

How Could God Let This Happen?

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-- *Commentaries from past newsletters – Winter 2001*

In an interview after the September 11th attack on New York and Washington, Anne Graham Lotz was being interviewed by Jane Clayson on the early show and was asked "How could God let something like this happen?" And Anne gave an extremely profound and insightful response. She said "I believe that God is deeply saddened by this, just as we are, but for years we've been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. And being the gentleman that He is, I believe that He has calmly backed out. How can we expect God to give us His blessing and His protection if we demand that He leave us alone?" I would add to her statement the fact that we have performed 3,800,000 abortions since Roe vs. Wade, also plays a role. In a magazine article a contrasting positive note was sounded when it was pointed out that on that day many people did not come to work, that the buildings emptied quickly, and it was quite significant that only 3,600+ people lost their lives. In the light of these two points of view I think it is worthwhile for us to ask just exactly what does the Bible say about our nation and its safety in the light of its relationship with God..

First of all we must know whether the US has a relationship with God. The answer is yes it does. When our forebears undertook the establishment of a new nation they decided to begin as one nation under God indivisible with liberty and justice for all. They also decided to adopt as a motto "In God We Trust." In those days not everyone believed in God but most did. Things have not changed. Most of our citizenry today still believe in God (90%). In addition most of the populace believe that the Bible is the true Word of God. It is not wrong to say on the basis of our beliefs and the many signs and bumper stickers asking God to bless America that we want our nation to be the recipient of God's blessing. When I have traveled all over the world and then come home I realize that God has blessed us. He has shed His grace on us beyond measure. Even today the prayer response of the populace to the September 11 attack was evidence that many do trust God or at least in times of crisis we turn to him.

Even though we are a nation founded under God that still believes in him and prays to him, we still need critical evidence that we are a nation that is truly under God. Since the Bible is God's Word and is truth, we should ask if there is any biblical warrant to believe that we are a covenant nation. If we search the scriptures the first conclusion that we draw is that Israel was and still is a covenant people. The second conclusion is that Christians are also a covenant people. The Apostle Paul asserted that we are grafted onto the parent stock of Israel (Rom. 11:17-22). It is then apparent that a nation that claims to be Christian are also covenant people. We must remember, though, that Paul said in this scripture that our "branch" could be broken off for unbelief. It is not, however, the exact same covenant that God made with the Jews. That covenant was modified in its restatement by Jesus. He gave us a new covenant, and as part of the new covenant we are to love God, our neighbors and one another. Our new covenant does not abrogate the old one. We are to abide by the same moral commandments and

ordinances that God gave the Israelis. Jesus said that he did not come to do away with the law, but to give it real meaning. This He does through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I need to remind you that a covenant is not a contract. A covenant cannot be terminated unless both parties agree to its nullification. I do not find any evidence that God has agreed to nullify his covenant with us. We are still bound to Him through the New Covenant just as the Jews are bound to him by the Old Covenant (Romans 11:23-26). This fact has extraordinary significance for us.

I have already stated that we are to obey God's commandments and ordinances. In the Pentateuch, God told us 40 times that we should obey his commandments. He also told us that our actions would bring consequences. Knowing this we have to know what the consequences are. In Deuteronomy God spelled out what would happen to us if we did and did not obey them. He said. "If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth." He then proceeds to elaborate the consequences of obedience. "All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock--the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven. The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you. The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you. The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity--in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground--in the land he swore to your forefathers to give you. The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom. Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them" (Deut. 28:1-13). All that sounds pretty good doesn't it? You know that God has kept his promise and all of these things have come true. God has shed his grace on us. Now let's read on and see what he said about disobedience.

