

SAVING AMERICA

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THE WAR WE CAN'T IGNORE

MICHAEL JOLAYEMI

REDEMPTION  PRESS

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GOD BLESS AMERICA



While the storm clouds gather far across the sea,
Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free,
Let us all be grateful for a land so fair,
As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer.

God Bless America,
Land that I love.
Stand beside her, and guide her
Thru the night with a light from above.
From the mountains, to the prairies,
To the oceans, white with foam
God bless America,
My home sweet home.¹

Pledge of Allegiance

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.²

DEDICATION



To all Christian missionaries past and present; those who have labored and those that are laboring to make the world a better place.

And

To my late father, Luke Gbenle Jolayemi: he spent his life in the services of others that they might know Christ and lead useful lives.

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—Mike Jolayemi

INTRODUCTION



Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.”
—2 Timothy 2:19

THE WORLD IS moving fast into perilous times. There are wars and rumors of war. Human rights abuses and oppression have become common. Society is troubled by racial discrimination, child abuse, assassinations, murders, and suicides. There are corporate and individual frauds and dishonesty in high and low offices, embezzlements and corruptions. Family feuds result in fathers, mothers, and children taking one another to court. Society is overwhelmed with conflict.

No nation is spared. Terrorism and willful human destruction are happening all over the world, with violence from local gangs and premeditated killings of innocent people. You would say these things have always been, but the speed at which these issues are enveloping the world is alarming, particularly in certain sections of the world like our country that have had relatively low levels of such problems.

The United States of America has, in the past, been seen as a model for the rest of the world to imitate because our government maintained

considerably fewer social vices than other countries. However, we too have become enmeshed in the issues common to other, less civilized societies.

This country was founded on freedom, accompanied by a set of responsibilities clearly laid out by godly men. Leaders and citizens alike were aware of their accountability, not only to the delight of man, but to the pleasure of God.

The men who founded America feared God and lived by faith. They sought His leading in their lives so as to better serve their fellow countrymen. The democratic system of government initiated by the early statesmen was successful because it was built on the principles of fairness and equality, the cardinal principles of God's Word.

The founding fathers crafted the Constitution using the Bible as their guide. They knew the only way to have relationships that reflected honesty, transparency, justice, and love was to adhere to the rules delivered to man by God. The Constitution of the United States of America, therefore, emulated and expanded on the Ten Commandments.

Unfortunately, we have allowed the encroachments of other cultures not just to mock the values we inherited but to destroy them. We have become estranged from God, our Creator, through the influences of people who are opposed to a government based on the principles of the Word of God, and who promote a belief in the separation of church and state. They have turned the clause in our constitution protecting the rights of citizens to practice their faith into 'separation of man and God.'

These people do not believe in God and do not want anything related to God in a national system of governance. Over time, this philosophy has undermined a nation founded "under God" and developed a society without the fear of God.

Throughout centuries, deviations from God's laws have always resulted in fractured human relationships. Remove the tenets of the Ten Commandments from any nation's system of government and you have anarchy and futility.

The peaceful society that once flourished in this country has turned violent in recent years. The values that set the course for America no longer exist, and a return to those values seems impossible.

What went wrong with our society? Jeremiah, the prophet of old, sought the answer to this question too. "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is

there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?” (Jeremiah 8:22). Why is our nation perpetually backsliding? Why are we holding fast to deceit instead of repenting?

If we do not take a good look at ourselves, we will become the kind of people the apostle Paul described when he said, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The War We Can't Ignore traces the genesis of world conflict, how it has entered our society, and the platform on which conflicts can be overcome. This book attempts to disabuse the minds of those who hold the view that life on earth can be lived successfully without God. It will also help Christian believers to understand the importance of their position among their communities and their spreading of the gospel message through their lifestyles and words.

Those who do not believe in salvation through Jesus Christ will not be at fault if no one reaches out to them. “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Romans 10:14).

Satan deceives people into thinking that the knowledge of God is irrelevant in the conduct of our personal lives as well as the management of the society. This book appeals to Christians to approach this deceit of Satan not by being forceful, hostile, or aggressive to those who believe in the lies of the evil one, but by attacking the devil, who has occupied their hearts with falsehoods about God.

