

Volume 2

# A Word in Season:

Daily Messages on the Faith for All of Life

R. J. Rushdoony

Chalcedon/Ross House Books

Vallecito, California

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Mark R. Rushdoony

This volume is a compilation of essays  
originally published in the California Farmer.

Ross House Books

PO Box158

Vallecito, CA 95251

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Library of Congress: 2011902465

10 digit: 1879998-58-0

13 digit: 978-1-879998-58-2

Printed in the United States of America

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This volume is dedicated to  
Dr. Ellsworth McIntyre,  
the members of Nicene Covenant Church  
and Grace Community Schools  
in great appreciation  
for their generous support of  
the work of my father.

Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony  
President, Chalcedon Foundation

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# Guerrilla Country

Peter F. Drucker, one of our most brilliant and stimulating thinkers, writes at the beginning of his study *The Age of Discontinuity: Guidelines to Our Changing Society* that “the future is, of course, always ‘guerrilla country’ in which the unsuspecting and apparently insignificant derail the massive and seemingly invincible trends of today.” The sense in which Drucker uses this expression is intelligent and understandable. For too many people, however, everything in the future is bleak and ugly; it is all guerrilla country, and all pitfalls. The future holds only more inflation, the Communist menace, old age and sickness, and ever-increasing troubles. Well, I too am not growing younger; inflation is growing worse, and the Communists are a more powerful threat each year, but I cannot see the future as guerrilla country.

God is not dead, nor have the centuries weakened Him. The government of the world is still upon the shoulders of our God and His Christ (Isa. 9:6), and nothing can change that fact. Moreover, God’s Word, which cannot lie, declares that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

Our real problem is not the enemies lurking in our future; we are the problem and our apostasy from God. We have forsaken God, despised His laws, and pursued our own ways in contempt of Him. It is God whom we should love and obey, whom we need to fear, because it is He whom we have most offended.

According to Deuteronomy 28, if we obey God, we are blessed and protected in all our ways; if we disobey Him, then we are under His curse, and everything becomes guerrilla territory to us, alien ground where we are faced with hostile forces.

As St. Paul stated it, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). But if God is against us, no ally can protect us. In this world, we will have enemies; we had better make sure God is not one of them. The world then will be totally guerrilla country. But if we walk by faith and in obedience to His law, this is then our Father's world, and we are in Christ heirs of it.

## Inscription at Timgad

In North Africa, in the deserted city of Timgad (or Thamugadi), there is an inscription on a stone in the ruined forum which reads, "Venari, lavari, luderi, rideri, occ (hoc) est vivere," meaning, "to hunt, to bathe, to play, to laugh, that is life!" When Rome was in power, and the empire ruled in North Africa over fertile fields and rich cities, this came to be the Roman philosophy. It was also a reason for Rome's downfall.

Rome ceased to think of the future. It became present oriented, and only the pleasures of the day mattered. Romans found it impossible to believe that their great civilization could decline and collapse. The Romans boasted of what they had done. The nations which survive are those who look ahead to what they can do.

Not too far from Rome is the island of Crete, where, long before Rome, Minoan civilization reached amazing advances. They were surprisingly "modern." They had running water, flush toilets, and a sewage system at Knossos. A Scotch professor, looking at the ruins of the palace, said, "The moral of Knossos is that good plumbing will not save a civilization."

Whenever a civilization loses its faith, it begins to live, not in terms of responsibilities and the future, but in terms of the present pleasure. Goethe, who was not a Christian, still saw the basic issue when he observed that the meaning of history lies in the conflict between belief and unbelief.

Without faith, men's vision narrows, and they are more concerned with the present than with the future. St. Paul said of unbelievers that they are "strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). When a civilization is without God, it is also without hope or a future. Like the Romans of Timgad, it will insist on pleasure and declare, "This is life!"

The Romans were powerful in their day, but it was the persecuted Christians, men with a lively hope in Jesus Christ, who survived and conquered. We are again surrounded by a generation of young and old "Romans," powerful enough and again in the majority, but without God and without hope. We shall survive them again and conquer. Are you with us, or with the losers? "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5).

# The Faith of St. Patrick

I have a great affection and respect for St. Patrick, who, in the fifth century, was the great missionary to Ireland.

What made St. Patrick great when many men of far greater ability are today forgotten or barely known? There were many churchmen of far greater learning than Patrick, better trained for the job than he was, and in every human respect his superior. While Patrick was a superior man, if we had been living in his day, we would have picked a number of other men as far more likely to make their mark and achieve greatness.

There were, however, certain things which set Patrick apart. First of all, there was his faith. R. P. C. Hanson, in his book, *St. Patrick*, writes, "Patrick realizes perfectly well that God's providence is quite compatible with his meeting disaster and death. He is prepared for the worst to happen. His faith in God is not a faith that God will always work a miracle to save him, but a conviction that he can entirely trust God to bring about a good result whatever may happen, the faith of a man who has cast himself entirely on God." The Lord blessed that faith greatly.

Second, the church then and a century after Patrick was faced with savage barbarians invading the British Isles. Many churchmen feared and denounced these savages. St. Patrick worked to convert them.

Third, St. Patrick preached both the wrath of God and God's redeeming and loving care. He was ready to denounce and excommunicate a tyrant without hesitation, but he was equally ready to speak often and joyfully about God's grace and mercy.

Fourth, it was said of St. Patrick that he was a man of one book, the Bible, not because he was an ignorant man, or one not versed in the thinking of his day, but because all his learning and experience were brought to focus on one thing, knowing and proclaiming the Word of God.

All this goes back to the first and foremost quality of St. Patrick, a man who “cast himself entirely upon God,” and whose word to man was God’s Word. St. Patrick knew that his God is the true and great God, Lord of all creation, and at all times he acted in the certainty of God’s victory. Other men were more impressed by their obstacles and enemies and less impressed in practice by God, and, despite their great abilities, they failed to accomplish what St. Patrick did.

What impresses you the most, God or your problems? Why not follow St. Patrick in his trust in God?

## The Coward Who Won a Medal

My wife has a relative, two generations back, about whom the family still laughs. He won a medal for bravery although he frankly told the family he was “chicken,” a coward. I myself have a fondness for his memory.

What happened was this: Uncle H. C. was a railroad man back in the old days when railroading was hard and dangerous work. The freight train was overloaded, carrying expensive cargo, and there was only a small crew. Going down a sharp and dangerous grade, the train began to run away. Every man jumped off the train except H. C. He was too scared to jump. He knew that jumping was impossible for him, and the thought of being mangled in the crash was very unappealing. He scrambled over the boxcars, setting handbrakes until he was able to stop the train. As a result, because he had saved a valuable train, H. C., the lone “coward” in the crew, won a medal.

I think H. C. was a brave man. H. G. Wells was right when he said, “Brave men are men who do the things they are afraid to do.” H. C. knew himself, and, as Proverbs 11:2 states, “[W]ith the lowly is wisdom.” H. C. had humility and the wisdom that comes with humility. He was able to act because he knew what he could do and could not do. To crawl over the boxcars on a runaway train on a mountainside was an act of courage, and it was based on humility.

Today, all too many men lack both wisdom and courage because they lack humility. They are not “lowly” men but proud men. The other members of H. C.’s crew were proud and confident men, but none of them won a medal.

The Lord blesses the lowly, the meek, and the humble. Such men know themselves because “with the lowly is wisdom.” We are told that the Lord “giveth grace unto the lowly” (Prov. 3:34).

Most people are trying to impress God and man; instead of being lowly, they are proud and pompous. Such men, like those on H. C.'s crew, will jump off a train when the showdown comes. I have a fondness for the H. C.'s of this world. They are faithful to Scripture, when it says, "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil" (Prov. 3:7).

By the way, the men who jumped suffered severe injuries. H. C. was unhurt, and won a medal. In his part of the country, some still remember his remarkable feat of years ago, before the days of airbrakes. Incidentally,

H. C. was not even a brakeman; he was a fireman and had never set a brake before!

# Faith

I know two women, kin to one another, who are both openly Christian. The first often speaks of her faith as her most precious possession, her comfort and her joy. I do believe that she is a Christian, but her faith is like fire and life insurance to her. She has the faith more than the faith has her. On the other hand, the faith has her cousin in its grip. Since her conversion, I suspect she has often been unhappy with what the faith requires of her. She can at times echo, I am sure, Jeremiah's statement that God's Word is "in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones" (Jer. 20:9).

The difference between the two is that one is a no-growth person and the other, whether she likes it or not, grows in the faith. When the faith is more than a possession but a fire in our being that possesses us, we are governed by it. It commands and compels us as nothing else can, because we are in the hands and power of the living Lord.

Faith must point beyond itself, because "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). This means that the man of faith is commanded by something beyond himself. The goal of salvation is not our redemption but that the will of God be done, and His Kingdom manifested. Salvation requires that we serve God with all our heart, our mind, and our being, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Does your faith command you?

## Faith in Action

Many years ago, when my wife was in nurse's training, she overheard two hospital workers talking. The one woman, a black, was reporting on her own family griefs, troubles, and complications. It was quite an account. It seemed as if almost everything that could go wrong had indeed done so. Dorothy herself felt grief as she overheard it. The other woman finally asked the narrator what in the world she could do about all her problems. The answer was clear and to the point, "Why, girl, I just say, 'You take it, Lord. It's too much for me.'"

Living in God's peace requires us to think like that. Too often, however, we feel that there is some great merit in fretting and anxiety, as though God were incapable of handling our problems without our second-guessing and complaining. We try to prove how sensitive and concerned we are by worrying ourselves sick and making others around us miserable as well. We make a public production of worrying, so that others will not miss the fact of our anxiety and feel sorry for us.

But our Lord tells us that all this is sin. We are told that to serve God means to take no thought, that is, not to be anxious and fretful about tomorrow, and, if we are anxious, we manifest "little faith" (Matt. 6:24-30). We cannot call our worrying, anxiety, and fretfulness a sign of godly concern and faith without at the same time implying that our Lord is a liar. Thus, when we justify our sin, we greatly compound it.

Rather, what we need to do is to apply God's Words to all our problems, seek godly solutions, and, with them, say simply, "You take it, Lord. It's too much for me." That is faith in action.

## The Relaxed Man

It is difficult to watch television without being told of some pills and drugs for an upset stomach, for mental tension that disturbs sleep, or for headaches caused by wild children, nagging wives, and complaining husbands. In fact, sometimes it is difficult to watch television without getting an upset stomach from it.

All this is not surprising: "The world is too much with us," as the poet wrote, and we can add, God not enough. Solomon wrote, "A relaxed mind makes for physical health; but passion is rottenness to the bones" (Prov. 14:30, Berkeley Version). Moreover, Solomon added, "[H]e that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast" (Prov. 15:15). But, best of all, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Prov. 17:22). Recently, I saw a doctor's prescription pad with these words printed across the top of it, and rightly so, for its truth is an obvious and important one.

Our age is riddled with tension and is ulcer-ridden because our world is too greatly absorbed with its problems and too little absorbed with the God who alone can govern all things.

Our Lord asked, "Which of you by taking thought [or by being anxious and tense] can add one cubit unto his stature?" (Matt. 6:27).

We are bombarded today by the world. We live in more physical comfort than man has ever before known, but in greater mental discomfort. The world and its problems hit us at every turn, on radio, television, in newspapers, and on billboards. For city dwellers especially, the bombardment is intense.

More than ever, therefore, man needs to be strengthened spiritually in order to face a high-pressure world, but, unfortunately, men are slow to turn to their only true source of strength, God and His Word. The

pulverizing effect of our tension-ridden world and the bombardment of problems are beginning to take a steadily heavier toll. A heart specialist reports that men are getting their first heart attacks at increasingly earlier ages, and that forty-year-old heart cases are now a part of his practice. "A relaxed mind makes for physical health," and a truly relaxed mind is one that trusts wholly in God, commits its ways unto Him, and rests patiently in the Lord. But we cannot have such a mind without feeding on Scripture or without a firm reliance on prayer.

## Seeds or Weeds?

How do you get vegetables out of your garden? By planting vegetables, of course. This is a fact almost too obvious to mention, except for the fact that most people seem to have forgotten that you reap what you sow and you harvest what you plant, “for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

Now if a man simply kept weeding a garden patch without ever planting it to vegetables, we would certainly have a right to call him at least a fool if he expected weeding to give him vegetables. We should, in fact, question his sanity.

But this foolishness is exactly what millions of “good Americans” are dedicated to: they do nothing but pull up weeds, and they expect to harvest vegetables. How? They are always fighting the weeds which crop up in the life of America, in the churches, schools, and organizations, and this is all that millions of them do—pull weeds. Meanwhile, the country and everything in it goes downhill.

Make no mistake about it, the weeds of communism, atheism, and permissiveness must be uprooted, but what good will all this weeding do if no sound seeds are sown? The net result is simply a better patch for new weeds to sprout in. Jesus said of the man who rid himself of an unclean spirit without submitting himself to God and bearing fruit to God that such a man becomes then a dwelling place for eight unclean spirits, “and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation” (Matt. 12:45). When people are simply interested in getting rid of their weeds, their problems, and have no desire for planting seeds, for moral and spiritual regeneration, then they are only the worse off for their efforts.

Before you start pulling weeds and expecting to harvest vegetables, be sure you plant seeds as well. Perhaps that church or school is only a weed patch and will not be anything more.