He continued, "However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: you will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed. The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out. The LORD

will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you have done in forsaking him. The LORD will plague you with diseases until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess. The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish. The sky over your head will be bronze, the ground beneath you iron. The LORD will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder; it will come down from the skies until you are destroyed. The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth. Your carcasses will be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away. The LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, festering sores and the itch, from which you cannot be cured. The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of mind. At midday you will grope about like a blind man in the dark. You will be unsuccessful in everything you do; day after day you will be oppressed and robbed, with no one to rescue you. You will be pledged to be married to a woman, but another will take her and ravish her. You will build a house, but you will not live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will not even begin to enjoy its fruit. Your ox will be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will eat none of it. Your donkey will be forcibly taken from you and will not be returned. Your sheep will be given to your enemies, and no one will rescue them. Your sons and daughters will be given to another nation, and you will wear out your eyes watching for them day after day, powerless to lift a hand. A people that you do not know will eat what your land and labor produce, and you will have nothing but cruel oppression all your days. The sights you see will drive you mad. The LORD will afflict your knees and legs with painful boils that cannot be cured, spreading from the soles of your feet to the top of your head. The LORD will drive you and the king (leader) you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your fathers. There you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone. You will become a thing of horror and an object of scorn and ridicule to all the nations where the LORD will drive you. You will sow much seed in the field but you will harvest little, because locusts will devour it. You will plant vineyards and cultivate them but you will not drink the wine or gather the grapes, because worms will eat them. You will have olive trees throughout your country but you will not use the oil, because the olives will drop off. You will have sons and daughters but you will not keep them, because they will go into captivity. Swarms of locusts will take over all your trees and the crops of your land. The alien who lives among you will rise above you higher and higher, but you will sink lower and lower. He will lend to you, but you will not lend to him. He will be the head, but you will be the tail”(Deut. 28:15-45). All these things can be the consequences of our misbehavior if we are disobedient! Could it be that we are beginning to reap a harvest of curses?

Sadly we have not taken the whole Word seriously, and thereby fail to appreciate the truth that is presented there. If, however, we go back to the scriptures and study the history of Israel, we will realize that God’s rewards and punishments have been realized over and over again when the nation was obedient and disobedient. We too are under that covenant and, therefore, these blessings and curses will be realized by us if we

obey or do not obey. As we proceed with our argumentation, let us remember these curses.

Let's now go back to Anne Lotz' statement. She mentioned one major area in which we had not been obedient. Let us examine it and inquire further to see if there are others that are significant. When we forced prayer out of the schools arguing that we were separating church and state, we were doing something that was part of a greater disobedience. God told us in his first commandment that we should have no other Gods before him. We disobeyed that commandment when we let humanism be the primary philosophy of our educational system. In humanism, man is his own God and he formulates his own rules of behavior. The group who drew up the Humanist Manifesto called it the Religious Humanist Manifesto. It is a religion and the Supreme Court has agreed. It denies the existence of God and rejects his commandments. Since John Dewey, one of the most influential educators of all time was a signer of the manifesto, it is possible that his influence caused humanism to become the religion of the educational establishment. It is to a great extent responsible for the eventual denial of prayer and the denial of God's commandments as absolute rules of behavior. When they are denied, our human nature is free to be the sole determinant of our behavior. We are reaping the harvest of the influence of humanism with ungodly children.

A sin not mentioned by Anne was the number of abortions that have been performed in this country. One of the things that God considered an abomination in Canaan was child sacrifice. The Canaanites sacrificed their children (most often their first born sons) to the God Molech. God specifically told the Israelis to not do that. We have not sacrificed our children to Molech, but we have sacrificed them to the god of humanism—ourselves. I say this because most abortions are done because of the selfish desires of someone to not have the responsibility for nurturing a child. Even though a few are motivated to try to save the lives of these children who are being murdered in wholesale numbers, most of us have sat purposeless and passionless as they are destroyed. We have also denied the fact that most of the mothers and 75% of the fathers who were involved in the decision are suffering from post abortion syndromes. Those who have had this procedure carry the scar on their souls for years and in some instances forever. This psychological trauma is one of the major contributors to the epidemic of anorexia nervosa and bulimoroxia in young women.

But there is much more for which God holds us responsible. There is the sexual immorality that is so rampant in our society. Children at age 11 and 12 are now indulging in sex. Most are beginning with oral sex but intercourse follows soon thereafter. Over half of the girls who finish high school have had sex. A much greater percentage of boys have also indulged. Rape is very common. In our town recently, two thirteen year old boys made a girl perform oral sex on one of them on the school bus while being transported to school. Illegitimacy is so common in our society that 70% of black children and 24% of white children are born out of wedlock.

