

What is Wrong with America?

Simply stated, it will be this: Americans have rejected God's gospel promise of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Thus the trouble with America will not be -

- An opposition to new politics.
- An unwillingness to accept the different morals of others.
- A resistance to a cultural cleansing.

Rather what you are seeing going on today is the result of the rejection of God's gospel and of that good change which it makes in the soul, namely, all sorts of lawlessness, selfishness, and the promotion of evil.

Because Americans have refused to repent of their sins, they have engaged in all sorts of lawless behavior which has brought on misery, division, and a loss of civility. Therefore, God has sent his punishments on top of this self-inflicted misery by way of floods, storms, droughts, disease, loss of income, and tyrannical government. This is why things have gone from good to bad in America.

In short, Americans have forsaken morality for immorality. This occurred after the majority of Americans left the gospel faith for unbelief.

This change had been going on for some time at a slower rate. In the 1960's it gathered tremendous speed and momentum from pop music, from the pop culture urged in books, and from the entertainment media in general. Even such a humbling divine punishment as the

Vietnam War did not pause much less slow down America's wild partying. "How the mighty are fallen!" (2nd Samuel 1:25.)

Ask someone aged seventy to eighty years old how things used to be years ago as compared with now. He will tell you that there was a great deal of difference in how people behaved. Back then Americans commonly were more moral than they are now because society was made up of a significant number of Christians who would behave in a moral manner, not in a lawless manner. For instance, after World War One, statistics showed that about forty percent of Americans belonged to a Christian church. Their behavior was the common one in society and even influenced to a great extent the non-Christian segment to behave itself in public in a polite, kind, and responsible manner, not because that segment actually was convinced of Christian morality, but simply because it did not want to be seen as being out of step with the rest of society. Aside from this there was also, to be sure, a tiny minority of incorrigible citizens - there always has been in every age - who kept crime alive. Yet they were in the tiny minority, though the newspapers would devote their sensational headlines to them. Consequently, their lawlessness behavior would be made to appear more widespread in proportion to what it actually was.

For example, in 1946, in Marshall County, Kansas, in the community of Bremen, there had been no arrest or court procedure for thirty years. The community was made up almost entirely of the Lutheran faith and had two Lutheran schools which made a public school unnecessary. Because of this, think of how much lower

their tax and insurance rates must have been! Around the same time the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Frankenmuth, Michigan had never had a crime of violence in the 102 years of its existence. During the last twenty-five years its jail had been entirely empty. Throughout the Great Depression of the 1930's not one person was on the relief rolls. Since its founding the town had been the first in the state to report all of its taxes paid in full, and has given more than the average in charitable drives. What is the explanation? Ninety-five percent of the people in Frankenmuth were Lutherans. "Righteousness exalts a nation" (Proverbs 14:24).

Indeed, even in the 1950's and the early 1960's people in a Midwestern city could leave home in order to attend church without having to lock their back door. They could buy jars of food safely at a grocery store that had no safety seals on them. They could board an airliner without going through a metal detector, and would be given metal knives, forks, and spoons for their meals. An uncountable number of similar examples could be given. This is how much peace and safety formerly existed in our society because of the widespread influence of the Christians. Thus neither society nor government had to go either to great lengths or to great expense to protect people. The vast majority of people commonly did not engage in immoral activity because they had no will to do it. In fact, it never occurred to them to do the evil things that since have been imagined and practiced in society today.

Again, on account of the prevalent immoral behavior today, government has had to take steps in order to protect itself and its citizens. For instance, the

public library in downtown Saint Paul has become a secure compound. All of the side doors have been locked except for one entrance. There are security cameras, and visitors have to pass through a shoplifting and/or metal detector. None of this was in place years ago. For "security reasons" the U.S. Postal Service has forbidden mail over thirteen ounces from being dropped into outdoor mail boxes. People have to go through scanners and/or have to be hand searched at transportation terminals. Any citizen, young or old, who sets foot in a governmental building, is now automatically considered to be a suspected terrorist until he has been screened and approved each time by a governmental agency. You are now living in a police state. It has been caused by waves of immoral Americans all across the country in the last few generations.