But, above all, plant the seeds, sow the Word, establish truly Christian churches, free and independent Christian schools. Establish a Christian family life, and a godly operation in your farm or business life. The times may look bad for making a start, but there is no harvest without a planting. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap" (Eccles. 11:4).

Men who think that they can get vegetables only by pulling weeds are crazy. Why be one of them?

# The Time of God's Power

Church and state were both ordained by God to serve and to glorify Him. The purpose of the state is to be God's ministry of justice, and the duty of the church is to be the ministry of grace, the ministry of the Word and the sacraments. However, throughout history, both church and state have usually been apostate; they have glorified themselves rather than the Lord. Washington, D.C., and the various state capitols, give us imposing monuments to the wealth and the power of civil government, and the country is liberally dotted with beautiful and costly churches. In spite of this, there is a famine of obedience to God and a widespread contempt for His Word.

This presents us with what appears to be a discouraging situation, and all too many people are badly disheartened and downcast.

The reality is, however, that God's greatest miracles, and His greatest advances of His work in history, have been done outside both church and state. God has not shared His glory with apostate statism and churchmen; He has never allowed them the luxury of saying that God's work is dependent on them.

Examine the times of God's great works in Biblical history. The days of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and of Jesus Christ were times of apostasy in church and state, but God's most dramatic works occurred in those days. God's power has not been tied to institutions or to men then or since. One of the worst of humanistic heresies is the common saying, "God has no hands but mine to use." It leads to arrogance on the part of men and institutions.

God shall accomplish His predestined purpose, with or without men. God's Kingdom cannot fail, nor His throne and government be shaken by men or by nations.

We have no need, therefore, to ask about results or to question the outcome. The duties God requires of us are plainly stated in Scripture, and we are required to be obedient, not to doubt the results. Very simply, the duties are ours to fulfill; the results are in the hands of God, who cannot fail. We must therefore not be discouraged by man's failure. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isa. 2:22). God is on the throne, and every day is the day of His power.

# The Resurrection

The Biblical faith concerning Jesus Christ involves and requires believing that He was raised from the dead in the same body which suffered crucifixion. Jesus Christ, by His resurrection, destroyed the power of sin and death. Moreover, He set forth His victory over the realms of both spirit and matter, conquering the enemy in every realm.

If Jesus Christ had only risen from the dead as a spirit, as a ghost, then His only victory and His only saving power would be limited to the world of the spirit. It would mean that He would be helpless to answer prayers concerning material things, because His power would extend only to things spiritual. It would mean that His people would be helpless against the powers of this world and without a law or a recourse in this world.

But, because Jesus Christ rose from the dead, He is Lord over all lords, King over all kings, the lawgiver and supreme governor of all things, material and spiritual. Prayer is effectual because He is effectual. We can therefore say with the psalmist: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Ps. 46:1–2).

For this reason, from the days of the early church on, the Day of Resurrection has been a time of joy because it sets forth the certainty of our victory in and through Jesus Christ. St. Paul, in terms of this fact of the resurrection, could happily declare, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55).

The world today, as it has moved from faith in God to faith in man, has moved from joy and confidence to fearfulness and darkness. Our material prosperity has not increased our joy, because, apart from the Christian victory, the joy of living drains out of a man. As St. John made clear, "[T]his is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

We, then, who are the people of the resurrection, must live in the joy and confidence of victory. This is our destiny, victory. Life is rarely easy, but, with Christ our King, it is always good. We are generally in a battle, because the enemies are many, and the forces of evil real, but our victory has been assured and manifested by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We can therefore sing with the early church: "Adam is recalled, the curse is made void; Eve is set free, death is slain, and we are made alive. Wherefore in hymns we cry aloud: Blessed art thou. O Christ our God."

# The Increase of His Government and Peace

One of the most important prophecies concerning the birth of our Lord is in Isaiah 9:6–7. Christ, eight centuries before His coming, is hailed as the “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,” and it is declared that “the government shall be upon his shoulder.” This is the first great declaration concerning Christ and all government: the ultimate and absolute government of all things shall belong to Christ. The second great declaration is that “[o]f the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” Christ, coming into a sinful and rebellious world to establish His dominion as Lord and Savior, will in the face of all enmity and warfare increase His power, government, and peace.

Next, we are told exactly how this shall be done: He shall “establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever,” or, as the Berkeley Version translates it, “[I]t is firmly established and supported in justice and righteousness from now on and forever.”

Christ came into the world as the great prophet, priest, and king. As prophet, He speaks for God; as priest, He is man’s savior and advocate with the Father; as king, He rules over the world.

The world is in rebellion against that government. From these rebels and revolutionists, we hear much talk about “peace,” and a great deal of hostility to government. But Isaiah tied the two together: “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” True peace, in other words, is a product of true government. When there is true law and order, then there is also true peace. Abolish law and order, and you abolish peace and create a situation of revolutionary warfare and anarchy. By

abandoning Christ as Savior and King, by abandoning His government and peace, we are moving into a world of perpetual warfare. We are engaged in “perpetual warfare for perpetual peace” because we are seeking it without Christ. The old hymn states it best:

Joy to the world!

The Lord is come:

Let earth receive her King.

But the invitation of the song is then personal: “Let every heart prepare Him room.” We all long for godly law and order, for His government and peace. It must begin first of all in our own hearts. Most people are waiting for their husbands, wives, children, neighbors, for all the rest of the world to be Christian, so that they can enjoy the luxury and peace of a godly world without any personal conversion, but there is no peace, says Scripture, to the wicked. But every man can know the peace of His government here and now, and in the face of all problems, if their hearts prepare Him room.

## Birth of the King

The birth of a king has lost most of its meaning in our day, because the few kings remaining are mainly figureheads. In earlier days, it was, however, a momentous event. Whenever a son was born to a king, the entire kingdom celebrated with a joy our holidays today do not have.

Why was the birth of a king's son so great an event to the poorest man of the realm, and so great a cause for rejoicing? It meant, very simply, that a protector and defender was born, someone who in the days ahead would provide the leadership, unifying force, and strength to repel all enemies, suppress criminals within the realm, and enforce justice. A kingdom without an heir to the throne had an uncertain future. Men being sinners, the kingdom would face internal and external troubles if no king reigned to enforce justice. The succession being uncertain, the kingdom would risk civil war.

The term "enforce justice" tells us much. Man is a sinner, and he is by nature lawless unless he is regenerated by Jesus Christ. Justice thus must be "enforced," that is, put into operation by force, because otherwise lawlessness and injustice will prevail. If there is no forceful enactment of justice, there is no justice. This is the grim fact people once knew and are now forgetting.

This tells us too what the Scripture means when it speaks of Christ as King, hailed King from His very birth. The Gospel of Matthew gives us His royal genealogy in its first chapter. Revelation 17:14 tells us that He is the universal King, "for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings."

When we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, we thus celebrate the birth of one who is ordained to right every wrong, overthrow every enemy, and enforce justice. He will put down all enemies before time is ended, and He will reign eternally over His people. The news of His birth, and its

celebration, is indeed “joy to the world,” because the Lord is come who shall in the fullness of time enforce justice truly and absolutely.

His promise is peace, not the peace of death and the graveyard, but the peace of justice and prosperity. The Virgin Mary rejoiced, declaring of the justice God and her son would finally establish: “He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away” (Luke 1:51–53).

If we believe in Christ, we shall rejoice, and we shall be confident, come what may. We have a King!

# Judgment

Alfred C. Kinsey, the sex researcher, an intolerant man? Emphatically, yes. True, Kinsey was tolerant about child molesting, homosexuality, and other perversions. True, he denied the truth of Scripture and its moral law. Still, there were limits to Kinsey's tolerance. There was one thing he could not tolerate—beards. Even a small mustache was very displeasing to Kinsey. Fortunately for him, Kinsey died in August 1956, before the return of beards took place.

Kinsey was an intolerant man, because he made his own private tastes the ground of judgment, while setting aside God's law. Our Lord said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1). The word "judge" can also be translated as condemn. Our Lord goes on to declare that we shall be judged by the same yardstick we use against others. If we condemn people for meaningless details, as did Kinsey, we shall be condemned as triflers who have no regard for God's law.

But we must judge according to God's law. Our Lord is very clear on this: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). To avoid righteous judgment is to sin. To use Matthew 7:1, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," to prevent righteous judgment is to trifle with God's law and to incur His judgment.

I have learned, over the years, to be very, very suspicious of people who act as if our Lord said only "Judge not." Such people are all too often hiding some sin and are badly in need of righteous judgment.

Moreover, such people do judge, but like Kinsey, they take a standard other than God's Word as their yardstick or measure of judgment. When we exalt a private taste into a measure or yardstick of judgment, we are playing god and are denying the true God. This is the great intolerance of our time: man's way is made into law, and we are expected to conform to

the whims of men rather than to the Word of God. It is a sure road to disaster.

## Judge Not

The man had committed two fearful crimes: he had raped and murdered a young girl. One person, sick at heart and revolted by the crimes, spoke of the guilty man as a “horrible degenerate.” Someone murmured, “Judge not. It isn’t Christian to judge.” Was this statement right? Or was it satanic?

Jesus Christ declared, “Do not pass judgment, so you may not be judged; for the way you judge you will be judged and with what yardstick you measure you will be measured” (Matt. 7:1–2, Berkeley Version). But Jesus Christ called the scribes and Pharisees “hypocrites,” “whited sepulchres,” and much more: He called Herod a “fox,” and He never hesitated to speak out sharply and with judgment. The prophets and apostles also spoke often with clear and sharp judgments. Were they wrong?

Obviously, when the prophets, apostles, and Jesus Christ judged, they not only did so with a clear conscience, but they did so in the conviction that it was their duty to do so, that their judgment was a godly act, and a moral necessity. But this is not all. By their public judgments, they were inviting others to make similar judgments. When Jesus called the Pharisees “hypocrites,” He was plainly marking out Phariseeism as hypocrisy for all His followers, then and now. When Paul condemned fornication and fornicators (1 Cor. 5), he was demanding that the church at Corinth and every believer in every age join with him in their condemnation. If evil is not condemned, it is tolerated and approved. Evil must therefore be judged.

The whole Bible summons us to judge righteous judgment. Over and over again, the Old Testament summons men to judge, and to judge righteously (Deut. 1:16; 16:18, etc.). Jesus Christ Himself declared, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John

7:24). Obviously then, all the Bible calls for righteous judgment, so that it must be false and unrighteous judgment which is condemned. We are not permitted to judge by appearance, or by our own feelings, likes and dislikes, but only in terms of God's law. We cannot judge a man because he has a wart on his nose, or because we dislike the way he parts his hair. We must judge a man if he is guilty of violating the law of God. "The way you judge you will be judged," Jesus said. If your judgments excuse evil or condone it, you will be judged to be evil yourself. If your judgments reflect the justice and judgment of God where required, and mercy where men are truly repentant, then you will be judged as faithful to God. "Judge righteous judgment."

## Two Ancient Heresies

There are two ancient heresies, both condemned by our Lord, which are again with us. The first was a belief in salvation by race. The Pharisees rejected the salvation Christ set forth, declaring, "We be Abraham's seed" (John 8:33). For this reason, they denied any need to affirm Christ as the saving truth. Their parentage, they held, saved them. Today, we have many who insist that race, not grace, will save them. Being born of an Anglo-Saxon lineage according to some, or being born in a church family according to others, constitutes salvation. Our Lord denied this, saying, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34) and is therefore unsaved. The commission of sin here means the habitual practice of sin.

The second ancient heresy is the belief that a mere verbal profession equals salvation. Jesus rejects all such people: "[W]hy call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Failure to obey Him means condemnation and destruction (Luke 6:47–49). All too many church members assume that a mere profession of faith is the same thing as saving faith. This is emphatically not so. Our Lord declares, "[B]y their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:20–21). The Father's will is clearly set forth in the law, the prophets, and the Gospels, in the whole Word of God.

The test of faith is thus from our Lord, not from a man's profession, nor from his ancestry. To accept a man as Christian on his word rather than on God's Word is to deny the Lord.

We are today plagued by false Christians who take refuge from judgment by saying, "You can't judge my heart." But we can. The heart, or the tree and its roots, are known, our Lord says, by the fruits. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good

fruit" (Matt. 7:18). Our Lord made discernment very simple; the sinner wants to confuse the issues. Among other things, heresy is confusion.

## Fallen Man

One of the great names in Biblical archaeology was C. R. Conder. From 1871 to 1878, Conder did some pioneering work for archaeology in a detailed survey of Palestine and of archaeological sites. It was a difficult work, because of problems with Turkish authorities and the Arab population. In one of his field reports, Lt. Conder wrote of the people there, "They are all born with stones in their hands," ready to attack people.

He had seen firsthand the fallen, sinful nature of man, without any of the restraints of a Christian society. His experience threw a light of daily confirmation on St. Paul's insistence, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). Man without Christ reveals only the depravity of the Fall.

One of our problems today is that too often we forget what man is outside of Christ. Humanism has too long infected us with unrealistic and sentimental notions about man. If all men were born good, then we would need no laws, police, or civil government, because all men would simply manifest their natural goodness, and all would be well. We need look no further than our own hearts to realize what man is or can be apart from the grace and law of God.

