

The Sermons of John

MacArthur

Psalm 2

"God and Government"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Thank you for those kind words. It is a wonderful joy to be here. Again, I've been here in the past, and count it a great honor to be in this pulpit and in this fellowship. Would you stand with me for the reading of the Word of God. I want to read to you Psalm 2, Psalm 2.

"Why are the nations in an uproar and the people devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!' He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury, saying, 'But as For Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain. I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shatter them like earthenware.'" Now there, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the Lord with reverence and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son," or kiss the Son, "that He may not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] We know that Your Word speaks to Your people, our Father, but we also know that Your Word speaks to the world. This divine message is addressed to the nations of the earth; to the kings, the rulers, the judges who

have taken counsel against You and against Your anointed Son, and therefore, against Your Word. It warns them that you laugh at their frivolous and frail expressions of power, and You speak to them in terrifying, threatening warnings of the judgment that will come, has come, is coming, against all those who turn against You. This is the way of the world; You have allowed all the nations to go their own way. The cycle of judgment has been repeated again and again and again since the very beginning. And, Lord, always we are grateful that You have a redeemed people in every time and every place who are protected and sheltered and blessed because they have taken their refuge in You.

We look at the world around us, we are horrified by what is going on, and yet in retrospect, we should expect nothing less. It's a tragedy when five law enforcement officers doing their duty before you are murdered, but it is a small thing in comparison to a brief few years around World War II where 100 million people were slaughtered. This is because the whole world lies in the lap of the evil one, and he is a deceiver and a liar and a murderer. And we know that there are diagnoses of the way of the world laid out specifically in Your Word, and we know that the world is incessantly under Your ongoing judgment, including our own nation, and yet You have been always a refuge for Your people, a shelter, a protector, because You are our Savior. You rescue us. You rescue us from all temporal fears, and more importantly from all eternal fears. You fill our hearts with hope in believing and joy because we're part of Your kingdom, even in the face of the tragedies in which we live.

Bless our worship today. May it lift You up and exalt You, and may it give us a clear view as we try to understand the world around us. And may we again be called to the fact that we are Your lights in this world. May we be faithful that that light would shine brightly, lifting up Christ; may many be drawn to Him we pray in His name. Amen.

[Message] On the 10th of June in the year 1900, at the age of 84, the

Bishop of Liverpool in England went to heaven. His name was J. C. Ryle, John Charles Ryle. He was called the man of granite with a heart of a child. During his long years of leadership in the Church of England and his relentless faithfulness to the Bible, the Word of God, he had been intensely loved and intensely hated, both for the same reason, because he was a lion for the truth. His legacy lives on today. Most of you know J. C. Ryle from his book *Holiness*, a monumental work that has blessed every generation since, and will continue to do so. Another exceptional book *Practical Religion* should be read by every believer.

If J. C. Ryle were alive today he would be a blogger. But then it was tracts, as they were called, and he wrote reams of tracts addressing all kinds of biblical and doctrinal and practical issues. The scope of Ryle's influence continues and exceeds the time of his own life, because his works have been translated into so many languages. One of the things that preoccupied J. C. Ryle was the relationship of the church to the government, the relationship of the church to the state. He recognized a foundational truth that people do not recognize; in fact, in America, do not even understand, and that would encompass churches, and it is this: that it is a deadly thing to a nation to separate the church from the government.

America is proud of its separation of church and state; that is a formula for judgment. J. C. Ryle understood that. He recognized this truth: all people and all nations are bound to honor God or be judged; and to honor God is to honor the true God in the true way, according to His true Word. This is a critical reality missing in the thinking of people today, even in the church. It is not a badge of honor for a nation to be open to all religions; that is an evidence of defection at a fundamental level. J. C. Ryle recognized several things that we need to understand. One – and you will recognize them when I mention them – Ryle mentioned that man was created by God in the image of God for the glory of God. Is that true? All men created by God in the image

for the glory of God. No person ever made for any other reason, and any person who does not fulfill that reason glorifying God is an eternal discard. Every person is given as a part of being human faculties then to drive that person toward God.