The moral ingredient of the Word of God is indispensable for a peaceful and progressive society. Arthur Simon explained this in his book *Christian Faith and Public Policy*. He writes:

The Bible prescribes no economic policy, foreign policy, or government structure for us, nor does it detail for us the way in which we are to carry out our responsibilities as US citizens in the twentieth century. The Bible gives us a sense of direction, but it leaves the method of traveling to us.... The Bible offers us no economic system, no political blueprint, no proof texts for domestic or foreign policy. But it does give us a solid foundation on which to build.³

A reliance on human philosophy and science to the exclusion of God in our social, political, and economic management has aggravated and will continue to blow out the conflicts within our society. The consequences are terrorism, racial segregation, nuclear proliferation, and economic downturns resulting in poverty, hunger, and human suffering.

This book presents a practical approach to winning the war against the devil by rescuing our society from sliding further away from God. The world has no other alternative than a return to our Creator, who understands the source of the conflicts in the world and has the solutions to the problems.

In this book, Christian believers will learn that they hold the road maps to the wellbeing of society as well as the key to required peaceful co-existence in the world. The world looks to us (Christian believers) for refuge in these chaotic and destructive situations. Readers will be equipped with tools available to us to transform our society, so that our nation can sustain our leading role in the world socially, economically, and politically. The book also advises those who think that God is not relevant in our society to stop fooling around.

I have walked with and worked for God since 1974, when I was a leader in Christian fellowship groups in high school and college. I was a resource person for campus students fellowships for about fifteen years. I have also been a teacher and elder in churches and other Christian groups, including Evangelical Churches Winning All (ECWA), other interdenominational soul-winning groups, and Gideon International. I am currently president of the African Christian Fellowship of Los Angeles.

Over the thirty-six years I've been a Christian, I have come to the conclusion that any society that wishes to make significant progress must acknowledge God in its leaders' and citizens' words and actions.

Roy Herron, in his book, *How Can a Christian Be in Politics?*, said:

In 1775, John Adams wrote his wife, Abigail, "Statesmen may plan and speculate for Liberty, but it is Religion and Morality alone which can establish the principles upon which Freedom can securely stand." Adams believed that a patriot must be a religious man.⁴

Godlessness will lead a society into utter darkness. The clarion call of this book is to fight wickedness and maintain uprightness in our land. A spiritual revival is required in this nation, and it is my prayer that this book will ignite the consciousness of the church and its people. I pray for awakening and restoration of citizens to godly living.

I appeal to readers to be passionate about the survival of our society. No one can fight this war for us. The only society that will get better in the current circumstances of the world is that which acknowledges God and teaches the fear of God among the people. Anything short of God's fear anywhere in the world today will be catastrophic.

THE GENESIS OF CONFLICTS



I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.
—Romans 7:23

I FEEL CONCERN about the issues of daily life around the world. It does not appear human life would ever get better. What is really the problem? We continue to witness a high proportion of conflicts within the human race. Conflict is a common issue in the world, ranging from emotional, interpersonal, communal, diplomatic, and national proportions. Conflicts ravage the environment, economics, and religion. And all conflicts center around one common denominator: people.

Every aspect of human endeavor is conflicted, yet we never seem to understand the source of the conflicts in which we find ourselves. Our conflicts appear to defy solutions. Unresolved attempts at resolution can lead to further conflicts and even the ultimate power struggle, war.

Dr. D. L. Moody summed up man's conflicts when he declared, "I have more trouble with D. L. Moody than with any other man I ever met."⁵ In other words, "I've never met anyone who has given me so much trouble as myself."

Man's agitated existence dates back to the first family on earth. Since the human disobedience to the instruction of the Creator in the Garden of Eden, man and woman were separated from their God; godlessness has pervaded the world and it has been catastrophic. For example, the first siblings from Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, were engulfed in fierce competition in their interactions with each other and with God, resulting in the death of the younger brother. Cain was overcome with jealousy and gave in to his emotions rather than attempting to resolve their conflicts and he recorded the unfortunate first in murder on earth.

