

Behold Their Threatenings

As a pastor, I regularly receive letters, faxes, and phone calls from fellow believers regarding upcoming governmental regulations to be imposed against Christians and local churches in America. These are urgent requests, asking me to act *immediately* to arrange congregational petitions, phone call initiatives, and letter writing campaigns to congressmen, senators, and legislators. The opinion seems to be *if the Church doesn't act, we will surely lose our nation*.

Please do not get me wrong: I do not believe in sitting back and doing nothing, expecting God to do everything about our country. I *do* write and phone congressmen and senators when I sense an urgency about a situation or a particular piece of legislation, and I encourage my congregation to do the same. This is part of our national responsibility and privilege.

Yet, on the other hand, I do not believe that letters, phone calls, and petitions alone will deliver our nation. Think about it: Is God in heaven anxiously pacing the throne room floor because Christians have not sent enough letters or made enough phone calls? Does God wring His hands over past or current legislation in Washington? Is Jesus concerned over bills and petitions which will hinder our ability to worship the Father or spread the gospel?

As I remember, Jesus told us that He would build His Church, "...and the gates of hell would not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). If Satan himself cannot destroy the Church, how can the Congress or our President?

Not a New Problem

Since there is nothing new under the sun, and all problems which exist today have existed since Adam, God's Word must have something to say about this matter. In fact, writers in both the Old and New Testaments have spoken out about the same issues we face in our nation today. One of those writers was a king himself, King David. Let's take a look at the first four verses of his second Psalm.

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their

bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."

Rage and Emptiness

Verse one divides the world's population into two parts: the heathen and the people. The "heathen who rage" are the troublemakers in society, the ones who live in a constant state of anger and turmoil. Reporters are quick to cover their marches, street wars, and protests. It seems half of every news broadcast is devoted to them.

We see, hear, and read about rage in Bosnia, Ireland, the streets of New York, and the heartland of America. Newsmakers include the angry whites, enraged blacks, radical feminists, and militant homosexuals.

The "heathen who rage" accomplish their goals through threats and intimidation. Their message is heard loud and clear -- and it strikes fear into people's hearts. Everyone asks, "What are we going to do?" There seems to be no solution to the problems. No wonder Jesus warned us that in the last days men's hearts would fail them for fear (Luke 21:26).

The second part of the world's population is called "the people." David said they "imagine a vain thing." The Hebrew says they *meditate on emptiness*. This describes the second half of the news broadcasts. After a few minutes of reporting on rage, the news switches to the emptiness of our modern society. We are warned not to break our Styrofoam cups, release freon into the air, or burn our trash. After all, we are told, we live on a fragile planet. We are instructed to "visualize world peace" and "live in harmony." Yet it seems that despite all of man's attempts at peace and harmony, with each passing day, the world is becoming a more dangerous place in which to live.

Is there a pattern here? Why do our local and national news programs seem to be endless variations on the same theme? And why does there seem to be the same liberal slant to reports from government and the news media? Could it be that there is a master plan behind what we see and hear? David says, "Yes!" and he tells about it in verses two and three.

The Kings of the Earth

The rage and emptiness shown to the world's population is merely a cover and distraction so the world leaders can plot. While the world is distracted and fearful, these government leaders work against the laws of God and the influence of the Church of the Lord Jesus. Verse two says, "...the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed [believers]."

Their plans are overheard by the Lord, and the Holy Spirit shares them with David, who shares them with us. Verse three tells what they are saying: "Let us break their bands [chains] asunder [in two], and cast their cords [ropes] from us."

These two verses tell us about the powerful influence the Church has on the world. Whether the world leaders or the press want to admit it or not, the Church and its teaching on morality have kept the world from destruction for two thousand years. Many world leaders, under Satan's control, want to break the hold of Christians and are working today to stop the influence of gospel radio, television, and local churches. These evil leaders feel hindered, *as well they should*. They are presently working behind the scenes in Washington, Eastern and Western Europe, and Asia to keep out the gospel and Christian influence.

Who Will Stop Them?

Now that you know from Scripture what the leaders and kings are up to, perhaps your heart is filled with more fear than before! You may be starting a frantic search for answers: What are we to do? Do we call our senators? Do we write letters? Do we begin petition drives? No! While all of these activities are good, they are not the answer!

God did not leave answers to world problems up to us. David says, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (vs. 4).

Let me assure you, God is not fearful, *He's laughing*. He is laughing in mockery and derision. "Derision" means "to make fun of." God not only laughs, He repeats and mocks what the leaders say. When a king, president, or magistrate tells his cabinet or congress that together they will destroy the Church and the influence of the Lord, God laughs and mocks.

Can't you just see the Father telling Jesus, "They said they will destroy the Church. Ha, ha, ha!" The Holy Spirit joins with their derision as they observe the folly of educated men trying to destroy the Church which Jesus built. The height of arrogance has to be the assumption that you can overthrow what God has decreed to be eternal. God will have the final word and the last laugh, as we see in verse five:

"Then shall he (God) speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure."

When God's anger reaches the boiling point, He will visit them in wrath. They will then find out the foolishness of their defiance against God.

The Attitude of the Early Church

Acts 4 records how the newly formed Church met its first opposition, which came from the government of the land. After the lame man was healed (Acts 3:1-8), many thousands of people were born again, filled with the Holy Spirit, and joined the Church. The government, made up of religious Jews, felt threatened and fearful. This new movement was now affecting the general population, and they feared it could change the religious and social makeup of the entire country.

The Sanhedrin called in the Church leaders and beat them with whips. They then threatened them and told them never to preach again in the name of Jesus. The Jews prided themselves on being tolerant of other religions; *actually they were tolerant only until one became powerful and successful.* Does this sound a lot like our own country today? *We speak of religious freedom, but laws are made to come against just one religion: Christianity.*

After the disciples were beaten and threatened, it would have been a perfect time for them to call their local congressmen or senator. And what a strategic moment for a petition to be signed by all of the new congregational members! But this is not how the Church leaders reacted to the situation. Here's what they did:

"And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art

God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?...

And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."

Acts 4:23-25, 29-31

The people lifted up their voices and quoted Psalm 2. They realized the same pressure which existed in King David's day was now coming against the newborn Church. David's answer also became their answer.

Next, the disciples and Church leadership asked God to help them see more people saved and healed. *The early Church asked for increased power to accomplish the Great Commission.*

Whose Job Are You Doing?

The disciples of the early Church understood the issue well. Ultimately, taking care of the evils of the world is God's job. Taking the gospel to the world is our job. God will empower us by the Holy Spirit when we accept our responsibility.

It is not wrong to speak out against the evils of our world or to become involved politically. The Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles spoke out about the issues of their day as did Jesus Himself. But they all realized and prophesied that God would one day handle it. In the near future, it would be taken care of either by national repentance ... or by military invasion. And ultimately, it would be taken care of at the second advent of the Lord.

Removing a Great Weight

A great weight can be lifted off your shoulders when you can give the world problems to the Lord. You can watch the evening news with an attitude of rest in your heart. You will also gain a clearer insight into your chief calling,

which is spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus. God will not empower us to do His job, but He has given us the Holy Spirit so we can do ours!

Bob Yandian

© 2001 by Bob Yandian Ministries. Reproduction of written text in whole or part without written permission is prohibited. All Rights Reserved