

# Our Nation Laid in the Balances

## *National Prayer Day*

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Psalter 218: 1, 2  
Scripture: Jeremiah 9:1-16  
Text: Jeremiah 9:9  
Psalter 441  
Psalter 4  
America

Dear congregation, it is good that we have an opportunity to come together for an annual National Prayer Day service. Today we are called to consider the moral and spiritual fiber of our nation and of ourselves as citizens who either contribute to or detract from the well-being of our country. When we are called upon to examine our nation in the light of Scripture, we shall find, as you well know, that as a people we are laid in the balances and found wanting. Moreover, we have to bear in mind that we are not mere spectators looking upon this nation. Every sin which cripples this land has its beginning in our natural, corrupt, fallen hearts. We are involved; we are part of the problem. And only by grace can we ever be a part of the solution.

Our nation is at a critical juncture. We are on the verge of spiritual, moral, and financial collapse. Only the intervening grace of God can help us and deliver us, and so we turn to the living God as our only hope. We want to consider not only the plague that is upon us, but also the only cure of that dreadful plague. Our text words are Jeremiah 9:9, “*Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*”

With God’s help we will consider *Our Nation, the United States of America, Laid in the Balances*. We will see:

1. The sad condition of our nation
2. The impending judgment upon our nation
3. The only hope for our nation.

*1. The Sad Condition of our Nation*

In English grammar there is such a thing that we call a *rhetorical question*. A rhetorical question is a question you ask that does not really need an answer because the question itself implies the answer. Our text is a rhetorical question. Jeremiah has listed in eight or nine verses the great and gross sins of the people of Israel. The conclusion can only be judgment if there is no national repentance. And so when the Lord asks this question in our text, we do not have to wonder what the answer is. The answer is in the question: "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

God says as it were "This nation—the nation that I have delivered from Egypt with an outstretched arm; the nation for whom I have divided the Red Sea and led them through the wilderness by a cloud and a pillar of fire; this nation that I fed with manna and gave water from a rock to drink, and planted in a good land; this nation that has often rebelled and I have been merciful again and again to them; this nation which is now worshipping Baalim—shall I not be avenged upon such a nation as this?"

God fulfilled this rhetorical question. Israel did not listen to Jeremiah. She filled her cup of iniquity and God sent Nebuchadnezzar to conquer the land, to destroy the temple and city of Jerusalem. The temple was burned, the land was desolated, and the majority of the citizens were killed. Survivors were led as captives to a distant land. God was avenged of such a nation as this.

We have to consider, congregation, that the parallels that our nation has with Old Testament Israel are both striking and disturbing. We are also a highly favored nation. Even today we are the envy of most nations but like Israel we are a sinful, ungrateful, immoral people in the midst of prosperity. We are an ungodly people despite the godly roots our forefathers have established when they landed on the shores of this nation. They wrote in their well-known *Mayflower Pact*: "The primary purpose of settling in this new land is for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith." Ought not we be filled

with both sorrow and joy today—joy that we had such a rich beginning; sorrow over where we are now at? Today we have judges who have decided that the ten commandments cannot be placed on the classroom walls of a public school because some children might be offended by their contents. We have given in to pluralism; we have surrendered our Christian moorings so that most historians now speak of our age as post-Christian America.

Things have gone from bad to worse. Our beginnings were good. Godly laymen like John Winthrop, as well as godly preachers like Thomas Shepard, Thomas Hooker, John Cotton, Peter Bulkeley, and Thomas Cobbett had great impact on the morality of the people. It was not long, however, before the so-called Enlightenment blew over from France and took deep root in this land. It espoused the child of humanism; humanism in turn fostered pluralism and pragmatism, such that God and His law and Word are excluded from the classroom and the courtroom.

Today we have the full outgrowth of secular humanism. Morality is at an all time low. I read only yesterday that sixty-two percent of children born to black women are illegitimate. Thirty years ago it was twenty-one percent. It has tripled in thirty years. But the same article said that thirty years ago among white women illegitimacy was at seven percent, but today it is at twenty-one percent—also a triple jump. Among whites it is exactly where it was at thirty years ago among blacks. If immorality continues to proceed at this pace, the majority of children born in this country will be born illegitimately.

Financially, our nation is a disaster. We are 4.6 trillion dollars in debt, which amounts to eighteen thousand dollars for every person in our nation. There are 4.6 billion people on the earth, and our nation alone owes 4.6 trillion dollars—one thousand dollars for every person on the face of the earth.

