

"Making Sense Of The Nonsense"

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Call from Faithe last night around 10:00. "Be instant in season and out of season"! Several weeks ago I wrote a daily encouragement message by this title. Pastor wrote: "Your blog today is so true and to the point that I feel like weeping for our beloved nation that has drifted so far. Bro. Steve this would be a wonderful message that you could preach to our congregation sometime as the Lord directs of course. God bless you for putting this truth out unashamedly."

So here goes. Please seek to take note regarding the main points (six of them). A link to the entire message will be posted on the daily encouragement website after I get home today and I also would be happy to make copies for any who do not have web access. In fact I have several with me I will distribute upon request. I urge you to follow along in your Bibles but have the Scripture in my notes and will be moving along at a pace to get through so it may be most feasible to write down the reference since I use a lot of Scripture. But let's all turn to Daniel 2:20-22.

"Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding" (Jeremiah 3:15). "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him" (Daniel 2:20-22). "The sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do" (1 Chronicles 12:32). "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3).

I see Pastor's message today was to be on "Suicide" Os Guinness "A Free People's Suicide: Sustainable Freedom and the American Future"

Do you ever say, "This doesn't make any sense" or hear some recent news report and declare, "I just can't believe what I just heard; that's nonsense!" Or like me do you say, "It just can't get any crazier than this"? But it most certainly will, likely in ways we can hardly imagine. I recall a book written about twenty years ago with a great title, "Nonsense is Destroying America."

I regularly visit a website that compiles news stories (with links to the source report) which reveals the nonsense that is sweeping our land. I have to be careful in the sense that although I want to be informed on current events and the state of affairs I don't want to be in despair and the accumulation of sheer nonsense can be despairing!

It sure seems to me this nonsense is rapidly increasing and I have been considering this matter and seeking the Lord in trying to make some spiritual sense of all the nonsense. Today we will consider a selection of Scripture truths that I believe can inform us in understanding this matter.

In demonstrating this increasing nonsense there is no shortage of illustrative material on many fronts. We heard a report about an elementary school in Wisconsin which just had a "gender bending day" requesting that boys come to school dressed as girls and girls dressed

as boys. Some parents (although not all) were very upset. Apparently as far as student participation it was a total flop but some of the foolish teachers went along with it, even performing a line dance in front of the school dressed in drag.

I consider my devoted teachers in public school in the sixties like Mrs. Still, my third grade teacher and can't imagine they would have ever dreamed of this happening in the once dignified profession of teaching. How far we have digressed since the days when my pastor, who is just several years older than I, went to a rural school here in Pennsylvania and recalls the Bible being read in class.

Probably related to this, although I am certainly no expert on the various sexual perversions amongst us these days, Ester recently went on a trip to the Delaware shore with some friends on Monday. They had stopped at a WaWa to use the restroom when they encountered a man using the women's restroom! It upset Ester and her friends but I suppose he had some kind of "right" to use whatever bathroom he chose. I have read that this is coming. In fact on the website just mentioned a prominent congresswoman from CA (former speaker of the House) advocates just making all public restrooms Unisex!!! Or how about this. Voter ID laws are

So how do we make any sense of this slide into nonsense? Let us consider six factors today that may give us understanding and discernment but I am sure there are more:

1) Loss of generational spiritual capital.

"All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel" (Judges 2:10). The first generation referred to in this verse were the people who lived during Joshua's lifetime. Some of them would have remembered Moses, the crossing of the Jordan, and Jericho, and all of them the settlement in the Promised land, Canaan. They heard Joshua give his final sermon challenging them to serve the Lord. The next generation after them "did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel." The text continues to record that this generation, "did evil in the sight of the Lord, served the Baals and forsook the Lord" (Judges 2:11,12).

Although making no attempt to depict a precise parallel between this verse and today's cultural war I nevertheless believe there is a parallel. I grew up in the years when Jesus Christ and the Church were still respected by most even those who made no claim to following Him or being church people. There was a general Bible knowledge as illustrated by my pastor's recollection of Bible reading in class. Presently God is openly mocked and several organizations are bent on eradicating Christian faith in America.

I have a Gideon's New Testament given to my uncle during World War 2 with this inscription from President Roosevelt, "As Commander-in-Chief I take pleasure in commending the reading of the Bible to all who serve in the armed forces of the United States. Throughout the centuries men of many faiths and diverse origins have found in the Sacred Book words of wisdom, counsel and inspiration. It is a fountain of strength and now, as always, an aid in attaining the highest aspirations of the human soul." Now there is a relentless push by the godless to remove the Bible's influence from every sphere of life with a special focus on the military. I recently heard of an officer reprimanded for merely having a Bible on his desk.

As generations that were raised under some form of a Christian worldview pass on and their spiritual capital is forgotten expect to see the nonsense increase exponentially.

Related to this:

2) On the national scale in my view for many years now far too many pastors, regardless of denomination, have neglected preaching the whole counsel of God. Of course there have been and are exceptions to this. The call of the minister is to "preach the word" 2 Timothy 4:2 The verse goes on and states, "be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires."

I candidly admit in my pastoral ministry I was negligent in the Biblical call to reprove and rebuke. It's not a delightful expression of care and people may get angry and even leave over it but that's what a part of God's call is to the faithful minister of the Gospel!!! As God's people we need our toes stepped on some by Biblical truth and sometimes we need a firm rebuke publically in preaching and at times privately. May God give us hearts to appreciate these expressions of care.

