

The Justice of God—And the Sins of Our Country

~Other Speakers A-F: Samuel Davies:

The Justice of God—And the Sins of Our Country

Samuel Davies, 1755

"When disaster comes to a city—has not the LORD caused it?" Amos 3:6

It concerns you all seriously to reflect upon your own sins, and the sins of your land—which have brought all these calamities upon us. If you believe that God governs the world, if you do not abjure him from being the Ruler of your country—then you must acknowledge that all the calamities of war, and the threatening appearances of famine—are ordered by his Providence! And if you believe that he is a just and righteous Ruler, you must also believe that he would not thus punish a righteous or a penitent people.

We and our countrymen are sinners, aggravated sinners! God proclaims that we are such by his judgments now upon us: by withering fields and scanty harvests, by the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war. Our consciences must also bear witness to the same melancholy truth. And if my heart were properly affected, I would concur with these undoubted witnesses; I would cry aloud and not spare; I would lift up my voice like a trumpet—to show you your transgressions and your sins.

O my country, is not your wickedness great, and your iniquities infinite? Where is there a more sinful spot to be found upon our guilty globe? Pass over the land, take a survey of the inhabitants, inspect into their conduct—and what do you see? What do you hear?

You see the gigantic forms of vice bidding defiance to the God of heaven—while true religion and virtue are obliged to retire, to avoid public contempt and insult!

You see herds of drunkards swilling down their cups, and drowning all the morality within them!

You hear the swearer venting his fury against God—trifling with that Name which prostrate angels adore, and imprecating that damnation, under which the hardest devil in hell trembles and groans!

You see AVARICE hoarding up her useless treasures, dishonest craft planning her schemes of unlawful gain, and oppression unmercifully grinding the face of the poor!

You see prodigality squandering her stores! You see luxury spreading her table!

You see vanity laughing aloud and dissolving in empty, unthinking mirth, regardless of God, of time and eternity!

You see sensuality wallowing in carnal pleasures, and aspiring, with perverted ambition—to sink as low as her four-footed brethren in the stalls!

You see cards more in use than the Bible; the backgammon table more frequented than the table of the Lord; novels and romances more read—than the history of the blessed Jesus!

You see trifling and even evil diversions and amusements, become a gigantic business! You see the outcome of a horse-race or a dog-fight more anxiously attended to, than the concerns of eternity!

And where these grosser forms of vice do not shock your senses—even there you often meet with the appearances of more refined impiety, which is equally dangerous!

You hear the conversation of reasonable creatures, of candidates for eternity—engrossed by trifles, or vainly wasted on the affairs of time! These are their important subjects of conversation, even at the threshold of the house of God!

You see swarms of prayerless families all over our land! You see ignorant, wicked children, unrestrained and untaught by those to whom God and nature have entrusted their souls!

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You see thousands of poor slaves in a Christian country, the property of 'Christian' masters, as they will be called, almost as ignorant of Christianity as when they left the wilds of Africa!

You see the holy religion of Jesus—abused, neglected, disobeyed, and dishonored by its professors!

You see hear Infidelity scattering her ambiguous hints and suspicions; or openly attacking the Christian cause with pretended argument, with insult and ridicule!

You see crowds of professed believers, who are in reality, practical Atheists! These nominal Christians are really unholy heathens! They are abandoned slaves of sin—who yet pretend to be the servants of the holy Jesus!

You see the ordinances of the gospel neglected by some, profaned by others, and attended upon by the generality with a trifling irreverence, and studied unconcernedness. Alas! who would think that those thoughtless assemblies we often see in our places of worship—have met for such solemn purposes as to implore the pardon of their sins from an injured God, and to prepare for an all-important eternity?

Alas! Has that religion, for the propagation of which, the Son of God labored, and bled, and died; has that religion, for which his apostles and thousands of martyrs have spent their strength, and shed their blood; has that religion, on which our eternal life depends—has that religion become such a trifle in our days—that men are hardly serious and in earnest when they attend upon its most solemn services?

You see multitudes lying in a deep sleep in sin all around us! You see them eager in the pursuits of the vanities of time—but stupidly unconcerned about the important realities of the eternal world just before them! So few are concerned what shall become of them—when all their connections with earth and flesh must be broken, and they must take their flight into strange, unknown regions! So few lamenting their sins! So few crying for mercy and a new heart! So few flying to Jesus, or even sensible of the importance of a Mediator, in a religion for sinners!

