“And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, these that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.”

—Acts 17:6

The president of a godly theological seminary was meeting with a rather secularly minded accreditation committee, and the chairman of that committee asked him this question: “What is the purpose of this seminary?”

Without a moment’s hesitation, the president replied, “The purpose of this institution is to change the world.”

Being somewhat taken back, the chairman said, “That’s nice, but specifically, what is the purpose of this institution?”

He said, “The purpose of this seminary is to change the world.”

After a fifteen- or twenty-minute exchange between the two, he saw that he could not dislodge the president from his position—that, indeed, to change the world was the purpose of that seminary.

In case any of you haven’t noticed, that is the purpose of our seminary, the purpose of our school, the purpose of our television ministry, the purpose of our radio station, the purpose of Evangelism Explosion, the purpose of this church. It is my purpose for life. Nothing less than to change the world, I believe, ought to be the purpose of every single Christian in this sanctuary and in this world.
The apostle Paul and Silas had been preaching in Phillipi where many people had been converted. There was a great tumult; they were cast into prison. Finally released, they went on to Thessalonica, where they went into the synagogue and preached the gospel with great power. Numbers of the Jews were converted to Christ. A great multitude of devout Greeks also were converted, as well as a number of the notable women, so that some of the Jews, being moved with envy gathered together some lewd fellows of the baser sort. (I like that description: “some lewd fellows of the baser sort.”) They are still around today, aren’t they?) They gathered a company and they came to the house of Jason, where Paul and Silas had been. They were going to drag them out, but they could not lay their hands on them.

They took Jason and some of the brethren and brought them before the rulers of the people and they said: “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.” I love that description. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to have inscribed on your tombstone: “Here lies one who turned the world upside down.” That is what Christianity is all about.

Of course, we know, as we see it from the proper perspective, that the world is already turned upside down. What we are trying to do is turn it right side up. It was the pagan conception of turning the world upside down. Certainly we live in a world that desperately needs to be turned right side up in our time.

An article in Aspire magazine stated: “Since 1960, violent crimes have quintupled, out-of-wedlock births have quadrupled, the percentage of single-parent homes has tripled, and the divorce rate has doubled.” We have, in 30 years, gone from Leave It To Beaver to [Leave it to] Beavis and Butt-Head. My friends, that is a trip that is light years long—a simple picture of the tragic condition in our time. To mention a few of the things that are indicative of the cultural decline and the moral decay of our time, in the past year or so, we have seen: Dan Rostenkowski, Marion Barry, the Keating Five, Amy Fisher, Tonya Harding, Susan Smith, Natural Born Killers, 2 Live Crew. And then, of course, we have gays in the military and condoms in the classroom.

Some parents have said they are not concerned any more about the three “R’s” when they send their kids to school, because they don’t expect them to learn anything; they hope they might survive. Many parents who put little Johnny on the school bus on Monday morning are concerned with the problem of the three G’s—guns, gangs, and gays.

Indeed, some 76 percent of the American people have finally come to see that there is something desperately wrong with our country and that the problem isn’t “the economy, stupid”; the problem is the morals. But take heart, dear friends! The White House has announced that they are going to hold a conference on teaching character. That shouldn’t be laughable. We should all be rejoicing, but that, too, is a picture of the times in which we live.

ENCOURAGING SIGNS

We have been involved in a spiritual ice age for some decades, but I am happy to say that there are signs that spring is coming. A number of robins have been detected, and the omens of
spring now seem to be springing up all about us. Let me mention several of those. One is the fact that the basic underpinnings of the godless world have been and are crumbling in recent decades. Since it is upon these underpinnings that the whole moral, spiritual, and civil life of a nation depends, we should take a look at them.

