

A Response to Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ

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by Bill Knaub

Editor's note: In September of 1996, Bill Knaub of In-Depth Studies received a letter from Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ. Due to the nature of the letter, its hermeneutical and contextual problems, and its preoccupation with ancient Israel and the Old Covenant, we have printed it here in its entirety along with what we believe to be a Bill Knaub's solid Biblical response to this widespread thinking within the Christian Community. The letter we received from Campus Crusade for Christ - printed here in its entirety:

Dear Christian Friend,

An urgent financial need to help call Christians of the world to fast and pray for a national and worldwide revival and the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

In a recent letter to you, I explained my burden to help encourage God's people to be prepared for the coming revival through a worldwide emphasis on fasting and prayer. As you know, God burdened my heart to dedicate two 40-day fasts to this end in 1994 and 1995.

This urgency and burden has been with me since the infamous decision of the Supreme Court in 1962 and 1963 to ban God, the Bible, and prayer from the classrooms of America. This decision brought about the judgment and discipline of God on America. If there is a God in heaven (and there is); if this nation was dedicated to Him by our founding fathers (and it was); if the Bible is truly God's Word to man (and it is); if His warnings to ancient Israel and Judah are relevant and apply to America today (and they do); then we who know God's Word, the Bible, should be filled with fear and horror when we read such passages as Deuteronomy chapters 8 and 28, Nehemiah 9:22-10:34, and 1 Corinthians 9:24; 10: 14. There are hundreds of similar passages which promise the blessings of God upon men and nations when they obey God's laws, and His discipline and even wrath when His people disobey Him and worship other gods.

My dear friend, one does not have to be an Einstein to recognize that through the Supreme Court, the highest court in the land, America has insulted the God of our fathers, and His discipline of our precious country is apparent even to non-believers.

The rulings of the Supreme Court for almost 200 years since our nation's founding recognized our trust and reliance upon God. Then, in 1962 and 1963, the Supreme Court, without precedent, outlawed the Great Creator God of the universe whom our fathers worshipped. (George Washington, the father of our country, began and ended every day on his knees reading God's Word and praying to the God of the Bible.

You can read in 2 Chronicles that Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem at a cost of several billion dollars. The Temple housed the Ark of God, and the Ark contained the Ten Commandments. Think about how that relates to our own beloved country. The Bible and the Ten Commandments have been the basic teaching in all of our schools from elementary to university since the birth of our nation. Now it is illegal to teach the Bible in our schools or post the Ten Commandments to the walls of our classrooms. Do you wonder then why God is disciplining America?

But there is great hope. Whenever Israel or Judah repented of their sins and turned back to God, He graciously forgave their sins and blessed them again and again. There are many examples such as those recorded in 2 Chronicles chapters 26 through 36.

I would call your attention especially to the wicked reign of Manasseh; in 2 Chronicles 33:1-13, God severely punished him and Judah. Second Chronicles 33:9-13 records, "But Manasseh encouraged the people of Judah and Jerusalem to do even more evil than the nations the Lord destroyed when Israel entered the land. Warnings from the Lord were ignored by both Manasseh and his people. So God sent the Assyrian armies, and they seized him with hooks and bound him with bronze chains and carted him away to Babylon. Then at last he came to his senses and cried out humbly to God for help. And the Lord listened and answered his plea by returning him to Jerusalem and to his kingdom! At that point Manasseh finally realized that the Lord was really God!"

Yes, there is hope for America if we too repent and turn back to the God of our fathers. We, too, can claim the promise that God gave to King Solomon regarding Ancient Israel. "If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV)

God assured me during both of my 40-day fasts for revival in America and throughout the world that He would send revival as soon as His people repented and turned from their evil ways. He also led me to invite Christian leaders to join me, on two occasions, for three days of fasting and prayer. The first was in Orlando, Florida, December 1994, to which over 600 leaders of denominational and para-church groups came. And again in Los Angeles, November 1995, to which approximately 4,000 came. God met with us in a supernatural way and most of us would say that those days were the greatest spiritual experience of our lives. Both of these events have cost Campus Crusade for Christ \$1,400,000. Now, we are looking to the St. Louis Fasting & Prayer Gathering '96, November 14-16, with a budget of \$1,200,000.

And besides that, there is a great desire among Christians in other countries to join in fasting and praying for revival for their countries. They are asking for financial help to launch fasting and prayer movements in their countries.

Recently I received the prestigious Templeton Prize of \$1,057,916 for my role in advancing religion worldwide. Because I could think of no better way to help reach the world for Christ and bring about worldwide revival, I have given every penny of the Templeton Prize to help promote fasting and prayer worldwide.

