and things of eternal worth. Do you know people like that, people that make you thirsty of God? Well, this man was like that. Every time he got around him he wanted to talk about Jesus and winning souls. Then one day he began collecting stamps. As his collection grew, so did his enthusiasm for stamp collecting. Leonard Ravenhill said, "This man called me up one day and said, 'Come on over and I will show you my new stamp collection of British colonials that cost me 50,000 dollars.'"

Ravenhill said that pretty soon this man no longer wanted to talk about Jesus nor the things of God. He just wanted to talk about stamps. A harmless little thing like a stamp drew that man away from God.

What is it with you? What is the thing no matter how seemingly harmless has stolen your affection from Jesus? Why is your Bible a closed book? Why is your prayer life so stale and so infrequent? Why is your walk so up and down?

You see, a church has influence for God in a community as long as the church members have influence with God. A church is only a reflection of its members. The members of a church will either draw people to God like a magnet or turn people away by their inconsistent and worldly lives.

Let me share a story with you. A traveling preacher was passing through a certain city and he wanted to go by and visit a historic church that had a long reputation for doing good for the Lord. But when he got into town he stopped at a local restaurant to grab some lunch and ask directions to that famous church. The owner of the restaurant was well familiar with that church and when the traveling preacher went on and on about all the great things that church had done, the owner of the restaurant looked at him strangely and commented, "Yes, it used to be that way some time ago. If you want directions to that church, go up the road a piece and turn right at the next stop sign. Then go up a hill and at the top of the hill there will be a sign telling you the way to that church."

"What does the sign say?" asked the traveling preacher?

The man paused and with a sad look said, "The sign says, 'Caution, children at play.'"

¹³ Romans 13:12-14.

I am sorry to say I have known churches like that, too many that once did great things for God, that God did great things through them and now there are signs out front that say, "Caution: Children at play."

The hour is late, friends. It is time to get serious with God. Get serious with God and God will get serious with you. If your free time is spent on anything other than prayer and Bible study and things of eternal worth, I feel sorry for you. There is a bema seat for believers. And there we will receive gold, silver and precious stones or wood, hay and straw. When the works of your life pass through the fire, what will remain? Will it be gold, silver and precious stones? Will your life for Christ shine like a brilliant jewel reflecting his glory? Will you stand there knee deep in the ashes of a wasted life and bend over and press those ashes into his nail pierced hand? Do you want to be found playing with the marbles of the world when Jesus appears at the rapture? If we really believe we are living in the last days, our lives don't reflect it. If we really believe that Christ was returning soon, we would not be so consumed with this world. Some of you within the sound of my voice may be living your last years. How do you want to spend them? Chasing a little white ball around a golf course? I used to do that until God showed me what golf stood for, G O L F, golden opportunities lost forever.

What occupies your time? Are we redeeming the time because the days are evil? You may think I am morbid, but I read the obituaries every day. I take time to read each one and contemplate on their life and how they lived it. You can learn a lot about a person from their obituary. I often read, "He was an avid golfer. He loved to ride motorcycles. He had a passion for bowling and he was a deacon at such and such Baptist church."

Seldom do I read an obituary that says about a man he had a passion for God and he was consumed with things of eternal worth. He lived to bring the lost in. He loved Jesus with his whole heart.

No. It is usually he loved his antique cars, his bass boat and so on.

I read an obituary recently about a church member and her friend wrote the article and said the deceased loved martinis.

Like I said, you can learn a lot about a person by what consumes their time here on earth. My late mentor Dr. Steven F. Olford used to say, "Only one life. It will soon be passed. Only what is done for Christ will last."

What will they write about your obituary, that you were a success in life, but a failure for God? As blood bought born again believers, shouldn't we be consumed with things of eternal worth? Should I... should our model be eat, drink and be merry and live for today for tomorrow we die? Or should our motto be as believers only one life soon will be past, only what is done for Christ will last? And as I lay dying how good it shall be if the lamp of my life has been burned out for thee.

