# Our National Crisis

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[0:00] Thank you, men. If you have your Bibles, I want you to turn to Proverbs chapter 14. Proverbs! Chapter 14. It seems we're reminded every day of the crises that fall upon America.

Just a little good news here and there, it seems like, is all we get. And sometimes that bad news hits close to home. Some of it we simply read about and watch from afar. Is America really in a crisis? Or are these just things that you deal with and you ought to expect from time to time among fallible people? Well, you should definitely expect the type of things we see on the news to happen. But yes, I do believe we are in a crisis. Our crisis is not the economy.
Whether it feels good at your house now or not, they tell us that things are pretty good. People are buying more. People are borrowing more. People are blowing more than they ever have.
Our government has borrowed from our children's children and individual household debt is at an all-time high. We have a situation. And I don't know all the answers to that. I can teach you what the Word of God says about stewardship and the importance to give to the Lord first and to be stewards of what God gives you. But I don't know how all this is going to pan out. I do know this, that our nation's national crisis is not the economy. Our national crisis is not the wars. And I say wars because between the Middle East and Russia, they give us new ammo every day on what's happening. No pun intended.
But I mean, you know, there's so much going on in the world. We have military personnel spread out throughout the world, particularly in the Middle East. And we have countries that we know are fighting.
[2:24] And we have some that we know that we're going to have to fight or at least protect. And then some that we have to watch like a hawk. And when I think about the sacrifices that so many families are making so that men and women can go to work protecting our country from the rest of the world, it makes me glad to live in a land where people sign up most of the time anyway in our history out of their own free will, willing to serve, to protect us. With so much volatility, it can be overwhelming. And people often want to know if this is the end. When you see what's going on overseas, does this mean this is the end? Or is it merely the beginning of birth pains, as Jesus put it? I don't know. And you know what?

The guys that are selling the books that you're buying, they don't know either. They don't. So what I would encourage you to do is keep your eyes on Jesus. And I believe that if you're here today and you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, that there's not a better day in your life than today to secure your eternity with the Lord. And I'd love to help you with that process in just a few minutes. I'd love that. But the reality is we don't know all those things.
Luke chapter 21 verse 28 says this, now when these things begin to take place, the kind of things you see, straighten up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near. We have some situations, situations. But I can tell you that our national crisis is not war conflicts.
Our national crisis is not drugs. Drugs are a real problem. And, but the reality is it's the source. It's not the source of a crisis. It's the fruit of the crisis. People that take illegal drugs do it because something is missing inside. They either need to be accepted. They need to escape.
They need to find relief because there's a problem of the heart. But the drug problem in America is just a fruit of a different problem.
[4:59] And may I be blunt, the drug that affects most homes in America, that affects the most homes in America, is alcohol.

Christian, stay away from it. If you can use it and it not be a stumbling block for you, your use of it is easily a stumbling block for others.

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So why be compromised? Don't be a hindrance to others. Drugs of all sorts are a problem, but drugs are not our greatest national crisis.
Our national crisis is not gun control. On April the 20th, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold walked into Columbine High School in Colorado and murdered 13 students and a teacher.
Ten died in the library that day before both guys took their own life in that same library. They had intended to primarily blow up the school with several homemade bombs that were planted within the school, but they failed to go off.
[6:26] And over 20 people were injured in the gun bite. Columbine became the catch word for school shootings. At that time, it was the greatest school shooting, the largest school shooting, the most mass school shooting that had ever taken place.

And the immediate response to that was gun control. one of the students that was killed that day was named Rachel Scott. And in the aftermath of that tragedy, her father, Daryl Scott, spoke to Congress to make clear what the real problem was.
And I want you to listen to part of what he said. Since the dawn of creation, there has been both good and evil in the heart of men and women. We all contain the seeds of good kindness or the seeds of violence.
The death of my wonderful daughter, Rachel Joy Scott, and the deaths of that heroic teacher and the other 11 children who died must not be in vain. Their blood cries out for answers.
The first recorded act of violence was when Cain slew his brother Abel in the field. The villain was not the club that he used.
[7:41] Neither was it the NCA or the National Club Association. The true killer was Cain. And the reason for the murder could only be found in Cain's heart.