Irrational and even murderous acts are the norm in the world today. People are bereft of answers when they ponder what motives have driven society to such fierce and extreme actions.

What is the origin of these conflicts? The main source is the heart of mankind. The state of an individual's mind often determines his or her actions. We do not do anything outside of what goes on in our inner feelings. The heart is the engine that drives all our actions, the center of the total human personality leading to our emotions. Through conflicts that occupy our psyche, we are led to hurt ourselves or society and sometimes fight with other people in the world. Prior to the disobedience, man and woman were in close interaction with God and their hearts were occupied with the character of their Creator. The absence of God is doing incalculable damage to our existence.

Fighting! Fighting! Fighting!

Everywhere in the world, we are in some kind of competitions that have taken control of our behavior or thoughts and we have engaged ourselves often in hostile encounters with opposing forces or individuals...a verbal disagreement...a struggle to achieve a goal or an objective.

We sometimes witness a quarrel or misunderstanding, sometimes involving exchange of fists. It could be a heated, instinctive physiological response to a threatening situation that readies one either to resist forcibly or to run away. We also fight in contention for victory with vigor, fierceness, and determination. It may involve striving to overcome, take over, or destroy a person or thing by blows or weapons. It is an action

targeted at a perceived opponent. Whatever form it takes, it is the issue of the human heart.

Ironically, conflicts are not limited to enemies. We often quarrel with our friends and blood relations. The intention may not be to harm, but a situation resulting from disagreement could not be resolved. And not all fighting is physical. Two or more people may be locked in a silent cold war with no apparent aggression. Outsiders may be unaware that there is a fight and therefore do nothing to intervene. Silent war can be more dangerous than physical combat. Participants in a cold war may pretend not to be burdened by the disagreement even as they quietly plot each other's downfall. The parties then destroy not only each other but also victims who could have prevented such altercation if they'd known a problem existed.

And we fight each other globally, which may include embargoes, withdrawal of aid, and severance of communication between nations. Disagreements destroy the good relationship that may have existed between these nations. And some of these disagreements snowball into drums of war and panic in society.

Why Do People Fight?

The conflict is not what anyone wants; an average human desires a life of peace. That was the wish of the Creator, that we could live an abundant life. But this has eluded us. Fighting appears to be part of human development. Even the members of our physical body often hurt each other. For example, the teeth sometimes bite the tongue, resulting in pain for other sections of the body.

Though fighting is not good and no one enjoys it, we often end up in contention.

Dr. Gregory Tucker, in his article "Why People Fight," said, "The more we fight, the more we reinforce the fiction that people are 'warlike.' It is all part of The Human Condition."⁶

Fights occur when people disagree, get hurt or offended, or try to usurp another's rights. Diverse perception of needs, values, and interests, either personal or corporate, often results in separation. The reason for the disagreement may be unimportant or trivial, but if left uncontrolled,

it can snowball into serious fighting, the consequence of which is pain for those involved and for innocent bystanders.

Disagreements and misunderstandings occur when neither party is willing to shift position. Husbands and wives with normal differences of opinion on domestic issues (such as management of material possessions) have ended up with irreconcilable differences leading to divorce.

And some persons are involved in conflicts they do not understand. They find themselves fighting but do not know why. Others go into struggles for specific reasons. They fight to gain power or to defend themselves from aggression.

Despite loss, pain, and undesirable consequences, we become embroiled in fighting due to a passion we cannot ignore.

Former US President Ronald Reagan, while governor of California, in a speech on June 15, 1972, attested to the fact that war is not pleasant, and that if it were possible, no one would engage in it. "All of us denounce war; all of us consider it man's greatest stupidity. And yet wars happen and they involve the most passionate lovers of peace because there are still barbarians in the world that set the price for peace at death or enslavement and the price is too high."⁷

In spite of people's desire to conquer the threats of war—not only because of the immense damages and losses wars bring, but also because peace is the indispensable principle of life—fights still ravage the land, leading to sorrow for the people. Elimination of war in society is a serious challenge for human endeavor.

