

THE DISTRESS OF NATIONS

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Luke 21:25-26

This world is experiencing a colossal upheaval. Without doubt the nations have reached the most solemn crisis in their history. Words cannot describe the appalling world conditions. We live in a world of collapse. The bottom is falling out of many things. Thrones, governments and systems are changing with startling rapidity. The rapid spread of crime is another element making for national and international disintegration. Murders and suicides are claiming a huge toll. The diabolical, atrocious deeds of men are enough to turn one's blood cold. Divorces, crimes, and robberies show an alarming increase. There is widespread darkness, distress, destruction, and death.

As described in Daniel 7, the nations of this age are beastly in character. They hate each other, they are filled with greed, and they are filled with a lust for power. In connection with this lust for power, let us recall the incident in which Satan and Christ were involved. "And the devil, taking Him up into a high mountain, shewed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind Me Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Luke 4:5-8. But after Satan's failure with the Christ, he has continued in his vicious opposition to God's plan and purposes. He has made the same proposals of world dominion to many others at various times. He knows the essence of sin, namely, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. He has dangled before the eyes of his dupes the fascinating goal of world dominion, world conquest, and world control. He has fanned the sparks of lust for power, lust for glory, and lust for greatness into a flame, so that they have rushed forward to achieve their merciless goal. Every war is based on lust for power, lust for glory, and lust for dominion.

Fear has clutched at the hearts of men and women everywhere. What is going to happen? No one knows. Trouble stern and insistent knocks at the doors of the world. "And upon the earth distress of nations." The word translated "distress" also means "holding or joining together." In recent years there has been a joining together of nations. The word "distress" means to be left somewhere without a ferry or any means of crossing over to the desired place; therefore, a secondary meaning of this word is "without resources."

This distress is world-wide. No organization has been able to do anything substantial for the amelioration of the distress. Confusion and perplexity abound everywhere. Unrest and agitation are widespread, and strife, anger and suffering increase. Distress in many nations has led to revolutions. The existing situation is without precedent. All nations today are in distress hitherto unprecedented, perplexity heretofore unknown, animosities erstwhile unparalleled, and fear aforesaid unsurpassed. No living man could describe the actual physical and mental state of the world as accurately as did our Lord nearly twenty centuries ago. The pages of history have no record of international distress such as confronts all nations in this present hour. Demonized men never before possessed such powerful instruments of torment, devastation, and death as they now possess.

Present-day nations are like drunkards who know well that drink will bring swift damnation; yet they persist in drinking. Prominent men freely prophesy that another great war will mean the destruction of civilization; yet they are preparing the ways and the means for the suicide. Mankind seems to realize that it has lost its way, but it does not understand that it has lost its way because it has lost THE WAY. Men have tried to have peace and prosperity, but they have failed because they have left God out. The solution of the ills

of the world is not to be found in the schemes and reforms of governments. If civilization is to be saved from further disaster, we must have a revival of first-century Christianity. Life must be ordered by the precepts and principles of Jesus Christ. The problems of humanity are getting far beyond the wisdom of a generation that has politely bowed the living God and His Christ out of its council chambers. Even the infidel historian, H. G. Wells, candidly confessed, "We have come to the crossroads and no one knows the way out!"

Our own nation is facing the gravest perils that it has ever faced. These perils are not imaginary, but real and fundamental. If we will open our eyes, we shall see them all about us. If we are honest, we will admit that our country is in a bad fix; a mess, if you please. And our greatest enemies are not without, but they are within our nation. History proves that nations have fallen because of the undermining forces from the inside. in 1787 Gibbon listed the causes of the fall of the Roman Empire. His list is as follows:--

1. The decline of home life.
2. Higher and higher taxes, with more and more people living from the taxes paid by others.
3. A craze for pleasure and sports.
4. The building of a gigantic army, without thinking of the decadence of the people.
5. The decay of religion.

As we think of the perils facing our own nation, time will only permit us to consider three.