Spiritually, we are faring no better. A few weeks ago, when I was flying out to Iowa, I happened to sit next to a minister who is involved in Reformed radio ministry. He

told me that there were 16,000 “Christian” radio stations in North America, of which less than one hundred ever present anything which resembles the Reformed, Calvinistic faith. The vast majority of them proclaim largely one form of Arminianism or another. So this nation is being inundated with Arminianism—man can accept Jesus; man has a free will. Arminianism was practically foreign to our soil until the 1820s, when Charles Finney happened upon the scene and developed a man-structured, man-organized revivalism. Since that day, America has no longer seen any major Spirit-filled revivals. The 1730s, 1740s, and the early 1800s, sometimes called the first and second awakenings, were the bright spots, but they all happened in the context of Calvinism, not Arminianism. The greatest missionaries of this land’s history and the greatest fruits upon preaching have been the result of solid, biblical, Calvinistic exposition, not Arminian exposition. And what does that say to us? Well, that says to us that there is a tremendous burden resting upon all of us; a tremendous responsibility to swim against the stream and to declare a God of sovereign grace. We desperately need biblical Calvinistic preachers in this land to proclaim to young and old through preaching, the printed word, and on radio, that God is the living God, that man is depraved, but that God is able and willing to save the greatest of sinners out of free and sovereign grace.

Materialism is at an all-time high. Covetousness is the mother of many sins in our nation. Pride and self-emulation abound; pride is encouraged. And what must we say of the heinous practice of *abortion*? Let us not grow hardened to the fact that we have killed with legal governmental sanction more than twenty five million unborn babies in the last generation—as much as the entire population of Canada! The consequences of this baby holocaust will come back to haunt us, if the Lord tarries. Soon there will be more older people who need help than we know how to cope with, and not enough young ones to care for them, and it will be our own fault. And yet we go on. God shouts with a megaphone through a variety of national judg-

ments, and yet we continue to rush headlong into sin. We have become a national Sodom and Gomorrah. We go on flirting with euthanasia. We go on blatantly in Sabbath desecration, pursuing our own desires on the Lord's day. In the last decade, for the first time in the history of America, the majority of our citizens no longer attend any church on a regular basis. God's Word is joked about, even among people who name the name of Christ. Swearing is a common everyday thing. Parental rights are increasingly denied. Worldliness—the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life—abounds; worldly music, worldly parties, worldly friendships, and worldly reading material get worse. Our nation is worshipping at the shrine of organized sports. Some even in conservative Reformed circles get deeply involved in watching sports on television, perhaps never stopping to think these men are making millions of dollars; it is a fraud.

We have lost our sense of scriptural integrity. We submit to no authority. The means of grace are abandoned; religious duties are neglected; prayer is something done for a few minutes a day at best. Ninety-six percent of Americans today are convinced that they will not go to hell.

We are a nation just like Israel. We are living in the midst of deceit. We are deceiving ourselves financially, we are deceiving ourselves morally, we are deceiving ourselves spiritually. We are saying to ourselves, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

Where are the fathers who are busy instructing their children in the Scriptures? Where are the homes that engage in daily, conscientious family worship? Where are the people, even in our midst, who genuinely wrestle in the inner closet for our nation? So much is disappearing. Our own congregations have seen encouraging increases of spiritual life on the one hand, but discouraging developments on the other—discouraging when some take their Christianity so lightly, and do not live it out in daily life; discouraging when our talk and our dress and our walk do not reflect the sobriety with which God's Word calls us to walk through this Mesech here below; discour-

aging when some among us continue to persist in habitually involving themselves in various forms of entertainment in the media world.

Today Christianity by and large has baptized itself into materialism and humanism and “selfism.” Many do not come to church as a family any more. They do not grieve with those who grieve, nor rejoice with those who rejoice, but they come to church saying, “What’s in it for *me*?” There is little bearing of each others’ burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ. Christianity in America today is three thousand miles wide, fifteen hundred miles high, but only one inch deep. We are shallow, we are backslidden, and God can say of us as citizens of this nation: “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up my children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger; they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint” (Isa. 1:2-5).

### *2. Impending Judgment for our Nation*

Decay is everywhere; we have forgotten the Lord God. Why should not the Lord be avenged on such a nation as ours? Is it not a rhetorical question? Is not the Lord already on His way with divine judgment? God’s patience will come to an end. Ecclesiastes 8:11 says, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” That is the picture of our nation, but it won’t be its picture much longer because we are destroying ourselves.