In the days that followed the Columbine tragedy, I was amazed at how quickly fingers began to be pointed at groups such as the NRA. And I'm not a member of the NRA. I'm not a hunter. I don't even own a gun.
I'm not here to represent or defend the NRA because I don't believe they are responsible for my daughter's death. Therefore, I don't believe that they need to be defended. If I believed they had anything to do with Rachel's murder, I would be their strongest opponent.
I'm here today to declare that Columbine was not just a tragedy, it was a spiritual event that should be forcing us to look at where the real blame lies. Much of the blame lies here in this room.
Much of the blame lies behind the pointing fingers of the accusers themselves. God is what we need. He goes on to say, men and women are three-part beings.
[8:40] We all consist of body, soul, and spirit. When we refuse to acknowledge a third part of our makeup, we create a void that allows evil, prejudice, and hatred to rush in and wreak havoc.

Spiritual influences were present within our educational systems for much of our nation's history. Many of our major colleges began as theological seminaries. This is a historic fact.
What's happened to us as a nation? We have refused to honor God and in doing so, we opened up the doors to hatred and violence. And when something as terrible as Columbine's tragedy occurs, politicians immediately look for a scapegoat such as the NRA.
They immediately seek to pass more restrictive laws that contribute to erode away our personal and private liberties. We don't need more restrictive laws. Eric and Dylan would not have been stopped by metal detectors.
No amount of gun laws can stop someone who spends months planning this type of massacre. The real villain lies within our own hearts. Political posturing and restrictive legislation are not the answers.
[9:41] The young people of our nation hold the key. There's a spiritual awakening taking place that will not be quilched. He goes on to say, we need a change of heart and a humble acknowledgement that this nation was founded on the principles of simple trust in God.

As my son Craig laid under that table in the school library and saw his two friends murdered before his very eyes, he did not hesitate to pray in schools. I defy any law or politician to deny him that right.
I challenge every young person in America and around the world to realize that on April the 20th, 1999 at Columbine High School, prayer was brought back into schools. Do not let the many prayers offered by those students be in vain.

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Dare to move into a new millennium with a sacred disregard for legislation that violates your God. Give and write to communicate with him. To those of you who would point your finger at the NRA, I give to you a sincere challenge.
Dare to examine your own heart before casting your first stone. My daughter's death will not be in vain. The young people of this country will not allow that to happen. End of quote.
[10:47] Our national crisis is not gun control. It's also not the president. And it's not the Senate. And it's not Congress.

It's not the Supreme Court or any of the other courts. Now I realize that any talk of this can polarize this room in a heartbeat. I'm smarter than that. And that division becomes much worse when we put more, listen to me, when we put more stock in elected officials than we should.
I don't hang my hat on Washington. I don't hang my hat on Columbia. I don't hang my hat on Pickens. I hang my trust on the Lord Jesus Christ.
And he's the one I put my trust in. So with all that's wrong in Washington and Columbia or Pickens, our crisis is not politics. And it's not government.
It's more than that. Our crisis is not television or the apps that you have on your phone, the streaming apps.
[11:58] If your phone or your television does not have a power button, I would encourage you to throw it out and get another one. Because the reality is you can cut it off anytime you want to.

And the reason why there's the filth that there is on our televisions and on our phones is people aren't cutting it off. They just keep watching it.
But our crisis is not television or movie apps. news. It's not even the internet. I remember hearing, oh boy, preaching on WGGS years ago about the internet.
Oh God, blow it up. Blow it up, Lord. Blow up the internet. And I thought, brother, if he does, you won't be able to be watched anymore. Okay? So just chill out. The internet opens up new doors of opportunity and information and marketing, reservations and convenience like nothing that has ever come.
But every one of us does not use it for that purpose. Sadly, there are traps there that are set by individuals and are set by corporations to snatch the minds of the computer loners that devastate lives every day.
[13:23] our national crisis is not social media, although I warn you it can easily be a cancer. Be careful there.

The evil one looms there. Our national crisis is not sexual dysfunction, although we got a lot of it. It's the fruit of a greater problem, but it's not the root. there's been sexual indecency almost as long as there's been humanity, and there have been attempts to justify it ever since.
Today, the fascination is with gender dysphoria. I don't know if the devil has ever schemed up a more diabolic plan in our society.
The problem is that just because you feel a, I want you to hear me today, whoever you are, just because you feel like you feel a genuine attraction to someone, that does not make it right.
[14:30] It does not make it godly. It may feel legit, but our feelings and our attractions do not determine what is right or wrong.