But, I repeat, only a heaven sent revival will save America from ruin. These are, indeed, the end times. Do you believe that? And the end is drawing closer and closer every day. We are living in the day and the spirit of antichrist right now. Our society grows darker and darker with each new day. You better forget about your theory of relax and be raptured. I believe in the rapture of the Church, but I believe the American Church is going to go through the fire and persecution before Christ comes again. Persecution is on the way to America and it is right around the corner. The chaff will be separated from the wheat.

But there is hope of revival for America. The Word of God gives us a pathway to revival. It is found in 2 Chronicles. Turn in your Bibles there now, 2 Chronicles chapter seven and verse 14.

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall 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.”¹⁴

Let me ask you a question. Does our land need healing? Let me ask you the next question. Are you willing to pay the price for revival and really do what this verse says and get serious with God and humble ourselves before him, pray and seek his face in these dark days. And are we willing to do the last part of this verse which God requires from us? And that is to turn from our wicked ways? Are you willing to repent of your sins and come clean with God not only for your sake and the sake of your family, but for the sake of our nation? For the nation is merely the reflection of its people. America used to be a God fearing nation because the Christians used to fear God and live holy lives toward him. We are to be salt the Bible says.

You see, salt is a preservation. We are to be a preservation from evil for this nation to do it good for the glory of God.

Listen, friends. God promises us in his Word: Return to me and I will return to you. Are we willing to do it with a sincere heart? The passage in 2 Chronicles mentions duties on our part that we must do to gain the ear of the almighty. I believe the average church member is willing to do the first two aspects of this text, humble themselves and pray. But very few are willing to comply with the most solemn aspect of this text and that is repentance and turn from their wicked ways.

Listen to me. God will not move one inch until we comply with his demand of repentance on our part. If we humbly seek his face in prayer and supplication and turn from our wicked ways, the then promises to do two big things for us: hear and heal.

You see, this is an if/but proposition in Scripture. If the people of God will do such and such then God will do such and such. God says, “If my people do these things, then I will hear their prayers and heal their land.”

¹⁴ 2 Chronicles 7:14.

You see, there was revival in the days of Hezekiah because he complied with the precepts of 2 Chronicles 7:14. King Hezekiah gathered his religious leaders together and told them:

“Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place.”¹⁵

Hezekiah was instructing them to do two things. Number one, clean the temple of its idols and, number two, clean the altar of their hearts in repentance.

We see this in 2 Chronicles chapter 29 and verses 15 through 16. Listen to what the people of God did in response to the king’s request of getting right with God. And the text reads:

And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD. And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron.¹⁶

This is what the people of God did. They searched the temple to find unclean idols and then brought them out, took them, to the brook Kidron and burned them there. They sanctified themselves and God brought a mighty revival under King Hezekiah because he did which was right in the sight of the Lord.

It is up to the Church in America today to do the same, to search our sanctuaries, to see what idols we have set up which displease and grieve God and take those worldly idols back out of our churches and get rid of them. Then we are to search our hearts under the bright spotlight of the Holy Spirit to see if there is anything grievous to God in our lives and then we are to turn from it in repentance. Then and only then will our prayers have power with God to the degree that he will indeed hear and heal, hear our prayers and heal our land.

You know, we don’t hear much preaching today on the cross in the life of the believer. But if we want God to hear us and to take us seriously then we must crucify anything in our lives that is displeasing to Christ Jesus. When we get serious with God he will get serious with us and answer our prayers and bring a Holy Ghost revival to America that will shake the gates of hell from coast to coast.

This is a call to fall on our faces and seek him in sincerity of heart. Will we do it? Will we do it? America: revival or ruin. Will we heed the warnings? God help us if we don’t.

¹⁵ 2 Chronicle 29:5.

¹⁶ 2 Chronicles 29:15-16.