As a result of our sexual promiscuity, we now have an epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases that is worse than it was when there was no treatment for them. We have also added HIV to the mix and it cannot be cured.

Adultery is a common sin. My seminary class was recently startled when I told them that 37% of pastors and almost 50% of marriage partners have committed adultery. Some years ago I saw a woman who had been seduced by her pastor. When I questioned her further about her seduction she told me she had not been alone. The same man had intercourse with at least 40 other women that she knew of in the church. It was a large church so he had a fertile field in which to work.

Besides adultery there is the problem of homosexuality. The Bible is explicit in saying that it is a sin. A man shall not lie down with a man as with a woman (Lev. 18:22). Paul said that lesbianism is a perversion (Rom 1:26). Many in our society and in our churches have approved of homosexuality in both sexes. We have encouraged it in our schools in sex education courses. The media have also tried to make it a normal outlet. In my last newsletter I wrote about this problem so I will not pursue it further here, but it is one of the things that God will curse us for.

Sexual problems do not stop with homosexuality. There is the problem of child sexual abuse. One out of four children will be sexually abused in our society. Most of them will be little girls, but boys are now coming in for their fair share. Sexual abuse is one of the most damaging things that can happen to a child. You should sit in my office and day after day listen to the pain in the souls of women who have been sexually abused. They are angry that one who should have loved them used them to selfishly gain his satisfaction all the while causing them physical and emotional pain. They feel dirty and defiled. Their self-esteem is totally destroyed. Still we do not cry out against this sin that is so rampant in our society.

Then there is the problem of divorce. Over 50 percent of our marriages now end in divorce. God said he hates divorce (Mal. 2:16) and he certainly does today as much as he did in Malachi's day. He is unchanging and, therefore, holds us accountable. He said in the same scripture that he wanted godly offspring, and he knew that broken homes very often create broken children. They are at risk for behavioral and other psychiatric problems. He will not bless us if we are not creating godly offspring.

I do not want to close without mentioning the greed that exists in our society. Do you think a baseball player is worth \$25,000,000 a year for five years? Do you think that the multi-million dollar salaries paid to CEO's are justifiable in God's eyes? Does anyone need \$80,000 cars, or 3/4 ton SUV's? Does anyone need homes that cost over \$1,000,000? We have become a greedy nation and put our trust in money and not in God. Jesus said that we could not worship God and money!

The greatest problem in God's eyes though is the "death" that exists in many of our churches. We do not worship our God in spirit and truth. The word is not preached because the authority of the Bible has been assaulted by academics in many of our seminaries who have taught that it is just mythology. The Exodus is a myth. The Israelis did not cross the Red Sea as the Bible says they did. Jesus was not the Son of God; he was just a great teacher. The virgin birth sounds great but probably did not happen. Jesus was not resurrected from the dead. And he could not have ascended into heaven. The commandments of God are just suggestions. They are to be viewed as relative. How do you think God feels when he hears such talk? I am sure that God who inspired the Word and spoke to us in it as well as through his Son does not take kindly to it. I am also sure that He sees us as a stiff necked people who are disobedient and are to be cursed by Him.

Another thing that God is put out with us about is that we have been religious, but not spiritual. The Holy Spirit is a gift of God to restore our relationship with him. Before the fall of Adam, he lived in junction with God. After the fall, man had to live in disjunction from God, and had to live by the law to gain favor with him. He could not do it. He always failed. To atone for his sins, he had to offer sacrifices. These too were insufficient. God wanted a humble and contrite heart, but he could not get it. Therefore, God had to take another approach and send his Son to atone for our sins. Jesus was the final sacrifice that was able to take the punishment of all mankind so that we could know that we can be forgiven and through him we can have eternal life. Even so, we still were not able to live in junction with God. It was necessary that God lives in us. To accomplish this he sent us His Holy Spirit to live in us and with us when we make Jesus the Lord and Master of our life. When the Holy Spirit comes, we are reconciled to God and we can live in him and he in us. The Holy Spirit was sent to achieve God's purpose of making it possible for us to live in love with him and others. But if we do not obey God's commandments we will grieve the Holy Spirit and if we do not remain in communication with God we will quench the Spirit. There has been little prayer and Bible study in our lives. It is through prayer that we communicate with Him.

