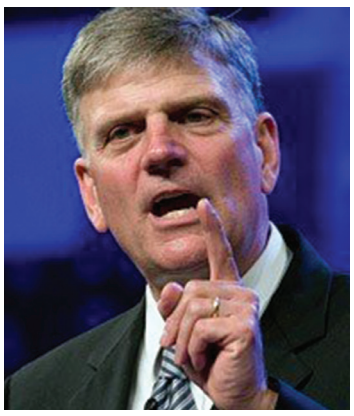
Franklin Graham: Turning Back to God Is the Only Hope

By Franklin Graham



A reporter from a national news network recently asked me: "Where do you see America today?"

I told him that our nation has turned its back on God. Politicians are looking for what people want and what culture wants instead of what God wants. We need to stand on the absolute authority of God's Word, and I believe the Bible to be the Word of God. By turning our back on God, our nation is sliding farther and farther away from Him. Instead of becoming a better country, we are becoming more violent, lawless, and godless. Our policies are failing, our economy is struggling and our country is in trouble. We need to take a hard look at God's laws and His standards. That's not what most Americans want to hear.

Violence is rampant in our streets. Gangs and thugs roam and kill, not only at night but in broad daylight. Leftist radicals riot, burn police stations, and loot city blocks. Drug abuse has soared, with fentanyl finding its way into virtually every sector of society, infiltrating rural and metropolitan areas alike.

Primary, secondary, and so-called higher education continue their assault on religious liberties, constantly seeking to remove any vestige of faith, and imposing their progressive values on even the youngest of children.

Need I say more?

A nation that was founded and grounded on the Christian faith and virtues has rejected God and His laws, much like the Israelites turned from their devotion to God and embraced the worthless idols of other cultures.

Speaking for the Lord, the Prophet Jeremiah called out the leaders and citizens of his day for their abominations:

"*'Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be very desolate,' says the Lord. 'For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water'"* (Jeremiah 2:12-13).

All the tumult and chaos we see in our nation and world today is a direct result of abandoning God's holy standards. His truth is eternal and relevant for every person in every generation, in every culture, and in every age. Since His Word is truth (John 17:17), the more we devalue the authority and power of Scripture, the further we slip—ever more quickly now—into a godless culture that has no moorings to the stabilizing, transforming truth of God's Word.

Let's take a brief look at the Ten Commandments, God's law that is unchanging and the cornerstone of civilization. From Exodus 20 (KJV):

• "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*" God brooks no competitors or substitutes. We are to let no one nor anything take His place as the only True God. It's sin if we do.

• *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, ... thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.*" Only God deserves our worship and allegiance. Don't enthrone environmentalism, social justice, wealth, prestige, or any other self-made idol. It's sin if you do.

• *"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."* Never curse God. Revere His Name.

• "*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*" God created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then on the seventh day rested from His labor. Our modern-day Sabbath (Sunday) should be a special time to worship, honor and revere the "Lord of the Sabbath."

• "*Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*" Children are to respect their parents throughout their entire lives and give them the honor that is properly due to them, just as we should honor our Heavenly Father. America's youth-oriented culture often fails here. It's sin not to honor our parents.

• "*Thou shalt not kill.*" The violence that plagues us is a direct result of disobedience to the God who gives life. Taking life in any form—murder or abortion—is abhorrent to God. It's sin.

• "*Thou shalt not commit adultery."* There is no such thing as an "affair." Sex outside the bounds of marriage is adultery, plain and simple. The same applies to those who pervert God's definition of male and female. It's sin.

• "*Thou shalt not steal."* When entire city blocks are plundered by looters, they are stealing. When we cheat on our taxes, that is stealing. It's sin.

• "*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*" Lying and gossiping is sin. So is spreading falsehoods.

• "*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife ... nor anything that is thy neighbor's."* Being jealous and envious of what others have, instead of being content with what the Lord has given you, is a sin.

When people cast aside God's laws and devise their own "norms," their nation is in serious trouble. God's law is holy, never changing, and given in divine wisdom and nonnegotiable truth. Any attempt by a culture to dictate ungodly standards will never work.

But herein is a dilemma. "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). Only one Person has ever kept the law perfectly, and that Person is the Lord Jesus Christ. His work on the cross fully satisfied the justice of God and His wrath against sin, so that all who come to Him in repentance and faith receive the gift of salvation.

But notice a key word here—repent. When Jesus began His public ministry, he said, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel"* (Mark 1:15).

The only alternative for those who have turned their backs on God is to turn to Him in repentance and faith so their sins are forgiven. God's law is then written on their hearts, so the commandments of God are no longer burdensome to keep (Hebrews 8:10, 1 John 5:3). And when people live in obedience to the commands and precepts of Scripture, God's blessings follow. When disobedience and disdain dominate a culture, the consequences are bitter.

In her Bible study on pages 36-37, my sister Anne Graham Lotz has a great article on what repentance really means. Check it out, and you will see just how crucial real repentance is. As Jesus warned when He told of the Galileans who died at the hands of Pontius Pilate and the 18 who were killed when a tower fell on them in Siloam, "*Unless you repent you will all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:5). It's a matter of life and death. ©2023 BGEA

Unless otherwise specified, Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version. The Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from The Holy Bible, King James Version.

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