

When God Brings Judgment

“For this cause everyone who is godly will pray to You in a time when You may be found” (Ps. 32:6).

The psalmist implies that there comes a time when God cannot be found. A time when God hides Himself. A time that I believe may have begun in America.

Our nation is in a mess. Why? Could it be because America is losing God's blessing? His favor. Could our sin be provoking His judgment? Judgment that is not necessarily in the form of a nuclear dirty bomb, or another ISIS attack, or an economic collapse. But a Romans 1 judgment as God backs out of our national life and turns us over to ourselves.

In the Old Testament, God moved in judgment on His own beloved nation of Judah. Interestingly, His judgment of Judah was a 22-year process. God moved slowly, giving plenty of opportunity for Judah to repent of her sin, turn to Him and, therefore, escape the judgment. But with all of God's warnings, Judah became even more defiant. More disobedient. More wicked. She insisted on her right to immorality and idolatry. In the end, God became her enemy. He sent in the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem, the temple and the people. Those who were not taken captive were slaughtered in the streets (2 Chr. 36:15-19)

God warns a nation that judgment is coming. He doesn't want any to perish. But if a nation does not heed His warnings, He unleashes His anger and there is nothing—no one—who can prevent it. If God would judge His own beloved nation of Judah, why would we think America could escape?

So ... *if* we are coming under the judgment of God—if He is giving us over to ourselves, removing His blessing, protection, and favor—the solution will not be found in politics or the economy or the military or technology. The

solution will be found on our knees as we humble ourselves, pray, seek God's face, and repent of our sin. Then plead for Him to return to us as we return to Him.



Now is the time to get serious about repentance and prayer. As I addressed the crowd gathered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on May 9, I told them that when Ezra led a great revival in Judah, the people stood in the pouring rain for three days repenting of their sin (Ezra 10:9). I wonder ... had God made it hard on His people to test the seriousness of their repentance?

Those gathered before me on the Washington Mall were also standing in the pouring rain ... and snow ... with temperatures in the 20s. Was God also testing our seriousness to seek His face, to pray and to repent of our sin?

God promises: *"You shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart"* (Jer. 29:13). There can be no casual, halfhearted turning to God—not if we want Him to return to us. God emphasizes this principle in Joel 2:12-14: *"Yet even now, declares the Lord, return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning. Rend your heart, and not your garments. ... Who knows? He might turn aside and relent, and He might leave behind a blessing."*

Some of the prayers and calls for repentance I have heard within the church or at prayer events seem to be a rending of garments. An outward show to impress. A going through the motions of repentance. But the pleading seems to be contrived and hollow instead of brokenhearted and contrite.

Only God knows those who are rending their hearts as they seek Him. But I am led to ask truly serious am I about seeking God on behalf of our nation? When was the last time I fasted and wept and mourned and confessed the sin of our nation as though

it were my own? I believe the future of America hangs on the answer to that question. {eoa}

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