We have grieved the Holy Spirit by sinning and not confessing and repenting of our sin. We have quenched the Holy Spirit by not remaining in communication with him and not allowing him full reign in our lives. Most of us have not even heard of the Holy Spirit and we do not understand who he is and what he does in

our lives. It is the Holy Spirit that empowers us to walk, talk, worship and pray in the Spirit. A pastor cannot preach, nor can a Sunday school teacher teach in the Spirit if he or she has quenched or grieved Him. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals the truth of the scriptures to us. We can perceive the truths there only if the Spirit illuminates them.

Well now, if all the things I have enumerated above are true (and they are), is it possible that God is put out with us and is allowing the forces of evil to attempt to destroy us? Job, a righteous man, did not do anything wrong and look what happened to him. But he is a real exception in the Bible. All the others like Saul, Solomon, Rehoboam, Ahab and many others were cursed by God and often came to a violent end when they did not walk in his ways. I, therefore, can only conclude that God, being unchanging, has released the forces of evil to attack us. It is useless for us to ask God to bless us if we do not change our wicked ways. If we do not change, He will not protect us from the forces of evil who are active in this present situation. I am also convinced that we do not fight against flesh and blood but against the rulers, authorities, powers of the dark world and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph. 6:12).

What then are we to do? Our answer can be found in the book of Jonah. Nineveh was a wicked city. God sent Jonah to preach against it. He tried to avoid it, but after being thrown into the sea, and after his sojourn in the fish he did as God had told him. The people fasted and repented and God did not destroy them. I have heard many calls to prayer, but none to repentance. Anne Lotz was in essence telling us that we have sinned and we need to repent. If that is not what she was trying to tell us, it certainly is what she should have been telling us.

In past newsletters I have written on repentance. I have two essays on the subject on our web site (www.InstChristianGrowth.org). I want to reiterate here in brief what I have said there in detail. As a nation we have sinned against God. Our sins made Jesus suffer on the cross because he took the punishment that should have been ours. We should ask the Holy Spirit to work a godly sorrow in us and then we should turn away from our sinful ways. It will be difficult to get an entire nation to repent as the city of Nineveh did, but it is possible for those of us who are spiritual to repent for our nation and quit being so passive about the sin that is around us. To be aggressive we first have to speak out against it. That is what Jonah did. It takes holy boldness in our society today to speak out against the sin that is so rampant. Next we have to call all Christians to confess that we are a sinful nation. After confession we need to call the people and the church to repentance. We have to confess that we have not believed God's Word and have condoned instead of condemning sin.

When you read this exhortation I am sure many of you will feel that you cannot contribute anything. You feel that you do not have any influence. You are wrong! You can tell your family, your friends and your pastor that we need to recognize our sinfulness and confess them. Then we need to ask the Holy Spirit to work

repentance in us. If all of those who receive this letter will call others to confess and repent it will make a difference. If Jonah as one man could call a city to repentance, what can the 1800 of you who receive this letter do? Do not be reluctant like Jonah was.

A PRAYER I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU.

The prayer of Jabez has received much attention of late, but years ago I found this prayer by Evelyn Carter Spencer that should be prayed by all who are surrendered to the Lord Jesus. I think you will find it worth praying regularly. This is especially true when we realize that the scripture quoted declares that Christ does dwell in us, and his mind is like a template that overlays our minds. Our surrender to Him gives Him permission to do what the prayer asks Him to do.

CHRIST IN YOU THE HOPE OF GLORY

Col. 1:6

Dear Jesus, here I am.

Love through my heart.

Think through my mind.

Hear through my ears.

See through my eyes

Speak through my lips.

Touch through my hands

Walk through my fee.

Stand tall in me Jesus, and do the greater works that You did when You were on the earth.