

America Has No Soul

But You Do

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*This book is lovingly dedicated to all those for whom Christ died,
which is everyone, for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is
for all.*

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Introduction

There is a conversation happening across America that sounds deeply spiritual but is, in many cases, spiritually hollow. Politicians call for prayer at press conferences, commentators declare that the nation needs to return to God, and talk show hosts speak of the soul of America and the crowds cheer.

However, we want to ask you a question before you read another word of this book. This is not a question about America but a question about you: **have you been born again?**

Notice that the question is not:

- Do you vote the right way?
- Do you fly the flag?
- Do you go to church on Sunday?

We mean, have you trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and received the free gift of eternal life?

That is the question this book is about.

America is a magnificent country. We are grateful to live here. The freedoms we enjoy to worship, to speak, to print, to own property, to raise our children in the fear of the Lord are not small things at all. They are the fruit of centuries of sacrifice, and we ought not to despise them.

However, *America* does not have a soul. It cannot be saved. It will not stand before God and give an account of itself. It will not spend eternity in Heaven or Hell. Nations rise and fall. America, like Rome before it and Babylon before Rome, will one day pass from the scene of history. The Bible makes this very clear: ***“the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance”*** (Isaiah 40:15).

You, however, are different. You *have* a soul. After you take your last breath, you will spend eternity somewhere, and where you spend it depends entirely on whether you know the Lord Jesus Christ.

This book is written to redirect your attention. Not away from your country, but away from the false gospel of political salvation, and toward the only Gospel that can truly save: that Jesus Christ died for our sins, shed His precious blood, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

We ask you to read this book with your Bible open, and check everything that is discussed here against it.

Chapter 1

The Confusion Of The Nation And The Soul

A nation may need reform, but a soul needs regeneration.

Turn on any conservative news program on any given evening, and within the first fifteen minutes you will likely hear someone say that America is losing her soul.

The host will speak gravely about declining moral values, about the removal of prayer from schools, about the coarsening of the culture. Now, they will not be wrong about the observations, because America *is* coarser. The culture *is* more hostile to Christianity. Biblical values *are* more openly mocked today than they were a generation ago.

However, here is where the conversation consistently goes wrong: the solution offered is almost always political.

Elect the right candidates, pass the right laws, appoint the right judges, and we'll be a-okay. Return prayer to public schools, put the Ten Commandments back on the courthouse wall, and somehow, if we get the legislation right, America will be restored.

We want to be charitable here, because many of the people saying these things are sincere. They love their

country and are troubled by what they see. There is nothing wrong with wanting righteous legislation or seeking to put men of character in positions of leadership.

But there is something deeply confused about treating the political process as a substitute for personal salvation, or worse, as if the salvation of the nation is what matters *most*, while the salvation of individual souls is *secondary*.

Of course, the Bible speaks of nations, but it does not treat them as having souls in the way that individual human beings do. When God judges nations in the Bible, He judges them for the public, national sins that become common and defended such as: idolatry, injustice, bloodshed, and hatred of God's truth. Nations may humble themselves outwardly and even turn from wickedness for a time, but nations are not born again and do not enter heaven as nations. You will not see the American flag in heaven, nor that of any other nation. Nations do not receive the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. God did not breathe into America's nostrils the breath of life. Instead, we see that ***"the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."*** (Genesis 2:7).

What is most concerning about the belief that America has a "soul" is the emergence of what can really only be called a "political religion." This is a set of beliefs, rituals, and devotions that *look* like Christianity on the surface but are actually organized around national identity rather than personal faith in Christ.

Think of someone who feels confident about heaven because they are "for God" in a political sense. They vote for conservative candidates, share Christian content, and speak warmly about America's founding. They may even pray in public settings. Yet, when you ask them about

repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, most of them will point to their values, their causes, and their side. They have a worldview and works, but likely have never truly trusted in Jesus Christ. A man is saved by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ (His death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection), not by voting right or living clean.

In this political religion, the great hope is not the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the dead, but the election of the right president.

Friend, this is a false gospel. It cannot save you. It cannot save America. It is, we fear, sending many people to a Christless eternity in Hell with the comfortable feeling that they stood on the right side of the culture war.

America doesn't have a soul, but you do, and that soul needs to be saved.

Chapter 2

The Confusion Of Kingdoms

There is a confusion at the root of nearly everything we have described in the previous chapter, and it must be addressed directly if the reader is to understand why so many sincere Christians have gone astray in their thinking about America and politics. The confusion is this: most believers in America have never been taught the difference between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God.

These two terms are used throughout the New Testament, and while they overlap in certain ways, the Bible draws a distinction between them that is critical for understanding the times we live in.

The Kingdom of Heaven is a physical and visible kingdom. It has borders. It has laws. It has a throne, and on that throne will sit the Lord Jesus Christ Himself when He returns to this earth.

The prophets described it in vivid detail. Isaiah wrote of a day when the wolf would dwell with the lamb and the earth would be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:6, 9). Zechariah wrote that the Lord would be king over all the earth (Zechariah 14:9).

This is a literal, future, earthly kingdom, and it will be established at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, not one moment before.

The Kingdom of God, on the other hand, is a spiritual, invisible kingdom that is entered only by the new birth. Jesus told Nicodemus plainly:

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3).

This kingdom is not a political system. It is not a nation. It is not an earthly government. It is the rule and reign of God in the hearts of those who have been born again through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It has no borders on a map. It operates entirely in the spiritual realm, and its citizens are made one at a time, through the preaching of the gospel and the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost.

Here is why this matters so much for the American Christian. When believers pour their energy into building a moral, political utopia in this country, they are attempting to build the Kingdom of Heaven on earth before the King has returned. They are trying to establish by legislation and cultural influence what God has promised to establish by His own power at His own appointed time. God has not called the church to build the Kingdom of Heaven. He has called the church to build His Church, one soul at a time, through the preaching of the gospel.

The Jews in the first century made this exact mistake. When Jesus came the first time, the nation of Israel was under the heel of Rome. They were taxed, occupied, oppressed. They wanted a Messiah, certainly, yet what they wanted was a political conqueror. They wanted someone who would overthrow Rome, restore the kingdom to Israel, and put them back on top of the world. They wanted a King on a warhorse, not a Saviour on a cross.

When Jesus refused to be that kind of king, they rejected Him. They chose Barabbas, a political revolutionary, over Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John 1:11).

Do not make the exact same mistake the Pharisees made. Do not look at the Lord Jesus Christ and see only a tool for political change. Do not reduce the Son of God to a mascot for your movement. He did not come to fix Rome, and He did not come to fix America. He came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

Stop looking for a political savior. You already have a Saviour, and His name is Jesus Christ.

Chapter 3

Calling For Prayer, But To Whom?

It has become fashionable for politicians to call for prayer. After a national tragedy, the flags go to half-mast and the politicians go to the microphones to ask the American people to pray.

We are not mocking this. There have been men and women in American public life who truly knew the Lord Jesus Christ and whose calls to prayer came from a genuine heart of dependence on God.

However, we want to press on this, because the question matters eternally: who are they praying to?

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." (Matthew 6:5.)

The God most frequently invoked in the civic religion of America is a somewhat vague deity. It is a 'Creator' who endows men with rights, a 'Providence' who guides the nation, and an 'Almighty' who blesses and protects. This God is not the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not the God of the Bible. He is a useful God when He is

invoked to sanctify national ambitions and comfort grieving citizens, but a God who makes no uncomfortable demands and offers no specific salvation.

The Founding Fathers were men of varying beliefs. Some were genuine Christians. Others were Deists who believed in a God who created the world and then largely stepped back from it. Still others were somewhere in between.