Another former US president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, said in a speech before the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 16, 1953:

I hate war, as only a soldier who has lived through it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity...Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed....

The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities....We pay for a single fighter plane with half

a million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people....

War is stupid, cruel and costly. Yet wars have persisted. In the name of self-defense, nations have paid the human price and, spurred on by fear and competition, have continued to accept the burdens of armament, the size and cost of which grow ever more fantastic.”⁸

The past world wars were no different in their origin, having emanated from human self-interest as well as political, economic, and/or territorial ambitions. Russia, Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Ottoman Turkey helped other countries attain independence not for the sake of independence alone, but to further their national advantage.

In 1829, Russia, Britain, and France cooperated to secure independence from the Ottoman rule of Greece. They were supposedly motivated by their individual nations’ interests and the gain that would accrue to their countries. As soon as they were through with the war on colonization, the Great Powers imposed a foreign dynasty over the new kingdom. Their quest for control and expansion led to threats, resulting in mistrust, a cold war, and eventually full-scale war.

The side on which each nation finds itself in the event of war is often dictated by its leaders’ interpretation of which side would best serve their country’s interests.

Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, in their book *The First World War*, wrote:

One thing had better be said at the outset, War occurs because the great mass of human beings is prepared, at least in certain circumstances, to regard the resort to arms as an acceptable proceeding. They may wish to enrich their communities, and so enhance their own self-esteem, by engaging in predatory acts at the expense of their neighbors. Or they may only be prepared to engage in battle to resist what appears to be the aggression and violence of others. Either way, a deliberate choice of war is being made.⁹

In an objective analysis of the actions of the conflicting parties, a common denominator is a deep-seated individual interest (often selfish). The decision whether or not to fight is dictated by an interest that is being protected.

For instance, the alliance of Italy, Germany, and Austria-Hungary in 1882 was predicated on the nations' political and economic interests. Prior and Wilson said:

Again, we may note the case of Italy. That country had entered into Triple alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1882 at the time when it possessed territorial ambitions at the expense of France. By the early twentieth century Italy's ambitions lay elsewhere. So when war broke out in 1914 Italy did not take side of its allies. That was not because Italian statesmen acted on different principles from the rulers of other European countries. They acted on the same principles: that alliances controlled action only when they embodied a nation's vital interests. Otherwise they did not.¹⁰

The same trend preceded the Second World War. Breakdown in communication and abandonment of peace initiatives led to gunfire.

No one embarks on war for the mere sake of war. But war at times becomes the inevitable conclusion in trying to prove a point. Society at large, made up of ego-driven individuals, is no different.

Quoting from A. J. P. Taylor's argument on the origins of the Second World War, Prior and Wilson noted:

The Second World War broke out not because any nation intended it but because governments were engaged in familiar games of bluff and brinkmanship. Their intention was to secure advantages at the expense of their neighbors without actually generating conflict. On this occasion, however, the process went wrong.¹¹

But conflicts started manifesting when people began to identify differences between each other in language and color of skins. Their hearts no longer accepted that all humans are created equal as we entered into race segregation, the genesis of division on earth.

The Birth of Race Segregations

Conflicts were minimal among the early people of the world because there was no language or race barrier.

According to the biblical accounts, the first men and women on earth spoke the same language and were cooperative with one another. The teamwork and understanding among them suggests that there was no such thing as race or color, though Bible history is not specific about this.

In human foolishness and arrogance, they attempted to build a tower to reach the heavens. They did not consider God's power and sovereignty; they apparently did not see the need to seek His consent before embarking on the project. God then divided humans with the creation of many languages, making it impossible for them to communicate. That put an end to the most contemptuous event in history and was the beginning of differences in the human race.

“The Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.’

So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:5–9).

Prior to this human self-inflicted misfortune, “the whole world had one language and a common speech” (Genesis 11:1).

The confusion of language created separations among the people of the world. This resulted in race segregations, different skin colors, and polarization and discrimination in human activities. The lack of cooperation may also have given rise to colonization, in which the more powerful groups (known as nations) forced their economic and political activities on weaker groups.

When the British colonized the New World, their rule was no better. It too displayed the selfishness of the human heart, resulting in ongoing conflicts. The colonialists set the indigenous people against one another.

