

PSALM 33:10-19
WHEN NATIONS ARE SHAKEN

“The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.
The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
the plans of his heart to all generations.
Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

The LORD looks down from heaven;
he sees all the children of man;
from where he sits enthroned he looks out
on all the inhabitants of the earth,
he who fashions the hearts of them all
and observes all their deeds.

The king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
The war horse is a false hope for salvation,
and by its great might it cannot rescue.

Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
that he may deliver their soul from death
and keep them alive in famine.”¹

September 11, 2001 is a day of infamy in the annals of the world. Vicious Islamists attacked the United States of America on that day. Airliners were turned into missiles to immolate and crush thousands of individuals. The image of bodies falling through space as men and women desperately tried to escape immolation is burned into the psyche of mankind. Though other western nations turned a blind eye to the danger posed by this unprovoked attack, all nations are at risk from these religious zealots. Immediately after the attack, spokesmen representing multiple nations provided the contemporary apologia which was, and continues to be, that this despicable deed had nothing to do with religion. It is impossible to give credence to such a position in light of the clear statements of those plotting and perpetuating the attack. Only if we ignore common sense and bury our heads in the sand can we accept such a position.

The western world is in a war and leaders appear incapable of defining the enemy. The enemy is a vicious, dedicated religious movement within one of the major world religions. If Pentecostals flew jets into skyscrapers and shot up nightclubs, we wouldn't be reticent about saying that Pentecostals needed to renounce the actions of those acting in such abhorrent fashion; nor would we imagine that all Christians were to be condemned because of the actions of these few. No less, when Jihadists from both Sunni and Shi'ite factions declare war on the West, it is proper to conclude that something within the Islamic religion promotes hatred of the West. We do not conclude that all Muslims are terrorists; but terrorists are overwhelmingly Muslims!

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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There was a day when the nations of the West looked to God as their strength. Though there are believers serving in various governments, it seems as if the political leaders are ignorant (deliberately or otherwise) of the Lord God. I confess that I am frightened whenever I hear a national leader speak of the might of the nation. Strategists know that plans for a given battle are no longer valid after the first shot is fired. Though carefully planned, battles are organised chaos—multiple little battles covering the field. The fog of war ensures that battles will quickly degenerate into bedlam once the battle has been joined.

GOD AND THE NATIONS —

“The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.
The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
the plans of his heart to all generations.
Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!”

[PSALM 33:10-12]

Massive armies and superior arms do not guarantee a victory. Consider some historical accounts of smaller forces besting superior forces in combat. The Persians suffered devastating losses to a much smaller Greek force at Thermopylae. Despite besting the initial defenders, the ferocity of the Greeks and devastating losses of even the crack Persian troops known as the Immortals ultimately convinced the invaders to return home. Rome, the conquering empire that ruled the civilised world of the first century, suffered the loss of three legions in one devastating battle against the Germanic tribes in the Teutoburg Forest, turning them for a period from attempting the conquest of the barbarians. English archers won the Battle of Agincourt when the English forces commanded by Henry V faced and defeated overwhelming French forces.

Engagements such as the Battle of Hodów (400 cavalry forces from the Kingdom of Poland repelled 25,000 Crimean forces) and the Battle of Rorke’s Drift (256 British forces repelled between 3,000 and 4,000 Zulu warriors) stand as examples of a determined and disciplined force repelling much greater armies. Canada can credit her armed forces with similar deliverances. The Second Battle of Lacolle Mill, saw 500 British and Canadian forces repel an invading force of 4,000 Americans. This was an early example of Canadian courage, courage displayed yet again in the Battle of Ypres against Germany.

I must mention one other, almost unbelievable battle that stirs the imagination. The Battle of Saragarhi was fought by 21 Sikh fighters of the 36th Sikh Regiment of the British Army when they were attacked by a force of up to 10,000 Pashtun Afghan fighters. Though all the Sikhs were killed, they exacted a toll of up to 1400 enemy killed before the last Sikh died. Though all the Sikhs were killed, they delayed the advance of the Pashtuns long enough to permit reinforcements to arrive in time to stop the advance of the Afghans. All the Sikhs who died that day received the Indian Order of Merit, the highest award given to Indian soldiers by the British. To this day, Saragarhi Day is celebrated in commemoration of their sacrifice.