One prominent philosopher wrote a book in the 1970s calling upon mankind to abandon all ideas about guilt and justice. He declared that guilt and justice do not exist, because they are relics of the God-idea. If there is no God, he said, there is no right nor wrong, no good nor evil, no guilt (or innocence), and no justice (no injustice), only the freedom for man to do as he pleases! The world this philosopher calls for is worse than the world Conder experienced.

Which world are you working for, and a part of, Christ's or this philosopher's?

# Standards

Recently one of my daughters gave me a photographic reproduction of a menu from 1843. The restaurant was New York's finest, Delmonico's. The price of a full dinner was exactly twelve cents. Has food gone up in price since then? Not really; money has simply become cheaper.

About the time of the war (1938–39), a friend built a lovely home for \$7,500, with the tile of the roof handmade by an able craftsman, the cabinet work custom made, and so on. Today, that house is worth \$100,000. It is the same house, thirty years older, but money is now cheaper.

A man I know has been married twenty-seven years. When he married his wife, they were the same age, but he is now five years older! She has changed the count.

Many jokes are made about fishermen using a rubber tape measure to judge the size of their fish. As a fisherman of sorts, I think we are a much-abused class of people. If fishermen used as elastic a standard as most men do today, they would be reporting whales in the Sacramento River.

Too often we forget that the thing to examine first of all is the yardstick. Now back to that 1843 dinner at Delmonico's for twelve cents; in 1884, Delmonico's offered the same full dinner, now with any kind of steak, for four cents; in April 1969, a friend and I had lunch, not dinner, at a fairly good New York restaurant, and it cost several dollars for each of us. The yardstick, money, has changed, not the food. To understand therefore what is happening in America's economy, the answer is not to complain about the rising price of farm products but to look at the changing yardstick, money.

This is all the more true in the realm of public and private life. We cannot understand what is happening to the world unless we have a

yardstick to judge the world, and ourselves, by. The only true yardstick is the Bible.

Nothing can be measured without a standard of measurement. If the standard is wrong, everything else is then out of line. This means that the principle of measure must be absolutely trustworthy or else nothing valid can follow.

## Wisdom, True or False?

By God's standards, as I understand the Scriptures, successful people are those who change themselves by God's grace and in terms of God's Word. Unsuccessful—and many times dangerous—people try to change others in terms of their own standards.

The world today is all too full of men and women whose answer to all problems is to compel other people to change, by law or by force. True, I will have no problems if everyone around me is compelled to conform to my ideas, but I will then be the problem.

So it is, in my opinion, with our human society today: we are too often the problem. We have too often forsaken God, and made our own ideas our law and god, and we too often expect the rest of mankind to be as wise as we are in our own eyes. We insist on doing our own thing, as though wisdom were born with us, and the world empty of all common sense until we came along. In our human pride, we erect our own thoughts too often into a position of judge over God, and our prejudices into a new revelation of truth.

The cry of Wisdom from of old is, "O ye simple, understand wisdom: and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart" (Prov. 8:5). Wisdom is not in man, the fallen creature, but in the Lord. Endurance and triumph in an age of storm and crisis depends, our Lord says, on being grounded in Him and in His Word. Everyone that "heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man" (Matt. 7:24).

The test of wisdom in the final analysis is to establish our life, thought, and action on the Rock Jesus Christ. To do otherwise is to build on sand. Gaining wisdom is in the daily act of changing and growing as we try to conform ourselves increasingly to His Word.

The rule of wisdom in human affairs is not every man being wise in his own eyes, and a law unto himself, but men being transformed by Christ and daily trying to conform themselves to and by His Word.

Where is your wisdom? Is it in Christ? Is it in yourself?

# Hypocrites

A man of prominence, closely connected with law enforcement, told me recently that drunk driving is a major problem in highway accidents and deaths. Nothing, he added, could be more easily controlled. Simply by taking away drivers' licenses on a mandatory basis and by mandatory sentences and penalties, every community could witness a drop in accidents, injuries, and deaths, because so many drunken drivers would be off the roads in a short time. He added that no such legislation was likely to occur, because, in virtually every state, too many legislators are heavy drinkers, and they are ready to legislate everybody's sins except their own.

He was right, of course, but before you start damning legislators as a particularly bad breed, remember that this is also a sin we are all prone to. All too often, the only sins we take seriously are the sins of other people. It is much easier to see the faults of our neighbors' children than our own. In fact, the faults of our husband or wife are usually far more aggravating to us than our own faults. We are far more likely to spend time trying to reform our spouse than to change ourselves. Somehow, our own faults have a sensible or even lovable look to us.

This was an important part of what our Lord was talking about when He condemned hypocrisy. "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matt. 7:3-5).

If our Lord is right, and He is, then very obviously most of our legislators, governors, presidents, and other civil officials, are hypocrites. They have the habit of hypocrites. They try to reform everyone except

themselves. They legislate for all of us, but never for themselves, to punish their own sins.

We have as many hypocrites in government as we do because so many of us voters are hypocrites. We are all for reforming everyone except ourselves.

Our Lord made clear that we can only try to reform others when we have reformed ourselves. We must first cast out the beam in our own eye before we can even see clearly what needs to be done to our brother's eye. Until then we are unrighteous judges.

Drunkenness may not be our fault, and our own sins may be less easily detected. This does not make them any the less serious, nor any the less destructive. The hypocrite is not against sin as such. It is not all lawlessness and the principle of lawlessness which he hates. The hypocrite can be against many particular sins, in fact, against almost all sins, but he will nurse, protect, and justify his particular sins. The hypocrite is thus mainly against sins when other people commit them, not when he does. Because he is against so much sin (by other people), the hypocrite assumes that he is righteous. But righteousness is not gained by condemning the sins of other people, but by grace, and by obedience to the law-word of God. The hypocrite is against sin in other people. The godly man is against sin anywhere but, first and foremost, against sin in himself.

## The “Kick Me” Generation

Remember how, in the early grades of grammar school, some pranksters liked to pin a note on

an unsuspecting student which read, “Kick Me,” or “Pinch Me”? It was a silly little trick, and it never really accomplished much except to leave the victim mildly annoyed or embarrassed.

But what shall we say of people who in effect pin a “Kick Me” sign on themselves? We are surrounded by such people today who are begging for trouble.

There are more than a few high school and college students who are asking to be kicked. They are insolent towards their parents, contemptuous of everything their father represents, yet greedy for his money, and they do everything possible to provoke trouble. Their whole life seems to be planned to aggravate other people so that they can then complain about being misunderstood!

Then too we have many Negro leaders who do everything that their imagination can conceive of to be offensive to whites and blacks alike. They invite hatred with a passionate intensity, and they reserve their own most intense hatred for the whites who try to befriend them. They are more than asking, they are begging, to be kicked.

Then there are men and women who insult, meddle, criticize, and complain about everything and everyone. They work at being totally offensive and hateful, and they only complain the louder when they get what they invite. These are some of the citizens of the “Kick Me” generation.

Solomon said, “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Prov. 30:12). These people invited the required judgment on themselves in order to be able to

complain against judgment. They are in effect saying, "I have the right to do as I please, and no man has a right to judge me." As sinners, they aggravate their sin and make it a means of attacking law and judgment.

The "Kick Me" generation holds that no man should ever be judged for anything, although none are so prone to judging others as they themselves. By kicking hard at all authority, they hope to take all the power of any kick back out of authority. One young man stated it this way to me: you win some, you lose some, but it all adds up to change. He lost with his parents: they kicked him out. He won with a judge: he was acquitted. Because he was both intelligent and talented, he won with his teachers, professors, and friends. He lost, finally, with the one person who never misses any challenge: God. He flouted every law he could, but the kick in God's law put him into a grave at mid-twenty.

Far more young American men and women of the "Kick Me" generation have lost their lives in flaunting law than all the Viet Cong have been able to kill in Viet Nam. Playing "Kick Me" in grammar school was just a game. Playing "Kick Me" with God's law is a fatal business.

# Government

When we talk about government, we should remember that the heart of all sound government is self-government. We fail to grasp the nature of our problem if we do not recognize that, basically, government is self-government. Throughout history, wherever and whenever self-government declines, statist government increases proportionately. If men will not govern themselves, someone else will.

Our Lord stated the matter very clearly: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin ... If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:34, 36). As we shake off the bondage or slavery of sin, we thereby assume our self-government in terms of the dictates of God's Word and Spirit. We grow proportionately more free as we are sanctified.

The problem of our time is that men want neither freedom nor self-government. They want the advantages of slavery without its penalties. Slavery offers cradle-to-grave security, and it offers a master who solves all problems for us. Most people want slavery but are not honest enough to call it slavery. They sugarcoat it with all kinds of political slogans to make it sound like heaven itself, and they are the first victims of their propaganda.

To be free, Scripture tells us, is to be in Christ and under His command. He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), and there is no true life nor freedom apart from Him.

The heart of true self-government is to live in terms of God and His Word, because His way is the way of life. It means that we keep ourselves from idols (1 John 3:21), because the heart of idolatry is the worship of man, the worship of our will, the state's will, the church's will, any will and word other than the Lord's. It is humanism.

Political tyrannies and powers grow as men forsake God's government and its requirements of them for the seemingly easy way of slavery. Most men today are slaves by choice. Their slavery is for them man's best hope and way, and they are eager for more slavery rather than less. Apart from Christ, men will grow in their sin and therefore their slavery, even as a Christian will grow in his freedom and self-government.

Now, are you growing into freedom, or into slavery?

## The Two Plans

The September 1968 issue of *Finance and Development*, a publication of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group, has an interesting report by Barend A. de Vries, "New Perspectives on International Development." According to him, "the family-run and operator-owned farm" is "the last remnant of the atomistic society" of the last century and must be brought under organization.

Maybe, when such important people say the family-run farm is only a relic of the past, the farmer should quietly surrender to this "progress" and turn himself and his farm over to the scientific planners. Especially when Washington experts tell us such small farms make up a terrible rural "ghetto," maybe the farmer should give in to all this superior wisdom, and to the marvelous planners.

Maybe. But, before the farmer surrenders, and before we let our political forecasters kill off the family-run farm, let us remember that there are two plans in operation. Which plan do we choose?

The social planners want a society totally organized by man and his central planning. They believe that unless a bureaucrat manages the world and its economy, everything will fall apart. Salvation for the social planners is a scientific socialist state. The "old-fashioned" privately owned, family-run farm is for them out of date. Stalin killed off 13 million farmers to make way for socialist "progress." This then is one kind of planning, social planning.

The other kind of planning is planning by God. In God's plan, the family is basic, and the most important economic unit is the family owned and operated farm. The strength of a land rests in the freedom and prosperity of a godly people who are landowners and land lovers. Men like Naboth (1 Kings 21) were the products of the Biblical standard.

These two plans are today in conflict. It was God's plan which governed the formation of America and made it great. God's plan gives due respect to man's character and freedom, and it is the prosperity of a land which abides by it.

## Farming and National Welfare

I recently ran across a very interesting fact: for every farm worker laid off, three more workers in farm-related industries are laid off. As a result, whatever happens to farmers has an immediate effect on cities.

I checked out this fact with my son-in-law, Dr. Gary North, an economist, and he confirmed it.

I learned still more as I read. In countries marked by bad economic policies and poor farming, the cities become huge slums and a center for largely unemployed millions who barely exist. Mexico City has eleven million people, San Paulo, Brazil, about nine million. Buenos Aires has nine million also, and Calcutta 7.2 million. The major cities of the so-called Third World countries are already big and are growing two to ten times faster than the cities of the Western world. Bangkok, Bombay, Cairo, Jakarta, Madras, New Delhi, Santiago, Seoul, and other such cities are far larger than places like Los Angeles, and also desperately poor.

I was vividly reminded by all of this of the truth of Scripture. Solomon declares, in Ecclesiastes 5:9, "Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field." Our Lord says, "[I]n the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage" (Matt. 22:30). What does this mean? It means that in this world, God ties man, because he is a sinner and because he is a far from perfectly sanctified creature, to necessities. A man and a woman need each other. People need food. The greatest affairs of state are tied to the realities of farm life and production. Thus, man cannot forget that he is a creature, and he must be ruled by God's every Word.

Today, politicians plan for "full employment" unmindful of the effects of the drought on the economy and employment. They assume that man's desires and man's legislative acts can alter the world and conform it to man's will. Instead, all such attempts by man lead to disaster. We dare not

forget that God declares that “the king himself is served by the field,” and that profitable or successful farming is beneficial to all men.

This is, like so much in Scripture, an obvious fact, but men will not see it, because they are proud and headstrong sinners. The remedy for that too is in God’s Word, and in God’s Son. When we neglect the written Word and the Incarnate Word, we do so to our own destruction. Hear ye the LORD.

## The Family and Welfare

Much is said today of the extensive programs of the federal, state, and county governments. The millions required to finance welfare make a major item in every governmental budget. All the statements by politicians on the major accomplishments of welfare miss the basic point: the world's welfare program has never been conducted by any civil government in any era of history. That credit belongs to the family.

The family is a God-ordained institution, and one of its basic functions is welfare. A basic requirement of both the Old and New Testaments is the responsibility of family members to care for one another. Our Lord made it clear that no gift was acceptable to God from people who did not care for their parents' material or financial needs (Mark 7:10–13). St. Paul declared, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8). Through the centuries, a requirement of true faith has been precisely this, the support and care of one's own family.

