

# **“From Sea to Sea and to the Ends of the Earth: Peace!”**

## **Zechariah 9:1-12**

**July 3, 2016**

**Pastor Jon Haakana**

Over these past few years, one thing is becoming painfully clear: America has slowly turned away from God. As a result, this Country’s leaders have removed prayer from the schools. Some towns will not let churches do door to door ministry and most of you may know, a Judge in California ruled that the use of God’s name in the Pledge of Allegiance is also unconstitutional. And it won’t be too much longer until we find the words, “In God We Trust” removed from all our currency.

It is difficult to deny that our Country is turning her back on God and as a result, I am concerned for our children and our families. If God is taken out of our nation’s “big picture”, if churches become hindered in their mission efforts and if our children have less and less exposure to our one True God, what will become of our once Godly and Christian Nation? Will we become as lost and desolate as the Bible portrayed Israel to be over the course of their journey through the wilderness? Will God allow the enemies of His Word to utterly swoop in and devastate us even as he allowed such burdens upon the unrepentant children of Israel?

According to Ronald Hutchcraft, the Director of Youth for Christ in New York and New Jersey, in the next thirty minutes-

57 kids will run away from home.  
29 children will attempt suicide.  
22 girls under 19 years of age will receive an abortion.  
14 teenage girls will give birth to an illegitimate baby.  
685 teens will use some form of narcotic.

Instead of being a nation at peace, we are a nation in perpetual war as we turn away from God more and more, and rely on ourselves and our own resolve.

### **A National Prayer of Repentance**

Joe Wright was the pastor of Central Christian Church in Wichita, KS. On January 23, 1996, he was asked to be the guest chaplain for the Kansas State House in Topeka. He prayed a prayer of repentance that was written by Bob Russell, pastor of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. According to an article in the Kansas City Star from January 24, 1996, his prayer stirred controversy, and one member of the legislative body walked out. Others criticized the prayer.

The controversy didn't end there. Later that year in the Colorado House, Republican representative Mark Paschall angered lawmakers by using Joe Wright's prayer as the invocation. Some members there also walked out in protest.

Paul Harvey got a hold of the prayer and read it on his radio program. He got more requests for copies of it than any other thing he had ever done. *Here's what he prayed:*

"Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask Your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, "Woe to those who call evil good," but that's exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and inverted our values. We confess that:

We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it pluralism.  
We have worshipped other gods and called it multi-culturalism.  
We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle.  
We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery.  
We have neglected the needy and called it self-preservation.  
We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare.  
We have killed our unborn and called it a choice.  
We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable.  
We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem.  
We have abused power and called it political savvy.  
We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition.  
We have polluted the airwaves with profanity and called it freedom of expression.  
We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

Search us, O God, and know our hearts today; try us and see if there be some wicked way in us; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent here by the people of Kansas, and who have been ordained by You, to govern this great state. Grant them Your wisdom to rule and may their decisions direct us to the center of Your will... Amen

Throughout Scripture, we have learned that God would allow such devastation to befall his people. He did this with the hope that it would bring about a revival in their spirit. He would allow Israel's enemies to have recourse and victory over them. God would actually use the enemies of Israel in order to bring about judgment over His people. Our Father never delighted in sending His wrath. He just wanted His people to realize their sin, turn away from it, and turn back to Him so that He could bless them and so that they of course could see His blessings. And from time to time, Israel did just that. They saw that they could no longer trust in themselves for guidance. They remembered times past when God was in their midst and how comforting His presence was to them. As a

result of that remembrance, and in true fear of God, they would turn back to Him, repent and find that God was very ready to make things right for them.

When Israel recognized their hopelessness and their sin, they in turn united together in prayer and expectation and gave God their burden. And God gladly received it. He welcomed it as the Father welcomed his wayward son. When Jesus Christ was given to us as the means to take away our sins, He gladly offered himself as the Sacrifice needed to pay for the debt of our sins. Jesus took away the consequences of our sins 2000 years ago, by the shedding of His blood. And God gladly received it. God still gladly receives Jesus' sacrifice as atonement for our sin just as our Savior gladly receives all the burdens we put upon Him all for the purpose of exchanging it with His peace.

Our text in Zechariah brings us tremendous comfort. It reminds us that even in the worse of adversity, Almighty God can and will prevail. This is why Zechariah said, "rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! ...See your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, ...He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to your fortress, O prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you." When Zechariah proclaimed this good news to his people, they did indeed rejoice for they were reminded that Almighty God was with them and would deliver them from their burdens.

You and I can rejoice even now because Jesus Christ, our King has come, gentle and riding on a donkey and He proclaimed peace to us. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ won for us salvation and restored our ability to communicate with God, we have recourse, we have hope and this hope will not disappoint.

Jesus says in Matthew 11:25 these words, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants." How wonderful it is that our Lord has shown us an answer to our questions and comfort for our burdens. But our prayer is that he uses us to reveal these hidden things to our leaders, so that they will know why it is so important to remain as one Nation under God and more importantly, that they would know the saving work of Jesus Christ our Lord.

As the Israelites remembered the love of their Father and thus turned to Him with prayer and expectation, I invite you to remember some more words from Jesus Christ. "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke

upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” As servants of God, purchased and won by way of the shed blood of Jesus Christ, we have the promise of rest and peace, even as our Lord receives and responds to our prayers of burden. The good news is that our Lord and Savior will respond to our prayers. He will restore us and he will give us His peace.

Be encouraged, dear family in Christ that we have a God who is ready to act in our defense of the Gospel and in defense of his will and way. Thanks be to God. Amen.