This “divide and conquer” approach enabled the colonialists to easily have their way by ruling the divided people. Over time, this division eroded the people’s trust in one another, which resulted in their inability to work together or live peacefully side by side. Irreconcilable differences eventually gave way to open warfare, which led to destruction of property and loss of lives, furthering the conflicts on earth.

Rwanda is an example of a victim of imperialism. It was colonized by Belgium in 1916. “Under the treaty of Versailles, the former German colony of Rwanda-Urundi was made a UN protectorate to be governed by Belgium.”¹²

The Belgians used the two distinct ethnic groups in that country to further their own interests. First, the division created among the people by the colonialists enabled them to rule the nation longer because the ethnic groups did not agree to rule themselves for lack of trust. Second, trades in the natural resources of the colonies benefited the colonists—an interest that beclouded their sense of judgment. As long as they were able to achieve their objectives, disagreements among the natives didn’t concern them.

Fergal Keane, in his book *Season of Blood: A Rwandan Journey*, said, “In 1926, Belgians introduced a system of ethnic identity cards differentiating Hutus from Tutsis, the major ethnic group.”¹³

By July 2, 1962, when Rwanda formally declared her independence, neighbors in the tiny country could not trust one another. Animosity between the two groups, which had accelerated over years of occupation and through the divisive actions of the colonists, culminated in barbaric genocide. More than one million lives were lost. A long and torturous rebuilding of the country is still evolving.

Human Selfishness

We humans often do not see anything wrong with our actions, provided our personal interests are met. We have a natural tendency to refuse to take responsibility for the myriad problems that besiege us. Issues are usually blamed on other people or things. Sometimes we even hold God responsible for our travail. We expect Him to use His influence to prevail over occurrences of evil. But we forget that we never consulted Him when our hearts pushed us to do what we do.

Does God have such power? And will He exercise it? The answer is both yes and no. God is absolutely powerful, but while God can and often does intervene when we are faced with evil, we must recognize His sovereignty. God cannot be controlled by the humans He created. He reserves the right to intervene or not. He is not accountable to us; rather, we are accountable to Him.

God created us as free beings who can make choices. These choices dictate the events and circumstances in life and within society. It is therefore irresponsible to lay the blame on God for the calamities that have befallen us.

In all the conflicts that have arisen out of the choices of human beings, God has always intervened, either directly through events or by raising individuals to the rescue. We do not always understand how He does it. Nor can we determine when He does it.

When we make bad choices, God sometimes may use wicked individuals to teach us to avoid the same pitfalls and to teach future generations the consequences suffered by those who choose such ways. Unfortunately, we keep repeating the same mistakes. Today, in most nations of the world there are leaders who have no fear of God and lead people into a state of hopelessness.

But even in the midst of hopelessness, God often remembers mercies and has punished wicked leaders. About eight hundred years before Christ, King Ahab of Israel was disobedient to God. Under the influence of his wife, Jezebel, he oppressed the people. God was angry with him and raised Jehu to wipe out all the generations of Ahab (2 Kings 9). This history should have helped subsequent leaders to fear and honor God. But since then, several kings in Israel have also become vain in their imaginations and done wickedly.

Ironically, some of them started their rule with the fear of God, and all was well with the nation. But they soon went astray, doing evil. Because God does not accept wicked acts, these rulers brought calamities to their society. However, God did not leave the people without intervention. When trouble came, they only needed to accept responsibility for their misdeeds, repent of their iniquities, and ask for God's mercy.

Unknown Motives in the Human Heart

It is often difficult to identify the true motives of an individual's actions because the contents of the heart are known only to the actors and the Creator. This makes it hard for people to understand the nature of conflicts when they occur. It is equally formidable to differentiate individuals acting for the sake of humanity (doing the work of God) from those whose hearts have been taken over by the spirit of Satan. This challenge prevents society from accurately ascertaining whether a fight is for a good cause.