For every person on state or federal welfare, there are a vast number supported by their family. The family, first, gives aid to most of the children of the country. The parents give full care to their children at least through high school, and very often through college. They help the children when they marry, and when the grandchildren come. No system devised by man or the state can ever replace the family in its efficiency and success in creating social stability and strength while supporting and educating virtually all the children of the land. Second, countless aged parents are also supported by their children. They may live in their children's home or be supported separately. Some have turned over their farms to their children, or their businesses, and they receive in return a lifetime support. Certainly there are frictions and tensions in the rearing of

children and in the care of parents, but no system devised by man can show an equal record of dignity and success.

The state system of welfare has in every age been productive of social disorder and delinquency. In the Roman Empire, the Senate and emperor came to fear the welfare mobs, which increasingly dominated the city of Rome. When bread and circuses failed to keep the welfare mobs in line, the emperors left Rome and made their capital elsewhere. Several times the capital of Rome was changed before it finally fell, to escape the mobs which dominated city after city.

In the United States today, the rise of welfare mobs is again in evidence. Delinquency, crime, vandalism, rioting and looting, illegitimacy, drunkenness, and savage hatred are seething in our welfare mobs. Instead of being relieved or diminished by increased welfare grants, the welfare mobs only become irresponsible. And, most important, state and federal welfare is destructive of family life, and this is especially deadly, because the family system is God's appointed welfare system and history's only successful one.

The more we do to relieve and "correct" poverty by welfare, the more irresponsible a welfare mob we create, and mobs can only destroy. It is the family which needs strengthening, and it is the family which today carries not only its burden, but, through taxation, the burden of welfare for delinquent families. We are penalizing responsibility and subsidizing irresponsibility, and, in the process, inviting God's judgment.

## False Expectations

Generation after generation, men are left with bitterness and disillusionment because they expect too much from things which can never deliver more than a little.

I recall one woman, with a good husband, who provided her with a better than average home and life, who was unhappy because he was not very rich. Marriage was somehow supposed to give her everything she had dreamed of, and she refused to enjoy what she had out of resentment and envy that she did not have more.

In 1878, a song was written which became the most popular song among labor unions until "Solidarity Forever" appeared. This song, "Eight Hours," looked to the eight-hour working day as the working man's answer to his problems. Still another song promised the millennium with the eight-hour workday, and its chorus began:

Eight hours! Eight hours!

Shall bring the jubilee;

Eight hours! Eight hours! Shall set the people free.

Of course, the great example of false expectations is Woodrow Wilson and World War I, the war which was supposed to end all wars but which brought in the world's worst century of warfare, tyranny, and persecution. That war could have accomplished something, but when men expected too much from it, the results were disastrous. A bridge with a ten-ton capacity is fine, but not if it is required to take a twenty-ton load.

Today, however, men are expecting too much from things which were never intended to deliver more than a little.

The problem is that men expect salvation from an eight-hour day, or a war, or some like endeavor, as though this were possible. As long as men

trust in such humanistic versions of salvation, they will not only be disappointed but will often do themselves and society much harm.

There is nothing wrong with an eight-hour day, or a six-hour day, if it is economically sound, but no such thing can bring in the jubilee. Wars, unfortunately, must sometimes be fought, but they will not change men's hearts and bring in world peace.

Almost all of modern politics aggravates the problem it offers to solve, because it tries to offer salvation by politics. At best, politics can give us a measure of justice and order, but only if justice and order exist in the lives of the people. Most politicians, however, try to offer us salvation by legislative and administrative acts. The results are disastrous.

It is idiocy to look to politics for salvation. God alone can provide it. Where have you been looking?

## The Oath

Two of the most interesting chapters of the Bible are Deuteronomy 27 and 28. These pronounce God's curses and blessings on disobedience and obedience to Him and His law. These were given through Moses before the children of Israel entered the Promised Land; after their entry, the pronouncements were repeated by Joshua (Josh. 8:34–35). They spell out God's conditions for the possession of the land. Because "[t]he earth is the LORD's" (Ps. 24:1), He lays down the terms of land tenure.

All this has much to do with us. The U.S. Constitution includes something which was important to the founding fathers but whose meaning we have forgotten: the oath of office. An oath is taken on the Bible. It invokes all the curses of God's Word upon disobedience and the blessings of the Word upon obedience. The oath is taken upon an open Bible, originally one opened to Deuteronomy 28.

This has been a solemn oath to God, fundamental to our country from the beginning with one's hand upon His Word, to live, as our Lord says, "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

This is now an empty promise and a routine ritual to our presidents and other politicians, but it remains as ever a serious one in the sight of God. To treat an oath to God as simply an old form or ritual is to invoke His anger.

An oath of office places a man and the people he governs in covenant with God. It binds the man and the people. It is an act of the most serious nature and consequences. Before it is too late, we had better take it as seriously as God does.

## The Blindfold on Justice

For several administrations now, American presidents have been telling us that it is their purpose to be “a president of all the people” and the champion and spokesman of all. Is this a valid goal?

Should the president stand “for the people” or for God’s law and justice? Should he be the representative of capital and labor, farmer and professional man, criminal and victim, homosexual and lesbian, and defend the “rights” of all as they see them? The White House has increasingly seen itself in this role.

The Bible, however, sees the role of the civil authority as of necessity a religious one, representing God’s justice as set forth in God’s law (Deut. 17:18–20). Civil office is a ministry of justice (Rom. 13:4), called upon to execute God’s law with respect to good and evil. God has ordained two ministries. The ministry of grace has as its duty the proclamation of God’s Word: this is the church’s calling. The ministry of justice has the duty of applying God’s Word to criminal and civil affairs: this is the state’s calling.

The Bible does provide for grass roots government, with civil authorities or elders ruling from the local level on up, at first chosen by Moses, and then by the people (Deut. 1:13–17). These men, however, were to rule without respect of persons and in terms of the Word of God.

Older statues of justice always portray justice as a blindfolded person. The blindfold is with respect to man. Justice must be oblivious to the status of men, whether rich or poor, and always mindful of God’s law.

What our presidents are saying, when they declare themselves to be the “president of all the people” and mindful of every “right,” is that justice must have no blindfold with respect to man. For them, justice wears an inner blindfold with respect to God and His Word. The result is no justice at all.

## The Lord's Judgment

When we are told in Deuteronomy 1:17 that in courts of law "the judgment is God's," it means the judge administers God's law faithfully. Similarly, we are told that just weights and balances are the Lord's (Prov. 16:11).

All courts of law therefore are to administer God's justice, not man's. In the Bible, the words for "justice" and "righteousness" are identical. God's salvation means for us Christ's righteousness applied to us, to give us a new standing before God. In our relationships with our fellow men, we are to apply God's righteousness, justice or law.

One of our problems today is that humanism enthrones man's word above God's Word, and man's law above God's law. Benjamin Franklin said, "Honesty is the best policy"; Friedrich Nietzsche later held that dishonesty is the best policy. Our Biblical requirement is that we be honest, whether or not it is the best policy for us. Our human situation or judgment cannot take priority over the Word of God.

We are very much in need of a return to God's Word as the command word, the judgment word which must stand. Our humanistic judgments have damaged our courts badly, and they have messed up many human lives. I hear too many church people say, "I think," instead of, "Thus saith the Lord," when they are talking about matters where Scripture is plainspoken. We can edit, amend, revise, or vote down a legislative measure proposed in state chambers, but we have no such amending or veto powers with God's Word. If His Word does not stand with us, we cannot stand before Him.

## Rogation Sunday

In the fifth century, Rogation Days began to be observed by the church. These were days of fasting before Ascension Sunday as signs of repentance for sins and supplications for a blessing on crops.

In America, however, very early a new meaning was added to Rogation Sunday in the Colonial period, a meaning which long remained as an important aspect of country life. Each spring on Rogation Sunday, farmers prayed for a good harvest, and pastor and people walked from the church into the fields to pray for God's blessing on the planted crops.

But this was not all. In the evening, each farmer and his family walked the boundaries of their property and gave thanks for the good earth. As they walked the boundaries, the boy of the family was "bumped" against the landmarks, the boundary stone, or against a boundary tree. If a pond or stream marked the boundary, he was ducked into it. Then the boy who was bumped or ducked was given a small gift. The purpose of the "bumping" and of the gift was to make the boy remember the boundaries of the land he would someday fall heir to. Also, it made the family itself the guardian of the landmarks. As one family walked their landmarks, their neighbors across the line walked the same boundary line and bumped their boy against the same landmarks from the other side.

All this recalls the ancient Biblical practice as well as Solomon's familiar verse: "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Prov. 22:28). Each generation was summoned to honor the boundary marks, not only of the fields, but of moral law.

God's law established a landmark for men to live by. Even as removing the boundary marks of a farm or ranch produces confusion, so any alteration of God's landmarks, His law, produces confusion and anarchy. Scoundrels in ancient Israel went out by night and moved boundary stones

and then plowed the field quickly so that the gain of a few feet would not be noticed. Over the years, this practice ate up their neighbor's acres.

Today, politicians and preachers are continually moving God's landmarks and steadily destroying all moral boundaries and moral order.

A national Rogation Day each spring would serve a good purpose if we could "bump" and duck our straying politicians, preachers, and people, and remind them of God's boundaries. If we don't, God will, and His "bumping" is one of the roughest possible nature.

## God's Tax

The tithe is God's tax. It is required of men by God as their landlord, because, as the Bible repeatedly declares, "The earth is the LORD's" (Exod. 9:29; Ps. 24:1, etc.). God requires the tithe as His tax, but not, as Jesus Christ declared, at the expense of "the weightier matters of the law, judgment [justice], mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matt. 23:23), that is, tithing must go hand in hand with godly morality.

The basic premise of the tithe is thus that "The earth is the LORD's," and He bestows it upon men in return for the tithe and the obedience of faith. Where men and nations neglect their duty to God, the result is judgment.

Because "The earth is the LORD's," it cannot be claimed by the state, taxed by the state, or seized by the state. Such actions are the mark of a tyrant (1 Sam. 8:11–18). The story of Naboth and his vineyard is a classic case of the tyranny of an expropriating state and ruler.

The tithe belongs to God, not to the church. "And all the tithe of the land ... is the LORD's: it is holy unto the LORD" (Lev. 27:30). The church has no right to equate itself with God. When the church is faithful to its Lord, then and then only is it entitled to receive the tithe. If men give to a church that denies Jesus Christ, which preaches an anti-Christian social gospel, and which proclaims another plan of salvation, to give to that church is not to give a tithe to God but against Him. It means participating in an anti-Christian enterprise.

Malachi declared that denying God His due was robbing Him, and it results in "a curse," whereas, yielding God His due results in so great "a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:8–10). What belongs to God must be rendered to God, to truly godly religious causes, even as that which belongs to Caesar, to the state, must be rendered to Caesar (Mark 12:17).

In the Old Testament the tithe went to the support of the priests and Levites. The function of these men was more than what we today call religious: it included education and many other social functions, all from a strictly religious perspective. The tithe thus provided for, among other things, both religious nurture and worship, and for schools. The teaching function of priests and Levites is often cited in Scripture.

The purpose of the tithe was to render unto God His due, but it also served to protect property. The tithe was a manifest witness that God is the Lord over property, and not the state, and property is subject to the laws of God, not the laws of the state. Biblical law strictly protects property rights. As H. B. Rand noted in the *Digest of the Divine Law*,

*Nowhere in the Bible is there any indication that property rights are to ever be abolished. On the contrary, such rights are emphasized and safeguards are placed around that property to protect a man in his possessions. Liberty for the individual is non-existent apart from freedom of possession and the protection of personal holdings and property, with adequate compensation for its loss or destruction.<sup>i</sup>*

## Bread Upon the Waters

One of the more beautiful verses of Scripture reads, “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days” (Eccles. 11:1). To some people, the meaning is a mystery, but to many farmers it has always been clear and telling. The “bread cast upon the waters” was rice, the farmer’s remaining store of grain, which he sowed in order to reap a harvest. Sometimes, with bad weather or famine, the farmer sowed his remaining grain weeping, for if it failed, the family starved. The Psalmist said, “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Ps. 126:5–6).

The meaning drawn from this by the Psalmist, and by Solomon, is clear-cut. Man cannot live in terms of the present moment only. The pagan attitude “eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we shall die” is ungodly. It is destructive of men and nations. The ancient farmer—who in time of famine, with tears sowed his present store of grain, rice or wheat, for a future harvest—went hungry often before the harvest came. We have some vivid pictures from old records of the gnawing hunger, of weeping children, and of weary farmers, as they waited for a harvest which meant life or death. The choice they faced as planting time came was simply this, live well today by eating up the future, or sacrifice today for life tomorrow.

Today our worldwide economic policy seems simply this: eat up the future. Use up the natural resources carelessly; pile up debt upon debt and let tomorrow’s world worry about it; live it up now and save nothing for tomorrow. As a nation, we are eating up the future at an increasingly rapid rate. We are piling restriction upon restriction on our farmers, increasing taxes so that a man will soon be paying a rent in taxes for his land, and then we ask the farmer to feel happy about being given a handout called a subsidy. Good soil and good farmers are any nation’s first and best natural

resource. A nation which harms either is committing suicide: it is eating up the future.