The Declaration of Independence speaks of “Nature's God” and “Divine Providence.” This is, of course, a language that any Deist could embrace comfortably without any commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

This civic religious language has been inherited by American political culture, and it has become a kind of lowest-common-denominator faith. It is a faith that is vague enough to unite believers and unbelievers alike under the banner of God-and-country, but specific enough to give the impression of genuine piety.

This lowest-common-denominator faith has a name. We will call it what it is.

The “American God” is an idol.

He is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is not the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not breathe the breath of life into Adam's nostrils, did not thunder from Sinai, did not send His Son to die on a Roman cross for the sins of the world.

He is a constructed deity, assembled by committee, approved by consensus, and carefully designed to offend no one. He loves everyone without distinction, tolerates everything without comment, and makes no demands that would inconvenience the nation's preferred way of living. He is treated not as a Lord who demands submission, but as a cosmic servant, ignored entirely when life is comfortable,

and summoned urgently the moment a tragedy strikes, expected to fix the problem and then quietly return to his post. He is always available to comfort the grieving and sanctify the national ambition, but he is never inconvenient, never holy, and never wrathful against sin.

He is, in short, the golden calf¹ dressed in the language of the founding documents.

Notice what made the golden calf so uniquely blasphemous. Aaron did not simply build an idol and invite the people to worship something new. He built the calf, erected an altar before it, and then proclaimed, ***"To morrow is a feast to the LORD"*** (Exodus 32:5).

He attached the holy name of God to a pagan construction. The horror was not merely that Israel worshipped an idol, it was that they worshipped an idol while calling it by the name of the true God. That is precisely what American civic religion does. It constructs a deity that tolerates everything, demands nothing, and offends no one, and then commits the ultimate blasphemy of calling that idol by the name of the God of the Bible.

When a nation constructs a deity accommodating enough to unite believers and unbelievers under a single banner, that nation has not honored the God of the Bible, it has replaced Him.

The real God, the God of the Bible, is nothing like this. He is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). He will by no means clear the guilty (Exodus 34:7). He says plainly: ***"Thou shalt have no other gods before me"*** (Exodus 20:3).

1. The golden calf incident takes place in Exodus 32. Israel sins by making and worshipping a golden calf while Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the law from God. Impatient at Moses' absence, the people persuaded Aaron to fashion the idol from their gold earrings, and they ascribed to it the deliverance God had performed in bringing them out of Egypt.

The first commandment was not an invitation to multi-faith dialogue, it was an absolute claim of exclusivity from the God who made the heavens and the earth and will share His glory with no one. ***"I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images"*** (Isaiah 42:8).

This same exclusive God has also declared an exclusive way of salvation. He has not left man to approach Him by whatever religion, nation, or tradition he prefers. He has appointed one Mediator, one Saviour, and one Name by which sinners must come.

The Lord Jesus Christ said plainly, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*** (John 14:6). Jesus didn't claim to be *a* way, but actually what He said was ***"the way."*** Jesus Christ is not one path among many, but actually He is the only path.

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The Bible says that there is none other name whereby we must be saved. That name whereby we must be saved is not the name of America. It is not the name of any political party or any founding father. The name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

This is not a popular message. It never has been. The world would much prefer a religion that says all paths lead to God, that sincerity is what matters, that as long as you are a good person and you call out to something greater than yourself, you will be okay in the end. However, this is *not* what the Bible teaches, and the kindness of God required that He tell us the truth, even if it is an *uncomfortable* truth.

Here is what concerns us most about the public prayer culture in America. It can create the impression of a relationship with God where there may be none. A man watches a prayer on television, bows his head in his living room, says "amen," and goes to bed feeling like he has done something before God. Perhaps he has. We cannot see his heart, and neither can you. Only God knows whether that moment was genuine.

However, the danger is real. Civic religion is *very* good at producing the *feeling* of spirituality without the *substance* of it. It offers the language of faith without the Author of faith. A man can bow his head a thousand times at the invitation of a politician and never once have bowed his heart before Jesus Christ. The form of godliness is not the power of it.

This is not a judgment of any man on a television screen. It is a warning for the man watching. The question is not whether *they* have trusted Christ, but whether *you* have. Public piety cannot do for you what only personal faith can do. No amount of political influence, no amount of righteous legislation, and no amount of shared public rituals can substitute for you yourself coming to Jesus Christ.

"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." (Matthew 15:8)

The Lord Jesus Christ quoted Isaiah when He said that. The people of Isaiah's day were the same as the people of Jesus' day, and they are the same as the people of our day. They draw near with their mouths, they honor God with their lips, they pray publicly, they invoke His name at ceremonies, and they print "In God We Trust" on their

currency. Their lips are moving, but their hearts are on the other side of the room.

Let's be fair. We are not saying that every politician who calls for prayer is a hypocrite. We cannot see men's hearts, and we will not pretend that we can. There may be genuine believers in public office who call for prayer because they truly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank God for those individuals if they exist, and we pray for more of them.

We have to separate two things that often get tangled together. There is public language *about* God, and there is a real relationship *with* God. There is the appearance of reverence, and there is the new birth. Prayer is not a civic ritual, but communion with the living God, and that access is only found in Jesus Christ. A microphone and a podium do not grant that access, but being born again does.

America cannot pray. The Statue of Liberty has no soul to bring before God. Yet, *you* can pray. You, as an individual, can have access to the living God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible invites every born-again believer: ***“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”*** (Hebrews 4:16).

That is the invitation of the Gospel. Don't waste it waiting for the nation to do what only you can do for yourself.

Chapter 4

God Never Made A Covenant With America

There is a belief that runs so deep in American Christianity that most people have never thought to question it. It is the belief that America has a special and exclusive relationship with God. That this nation was chosen by Providence for a divine purpose. That God has blessed America the way He blessed Israel, and that if we stray from Him, He will judge us the way He judged Israel, and that if we return to Him, He will restore us the way He promised to restore Israel.

It is a comforting belief, perhaps even a patriotic belief. However, it is *not* a biblical claim, and because it is not biblical, it has led millions of sincere Christians into a confusion that has real consequences for the souls of the people around them.

God made a covenant with Abraham. This is not a metaphor or a general principle. It is a specific, binding agreement between the Creator of the universe and one man, recorded in the scriptures for all to read.

“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of

thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” (Genesis 12:1–3)

God repeated this promise to Isaac:

“Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father.” (Genesis 26:3)

God repeated this promise to Jacob:

“And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.” (Genesis 35:12)

God repeated this promise to the nation of Israel:

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. (Exodus 19:5–6)

This is God’s covenant with the nation of Israel. Notice these key details:

- It has specific parties: God and the nation of Israel.
- It has specific terms: obedience to God's voice and the keeping of His covenant.
- It has specific promises, such as: the land, the blessing, and the special status among the nations.
- It has specific consequences for failure: which are laid out in terrifying detail in Deuteronomy 28.

Now here is the question we want you to think about honestly: where, in the Bible, is the equivalent covenant with the United States of America?

Where in the scriptures does God say to George Washington, or to Thomas Jefferson, or to the Continental Congress, ***"If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me"***? Where does God promise the land of North America to the American people the way He promised the land of Canaan to the seed of Abraham? Where are the terms? Where are the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience? Where is the covenant?

It does not exist. We say that not to diminish America, but to tell the truth. God never made a covenant with this nation. The Constitution is a legal document drafted by men. The Declaration of Independence is a political document, and a fine one, but it is not scripture.

America is a great nation, in many respects, but it is a nation like every other nation on the earth in this one crucial regard: it is not in covenant relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Now someone will say, "But America was founded on Christian principles. The founders were Christians. This was established as a Christian nation."

Were there genuine Christians among the founders? Yes, there likely were. Men who feared God, who read their Bibles, and who prayed with sincerity.