Romans 1 says that, "That which may be known of God is in them, for God has placed it in them, so that if they don't follow the path of human reason back to God they are without excuse." "Every human being, Romans 2 says, "has in his heart written the law of God. The nations that don't have the written law have a law written in their heart," Paul says, "and with that law comes a conscience that either excuses or accuses them based on how they respond to that law written in their heart."

To be human is to be made in the image of God with internal components and mechanisms intended to drive you to God. One is reason, and reason functions on the basis of cause and effect. That's how reason functions. That's how you reason anything in cause and effect. Follow cause and effect far enough back, you have to have a first cause. You have law written in your heart, that's why all across the globe through all of human history, even without the Word of God, people understand good behavior and bad behavior. The instinct in every human soul is to worship. Man is an inveterate worshiper, that's why he invents religion. That is strong in every soul, destined to draw each soul into worshipping God. Bishop Ryle would be sad to know that in the last few months statistics have revealed that there are now more atheists by percentage in England than Christians. But that's a form of worship too; that's worshipping yourself.

With all the mechanisms that God has placed in man, with all the creation around Him and His law written in the heart, man in his fallenness resists God. Romans 1 says, "When he knew God he glorified Him not as God, but rather invented his own gods, he became a fool but thought himself wise." Paul sums up man's condition like this, Romans 3: "There is none who seeks

for God."

This is what depravity has done to God's original creation. God creates all people with mechanisms to drive them to God, but it is true of all of them in their fallenness that none seeks after God. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Every mouth is stopped, there are no excuses. The whole world is guilty and accountable to the one true God. "All people," said Ryle, "are to worship the one true God." And He has put Himself on display externally in the creation, internally in the law in the heart. He has made man a worshiper, but as Jesus said, "You worship you know not what." That defines man's worship.

Listen to what Ryle said: "Any worship is more pleasing to the natural heart than worshiping the true God in the true way. Any worship is more pleasing to the natural heart than worshiping the true God in the true way." Nonetheless, all people, all nations are commanded to worship the one true God. Deuteronomy 32, God says, "There is no god besides Me."

God said to the pagan king, Cyrus, in Isaiah 45: "I am the Lord, there is no other. Besides Me there is no god that men may know from the rising of the sun," that is in the east, "to the setting of the sun," that is in the west, covering the whole globe, "that there is no other besides Me. I am the Lord, there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these things." "I take full responsibility for what's good and what's bad. I'm in charge of all of it. I am the only God."

What about all the other gods? Well, Deuteronomy also tells us that all the gods of the nations are demons. False gods are satanic counterfeits, demon impersonators. Therefore, what is the first commandment? "You shall have no other gods," Exodus 20:3. "You shall not worship any other god, for the Lord whose name is Jealous is a jealous God," Exodus 34:14. "You shall not worship them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God,

visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands to those who love Me and keep My commandments." In other words, God demands every human being to worship Him and Him alone; and when they don't, the iniquity that develops in that generation that rejects Him is so endemic, it gets into the fabric of life to such a deep degree that generation after generation after generation are corrupted by it.

And the Lord Jesus Christ repeated Deuteronomy 6:5 when He said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind." That is to say you don't have any love for any other god, because all your love of all your human capacities goes toward the one true God. And when you love God with all your soul, all your mind, all your heart, Paul says you fulfill the whole law. Therefore, the true fundamental in human life is this: worship the true God, the Creator God of the Old Testament, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is two individuals, but this is collectively to nations. And I'm not speaking this morning about personal salvation, I'm talking about national perceptions. I'm talking about national well-being. I'm talking about temporal blessing. I'm talking about being able to enjoy as a society the full richness of common grace.

Ryle also understood another point: "Failure to worship God or worship any other god by any people brings down divine judgment." It brings judgment on a person and it brings judgment on a collection of persons in a society or a nation. This has occurred all throughout history; the results are chronicled in the cycle of Romans 1.

There are lots of ways to explain the wrath of God. There is eternal wrath, hell; eschatological wrath, described by the prophets, particularly Daniel and the book of Revelation as well. There is consequential wrath which is sowing and reaping: "Whatever a man sows he reaps." There's wrath connected to sin. But the wrath of Romans 1 is a kind of cyclical wrath of

abandonment: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness of men who uphold the truth and abandon it."