Valuable though they are, numbers and munitions do not always win battles. Will, motive and national unity are all essential for consistently winning battles. Even in speaking of the personal battles which we as Christians must face, will and motive are vital. In the physical battles that are the lot of the armies of the nations, will and motive must not be neglected.

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The Psalm now before us is quite joyous; it encourages joyous exultation in gratitude to the LORD. In particular, the Psalm urges readers to consider God's works, noting that He is upright and His works performed in faithfulness. Thus, the earth is filled with God's steadfast love. In answer to anyone who might question this truth, the Psalmist points to God's creation.

“By the Word of the LORD the heavens were made,
and by the breath of His mouth all their host.
He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap;
He puts the deeps in storehouses.”

[PSALM 33:6, 7]

The earth is to revere the LORD; the inhabitants of the world are to stand in awe of Him. Tragically, few people, even among professing Christians, hold God in awe. A primary reason for our lack of reverence is that we know nothing of His power and we dismiss Him as Creator.

Take especial note that the Psalmist says that fear of the LORD is to be based on recognition of His creative power—He spoke and the heavens came into being. We live in a world that not only fails to recognise God's might, our world deliberately rejects Him as Creator! We have convinced ourselves that we can account for the universe and for all life through appeal to impersonal forces operating over vast amounts of time. After all, if there is no Creator, then we are not responsible to Him! If there was no sentient being calling all things into being, then we can live without restraint doing what we want rather than acting to honour Him!

It is bad enough when pagans refuse to acknowledge God's might, but we Christians have become practical atheists. Stop! Think! When did you last witness a display of God's raw, unrestrained power? I'm not speaking of God striking someone dead for blasphemy or for defying Him, though such has happened in my ken. I am much more concerned that we should witness His power displayed in turning the heart of one who is a blasphemer or who is defiant of the Holy One so that they embrace the Risen Son of God as Saviour. When did we last see that display of raw power in answer to prayer. When we grow complacent—content to go to church, saying prayers rather than praying and we begin drifting through the humdrum of mindless religion, we are scarcely better than atheists. Under such conditions, we need revival!

Nations plot and promote their aggression against their neighbours, but the success of their attacks is by no means assured. The Psalmist reminds us that as God stood behind the creation of the world, so He stands behind the history of the world. Someone has said, quite accurately, that history is His story. Humanity follows its desires; nevertheless, God writes the play. Godless people pursue their plans without thought either of God or His will; yet, the LORD God overrules all the plans of the nations as His perfect plan is worked out. Ultimately, the plots and plans of the nations come to nothing; but the will of the Lord stands forever.

Empires rise and fall; nations wax and wane. The progress of empires as they move toward strength and then decline is so consistent as to be formulaic. The formulae applied to the progress of civilisations describe a bell curve when graphed as an index of freedoms. Studying the great empires reveals that each moves from bondage to spiritual faith. Spiritual faith gives rise to national courage; and national courage leads to liberty. Freedom leads the empire to abundance. However, abundance leads to selfishness. Selfishness leads to complacency; and complacency leads to apathy. Apathy gives rise to moral decay; and moral decay leads to dependence. Dependence must, of necessity lead to bondage.

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It is not possible to state precisely where Canada or the United States is located on such a national scale; however, my understanding leads to the conclusion that we are situated somewhere between apathy and dependence. This suggests that the west is in a perilous condition. What is abundantly obvious is that spiritual faith and national courage is no longer common in western culture. I am hard-pressed to say that we will not readily exchange freedom for government oversight. As a society, we appear prepared to exchange biblical morality for governmental tolerance. This tendency to surrender honouring God for governmental tolerance is far more dangerous than we could ever imagine.

Even in the rise and decline of empires, we witness waxing and waning of spiritual fervour and even of individual freedoms within the nations of the empire. Consequently, the influence of nations rises and falls in concert with the rise and fall of spiritual commitment of the individual nations. The account of Israel recorded in the Old Testament reveals a cycle repeated as the nation turned *from* worship of the Living God to turn again *to* worship of the Living God. God's blessings were poured out as the nation turned to Him; but the nation never enjoyed the same degree of freedom previously known. As the nation turned from pursuing God, the nadir of gross sin was always lower than previous lows. Finally, even Judah had fallen into such grievous sin that God would no longer delay judgement.