Were there also Deists among the founders? Yes, there were.

Thomas Jefferson produced a version of the Gospels with miracles and references to Christ's deity removed. He produced what is often called the *Jefferson Bible*, which is

not a Bible at all but a gutted moral handbook stripped of everything that makes the gospel the gospel.

Thomas Paine, whose pamphlet *Common Sense* helped spark the Revolution, wrote *The Age of Reason*, which attacked Christianity with open hostility.

These are historical facts. You can read these men's own words for yourself. Does this mean that God's hand was not at work in the founding of America?

God can use *any* nation for His purposes *without* being in covenant with that nation. He used Assyria as the rod of His anger to judge Israel (Isaiah 10:5), and Assyria was not in covenant with Him. He raised up Cyrus the Persian to deliver Israel from Babylon and called him "**my shepherd**" and "**his anointed**" (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1), and Cyrus did not even know the Lord.

God can bless a nation, use a nation, and work through a nation without that nation being His covenant people. He has done it many times throughout history. We do believe He has done it with America. The freedoms we enjoy, the opportunity to worship and preach and all the blessings of being an American, these are blessings from the hand of God, and we ought to be grateful for them.

However, *blessings* are not the same thing as a *covenant*. Gratitude for what God has done through America is not the same thing as claiming that America holds the position that belongs to Israel alone.

This matters more than you might think, because when you confuse America with Israel, you make a series of errors that have real spiritual consequences.

First, you begin to read the Old Testament promises to Israel as though they were written to you as an American. You read 2 Chronicles 7:14 and you think God is talking about healing America. You read Jeremiah 29:11, "**For I**

know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" and you think God is talking about America's future. He is not. He is talking to the Jewish captives in Babylon. That is what the context says. You may draw a principle from it, but you may not claim the promise unless you are the party to whom it was made.

Second, you begin to treat the nation as though it were the church. You speak of "America returning to God" as though America were a backslidden believer in need of restoration. However, America is not a believer. America is not the church. America is a civil government made up of saved and unsaved people, and it has no capacity to repent, to believe, or to be born again.

Only individuals can do that.

Third, and this is perhaps the most dangerous error of all, you begin to treat political loyalty as a substitute for personal holiness. If America is God's chosen nation, then being a good American starts to feel like being a good Christian. Waving the flag starts to feel like worship. Voting the right way starts to feel like obedience to God. This results in, slowly, without anyone hardly noticing, the gospel being replaced by patriotism, and people go to their graves believing they were right with God because they were right with America.

The prophets of Israel had something to say about this kind of confusion, and they did not say it gently.

The people of Israel made the same mistake. They assumed that because they were God's chosen nation, because they had the temple, because they had the law, because they had the covenant, that they were automatically in God's favor. They confused their national identity with their personal standing before God.

The prophets corrected them in terms that should make every American Christian pay very close attention.

“The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.” (Jeremiah 7:1–4)

The people were walking into the temple chanting, ***“The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.”*** They thought the building protected them. They thought the institution secured them. They thought their national religious identity meant they were safe. Yet God, through Jeremiah, called those words ***“lying words.”***

They had the temple. They had the covenant. They had the law of God, but it did not save them, because their hearts were far from Him.

If the temple of the LORD could not save Israel when their hearts were wicked, what makes you think the Constitution of the United States will save America?

“Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” (Amos 3:1–2)

“You only have I known” is an exclusive statement. God had a unique relationship with Israel that He did not have with any other nation. Even with that unique relationship, their sin still brought judgment.

We want to say something here that we hope will be received in the spirit in which it is intended. We are not anti-American. We love this country. We are grateful for its freedoms. We pray for its leaders. We want to see it do well.

However, we love the truth more than any country, and the truth is that America is not eternal. America is not in covenant with God. America is not the church. The sooner Christians in this country stop treating America as though it holds a position in God's plan that belongs only to Israel, the sooner they will be able to focus on the one thing that actually matters eternally: the salvation of individual souls through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible does not leave us in the dark about the future of the nations. It tells us plainly:

“All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.” (Isaiah 40:17)

“For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.” (Isaiah 60:12)

When Jesus Christ returns, He is not wrapping Himself in the American flag. Every soul will answer to God as an individual. They will not be standing before the Lord as a patriotic American, not as a Republican, and not as a Democrat, but as a *soul*.

America is not eternal. America does not have a soul, but you do. If you have been trusting in your country instead of Jesus Christ, it is time to put your faith where it belongs: in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and whose kingdom shall have no end.

Chapter 5

Have You Been Born Again?

There are many voices today who can see that something is wrong.

They can point to the confusion in the culture. They can trace the moral decline. They can identify movements, ideologies, and moments in history that have brought us to where we are today.

In many ways, they are not wrong.

The culture *is* confused and the nation *is* changing. Things that were once considered shameful are now celebrated, and things that were once honored are now mocked.

However, here is where even the clearest voices often go wrong: they diagnose the symptoms correctly but misidentify the disease. The problem is not ultimately feminism, or government, or any cultural movement. Those things are the fruit. The root is the same as it has always been: sin.

Now since the problem is spiritual, no cultural correction can fix it. You can rebuild the family structure, and still die lost. You can restore moral values, and still stand before God without Christ. You can win every political battle, and

still lose your soul. The issue is not first what is happening around you, but what has (or has not) happened within you.

Have you been born again?

There is perhaps no phrase in the English language more abused, more misunderstood, and more emptied of its power than the phrase "born again."

Politicians claim it, athletes claim it, and celebrities have described spiritual experiences with the language of being born again. The phrase has been so broadly applied that it has lost, in many circles, any specific meaning at all.

But Jesus Christ was very specific about what He meant.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3).

Nicodemus was a Pharisee. He was a religious expert, a ruler of the Jews, and a man who knew the scriptures thoroughly and lived by them carefully. He came to Jesus by night and acknowledged, ***"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him"*** (John 3:2). Nicodemus was, by every outward measure, a godly man.

Jesus still told him, ***"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."***

Nicodemus was confused: ***"How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"*** (John 3:4).

Jesus clarified: ***"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*** (John 3:5-6).

When Jesus spoke of being born of water, He was refer-

ring to the first birth, which is the physical birth that is visible to all. Nicodemus had already experienced the first birth, but Jesus was telling him that a physical birth is not enough; he must have a second, spiritual birth to enter the Kingdom of God.

The new birth is not a reformation of the old nature. It is not becoming *more* religious, *more* moral, *more* patriotic, or *more* culturally conservative. It is a supernatural work of the Holy Ghost of God in which a dead soul is made alive, a lost sinner is made a child of God, and a condemned sinner is justified by faith in Jesus Christ.

We live in a culture that is largely uncomfortable with the concept of lostness. Yet, it is the biblical teaching that apart from Jesus Christ, all human beings are lost, condemned, and on their way to Hell. This is not a popular doctrine, but it is what the Bible teaches, and to soften it or ignore it is to rob the Gospel of its importance. Why would Jesus allow Himself to be crucified, if it were not for a *very* important reason? It is ludicrous to reject the fact that Jesus came **“to seek and to save that which was lost.”** (Luke 19:10).

The Bible says, **“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”** (Romans 3:23). Every person reading these words has sinned against a holy God. Not once or twice, but throughout their entire lives. **“There is none righteous, no, not one”** (Romans 3:10).

The wages of this sin is not merely temporal suffering, not merely a hard life on earth or a guilty conscience. **“For the wages of sin is death”** (Romans 6:23), and the death in view here is not only physical death but eternal separation from God, which the Bible calls the lake of fire, the second death (Revelation 20:14).