The pattern of nations almost always follows a five-step process. There is the *infancy* time where the nation bands together in organization; then there is the *growth* period; then the time of *maturity and prosperity*; then the

time of *decay*; and finally the time of *destruction*. That was the pattern of the world's mighty empires—Assyria, Persia, Macedonia, and Rome. Our nation appears to be at the end of the fourth step. We do not have to be prophets to say that; it is obvious. We are filled with decay, we are on the verge of destruction, and the Lord is asking in our text for us to lay before ourselves this question: “How shall I spare you, United States of America, for your sins? Would it be consistent with the nature and the glory of My Name and My government to spare such a nation? Do not the holiness of My nature, the honor of My government, the rectitude of My law, and the truth of My Word compel Me to destroy such a nation as this?” Ought not every mouth in the United States of America—yours and mine also—be stopped, and the whole country be united in declaring that God would be righteous and just to abandon us altogether, to destroy us as a people, to let all the crops rot in the field this year, and to let us have our financial, moral, and spiritual debts collapse upon our heads? We have asked for divine destruction.

Perhaps you ask: Is there then no hope? Not in this nation and not in us—only in the grace of God. And that is what we will consider in our last thought after we sing.

### *3. The Only Hope for our Nation*

We have squandered our rich heritage, we have spoiled what our forebears have striven for, and now we must say in the words of Lamentations 5:16, “The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!” We have turned our backs to God and clouds of darkness hang above us. Everything seems to be on the verge of collapse; the future seems to be hopeless. And if you look at our text, that is what you must think.

Is there then nothing in our text that gives any hope? Look again, congregation. “Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the LORD.” Notice that God uses His covenant name Yahweh, the special name of the living Jehovah who will remain faithful and true to His covenant. There is still hope. Our only hope is in the

name of the Almighty God, that God who still says to us as we are about to slip into destruction, “Only acknowledge your iniquities and turn back to the Lord your God for I will yet have mercy upon you.” I am convinced, congregation, that if this nation would cry mightily to God as we read in 2 Chronicles 7:14, repent of our sins, take upon ourselves moral and financial and spiritual responsibility, and beg for mercy, that this land could yet be restored to its greatness. It is our fault, but there is hope *in the Lord God*, in His covenant name, the LORD. There is hope if God visits us with covenantal judgments; there is hope if He visits us with covenantal mercies; there is hope as long as that covenant-keeping God does not stop dealing altogether with such a nation as we are. That is what God said to Israel in Deuteronomy, did He not? He said as it were: The greatest punishment that I can ever bring upon you as a people or as a nation is when I stop sending you both My mercies and My judgments, and leave you over to yourselves. The greatest judgment God can bring upon a nation is to stop visiting that nation. Will God stop visiting us altogether this year? Next year? Are His present judgments an open testimony that He is giving us one or two final calls to repent, and then He will let us be? “Turn ye, turn ye, O house of Israel—oh congregation, oh America—for why will ye die?”

Oh congregation, it is a serious thing to be a human being; a serious thing to have a soul; to have time on our hands; to be journeying to eternity—especially to be journeying to eternity without our sins having been washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ. Oh my friend, if our sins are not washed away, I tremble to say it but I have to say it, then we are but adding to the large debt of national sin! Oh, I call to you in the name of God, repent, sinner, before the vengeance of God descends also upon you and your family. Hear the call of God before it is too late. Ye must be born again!

But there is hope! Hope for the unsaved? Yes. In what? In God, in the overtures of His gospel grace, and in His open declarations that He is willing to save lost sin-



ners! It is not man's word that says, "Seek ye the Lord," but it is God's Word! God says, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him (not just God's people) while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him *return* unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." What we need today is national repentance; we need thousands upon thousands to bow in individual repentance in their own homes. We need fathers to call their children to repentance. We need mothers to bow in the dust in the presence of their children. We need husbands and wives to repent before God together in secret and individually. We need children to call out to God, "O God be merciful to me a sinner."

The solution to all our problems lies only in the God of grace granting true and godly repentance. Our duty is to get on our knees like Nineveh, to believe that the time is short and the judgment is ripe, and to put our hope in the Lord God. The prayers of God's people can only stay the hand of God so long. There came a time when there were not enough petitioners in Sodom and Gomorrah to keep back the judgment. And God said in Jeremiah 15:1, "Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth." Is that day coming, when the Moseses and Samuels of this land, that is, those who are still interceding between the porch and the temple for Almighty God and for the glory of His Name in the midst of this nation, become so few and far between and the population so large that God would say, "I will not spare this nation any more"? Oh congregation, it is a National Day of Prayer. God calls us to pray to Him as the almighty, faithful, covenant-keeping God.