Let me mention the “four horsemen” of the godless apocalypse of the nineteenth century who have done so much to intellectually create the society in which we live today. It, of course, goes from philosophers, to historians, to novelists, to poets, to songwriters, to motion picture directors, and to television stories until it reaches the pages of our newspapers and the daily lives of our citizens. But that is where it begins. I hope you know who those four ungodly horsemen were who have wreaked such havoc upon the twentieth century.

There was **Freud**, whose views of man totally changed the thinking of the vast majority of modernity and gave a picture of man totally at odds with the biblical picture which had been held before. But happily, may I say, Freud is passé today. And though his successors are not by any means necessarily good, many of them are better than those we had before. At least the Freudian era is mostly over and his theories have been pretty much debunked, even by psychologists themselves.

**Marx**, the second horseman that I might mention, did so much in his writings to bring evil upon the world. At least 135 million (and that figure is 25 years old) people died because Marx took pen in hand and wrote his godless views of life, economy, and politics.

But we have seen Marxism collapse in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and many other parts of the world, I am thoroughly convinced that before this decade is over, there will not be a Communist government left on the face of the earth. In fact, the only place Communists will be found at all, I am sure, will be those few remaining holdouts in the gulag of many American public universities.

There are those who say: “Well, yes, but Marx was never given a fair trial. None of these countries got it just right. Now, if we could just get some country to do it our particular way...” In every Marxist country, they said, “Well, you see, our Marxism is different than any other Marxism.” Every one of them has said that. Every one of them has spelled death, destruction, misery, and poverty. But that horseman has gone down, indeed, with a great, great, crash.

Of course, there was **Darwin**, whose views of the origin of the species and biology affected not only biology, but all of the sciences, then all of the social sciences, and then almost all of life itself. In the last fifteen years, every basic column of Darwinism has collapsed. Hundreds and hundreds of articles in magazines have been published all over the world attesting to this fact. Darwinism is a theory in crisis. There is chaos in the evolutionary camp today. But since evolution is the religion of the godless, they will hold to it until every last vestige of evidence has come in. But I am sure that eventually that, too, will collapse.

Then, of course, there was **Nietzsche** and his book *The Superman*, which led to the super race and Hitler. Of course, we remember today the 50th anniversary since the opening of Auschwitz, where six million Jews died, part of the contribution of Darwin, with his concept of
the origin of the species, and Nietzsche, with his concept of the super man which led to the super
race.

By the way, it is interesting that in the writings of numbers of historians, it is coming out
now, that not only were six million Jews killed in the Holocaust, but nine or ten million other
people, mostly Christians, were also killed. I must say that for many, many years I never heard
this. I wonder how many of you knew that. It certainly never gets any press.

Today is also the 22nd anniversary of Roe v. Wade, a Supreme Court decision that has led
to the massacre of over 30 million babies in the womb. I don’t think that was on the front page of
the paper, either. These, indeed, are tragic pictures of the consequences of the writings of people
like these who have presented a godless, secular view of life—a humanistic, materialistic,
atheistic view of life, which has led to misery and suffering that is absolutely beyond human
calculation.

But those four horsemen have largely been thrown to the ground, and that, I think, augers
good for the future. They have been unsuccessful in changing truth into a continuing lie. Even
Communism, in its great effort to destroy religion (religion was the “opiate of the people”) soon
would be destroyed altogether. Don Feder says something very interesting about that. He says:

Communism’s inability to eradicate man’s spiritual instinct must rank among the great
failures of history. During the nineteenth century, the high noon of rationalism, the demise of
religion was considered [absolutely] inevitable. As enlightenment spread and reactionary
church-dominated governments fell, mankind would shrug off this ancient superstition, it was
confidently predicted.

But even with atheism enshrined as the official policy of a state that exerted pervasive
influence over the lives of its subjects, faith survived. Consider the resources mobilized in this
total warfare: Mass propaganda, educational brainwashing, laws which forced organized
religion into the catacombs, punishment for believers ranging from loss of employment to
gulags. Yet with all of the weapons at its disposal, atheism was routed.