Our world today is full of planners, but their planning is geared to pleasing people today, to satisfying bureaucratic demands for power, to winning elections, and to a variety of other pressures which add up to one result: eating up the future.

Preparation for the future requires a number of things, first and foremost a truly Biblical faith. Second, the life of a nation is in the soil, in its farming, and the farmer must be free, and he must be provident. Third, a people cannot survive if it lacks the character to forego present benefits in terms of future plans. Those who do "shall doubtless come again with rejoicing," bringing their sheaves with them.

## What Is Law?

Several writers lately have declared that law has nothing to do with morality, and that it is high time we stopped trying to legislate morality. It is time to examine this statement and understand the menace in it. The fact is that every law has something to do with morality. A law says something is right or wrong; it makes certain actions punishable by law because society believes them to be wrong.

All laws are therefore legal enactments of a moral code. This goes for traffic laws too. Their purpose is to protect life and property, because our moral law says, "Thou shalt not kill" and "Thou shalt not steal," and destroying another man's property is one way of robbing him of it. Laws of courtroom procedure are also moral laws: their purpose is to further justice and prevent perjury and injustice.

It is impossible to separate morality from law, because civil law is simply one branch of moral law, and morality is the foundation of law. Laws cannot make men good: that is the work of the Holy Spirit. But laws can prevent men from doing evil. When we see a speed limit sign, or a police officer, it does restrain our foot on the gas pedal. No thief is saved by laws against theft, but society is protected by laws against theft.

The foundation of law is morality, but what is the foundation of morality? Every morality rests on a religion, on a faith concerning the ultimate power in or over the universe. Buddhism has one kind of morality, Mohammedanism another. Every religion has a different moral code because their religious foundations differ.

The foundation of our American law is Christianity, Biblical faith. Our American system of laws will not last long without the foundation of Christian morality and faith.

The late Chief Parker of the Los Angeles Police Department said in 1965 that we are in the midst of a legal revolution. Indeed we are. Our historic Christian American legal system is being subverted by humanistic and anti-Christian faiths, and as a result law and order are declining. This is the real revolution today, revolution against Christianity. During the Viet Nam Day Protest Speeches at Berkeley, one Communist stated that “revolution [sic] with machine guns ... are the least important. The revolutions that are really important go on in people’s minds and in the way they think and feel.” This, the basic revolution, the speaker said, was being won.

How far has this revolution gone in you? Is law for you basically Christian, or is it humanistic and revolutionary?

The promises of God to us as a people are for obedience to His law by faith: “[D]o them, that ye may live” (Deut. 4:1). “And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth” (Deut. 28:1). If not, God declared “that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee” (Deut. 28:15). The choice is an obvious one. And we had better choose quickly.

# The Two Ten Commandments

When God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, He instituted thereby the laws to govern man's relationship to God and to his fellow men. The first four commandments govern worship. The other six govern the family, property, man's speech and testimony ("Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour"), and the heart of man ("Thou shalt not covet"). With the triumph of Christianity in the Western world, these laws became basic to all society, and the result was Christian civilization.

In 1847, however, another set of ten commandments for man and society were proclaimed by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*. It was a program stated deliberately in ten points in order to provide the "new law" for mankind, to replace the Bible and its Ten Commandments. Marx' new "ten commandments" called for (1) abolition of private property in land; (2) the income tax; (3) abolition of all right of inheritance; (4) confiscation of all property of rebels and emigrants; (5) a national bank monopoly and concentration and centralization of credit in its hands; (6) state control of communications and transport; (7) state ownership of factories and instruments of production; (8) equal liability of all to labor and establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture; (9) combination of agriculture with industry and the abolition of the distinction between town and country; (10) free education, plus child labor as a part of education. The result, Marx believed, would be a wonderful and happy world.

Except for Marx' call for a new form of child labor, all his "ten commandments" are now in part or in whole in operation. The *Communist Manifesto* is a better description of our political goals than party platforms. But, the closer we get to Marx' communist heaven on earth, the more it resembles hell.

In every society, there must be a basic law, a fundamental law that establishes right and wrong. This the Ten Commandments has done for Western civilization for centuries. It has made God the ultimate law-giver, the Judge of right and wrong. The Ten Commandments has made worship, family, property, and moral integrity basic to man and society. It has been the foundation of our legal systems, as T. R. Ingram has shown in *The World Under God's Law*.

What Marx wanted, and what modern politics is doing, is to break up Christian civilization to create a new order, one based neither on God nor on godly character, law, and morality, but on *environmentalism*. Man is not a sinner, Marx believed, and it is not man's fault that he fails: it is his environment. Change the environment, change the world, and you will change man, and the result will be paradise on earth.

Two law systems are at war today, two sets of Ten Commandments. One offers man the good life through faith, godly morality, and law. The other offers the good life through changing the environment, that is, by revolutionary action. For the Christian the environment can only truly be changed as men are changed, and these men then remake their world and place it under God's law. For the Marxist men are changed by changing the environment, because man is only a reflex of his environment, not a lord over it. Between these two positions there can be no peace nor any coexistence.

## The Vengeance of God

In 2 Thessalonians 1:8, we are told that the Lord will come “[i]n flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The word “taking” is in the Greek *didontos*, from *didomi*, which most commonly means “give.” In other words, the vengeance of the Lord is not something brought in as an imposition on sin but as a necessary consequence of sin.

This same thought also appears plainly in Deuteronomy 28:2 and 15. We are told that faithfulness leads to inescapable blessings which come upon us and overtake us. Similarly, the curses of God upon disobedience are inescapable: “[A]ll these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee.”

We can say that, just as jumping off a tall cliff will kill us when we reach the end of our fast journey, so too sin is a trip that yields disaster. That built-in disaster, now and at the end of time, is the judgment of the Lord. If we jump off a high cliff, the end result is inescapable; so too is all sinning. The wages it pays is death (Rom. 6:23).

This is true of men, and also of nations. When a nation seeks its own will rather than God’s way, it embarks on a disaster course. It jumps off the cliff of reality.

Men and nations are today racing for that cliff in their lawlessness and blindness. They refuse to believe in God’s inescapable judgment; if they talk about God at all, it is only of His love.

God’s love and grace are very real, but so too is His judgment. To eliminate any aspect of God’s being is to falsify Scripture and to turn the living God into an idol of our imagination and a vain thing.

## Planting Thorns and Thistles

How long can any country last if it penalizes good and subsidizes evil? How can a country survive if it places a tax on work and gives that money to the lazy and the improvident? Such a country will get exactly what it promotes. Our Lord declared, "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt. 7:16). Before you pick grapes and figs, you must plant, care for, and protect your grape vines and fig trees. A country which wants good, hardworking, and productive citizens must protect and advance the welfare of such citizens.

But we are not doing this. The landowner, who has worked hard and long to buy and develop his property, is penalized by means of heavy taxes on his land and income to take care of men who will not work, to subsidize college hoodlums whose idea of education is to lecture their elders and to destroy society, and to subsidize revolutionists who are at war against law and order.

The California farmer is mainly a man who has earned his land the hard way. Some are the descendants of early settlers and have a long background of hard work and farming. Others came here from Oklahoma and Arkansas in the Depression, with very little to their name, and entire families worked to earn enough to buy a farm. Still others came as immigrants, and they and their children have worked their way up to a position of dignity and substance.

Robert Ardrey has called the productivity of the small American farmer one of "the best-kept secrets in the arsenal of American power." Why? The small American farmer who owns his own land and works it with his wife and children is the most productive farmer in the world. The big collective farms of the Soviet Union, the serfs of ancient times, the tenant farmers of the world, and the big land companies of America cannot match his performance. Acre for acre, the American small farmer out produces them

all. His land is his property and his future, and no one can equal him in his ability to use it and protect it. Fully half of our farms are no larger than in Lincoln's day, and they are still the backbone of American productivity.

But we are not usually told this. Instead, we are told that, first, the small farmer is obsolete and out of date and must go. Second, the small farm is being taxed out of existence by a tax rate which is increasingly approaching confiscation and robbery. The American farmer is being penalized in order to subsidize the American bum. These are harsh words, but the growing threat to a farmer's ability to survive is a harsh fact.

In other words, as a country, we are busy taxing and destroying grape vines and fig trees, that is, good and hardworking men, in order to subsidize and plant thorns and thistles! Does this make sense?

Our Lord warned, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 7:19).

## Thieves and Robbers

Jesus declared, "I am the door of the sheep," a figure of speech meaning that He alone is the way to salvation. "All that ever came before me are thieves

and robbers" (John 10:7-8). All other religious leaders (other than the Biblical writers who spoke of Him and declared His Word) are enemies of man, "thieves and robbers." That included Confucius, Socrates, Buddha, Mohammed, and others, for, as one Biblical scholar has stated, the expression is exclusive and takes in past, present, and future. Jesus was emphatic: He *alone* is the truth: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

The premise of our Lord's statement is a clear-cut one: truth is exclusive; it cannot include a lie. But no idea is more alien to our modern temper. We want a foot in every camp; we want to eat our cake and have it too. We want God, but with no offense to Satan.

But truth is exclusive; it is not tolerant. If two plus two equals four, it is not true that it equals three or that it equals five, nor can we say that a child who answers three or five is "almost right." The answer is either right or wrong. We cannot say that a man is a persistent liar and at the same time call him honest and trustworthy. We cannot say that a man is a thief and at the same time insist that he respects other people's rights and properties.

But, of course, this is what we are trying to say. And we are trying to break down the exclusiveness of truth and the very idea that there is a right and wrong. A child recently brought home an arithmetic problem which began, "If eight is greater than fifteen ..." If eight is greater than fifteen, then a lie can be greater than the truth because no absolute standard remains. And we are destroying absolute standards. We are justifying the lawbreaker and the criminal, and condemning the honest and the hardworking. Our world is in rebellion against truth and the law of truth.

There is, however, an unchanging hardness about truth. Jesus said, "I am ... the truth...; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Jesus expressed not a hope, but a hard reality. There is no other way. Men either live by truth, or it kills them. If a businessman treats \$8 as greater than \$15, he is soon bankrupt. A nation that coddles its criminals and penalizes its godly citizens must either change or perish. Our Lord said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt. 7:16).

Truth is exclusive in every area, in religion, science, farming, and all things else. If you don't believe it, go pick your grapes from thorns, and your figs from thistles.

## The Serpent in the Fence

One of my favorite verses has long been Ecclesiastes 10:8, which concludes, “[W]hoso breaketh an hedge [or fence], a serpent shall bite him.” Anyone who knows me very long will hear that verse. What does it mean?

Fences in Bible times were often hedge fences, sometimes of thorny bushes. These kept cattle out of grain fields, orchards, vineyards, and gardens. It was a temptation to some, whose pastures were dry and barren, to break a fence at night and let their cattle go into a neighbor’s field to eat, and then to claim the cattle did it. There was, however, a big reason why such hedge fences were rarely broken: they became hiding places for poisonous snakes. Thus, anyone breaking through a hedge fence was almost certain to get bitten.

The meaning is this: anyone who breaks God’s law finds his judgment written into his violation. The law or fence he breaks has within it God’s judgment against him, so there is no escape. Instead of leading to good pasture, it leads to death.

Today, all around us, men, old and young, are breaking the fences of God’s law-order. They believe all this leads to a happy and free world. Don’t you believe it, and never follow them through that break in the wall. Death awaits there to strike the trespasser. Instead of freedom from God and His law, the result is judgment and death.

All around us, men who are trespassers against God’s law are facing the judgment of death. If we believe in the Lord and know His Word to be truth, we know this is so.

Therefore, let the dead bury the dead. We have work to do, repairing the fences, proclaiming God’s sovereign power and grace unto salvation,

exercising dominion and subduing the earth in His name, and rejoicing together as heirs of “the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7).

Therefore, rejoice. In a sinful world, it is only natural that there are problems and lawlessness. But, even more, there is also God’s government, judgment, and grace. Those who break God’s fences face death. Those who are the redeemed of God have life, joy, and peace. And they strengthen the fences.

## The Exaltation of a People

It seems very remote now, but when the British began their war against the American colonies, they faced a problem. Loose women were too few in America to provide for the troops, so the British War Office contracted to have 3,500 street prostitutes transported to America. The women of England were mostly unwilling to go at any price to a “barbarous” land, so Captain Jackson had to fill his quota with Blacks from the West Indies; these latter women came to be known as “Jackson Whites.”

This and like actions turned many colonists against the mother country. It was noticed that very few Britishers had Bibles, and even fewer used them. To the Americans, all this spelled evil, and the prospect of God’s judgment against the British. Even Jefferson, far from an evangelical in his opinions, believed that the British were sowing a harvest of judgment.

Over and over again, the colonial clergy stressed Proverbs 14:34, “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” To them, it was the Word of God, and an article of faith and life. Washington stressed the necessity of seeking God’s favor by faithfulness to Him.

Were they right or wrong? Were they simple-minded for believing that righteousness (or, justice before God) is the most important element in a nation’s strength, or were they wiser than the men of this generation?

If they were right, then we are very much off base. Then, far more serious than any constitutional deviation is our religious and moral waywardness. Righteousness, the proverb tells us, lifts up and makes great a people, whereas sin brings a reproach or shame and disgrace to a nation. Faithfulness and justice before God bring grace, sin disgrace. The exaltation of a people is thus God’s handiwork, and it is dependent upon our faithfulness to Him. The exaltation of nations is thus not political but, in the truest sense possible, religious. What men and nations do adds up finally to grace or disgrace from the hand of God.