This is the condition of every unsaved person, regard-

less of how good a citizen they are, regardless of whether they voted correctly, regardless of whether they say they believe in God in the broad civic sense. Being a decent American does not save you. Hating communism does not save you. Flying the flag and going to church and supporting the right causes does not save you.

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5).

The good news, and this is the best news you will ever hear in your entire life, is that God ***“so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”*** (John 3:16).

The Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, took on human flesh, lived a sinless life, and went to the cross of Calvary. There, He bore the sins of the world in His own body. ***“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”*** (2 Corinthians 5:21). He died, was buried, and on the third day rose again from the dead.

Salvation is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and not of works. ***“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”*** (Ephesians 2:8-9). You cannot earn it. You cannot deserve it. You can only receive it, as a gift, by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the new birth. It is *not* a “political awakening.” It is *not* a “cultural revival.” It is *not* a return to “traditional values.”

It is a personal, supernatural, once-for-all transformation in which God declares you righteous because of what His Son did for you on the cross.

So, have *you* been born again?

We are asking whether you, personally, repented and believed the gospel, and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour? Whether the Holy Ghost of God dwells within you. Whether, if you were to die tonight, you are absolutely certain that you would spend eternity in the presence of God.

If you are not sure, do not put this off. We implore you to read chapter 11 next.

Chapter 6

The Great Misdirection

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." (Colossians 3:2).

One of Satan's most effective tricks in the modern age has been to redirect the focus and energy of Christians away from eternal things and toward temporal ones. His trick is to trade the urgency of the Gospel for the urgency of the election cycle.

Let us be fair: elections do matter. The policies of governments affect the lives of millions of people. A government that protects the unborn is better than one that doesn't. A government that protects religious freedom is better than one that persecutes the church. These things are not trivial.

However, when the church begins to spend more time talking about the upcoming election than about the Lord Jesus Christ, when more passion is directed toward defeating a political opponent than toward reaching the lost with the Gospel, something has gone *deeply* wrong.

Because at that point, we have forgotten who the real enemy is.

The Bible is crystal clear in Ephesians 6:12: ***“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”***

Read that carefully. Your enemy is ultimately not a political party. It is not a voter base. It is not a group of people you disagree with. They are not the opposition to be defeated, they are souls that are in need of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The real battle is spiritual. It is against unseen powers that are working behind the scenes. When a Christian begins to view a lost person primarily as a political opponent, he has already lost the battle. He has traded spiritual weapons for carnal ones. He has stepped out of the fight God called him to and into one that cannot produce eternal results.

For many Christians in America today, the worst imaginable outcome is a political one. The wrong party wins. The wrong laws get passed. The wrong justices are appointed. The country goes further down the road of moral decline.

Rome in the first century was not a Christian nation (nor is it today). Abortion was practiced. Infanticide was practiced. Sexual immorality was rampant. Slavery was the foundation of the economy. The government executed people for their faith. By any measure, Rome was in worse moral shape than America is today.

Yet, the response to all of this was not primarily political. The Holy Ghost, through the Apostle Paul, wrote no treatises on Roman law. Paul did not organize a movement to reform Roman governance from the outside. Paul preached the Gospel, planted churches, trained pastors, and trusted that the transformation of individual souls

through the power of the Holy Ghost was the only real answer to the moral disorder of the age.

America's problems are not primarily political. They are spiritual and thus require spiritual solutions. The solution is not the right president. The solution is the Lord Jesus Christ, received personally by faith, one soul at a time.

Chapter 7

Do Not Bury Your Head In The Sand

We want to be absolutely clear about something, because this book could be misread if we are not.

This book is not telling you to stop caring about your country. It is not a call to withdrawal or to cynicism. We are not asking you to bury your head in the sand and pretend that what happens in America doesn't matter.

It *does* matter. The laws your nation passes *matter*. The leaders you elect *matter*. The culture your children grow up in *matters*. God placed you here, in this country, at this moment in history, and He does not make mistakes. You are here for a reason. One of those reasons is to be a witness for Jesus Christ to the people around you.

You live next to people. You work with people. You share roads, restaurants, and neighborhoods with people who have immortal souls and no Saviour. Some of them are anxious about the same things you are anxious about. Some of them are following politics with the same intensity you are. However, most of them have never seriously thought about where they will spend eternity.

Before you ask your neighbor who they are voting for,

ask yourself a more important question: where will *they* spend eternity?

That is not a question that politicians can answer. It is not a question that any candidate, any party, or any piece of legislation can address. It is a question that only the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ can answer. Do you know that gospel yourself, and do they?

The Great Commission was not “go ye into all the world and get the right people elected.” It was “***go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature***” (Mark 16:15). That commission was given to every born-again believer, not just pastors and missionaries. It was given to you.

Everyone loves quoting “***And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.***” (Matthew 22:39)

But think about what it means to genuinely love your neighbor. You would want good things for them. You would want them to be healthy, safe, and prosperous. You might work alongside them toward political goals you both believe in. You might pray that their family is protected, that their children have opportunities, that their community is safe.

However, all of those things are temporary. The most loving thing you can *possibly* do for your neighbor is to tell them about Jesus Christ. Because in ten thousand years, it will not matter whether they had a good president or a bad one. Yet, it will *absolutely* matter whether they knew the Lord Jesus Christ.

Loving your country means wanting what is best for the people in it. What is best for the people in it, more than any policy or law or leader, is for them to be saved by Jesus Christ and to know Him.

Before you ask someone who they are voting for, Republican or Democrat, ask yourself: have I told this person about Jesus Christ? Have I prayed for their soul? Do they know that I am a Christian and that my Christianity is not merely a political affiliation but a life that has been reconciled to God?

If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, praise God. Walk in that. Let it show in the way you treat your neighbors, in the compassion you have for the lost, in the peace you carry into an anxious world.

If you do not, then the most important thing in this entire book is this: you can trust Him today. Right now. The God who made you and loves you has not hidden the way to Himself. He sent His Son to be the Way. Call upon Him, trust Him, and be saved.

Then go tell your neighbor.

Chapter 8

A Great Country With No Eternity

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24:35).

We want to pause here and say something that we believe wholeheartedly: America is a great country.

We have read enough history to know that the freedoms Americans enjoy are not the norm of human experience. For most of human history, in most places on earth, men and women have lived under the boot of tyranny. Most have lived under kings who ruled by force, under empires that crushed dissent, under systems that assigned people their place in life by birth and allowed them no possibility of rising above it.

With America, we have: the freedom to worship, the freedom to preach, the freedom to print and distribute the Bible without fear of government interference, and the freedom to raise your children according to your convictions are gifts, and we ought not take them for granted.

But, here is the thing: America will end. We don't say this to be gloomy. We say it because it is simply true, and

because the failure to reckon with it has contributed to the confusion we have been describing throughout this book.

Now, did you know there are only two things on this entire planet that are actually going to last forever?

Most of us spend the majority of our emotional energy on things that will not last forever. We agonize over elections, rage at the news cycle, and pour ourselves into the question of whether America will survive, and these are not small concerns. However, they are temporary ones. We see from history that nations rise and fall.

Great Britain was the dominant world power for a century and then declined. Rome dominated the Western world for half a millennium and then fell. Egypt was a superpower for thousands of years and is now a much smaller nation. Every empire, every republic, every great civilization in history has eventually run its course.

America will not be exempt from this pattern. We cannot tell you when or how, but we can tell you with certainty, with the certainty from the Bible, that America is not eternal. ***“For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come”*** (Hebrews 13:14). When Jesus Christ returns, He is not planting the American flag in heaven beside His throne.

The Bible does not leave us guessing about this. It tells us plainly that this present heaven and earth will one day pass away (Matthew 24:35). Everything we can see, touch, vote for, and argue about on the internet is, in the grand sweep of eternity, temporary.

