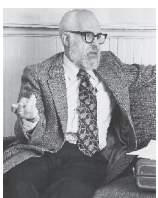


ChalcedonReport

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Crises and God

R. J. Rushdoony (*Good Morning, Friends*, Vol. 2, pp. 1-5)



Good morning, friends. One of the things which makes life a little harder these days is the newspaper. All one has to do to find something to worry about is to read a newspaper and listen to some news commentator. They give us a fairly steady diet of wars and rumors of war, storms, accidents, murders, scandals, and the like. Try mixing all that into your breakfast, and you've got a good reason for ulcers!

Now, I have no intention of suggesting that you cancel your daily paper. I certainly don't intend to do so. I do suggest, though, that we look at these constantly recurring human tragedies from a healthy perspective.

First of all, we have to recognize

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that the history of the world is one of perpetual human crises. All recorded history gives us essentially the same story: civilization tottering, man in despair, ugliness of behavior, human depredations and depravity, it's all an old story. As Christians we not only must recognize that this has been so, we must insist that

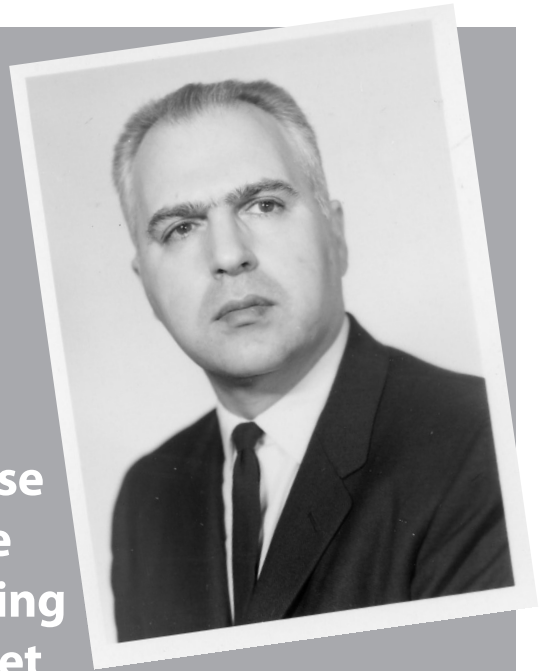
it will be so. The history of the world will be a perpetually recurring crisis because man is in rebellion against God. You cannot take rotten lumber, eaten by termites and dry rot, and build a good house. Neither can you take man the sinner and build a paradise on earth. Man keeps demanding two things, peace and security, and dreams of a trouble-free world with cradle-to-grave security and only creates a hell on earth instead. Forty centuries and more before Christ, men dreamed of a human paradise, a world parliament of nations, and the like. Assyria tried to force a one-world concept on the nations, and only destroyed itself in the process. There is no peace or security apart from God, and every effort to attain them is doomed to frustration. As long as there is a God of justice, there will be the kind of world we see around

us. If the world tomorrow gained the kind of peace we hanker for, it would be the greatest act of divine injustice that could be imagined. Man has no peace in his own heart: how can he hope to live in peace with anyone? Man apart from God is a shaking reed, a ferment of insecurity. How can any outward condition give him security? Man himself destroys his peace, and wrecks his own efforts at security. When mankind is not made up of saints and angels, it is no wonder that this world will not be a heaven. Thus history is in a constant recurring state of crises and will continue to be so. This is a fact which we must accept, a grim fact, but a fact of justice.

Second, we must recognize that this very condition of crisis is a part of God's justice and therefore under His control. We all have moments of discouragement when we feel that things are all wrong and hopelessly out of control. We need, then, to turn to the book of Genesis and read the history of Joseph in chapters thirty-seven to fifty. Here we see a growing tragedy: a family divided and corrupt, brothers betraying their father and selling their brother into slavery; the brother suffering injustice as a slave and ending up in prison, forgotten by man and left to rot with none to remember him. Life seems often to deal with us in this manner. We feel like crying out with Jacob, "All these things are against me." But God never forgets: step by step all the evil of man is converted into good by His total providence: Joseph rules over Egypt and sees the blessing in all his suffering. This is the history of God's people: the outcome is certain, although often it is apparent only in eternity. The world is not out of God's control: it is held tightly in His Almighty hands. To us it seems chaos only because we cannot see the pattern that is being woven. But in quiet confidence shall be our strength, and in trusting Him our surest reward.