# Hindsight

One of the most common forms of pretended wisdom is hindsight, wisdom after the event. It is always easy, when a thing is done, to recite reasons why a man should have done thus and so, but to give the wise counsel before the event is a rare gift.

Some years ago, I heard a historian, an old reprobate, ridicule several great men of past history, calling attention with scorn to their mistakes. Yet the errors of these men at their worst would almost have been virtues in this historian, who at his best was no more than a learned and drunken fool. Many historians are so puffed up with the wisdom of hindsight that they find it difficult to forgive men and nations for not making use of them, and they vent their frustrations on great men of the past.

It is easy to have hindsight when we know the beginning and ending, but to judge the future with a limited knowledge of the present is another matter. I once told a man, who with hindsight was condemning himself for what he called a wrong decision, that his decision, in view of all that was possible for him to know at that time, was a very sound one. Not being God, he could not possibly have known some of the factors that set aside his efforts.

The wisdom of hindsight is a dangerous and false kind of wisdom unless it becomes a means of correcting what errors we make and learning better judgment for today's decisions.

Moreover, the wisdom of hindsight is a foolish thing unless it leads to foresight, to better planning and sounder actions today and tomorrow.

Most of all, there can be neither sound hindsight nor foresight without faith. In perhaps the greatest single sentence of Scripture, St. Paul declared, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Our

sovereign God rules and overrules in all things to bring good out of our sins and out of our mistakes when we are His people. We can thus with hindsight see that God has used our failures to bring forth good, and with foresight, we can act in the assurance that we are never alone, that God is with us and His purpose shall prevail.

Thus, we can survey all events in the confidence that “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37). The only wise hindsight and foresight is to view all things in terms of God. All things come from Him, and they shall accomplish His purpose in the face of all things. To see anything apart from God, however perplexing it may be, is not wisdom but blindness, whereas to see His hand in all things is true hindsight and foresight.

## Perseverance and Progress

The great poet and preacher, John Donne (1571–1630/1), in a famous sermon spoke of the difficulty of persevering in prayer, even in a fairly short prayer. He found that his mind wandered easily, and in his most earnest praying, trifling thoughts crept in. He observed sorrowfully:

*I neglect God and his angels for the noise of a fly, for the rattling of a coach, for the whining of a door; I talk on in the same posture of praying, eyes lifted up, knees bowed down, as though I prayed to God; and if God or his angels should ask me when I thought last of God in that prayer, I cannot tell. Sometimes I find that I forgot what I was about, but when I began to forget it I cannot tell. A memory of yesterday's pleasures, a fear of tomorrow's dangers, a straw under my knee, a noise in my ear, a light in mine eye, an anything, a nothing, a fancy, a chimera in my brain troubles me in my prayer. So certainly is there nothing, nothing in spiritual things perfect in this world.*

Man's mind, as well as his feet and devotion, wander easily, and we are readily given to changing our minds. Our attention wanders always, and we are better at drifting than commanding in our lives.

Yet Scripture makes repeatedly an amazing statement about us, namely, that we shall persevere in our faith. When we are in the state of grace, we persevere therein to our life's end. This, however, is not our doing. We "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Pet. 1:5). Moreover, we can be "confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

This is a fact of inestimable importance. Men apart from Christ tend to be as firm as sand, and as solid as water. They cannot be depended on. To trust in man is to risk disaster. More than one great man and movement have failed because the people lost interest, changed their minds, changed sides, or drifted away.

Into the inconstancy and drifting changes of this world, God introduces a steady and purposeful element, His people. The people of God are not immune, as Donne saw so clearly, to a drifting mind, but, as he saw with intensity in his many sonnets and sermons, they are always recalled to their ordained path and duty, and they persevere therein by the grace of God.

Pagan philosophers, observing man's drifting ways, spoke of history as being cyclical. All things for them were and are meaningless. Progress is impossible, and only drift and change are apparent to history.

The Bible, however, tells us that God's sovereign grace commands and directs man in His appointed and ordained way. Man cannot get "off the track" permanently when he is truly a member of Christ. He has an inevitable and commanding direction which brings purpose and meaning to his life and to the world. He moves in a world of total meaning in which God makes "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Without this perseverance, neither life nor history would have direction or meaning. With it, they fulfill God's glorious purpose.

## Faith and Works

According to James, “[F]aith without works is dead” (James 2:26). The necessary relationship between faith and works is stressed by St. Paul (Rom. 3:31) and very strongly by the Lord (Matt. 7:16–29). Their words mean that if you act like a stinker, that’s what you are, whereas if you are godly in all your ways, you are godly. As the Lord says, a good tree brings forth good fruit, and a bad tree bad fruit. There is a consistency between faith and life.

Joel R. Beeke has described it this way: “Obedience comes spontaneously and is like fruit brought forth.” He says also that the “new birth infallibly issues in new life.”

This, very simply, means that the Lord makes a great difference in a person’s life. We cannot excuse someone’s evil ways by saying that whatever his actions may be, his heart is still right with the Lord. To do so is grossly insulting to God; it implies that the regenerating power of His grace is impotent to change a person.

When an earthquake hits, it makes a difference. When a tornado hits, you can see the force of its movement. An earthquake and a tornado have little power compared to the regenerating grace of the Almighty.

There are too many church people who claim to be saved and yet are no different from those around them who are without Christ. Is it any wonder some churches are powerless?

The living church, the church filled with regenerate individuals, has always been a mover and shaker on earth. God sends us people who can change the church and the world by His power.

## Listening to Life

Within a matter of a few days, two people reacted very differently to what I was preaching and teaching. The first expressed dissatisfaction in a general way but refused to discuss it, saying, "You're a hard person to talk to." I learned later that this person had the death of one man, and the devastation of another, on his conscience, and he disliked any forthright teaching of God's Word. The second, a non-Christian, listened eagerly, later asked questions, accepted Christ as Lord and Savior, has grown rapidly since, and, over and over again, has remarked, "You're such an easy person to talk to."

Things are hard or easy to listen to, and a pastor who preaches faithfully, difficult or simple to talk to, depending on the state of our conscience and our receptivity to God's truth.

It was Mark Twain who said that it was not what he could not understand in the Bible that bothered him, but what he could understand. Precisely. People do not avoid the Bible because it is difficult to understand as much as because what they understand condemns their conscience and throws light on dark corners in their lives which they prefer to keep dark.

We cannot be indifferent to God, although we may pretend to be. Because all things are created by God, all things witness to God, even to every atom of our being. We either suppress that witness, or we affirm it. St. Paul was emphatic: every man, everywhere has this resounding witness: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).

If you suppress that witness, you suppress with it the meaning of all creation, and, ultimately, you will suppress life itself. Our Lord declares, in Proverbs 8:36, "[A]ll they that hate me love death." Our age is seeing the

outworkings of the love of death in personal, national, and international courses which are suicidal.

The choice is the same as when Moses declared, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deut. 30:19). Our Lord makes the issue even clearer: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Now, the question is this: are you listening to Life?

## The Water of Life

Blessings that we enjoy in abundance, we tend to take for granted, and to forget their importance. We might feel differently about water, for example, if we passed a sign on our way into the desert, reading, "Next water, 700 miles."

An American anthropologist who passed such a sign has given us a grim picture of the necessity of water. The average-sized man has about four gallons of water in his body. In the desert, a man must have as an absolute minimum two gallons a day to live. He can lose up to three gallons a day in bad desert conditions, and more than a pint by breathing. There is no life for man, nor growth for vegetation, without water.

Our Lord knew this and had these facts in mind when He declared Himself to be the water of life: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). A planet without water is a dead planet, and a man without the water of life is spiritually dead.

The Sahara Desert was once, within the span of human records, a fertile area of farms and cattle ranches. Weather changes, dating perhaps to the time of Abraham, began to change the nature of the Sahara. From a rich and productive land, it has become a byword for desolation and emptiness. The difference is water. The most fertile areas of the world today can become new Saharas if they have no water.

The point Scripture makes is that man is like a Sahara Desert, desolate, lonely, and unproductive, when he is without the water of life, Jesus Christ.

The summons of Scripture therefore is a forthright one. "[L]et him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

David declared to God, “[M]y soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land” (Ps. 143:6), because David knew his need. He was also fully aware of the national need. The country, weak in faith, was like a desert: “[M]y flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is” (Ps. 63:1). In a nation where God’s Word was despised, life was like a desert, and David longed to see the power of God manifested in the land.

Like David, we too are thirsty men, longing for the righteousness of God to be manifested in us and in our country. The world around us is becoming like a desert because of men’s contempt for the Water of Life, and we are more and more aware of the growing desolation. In the face of all this, the certain Word of Christ is a sure promise: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6).

# Prayer

On his last voyage to America, Columbus fell seriously ill at a time of great danger and possible mutiny. Greatly exhausted, and down with a high fever, he was not only weak in body but in spirit also.

In his Journal, he wrote of himself, "Thou criest for help, with doubt in thy heart. Ask thyself who has afflicted thee so grievously and so often: God or the world? The privileges and covenants which God giveth are not taken back by Him. Nor does He say to them that have served Him that He meant it otherwise, or that it should be taken in another sense; nor does He inflict torments to show His power. Whatever He promises He fulfils with increase; for such are His ways."

Columbus, a greater man by far than most men realize, was right. His troubles came from men, not from God, and one of those men was Columbus himself. Some of his most serious problems were a product of his own errors. Columbus realized this in part and wrote, "Turn thyself to Him, and acknowledge thy sins. His mercy is infinite."

At first, in his sin and illness, Columbus had asked God to change. As he prayed, he came to realize that instead it was he who must change, not God, and men who must be transformed, not God's purposes and ways.

Perhaps Columbus' problem is ours also. We are distressed at the way things are, and at God's government of the universe. We may not be altogether honest about it, but in much of our praying, we are asking God to change so that we can remain as we are, to have our way in our hopes and plans.

It too seldom occurs to us that it is not God who needs an overhauling and remaking but we ourselves. The point of too much of our praying is that we want things and God to change to please us, not we ourselves changed to please God.

David prayed, in the crisis of his life, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10). Will it take a similar horror and grief to make us pray the same way, and mean it?

We need changing continually, but just as continuously we want God to change, not us. But remember, when you pray, that you are required to please God by believing in Him and by an active obedience to Him. Moreover, we should always remember that God's greatest gift to us is not in things but in His grace as manifested in Jesus Christ.

Among other things, prayer emphatically means coming to God to be changed by Him, and to know wherein we need changing. Confession is a part of prayer for this reason. It reminds us that we need God's transforming grace and power.

What are you praying about?

# True Prayer

The trouble with most prayer is that the person praying is not really talking with God but carrying on a recitation into the air. True prayer involves communion and conversation, and it is a continuous thing. We do not limit our conversation with our husband or wife to a set time, at meals or before going to sleep, and then keep silent all the rest of the day. We talk when we have something to say. The same is true with God. If we limit our prayers to set, formal times, we soon have little to say then.

Then how do we pray? Dozens of times in a day, we talk with God, usually only a sentence or two. Do we have a difficult and trying person to meet or deal with? Then we pray simply, "Lord, give me patience and wisdom to meet this person in Thy Spirit and grace."

Is our task one we dislike? Then we ask, "Lord, I hate this job, but I must do it. Give me grace to do this thing in the right way and in a better frame of mind."

If we make a blunder, we say, "Lord, I was pretty stupid that time. Help me grow up in my handling of such problems." We share with Him, in a sentence or two, a hundred times in a day sometimes, our problems, our delights with things, our fears, our hopes, our everything.

And we must not forget gratitude. "Thanks for helping me through that one, Lord." Or we say, "There must be something for me to learn here, Lord, that I don't even know about, so please, Lord, teach me, so that I do better next time."

If God is real to us, He is "a very present help in trouble" and in time of need (Ps. 46:1). We therefore call upon Him continuously, to share with Him our needs, hopes, joys, griefs, and gratitudes. This is what St. Paul means when he writes, "Be careful [or anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be

made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6–7). There is no better way to live.

# Church and Government

One of the more serious examples of false or muddled thinking today is with regard to the use of the words “church” and “government.” When people say “government,” they usually mean the state or federal government, and nothing could be more false. The Puritans knew better. The state for them was “civil government.”

Government meant first of all the self-government of the Christian man. There is no more basic and important government in society than that. Government also means the family, a very important area of rule and authority. It means the school, which governs the early lives of people, and it means also the church, a very essential area of government.

Our work governs us, as do our friends and relatives, and the people of our community, by their attitudes and opinions. Clubs and organizations we join also govern us. The kinds of government are many. Civil government is an important one among many, not the only one, and the most important government of all in human society (other than God’s) is self-government.

The same misuse appears with the word “church.” We usually mean by that word a religious institution, a denomination, or sometimes a building. The church, however, is first of all the mystical body of Christ, the true, living, and supernatural congregation of all the redeemed in time and in eternity. It is thus far greater than our church or its local building.

We must be loyal to our particular visible church insofar as it is sincerely and faithfully obedient to Christ and truly manifests and represents His Body, not to perfection but with essential faith and obedience. We can sometimes be disobedient to Christ by obeying “our church.”

