

## **“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people.”**

Proverbs 14:34

### **Righteousness exalts a nation**

The Lord Jesus expects to find righteousness in the nation. The social, economic, political, business and moral character of the nation must reflect the moral absolutes of righteousness. Such righteousness demands a moral purity. Self must be secondary to a compassionate understanding of the needs of the poor and disadvantaged, the education of the children and the provision of health and security. This pure stream of the water of life must flow through the nation, watering every aspect of it. The nation that attempts to live in this way will live under the covering of the Lord. The banner of the Lord will fly high and under it the whole nation who knows security and provision.

Setting a nation on these foundations is always going to be a challenge because it runs against the self-centred human spirit which will always seek opportunity for gain at the expense of others. The Lord makes provision for our frailty but not for our deliberate disobedience.

### **Sin condemns any people**

The second part of this verse tells of the consequences for an unrighteous nation. Self-centred seeking of personal gain by individuals, groups and national leaderships is seen by the Lord as sin. “Sin” in this verse can be translated “offence.” It is seen here -

*When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked. “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” And they took offence at him. (Matthew 13:54-57)*

The Greek word is “scandalizo” and translates “cause to stumble, cause to sin, cause to become indignant, shock, offend.” The sin of a nation is an offence to the Lord and causes him to turn away. The Lord is too holy to look on sin. (“Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing.” Habakkuk 1:13) He will turn away.

The Nation may try to pretend that this will not be so, claim some extenuating circumstances of cling to some false optimism. Israel did all these things, yet the Lord turned away from them in 586 BCE and again in 135 CE.

Then the Nation stands condemned. "Condemnation" leads to -

### **Loss of cover**

*"Since they refused to listen when I called to them, I would not listen when they called to me, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies." (Zechariah 7:143. NLT)*

A nation which has become unrighteous comes under condemnation and the first consequence of this is that the covering of the Lord is no longer there. This is what Zechariah saw. The constant words of guidance and encouragement from the Lord are no longer found in the land. The banner of the Lord no longer flies over the nation.

### **Exclusion**

*But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)*

### **Exposure to the enemy**

*So all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. (2 Kings 25:10)*

A nation which becomes unrighteous is exposed to the enemy. When the enemy comes in like a flood the Lord will not raise a banner. The nation is left exposed to the scheming of the enemy and its very heart will be corrupted. This corruption will begin to show itself as any sickness does. It will rot the nation from the highest levels to the lowest. No longer will righteousness be found in the streets or the name of the Lord held in high honour. The nation becomes known as a place of corruption cheating and low moral value. This is the epitaph of such a nation -

*All who pass by jeer at you. They scoff and insult beautiful Jerusalem, saying, "Is this the city called 'Most Beautiful in All the World' and 'Joy of All the Earth'?" (Lamentations 2:15)*

Ghana finds this hard to believe Any of this. It is blinded by its own folly. It says -“God will never judge us.” Yet in the history of faith this is so obviously wrong. Ghana is blinded by the prosperity message which says that all will be well no matter what we do. The history of faith shows how wrong this thinking is and how dangerous.

There is a deep corruption in the heart of the nation. There is pride, the exalting of self and serious financial misdeeds. Sadly, this same corruption has entered the church. It now seeks position power and success. It sees this as the mark of the Kingdom. The cross, which is the power of the Christian faith is no longer exalted or loved. Prayer has become self-seeking and weak. Teaching has become shallow; the nation is slipping away and few seem to care.

Any voice which challenges all of this is ignored or silenced. The Bible warns of this -

*For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)*

History teaches that there is a price to be paid for any nation which goes down this pathway. Judgement will surely come. Again, many make serious error here believing that this means earthquakes, fires and great shakings. Sometimes it does. But mostly judgement comes when decay, immorality, a corruption of the economy, an increasing sense of insecurity and a deep feeling of inability to change a desperate situation – all show themselves.