You may indeed see some degree of civility and benevolence towards men, and more than enough of cringing complaisance of worms to worms—of clay to clay—of guilt to guilt. But oh! how little sincere homage, how little affectionate veneration for the great Lord of heaven and earth! You may see something of duty to parents, of gratitude to benefactors, and obedience to superiors—but if God is a Father—then where is his honor? If he is a Master—then where is his fear? If he is our Benefactor—then where is our gratitude to him?

You may see here and there some instances of proud, self-righteous virtue, some appearances of morality: but oh! how rare is vital, evangelical religion, and true Christian morality, animated with the love of God, proceeding from a new heart, and a regard to the divine authority; full of Jesus, full of regard to him as a Mediator, on whose account alone—our duties can find acceptance!

O blessed Redeemer! what little necessity, what little use do the sinners of our country find for you in their religion! How many discourses are delivered, how many prayers offered, how many good works are performed—in which there is scarce anything of Christ! And this defect renders them all—but 'shining sins', 'glittering crimes'!

How few pant and languish for you, blessed Jesus! and pledge never be contented with their reformation, with their morality, with their good works—until they obtain a saving interest in your righteousness, to sanctify all, to render all acceptable!

You may see children sensible of their dependence on their parents for their existence; you see multitudes sensible of their dependence on clouds, and sun, and earth, for provision for man and beast. But how few sensible of their dependence upon God, as the great Sustainer of the universe? You see that even the dull ox knows its owner, and the stupid donkey knows its master's feeding—trough; you see the workings of gratitude even in your dog, which welcomes you home with a thousand fondling motions! But how is Jehovah's government and agency practically denied in His own territories! How few receive the blessings of life as from His hand—and make proper returns of gratitude to Him!

You see a withered, ravaged country around you, languishing under the frowns of an angry God; but how few earnest prayers, how few penitential groans do you hear! Pass over the land, and bring me the facts! Is not this the general character of our country? I know there are some happy exceptions; and I hope sundry such might

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be produced from among you. But is not this the prevailing character of a great majority? The most generous charity cannot think the contrary, if under any Scriptural or rational limitations.

May it not be said of the people of our country—as well as those of Sodom, "Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD!" And thus, alas! it has been for a long time! Our country has sinned on securely for over one hundred and fifty years; and each generation has increased the vices of the previous one! And can a land always bear up under such a load of accumulated wickedness! Can God always allow such a race of sinners to go unpunished, from generation to generation! May we not fear that our iniquities have now filled up the cup of God's wrath—and that He is about to thunder out His dreadful mandate to the executioners of His vengeance, "Swing the sickle—for the harvest is ripe! Come, trample the grapes—for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their wickedness!" Joel 3:13

And is there no relief for a sinking country? Or is it too late to administer it? Is our wound so incurable, that it cannot be healed? No, blessed be God; if you now turn every one of you from your evil ways, if you mourn over your sins, and turn to the Lord with your whole hearts—then your country will yet recover. God will appear for us, and give a prosperous turn to our affairs; he has assured us of this in his own word, "If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil—then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned!" Jeremiah 18:7-8.

Therefore, my friends, as we have all rebelled—let us all join in unanimous repentance and a thorough reformation. Not only your eternal salvation requires it—but also the preservation of your country, which is now bleeding with the wounds you have given it by your sins. The safety of these our friends, who are now engaged in so generous a design, requires it: for even an army of saints, or of heroes—cannot defend a guilty, impenitent people, ripe for the judgments of God!

If you would be everlastingly happy, and escape the vengeance of eternal fire, or (to mention what may perhaps have more weight with some of you,) if you would preserve yourselves, your families, your posterity—from poverty, from slavery, ignorance, idolatry, torture, and death; if you would save yourselves and them from all the infernal horrors of popery, and the savage tyranny of a mongrel race of French and Indian warriors: in short, if you would avoid all that is terrible, and enjoy everything that is dear and valuable—then you must repent and turn to the Lord. This is the only cure for our wounded country; and if you refuse to repent in time—then prepare to perish in its ruins.

If you go on impenitent in sin, you may expect not only to be damned forever—but (what is more terrible to some of you) to fall into the most extreme outward distress. You will have reason to fear not only the loss of heaven—which some of you perhaps think little of—but the loss of your estates, which lie so near your hearts. And will you not repent—when you are pressed to it from so many quarters at once?

(Note: The above is an excerpt from a much longer sermon.)