

October 2011

Dear neighbours,

3000 years ago when David became king over the Middle East it was his earnest prayer that, "there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets. Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD" (Psalm 144 14-15).

Even in those days there were burglars, rioters and protestors.

There have always been things in most lands which have brought people on to the streets in protest. If peaceful protests succeed in getting things done then well and good. Often what starts out peacefully turns nasty. Sometimes there are those who deliberately set out to cause trouble, possibly in an attempt to bring down the government or even destroy the wellbeing of the land.

In our recent disturbances what hit home most was the looting - that otherwise ordinary citizens should be so tempted as to take advantage of the situation to grab what they could. It seemed to be people from all walks of life.

Many papers carried articles at the time about the cause; most diagnoses and suggestions to prevent such things were all right as far as they went. Putting things right is not easy.

There will actually be no cure unless we go to the root of the problem. It is, at heart, spiritual. The problem of the human race, with its cure, is set out in the Bible. No better explanation of mankind's situation has ever been given. The principles behind all current behavioural issues are there.

If you read the early chapters of the Bible you will see that rebellion against God is the cause of all our trouble. Immediately you read those early chapters of Genesis that rebellion may well surface within yourself, perhaps to your surprise. You may well want to fight within yourself and resist saying, "There is no God. I do not believe in God." That is the first matter to be dealt with.

The second, which was the problem of Adam and Eve, was not that they didn't believe God existed but that they wanted their own way, not His – so they disobeyed Him and chose to believe Satan's alternative instead. The punishment was the cursing of the earth and individual death, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3.19).

To get a flavour of how deep that disobedience now runs in our society and in our own individual hearts, read the 10 commandments which I have listed below. The reaction of many is to say, "Scrap the Bible," but of course that doesn't alter the truth it contains. No Bible simply means that the truth which would help us is denied us.

The commandment which affects looting is, "thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20.15) – the eighth commandment. Everyone who steals, in any way, shape, or form must face God about it and its consequences. You and I may not want to hear about it but it cannot be escaped. We think, perhaps, that as long as we're not caught it will be OK. God knows everything, so it won't be OK.

Now the law in the Old Testament is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3.24). "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3.17). None of us has kept the law perfectly, so we all need the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The third matter is the realisation of wrongdoing, deep-seated and often repeated, in the sight of God. Only then will you appreciate the need of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even so, you may well experience a struggle within to repent and forsake sin. This is a universal human experience.

But there is no salvation other than through Jesus Christ for you and me as individuals according to the Bible. And no hope of establishing a happy nation other than many being similarly saved.

Now I am sure that you can see the consequences for our society in rejecting such things. If a generation arises that throws off belief in God, this is what always happens:- No God, no judgment to come, no account of our lives to be given after death. If no account is to be given, then each person can do what they like. What you want may be mostly good maybe, but when the crunch comes, if there is no God, in your opinion, you will do what you want even if it is not right by the Bible standard.

If each person does what they like, then some will loot; others will do other things.

This godless, downward spiral has been the destruction of all empires in turn – the ancient Babylonian, the Greek, and the Roman. We are, in fact, witnessing our own nation disintegrating. There are those who would like that, perhaps. We should not encourage it by our own lifestyle.

The laws of a nation represent its official stance in the sight of God. Though not all citizens are believers, Christian laws bring God's blessing upon the nation as nation. As individuals, whether we like it or not, we shall all give account to God for every sin according to the Biblical record.

These are God's 10 commandments for the well-being of the world, of a nation, of a society and of individuals. They embrace all cultures. They are 10 things which must never be broken. It is appalling to break one once, in the sight of God, let alone thousands of times. But there is pardon in Christ, that God would grant unto us, that we..."might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1 74-75).

When such a turning to God happens on a massive scale it changes the face of society. There have been Great Awakenings (as they are known) or Revivals in our land when whole communities, hundreds of them, have been transformed to the extent that no soldiers or police were required to maintain order.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make any graven image...thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land...

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness (lie).

Thou shalt not covet.