

**~Other Speakers G-L: Erwin W. Lutzer:**

Despite its foundational Christian heritage, America is rapidly degenerating into a godless society. The church in America, although highly visible and active, appears powerless to redirect the rushing secular currents. Mired in a moral and spiritual crisis, America's only hope is a national revival, like God has graciously bestowed in the past.

**The Removal of God.** From the beginning, Christian values ingrained America's political and social fabric. Its democratic form of government was founded on faith in God. To this day United States currency bears the inscription, "In God We Trust." America flourished while Christianity permeated all aspects of life, including the laws, education, and culture.

The powers in America today, however, have chosen a path of rejecting God and His ways. Federal courts have interpreted our constitution as requiring that the Bible, prayer and religious discussion be removed from classrooms, community buildings and places of public gatherings. Government officials and educators across the country are systematically eliminating any vestiges of God from society. Militant secularists will not be satisfied until God is expunged from every facet of American life.

American laws are being reinterpreted and rewritten to sanction what is abominable to a holy God. In 1973 the Supreme Court legalized abortion for any reason, and Congress subsequently passed a law providing government funds for such barbarous acts. Old laws making homosexual practices criminal are being repealed, and new legislation is being enacted requiring society to support such lifestyles. While religious discussion is gagged, pornography is permitted to saturate our culture.

Our society is fast becoming openly hostile to Christian values. The media trivializes and ridicules Christianity in the name of humanistic and pluralistic concerns. American culture is dominated by television and movies, whose profanity and lewdness tramp God's honor into the mud, inculcating non-Christian values from infancy. Public schools teach our children how to practice various forms of immorality. One school curriculum in America teaches acceptance of homosexuality in the first grade and mutual masturbation in junior high.

America is reaping the dire consequences of rejecting God. Our society is morally bankrupt, and the problems seem resistant to government cures. William J. Bennet, in his Index of Leading Cultural Indicators, provides the following statistics for the past 30 years. Despite increased funding and stricter laws, violent crime has increased more than 500 percent. While sex education programs have proliferated, illegitimate births have increased over 400 percent, significantly among teenagers. The divorce rate has quadrupled, and single parent homes have become the majority. Our young people today exhibit a hopelessness, with a more than 200 percent increase in the teenage suicide rate. And America appears helpless before its great problems.

**The Church's Ineffectiveness.** The church in America, despite its many activities and apparent successfulness, has had no measurable affect in reversing this downward spiral. We must candidly admit that no country has had more Christian organizations, more radio stations, more books, more seminars, and more churches with proportionately less impact on society. We are confounded with the pollsters who tell us that religion is up but morality is down.

Sadly, the influence has been in the wrong direction, as we see evidence that our culture has begun to permeate our churches. The church is seduced by the social agenda of wealth and pleasure, and has condoned sinful compromises. There is moral decay within the church, with highly publicized scandals involving ministers, and divorce statistics which are not much better than those outside the church. Think of all that we and our churches would have to repent of if a spirit of holiness began to captivate us. How can America be influenced by an inconsistent and hypocritical church?

If the strength of the church should be determined by its impact on its surrounding culture, we desperately need an injection of spiritual life. The present powerlessness of the church may be a sign that God has withdrawn His blessing that we might seek Him.

**A National Revival Needed.** There is reason to believe that only a national revival can pull us out of the ditch into which we have slid. I am convinced Â- as all of us must be Â- that every human resource is now inadequate and only the direct intervention of God can reverse our country's spiritual decay. If America will really be given another chance, at least some kingdoms of darkness will have to fall like dominoes. That can only happen if God chooses to show us the mercy we most assuredly do not deserve.

America has experienced three great periods of revival in the previous two centuries, during which all of society was dramatically affected. There was a widespread restoration of the people of God, that resulted in tens of thousands of conversions greatly affecting the culture of the day. America returned to its Christian roots. Taverns were closed, families were reconciled, and young people became sober in their pursuit of God.

From our past, we learn the clear lesson that a genuine spiritual revival can do more to transform culture than all of our political/social activism. We need a renewal that can only be effected by widespread repentance before the Almighty whom we have so grievously offended. The forces of evil are so deeply entrenched that any cultural shifts will only be cosmetic unless they are accompanied by a spiritual awakening that affects large segments of our population.

When Ephesus experienced revival, the people brought their occult books and artifacts, and publicly burned them (Acts 19:18-19). What bonfires of pornography, rock music, artifacts, and books of occultism we would have if God's presence was manifestly felt!

There is Hope. Revival is possible as long as God is God. Jonathan Edwards, a leader during the First Great Awakening in America, argued that God grants light when the darkness is the greatest, and it was in just such times that the glorious periods of revival occurred in America's history. When there was disinterest in religion, gross immorality and rampant unbelief, God poured out His undeserved gracious blessing.

So let's dream for a while: Catch the vision of crowded churches from coast to coast, shops closing during the noon hours for special prayer, and our legislators turning to God for wisdom in making decisions. Think of the nightly news telling the story of tens of thousands of believers making restitution for past wrongs, and reports of thousands of conversions to Christ.

Imagine a country where abortion would become rare, not just through legislation but because mothers valued their children and immorality was on the decline. Imagine a country in which homosexuals repented and sought God for help in overcoming their lifestyles rather than imposing their values on society. Imagine a country where the courts would reflect America's Christian roots.

We must believe God for something more than our generation has seen. May our sights be raised and our faith increased, to fervently seek God for a national revival. What God has done in the past, He can do again!