Unity is always a serious issue in determining whether a nation stands firm or is shaken by events. In similar fashion, congregational unity is essential for a church to withstand the inevitable challenges each church shall face. Winston Churchill almost single-handedly ensured that Great Britain would be unified in the face of Nazi aggression during the terrible days of the Second World War. His dogged determination to unite the British people served to ensure that not only the nations of the British Empire would stand firm, but that even the United States would join in resisting the Axis assault.

I do not want to drift too far afield from focusing at the national level, but allow me to briefly shift our thoughts to the realm of the spiritual; consider an issue far more critical than even the survival of a nation. Survival of a congregation is essential to survival of a nation. When the spiritual life of a nation declines, economic and moral decline must inevitably follow. In His High Priestly prayer, Jesus prayed, "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. The glory that You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and You in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You loved Me" [JOHN 17:20-23]. This request echoes our Lord's prior request, "I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your Name, which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as We are one" [JOHN 17:11].

The Master's request spans time, reaching even to this present hour and beyond. Churches in this Day of Grace are to seek unity in the Faith. Let me stress this point by stating again that individual congregations are to strive for unity in the Faith. Each Christian bears responsibility to work at creating and maintaining harmony within the assembly in which she or he have been placed. Because of our fallen nature, I must caution against confusing uniformity with unity. There is to be but one Head, and that is Christ. We are taught, "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" [EPHESIANS 4:4-6].

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We will never be identical, neither in our desires for the conduct of worship, or for the music we prefer or for how we dress—we have freedom in all such areas. However, we are to seek unity in the Faith and in our love for one another. This becomes evident from the verses preceding the admonition we just read. “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” [EPHESIANS 4:1-3].

In Jesus’ High Priestly prayer, we are taught that unity in the Godhead is essential; and Jesus’ concern is that His redeemed will reflect this unity on earth. Where there is disunity, the people cannot focus on fulfilling the will of the True and Living God. The wicked one wants to introduce disharmony among the faithful because when they are no longer united they are no longer serving. Whenever I, or whenever you, begin to exert my will or your will over the congregation, we can be assured that we will have ceased doing the will of God! It is in unity that the glory of God is revealed. Though the distinction may be fine, there is nevertheless a distinction between standing firm and being obstinate. The former expresses conviction and the latter reveals a perverted sense of entitlement. Standing firm encourages unity and harmony; obstinacy ensures disunity and fragmentation. Standing firm grows out of a desire for good for others; obstinacy grows out of the exaltation of the self.

Congregational harmony reveals God to the world! When harmony is absent, we demonstrate that we are indistinguishable from the world. Our refusal to cultivate a tractable spirit and to seek unity drives people away from Christ rather than drawing them to the Faith. The individual who insists on having his way is testimony to the fallen will of mankind. *It is impossible to see the glory of God where there is no harmony.* Thus, without harmony the will of God cannot be revealed among the people of God and our motives are perverted.

Listen to the Apostle Paul on this issue as he instructs the Roman saints on this matter. “By the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness” [ROMANS 12:3-8].

Later, he will instruct these saints, “Live in harmony with one another” [ROMANS 12:16]. He follows up on this plea with a prayer that is written for all Christians. “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” [ROMANS 15:5, 6].

The instructions Paul has given are emphasised by what he wrote to the Christians of Colossae. “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful” [COLOSSIANS 3:12-15].

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These pleas are echoed by Peter, indicating that the harmony sought is to be universal for all the congregations of the Lord. “Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind” [1 PETER 3:8]. We must not dismiss what is written by deceiving our own mind or through exaltation of personal desire; rather, we must subsume our own will to the will of the Master. Maintaining the intended focus of this particular message, I stress that when the spiritual condition of the nation has been degraded, it is but a matter of time before the nation itself is endangered. Indeed, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” [PSALM 33:12a].

NATIONAL SALVATION —

“The LORD looks down from heaven;
he sees all the children of man;
from where he sits enthroned he looks out
on all the inhabitants of the earth,
he who fashions the hearts of them all
and observes all their deeds.
The king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
The war horse is a false hope for salvation,
and by its great might it cannot rescue.”

[PSALM 33:13-17]

God delivers the nations. Several truths from these verses must be considered. The first truth is that *God oversees the affairs of nations*. This is nothing less than a restatement of the principle of the sovereignty of God. As western nations have drifted from acknowledging the Living God, a growing number of theologians have attempted to wear a religious façade while simultaneously rejecting the idea of God’s might and power. Of such futile efforts, Paul warns, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools” [ROMANS 1:18-22].