And what is that wrath? How is it actually described? "God gave them over. God gave them over. God gave them over." When that wrath of abandonment –when God turns His back on a society that has turned its back on Him; when they no longer worship the true God, they no longer follow the path of reason, following the path of the law written in the heart, they turn away from God, they become fools, they create their own gods. When that happens, when they knew God but glorified Him not as God, that kind of deviation from God then results in God sentencing them. And that's a legal term: God gave them over, gave them over, gave them over, as if you were turning a prisoner over to punishment. And you know when it happens, because it says in Romans 1 language that you're very familiar with. Let me just briefly remind you of it, because it is so very important.

Listen to what happens when God gives a nation over. "God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity so that their bodies would be dishonored among them." The first thing that'll happen is a sexual revolution. When God gives them over, He gives them over first to the lusts of their own hearts to impurity. The heart is full of lust. The unredeemed heart is full of lust. And once they reject God and His law that lust is unbounded. This happens because, Paul says, "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator." Again, they'll worship anything before they'll worship the true God; and when they turn from Him there will be a sexual revolution.

Then verse 26 says, secondly, "God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire one toward another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty

of their error." That's AIDS or any other venereal disease that comes to homosexuals.

When God turns over a nation the first thing that happens is a sexual revolution. In the 1980s, the playboy culture. The second thing that happens is a homosexual revolution, and we're living in the middle of it. That revolution has reached massive proportions. That's evidence of God's judgment. The final thing is in verse 28: "God gave them over to a reprobate mind." That's when the brain doesn't function, the brain doesn't function and you come up with things like gender fluidity and the idiocy of ignoring reality. There's no such thing as a transgender person, it doesn't exist. You're XX or XY, that's it. You can't have gender reassignment. You can mutilate yourself.

"The depraved mind is filled with all kinds of unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossip, slander, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and even though they know the ordinance of God, those who practice such things are worthy of death, and not only do them, but give hearty approval to those who practice them." They applaud the people. It's like our whole nation is the Jerry Springer Show. This is a cycle of Romans 1.

So where am I going with all of this? Well, I want you to have a biblical diagnosis. When government separates from God and from God's Son and from God's gospel because they separate from God's Word, this invites judgment on a national scale. Let me back into it. When the church thinks its only responsibility is for the religion of the people and not their physical, temporal, material needs, it makes a grave mistake and it rejects the full purpose in the world that the church should fulfill in showing the compassion and mercy of God. But on the other hand, when government thinks it is only responsible for the physical, material, and temporal needs of people and not

their spiritual needs, it makes a grave mistake, and it invites divine judgment, and seals its own destruction.

Bishop Ryle affirmed to his nation these things. He said, "You should recognize nationally the Holy Scripture as the only true revelation of God, and therefore of moral conduct and behavior." And he wasn't talking about personal salvation, that's another issue, but he was talking about the ability of a nation to enjoy the fullness of common grace because of a recognition of the one true God and an adherence to His laws.

Now the reformers used to speak of the law of God as having three purposes. This is classic reform theology. Purpose Number One was to lead the sinner to the Savior. And we know about that, right? The law our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. We measure our lives against the law and it beats us up, it pounds on us, it shows how we fall short; and because we fall so short we pound our chest like the publican in Luke 18 and say, "God be merciful to me, the sinner." That's what Old Testament conversion was like.

If you want to know what Old Testament conversion looks like look at the publican. That's pre-cross, pre-resurrection. That's an Old Testament conversion. That's like Isaiah, "I'm a man of unclean lips. I dwell amidst a people of unclean lips crying out for cleansing." That's the use of the law. The law literally condemns us. There is enough in the law to condemn us; there's not enough in the law to save us. In fact, the law has no ability to save us, it only has the ability to condemn us. So the reformer said the first use of the law is to lead the sinner to the Savior because of the desperate reality of his own guilt.

The third use of the law that the reformers talked about was to provide the standard for believers behavior. Since the law – apart from the ceremonies and the rituals – since the law, the moral law of God, is a reflection of God's nature, the law then becomes the Christian's pattern of life, right? We don't throw the law away, we're not antinomians. We don't reject the law, we live

the law.