To be sure, the non-Christians in our Christian society years ago had the presumption that the peace, safety, and prosperity found in America simply existed naturally; that these things normally would be around. Indeed, they chaffed under Christian influences and complained about the bondage in which they saw themselves. Their desire was: "Let us pursue our immoral behavior and gather as many followers as we can with our Siren song in order that we may pursue as much immoral behavior as we want since we will never have to pay the price." Never did these radical promoters, these so-called liberals, give it a thought that in their efforts to make others immoral, they would have to pay a terrible price: that they would kill the peace, safety, freedom, and prosperity in America and remove God's blessing. For instance, around the year 1989 crime

cost our country about 168 billion dollars a year (figured in 1989 dollars) in law enforcement measures alone, while the loss from crime itself cost another 345 billion dollars.

Not only will America have to suffer these self-inflicted evils as the price to pay for its immorality, but the punishment of God will be placed on top of this. The Almighty threatens: "I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity" (Isaiah 13:11). "When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he will die because of it" (Ezekiel 33:18). God will begin his punishment already in this life by inflicting loss of life from storms, floods, heart disease, and so-called accidents. Then he will continue it into the next, starting with Judgment Day. Be warned of these threats of the Almighty! It is he who will back them up.

Why has there been this increase in immorality? Again, it is due to the decline in the numbers of true Christians in the population. Recognize this rule: The more Christians that there would be, the less immorality there will be! On the other hand, the more non-Christians there would be, the more immorality there will be. The correlation is simple and definite.

Yet have there not been exceptions to this general rule? Have there not been instances of Christians and clergy caught in adultery and other such immorality? Yes, but also look at their creed! If they would have preached and practiced true repentance and faith such immorality will be rare, indeed. On the other hand, if sinful pride would be imbedded in their church creed, this actually will encourage rather than discourage immorality, for example, as the man-made mandate for

celibacy among the Roman Catholic clergy actually promotes unchastity among them.

Therefore, in order for there to be more morality in society so that God's punishment could be lifted, and so that there could be a return to peace, safety, freedom, and prosperity, there would need to be more members of society that would be truly Christian. The only way in which this could be done would be to get more and more of society to repent and to have gospel faith. To be sure, to power Christians to live a civil and a moral life on earth is an intended goal of the gospel, though not the primary one. The primary goal of the gospel is to get people to heaven.

In order to get citizens to repent and to believe, true law and gospel preaching in boldness must be done by all of the pulpits which use the name of Christ. Pray and work so that this may happen! God commands it. "I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it" (Ezekiel 22:30). This is your duty. Do it!

Indeed, "the sinfulness of our age is our opportunity. God is not willing even now that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, repent, and be saved. God commands *us* to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth." We "cannot afford to miss our opportunity. Our souls must be set on fire, and burn with love and zeal for the saving of the poor condemned world."¹

¹ H. W. Bartels, "The Deplorable Conditions of our Day," *Vesper Sermons*, editor John H. C. Fritz (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1919), page 166.

Be encouraged and motivated to do this by God's own promise: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2nd Chronicles 7:14)!

Prayer/Hymn

Almighty Lord, before Thy throne,
Thy mourning people bend:
'Tis on Thy grace in Christ alone
Our failing hopes depend.

Dark judgments, from Thy heavy hand,
Thy dreadful pow'r display;
Yet mercy spares our guilty land,
And still we live to pray.

How changed, alas! are truths divine
For error, guilt and shame!
What impious numbers, bold in sin,
Disgrace the Christian name!

O turn us, turn us, mighty Lord!
Convert us by Thy grace;
Then shall our hearts obey Thy Word,
And see again Thy face!

Then, should oppressing foes invade,
We will not yield to fear,
Secure of all-sufficient aid,

When God in Christ is near.

Anne Steele

This form was taken from the original hymn of Miss Steele which began: "See, gracious God, before Thy throne." She wrote this hymn for the public fast that was declared in England, 6 February, 1756, in regards to the French and Indian War.