

If You Do Not Obey My Voice

Curses for Disobedience

Martin G. Collins

Given 12-Mar-11; Sermon #1036c

The March 14, 2001 issue of *Time* magazine carries an article titled, "Are America's Best Days Behind Us?" It was by Fareed Zakaria. He is editor-at-large of *Time* magazine, a Washington Post columnist, and a *New York Times* best-selling author. He writes in his article,

I am an American, not by accident of birth but by choice. I voted with my feet and became an American because I love this country and think it is exceptional. But when I look at the world today and the strong winds of technological change and global competition, it makes me nervous. Perhaps most unsettling is the fact that while these forces gather strength, Americans seem unable to grasp the magnitude of the challenges that face us. Despite the hyped talk of China's rise, most Americans operate on the assumption that the U.S. is still No. 1.

But is it? Yes, the U.S. remains the world's largest economy, and we have the largest military by far, the most dynamic technology companies and a highly entrepreneurial climate. But these are snapshots of where we are right now. The decisions that created today's growth—decisions about education, infrastructure and the like—were made decades ago. What we see today is an American economy that has boomed because of policies and developments of the 1950s and '60s: the interstate-highway system, massive funding for science and technology, a public-education system that was the envy of the world and generous immigration policies. Look at some underlying measures today, and you will wonder about the future.

Of course, we know these blessings from God. Those policies may have had some impact, but it's God who blesses His nation.

The following rankings come from various lists, but they all tell the same story. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), our 15-year-olds rank 17th in the world in science and 25th in math. We rank 12th among developed countries in college graduation (down from No. 1 for decades). We come in 79th in elementary-school enrollment. Our infrastructure is ranked 23rd in the world, well behind that of every other major advanced economy. American health numbers are stunning for a rich country: based on studies by the OECD and the World Health Organization, we're 27th in life expectancy, 18th in diabetes and first in obesity. Only a few decades ago, the U.S. stood tall in such rankings. No more. There are some areas in which we are still clearly No. 1, but they're not ones we usually brag about. We have the most guns. We have the most crime among rich countries. And, of course, we have by far the largest amount of debt in the world.

He goes on through the article to detail some of that. One of the other things that he has in the article is a map. The map is rated by a prosperity index. Scandinavian countries rate the highest in the Legatum Institute's index of prosperity, a measure of material wealth and quality of life among 110 nations. Having dropped from the first place tie in 2007, the US now ranks 10th. What I find interesting about this prosperity index rating is that the top 10 nations that are shown on this map are

Israelitish nations. They are people have descended from the ancient Israelites, and they're in the top 10 spots for prosperity. And that's thanks to God and His blessings to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Of course you know Jacob was renamed Israel and is the father of the Israelitish nations.

Number one shown here is Norway in the prosperity index. Number two is Denmark. Three is Finland; four is Australia; five is New Zealand; six is Sweden; seven is Canada; eight is Switzerland; nine is the Netherlands; and 10 is the U. S. Then come the Gentile nations of the world. So the Israelites are still ranked in the top 10 of the nations of the world for prosperity. God's blessings go on and on, despite the way that the our nation and the Israelitish nations continue to live.

It's sad that despite the abundant blessings God has bestowed upon the modern day descendants of ancient Israel—Americans and Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders, and many North European countries—that they have been unthankfully wasting and destroying many of these blessings. Now it seems God has taken away His benevolent hand, leaving us to use up the blessings until they are gone. And His blessings were so great that it is taking us decades to use them up. He used to replenish them, but now they are frivolously exhausted until they are gone or taken away from us.

Although declining, the once great and prosperous Israelitish countries today, which began with the heavy influence of the Judeo-Christian ethic, have had corruption since their beginning. But the trust of their citizens and the ideologies of the majority were ones of morality and good will and limited in sporadic reverence of their Creator. Relatively honest people sat on judges' benches, and parents raise their children to have values and to be upright. Human life, including that of an innocent fetus, was cherished, protected and respected. But not so anymore.

We call Deuteronomy 28 the "blessings and curses chapter." As you know, God tells Israel through Moses what will happen if it does not obey Him. I'm not going to read them all, but just a sampling of it.

Deuteronomy 28:15 But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

Deuteronomy 28:20 The LORD will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me.

Deuteronomy 28:43-45 “The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail. “Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you.

Deuteronomy 28:47-48 Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you.

As I said, this is only a sampling of the curses that come upon the descendants of Israel for disobedience. Willful sin is the reason for the decline of the Israelitish nations today. That's no surprise to us; we've talked about it many times. God says He will destroy rebellious people.

The ancient Israelites believed that adoring and worshipping idols and trinkets and other objects would take care of their material and spiritual needs much better than God could. So they broke their covenant with Him, as well as tossing him aside, which we see this nation and the other Israelitish nations doing today. Today, the descendants of Israel have taken for granted all the God given gifts bestowed upon them—life's fun, carefree existence. Its excesses and the ability to possess things and people by far carried more importance than following God's commandments and instructions.

Each of the so-called great civilizations of the world pass through a series of stages from their birth to their decline and to their death. Historians have listed 10 stages of development and decline common to these civilizations, and it's interesting to notice these.

The first stage moves from bondage to spiritual faith.

The second stage moves from spiritual faith to great courage.

The third stage moves from great courage to liberty.

The fourth stage moves from liberty to abundance.

The fifth stage moves from abundance to selfishness.

The sixth stage moves from selfishness to complacency.

The seven stage moves from complacency to apathy.

The eighth stage moves from apathy to moral decay.

The ninth stage moves from moral decay to dependency on government.

The tenth stage moves from dependency on government to bondage.

Those are sobering things to consider, and some of those things do overlap, obviously.

The people of ancient Israel knew they had sinned, and they wept loudly, responding with deep sorrow. The solution, of course, is repentance. Repentance means not only confessing our sins to God and asking for Him to forgive us, but also abandoning our sinful ways and overcoming sin. That's what this nation needs to do, but there is much doubt at this time that it will ever turn around.

A nation that repents and submits to God saves itself from these terrible curses. It's been obvious; we've seen many examples of the historical record of the ancient Israelites. All the ancient Israelites had to do was to listen to and reverence God, but Israel desired material things and coveted other nations' religions and idols. What a waste of human potential it is to seek after the deceptive ways and the cheap trinkets of the world. And that's exactly what this nation is doing by getting so many things from China that are just cheap. Because they are cheap, people can buy more of them even though they fall apart. There is just no wisdom in it.

God guarantees blessings on obedience *if*. . . and here is a simple solution in Deuteronomy 28:1, where it talks about the blessings on obedience:

Deuteronomy 28:1-2 Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

Deuteronomy 28:12-13 The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them.

I've read from Deuteronomy 28 because it's such a simple solution that this nation has to solve all of its problems. Just obey God and do what He says. But this nation, with its enmity against God and its human nature, just refuses to submit, just like a child who is young and who you tell that they should be doing something and they ignore you. And sure enough, what you told them would happen if they did not listen to you happens. This nation is full of children today that refuse to obey its Parent.

This is the only real solution to the curse of this nation and all the other Israelitish nations are under today. Although it's not likely that the nations will turn to God and submit to Him any time soon, it's never too late for individuals and families to do so. Diligently obeying the voice of the Lord is the only way of being safe from the brunt of the curses that are beginning to hit the descendants of the ancient Israelites today. It's such a simple solution, and even those of us in the church sometimes forget what it is, and that is to submit to God repent of our sins.