

Samuel Chadwick once said, “The church has never talked so much about itself and its problems. That is always a bad sign. The lust for talk about work increases as the power for work declines. Conferences multiply when work fails. The problems of the Church are never solved by talking about them... There is no need to discuss the problem of reaching the masses as long as the masses are being reached. There is no problem of empty churches as long as churches are full... The power to attract is in attractiveness, and it is useless to advertise the banquet if there is nothing to eat.”

I believe it is important for us to realize not only that there is something very wrong with the North American Church but there is something *very wrong with* **how we are going about trying to solve the problem.**

For years we have been saying the church is laodicean. It's lukewarm. Our churches are full of lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. We have the form of godliness without the power.

Leaders have been saying this for years. And how did the Church respond?

Books were written. Conferences were attended. Podcasts and talk shows and everything else multiplied, and yet the problems remained.

Now we are faced with a new set of circumstances. In the reformed churches there seems to be universal agreement that this virus and its consequences is judgment from God. So some have complied with restrictions, others haven't, but *all* are agreed that this is God's judgment on the Church. After all the Bible teaches that judgment begins at the house of the LORD. And yet how has the Church responded?

Some have closed, some have remained open. Books are still being written and sold, conferences are now live streamed. Podcasts and talk shows continue to abound... **and the problems remain.** God's judgment is still upon us... **and we have yet to take it to heart.**

We have yet to respond in a biblical way. For all the discussions and debates online, I have yet to hear the churches call for a solemn assembly. *Not a whisper* about coming together in fasting and sackcloth to repent and to pray and ask God to heal the land!

And so this lockdown may come to an end; but for all this God's wrath is not turned away. And since we remain stubborn and careless not taking to heart God's chastising, we can expect worse.

Worse is coming...

If we have a brief reprieve we can be sure that unless the Church will begin to take this seriously and convocate assemblies for fasting and prayer and repentance, we will never return anything like normal but instead find ourselves plunged into greater darkness and greater tribulation.

It's astonishing to me that even now in this time of what is being called unprecedented challenges, the church admits on one side of her mouth that God is angry, that God is dealing with us, that the Church needs to repent and then with the other side of the mouth speak of strategies all borrowed from man!

That is a sign of profound belief and desperate short sightedness.

We've talked about the needs of the North American church. We've admitted that we share in the spiritual poverty. There is an impotence about us today that makes the world scoff at us – and now most churches are closed. *Literally* doors are closed and people are not allowed to enter.

So how should we respond?

If someone came into your home and took your children from you would you hold a conference to tell everyone your children were gone and you needed them back? Or would you write an article for the paper or publish a book describing what your children were like and asking the public's help? *I doubt it.*

Before you did anything else, in the midst of everything else, and after you had tried everything else I can tell you that, like Jeremiah, you would get down on your knees, or put face down on the floor and you would say with groans *“for these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water; because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me... the enemy prevailed.”*

And then if there were even one person to hear you you would say *“O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine cease. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord...”*

Is the analogy that far off? They haven't yet taken your children but they've taken the crown off of Christ's head! Praise no longer waits God in Zion! And then there are all the reasons why this judgment is upon us in the first place:

- Worship that is unhallowed
- Sabbaths desecrated
- Broken homes
- No family altars
- Neglected prayer closets

- Pornography
- Adultery
- Covetousness
- Worldliness
- Immodesty
- Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God
- Form of godliness without the power thereof

... what if the church should die?

I know, “the gates of hell will not prevail against her...” That’s true globally. But in regions, in parts of the world at various times in history the light has gone out and the doors have closed not to be reopened for centuries.

Look at Augustine in North Africa before it fell to the Muslims and the light went out. Look at Scotland in the days of the Covenanters and Scotland today almost entirely pagan. Look at where we’re going. I believe God may very well take the candlestick from us. Unless we repent, we have every reason to expect the light to go out in Canada.

...The difference between our response and Daniel's response is anguish. His heart was broken. So he went to God with sackcloth and ashes fasting and supplicating

Consider 4 examples of fasting:

- a. In **Judges 20** when the tribe of Benjamin had defeated the Israelites in battle killing 22000 on one day and 18000 on another the people of Israel came together to the house of God and wept and sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening.

And then deliverance!

- b. In **2 Chronicles when Jehoshaphat** king of Judah learned that a very large army had invaded his kingdom and that he didn’t have the resources to fight them he proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

And then deliverance!

- c. In **Esther** we read that Haman was bent on the complete destruction of the Jews. We are told that the Jews gathered in Shushan and fasted and prayed three days without eating or drinking...

And then - of course - deliverance!

d. In **Jonah** we read of Jonah's visit to Ninevah. Again he fasted and prayed...

And to no one's surprise they were delivered.

...Has our Calvinism robbed us of our sense of responsibility? Have we so distorted the sovereignty of God that we lost sight of means and responsibility?

Isaiah once observed that there was "*none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee...*"

He wanted God to rend the heavens and come down. He wanted revival, awakening, a transformed church, a valley of dry bones becoming a great army. But he looked around and he saw a people who wanted ease in Zion - all the blessings of God without anguish.

They didn't want to know the heart of God. They wanted to enjoy themselves. They wanted to be left alone to pursue the life they enjoyed.

And the same is true today. We say we want God to rend the heavens and come down. We say we want awakening. **But do we really want it?** Enough to "*give him no rest, til he establish, and till he make Jerusale (the church) a praise in the earth*"?!

Ezekiel says there was a time when your renown, the renown of the church of Jesus Christ went forth among the heathen for your beauty: "*for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, says the LORD. But thou didst trust in your own beauty, and played the harlot because your renown...*"

And we've lost it. The glory of God has departed. The beauty of the Church is lost. We're a reproach; and where are the people to take it to heart? Who will pray with me? Who will covenant with me to give God no rest?

... Please, let it never be said of you that he did not call upon the name of God, that he did not stir himself up to take hold of God.

Pray in weakness and frailty if that's all you can do. Groan if that's all you can manage. But begin to pray in earnest.

My hope for the church is *not* Calvinism or Presbyterianism. My hope for the church is that she will not only realize her privilege and her need, but that she will be given more faith to believe and know that Jesus is worthy. **That we would realize that what He now receives from his people is *not* good enough.** That we would be so confronted with His glory that we would put aside everything else in order that we might seek Him and know Him and have Him and worship Him and *obey Him*. That word would get around that Calvinists and Arminians and Baptist and

Presbyterians are gathering in fields and homes and churches in the day and in the day in the night to meet with God *because they want to*. **Because He is worthy!**