What you woke up and felt like doing today does not determine what is right and wrong. I'll tell you what determines what's right and wrong.
The timeless truths of the word of God. And I truly believe that sometimes we need to blank our mind of any of our own preconceived ideas or self-generated ideas and trust God at his word.
Same-sex attraction is five times more popular today than it was 40 years ago. If people are born in it, we need to stop drinking the water, apparently. You know what that is?
That's not inborn. What in the world is going on? What's caused that? Several things, but I'll tell you what it is. It's a societal sinful sickness that's opened themselves up to allow those floodgates to come in.
[15:44] America has opened its arms to ways of life that are contrary to scripture, and that displeases the Lord. And it's a problem, but it is not our national crisis, as opposed to what many believe our national crisis is not the environment.

And I didn't say we shouldn't take care of the land we live in. You better take care of your natural resources and be stewards of the garden that God's placed you in, because he told you to. It's one of the early basics of Genesis.

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But let's not fall into pantheism, the belief that all is God. I mean, I love animals, but they're different than we are, and they don't have a soul, and when they're gone, they're gone. God has not breathed his spirit into them, nor has he the big oaks in your yard, nor has he in the turnip, or the rainforest, or the spotted owl, or the red-eyed frog.
We need to take care of all those things, folks, but don't let it overwhelm you. I'll tell you what he has breathed life into. Every child and every womb that's ever been conceived, and we ought to act like it as a country.
Our national crisis is not that, however. It's also not the ice caps. It's not any of those things.
[17:07] It's deeper than that. Proverbs 14, 34 says this, righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

The problem in America is America, our national crisis is too much of America is alienated from God. This nation is so marked by sin and missed opportunity that we've deceived ourselves into thinking that we only need God at certain times, and so many other things have grabbed our attention, and that is the crisis.
It's a crisis outside the church that's devastating, but it's a crisis inside the church too. Distraction and waywardness weaken the church. Our national crisis is that we have put too many things before our personal allegiance to the Lord.
We've put too many things before our faithful walk with Christ. Christians have too often lived, not as Christians, too often Christians don't look any different than society does, and society looks at Christians and say, why do I need that?
The same things that dog a lost society are sometimes the same things that dog the church. I mean, honestly, we're reaping what we've sown, we're reaping what we're sowing. The broken and unchurched homes of America have simply given lip service to God and walked away, and now we reap the fruit of that.
[18:33] And that crisis may be bigger than you think. When I thought about this, I couldn't help but think about Ephesus. We're too much like Ephesus. Revelation 2, verse 4 and 5 says this, but I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love that you had at first.

Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen. Repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent. Now, let me explain. The lampstand is the pulpit. The lampstand is the witness of the church to the world. And what he's saying is we are destroying our witness.
He also says, once salt has lost its saltiness, what good is it? It's good for nothing. And if we're not different than the world, Christian, we're making little difference in the world.
And if all we do is come in here and shut the doors to the world and sing a song and hear a message and go home dead to God and dead to his will to change our lives in response to what he'd have for us, to change our world by the power of the Holy Spirit of God living in us, then we are sinners and we are disgraced to any people because we have responsibility.
[19:55] What America needs is the church of Jesus Christ to beg God for the fresh winds of his spirit, the fresh fires of revival. And revival don't start among lost people.

Revival starts in the church. We need to repent of casual Christianity and fall into a burning love for Christ, his will, his way and his word and let it show everywhere that we go.
Because the world without Christ is dead in sin. They honestly don't know what their opportunity in Christ really is.
They don't know the difference that Christ makes unless we tell them. Unless we live it out before them. We'll never know.
We may think, well, they'll hear it somewhere. I mean, people around here, there's churches on every corner. I mean, surely, surely everybody's heard about Jesus.
[20:59] Why in the world should we assume that? And have they all received a personal invitation to come to Christ? We need not assume that.

And why can't we be a part of that? Don't you want to be a part of people's lives being changed for Christ? So God puts people in our path sometimes and we're so busy and in such a rush, we ignore the fact that he's put them in our path.
We went to Cracker Barrel the other day. I got some grilled fish. How disappointing. It's the Great Depression.

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There's a closed down restaurant sitting right beside it there in Piedmont. I think I remember what it was. I like that kind of restaurant. But we were kind of trying to figure it out.
So I thought, I wonder if they still got their menu up. Because they had painted it and tried to change it some, but you couldn't change it on anything. And we rode around that old Bojangles. Rode around to the other side.
[22:27] And right there in that small side entrance where there's a handrail there, there was a lady who had set up camp there. She had a buggy she'd barred from somewhere and filled it up.