Any effort to reduce God to a figurehead or to diminish His glory is destined to result in the one making such an effort being exposed as a fool. One such movement that has infiltrated contemporary evangelicalism is known as “open theism.” The insinuation is promoted by men who are recognised for their intellectual prowess. In a tragic sense, these are men capable of promoting their poison in attractive guise precisely because they are capable speakers. In effect, this movement teaches us that God is all powerful, but not all knowing. He can’t know what is going to happen, but He is prepared to intervene to assist in time of need; He can work out solutions, but He is always being forced to resort to Plan B because He is caught by surprise. Proponents of open theism want to be recognised as evangelical and orthodox without giving up the accolades of this dying world. This doctrine is attractive precisely because it allows man to maintain a semblance of autonomy. Nevertheless, God *is* omniscient; God *is* all-knowing.

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When the deceiver seduced our first mother, he did so by pointing to an obvious truth concerning God. Satan said, “God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened” [GENESIS 3:5a]. Indeed, our first parents did know good and evil; but they had no power to avoid evil. They were utterly contaminated by sin and unable to do anything to change. This dreadful condition has been passed down to every child born into this fallen world.

Elsewhere, various writers of the Psalms have spoken of God’s knowledge. In fact, the first Psalm begins with the affirmation that “the LORD knows the way of the righteous” and the implication that he also knows the way of the wicked [PSALM 1:6].

Of God, David testified:

“The LORD knows the days of the blameless,
and their heritage will remain forever;
they are not put to shame in evil times;
in the days of famine they have abundance.”

[PSALM 37:18, 19]

Imagine! God knows my days. Indeed, “My times are in [His] hands” [PSALM 31:15].

There is another statement recorded in the Psalms that speaks to God’s omniscience. The Psalmist has written,

“Understand, O dullest of the people!
Fools, when will you be wise?
He who planted the ear, does he not hear?
He who formed the eye, does he not see?
He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke?
He who teaches man knowledge—
the LORD—knows the thoughts of man,
that they are but a breath.”

[PSALM 94:8-11]

Focus on the initial statement of the final strophe: “The Lord knows the thoughts of man.”

The Psalm to which I have just alluded is reminiscent of another Psalm. The 139th Psalm opens with a statement of God’s perfect knowledge.

“O LORD, you have searched me and known me!
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.”

[PSALM 139:1-6]

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And that Psalm concludes with a statement of God's knowledge.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!”

[PSALM 139:23, 24]

When puny men challenges God, questioning His power and omniscience, another Psalmist has the answer that needs to be delivered.

“[The arrogant] have no pangs until death;
their bodies are fat and sleek.
They are not in trouble as others are;
they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.
Therefore, pride is their necklace;
violence covers them as a garment.
Their eyes swell out through fatness;
their hearts overflow with follies.
They scoff and speak with malice;
loftily they threaten oppression.
They set their mouths against the heavens,
and their tongue struts through the earth.
Therefore, his people turn back to them,
and find no fault in them.
And they say, ‘How can God know?
Is there knowledge in the Most High?’
Behold, these are the wicked;
always at ease, they increase in riches.”

[PSALM 73:4-12]

In our text, the Psalmist notes that God fashions the heart; and thus He knows what is in the heart. Repeatedly do we read in the Gospel accounts that Jesus knew. He knew the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Herodians [MARK 12:15; LUKE 20:19]. This is not merely recognition—He knew their thoughts [LUKE 6:8]. The Saviour knew who was to betray Him [JOHN 13:11]. The definitive statement on this point is this: “Jesus on His part did not entrust Himself to [the crowds], because He knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for He Himself know what was in man” [JOHN 2:24, 25].

Again turning to the 33rd Psalm, I observe that because God rules over the nations *deliverance is less dependent upon armed might than it is upon a mighty arm*. Great armies do not ensure victory. To be certain, a nation must assume responsibility to protect itself from hostile states; it must build the most powerful armed force possible while maintaining vigilance against hostile entities. However, the nation must always know that armed might is not the sole answer to deterring aggression and invasion. Ultimately, each nation, and in particular the western nations, must know that a nation is dependent upon God's protection.