So what remains? Exactly two things:

1. **“Heaven and earth shall pass away,”** Jesus said, **“but my words shall not pass away”** (Matthew 24:35).

2. The soul that God breathed into Adam in the garden, **“the breath of life”** that made man **“a living soul”** (Genesis 2:7), that soul does not have an off switch. Every soul you pass on the street today will still exist a million years from now.

That means the most important thing about a man is not what nation he belongs to, what party he votes for, what flag he salutes, or what freedoms he enjoys in this present world. The most important thing about a man is whether he has been born again.

This also helps us understand why the Lord Jesus gave His church the Great Commission that He did. In John 14:12, Jesus told His disciples, **“He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”** Christ was not saying that His people would perform miracles more spectacular than His own, as though men could outdo the Son of God. Rather, He was speaking of the great work of gospel witness that would follow His ascension. His disciples would go into the world and preach Christ to men who could not see Him with their physical eyes. They would call sinners to believe on a risen Lord no longer standing bodily before them. In that sense, these were **“greater works”** in scope, reach, and redemptive effect, as the gospel would go out across nations through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The point is this: if Christ said **“my words shall not pass away,”** and the souls of men endure forever, then it makes perfect sense that Christ would leave His people with a commission centered on both. We are not here merely to preserve a temporary civilization, but to carry an

eternal message to eternal souls. The great work of the church is not political rescue, but gospel proclamation.

People speak passionately about saving the country while remaining strangely indifferent about the salvation of souls. They mourn the moral collapse of the culture while never caring about the fact that sinners are headed for hell without Jesus Christ. They speak of national renewal when what they really need is personal repentance and faith in the Gospel.

This is not a call to stop loving your country, but a call to love it rightly. America may continue for a long time, or it may decline more quickly than we expect. Either way, we are not here to make this present world permanent, but to point men to the world to come. We are here to preach Christ crucified, buried, and risen again. We are here to take the unchanging Word of God to dying men with eternal souls.

Chapter 9

No Man Can Serve Two Masters

We have spent several chapters talking about the confusion between national identity and personal salvation. We have pointed out that America does not have a soul, that political religion is a false gospel, and that nothing in this world can substitute for the new birth.

But there is another aspect of this confusion that needs to be addressed directly, because it is, for many believers, the most personal one.

It is the question of who you are listening to.

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.” (Matthew 6:24).

Every generation of Christians has faced the temptation to elevate a human voice to a place that belongs only to God. In the first century, the Corinthian church divided itself along the lines of its favorite teachers. They were rebuked sharply for this: ***“For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?”*** (1 Corinthians 3:4). The problem was not that Paul and

Apollos were bad teachers. The problem was that the people had begun to follow men rather than Christ.

We face the same temptation today, but in a form that the Corinthians could never have imagined.

The modern Christian has access to more voices than any generation in history. Podcasts, talk shows, social media accounts, YouTube channels, newsletters, and cable news programs flood the average believer with commentary every single day. Many of these voices claim to speak for God, or at least for “biblical values.” Some of them are genuine believers. Others are entertainers who have learned that Christian audiences are loyal and generous. Still others are political operatives who use the language of faith to build a following.

The question we want you to ask yourself is not whether any particular commentator is right or wrong about any particular political issue. The question is this: has any human voice become more influential in your daily thinking than the Word of God?

Be honest with yourself. How much time did you spend last week listening to political commentary? How much time did you spend reading your Bible? How much of your emotional energy was shaped by what a talk show host said versus what God said through the Bible? If a podcast host and the Bible were in disagreement, whose instinct would you follow first?

These are uncomfortable questions, but they are necessary ones.

The Bible warns repeatedly about the danger of following human leaders uncritically, and it does not limit that warning to false teachers in pulpits. It extends to anyone who speaks in God's name without speaking God's word.

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.” (Jeremiah 23:16)

Notice what God told the people to do. He said for them to ***“hearken not.”*** He told them to not listen to the false prophets, to stop paying attention to them. These prophets were not atheists. They were religious men who spoke in God's name. They said things the people wanted to hear. They told Israel that everything would be fine, that judgment was not coming, that God was on their side. They made the people vain: that is, empty, hollow, inflated with false confidence.

They were wrong. Judgment came. Jerusalem fell. The temple was destroyed. The people were carried into captivity. The voices they trusted had led them straight into disaster while assuring them the entire time that God was with them.

“They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.” (Jeremiah 23:17)

That is the message of the false prophet: peace, peace, when there is no peace. Everything is going to be fine. God is on our side. No evil shall come upon you. Just keep doing what you are doing and trust that God will sort it out.

Does that sound familiar? Does that sound like anything you have heard on a cable news program, or from a podcast host, or from a political figure who wraps his message in Christian language?

God's response to these false prophets was devastating:

“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had

stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.” (Jeremiah 23:21–22)

Read that last sentence again. If the prophets had stood in God's counsel and caused the people to hear God's words, the people would have turned from their evil ways. The people did not turn because the preachers did not preach. The nation continued in its wickedness because the voices the people trusted refused to tell them the truth.

The same thing is happening in America today. Not only in the pulpits, which we could discuss at length, but in the media voices that have begun to replace the pulpit in the daily lives of millions of Christians. The average person in America today receives more of his worldview from a commentator than from a pastor, more from a podcast than from the scriptures, more from a news program than from the preaching of the word of God.

That is common, and if you are honest with yourself, you may recognize it.

We are not telling you to stop listening to commentators or to withdraw from the public. We are telling you to test every voice against the Bible. ***“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good”*** (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

A teacher who consistently points you to Jesus Christ, who calls you to repentance, who reminds you that your citizenship is in Heaven, who makes you want to open your Bible, *is* a voice worth listening to.

A voice that consistently makes you angry, anxious, fearful, and consumed with the political fate of the nation while rarely pointing you to the cross of Jesus Christ, is a voice you ought to evaluate very carefully, no matter how much you agree with it politically.

Consider whether your favorite voices are feeding your soul or merely feeding your opinions.

The Lord Jesus Christ is not a means to a political end. He is not a mascot for a movement. He is not a brand. He is the Son of the living God, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and He will not share His throne with any man, any party, or any nation. ***“I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another”*** (Isaiah 42:8).

If you find that a human voice has slowly taken the place in your heart and mind that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, the answer is not complicated. Turn off the program, open your Bible, pray, and ask the God who saved you to restore your first love (Revelation 2:4).

No man can serve two masters. Make sure you know which one you are serving.

Chapter 10

The Gospel Power Versus The Political Sword

If you have read this far, you may be wondering whether we believe anything can actually be done about the state of the world. We have told you what does not work: political solutions, civic religion, patriotic substitutes for the gospel, and media voices masquerading as spiritual authority. A fair-minded reader might ask at this point: well then, what does work?

Before we go any further, we need to address something that could be misunderstood about the argument of this book. We have said that the solution to the world's problems is not political. We stand by that completely. The gospel of Jesus Christ, not the government, is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. No law can regenerate a soul. No court ruling can produce the new birth.

However, this does not mean that government has no purpose. God ordained human government, and the Bible tells us clearly what that purpose is.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For

there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Romans 13:1–4).

God gave human government the sword for a reason: to restrain evil, to maintain order, and to execute justice. Government is designed to rule the flesh, to punish the lawbreaker, to protect the innocent, and to keep society from descending into total chaos. These are real and important functions.

Christians should desire righteous laws, should pray for their leaders, and should want justice to prevail in the courts and order to prevail in the streets.

Here is the distinction that must be understood: government has the power to restrain the flesh, yet it has zero power to regenerate the soul. The sword can stop a man from committing murder, yet the sword cannot make that man love his neighbor. The law can punish theft, yet the law cannot produce generosity. Government can enforce outward compliance, yet it cannot produce inward transformation. Only the gospel does that.

