

550 The Kansas State Session

We can presume that most politicians are honestly doing their best to tackle today's many problems, in spite of frequent criticism from the media and from the social media platforms - today's "Wild West". No wonder it takes courage and a thick skin to enter public office nowadays. How greatly do all who serve in the public eye need our steady prayers, and especially our Christian brothers and sisters "who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6.10b / I Timothy 2.1-4, KJV).

The problems around us, with their causes and God-given solutions, are much more clearly understood in the light of God's Word. In that Word Almighty God has laid out for us the "Great Cosmic Realities" underlying all human existence: the existence of God, our loving Creator; the rebellion of Satan against God; the rebellion of Man against God, leading in turn to the entrance of sin into God's creation, the spoiling of that once "very good" creation, and Man in his natural state now being cut off from God, helpless if left on his own, and facing future divine judgment and punishment for his sins; then God the Father's gift of His Son Jesus Christ, who has smashed the grip of Satan, sin and death, and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers in Him; and finally Jesus' promised return in victory as the Messiah, the Christ, the Lord, Saviour and Judge. Crucially, for the time being God's gracious Christ-door of mercy, forgiveness and welcome remains open.

Too many of those in power have ignored these Realities for years, to their, and our, cost. In response to His being widely ignored by sinful Man, we know from numerous scriptural precedents that the Lord God in His mercy either allows, or directs, such mess to develop, so as to expose human sinfulness and to call for deep repentance before Him while there is still opportunity. If there is no repentance, finally He acts in judgment (eg., Matthew 24.36-42).

In a departure this time from our usual practice in these Reflections, there now follows a remarkable prayer, printed in full, uttered by a brave Christian pastor Joe Wright, who had been asked to open the Kansas State Session with prayer. Instead of the expected "nice little prayer" from the pastor, the Lord, and all present, were given something rather different! -

"Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and to seek your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says: "Woe to those who call evil good" (Isaiah 5.20a), but that is exactly what

we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it pluralism. We have worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism. We have endorsed perversion and called it alternative lifestyle. We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. We have killed our unborn and called it choice. We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable. We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem. We have abused power and called it politics. We have embezzled public funds and called it essential expenses. We have institutionalised bribery and called it sweets of office. We have coveted our neighbour's possessions and have called it ambition. We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed time-honoured values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment. "Search us, Oh God and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Amen!" " (from Psalm 139.23a; 51.2 / John 8.36). (This version omits what should have been, and probably were, the final words of the Pastor's prayer – "through Jesus Christ our Lord", for "No man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14.6b)).

Little wonder that the reception for this "straight-to-the-point" prayer was mixed! Some legislators walked out during it, but apparently over the next few weeks the Pastor's Church had over 5,000 phone calls (of which 47 were negative), with requests for copies of the prayer coming in from around the world. There would be no harm in our making a copy of it to use ourselves, and to share with others as and when appropriate.

The message from all this is simple: standing up for God's truth in Christ in a sinful world has never been popular but has always been necessary, and especially so today. We give thanks to the Lord for faithful, gutsy Christians such as Pastor Joe Wright, who "told it the way it is" in the presence of powerful, worldly legislators (just as did the Lord Himself – many examples - and Stephen (Acts 6.8-7.60, especially 7.51-53), and others in the centuries since). As a result, Pastor Joe is unlikely to be invited back to open in prayer at their next session! – but never mind: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity" (I Corinthians 16.13-14, KJV).

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