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Growing out of this knowledge is the unspoken call to look to God as our deliverer. We are living in dangerous times. Society has grown timorous, seemingly incapable of speaking the truth. Politicians and religious leaders assure us that Islam is a religion of peace; they have convinced most people that to say otherwise is evidence of something they call “Islamophobia,” and no one wants to be “Islamophobic.” However, it is not Islamophobic to identify the disconnect between Sharia law and a Constitutional monarchy. It is not Islamophobic to recognise that the overwhelming majority of terrorists are motivated by their religion. It is not Islamophobic to recoil at the violent extremes of the faith’s practitioners, from murdering the innocent to “honor killings” among their own ranks. It is not Islamophobic to observe that migrating Muslim populations have historically spread the caliphate by the sword rather than through peaceful coexistence and persuasive arguments.

As one writer has noted, “Islamophobia does exist, found in the broad scapegoating of peaceful Muslims by those who paint with too broad a brush.”² When self-serving politicians acting as self-appointed watchdogs fail to place the bar at actual prejudice, they stigmatise and ultimately silence voices who would call for western vigilance in a time when we are the target of a growing terrorist menace. Nevertheless, we know that ultimately, safety lies in resorting to the True and Living God who has blessed our nation, permitting us to enjoy peace and security.

PERSONAL SALVATION —

“Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
that he may deliver their soul from death
and keep them alive in famine.”

[PSALM 33:18, 19]

Ultimately, there remains this promise given in these final verses of the text chosen today. God is our hope and our strength. The Psalmist will continue with an affirmation of confidence, writing,

“Our soul waits for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.
For our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.
Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.”

[PSALM 33:20-22]

Notice that he writes on behalf of the nation when he says “Our soul waits for the LORD.” United, the worshippers proclaim together their confidence in God’s deliverance. This emphasis is iterated in the next verse when worshippers unite in proclaiming “Our heart is glad in Him.” The unity that is necessary for His deliverance is proclaimed with one voice. Divine deliverance is the promise that is given to all who fear the LORD.

² Mark Davis, “Our War With Global Jihad Starts With The Language,” August 16, 2016, Townhall.com, <http://townhall.com/columnists/markdavis/2016/08/16/our-war-with-global-jihad-starts-with-the-language-n2205246>, accessed 15 August 2016

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I wonder if Canada will ever see a leader such as Jehoshaphat. Confronted by a vast coalition intent on invading the land, “Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast” [2 CHRONICLES 20:3]. The prayer he offered is a model for all national leaders; Jehoshaphat concluded the prayer by pleading, “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You” [2 CHRONICLES 20:12b]. And God did deliver the nation. The army advanced against the enemy with singers going before them, praising God and singing,

“Give thanks to the LORD,
for His steadfast love endures forever.”

[see 2 CHRONICLES 20:20-22]

The passage details how “the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed” [2 CHRONICLES 20:22]. Then, there is this summary statement of the impact of looking to God. “The fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel” [2 CHRONICLES 20:29]. God was faithful then; and God is faithful now. Our responsibility is to be a congregation that dares believe Him and dares live as though He is alive.

There was a day when Canada waited on the Lord. There was a day when Canada proclaimed her gladness in the Lord. While living in the Lower Mainland, I made the acquaintance of a fine high church Anglican priest. Bob was a kindred heart in that he longed to see God’s glory manifested in his services. Consequently, we spent time together praying and discussing matters of the Faith.

On one occasion Bob looked back to the history of this province and said, “I recall a day when the Bishop of British Columbia or the Bishop of New Westminster would announce a day of prayer and fasting and even the legislature would close for prayer and fasting. Now, we neither pray nor fast. The spiritual momentum lies with you evangelicals.”

I wonder if Bob didn’t have it wrong. Does spiritual momentum lie with any Christian movement today? Is it not the case that we are infected with a spiritual malaise, and we have contented ourselves with going through the motions to “doing church?” This our dangerous times, and the nation needs godly men and women more than ever. I pray that the message serves as a call to return to ardent pursuit of the Lord Christ, seeking His favour and endeavouring to know His will. I pray that the message stirs our heart deeply so that we cease being content with the status quo, which is Latin for “the rut we are in.” May God speak to us! May God deliver us from complacency. May God have mercy on our nation. Amen.