Had an umbrella covering her and it's about 100 degrees outside. I looked to see if somebody was there and I could see her and she saw me.
I pulled out, took a chance on life to get out of that cracker barrel. If you've ever been there, you know what I'm talking about. It's hard to get out. And I got out and I started back toward Easley. And I did a U-turn and I came back. And I pulled back up beside her. And I said, are you hungry? You want something to eat? I said, there's a KFC and there's an Arby's right there across the street. What can I get you? She said, KFC. I said, you want some mashed potatoes that chicken?
[23:33] She said, slaw. I said, I'll do that. We went to Sam and we had oranges in the car. So we went by KFC and got a pretty good meal and it's KFC.

But anyway, got a decent meal and got her a big old drink and threw some bottles of water in there and threw some oranges in there. Went back to take it to her. And she had left her little spot.
We had actually seen this lady crossing the road going to a raceway, which is a gas station across the street. And we had seen her and always concerned about her crossing that road because it's very busy there as people come off the interstate.
I realized that was a, I realized she'd been here a while. When I got back, I gave her that, that, I reached out the window and gave her that food.
She was leaving. She was headed that way is why I brought that up. She was headed that way. And, and I brought that food to her. And I said, um, ma'am, my family was with me.
[24:39] I said, ma'am, I just want you to know that Jesus loves you. And, um, I hope this brings some relief to you. And she, she looked at me and she said, when somebody has more than a million, they have a billion.

And when somebody has more than a billion, they have a trillion. And when somebody has more than a trillion, they have something else. I don't, I'm not familiar with that. I'll just say a quadrillion or something, something like that.
She knew she was on it. And she said, that's what God's going to bless you with. And I said, well, thank God. I mean, that's good. I said, thank you, ma'am. I said, have you ever given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ?
She said, oh, yes. Oh, yes. I love and trust my Savior. Now, the only reason I say that is if you happen to ride by that way, check on her.
Grab her a biscuit or something. If God's planted her there. I just think sometimes, whether it be in an inconvenient situation like she's in right now in her life, or whether it be somebody we just see daily in places that we go and things that we do, I believe God puts people in our path along the way in order for us to share the love of Christ with her.
[26:14] And I wish I could tell you that I had some life-changing story about her at all. She just popped up in my mind when I got to thinking about this. That God puts people in our path that we have the opportunity to share with.

And we need to do that. Because unless we tell them, and unless we live it before them, they'll never know. Listen, down in the mouth, pessimism kills the work of the kingdom of God.
Selfishness and only concern about us or ours kills the work of the kingdom of God. Holier than thou attitudes or just plain worldly hypocrisy kills the work of the kingdom of God.
Preoccupation with our wants kills the work of the kingdom of God. Apathy and silence kills the work of the kingdom of God. We need Christians, as the song said earlier, to stand in the gap and say, there's a crisis.
And bless God, there's an answer. And that answer is Christ. And we need to share Christ with the world in which God's placed us. Proverbs 14, 34 says, righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.
[27:34] Let us not be the reproach to the people of America, but instead saints of a living God sharing his hope with the world he's planned us in.

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With every head bowed and every eye closed, I ask you today, have you ever given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ? I didn't ask you if you remember this church. I didn't ask you if you was faithful at this church.
I didn't ask you if you'd ever been to this church. I just ask you today, if you've ever said, Lord Jesus, I know I'm a sinner. I know I've done wrong. I need you to forgive me, change me.
I commit my life to follow you from this day forward. If you've never done that, I encourage you to do that. We got a lot of special things going on today with the meal and things, but there's nothing more special than you giving your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ.
I encourage you to come. I'd love to share that with you. Maybe you're here this morning and you have done that, but you've never acknowledged that publicly and you need to do that. We're going to baptize in just a few weeks and I encourage you, if you've never been baptized as a believer, that you'll obey God and follow him.
[28:40] What he showed us to do and what he told us to do. Let's follow that. Maybe God's drawing you to this church. God's leading you to Pickens First Baptist Church.

God's blessing in a mighty way and I'm thankful for that. And if God's leading you to this church, I encourage you, soon as we stand this morning, you want to join this church. Soon as we stand, you come down the aisle.
Now, share that with me. Or maybe there's just stuff in your life that's a reproach to a heavenly father that loves you.
And today you need to confess that, repent of that, and walk away from the Christian. Live for the Lord Jesus Christ.
It'll change your life. It'll change others' lives. He works like that. Let's just follow the Lord today.
Heavenly Father, I love you. I thank you, Lord, for the gospel and the opportunity you give us to share.
[29:38] And I pray, dear God, right now that you'll work and you'll move in the hearts and lives of every one of us to be obedient to follow you as you lead. In Jesus' precious name, amen.

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