This is why Christians must never mistake governmental restraint for spiritual regeneration. You can pass every righteous law imaginable, and the hearts of the people will still be wicked apart from the new birth. You can put the Ten Commandments on every courthouse wall

in America, and the people walking past those walls will still be sinners in need of a Saviour.

Government is a gift from God for the ordering of society. It is not a substitute for the gospel, and it was never designed to be one. Desire good government, pray for good government, thank God for good government where it exists, yet never confuse the restraint of evil with the redemption of the soul. Only Jesus Christ can do that.

Some Christians today try to accomplish through politics what can only be accomplished through the gospel.

You cannot legislate righteousness into the human heart. You can pass laws against every sin in the book, and the hearts of men will still be desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). The only power that can change a human heart is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and people today have neglected that power in favor of a power that was never designed to save.

The gospel does not need a political party. It needs a preacher. It needs a willing mouth attached to a willing heart that is filled with the love of Christ for lost sinners. It needs you to care about the person across the street more than you care about the person in the White House. It needs the church to return to its first love and its first mission: go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

So, what can be done? The answer is not complicated. It is, in fact, the simplest answer in the world. It is also the most powerful, the most proven, and the most consistently ignored.

The gospel of Jesus Christ, preached faithfully to individual sinners, one soul at a time, is the only thing that has ever changed the world.

We do not say that as a platitude, but as a matter of

historical record. The early church had no political power. Let that sink in for a moment, because we have become so accustomed to thinking of Christianity in political terms that it is difficult for us to imagine a Christianity that exists entirely without political influence.

The first Christians could not vote, could not run for office, could not lobby their representatives, could not organize a political action committee, could not start a petition, could not file a lawsuit, and had no representation in the Roman Senate. They had no voice in the machinery of government whatsoever.

What they *did* have was far worse, from a political standpoint. They had the active hostility of the most powerful government on earth. Rome did not merely ignore the early Christians. According to the Roman historian Tacitus, under Emperor Nero Christians were torn apart by dogs, crucified, and set on fire to serve as torches illuminating the emperor's garden parties while Nero paraded among the crowd dressed as a charioteer.¹ They were fed to wild animals for public entertainment and executed as warnings to anyone who might follow this crucified Jesus from Nazareth.

By every political calculation, Christianity should have been dead within a generation. A small group of fishermen and tax collectors following a leader who had been publicly executed by the state: no army, no treasury, no political allies, and no institutional support of any kind. The smart money would have been on the Roman Empire, and it would have lost.

Now we need to address something here, because we

1. Tacitus, *Annals*, XV.44. See also Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, "Nero" 16; Clement of Rome, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (c. 95 AD).

can already hear the objection forming in some reader's mind. "What do you mean the early church had no political power? What about the Catholic Church? Christianity ruled Europe for a thousand years."

That objection deserves an honest answer, because it touches on one of the most important and most misunderstood chapters in the history of Christianity: the question of what happens when the faith of the New Testament becomes entangled with the power of the state.

In the earliest centuries after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the church existed exactly as we described: without political power, under persecution, spreading the gospel one soul at a time through faithful preaching and the testimony of transformed lives. During this period, the church was closest to the pattern laid out in the New Testament. It had no pope and no Vatican. It had the word of God and the power of the gospel, and that was enough.

Then, in 313 AD, the Emperor Constantine and his co-emperor Licinius issued the Edict of Milan, which granted official toleration to Christianity throughout the Roman Empire.² Eventually, under Emperor Theodosius I in 380 AD, Christianity went from being a tolerated faith to being the official state religion of the empire.³ On the surface, this looked like a tremendous victory.

However, the historical record shows that the results were far more complicated than anyone might have expected. The Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Will Durant,

2. Britannica, "Edict of Milan," accessed 2025. See also Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, ch. 48; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

3. The Edict of Thessalonica (380 AD), issued by Theodosius I, Gratian, and Valentinian II, established Nicene Christianity as the official state religion. See the Theodosian Code, XVI.i.2. See also R. M. Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy from Julian to Theodosius* (Routledge).

writing in his book *Story of Civilization*, concluded that the institutional church did not so much *convert* the pagan world but *absorb* it.⁴ The scholar Michelle Salzman has similarly documented how, in the process of converting the Roman aristocracy, the institutional church absorbed the values and structures of that aristocracy.⁵ The historian Edwin Hatch put it this way: "*It was impossible for Greeks, with an education which penetrated their whole nature, to receive or to retain Christianity in its primitive simplicity.*"⁶

What does this mean in practical terms? It means that when Christianity became the official religion of the empire, the empire did not simply bow the knee to Christ. Instead, there was a gradual merging of the culture with the language of Christian faith. The simplicity of faith in Christ and the authority of scripture was, over the course of centuries, overlaid with layers of political structure, institutional hierarchy, and rituals and customs carried over from the empire's pre-Christian past.⁷ As one historian put it, the

4. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization, Vol. 3: Caesar and Christ* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), 595. Durant, though not a theologian, was a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian whose eleven-volume survey of civilization remains one of the most widely read works of popular history in the English language.

5. Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 595. See also Michelle Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy* (Harvard University Press, 2002), who documents how the Roman aristocracy's values were absorbed into the institutional church.

6. Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1970 reprint), 49.

7. See Bruce David Forbes, *Christmas: A Candid History* (University of California Press, 2007). Forbes concludes that Christmas was likely started to compete with rival Roman celebrations, to co-opt winter festivals, or to invest them with Christian meaning. See also the entry on "Historiography of the Christianization of the Roman Empire" in Wikipedia for a survey of scholarly positions.

medieval church *"took on the trappings, the hierarchies, and the authoritarianism of imperial Rome."*⁸

We are not the first to observe this. These are the conclusions of secular historians and church historians alike, many of whom had no theological agenda. They simply followed the evidence.

When Christianity became the official religion of the empire, the empire did not become Christian. The empire absorbed Christianity and remade it in its own image. The simplicity of the New Testament faith: repentance, faith in Christ, the authority of scripture, the priesthood of every believer, was gradually buried under layers of political structure, institutional hierarchy, pagan ritual dressed in Christian clothing, and a priestly system that placed human mediators between the individual soul and God.

This is how you got the Roman church's political-religious system. Not from the Bible, but from the merger of biblical language with Roman political power. The pope took the place of the emperor. The Mass replaced the simple Lord's Supper. The confessional replaced direct access to God through Christ. The traditions of men replaced the authority of scripture. Salvation by grace through faith was replaced by a system of works, sacraments, indulgences, penances, and priestly absolution that the New Testament knows nothing about.

The Bible anticipated this kind of corruption. Paul warned the elders at Ephesus:

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

8. Gene Edward Veith, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," Ligonier Ministries. Veith notes that the medieval church "took on the trappings, the hierarchies, and the authoritarianism of imperial Rome."

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:29–30).

Paul told Timothy what was coming:

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." (1 Timothy 4:1–3).

"Forbidding to marry." The historical record shows that mandatory celibacy for priests was not practiced in the earliest centuries of Christianity. The apostle Peter himself was married (Luke 4:38). The first formal mandate requiring clerical chastity came in AD 304, and the practice was not universally enforced until Pope Gregory VII issued his decree in 1075, formalized by the First Lateran Council in 1123.⁹ This is a tradition of men, not a commandment of God. The Bible does not mince words about it: calling such things doctrines of devils, promoted by men speaking lies in hypocrisy with seared consciences.

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who

9. History News Network, "When Did the Catholic Church Decide Priests Should Be Celibate?" The first written mandate requiring clerical chastity came in AD 304 at the Council of Elvira. The Council of Nicaea in 325 rejected a ban on priests marrying. Mandatory celibacy was formalized by Pope Gregory VII in 1075 and the First Lateran Council in 1123. See also Stefan Heid, *Celibacy in the Early Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997); Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (2 Peter 2:1–2).