All the Lord has to do to judge is to stop speaking, let this situation go forward unchecked and inevitably the nation will run into the ground. The people of Israel discovered this painful truth for themselves. After their failure to take the promised land, the Lord did nothing. The people wandered aimlessly in the waste places until all those who had been corrupted had died. This was judgement and far more painful than an earthquake or a fire. Such judgement takes time and here there is a huge difference between the Creator and his creation. He has all the time of eternity. The creation does not. The Lord can take time to judge by withdrawing his hand of protection and leaving a nation to its own devices.

Is Ghana sliding into judgement? If the nation lifts up its eyes from its self-seeking ways, what will it see? Will it see blessing, or will it see insecurity? Will it see a confident nation striding out under the banner of Christ or one sleeping into economic, financial and social chaos?

### **Is there any hope?**

**“Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?”**

(Psalm 85:6)

The Lord chose Ghana out of all West Africa to be the place of promise. The Lord offered a great promise. Ghana was to be the people through which he would pour his spirit into all West Africa. Then all of West Africa could be set on fire by the spirit pouring through Ghana. All Ghana had to do was to walk humbly before the Lord, serving him in humility and love, walking the way the cross and moving in the power of Pentecost.

Ghana turned away from this path. Here is something I wrote many years ago and I think it is a very clear picture of what went wrong.

The strongman appeared again standing in light. He stood over the land and called to the people “come and take all you want.” From all over the land people rushed towards him and he pointed to the palace of the king. “Come and take” he called. People came with cars trucks and barrows. They ran into the king’s palace and everywhere they looked they saw jewels, precious stones, money and goods beyond their wildest dreams. They loaded up their trucks, cars and barrows with as much as they could carry. They stuffed precious jewels into their pockets and into their dresses. They could hardly walk yet still they took more. Their greed knew no limit. “Thank you” they called to the man clothed in light. “This is what we needed. Now we can live in security and peaceful stop our land is safe.”

Now the consequences of this betrayal are becoming clear.

What can be done? Faced with these uncomfortable truths, something radical is needed before it is too late. One writer on revival put it like this -“We must look to a religious revival throughout the nation as the only effective means of rescuing us from the many dangers which are threatening us.”

He went on to make it clear where the revival had to begin –

“A revival of religion in God’s own people must precede and prepare for a revival of religion in the nation.”

The nation needs healing and only the Lord can do it -

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22: 1-2)*

The only healing available now is that the Lord will revive the church with the new Pentecostal outpouring of his spirit. This can only come when leaders and people of the churches are convicted of their sin. And their sin? These pictures give a glimpse of what has happened -.

### **The child has been lost**

One day, a man and a woman came to stand before the Lord. They were full of confidence. “Who are you?” the Lord asked.

“We are the church in Ghana” they replied. “We have done many great things in your name. We have praised you. We have spoken about you and we have spread all over the nation. We are known as a powerful and praise - filled church. Everyone tells us that the Spirit moves in us. We honour your name.”

The Lord was quiet, and the man and woman looked at each other, and they wondered why the Lord did not thank and bless them. So they said - “and we learnt to heal the sick. We collected money - lots of money - and raised up buildings for you and did many works in your name. We wrote songs, books - all for your glory.”

Still the Lord was quiet. So they continued - “Our nation lives in peace because of our prayers. Look at all the lands around us. We know that we are special.” The Lord began to cry, and the two people were amazed. Everything they had said was good. Surely this was what the Lord wanted to hear?

Then the Lord asked - “and where is your child?”

Now they were now really amazed. “What child?” they asked. “The one I trusted you with” he replied. “The one which was so precious to me. The one you were to care for, nurture and raise up.

“But Lord,” they replied, “we don’t know what you are talking about. We had no child.” “Yes you did” said the Lord. “I trusted a very precious child into your hands.”

“What is this child called?” they asked.

“The child was called Ghana. You were to take care of it, help it grow, protect it from harm, crown it with glory and make it strong. This was your sacred trust. Where is the child?” The two people had no answer to give.