In any case, if we limit the meanings of church and government to an institution and a state, we have not only misused those words but also limited and impoverished our lives. Instead of seeing ourselves as the basic government in human society, we have handed over our lives to the civil government. We are the government, each in our conduct of our lives under God. To forget that is to take the road to slavery.

Moreover, the true church is first and last Jesus Christ Himself and every particular congregation insofar as it is faithful and obedient to Him. To limit the church to an institution is to put ourselves out of communion with Him who is the church.

The way we use these words tells us much about our time. A man speaks out of his heart and faith, and we have been trusting too much in things present, things as we see them, rather than in things as God ordained them. For as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

# The Stolen Church

The greatest robbery of our day is the stealing of the church. The church properly belongs to Jesus Christ. It exists in His name, and its purpose is to preach the Word of God, administer the sacraments, and faithfully apply godly discipline to Christ's members. But the church has been stolen. The thieves are the modernists, socialists, humanists, all of which adds up to one fact, anti-Christianity. Using the name of Christ, these sanctimonious thieves have crept into the church, gained control of it, captured the pulpit and the bank accounts and endowed funds, and they are using the church to advance their anti-Christian purposes. Instead of proclaiming Christ, the church is now preaching social revolution and financing it. First of all, then, the church has been stolen from Jesus Christ.

Second, the church has been stolen from the people of God, from faithful Christians. In numerous cases, faithful Christians, whose money built the church and supported the pastors, have seen a minister or priest assigned to their church who denounced his faith, preached doubts concerning Christ, promoted social revolution, and drove out of the church the very people whose faith, work, and dollars had built it. These Christians have been robbed: their church has been stolen from them. When they protest the theft, these faithful believers are actually denounced as troublemakers! Is it any wonder that shock and bewilderment are being expressed in many communities?

What can be done? To answer that question, it is necessary to look realistically at the situation. Two things are under attack: first, Christianity, and second, church property.

The church property has been largely captured, and the law courts on the whole support the legality of that takeover. This is very regretful, but not much can be done about it now. The more important questions are, have they captured us, and will they destroy Christianity?

They cannot capture us if we refuse to be a part of them, if we walk out of their anti-Christian churches and lay afresh the old foundations of true faith. And they cannot destroy Christianity, because it is not of man but of God, not a natural force but a supernatural force. On the contrary, God will in due time judge and destroy them, and we had better avoid these churches which are headed for judgment.

We are in a battle, and we had better realize it and move in terms of it. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:13). And what kind of a stand can you make associating with thieves and supporting them?

The church must be rebuilt, not in terms of any man's wishes, but in terms of the Word of God. If it is to be Christ's church, it must be governed by God's Word and Christ's saving purpose. We are told today that the church must "serve men." This is not its purpose: it was called into existence by Jesus Christ to be the community of the redeemed, the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. And this it can be only by faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

## Like People, Like Priest

One of the less popular verses of the Bible is Isaiah 24:2. Isaiah, in speaking of the coming judgment on the Kingdom of Judah, declared: "And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him." People in Isaiah's day knew that something was wrong with their world, but not with themselves; the people blamed the priests, and the priests the people; the buyer blamed the seller, and the seller the buyer, and so on. And they were all right; corruption extended to every area of society. Therefore, God declared through Isaiah, judgment would affect them all equally.

What about our situation today? On all sides we hear extensively a chorus of complaints about everyone. Especially of late we have heard complaints about our politicians, and the complaints are true. But it is possible to say, that, with all their faults, our politicians may still be better than we deserve. Allan Nevins, in his study *Grover Cleveland*, wrote very wisely: "Character is not made overnight. When it appears in transcendent degree, it is usually the product of generations of disciplined ancestry, or a stern environment, or both." Let us apply this to the situation today. If a people lack discipline and character, will they elect to office or call to the pulpit and school men of discipline and character? And if the homes and schools do not produce young men of Christian faith and stability, how can we then expect to find such character in any area of life? "Like people, like priest" (Hosea 4:9).

If the roots of a tree are diseased or dying, the tree will produce diseased or withered fruit. If the roots of a people, their Christian faith and character, are diseased then their fruits, their children, and their lack of

Christian training, will bear an ugly fruit, and the results will be written large across all society.

We have many needs, but certainly one of the basic needs is Christian regeneration and reformation. The family cannot expect the world to do its work for it by disciplining its children. The family, church, and school must be truly Christian, and this means work. There is no harvest in any field without hard and patient work. This means families must take their Christian responsibilities seriously. It means reestablishing truly Christian churches, and forming independent Christian schools. Our most hopeful sign for the future is that many are doing this. Until then, let us not be surprised that, as our people are, so shall our society be.

## Sensitive Church Members

One of the most amazing facts about all too many church members is their extreme touchiness, and I do mean extreme. How often we hear someone say that they will never again set foot in that church after what the pastor, or Mrs. Jones, said to them or about them.

All too often these hypersensitive people have been the most ready to talk very harshly about other people. Their hypersensitivity to the least criticism goes hand in hand with a hypersensitivity to the shortcomings of other people. As a result, they read hidden meanings on all sides, sometimes with sharp insight, and also very often with a lack of charity and understanding.

The counsel and command of St. Paul to all who are Christians, those who are hurt or have hurt someone, is very clear: "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:13-14). "The bond of perfectness" and unity in Christ is not the ability to be hypersensitive but to be charitable and forbearing.

Forbearance, charity, and love cannot be postponed to Heaven. We need them here and now. If we cannot practice them here, we will not have the opportunity to practice them in Heaven. We are required to be uncompromising about the things of the faith but not about our own requirements. The standard is the Lord, not us.

The church can never be the army of the Lord when so many church members are acting like hypersensitive hospital cases, and a pastor's continual task is smoothing ruffled feathers. Such hypersensitivity leads to basketcase members, an impediment to Christ's church and a great source of aid and comfort to its enemies.

No doubt, as you read this, you can think of a number of people whom all this fits. The important question is thus: does it fit you? And if so, what are you going to do about it?

## The Congregation of the Dead

A friend who is a very fine man and a superior farmer lives in an area where a beautiful game bird has been planted. This fact does not please him. In fact, what the birds eat makes a \$5,000 difference in his income. He would like to be rid of the birds, but it is illegal for him to do anything about it.

I like to tell that story as I travel just to see the reactions I get. Almost all are of two kinds: some feel that they, as hunters, have much at stake in extending the territory and feed of the game birds, and the farmer must realize that his land belongs to the animals too. Others are against any hunting and are hostile to the attitude of farmer and hunter alike. None of them really answer my question when I then ask, "How would you feel if the \$5,000 came out of your income?"

Men are always ready to see everyone except themselves make sacrifices for some desired goal. It is the course of wisdom and understanding to ask in all situations, "What is God's will in this matter, and what does His Word say?" and "Am I ready to pay the price for what I want?"

A society in which men penalize others for what they want, and fail to consider God's Word, is devoid of wisdom and understanding. Solomon tells us, "The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead" (Prov. 21:16). The same is true of a nation. Any country that is made up of men whose policies are governed by their will, in disregard of God's law and the cost to other men, is headed for death. It is working to fulfill the membership requirements for the congregation of the dead.

# A Vulture Society vs. A Diaconal Society

Our Lord calls attention over and over again to the lust for power which marks the ungodly, and their dog-eat-dog mentality. It is a philosophy of doing in others before they do you. Christ's commandment here is blunt and simple: "But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:26–28).

The choice He tells us is an inescapable one: we have either a vulture society or a diaconal one, a world of hatred, evil, and distrust, or a world of faith, grace, and ministry.

The diaconal society, however, can only be built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. The modern state offers a pretended ministry of service as a means to exercising a pagan dominion, and the result is a vulture society of hatred, crime, and exploitation. It has no grace and therefore no ministry.

We cannot escape this choice: the more we build our country on any other foundation than Jesus Christ, the more we become a depraved and vicious social order, a vulture society.

The change must begin with us, and then every area of life and thought must be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ. If the Lord does not govern us, the vultures will.

Take your choice. You pay the price with your life: is it Christ or the vultures?

## On Eating Our Gifts

Over twenty years ago, a contractor told me a very interesting story of a man who had supervised work for a construction company for some years. Shortly before his retirement, he was asked to handle a small job, the construction of a new house. Feeling very sorry for himself that no fuss was being made over his coming retirement, the man cut corners ruthlessly on the job and pocketed the difference, having little regard for the fact that a barely passable job was the result. When the work was done, to his horror he was handed the keys to the house. It was his retirement gift from an appreciative company. The man then had to live with his sin.

In the Biblical laws of sacrifice, the peace and thank offerings to God were presented before the Lord and then much of it eaten by the worshipper and his family (Lev. 3:1–17). In other words, a man ate much of his gift to God.

The requirement for all offerings was that they be the best of the herd and of the field, without blemish. God rejected the idea that man could bring Him leftovers and culls. Some of man's offerings man had to eat in part, which, among other things, made clear to the worshipper that what a man gave to God also came back to him.

Today, all too many people feel that God is only entitled to the leftovers—the money, time, or things we have no need of. I can recall some years ago how many fine pastors, hardworking and godly men, got the leftovers from their parish. The furniture nobody wanted ended in the manse. The clothing no one else could use was passed on to the pastor's family. God's work was all too often given only the leftovers of men's lives and possessions.

Well, what are these churches getting now? The clergy today is largely made up of God's leftovers—men He does not regard as fit to use. In town

and country, men are getting what God will not use, an ungodly generation of clergymen.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). We are reaping what we sowed, and eating what we gave. The man who built a substandard house had to live in it, just as our generation is living in a world it helped to make.

Only as God has priority in our lives, and only as His Word is believed and obeyed, can we begin to expect His blessings. God has a habit of returning to men the gifts they give Him, and the results can be very unhappy for men.

## The Unchanging Word

Recently, I read an interesting account of life in a New England country church well over a century ago, in *The Old White Meetinghouse; or, Reminiscences of a Country Congregation*, written in 1846. Much of what it described would be familiar to most of us, but the changes are also apparent here and there, not many, but a few. The author objected to the new custom of church choirs; he preferred the old-fashioned congregational singing under a precentor. His list of old favorite hymn tunes was very interesting. "Old Hundredth" is still a favorite, as is "St. Thomas" ("Come, we that love the Lord"). "Dundee," "Silver Street," and "Wells" are still in some hymnals, but they are no longer the old favorites, and "Tamworth" and "Uhear" I could not locate. Some of the old favorites of 1846 would be objected to by congregations today as "new" and strange tunes.

In spite of this, the differences between the "Old White Meetinghouse" of 1846 and a true church of today are very small. Members of yesterday and today would be at home with one another after a very brief time. The one basic and unchanging fact in the "Old White Meetinghouse" of 1846 and any true church of today is the Bible. Take this away, deny its absolute claims, and you have not church but only a counterfeit. But, with that unchanging faith, the church of 1846 is as fresh and timeless as the church of today. It proclaims the everlasting gospel of the God who declares, "For I am the LORD, I change not" (Mal. 3:6).

Does the church need to change with the times? Not if the church holds the truth; the unchanging truth of God needs to be applied to man's changing times as the measure or yardstick whereby men and events are to be judged. Where the truth is declared to be man's standard, change then is progress towards the truth, it is purposeful growth. Without the truth, change is no longer progress; it is merely change.

Today our world is changing, but it is not progressing. There is much evidence that it is in many ways declining. The reason is that our change has no standard of truth to it, because the Word of God is no longer applied to man and nations as the yardstick and standard.

The "Old White Meetinghouse" proclaimed the word of truth, the Word of God in its day. Our need today is for churches which will do the same.

## The Power of the Word

Soon after Oliver Cromwell came to power, a group of London clergymen came to him with a complaint. These men, who until recently had been persecuted by the Church of England, now charged that these Anglican divines were stealing their congregations away from them. "After what manner do the cavaliers debauch your people?" asked Cromwell. "By preaching," the deputation replied. "Then preach back again," said Cromwell, and dismissed them.

Because these men had forgotten the power of faithful preaching, they were looking to the power of the sword to replace the power of the Word and the Spirit. Paul tells us, "[F]aith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Not man's words but God's Words give hearing, faith, and power. Hence, Paul tells Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2).

When the church forsakes the faithful ministry of the whole Word of God, it forsakes power, and it loses hearing and hearers. Then not only do churchmen trust too much in political action above the power of the Word, but the people do as well. The state grows strong, because people believe more in its power than in God's.

Cromwell's Commonwealth ended with his death. The deputation of London ministers suggests why. The very men who should have proclaimed the Word of God looked to the power of the sword to hold their congregations. By downgrading the power of God's Word, they had forsaken it.

## The Prince of Peace

Violent marches for peace are a common fact today. Our cities are being attacked, public buildings bombed, and the police assaulted by our modern peace lovers. Such peace as these men have to offer is another word for slavery.

The Bible makes clear that peace is not a matter of politics but of religion, more specifically, of Jesus Christ. Peace is a product of an inward character; it goes together with righteousness and truth.

To illustrate: a hundred years ago, bank messengers carried heavy canvas bags of gold coins up and down Wall Street. When a bag broke, the crowd would form a circle around the area, until the messenger picked up every piece. A man bending over when a bag broke received a boot in the rear.