But much more is needed. Right now, there is an urgent immediate need for over one million dollars to cover the costs of helping to encourage the fasting and prayer movements in America. In addition to that amount, during the next three years, our worldwide budget for fasting and prayer seminars, distribution of literature, radio and television programs, and encouraging fasting and prayer will cost more than \$10 million.

You can help usher in a worldwide revival through helping us promote fasting and prayer. Think what will happen when millions of Christians repent of their evil ways and become excited about sharing their faith in Christ with others.

As you know, I have dedicated my life to helping fulfill the Great Commission-- to winning and discipling tens of millions of people for Christ. Because of your help and that of many others, Campus Crusade for Christ has a present full-time staff of over 14,000 and a trained volunteer staff of over 163,000. Together, we have helped to train many millions of Christians in evangelism and discipleship.

You may ask, "Why are you now giving so much emphasis to fasting and prayer for revival?" Because I truly believe that this is God's way to dramatically accelerate and expand reaching our world for Christ.

Your help is needed! Spiritual revival is a matter of life and death for the soul of our country. Our country needs our help!

Your prayers and gifts will make a difference! No amount is too small or too large. Please respond in accordance to the way God has blessed you spiritually and financially. The enclosed envelope is for your convenience.

God will do for you and for our nation and world what He did for Israel and Judah when we repent and meet the conditions of 2 Chronicles 7:14. I pray that God will mightily bless you, and all who are dear to you.

I look forward to the Coming Revival with great and joyful anticipation. Thank you again for your continued support. Let us together help change our world with Christ's great love.

Yours for fulfilling the Great
Commission in this generation,
Bill Bright

In-Depth Studies' Response
By William J. Knaub

Dear Mr. Bright:

This letter is in response to your letter dated September 1996 (copy attached). In that letter you discuss the need to support and promote fasting and prayer movements for worldwide revival. You indicate that further help is needed in the form of gifts and prayers as "spiritual revival is a matter of life and death for the soul of our country".

Although I admire and appreciate your zeal to help fulfill the Great Commission, I have serious concerns regarding your handling and application of God's Word (the Bible). Again, my desire is not to hinder your zeal to glorify God and His Son Jesus Christ. Since your ministry with Campus Crusade influences large numbers of people, your quest for biblical accuracy in interpretation and application must be at the highest level of precision possible. Therefore, I urge you to carefully consider the analysis which follows and to re-examine your agenda by God's Word (Heb. 4:12).

I will endeavor to focus my discussion on the major themes in your letter which lack biblical and historical warrant. Your letter indicates that "America has insulted the God of our fathers" and as a result the "judgment and discipline of God" is upon America. You assume that the United States is in covenant relationship to God as a nation and that the blessings and curses which applied to Israel also apply to America today.

However, the above assertions you make cannot be substantiated from the biblical record or historical data. Israel as a nation has been the only physical nation to be in covenant relationship to God. This covenant was known as the Old Covenant (Law of Moses) and was made only with Israel (Deut. 5:1-3; 1 Kings 8:9). The Ten Commandments were the specific

covenant document that established Israel's nationhood which can be compared to the Constitution that established the USA as a nation. Thus, the Ten Commandments are the essence or exact terms of the Old Covenant (Ex. 34:27,28) and they applied only to Israel.

Since the Old Covenant was a covenant of law demanding perfect obedience to God (Ex. 19:3-6), Israel (or anyone) could not keep this covenant as it was a "ministry of death" which brought condemnation (2 Cor. 3:5-9). Hence, Deuteronomy 8 and 28 apply only to the nation of Israel and not any other nation including the USA. Israel suffered God's judgment for failure to obey the Old Covenant terms (Deut. 31:16-39).

According to Hebrews 8, the Old Covenant (or first covenant) has become obsolete because a New Covenant has been established by Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:13). For Jesus is the "mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises" (Heb. 8:6). The Old Covenant as established with Israel was only temporary since God clearly indicates that He will effect a New Covenant with the House of Israel and Judah (Heb. 8:7-12). The reference here to the "House of Israel and Judah" can only refer to the New Covenant Church (body of Christ) which includes Jew and Greek (Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 2:13-22). That is, the New Covenant includes only the elect of God which are true believers in Jesus Christ. The New Covenant Church is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant promises to Israel (Ex. 19:5,6) since the body of Christ is the "Chosen Race, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a People for God's own possession" (1 Pet. 2:9,10). America, then, was NOT ever a "Christian Nation" as only the Church is the true Holy Nation before God.