Illustration, seeing a child playing near a cliff with parents preoccupied with piddling on their cell phones.

We need those like:

- Samuel confronting Saul 1 Samuel 15 "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"
- Nathan, who confronted King David, "Thou art the man" 2 Samuel 12:7
- John the Baptist confronting Herod "For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." Matthew 14:4

Paul stated to the Ephesians elders "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). In the Old Testament false prophets were popular preaching peace, peace when there was no peace. "They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying, 'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14) An interesting obscure prophet was Micaiah, 2 Chronicles 18 Ahab hated him but knew he was the one telling the truth!

We need the pulpits of America with Shepherds like the prophet Jeremiah spoke of, "Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding" (Jeremiah 3:15). During these times we need to especially pray for our spiritual shepherds that they will stay faithful to God and His Word, being shepherds after God's heart who will indeed lead us in knowledge and understanding. God continues to give wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding.

Although we are not pastors in the local church sense we see this verse as very instructive in regard to what we aspire to in our daily teaching role on Daily Encouragement Net. Sadly in many churches the teaching role has diminished to such an extent that this is needed.

We need leaders with the spirit of the Sons of Issachar who in their age "understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do". We need discerning leaders who understand

our times with knowledge of what the Church should do. And we can all pray for the Holy Spirit to lead us into His truth and be like these sons of Issachar.

3) Layers of concessions to Biblical standards through the years that were so often not a result of earnest and very deliberate Bible study respecting the counsel of elders that may lead to a change in belief about an issue but instead by the world.

Illustration from our own history in the Brethren in Christ. How many of you have heard of Eric Liddell? Chariots of Fire? What was his issue? We are now facing as a culture a concession that I earnestly believe will be a cliff of Biblical faithfulness, the very definition of marriage. We need convictions like Martin Luther at the Reformation: I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen.

Once a concession is made on one issue, the next becomes easier and easier. Concessions may be changes which are not necessarily bad but need to be made with much prayer, counsel-seeking and studied deliberation. If I am going to error on a matter error on the side of safe and right!

4) When truth is rejected error (the lie) inevitable fills the void and God "gives over" Romans 8:28 "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper."

Three instances of "God gave them over" in Romans 1:

1. "God gave them over in the lusts of their heart" (Romans 1:24).
2. "God gave them over to degrading passions" (Romans 1:26).
3. "God gave them over to a depraved mind" (Romans 1:28).

Man's response to the truth of God as taught in Romans.

1. "Suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18).
2. "Exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (Romans 1:25).
3. "Those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil" (Romans 2:8).

5) Evil is called good, and good is called evil.

"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!" (Isaiah 5:20,21).

A verse I often use comes to mind. Consider this ancient condemnation from God: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil." We are seeing this before our very eyes as our culture increasingly rejects God and His ways; evil is being called good and good is being called evil.

In an article titled "Normalizing Deviance" Cal Thomas writes, "A University of Maryland student friend of mine tells me one of her classes last semester discussed 'the normalization of deviance.' In an age when what is normal is determined by culture and opinion polls and when "orthodoxy" is regarded as something to be avoided, deviance has ceased to have meaning." That which had been considered sensible is now considered insensible and what had been insensible is now considered sensible!

6) A nation loses its sense and discernment altogether. This prior to judgment.

"They are a nation without sense, there is no discernment in them. If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be!" (Deuteronomy 32:28-29).

In Deuteronomy Moses is preaching his final sermon prior to his death. "They are a nation without sense, there is no discernment in them. If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be!" In this verse Moses is prophetically speaking of the future apostasy of the people of Israel, which culminated with their Babylonian exile some 800 years after Moses spoke these words.

This description could very well be a description of America today. Without the firm foundation of God's Word we are on sinking sand. America is in a great state of confusion. With recent events and pending decisions it's no longer a slippery slope but more like a crumbling cliff. The consequences may not be immediate, but they are certain. May the Lord help us to be "wise in our understanding and discern what the end will be." 32:29).

The foolish nonsense will surely continue and get worse to the extent people fail to submit to God. "The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray" (1 Peter 4:7).

Ending the message with hope! "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3). So then what can the righteous do?

Os Guinness states, "I'm reading now about people who lived at an age when the world they knew had gone. Daniel—after centuries in the Promised Land, living as the chosen people, Israelites are in a pagan empire with Jerusalem destroyed. Daniel serves God even in that pagan empire. We've got to engage with faithfulness at the very heart of power, still."

Psalm 11 gives at least three contemplative answers to the question, "What can the righteous do?"

1. We must recognize that the Lord alone is our Refuge (Psalm 11:1).
2. We must realize that God is in His holy temple observing the sons of men (Psalm 11:4). As often say "God is on the Throne!"
3. We must recall the glorious truth of His character "for the LORD is righteous, He loves justice; upright men will see His face" (Psalm 11:7).

So many other calls to hope in the Bible but remember this: "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them" (Hebrews 11:13-16).

We must remember that no person, law, legislation, or imposed ideology can remove what God has revealed to our hearts. We need to know Him and His Word and stand faithful for what we believe regardless of how unpopular such a stand may be or what it will lead to.