So the attack on religion that was spearheaded by people like Nietzsche (and these are just
the figureheads, there were many who followed in their trail), the attack on the biblical view of
life and science and family and everything else are now coming into disrepute in our time. I think
that speaks very well.

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

In addition to that we have seen a tremendous and encouraging resurgence of religion in our
world today. In the last year I told you about one statistic in one message and another statistic in
another message, but these two statistics are the most encouraging statistics I have ever run
across in my 35 years of ministry. I want to bring them together today as we consider the
spiritual state of our nation and the prospects for our future.
The first statistic has to do with the Great Commission. I have said that the church runs on two tracks: the Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate, and every church and every minister and every Christian should be fulfilling both of these. The Great Commission is to share the gospel with every creature, to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of every nation, and that we have been endeavoring to do.

The statistics show that the number of converts per day worldwide has grown from 100 a day in 100 A.D. to 943 per day in 1900 (not a very rapid growth), to 4,500 a day in 1950, to 20,000 a day in 1980, to 92,000 per day as of last month, the end of 1994. That is an enormous ingathering. There have been more people gathered into the church in the last 15 years than were gathered into the church in centuries gone by. In Africa we have gone from 10 million Christians in 1900 to 300 million Christians in Africa today.

In the United States 86 percent of Americans profess themselves to be Christians. Unfortunately, many of them are merely nominal Christians—Christians in name only. They may have been baptized, confirmed, joined the church. They may be members of this church. They are, no doubt, some of you. You are a Christian in name, but you have never experienced that transforming, heart-changing encounter with Christ that has changed your life. You have never really repented of your sins and surrendered yourself to Him. You are even now continuing to live in known sin.

But 86 percent, at least profess themselves to be Christian. Many of those in America are being converted today, but as I said, they are “stealth” converts; they don’t appear on the statistical radar. Therefore, statisticians aren’t picking them up. For example, a person was a nominal Christian for thirty years or more and then he was converted—he met Christ and then he became a real Christian. Statistically nothing happened. He was a Christian; he is a Christian. Nothing happened.

Ah, yes, but something very dynamic happened! His heart was changed, he became a new creature in Jesus Christ, he was born of God, his whole view of life has been transformed. And that is happening to people all over this country. That is very, very encouraging. Furthermore, those statistics project out to 100,000 per day by the end of this year, and 200,000 per day by the end of this century, or this decade, five years from now. That is absolutely incredible, and the greatest ingathering we have ever seen.

IN Volvement In Cultural Mandate

Coming along behind that is the fact that Christians in increasingly large numbers are becoming involved in the Cultural Mandate. They are realizing they are not only to proclaim the light of the gospel, but they are to be light—to be salt to prevent the body politic from corrupting altogether, as the body of our society is in grave danger of corrupting altogether. As one writer says, the forces of decomposition are overwhelming the forces of composition in America. We have many who are involved in the decomposition of this nation.
But there are more Christians who are becoming involved. They are getting out and they are becoming active. They are getting active in school boards, in county elections, in the affairs of their society. They are getting involved in voting, when they never have been before.

The results were that in 1988 only 18 percent of those who voted were evangelical born-again Christians, according to an exit poll by the National Research Institute. The question they asked was, “Are you an evangelical born-again Christian?” That was ’88. By ’92 that figure had risen to 24 percent. By 1994, just six year later, that figure had risen to 33 percent—making that group of “evangelical born-again Christians,” the largest single voting block in America—larger than any one of the five often-sought-after, highly touted voting blocks of America. More than that, my friend, making it larger than all five of them combined, therefore, auguring the possibility of affecting the course of this nation in the future as never before. It is exciting to see that the growing number of Christians in this country who are becoming involved is beginning to melt the ice in the spiritual ice age we have been going through in recent decades in this nation. That is truly encouraging.

