

Greg Laurie: Sow the Wind, Reap the Whirlwind

I heard about an art gallery owner who was representing a certain painter. One day he called the artist and said, "I have some good news and some bad news."

"What's the good news?" the artist asked.

"The good news is that some guy just walked in here and asked if your art would be worth more if you were dead. So I told him yes, and he bought every one of your paintings."

"That's fantastic!" said the artist. "So what's the bad news?"

"Well," said the gallery owner, "the bad news is he was your doctor."

We've all heard good news–bad news jokes, and maybe some of them make us groan. But I think we need to lighten up a little and find humor when we can. We can all use some good news, because we're living in a bad world.

The Old Testament talks about a very dark time in Israel's history. They were experiencing a severe famine–so severe, in fact, that the people actually were eating donkeys' heads with dove droppings. Talk about a lousy meal. Even worse, the people had begun turning to cannibalism. That's how desperate the people were.

The irony was this famine had come as a result of their own disobedience. Israel had again been turning to other gods.

God will not share His glory with anyone or anything else. He wants the No. 1 position in our lives. God said, "I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to graven images" (Isa. 42:8).

Despite the fact that God had blessed Israel, they turned again and again to idols.

The first two commandments had specifically warned about this kind of activity. In Exodus 20, God said, "You must not have any other god but me. You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods" (vs. 3–5a, NLT).

Maybe you're thinking, *Is God a little insecure? Why is he so jealous?*

But let's bring this into your world for a moment. Husbands, let's say your wife were flirting with some other guy. How would you feel? Would you be all right with that?

I don't think so.

Wives, what if your husband said, "You know, I'm going on a date with a different woman every night this week." Would you be comfortable with that?

Of course not.

So how do you think God feels when we turn away from Him and follow false gods? It might be the god of our career or the god of money or the god of pleasure or something else. But God is saying, "What are you doing? You're abandoning Me, the true and living God, for this kind of stuff."

As for Israel, God let the people reap the repercussions of their sin, which in this case was a famine. The king, hearing about the people's cannibalism, decided he wanted to kill God's representative.

What kind of reaction is that? He should have said, "Lord, this is crazy. We're calling out to you. We've finally had enough."

But instead the king said, "May God strike me and even kill me if I don't separate Elisha's head from his shoulders this very day" (2 Kings 6:31). Yet Elisha had nothing to do with this whatsoever.

We see the same thing happening today as people reap the consequences of their sin and sink deeper into it. Instead of finally repenting and coming to their senses, they strike out at God and at His representatives.

Some people say the problems in our nation today are the fault of the Christians. Yet here we are, proclaiming that the Bible, the Word of God, has the answers. Still, they blame it on us.

The fact of the matter is that those who are the most heavenly minded have always reaped the greatest earthly good. A classic example of this is Wilbur Wilberforce, whose life is portrayed in the film, *Amazing Grace*.

Wilberforce was a British parliamentarian who believed slavery was wrong. What motivated Wilberforce to come to that conclusion? It was his belief in the Bible and his conversion to Christianity that transformed his worldview. As a result, Wilberforce spent the bulk of his life fighting slavery, which was against the status quo of the British government at the time.

A lot of people think the government is the answer and that we need more government programs and more money to spend on them. But I love the statement of President Ronald Reagan in 1986 when he said, "I've always felt the nine most terrifying words in the English language are: 'I'm from the government, and I'm here to help.'"

As we see all the problems in America today and look to politicians with the hope they'll turn things around, we need to be realistic and know the limitations of the government.

When we look at all the problems in our culture today, we have to recognize that many of these things have happened as a result of our disobedience to God.

We've done everything to get God out of the courtroom, out of the classroom and out of the culture. As Hosea said, "For they sow the wind, and they will reap the whirlwind" (Hos. 8:7a, MEV).

If we're not careful, what happened to Israel in Elisha's day could happen to the United States of America today. We need to call on God to help our nation. We need to call on God and turn back to him. {eo}

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