Some warriors fight with the objective of defending the common good. They commit all the resources at their disposal without expecting any personal benefit in return. They fight a purposeful war or crusade as Providence has led them. They are not warmongers, as they are sometimes portrayed, but are genuinely concerned with the situations they seek to resolve, using their God-given talents for the common good of society. They may have no desire for war, but the responsibility to defend their people rests on them. The fight became an issue of necessity. Their place in history is etched by their actions in answering the call. All these are, of course, God's creations.

In the fifth century BC, Mordecai, a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, found himself leading his people out of impending trouble. The Jews were faced with a threatening situation in which an opponent of the Israeli nation planned a mass murder of their people.

Haman, an Agagite, was influential and highly favored in the king's court under King Xerxes, also known as Ahasuerus (486 to 465 BC). Haman hated the Jews and had perfected a plan to annihilate all the Jewish people in the kingdom. He manipulated the king into signing a decree declaring that all Jews in the nation would be killed on a set date.

When Mordecai got this sad news, he could not ignore the fight or make excuses to avoid it. He went into battle to defend his people and save them from annihilation using his niece, Esther, the queen. Initially, Esther did not understand what her guardian was up to. She bought into the cause when it became clear to her it was good.

The Jews' battle for survival under Mordecai did not involve guns or other weapons. Mordecai was not a soldier. He knew nothing of the art or techniques of war. But he understood where true power lies. He

had all the Jews fast, as directed by Esther the queen. Fasting is a way for people to show God they need Him in their situation. It is in effect a demonstrated prayer. As a result of those agonized prayers, God's favor came to Esther as she spoke to the king.

Again, but for God the Jews could have been completely wiped out. Mordecai was a willing instrument of God in a moment of desperate need for the Jews. He rose to the challenge at a time when others might have gone into hiding. He knew what was at stake, and he mobilized all the Jews for the deliverance of the nation of Israel.

Individuals are often part of God's intervention in times of conflict in society.

A young Jewish man, David, tended his father's sheep, but circumstances and destiny drew him into formidable leadership of his people. At the time of his youth, the Jews were at war with the Philistines. Goliath, a Philistine army commander and giant, continually challenged the Jews to fight him. This dismayed and terrified the Israelites.

David, small in stature but large of heart and full of faith in the God of Israel, believed his people needed delivery from the Philistines. He shouted to Goliath: "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head.

This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands" (1 Samuel 17:45–47).

David faced Goliath with a strategy born out of a vision from God. He was unschooled in the art of war and military practices. He wasn't even large enough in stature to wear armor. To the amazement of both the Philistines and the Israelites, David slew Goliath, answering the call to save his people from the oppression of their foes. His passion, commitment, and dedication demonstrated the intervention of the God of Israel. The war reached a decisive end not by soldier and sword, but by boy and slingshot.

The world has witnessed spirited leaders whose main focus was to resolve conflicts. When Abraham Lincoln was faced with criticisms in his handling of the Civil War and slave trade, he said: “If I were to try to read, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how—the very best I can; and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what’s said against me won’t amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference.”¹⁴

Lincoln was raised by his Creator for the purpose of freeing the slaves, an evidence of the intervention of God in a time of conflict.

Human Pride

Our egos often give us a false sense of ability. Can men and women control the conflicts within and outside of ourselves without God? Can we actually exist without fighting in the midst of the godlessness that pervades our society?

Jesus spoke to the people of Capernaum on the limits of human ability when it comes to conflicts. He said, “Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come!” (Matthew 18:7). Jesus was saying in effect that we would continue to be in trouble because of the situation of our hearts which does not give room to God and that the dire consequences are there for us.

It is an illusion on our part to think our efforts could resolve all the conflicts around the world. Past failures attest to this. Admittance that we are at fault and helpless in our situations would elicit the mercies of God. But we keep playing gods in our actions, as if the solutions are in our hands, forgetting that we are really the problem.

The lack of recognition of our inadequacy is a serious setback. That is why when we seek peace, we end up in war. We often regret the effects of war and yet still see it as the only answer. Ironically, some people, in trying to resolve conflict, choose death and destruction as a final solution. Several suicides have come as a result of someone’s inability to find solutions for conflicts, resulting in the bizarre conclusion that the

appropriate response is to take his or her own life. Some people have even taken other people's lives before taking their own.