The crises of which the newspapers write, the horror and tragedy, are in themselves a horror. But nothing in this world exists in itself: all exist against the background and within the orbit of God's providence, and no act is final in

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itself. When God's reckoning is made, the meaning will be made plain to all.

Third, we must recognize that there is more to our world than the crises we read of. Remember, the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord are the determining factors of all human history, and they are not daily recorded as the basic factor in all news. Remember, too, that your life and mine have been rich in God's providence and blessing: our years have been filled with His goodness. Yet the rare occasions when our lives enter the news is usually when we have an accident or are in trouble. A million people can fly safely, but let ten die, and that alone is news. Every rumor of war is news, but a hundred thousand converts to Christ in Asia is not news. Our very concept of news tells us something about man, about ourselves, that man is looking for trouble, and that we delight in it. We are more ready to read about war and scandal than we are to read the Bible: we enjoy our troubles far more. We are more ready to talk about somebody's sins than to praise his goodness, more ready to gossip than to pray. We all have this weakness.

If we walk more closely with God in Christ, we will have more of His peace and confidence.

He says to us:

They shall not be ashamed that wait for me. (Isa. 49:23).

Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? (John 11:40)

I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. (1 Sam. 1:27)

My heart rejoiceth in the Lord. (1 Sam. 2:1)

Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.

Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me. (Ps. 66:16, 20)

When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. (Ps. 89:9)

He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still ... so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness. (Ps. 107:29-31)

Blessed is the man that trusteth in him. (Ps. 34:8) 🏠

R. J. Rushdoony the Pastor

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. ~ Romans 12:2

You can sum up Christian Reconstruction with Romans 12:2. After salvation, the Christian remains in history but must not organize their lives or society in conformity to this world, i.e., the thinking and living of autonomous man. Instead, our sanctification is a transformation of our thinking according to God's will. What is God's will? It is His law-word.

When critics question the validity of God's law for today, they'll often note that the law of Moses was given to an ancient agrarian people, and therefore not intended for modern society. In its place is reason if you're an unbeliever and pietism if you're a Christian. Either way, there is no room for God's law because modern man cannot make sense of the multiplicity of case laws regarding matters such as having mixed materials in garments or muzzling an ox.

Good, Acceptable, and Perfect

The key is proving "what is that good, acceptable, and perfect, will of God," which means the work of the church is to examine, test, and approve how all of God's Word applies to all of life. In summary, we are to offer ourselves like a sacrifice and then labor in God's Word in order to apply it so that the world also may be transformed.

However, when we think of applying God's law-word, we think first of politics, policies, and institutions and not how God's law applies to the details of our own lives, churches, and communities. We have to more say about a Biblical monetary system than how God's law addresses our own debt or spending.

This is where the role of pastors and teachers are helpful because local church leaders have regular access to the hearts and minds of believers who desire to be used of God. The question is are pastors equipping the saints to apply their faith?

Faith and Action

Faithful pastors understand the importance of sound theology, but to be effective, they must be able to show how theology leads to faith and action. A great example of this is found in the three volume set, *Good Morning, Friends: A Collection of Weekly Radio Messages by R. J. Rushdoony* where we get a clear look at Rushdoony as pastor.

Imagine concise, clear expositions on central doctrines such as God, the Trinity, providence, Christ, covenant, faith, salvation, and sanctification alongside an eight part series on "How to Be a Failure," a ten part series on "How to Live with Yourself," and a nineteen part series on "How to Pray."