Notice that phrase: ***“By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”*** That is *precisely* what happened. Because terrible things were done in the name of Christ by the institutional church, such as: the Inquisition,¹⁰ the Crusades,¹¹ the sale of indulgences,¹² the persecution of those who sought to put the Bible into the hands of common people... the name of Christianity has been dragged through the mud for centuries.

Consider the case of William Tyndale. Here was a man whose great crime was translating the New Testament into English so that ordinary men and women could read the word of God for themselves. For this, and for teaching that the grace of the gospel was sufficient for salvation, Tyndale was convicted of heresy, strangled, and burned at

10. Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1887). See also Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (University of California Press, 1989).

11. Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

12. See Lawrence G. Duggan, "Indulgence," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The first known plenary indulgence was issued by Pope Urban II in 1095 at the Council of Clermont. By the late medieval period, professional pardoners exceeded official doctrine, promising salvation in exchange for payment. See also Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).¹

the stake in 1536.¹³ His final words were reported as, "*Lord! Open the King of England's eyes.*"¹⁴

When an atheist today points to the crimes of "the church" as a reason to reject Christianity, he is almost always pointing to the crimes of this institutional system.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself settled this matter when He stood before Pontius Pilate:

"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 18:36).

Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world. If it were, His servants would fight. That is what the institutional church attempted to do for a thousand years, and the result was not the kingdom of God on earth. The result was corruption, tyranny, spiritual darkness, and the suppression of the very gospel that Christ came to proclaim.

So when someone tells you that Christianity had political power and it did not work out very well, agree with them. They are right. It did not work out well at all. The merger of the church and the state produced one of the greatest distortions of the gospel in the history of the world.

Then tell them that what the institutional church did is

13. David Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994). Tyndale was convicted of heresy and executed by strangulation in October 1536, after which his body was burned at the stake. His final words were reported as "Lord! Open the King of England's eyes." See also John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*.

14. Britannica, "William Tyndale." See also the Library of Congress exhibition "Let There Be Light: William Tyndale and the Making of the English Bible."

not what Christ commanded. What Christ commanded was this:

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15).

That is the command that changed the world. That is the command that is for the Christian right now, in their neighborhood, with their neighbor, today.

"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." (Acts 5:42).

They preached Jesus Christ daily in the temple and in every house. They did not preach a political agenda. They did not preach the reform of Roman government. They did not preach the moral superiority of Jewish culture over Roman culture or vice versa. They preached Jesus Christ, His death, His burial, His resurrection, and the free gift of eternal life available to whosoever would believe.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:16).

The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. It is not *a* power. Not one power among many. The Bible says it is ***"the"*** power. The gospel is the only instrument God has authorized for the salvation of souls and the transformation of lives. Legislation cannot do it. Education cannot do it. Cultural reform cannot do it. Political activism cannot do it. Only the gospel carries the power of God unto salvation, and that power is available to every one that believeth, regardless of their nationality, their political affiliation, or the moral condition of the country they happen to live in.

God did not have Paul write treatises on Roman law. He did not organize a movement to reform Roman governance

from the outside. He did not lobby the Senate for more favorable treatment of Christians. He did not run for office. He did not start a political party. Instead, he planted churches, trained pastors, preached the gospel, and wrote letters to believers explaining how to live as citizens of heaven while residing in the most pagan empire on earth.

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Corinthians 1:21).

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching. The Bible does not say that *"it pleased God by the cleverness of political strategy to save them that believe,"* nor does it say that *"it pleased God by the force of cultural influence to save them that believe."*

The Bible says that preaching is God's chosen method for the transformation of the world, and He has not updated it, revised it, or replaced it with anything more modern. The method that turned the Roman Empire upside down is the same method that is available to you in your neighborhood today.

You want to pull down the strongholds of wickedness in America? You will do it by telling your neighbor about Jesus Christ. You will do it by living a life so different from the world around you that people cannot help but ask you for the reason of the hope that is in you.

You can tell the man at the gas station what Jesus Christ did for you. You can invite the woman across the street to church. You can sit down with your children tonight and open the Bible and read it to them and pray with them. You can forgive the person who wronged you. You can live with integrity at your workplace. You can be salt and light in the fifty-foot radius that God has placed you in.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious

seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." (Psalm 126:6).

If every born-again Christian in America would turn off the news for one hour a day and spend that hour reading the Bible, praying, and sharing the gospel with someone who is lost, the results would be staggering. Not because the method is clever, but because the method is God's, and God has promised to honor His word.

"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11).

His word will not return void. It will accomplish what He pleases. That is a promise from the mouth of God, and it does not depend on who is in the White House, which party controls the Senate, or what the Supreme Court decides about anything.

Preach the word. Win souls. Make disciples. Raise your children in the fear of the Lord. Live a holy life. Let the gospel do what the gospel has always done.

That is how nations are changed: one redeemed soul at a time, through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 11

You Could Die Tomorrow

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4:14).

You have opinions about the next election. You have watched the debates. You have read the headlines. You are anxious, perhaps, about who will win, about what laws will be passed, about what kind of country your children will inherit. You have invested real emotional energy into the political future of America.

However, have you made any investment in your own eternal future? Have you given as much thought to where you will spend eternity as you have given to who will occupy the White House?

Because here is the truth that no one on the evening news is going to tell you: you could die tomorrow.

The Bible speaks plainly about the shortness of human life. James calls it ***"a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"*** (James 4:14).

Job said, ***"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle"*** (Job 7:6).

“As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more” (Psalm 103:15-16).

This is not poetry for poetry's sake. This is a warning that life is short. It is far shorter than we act like it is. We make plans as though we are guaranteed decades ahead of us, and sometimes those decades are given to us, but sometimes they are not.

People die at every age. Young men and women who had every reason to expect a long life are cut down without warning. Middle-aged people who were in perfect health suffer a sudden heart attack. Accidents happen. Diagnoses come without warning. ***“Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth”*** (Proverbs 27:1).

When you die, it will not matter one bit who won the last election.

The Bible is clear about what follows death. ***“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”*** (Hebrews 9:27). There is no soul sleep. There is no purgatory. There is no second chance to reconsider your life choices after you breathe your last. There is death, and then there is the judgment.

The Lord Jesus Christ described what awaits those who die without Him in language that ought to make every reader sit still and think carefully. He spoke of a place where ***“the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched”*** (Mark 9:44). He told the story of the rich man and Lazarus, in which the unsaved rich man died and in Hell lifted up his eyes, ***“being in torments”***(Luke 16:23). He cried out for Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool his tongue.

You may have told yourself that you will think about spiritual things when things settle down. When the election is over. When the country is in better shape. When life is less busy. However, the Bible never *promises* you that settling-down moment. It promises the opposite: ***“now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”*** (2 Corinthians 6:2).

The politician you are counting on to save America could die tomorrow too. The great revival you are praying for America to experience could take a generation to arrive, if it arrives at all. However, *you* have *this* moment. You have right now and, *right now*, Jesus Christ is offering you the free gift of eternal life.

Please do not be so consumed with the fate of this nation that you neglect the fate of your own soul. Your eternal future is the decision that is before you today. Don't let another day pass without settling it.

“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near” (Isaiah 55:6). He is near right now, and you are not promised tomorrow.

Chapter 12

Your Eternal Destination

Let us speak plainly about something that our culture, including much of the modern church, has become very reluctant to speak plainly about: Hell.

Hell is real. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of it more than anyone else in the New Testament. He described it as a place of fire (Matthew 5:22), of wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:42), where ***“the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched”*** (Mark 9:44).