Do We Learn from the Past?

The challenge of the human race is that we keep doing the same things, even though they lead us into trouble. God created us as body and soul. The soul, also known as the heart, is where the spirit dwells. The spirit controls the mind and is the ultimate driver of our behavior. We dwell in the body, which is physically seen, but a human being is not the physical body; the body is only the shelter for the real person.

God created human beings in His image, and since He is spirit, so are we. The heart is continually faced with a choice of evil or good, resulting from the influence of the two forces battling for control of our minds.

There are two types of behavior in people all over the world: good and evil. Evil behavior is propelled by Satan, while good behavior is of God.

We were not created for evil, but evil pervades the world as a result of the influence of Satan, which began when he craftily led the first created human on earth to disobey God. This deceit brought sin and guilt to the human heart. Ever since then, our hearts have been polluted, hungry and thirsty for wickedness always (see Genesis 1:31 and Genesis 3).

Paul of Tarsus describes the nature of the human heart this way:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

—Romans 7:15–20

The prophet Jeremiah observed, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: Who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9 KJV). Jesus Christ, who has a deep understanding of the human heart,

said, “For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person” (Mark 7:20–23).

Speaking with the Pharisees, the custodians of Jewish law in His day, Jesus said, “You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (Matthew 12:34). In the heart lies the ultimate cause of war.

The apostle James asked these rhetorical questions concerning conflicts:

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

—James 4:1–3

David, the second king in Israel, who reigned between 1010 and 970 BC, summoned the courage to ask God for mercy because he recognized that he was helpless in his behavior and needed a higher power to deliver him from all the troubles he had put on himself. He said:

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:1–5).

King David asked God for a new heart because that is where all the conflicts that consumed his life dwelled. “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). David did not want God to leave him without a heart. He needed his heart, because if the heart is taken away the physical body becomes useless. He therefore requested from God a new heart. He believed that with a regenerated heart, conflict was bound to cease.

What Can We Do About Our Hearts?

We cannot do anything about our heart, but we can get it regenerated. God provided the answer to the conflicts of the human heart through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was born in the small village of Bethlehem in Judea. He was born as a baby to Jewish parents, and his birth was the only miracle of its kind in the history of the world.

The Bible gives us insight into how God made the provision of Jesus Christ for the reconciliation of human beings to God.

Paul captured the revelation of Jesus Christ when he said:

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

—Hebrews 1:1–3

We cannot help the conflicts that came to us through our forebears. But we can accept a regenerated mind through Jesus Christ, who possesses the power to give us new hearts.

Paul testified of this when he said:

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Jesus Christ] the many will be made righteous.

—Romans 5:18–19

The name of Jesus repulses unregenerate humans, as it is considered synonymous with religion. But the conflicts of the human heart require that we humbly submit ourselves to the lordship of Jesus Christ. We cannot run away from Him if we want to be free from our daily troubles. Our past efforts at resolving conflicts have not yielded any positive results; we need to try a different method.

We will forever continue with our struggles unless we accept what Jesus told the Pharisees, who struggled with an attitude of unbelief. To them he said, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’” (Matthew 21:42). The way to go is to accept the only provision made by God for human freedom from conflicts, Jesus Christ.

And We Can Experience Less War

Our hearts must be changed to avert conflicts, and Jesus is the ultimate heart changer of all time. When Jesus comes into our hearts, our thoughts and our understanding of fighting changes. There is only one common enemy to man and woman; he is Satan. That was the reasoning of Paul the Apostle when he said, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). In other words, this is not the war we can use armored mortals or guns to fight but an offensive using the words of God, the Bible and prayers. The Bible says: “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Thoughts

The human situation may appear helpless but the truth is that if our hearts are surrendered to God, we will experience peace and our society will also have less problems. The sinful nature in us does not give us room to do any good, but only evil. But our depraved personality can be changed by the man Jesus, who possesses the power to affect change in the human heart. When the spirit of Jesus Christ enters our hearts, the spirit of Satan departs and we can do only those things God would do. And you know what? God is a good God.