**The first great sin which the church must face up to is that it has not cared for the nation and consequently the nation has gone its own way. The church went after comfort and ease prosperity and success, and the nation has made this its goals. The central focus of the Lord, his cross and a passionate love for the nation he created has been lost. The size of this sin can only be understood when spiritual history is understood.**

**Africa protected the Lord when he was a baby. Africa protected the Lord from the violence of Herod and Satan’s desire to kill the child Jesus. Satan has been taking out his anger on Africa ever since for its protection of Jesus.**

**There is a deeper issue. Satan feared that one day the Lord would raise up a nation which would break him. He feared that day and tried to destroy Africa before it could happen.**

**That child was Ghana. The destiny of Ghana was that it was to be a channel by which the spirit would flow into all West Africa, into wider Africa and into the world. The church in Ghana has not loved this child or protected it. The destiny of Africa is in danger because of the laziness and failure of the church.**

**This will bring the judgement of God on Ghana. it is a sin he cannot overlook unless the church is convicted of its sin and confesses. This process has to begin with the leadership with the conviction of its own sinfulness both personal, within the church and within the nation. The only hope is revival.**

**Such a revival will not be the comfortable Fiesta-clapping experience which so many expect. It will penetrate to the very depths of sin and expose the hearts of many - and that will include the hearts of many leaders. Personal sinfulness, the focus on self and success, the hidden sins which riddle the church - all these have given the enemy a hold over the nation. These sins will have to be exposed if the revival fire is to fall. Revival is a deeply uncomfortable and frightening experience, revealing the heart as it truly is.**

**Unless the Lord blesses us in revival - a conviction led revival -judgement will surely come for the failure of the church to protect the land.**

This sin has brought great sorrow to the Lord. Here is another picture which many in the church in Ghana do not want to consider. It shows the depth of the failure and sinfulness and the damage it has done to the Lord and to the nation

In heaven, I saw a great table, with many places set. This is where the Nations of the world gather to worship the Lord. But one chair was empty. "Who should be sitting here?" asked the Father. "This is where our beloved child Ghana should be sitting" said the Lord, and he began to cry. "But why has this child not come?" asked the Father. "What are we going to do?" The Lord did not speak, but took his crown of thorns, and placed it on his head. Blood began to run down his face. "Suffer some more" he said, and all heaven was filled with sorrow.

**As the church runs around satisfying itself and patting itself on the back, it fails to realise the enormous amount of sorrow and disappointment it is pouring onto the head of the Lord. The church claims to love him and yet continues to hurt him without any apparent awareness - or if there is awareness little apparent care. Trapped in the small vision of its own desires the church is going its own way and leading the nation to destruction.**

What should the church have been doing? I have worked for over 30 years in Ghana, and I learned early on in those years what I had to do. I believe this is a picture or what the church should have been doing.

I was walking on a road filled with thorns. Every step I took was painful, because the thorns pierced my feet. I wanted to stand still, but ahead of me I saw the Lord, and he was calling me to himself. But to get to him, I had to walk on the thorns, and I did not want to do that.

“You cannot choose when you follow me or where you follow me” he said. “You cannot choose to follow for one day, or one week, and then stop. You cannot choose a nice path but ignore a hard one. You must walk the Way always, whatever is in your path. You must love me so much that whatever the cost, you will come. You must desire to share my sufferings every day and every hour. Your constant journey must be towards Calvary, and as you journey this path, every step will be Calvary for you. You must become Calvary among my creation, so that you will know their sufferings and mine.”

I saw a child, laying in the road, deep in the thorns, bleeding and crying. I was shocked. “How did you come to be here?” I asked. “Help me” it sobbed. “No one comes to help me.” My heart was filled with compassion, but as I moved to help, my feet were crucified by the thorns. I cried out in pain– “Lord, I want to show compassion, but it is hurting me so much.”

The Lord did not speak. The child cried, and deep in my heart, the spirit of compassion stirred. The cross called me. I stepped out to rescue the child. The thorns bit into me, but compassion grew stronger than the thorns. I was crying in pain when I arrived at the child. I lifted the child, and in great agony of spirit, I turned and walked towards the Lord. The journey was endless. The pain hurt, but the sorrow of the child hurt more and began to overcome my own sufferings. I finally arrived at the cross, covered in blood and pain. “Take the child” I cried. “Now you can heal.”

