



"It is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you will turn it into a blessing."

—William Law

**09-Aug-02**

## **Bugs and Beasts**

Behaviors have consequences. Actions have reactions. Causes have effects. This is a law of nature that many moderns have sadly forgotten, or in their hubris believe that they can mitigate.

We perhaps see this most starkly in [the world](#) of health. A young man in his rebellion lives a wild life, drinking, carousing, and sleeping with multiple women throughout his college years. Soon, he finds he has contracted a venereal disease. "No problem," he thinks. "I can just go down to the clinic, and the doctor will prescribe something to cure me." He thinks he has just defeated cause and effect, but in reality, he has just treated a symptom. The compound effects of his earlier lifestyle may not reveal themselves for years—in fact, they may ruin his entire life!

Because of this kind of rationalization and short-sightedness, [God](#) works on a far larger canvas when it comes to teaching humanity lessons, and sometimes even the destruction of whole nations and millions of people fail to impress the truth on some. We can see this in His dealings with Israel and Judah over 2,500 years ago. He called Assyria to invade Israel several times, carting off hundreds of thousands of slaves, and they still did not make the

connection between their sinfulness, particularly their idolatry, and their destruction ([II Kings 17:5-23](#)). A similar series of events befell Judah just over a hundred years later.

Through Amos, God shows us that He uses natural disasters to show His displeasure ([Amos 4:6-13](#)). These "acts of God" occur on a scale so immense that man's activities have little or no effect on their outcomes. Who can stop the earth from shaking? Who can hold back the howling wind and driving rains? Who can "prime the pump" to make the rain fall and break a drought? Who can plug the magma vents of the earth? Man is essentially powerless against the awesome forces of nature, and if we believe that God is nature's Creator, we should ask ourselves why such things occur.

Our current drought affects upwards of 40% of the nation, and the problem is not just lack of rain anymore. Drought conditions cause other "natural" consequences. Earlier this summer, we witnessed one of the most spectacular effects of extended dry weather: forest fires. As the drought continues, however, new problems begin to crop up.

*USA Today* reported on two of these resultant conditions this past week. One story on Monday declared: "Across the parched western half of the USA, creepy-crawlies are boring through forests, invading rangelands and chomping on crops, making an already bad season worse" ("Drought Boosts Bug Population in West" by Patrick O'Driscoll, August 5, 2002). The article goes on to chronicle the attacks of bark beetles, grasshoppers, Mormon crickets, and West-Nile-Virus-carrying mosquitoes. On the grasshopper front alone, "some infestations are the worst since the Great Depression, costing millions of dollars in lost crops and insecticide bills."

The second article contends that "drought is driving wild critters into the suburbs" ("Wild Animals Breach Wall of Suburbs" by Deborah Sharp, August 8, 2002). We occasionally hear of bears wandering down from the mountains into populated areas, but this "invasion" is far more diverse, including snakes, bighorn sheep, ducks, and rats as well. Experts believe scarce water and the resulting food shortage is forcing these animals to extend their range. Nationally, out-of-bounds wild animals cause an average \$22 billion in damage each year, drought or not.

We have still not encountered what may be the worse result of drought: famine. However, it is prophesied for the end time. It is the third seal of [Revelation 6:5-6](#), interpreted by [Jesus](#) in [Matthew 24:7](#). Even a wealthy and productive nation like the United States can be brought to its knees by famine—and our vaunted pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps mentality could do nothing to stop it. And that is where God wants this nation—on its knees, but in repentant prayer, not despair.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

---

## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[Self-Government and Responsibility \(Part One\)](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

A major distinguishing characteristic of mankind is his free moral agency, presenting him with choices and the right to make decisions. We need free moral agency to be transformed into God's image. The volition to do right has to come from the core of our character or nature. Paradoxically, the way to maximum freedom is to yield to God's way of doing things. Unless one has the Spirit of God, he cannot exercise the necessary internal control to be subject to the government of God. Even though the church is not the government of God (John 18:36; I Corinthians 15:50), we need to respect the ministry as well as lay members, being subject to one another (I Corinthians 11:1). The operation of God's government absolutely depends upon each person governing himself, never going beyond the parameters of the authority God has given him.

---

## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **['... And Not a Drop to Drink'](#)**

by Martin G. Collins

The scarcity of potable water will become a factor as the end nears. Martin Collins shows how world consumption of water is setting us up for major conflict over this precious resource.

---

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G. Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email Subscriptions page](#).

---