Therefore, all the blessings and curses which God promised for obedience and disobedience to the Old Covenant terms are no longer in force. The many Old Covenant passages you site in your letter such as Nehemiah 9-10, 2 Chronicles 26-36, 2 Chronicles 7:14 and others do NOT apply to men and nations today. Jesus Christ alone has met all the terms of the Old Covenant perfectly for His people (Gal. 3:13,14,20-26). This is the glory of the New Covenant! Jesus perfectly kept the terms of God's holy law and endured the curse of God for the sin of the elect. As a result, all those justified by Jesus Christ are in union with Christ and have peace with God (Rom. 5:1-2). Those in Christ will never have to face the curse or wrath of God (Rom. 8:1-2).

In regards to your historical assertions that this nation was dedicated to God by our founding fathers, a closer examination of our nation's history reveals a different situation.

Although some of the founding fathers appeared to be true Christians, many others (Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, etc.) held to a Deist system of thought which denied the personal God of the Bible and His Son Jesus Christ. George Washington may have been religious but it is doubtful as to him being a true Christian. Many of these founding fathers referred often to God and the Bible but in reality denied the tenets of the Christian faith. That is, many actually followed a false god because they rejected the true God as revealed in the Scriptures. Thus, the idea of "dedicating" this nation to God involved a few persons who desired to honor the true God and many others who did not hold to the Christian God. One, then, must be very careful to NOT identify the founding of this nation as Christian since history reveals a mixture of religious ideas. While I could say much more, I would refer you to an excellent work on this subject for further study (See Noll, Mark A. and Hatch, Nathan O. and Marsden, George M. *The Search For Christian America*, Helmers & Howard, 1989). (Reviewed in this issue of the *Whitefield Review*)

As I conclude this letter, a few other concerns must be noted. You claim that God "assured" you during your fasts that "He would send revival as soon as His people repented and turned from their evil ways" and that God "led" you to invite other Christian leaders to join you for fasting and prayer days. My first concern is that you seem to be claiming some type of revelation from God not revealed in the Bible. If so, what type of revelation are you receiving from God? Are you receiving a vision or dream or audible voice directly from God? If this is the form of revelation you received from God, I am very skeptical to accept your report since the canon of Scripture has closed with the death of the New Testament apostles and prophets. More likely, you are claiming some type of internal "feeling" from the Holy Spirit.

However, God's revelation to us is complete and sufficient as God has spoken to us in these last days by his Son (Heb. 1:1-2). We have no reason to expect further revelation from God except as indicated in His general revelation (creation) and special revelation (the Bible). The written Word of God (the Bible) is to be our full and final authority and not one's internal "promptings" or "leadings" as these are merely subjective feelings and cannot be identified as coming from God (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Another concern is exactly what do God's people (only Christians) need to repent of? Again, God's people make up the New Covenant Church and are justified by Christ Jesus. God's people are responsible to obey His commands including evangelism but they are NOT under the terms of the Old Covenant which brought curses and death for disobedience to the covenant. In the New Covenant era, God does discipline his children in love as sons. However, no condemnation can apply to the New Covenant believer because of union with Christ (Rom. 8:1-2). Therefore, the Christian cannot be treated by God the same way as the Israelite was under the legal Old Covenant terms. The New Covenant terms have changed (2 Cor. 3:17).

In closing, I must thank you for taking the time to read and consider this letter. My prayer is that the Lord would grant you wisdom as you search the Scriptures for the truth of the matters indicated above. You have seen that a clear Biblical understanding of the function and application of the New and Old Covenants is absolutely essential to living the Christian life to God's glory.

I encourage you to examine your presuppositions in light of Scripture and also to re-evaluate your historical understanding of this nation's religious founding. Since you are investing large amounts of time and money in these "Fasting and Prayer Gatherings", you may determine upon further biblical study and reflection that your resources could be used much more effectively for God's glory. Most importantly, I urge you to discontinue placing God's people (Christians) back under the bondage of the Old Covenant which brought death. "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Jesus Christ is now the New and Final Lawgiver in the New Covenant era and the believer is to follow Christ (Heb. 1:1-3; Eph. 1:22-23).

For further study regarding the above issues, I would recommend the following excellent resources:

- * Reisinger, John G. Abraham's Four Seeds. Sound Of Grace, 1987.
- * Reisinger, John G. Tablets of Stone. Crowne Publications, Inc., 1989.
- * Friesen, Garry. Decision Making & the Will of God. Multnomah Press, 1980.

You may order Abraham's Four Seeds and Tablets of Stone from:

Sound Of Grace
P.O. Box 185
Webster, NY 14580
Ph. (716) 265-1494

After you have reviewed this letter, I would appreciate your comments and any further questions. May the Lord continue to use you in bringing the Good News of Christ to all nations. I look forward to hearing from you.

Saved By Christ Jesus Alone,
William J. Knaub
(Romans 4:5)