“No” said the Lord. “It is not as easy as that. You must continue to bear the child, day after day. You must bear the burden day after day. You must release the compassion day after day. Do you think you can put down your suffering? I suffer day after day for the heartbreak of my children. If you truly want to share my sufferings, you must do the same.” I sank down in despair. The Lord was right. I wanted to suffer as I chose, when I chose and how much I chose. I wanted respite from the burden, yet he hung and hung, with no respite. How could I ever hope to bear such a burden?

The Lord did not speak, but took his crown of thorns, and placed it on his head. Blood began to run down his face. “Suffer some more” he said, and all heaven was filled with sorrow

**If the great sin of the church was to fail to protect the nation the second great sin is not to be willing to bear the burden of the broken nation before the Lord.**



**Caught up in success, achievement and pride the churches failed to bear the agony of the Lord for Ghana in its heart or lift it before him. Success driven fiesta religion leaves no room for seeing the agony of the land and no willingness to take up such a burden. What success is there in bearing a bleeding broken child to the Lord - one that has been broken by the neglect of the ones that are claiming to bear it?**

These great failures point to the need for some radical change and the history of the church indicates that such changes are beyond it. There has to come a great outpouring of the Spirit, to bring home the true nature of the failure and the potential of a new beginning walking a different path.

### **It's time to pray at agonising depth**

**The secret of praying for revival is to pray from within the failure. This generates passion and an awareness that the Lord and the Lord alone can help.**

#### **\* Broken hearts of prayer**

*Arise, cry out in the night as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at every street corner.*

(Lamentations 2:19)

**Prayer has to flow from the depths of the failure and sinfulness which has brought the nation down. Prayer has to be a pouring out of the heart in the presence of the Lord seeking no more than his mercy - which is more than is deserved. The church seems to find this very difficult. The reason is easy to see - it cannot accept that it has failed.**

#### **\* Prayer with tears**

*My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" (Psalm 42:3)*

**The church must pray within the sorrow which it has placed in the heart of the Lord. This is the only safe way of praying. The Lord is always moved by the tears of his people.**

### **\* Desperately urgent prayer**

*That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" (Mark 4:35-8)*

**The people of God must recognise the dangerous situation in which they are living. Goliath is threatening, Nebuchadnezzar is imprisoning, Herod is looking to kill and the beast of Revelation 13 is rising. The enemy is no longer at the gate. The enemy is within the gate. There is no time to waste, and unless God's people pray with tears and acceptance, the church is lost. The days of thinking, evaluating and taking time are over. Unless the Lord intervenes the church is lost and so is Ghana.**

### **\* Pray with hope**

*Who has ever heard of such things? Who has ever seen things like this?  
Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment?  
Yet no sooner is Zion in labour than she gives birth to her children. (Isaiah 66:8)*

An old revivalist preacher said this -

"Can it be that at the commencement of the last and greatest outpouring of the spirit of God, the manner of the work would be very extraordinary and such as never has been ever been seen. Will what Isaiah prophesied be true?"

Through all the agony of acceptance of failure, the Lord is anxious to redeem his people. He is not a vengeful God who enjoys judgement, but judges to heal.

My conviction is this - if the church can accept its failure, be convicted of its sin and cry out to the Lord, the possibility exists that a new Pentecost will come in the church and from the church into the nation, through the nation to Africa and through Africa to the world. This is the struggle which is raging in Ghana. As those who pray look out over the spiritual world is the cloud the size of a man's hand rising? This is what we must hope and pray for -

*And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain." So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees. "Go and look toward the sea," he told his servant. And he went up and looked. "There is nothing there," he said.*

*Seven times Elijah said, "Go back." The seventh time the servant reported, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea."*

*So Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'" Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain started falling and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. The power of the Lord came on Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel. (1 Kings 18:41-5)*