But the second use of the law reformers said, first, to lead us to Christ; second, to show us how to live – the third, to show us how to live, the second and the middle one is this: the reformer said the second use of the law is to restrain sin in society, it is to restrain sin in society. The law restrains. It doesn't restrain perfectly, it doesn't restrain totally, but it restrains.

You have a kind of a microcosm illustration of that in the way God has created all of us. We're all fallen sinners, we have to be restrained. On a personal level, God has written His law in our hearts. That law then becomes the means of that restraint. The tool that God uses is our conscience. And what does our conscience do? It accuses or excuses us. So, literally, to restrain sinners, God has written His law in their heart and created a mechanism that reacts with guilt, fear, anxiety, terror, or whatever when you violate that law. The conscience is a whip in an individual life.

And then there's the family. God has built restraint into the family. Sinners need to be restrained, and they need to be restrained at a very small level. So its parents' responsibility to restrain their children, and the weapon is – are you ready for this – the rod. The weapon is the rod; that's what the Bible says. If you don't use the rod you'll ruin your child.

But the next restraint is government, and government's weapon is the sword. Conscience inflicts mental anguish; the rod inflicts physical anguish; the sword is a weapon of death. God knows that society, in order to be restrained, has to have the fear of death. Listen to Romans with that in your mind. "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God." Did you get that? Every nation, every set of rulers, leaders, senators, congressmen, judges, police, every army – every authority, every civil authority is from God. It doesn't mean they're godly, but they are agents of God as the conscience is an agent of God, and as parental discipline is an agent of God, to restrain sinners.

And then he says, "There's no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God." Rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior but for evil. Did you get that? The purpose of rulers and leaders is to prevent evil, to prevent evil. It is a moral purpose. Government can't shirk morality, that is its purpose; and when a government says, "We're fine with fornication. We're fine with abortion. We have no problem with homosexuality, transgender this and transgender that; we really couldn't care less what you do," that government has ceased to function in God's way.

"Government," says the next verse in Romans 13, "is a minister of God to you for good." Did you get that? Again, it's a moral purpose for good. If you do what is evil you should be afraid, because it doesn't bear the sword for nothing, "For government is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who does evil." So they have decided that robbery is evil, and molesting children is evil, but whole categories of sins which God deems evil are not evil.

So government has abandoned God and abandoned its function. This is tragedy. This is irreparable tragedy. Ryle wrote extensively on this. He wrote against those who wanted to separate the Christian church from the government of England. He said, "I warn you, the results will be disastrous."

This is a quote from Ryle: "The government of England will allow all its subjects to serve God or Baal, to go to heaven or to go to hell, just as they please. The state would make no cognizance of spiritual matters, and would rather look on with epicurean indifference and unconcern."

And then he said this: "In what manner God would punish England if the English government casts off all connections with Him? I cannot tell whether He would punish us by some sudden blow such as a defeat in war, and the occupation of our territory by a foreign power; whether He would waste us away gradually and slowly by loss of commercial prosperity, whether He would break us to pieces by letting fools rule over us and allowing parliament

to obey them, whether He would ruin us by sending a dearth of wise statesmen, et cetera. But one thing I am sure; the state that sows the seed of national neglect of God will sooner or later reap a harvest of national disaster and national ruin."

Look at England; there are more atheists there than Christians, and there is unrestrained evil everywhere. Scripture teaches plainly that God rules everything. He deals with nations the way they deal with Him. And without His blessing and without His protection, no nation can prosper.

Again, Scripture says the first duty of the government is to recognize what is good and what is evil; and to recognize that, you have to go to the source of that, the revelation of that, and that's the Scripture. You must honor God, and that produces the well-being of the people. My good friend Iain Murray wrote, "The government which ignores true religion and coolly declares that it doesn't care whether its subjects are Christians or not is guilty of an act of suicidal folly. Let me give you an illustration.

When Israel went into the Land of Promise as they were on the brink in the book of Deuteronomy and they were hearing the law, the Lord sent them in and He said, "When you get in there get rid of all the," fill in the blank, "idolaters. Get rid of all of them." They were actually God's weapon, weren't they, for judgment. "Clean out the idolaters. They are blasphemers; they blaspheme My name. You must rid the nation of them." Well, they didn't; they intermingled with Moloch and Baal.