When addressing the subject of God, Rushdoony writes:

The only god man can prove by his reasoning is a god who is less than man and is therefore not God, for God is known, not by our discovery or recognition, but by His self-revelation. Because He is our Creator, both we and all things around us are understandable in terms of Him. It is not our mind but His person that is the key to all things. It is folly to attempt to prove Him apart from whom there is no fact.¹

Only those teachers who strive to be understood can elucidate truths in such a way that the reader is left not only understanding the text but also feeling the weight of its content.

Rushdoony addresses other central doctrines such as the Trinity, and again, he makes it practical and convicting:

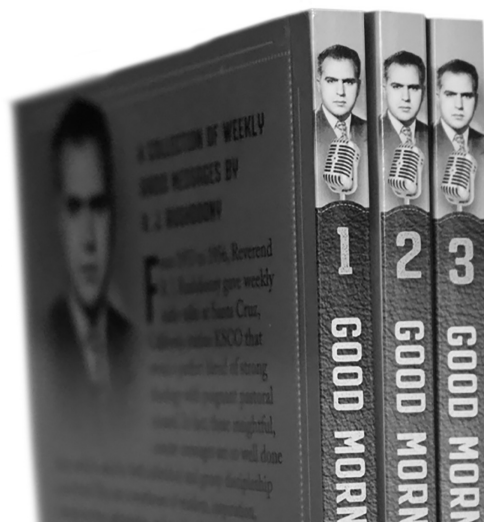
[T]o worship God we must worship Him as God the Trinity; we must see Him, not merely in what He does for us but as God Himself; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, thrice-holy Trinity, whom to worship alone is true worship. To glory in the Lord cannot mean to glory in what He does for us, for then what we worship is ourselves and our gratification, our satisfaction.²

When speaking of providence, he again applies the doctrine directly to our individual thinking:

Our lives have meaning only in terms of Him and His purpose for us: if we forsake Him and His purpose for us, we forsake the sanity of life with meaning. To believe in God is to believe in providence, and to believe in providence is to believe that our life has purpose and direction even in spite of ourselves and our shortcomings, and that God works concurrently in us to that determined and glorious end.³

Finally, when speaking of the Word of God, he touches the topic as with a needle by differentiating precisely how the Bible is God's revelation and not simply a record of it:

God speaks to us directly and without any tainted intermediary in Scripture, in the Bible. Any attempt to tamper with the directness of the Bible's word is to attempt to destroy it. If we say that the Bible is the record of God's revelation rather than revelation itself, we take away its directness. If the Bible merely contains the word of God instead of being the Word of God as such, then we have to hunt through the Bible for God's speaking, and then wonder if it is really there, if the Bible is, after all, a completely human book. To remove the security of an infallible Bible is to destroy the Christian faith, to subvert God's word and place man's word in its place.⁴



Christian Development

As he is prone to do, Rushdoony writes so directly to the human condition outside of God that one can lift many citations from his works and apply them to today without any revision. In his section on “How to Be a Failure,” in Volume 2 of *Good Morning, Friends*, he shows how modern man’s drive is to failure because it’s the price he must pay to avoid submission to God:

[I]t’s a matter of clear-cut statistical evidence that Christians on the whole have happy homes that endure, children who are loving and successful, and more satisfying and rewarding lives. Apparently most people don’t want that, because they’re very busy doing the things which produce failure and frustration.⁵

Then, with stinging sarcasm, he offers his counsel on how someone can succeed quickly as a failure:

If that’s what you want in life, I’d like to give you a little help towards that end, so that you can be a failure more easily and quickly. There’s no point in wasting time in this matter: if you want failure and frustration, you might as well get it quickly and efficiently.⁶

What was most disappointing to him was to see Christians striving to fail by falling prey to criticism, blaming others, self-love, ungratefulness, perfectionism, and the most common maladies of fretting and worry:

Go ahead and worry if you want frustration and failure, but if you want the blessed peace and assurance of God, stop trusting in your own little self and trust in God instead. Any man who trusts in himself has grounds for worrying, but the man who trusts in the Lord has grounds for serene confidence.⁷

Once again, the emphasis is upon how God’s revelation can be applied in our lives because that is the starting point for Christian Reconstruction. We learn to obey God’s Word and apply our faith.