What must we then pray for? We must pray in the first place that God may send godly preachers, for not only does judgment begin at the house of God, but also revival begins at the house of God. Revival in church history always begins with those who fear the Lord being aroused

in their own spiritual life, and storming the kingdom of heaven and taking the kingdom of heaven by violence. That is the pattern of revival. Revival begins with the children of God, particularly with bold and courageous servants of God who dare to declare death in Adam and life in Christ, and the need for repentance. We need godly preachers. We need to pray for revival—revival of historic Calvinism. The books we sell and read are needed throughout this whole land. We need to get them out. We need to pray for open doors to reach the millions of the lost—those in our own families, in our own congregation, but also in our city, our state, our nation—with the message of the gospel. We need to pray for godly politicians, for godly business people, for godly educators, for godly doctors and nurses. We need to pray for missionaries, for mission workers, for evangelists—yes, for people who are willing to lay down their lives, to labor for the gospel's sake, to make a difference in this world in which so many are just padding their bank accounts and abandoning the spiritual needs of their fellow man. We need to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We need to pray for revival of experimental Calvinism—not only the outward shell of the doctrines but the inward living essence. We need to pray that sinners may experience sound and true conversions that may evidence the marks and fruits of grace which Scripture expounds.

We need to *pray*. Prayer is the *greatest weapon* at our disposal. "Prayer," said Octavius Winslow, "is the pulse of the renewed soul, and the constancy of its beat is the test and measure of spiritual life." As the poet William Cowper wrote:

*Restraining prayer we cease to fight;  
Prayer makes the Christian's armour bright;  
And Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees.*

But we need more than prayer. The boat must be rowed with two oars—*prayer and work*: work, not in our own strength, but work that is mixed with prayer; work

under God, work in obedience to God. We do not have much to say about the way things are in our nation if we never sit down and write letters to our political leaders on the moral issues of the day. We do not have much to say as a citizen who contributes to this nation, do we, if we have never done anything in our local neighborhood to promote the gospel and biblical morality. We do not have much to say if we never speak about the one thing needful to those with whom we work; or have never given out any tracts or books.

Let me ask you this question: *What difference would it make in the world today if you were not here, and if I were not here?* How many people would not hear the gospel? How many people would not be lovingly—I stress *lovingly*—confronted with their sin? What difference would it make if you were not here? We must *work*. And work does not always mean *talking*; work also means *walking*, being examples. Congregation, do you realize that every one of us is being watched by the world? I had someone today say to me that they were “kind of interested” in coming to our church, but not yet convinced to come. I asked, “Why don’t you come?” And she said, “I cannot bring myself to do it yet; maybe some day.” I said, “Why not next week?” She said, “Because I cannot get over the impression that you are a church which doesn’t offer hope.” I said, “No hope! We preach, my dear friend, the only hope there is!” “Well,” she said, “but from what I have *seen*, I am not sure.” My heart began to bleed. *No hope!* She is wrong, of course, but what gave her that impression? What did she see, what did she hear? Oh my dear friend, we are a church that preaches no hope in man—for there is no hope in man and we have not to be embarrassed to preach that there is no hope in man—but God forbid that we preach that there is no hope in God! His Name is the LORD. All hope is in Him. His Name is Hope with a capital “H.” He is Hope—Christ is hope and hope is Christ; it is His core nature. But if we are silent about that hope, or worse yet are negative toward that hope, we bring a blight upon the cause of Jesus Christ.

Finally, let me say to you, dear child of God: To you belongs the future. Even in wars and rumors of wars, to you belongs the future. "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (Mt. 24:6). Today the end is not yet, but ask God, dear believer, that the rest of your life may be wholly consecrated, whoever you may be, to God, for the cause and the sake of the gospel. Pray that God may make you useful; that He may bless you and let you be a blessing, because that is what this land desperately needs—children of God who do not belong to themselves but to the faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, and who lay down their lives in adversity and in prosperity for the glorious coming of the kingdom of God in the church and in the world.

May God have mercy and forgiveness upon us, you and me, and upon this land. "To us belongeth confusion of face. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him" (Dan. 9:8-9). "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence" (Isa. 64:1). AMEN.