IMPACT ON MEDIA

It is even reaching, of all places, even into the media. Ted Baehr, president of the Christian Film and Television Commission, and also the publisher of the biweekly Movieguide, has said there may be a revival beginning in . . . in Hollywood! Can you believe it? He said that two decades ago there were only one or two Christian groups working in Hollywood, but today there are 16 or 17 groups of Christians working with the people who work in Hollywood. The result is that the Rothman-Lichter poll, which showed a decade ago that the Hollywood television people were among of the most godless people in the country, is now showing that there are more people in Hollywood attending church than before.

It is even reflected in television. Ted Baehr says that of about 40 to 50 top producers of Hollywood’s prime time shows, 21 of them are Christians, such as Michael Warren, co-producer of Family Matters. Both producers of the #1 Home Improvements are Christians. This program presents a well-adjusted family that even attends church. A far cry from the trash Hollywood has been putting out in recent years.

Just consider this: In 1988—only seven years ago—Christian bashing was the “in” thing in Hollywood. That was the year of The Last Temptation of Christ, where Christ was called every evil thing imaginable. Worst of all, He was called those things by Himself, in the movie. He said in that movie that He was controlled by Satan, He was filled with lust, He was a coward—everything that every atheist ever wanted to say about Christ, they put into the mouth of the character who played Jesus in that film. That was seven years ago.

What has happened? In that year, there were 90 Christian-bashing films that came out of Hollywood. In 1994, there were about six or seven such films. Or consider it from a positive point of view—family films. In 1985 there were two family films produced by Hollywood. Last year there were 75 family films! In two films, Corrina, Corrina and the Santa Clause, it wasn’t Christians who were the bad guys—the demons incarnate in human flesh—as has been portrayed by Hollywood so many times, but believe it or not, the bad guys were atheists.
But, indeed, there are slow indications of a change—a change that comes about as people obey both the Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate. As they do what Christ tells them to do, consequently, society begins to change. Those are incredibly encouraging statistics about what is happening in our time.

We live in a time which, indeed, is going to be a great shift—a paradigm shift, I believe—in society. This age of rationalism and unbelief that has been growing for the last several centuries, I believe is about to turn a corner. We are at that intersection right here to be a part of the most exciting change that has ever been seen in the world in modern times. . . in modern centuries. And we have the opportunity to be a part of that change.

We have seen tremendous changes taking place in this country just in the past year. We have seen a revolution that has taken place in Washington. One analyst said that in Washington, the world has been turned upside down. Isn’t that interesting? But we are interested in a greater turn than simply a political turn. We want to see people’s hearts changed and their minds changed. Our concern is with the spiritual and the moral. Political and economic and governmental changes will inevitably follow. That, indeed, is something which should cause us great delight.

We still have a long way to go. We have a lot of evils out there to fight, but we know we can win. We are winning. We need just to resolve that we are going to become more active than we ever have been before. We need to be active in fulfilling the Great Commission. We need to be active in fulfilling the Cultural Mandate. Are you?

“Granddaddy, what did you do when society made that great change? When the great awakening came and America was transformed, what did you do?”

“Oh, I just sat on the sidelines and watched.”

Ninety-two thousand people a day were led to Christ last year. How many of them did you lead to Christ?

“I was just a spectator. I was living in the most exciting times, perhaps, in the history of the world, and I was just a spectator.”

Kitty Genovese made the front page in 1964. She was a young lady who worked in New York. She came home late one night, made it to the front door of her apartment building, where she was accosted by a man with a knife. He slashed her; she screamed at the top of her voice. He slashed her again. She screamed louder: “O God, help me! Somebody help me! Help me, somebody, I’m being killed!”

It took thirty minutes for her assailant to kill her. Nobody came. It must be said, I guess, that nobody heard. Would that that were true. The police investigation revealed that 38 people heard her scream. Most of those looked out or their windows and saw her being slashed to death. None
of them came. None of them even bothered to call the police! When asked why not, they said, “We didn’t want to get involved.”