Free to Serve God

Most people seem to find it difficult to live with themselves. They find it very hard to be alone or to have nothing to do. But most of all, they find it difficult to keep from judging themselves.⁸

Who needs an enemy when we make such good enemies to ourselves? That’s what Rushdoony addresses in his ten part series on “How to Live with Yourself.” Building off of Romans 8:1, he writes:

This gives us a new attitude towards ourselves, and we can now live with ourselves peacefully. Of course, we blunder; and of course, we sin. The old man in us makes this a constant fact of our existence. But now there’s more to our lives than that. Jesus Christ is now part of our life, the overwhelming part of it, and no man can judge Him. Because He has forgiven us, we learn to forgive even ourselves. There is therefore now no condemnation either from God or from our own heart.⁹

The point is that Rushdoony the pastor wants us to be free to serve God more fully by liberating ourselves from the effects of sin. Sin not only destroys our lives, but it hinders our prayerful relationship with God. We spend more time in self-condemnation than leaning upon our Lord to help us triumph in life!

Sentence Prayers

Outside of His Word, the Christian relates to God by prayer, which explains why there are so many books on “how to pray.” This is nothing new because when our Lord was here, His disciples asked Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1), and from that we received the Lord’s Prayer. Rushdoony felt that praying was so important that he included a large section on prayer—just as Calvin did in his *Institutes*—in his two volume *Systematic Theology*.

In Volume 3 of *Good Morning, Friends*, Rushdoony writes, “the best way to learn to pray is to say simple sentence prayers to God,”¹⁰ which means a continual conversational relationship with our Lord that brings Him into every aspect of our lives:

What do we do in sentence prayers? Throughout the day, as the need arises, we lift up our hearts, and sometimes our voices, to the Lord, with a simple and direct petition. These simple prayers ask for help for the need at hand. We may ask, “Lord, give me patience as I deal with this person”; “Lord, give me strength to do the day’s work, and to

do it joyfully”; “Lord, take away my pessimism and give me confidence and hope”; “Lord, take care of my loved ones in this matter”; “I thank Thee, Lord, for this that has come to me.”¹¹

Rushdoony the pastor saw clearly the importance of a personal relationship with a living, present God who is far more concerned about our lives and our needs than we are. Rushdoony felt it was important that a Christian grow in their fellowship with God, and in so doing, experience a greater presence of God in their lives:

Sentence prayers are thus direct and simple requests and remarks to God. When our days are filled with sentence prayers, so that morning, noon, and night, all our moment-by-moment needs and problems are thus discussed with God, things begin to happen to us. God hears and answers our prayers. And because our minds are increasingly opened to Him in these sentence petitions, His presence in our lives becomes increasingly manifest and active.¹²

A wonderful blend of sound doctrine and godly praxis fills the three volumes of *Good Morning, Friends*, and it highlights the drive in Rushdoony to make the faith applicable for every Christian. In an era of crisis, uncertainty, and decline, it becomes more imperative that believers build solidly upon the rock of Jesus Christ and His infallible law-word.

Be sure to get your three volume set of *Good Morning, Friends*, or gift it to someone else so they can experience it’s richness. 📖

1. R. J. Rushdoony, *Good Morning, Friends: A Collection of Weekly Radio Messages by R. J. Rushdoony*, Volume 1, pp. 2-3.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

3. *ibid.*, p. 25.

4. *ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

5. R. J. Rushdoony, *Good Morning, Friends: A Collection of Weekly Radio Messages by R. J. Rushdoony*, Volume 2, p. 52.

6. *ibid.*

7. *ibid.*, p. 62.

8. *ibid.*, p. 124.

9. *ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

10. R. J. Rushdoony, *Good Morning, Friends: A Collection of Weekly Radio Messages by R. J. Rushdoony*, Volume 3, p. 111.

11. *ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

12. *ibid.*, p. 112.