I. The Home Peril.

A nation is no greater than its home life. In our nation many have forgotten God. They are completely disregarding His teachings. Our forefathers knew God and loved Him. They studied, believed, and obeyed His Word. They prayed unto Him. They observed the Lord's Day. They went to church and lived right before God. But what are our people doing today? Many are forgetting Him, and ignoring His word. They have Bibles in their homes, but they never read them. They never pray unto the Lord, unless they are sick or in trouble. They are making a holiday of the Lord's Day. They have very little interest in church. Multitudes of both parents and children are seeking pleasure, drinking, gambling, and indulging in profanity. Divorces are increasing until almost one-third of marriages result in divorce. Multitudes of parents are setting bad examples before their children. Naturally, their children disobey and disgrace their parents. When and as the home goes, everything goes.

II. The Educational Peril.

I believe in education. I am grateful for what education I have. It has helped me, and I would not take anything for it. But education that leaves God out is a curse; it harms the individual and wrecks his life. An individual has a body, a mind, and a spirit or soul. The body is the physical house in which you live. Death is the moving day. The soul is composed of conscience, intellect, and will. The conscience is the seat of your emotional life. The intellect is the seat of your mind. The will is the seat of your decision. Your spirit has a God-conscience. Only the presence of the Holy Spirit can satisfy its deepest needs.

Modern education recognized the needs of the body. For that reason gymnasiums are provided. The playing of games is an important thing. Efforts are being made to provide the individual with strong, healthy bodies. Modern education recognized the needs of the mind. It seeks to train the mind, but it excludes the soul and God. In it the Bible has no place except as literature. The result is lawlessness. Children are taught to take and to do only what they want to take and to do. Some say we should let the children do as they please and have everything that they want. Many are taught that what they want they have a right to have. But we have no right to have what we want unless we want what is right. Much of the lawlessness today is the result of the behaviouristic ideas of

education. This kind of teaching is bringing wreck and ruin to many young people in our nation. It will make criminals out of some of the finest of our young people. It will ruin many homes.

May I call you back to the God of our fathers. This nation was built on the foundation of faith in God and in the Bible as His Word and our rule for daily living. Old-time Americans believed in God and in prayer; they believed something; they had convictions and they stood by them. It is better to die for something than to live for nothing.

Many teachers of the years gone by believed in God. They had both head knowledge and heart experience. They began school by reading the Word of God and reciting the Lord's prayer. Many studied their lessons from McGuffey's readers. He placed an effective moral in every reading lesson. In many school circles today one of his readers would be as much out of date as a 1913 Ford. In the average modern school the Bible is never read and a prayer is never spoken. For this an excuse is frequently offered that it might be offensive to somebody. I have never known of anybody being harmed by reading the Bible or reciting the Lord's Prayer. The Bible is not read because it has effect on the reader and condemns the type of life that many are living. In many of our schools today they have kicked the Bible out and put the dance in. In some places, Christian teachers, who love and honor God, do not want the dance, but they sometimes have to tolerate it in order to hold their positions.

III. The Religious Peril.

This is a most vital one. Far too many have forgotten or ignored their spiritual needs. Consequently, they live only to gratify the desires of the body. But when they are in trouble they will turn to the church the first thing that they do, and expect church folk to help them. They have been following false gods -- wealth, lust, and pleasure. They have neglected God, His Word, and prayer. Some churches have even closed their doors; at least, many of them never have Sunday night services. They have substituted modernism for the gospel of Christ, and the people are groping in the fog of doubt and unbelief. Many are even taught salvation by works, which is a false doctrine.

What is the cure for our situation? It is to return to God, to confess our sins, to forsake our sins, and to dedicate ourselves, our children, and our possessions to God anew. It is to sing from our hearts and mean it -- "Lord, I'm coming home." Let us come back to God, back to the faith of our fathers, back to the schools where God is honored, and back to reverence for the Lord's Day. Will you do your part?