You know the rest of the sad history of Israel. When you allow any false gods an equal place with the true God, God will bring judgment. Keep on inviting the Muslims in. Keep on saying Christianity is just one of many world religions; we're happy to have all of them here – and you are just planting the seeds of the total destruction of this nation by God who is offended.

There is only one true God, the God of the Bible. There's only one true

law; the law of Scripture. There's only one true Savior; the Lord Jesus Christ. There's only one true blesser, the true God. You will not be blessed by Him if you do not worship Him and Him alone.

The chaos of the world is always related to the rejection of God, and God's law, and God's Son, and God's Word, and God's gospel. An irreligious, immoral government will self-destruct in its own indifference. Listen to Joshua 24:20, "If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He's done good to you." "He's done all this good to you nationally, you forsake Him, serve foreign gods, He will consume you."

Do you want to know another word for the reprobate mind, another phrase that will define the reprobate mind? Political correctness; that's a reprobate mind. Want to know another word for postmodernism? Paganism. And now in this nation they want to do everything they can to offend the true God, not just ignore Him, not just reject Him, but offend Him.

The last couple of weeks in California they passed a bill called SB 1146. It specifically says, "No Christian college or university in the state of California can discriminate against LBGTQ people or they are subject to lawsuits." They put Christian in there because that's exactly who they're after.

So all the religious, immoral, anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Bible, governments that tolerate that will self-destruct in their own indifference. Such a society will be open to – are you ready – all religions, all idols, all false gods, all moralities, all immoralities, all freedoms, all preferences, all opinions, all lies, all deceptive systems, all sins, all iniquities. It will lose control. It will have a collective reprobate mind. Remove the worship of the true God, the authority of His Word, the voice of His church, the moral education of youth, the elevation of the gospel, and a nation is on the path to destruction.

In Exodus 9:16 we read, "But I have raised you up for this purpose,"

God says, "that I might show My power, and My name might be proclaimed in all the earth." That His purpose for Israel. "I want you to be the model nation, and here's what you're going to model."

What was laid out in Deuteronomy 26 through 30? "When you obey, you'll be blessed. When you disobey, you'll be cursed. And you're going to model that for the world." The history of Israel is a history of what happens to a nation when they obey, and what happens to a nation when they don't, and it's a lesson for the whole world.

First Kings 8:60, "So that all the nations of the earth may know I've raised you up, so that all the nations of the earth may know that the Lord is God and there is no other." We don't even hear that being preached from church pulpits.

There are a couple of pretty graphic illustrations of this; one is in Daniel 4 with Nebuchadnezzar. You remember Nebuchadnezzar was looking at everything he had when he was in his wonderful palace – one of the seven wonders of the ancient world – and he was extoling his greatness, all that he'd accomplished. And you remember what happened; God struck him and he became insane, and he lived outdoors for seven years, and his fingernails grew like bird claws and his hair like an animal, and he was out of his mind for seven years. That's what God did to him for trying to usurp the place that belongs only to God. And at the end of that period we read in Daniel 4, "I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. He does according to His work in the host of heaven and all among the inhabitants of earth. All His works are true; His ways are just. He is able to humble those who walk in pride." I want to hear a candidate say that. "I just found my senses. God alone is God; He is sovereign."

God calls all people and all nations to give Him worship. Psalm 33:8, "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the nations of the world revere Him." Do you hear that? That's not a theocratic kingdom, that's every nation. Psalm 117:1 – and there are many of these: "Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol Him, all you peoples."

In the New Testament there's another little brief moment in the book of Acts in the 12th chapter, very much like Nebuchadnezzar with Herod Antipas who declared it Herod Day. You remember that? He declared Herod Day, and people were saying, "He's a god and not man. He's a god and not a man." The Lord struck him, he was eaten by worms and died; that was the end of Herod Day.

Psalm 72 God says, "Let all the nations bow down; let all the nations serve Me," all the nations.