Revelation describes the lake of fire as ***“the second death,”*** and it says that whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14–15).

We do not say this to terrify you gratuitously. We say it because we believe it is true, and because a doctor who withholds a diagnosis to avoid upsetting his patient is not a kind doctor. The kindest thing we can do is tell you the truth about what is at stake.

But equally real, and more glorious by far, is Heaven.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God

hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Heaven is not an abstract, cloudy, vaguely pleasant existence. It is a real place, a redeemed creation, a dwelling in the presence of the living God, an eternal life of joy and purpose and worship that will make the best moments of this life look like a dim shadow.

The only way there is through Jesus Christ.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13–14).

The narrow way is not found by being a good American. It is not found by winning the culture war. It is found by coming to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, by believing that He is the Son of God, that He died for your sins, that He rose from the dead, and that He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him (Hebrews 7:25). Not as a work to merit salvation, but as the turning of the heart from self to Christ.

That invitation is open to you right now. So let us be clear about the diagnosis before we talk about the cure.

The Bible is clear: sin is the breaking of God's law, and every one of us has done it. God is holy, just, and true, and His standard is perfection. When measured against that standard, all men fall short.

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." (Romans 3:10).

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23).

"For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

God says plainly that anyone who claims to be without sin is calling Him a liar. The verdict has already been given: all are guilty.

Sin is not a small flaw or a harmless mistake. It creates a real separation between man and God. Because God is righteous, sin places us at odds with Him and leaves us unable to stand before His judgment or enter His presence.

“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God.” (Isaiah 59:2).

“Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment.” (Psalm 1:5).

Left to ourselves, we have no answer for our sin and no way to bridge the gap it has created. That is why effort, morality, and religion are not enough.

However, God did not leave mankind without hope. The Creator stepped into His own creation. The eternal Word became flesh, was born of a virgin, lived without sin, and willingly laid down His life to pay the full price for sin.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:11).

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” (1 Peter 2:24).

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” (1 Peter 3:18).

No church can remove sin. No priest, pope, ritual, ordinance, or good work can cleanse the soul. Only Jesus Christ shed blood for sinners, and only He rose from the dead victorious. Salvation is found in a Person, not a system.

Paul wrote that he was not ashamed of this Gospel, and neither should we be. ***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”*** (Romans 1:16). The Gospel is not one option among many. It

is the power of God unto salvation, and it is available to whosoever will believe.

What is that Gospel? The Bible is clear: ***“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”*** (1 Corinthians 15:1–4). That is the Gospel. Christ died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again.

Salvation is not earned. It is received. God promises forgiveness and eternal life to those who place their trust entirely in Jesus Christ. God does not promise forgiveness to those who instead choose to trust in themselves, in works, or in religion.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16).

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Romans 10:9–10).

There is no alternative path.

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6).

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27).

Every person will die, and every soul will stand before God. What if that appointment were today?

You now know what God has said. You are a sinner. You need a Saviour. Jesus Christ is that Saviour. The only question left is this: will you believe on Him now?

“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3).

The Soul Of The Matter

We are at the end of this book. We have spent several chapters diagnosing the problem: the confusion of national identity with personal salvation, the false gospel of political religion, and the misdirection of spiritual energy toward temporal concerns.

There are two categories of reader we have in mind as we write this conclusion. First, the person who has never been genuinely saved, who may have grown up in a Christian home, who may vote the right way and hold the right values, but who has never personally known and trusted Jesus Christ. Second, the person who is saved but has been living as if America's soul matters more than their own walk with God.

For both, the answer begins in the same place.

FOR THE PERSON WHO HAS NEVER BEEN SAVED

If you are reading this and you are not sure whether you

have been born again, or if you are sure that you have not, we want to tell you that you *can* have that assurance.

God loved you so much that it led Him to send His own Son to die in your place. ***“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”*** (Romans 5:8).

You are a sinner. This is not an insult. It is a diagnosis that applies to every human being who has ever lived apart from Jesus Christ Himself. ***“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”*** (Romans 3:23). Your sin has separated you from a holy God and, if it remains unforgiven, will result in eternal death.

But Jesus Christ bore that sin. He took your judgment. He paid your debt. ***“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God”*** (1 Peter 3:18). He died, was buried, and rose again. He is alive today, seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for all who come to Him.

Salvation is received by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. ***“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*** (Romans 10:9-10). You don't have to clean yourself up first. You don't have to become a better person first. You come as you are, in your sin and helplessness, and you trust Jesus Christ to save you.

FOR THE BELIEVER WHO HAS LOST PERSPECTIVE

If you are a born-again believer but you have found yourself more consumed with politics than with the Lord Jesus Christ, more anxious about the next election than about your own prayer life, more passionate about America than about the lost people around you who need the Gospel, we say this gently: return to your first love.

How long has it been since you wept over the lost? How long since you shared the Gospel with someone? How long since you prayed with real urgency, not for the country, but for the souls of your neighbors, your coworkers, and your family members who do not know Jesus Christ?

The world around you is filled with people who are headed for an eternity without God, who are desperately seeking meaning in politics and culture and every other substitute for the real thing. You have the real thing. You have the Gospel. You have the Lord Jesus Christ. Give Him to them. Remember that America doesn't have a soul, but you do.

We want to be very honest with you about something. The American church, in many ways, has traded its birthright for a mess of political pottage. We have exchanged the power of the gospel for the power of the ballot box. We have substituted cultural battles for the Great Commission. We have poured our energy, our money, our time, and our passion into political campaigns while the mission field next door goes unworked and the harvest rots in the field.

“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.” (Matthew 9:37).

Notice that the Bible does not say *believers* are few, but

that the *labourers* are few. There are millions of professing Christians in America. The laborers are few because the believers are busy doing something else. They are busy watching the news. They are busy arguing on social media. They are busy following the latest political drama. They are busy being outraged, being anxious, being consumed with the fate of a nation that does not have a soul, while the people next door who do have souls are perishing without Christ.

The Bible says, ***“He that winneth souls is wise.”*** (Proverbs 11:30). Not he that winneth elections, he that winneth arguments, or he that winneth the culture war. Where is your energy going? Where is your passion directed? Where are your hours being spent?

We are not telling you to bury your head in the sand. The world you live in matters. The laws your government passes affect real people. The culture your children grow up in is not irrelevant. You are placed here, in this country, at this moment, for a reason.

What we are telling you is to get your priorities in the right order.

You have read these pages. You have heard the scriptures. You know the truth. You know that America does not have a soul, but you do. You know that no political solution can substitute for the new birth. You know that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again and offers you eternal life as a free gift. You know that you are not promised tomorrow.

What are you going to do about it?

If you have never trusted Christ, today is the day. Do not close this book and set it on the shelf and go back to the news cycle. Do not postpone the most important decision of your life because you think you have time. You may not.

“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.” (Isaiah 55:6)

If you are a believer who has lost your way, today is the day to come back. Not back to a political movement or a culture war, but back to your first love. Back to the Lord Jesus Christ, back to the Bible, back to prayer, and back to the gospel. Remember the command of the Lord Jesus Christ: ***“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”*** (Mark 16:15).

Tell people about Jesus. Tell them He died for their sins. Tell them He rose again. Tell them He is willing to save them and He is wanting for them to come to Him. Tell them that America does not have a soul, but they do, and that soul is the most valuable thing they possess, and it can be saved today by the blood of Jesus Christ.

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:13–14)

How shall they hear without a preacher? Because when America is gone, and one day it will be, Jesus Christ will still be on His throne. His kingdom will still stand. His word will still be true. Every soul that trusted in Him will be with Him forever. Every soul that did not will wish they had.

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” (Matthew 24:35)

America will pass away. Your soul will not.

Make sure you know where it is going.

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