Can you believe that that young lady was slashed to pieces with a knife and not even one person called the police? “We didn’t want to get involved.” Dear friend, it takes more than 30 minutes to die in hell. It takes forever. What are you doing? “I just don’t want to get involved.” “I’m too busy. Pray, have me excused.”

Dear friend, there was a young man named William C. Burns—a name known to many ministers. He wasn’t world famous, but he was well known in Scotland as a very compassionate and effective minister for Jesus Christ. But when he was only sixteen years old, he was simply Billy Burns. He grew up on a farm, a long way from any town. He probably had never seen fifty people in his lifetime. He had never been to a big town. Never.

But his mother took him, at the age of sixteen, to Glasgow. As they were walking down the crowded streets of Glasgow, his mother suddenly noticed that Billy was gone. She called for him. She turned around and in panic began to retrace her steps down the street looking for him anxiously. Finally, she came to an alley, and there, back in the alley, seated on the ground with his back against the wall, his knees up before him and his arms around his knees, his head on his knees, he was sobbing uncontrollably. She ran up to him and said, “Billy, Billy, what is the matter? Are you all right? Are you all right?”

He looked up at her with a tear-stained face and said, “Oh, Mother, Mother, The thud of all those Christless feet is breaking my heart.”

You know, that really got to me. Have you ever . . . have you ever heard the thud of Christless feet? Have you ever bothered to inquire, or even think, if those with whom you rub shoulders day by day, week by week, are Christians? Have you ever wondered if they are on their way to eternal paradise, or on their way to eternal condemnation? Do you ever hear the thud of Christless feet? Do you even care?

Aunt Sophie was a caring lady. She was a dear old lady, now, and all her family loved her. At every opportunity she would share the love of Jesus and His grace with anyone she could. One day one of the family was walking down the street and they saw a crowd of people and in the middle of the crowd there was Aunt Sophie! People were laughing at her and mocking her. It turned out she had been sharing the love and grace of Christ with an Indian . . . a wooden cigar store Indian.

When she was told what had happened and why the crowd was laughing, she said, “Oh my, my eyes are just not what they used to be. Yet, I guess it is better to share the gospel with a wooden Indian than to be a wooden Christian and never share it at all.”

How about you, my friend? We will soon begin another semester of training people how to graciously share the love of Christ with others—through our Evangelism Explosion program. Will you be involved, or are you a wooden Indian, professing to be a Christian? Do you have a heart that is never broken over one lost soul, over one person who is going away into everlasting
perdition? Do you care at all? Do you have a heart that beats with the passion of Christ’s heart? Do you have a love for the Savior? If you do, you will love the things He loves, and He loves to draw lost men and women to Himself.

Ah, my friend, won’t you become involved in the greatest spiritual movement in the history of the world? Don’t continue to be a spectator. Become a participant. Don’t say, “I don’t want to get involved.”

I remember Kitty Genovese. Nobody cared enough to even make a call. If you care enough to learn how to save the lives of people who are perishing forever, I am going to ask you to call the church and tell the outreach department you want to become a part of that witnessing training.

Did you hear me . . . Indian? Maybe there are some Billy Burns here who would like to learn how to do something about the thud of the Christless feet, and change our world. That is how Paul did it, and that is how it is happening today. And that is how we can turn a world upside down for Christ. Won’t you be a part?

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PRAYER: Gracious heavenly Father, all around us there is the thud of Christless feet—men and women who are perishing, who need to know the Savior. Lord, teach us how to share the Good News with them, how to share the love and grace of Christ. Give us courage for the living of these days. Deliver us from our cowardice and make us soldiers of Christ. Give us a heart that feels compassion as Yours did for us. Make us not wooden Christians who care for no one, but use us for the changing of this world and the transforming of our society. In Christ’s name. Amen.

Sermon delivered by Dr. D. James Kennedy on January 22, 1995, at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.