Listen to Psalm 72: "Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness to the king's son. May he judge Your people with righteousness and Your afflicted with justice. Let the mountains bring peace to the people, and the hills, in righteousness. May he vindicate the afflicted of the people, save the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor. Let them fear You while the sun endures, as long as the moon, throughout all generations. In his days, may the righteous flourish in an abundance of peace."

That was David's prayer for Solomon, "Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness to the king's son," Solomon, "so he can judge Your people with righteousness. And then the mountains will bring peace, and the hills, and righteousness will flow." We're not seeing that.

Proverbs 16:12 says, "It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts, for a throne is established in righteousness," in righteousness defined by God's law. Proverbs 29:2 says, "When a wicked man rules, the people groan."

Second Samuel 23:3, listen to this: "He that rules over men must be righteous, ruling in the fear of God." That's universal. That's what we should

expect from a governor, a mayor, a judge, a senator, a congressman, the President. On the other hand, a leader without virtue is like a surgeon who is contaminated. God's standards are the only true criteria for all leaders, there are no others; and that's the full story, and that's the truth.

We don't see that in our world; we're watching a nation under judgment, under judgment. Starts with individuals: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Calls for individual salvation, right? Everyone of us needs to kiss the Son personally, and not a Judas kiss. But even nations, as we read in Psalm 2, need to kiss the Son.

First Corinthians 16:22 says, "If anyone doesn't love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be damned. If anyone doesn't love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be damned." That's the truth. That's the truth. And when not only your government isn't willing to say that, but even the preachers aren't willing to say that, that's evidence that the cycle of Romans 1 is well underway.

The only hope for us as a nation in the material sense, the temporal sense, the social sense, being able to get along with each other, which we hear about all the time – the only hope for this nation is to worship the one true God. That then needs to be the passion of every believer and every true preacher. We all need to call this nation to worship the one true God.

I'm looking out at you, but I have visions in my head of last Sunday when I was asked to speak at the Western Conservative Summit, the largest meeting of politically conservative people outside DC. And I was the odd man out, but I was there with Donald Trump, and Carly Fiorina, and Duck Dynasty people, and Sarah Palin and all kinds of people, and they were giving all kinds of political opinions, and I just essentially told them what I've just told you. You could have heard a pin drop, like, "What?"

I said at the end, "The only hope, the only hope is not somebody to reaffirm the Constitution; that would be good. The only hope is not to find

some economic strategy. We're under divine judgment. The only hope is preaching the gospel, and people repenting; and if enough people repent, then maybe we get some movement." Is there any hope? I mean that is the question.

A cycle of judgment has begun. The momentum is just really shocking, isn't it, the speed with which this thing is rolling. We're so far into the reprobate mind. But there is a word in Psalm 81, "I am the Lord your God. I am the Lord your God."

Let's emphasize: "I am the Lord your God. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it. But My people did not listen to My voice; they did not obey Me. So," here's the same line which is Romans 1, "I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, to walk after their own devices," lusts, et cetera. "Oh, that My people would listen to Me, would walk in My ways!"

Sometimes people say to me, "Why do you do nothing but exposit the Scripture?" That is a stupid question. You want my opinion; you want to line me up with everybody else? I only have one function in life. "Oh that My people would listen to Me and walk in My ways!" God says, "I would quickly subdue their enemies." That would be good, wouldn't it? "And then My hand would turn against their adversaries, and I would feed them with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy them." God says, "Look, you walk in My ways and I will protect you from the outside enemy, and I will cause you to flourish as an economy and as a people on the inside. But it's not going to happen unless you listen to My voice and walk in My ways."

America is burning. The fire was lit by the rejection of God, the rejection of Christ, the rejection of the Bible, the rejection of the gospel, the rejection of the church. America is full of idolatry and paganism. We're fast increasing in the percentage of people who call themselves atheists; they're essentially self-worshippers. America is burning; it has been set on fire by the rejection of God; but in judgment, God has begun to pour fuel, the fuel of His

wrath, on the fire, and the fire is consuming this country. Politicians, educators, and many pastors are fiddling while America burns.