Today, it would not be safe, of course, to transport bags of gold coins that way. Moreover, if such a bag broke now, there would be a mass scramble to pick up the gold and run.

The difference is the loss of Christian faith and character. There is neither peace nor security in the world today, because there is neither peace nor righteousness in the lives of men.

Our Lord declared that a "good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit" (Matt. 7:17). A corrupt humanity is bringing forth corruption. We have no right to expect peace from it.

In the prophecy of the coming of Christ, Isaiah declared that there would be no end to the increase of Christ's peace (Isa. 9:7). All other forms of peace, because they are fraudulent and are never true peace, shall fail. The peace of Christ, as it conquers man after man, can alone create true order and justice. The joyful message of Christmas is still the same, therefore, a promise of peace. "God rest you merry, gentlemen, Let nothing

you dismay. Remember Christ our Savior Was born on Christmas day, to save us all from Satan's pow'r When we were gone astray; O tidings of comfort and joy."

We have gone astray again. Let us return to the Prince of Peace, who is our only Savior. No peace marches, politicians, educators, or others can make us into a regenerated people. This Christ can do, and He shall prevail. "O tidings of comfort and joy."

# Time

We can leap over space, a scientist once observed, but we cannot leap over time. We can move from our home across town, or across the world, and a few men have set foot on the moon. Our ability to jump over space is remarkable. But we cannot jump over time, either to go backward or forward.

An old once-favorite poem, Elizabeth Akers Allen's "Rock Me to Sleep," begins:

Backward, turn backward,  
O time in your flight;  
Make me a child again,  
Just for tonight!  
Mother come back again from  
That echoless shore;  
Take me again to your  
Heart as of yore.

More than a few feel this way, and long for peaceful yesterdays and for an escape from the present. Still others share the mood of another old poem, "Why are You Weeping, Sister?", which says:

I'm old and gray and  
I've lost my way,  
All my tomorrows were  
Yesterday.

Still others want to jump over the present into a future beyond the current problems and tensions, to get at the answers beyond the problems.

It is, of course, all futile. Man cannot jump over time. God gives us time, a moment at a time, and always in sequence. Time is a book of problems, and the answers are sealed off to us until we work out the problems, or at least live with the problems and our failures. Time is testing from which there is no escape.

But time is more than testing. It is also our life, and it is to be welcomed as a wealth and as opportunity. It cannot be hoarded up for future use nor traded off to another man to add to his years.

Moses prayed, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps. 90:12). Wise people, said St. Paul, redeem the time, make the best possible use of time under God, because these are evil days (Eph. 5:16), and it is our calling to place ourselves and our times in His service.

Time is wealth. It is a great treasure. But, unlike other forms of wealth, it only appreciates in value when it is used, and its value only appreciates when it is used for God. It then has returns in time and eternity.

To dream of jumping over time is to dream of losing time, of losing life, and of escaping from God's testing. It cannot be done.

## Festival of Time

In the Bible, we find that not only was every new year a festival, but every new month, and each new month began with a festival, *ro'sh hodesh* (Num. 10:10, 28:11–15). Thus, not only the new year but every month was a festival and a holy day (Ps. 81:3; Isa. 1:13). Each of these festivals of time was announced at its beginning by an authority who declared, according to old records, “It is consecrated,” meaning that the day was now consecrated.

Why this importance to the calendar? One day, after all, is just like another, but, everywhere in the world, we find new years, new moons, new months, regarded as important. The reasons for this are twofold, and very different. In paganism, days marking divisions of time were very important because these days reflected changes in nature. Pagan religions were forms of nature worship, and therefore such days as the winter solstice and summer solstice were very important because they marked changes in time, changes in the day and sun. If we worship nature, then we will regard natural events as important. The Hebrew festivals were not geared to nature but to God. They celebrated time changes in relationship to God. The Passover was their day of salvation. Their thanksgiving celebrated the goodness of God to His people. The new month marked a natural change, but it praised God for His sovereignty, and each new year was numbered in terms of God's creation.

The Christian calendar is dated A.D., *Anno Domini*, the year of our Lord Jesus Christ. It continues the Biblical tradition in honoring time and observing it, because it holds time to be under God and serving the purposes of God.

The French Revolution tried to abolish the Christian calendar and to date time from the Revolution, because now history was to be under man's control, not God's. The Russian Revolution made a similar attempt, and

more than a few dream of a new calendar in terms of man. The Soviet regime, and other socialist governments, introduced many plans, five-year plans and the like, whose purpose was to make time and the future an area of state planning and controls. The results of all such planning have been wretched failures. Man is not a god over time, nor a god in any form. Man is not the maker of time but a creature under God.

The Christian can therefore celebrate festivals of time, the new year, the coming of winter, summer, spring, or fall, and enjoy the new moon or the new week, because he has the confidence that time is governed by God. The future is not in the hands of the planners but in the hands of God, and each new day, month, and year only serve to unfold God's purpose and to frustrate the ambitions of ungodly men.

Time works against the ungodly, against all builders of modern Towers of Babel, because time is totally governed by its Creator, God. God having made time, time can only serve God.

## Fearing Tomorrow

In 1139, The Lateran Council condemned a new weapon of war as too powerful and deadly for good men to use. The new weapon was the arbalest, or crossbow. Men debated about it; some warlords were uneasy about using it; but in spite of all this, it was soon commonly used.

The mistake of the men of 1139, and of all too many in 1985, was that things today and tomorrow should be the same as they were yesterday. As a result, they are handicapped in putting to use the developments of the day.

The fear of what tomorrow may bring is a dangerous and enervating force. We have benefits and blessings today and shall have more tomorrow.

Whatever comes, we have the assurance of Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Because God is always in total control, all our tomorrows, however difficult, are good ones, because they come from the Lord to accomplish His purpose.

To be afraid of what tomorrow will bring is to be afraid of life. The Lord who made life ordains all things in terms of His holy purpose, so that we are always on the side of victory when we walk by faith.

## Ferocious Times

Again and again, the apostles use the expression “last days” or “last times,” and what is usually meant is the era from Christ’s first coming to His return. These are the last times, says Peter (1 Pet. 1:20) and also John (1 John 2:18), for example. This helps us to understand what Paul means in 1 Timothy 4:1, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” This is to explain to Timothy why two notable leaders, Hymenaeus and Alexander, had left the faith (1 Tim. 1:20, 4:1). With the coming of Christ, the battle between good and evil has intensified, and men are now “[w]ithout natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,” and given to every evil (2 Tim. 3:3), and in these “last days perilous times shall come” (2 Tim. 3:1).

The word “trucebreakers” means unwilling to live in faithfulness to treaties, and it has reference to international affairs. In both personal and political life, men will use works to deceive, and truthfulness will be despised.

The result will be “perilous times,” or, more literally, ferocious times. The forms of civilization clothe evil in all its ferocity and malice, its hatred of righteousness. Underneath the forms stands the new, the greater, evil—the civilized barbarian.

Thus, Paul warns Timothy and all Christians that life is now an open battle; because Christ has come, the powers of evil are arrayed against Him with intense hatred.

Paul himself faced this ferocity, even from former associates. All the same, he could say, “[T]he Lord shall deliver me from every evil work” (2 Tim. 4:18), because only Christ is Lord over all. He is the victor, and we are victorious in Him.

## The Future

All of us are at one time or another very curious or anxious about the future. What will the future bring us? So many things our hearts are set on seem to fail or never come to pass. We look around and see so much frustration and failure, troubles arising on all hands, the world apparently falling apart, and at times our hearts falter, and we are troubled at what the future may bring.

"I know what the future will bring," someone said to me recently. "I shall get older, have more aches and pains, more disappointments, and finally death." Is this really all?

St. Paul declares, in Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." This means that, while we can undergo many difficulties, we cannot lose, because God makes all things add up to good for us, in time and in eternity. This is true, because God is absolute Lord and sovereign over all things. "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:35).

What must I then say, in the face of all things? I must recognize certainly that I do not know what today and tomorrow shall bring, and much that may come will distress and trouble me. Even more, there is no doubt much in the future that will bring me grief. But I dare not stop here. I must at all times recognize that, while I do not know what the future will bring, I do know who is bringing it. It is the Lord.

I must remember that He has already done the most difficult of all things for me: He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as my atonement on the cross. He who has done so much for me, will do yet more, and care for me. For this reason, St. Peter, who suffered far more

than we are ever likely to, spoke of “[c]asting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:7).

“Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus” (1 Pet. 5:14).

## Born of the Virgin Mary

The Apostles' Creed, as it summarizes the Biblical faith, begins, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary." Among other things, these opening words emphasize two things. First, we cannot call this the church's creed or reduce it merely to the apostolic age's confession of faith. It is personal: "I believe." It is intended to be a creed for every believer in every age. Second, it emphatically asserts the Virgin Birth. Jesus Christ was both truly human and truly divine. In Him God created a new man, another Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), so that humanity could have another beginning. The old humanity born of Adam, because of the Fall, is born into sin and death. The new humanity, which is born again in Jesus Christ, is born to righteousness and everlasting life.

From the beginning of His ministry, Jesus declared that a new life and a new age began in and with Him. "Blessed are the poor in spirit [that is, they who feel their spiritual need, as Goodspeed paraphrases it]: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). "Blessed are the meek [the tamed of God]: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). Jesus brought in a new covenant, a new life, and a new age. The task of the church is the proclamation of this good news and the extension of Christ's Kingdom of grace.

But many men, both inside the church and outside of it, have placed their hope for a new life and a new age in someone other than the Virgin-born Savior. They have looked for salvation by means of a political program, a socialized world, a humanistic society, by means of education, science, and other things. Basically, all these hopes have one thing in common: they believe that a new plan or a new arrangement of things can produce heaven on earth. They look therefore to a new environment to

remake man. The Christian, however, looks to Jesus Christ who remakes the heart of man, who takes a man dead in sins and dead to God and makes him a new man under God. As St. John said, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12–13).

The Virgin Birth is a miracle, the miracle of a new creation, a new humanity. The rebirth of every Christian is also a miracle, the miracle of regeneration by Jesus Christ. This second miracle depends on the first. Because Jesus Christ is very man of very man and very God of very God, He is able to remake man after His own image. He is able to preserve man from the powers of darkness, and He is able to subject all things to His own dominion. Indeed, the goal of history is declared in advance: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). We have a glorious destiny in Him who is born of the Virgin Mary.

## Light at Evening Time

One of the more moving verses of the Bible is Zechariah 14:7: "But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light."

Evening time means the coming of darkness. Zechariah says, however, that God reverses this process and can bring and does manifest light at evening time. The natural order is reversed. Light at evening time is a miracle.

What we are told is that this world and history do not follow the government of nature but of God, the Creator and Lord of all things. When the lights go out all over the world, when history seems headed only into a dead end and total disaster, God brings forth light. He changes the direction of history and regenerates men and redirects events and institutions to fulfill His purposes.

Darkness ahead? Of course. Daily, men and nations by their sins bring on a great darkness. All around us, the problems abound and increase. Men grow pessimistic about the future, and with good reason.

It is precisely in such a darkening evening time that again and again in history, God the Lord has brought forth light. Man's sin is a grim and ugly fact: it dirties history and darkens every age, and ours is more than a little clouded by its blight.

The great and ruling fact, however, is not sin but the Lord. Christ is Lord and King over all things, including sin, death, and darkness. At our evening time, He can bring forth light.

For this reason, Paul summons us always to rejoice and in everything to give thanks (Phil. 4:4, 6), because our God is He who makes all things work together for good (Rom. 8:28), and, at evening time, brings forth light.

# The Author

**Rousas John Rushdoony** (1916-2001) was a well-known American scholar, writer, and author of over thirty books. He held B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of California and received his theological training at the Pacific School of Religion. An ordained minister, he worked as a missionary among Paiute and Shoshone Indians as well as a pastor to two California churches. He founded the Chalcedon Foundation, an educational organization devoted to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctively Christian scholarship to the world-at-large. His writing in the *Chalcedon Report* and his numerous books spawned a generation of believers active in reconstructing the world to the glory of Jesus Christ. Until his death, he resided in Vallecito, California, where he engaged in research, lecturing, and assisting others in developing programs to put the Christian Faith into action.

# The Ministry of Chalcedon

**CHALCEDON (kal-SEE-don)** is a Christian educational organization devoted exclusively to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctively Christian scholarship to the world at large. It makes available a variety of services and programs, all geared to the needs of interested ministers, scholars, and laymen who understand the propositions that Jesus Christ speaks to the mind as well as the heart, and that His claims extend beyond the narrow confines of the various institutional churches. We exist in order to support the efforts of all orthodox denominations and churches. Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), which produced the crucial Christological definition: "Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man..." This formula directly challenges every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, school, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative: Christ alone can announce that, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Historically, the Chalcedonian creed is therefore the foundation of Western liberty, for it sets limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the One who is the source of true human freedom (Galatians 5:1). The Chalcedon Foundation publishes books under its own name and that of Ross House Books. It produces a magazine, *Faith for All of Life*, and a newsletter, *The Chalcedon Report*, both bimonthly. All gifts to Chalcedon are tax deductible. For complimentary trial subscriptions, or information on other book titles, please contact:

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<sup>1</sup> Howard B. Rand, *Digest of the Divine Law* (Merrimac, MA: Destiny, 1943).