The gospel, Christians, the only hope – preach and worship the one divine revelation of the one true God and His only Son, the all-glorious Christ. Only the one who is the Living Water can quench the flames. And Peter said this, 1 Peter 4:17, "Judgment must begin," where? "at the house of God." There's not going to be a revival, there's not going to be a repentance, there's not going to be a restoration of a nation until it starts in the church.

Let God have the final word and I'll finish. Isaiah 59 – you might want to open to that. I just think it might be very helpful to read a bit of Isaiah 59, close, hearing directly from God. Don't blame God, folks. Don't wonder why God hasn't done something.

Isaiah 59: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear." Don't blame God. Verse 2: "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." What sins? "Your hands are defiled with blood." Start with abortion.

"Your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken falsehood, your tongue mutters wickedness. No one sues righteously and no one pleads honestly. They trust in confusion and speak lies; they conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity. They hatch adder's eggs and weave the spider's web; he who eats of their eggs dies, and from that which is crushed a snake breaks forth." Even when they attack deception, as illustrated by a snake, it just produces another snake.

"Their webs will not become clothing." They weave webs to hide their sin, but they're transparent. "Nor will they cover themselves with works," their works. "Their works are works of iniquity, an act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, they hasten to shed innocent blood." We saw that this week.

"Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, devastation and destruction are in their highways. They do not know the way of peace, there's no justice in their tracks; they have made their paths crooked, whoever treads on them does not know peace. Therefore justice is far from them," everybody crying for justice.

"Righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, but behold, darkness, for brightness, but we walk in gloom. We grope along the wall like blind men, we grope like those who have no eyes; we stumble at midday as in the twilight, among those who are vigorous we're like dead men. All of us growl like bears, and moan sadly like doves; we hope for justice, but there is none, for salvation, but it is far from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us; and we know our iniquities: transgressing and denying the Lord, and turning away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving in and uttering from the heart lying words. Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the street, and uprightness cannot enter. Yes, truth is lacking; and he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey." They hate you if you're righteous.

"Now the Lord saw, and it was displeasing in His sight that there was no justice. And He saw that there was no man," no candidate to step forward. "He was astonished there was no one to intercede; then His own arm brought salvation to Him, and His righteousness upheld Him." This is a most magnificent picture.

"So God Himself put on righteousness like a breastplate, put on a helmet of salvation," this is where Paul borrows that language in Ephesians 6, "on His head; put on garments of vengeance for clothing, wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle. According to their deeds, so He will repay." He dresses in His military armor; God coming down in military armor. "He comes according to their deeds to repay them," verse 18. "Wrath to His adversaries,

recompense to His enemies. To the coastlands He will make recompense. So they will fear the name of the Lord from the west and His glory from the rising of the sun," that's the east, "and He will come like a rushing stream which the wind of the Lord drives."

I love this, "A Redeemer will come to Zion." Do you know what that's describing? That's describing what's described in Revelation 19; that's the return of Christ. We will have a ruler, the ruler we need, right? It will be Him.

Chapter 60: "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." Do you know what that is? That's Revelation 20; that's the millennial kingdom. We have to put our hope there, folks. Right? "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

[Prayer] Father, we thank You that You have shown us in Your Word how we can understand our times; and while we recognize the sadness of these things, we may not be able to hang onto the comfortable traditions and experiences that we have enjoyed on a temporal level. But at the same time, you are our refuge, and we are secure and we are safe. We are hidden with Christ in God, and we shall not be touched by any of this. You will gather us to Yourself before the horrors of the final judgment. But until that time, we will see the cycle of judgment of Romans 1 going on. And maybe it's a shock to see it in this nation, but this is a graphic illustration of Romans 1, because this nation was founded on the knowledge of the true God. And so here we are; when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God. The foolish imaginations have catapulted this nation into judgment.

The only answer on, a personal level, is Christ and the gospel and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to those who believe on a personal level; that's the only answer. And on a national level, the only answer is that

there are enough true believers to influence this culture, to call it back from such severe judgment. And we know what the call has to be: "Oh that My people would listen to My voice, that they would walk in My ways."

Lord, may You raise up many who will proclaim Your Word, and many who will listen and walk in Your ways. For Your glory we bring these things to You, in Christ's name. Amen.

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"God and Government" by John MacArthur

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