

GLOBAL LIFE CAMPAIGN™

Lawlessness Unleashed

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I was shocked and deeply grieved by the unjust treatment, disregard for the sacredness of his life, and murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the city where I was born. We are praying for his family, for true justice, forgiveness, healing and transformation in our nation, especially for the Church to come together nationwide. Let us finally come together in humility and repent for our past national sins of slavery and injustice, and the corresponding ongoing sinful attitudes against some Americans because of the color of their skin – all of which is deeply offensive to our Creator, and ought to be to us.

To peacefully and respectfully protest injustice is right, as did Martin Luther King, Jr. But “Violence is never a proper response.”[1] The lawlessness, violence and destruction that has come unleashed in the United States reveals many serious underlying issues. I think we are reaping a harvest of lawlessness from seeds sown for many decades and generations, rejecting God and His authority and His Word in every sector of our society. In the *GLC Series* this week, we will examine the roots of lawlessness in mankind and in the United States.

Respect for the dignity of all human life begins at the moment of conception. Taking innocent life before birth invariably leads to broader and broader disregard for all human life. 2020 is the 100th year since governments began to authorize abortion. Do we really think it is possible to murder more than 1 billion babies by abortion, including 61.3 million in the United States, and for heaven and nature to not respond? The first sign of judgment this year that God wants the innocent bloodshed to end is the global coronavirus pandemic. The second sign may be lawlessness. Increased lawlessness is another sign of judgment in this way: the LORD is so grieved by our sins that He partially or substantially withdraws His Spirit. The shedding of innocent blood grieves the Holy Spirit and cries out loudly before God Almighty every day. The Spirit of God restrains lawlessness, but when He withdraws, lawlessness is unleashed (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). Also, lawlessness is a primary indicator that Jesus uses to discern those who do *not* know Him (Matthew 7:21-23).

As I spent hours watching news reports and video clips of lawlessness, it was like watching my beloved nation self-destruct before my eyes. What is it in my fellow-Americans that would cause them to behave this way? Those who were violent, destructive or looted seemed to have absolutely no knowledge, reverence or fear of God; no sense of responsibility or accountability; no respect for human life or property except their own; no respect for the church, civil government or the rule of law; no sense of the enormous investment of time, labor and money that is required to build a business; and no understanding of the beliefs and careful foundations that were put in place to build this free and prosperous nation soon to be entrusted to them.

Here is another question to consider: Do we think it is possible to have been a nation devoted to God and more blessed than any other in history, and then become full of idolatry, self-idolatry, immorality, innocent bloodshed, and rejecting Him, and not receive correction?

Source of Lawlessness: Where does lawlessness come from, and why do some people behave in lawless ways and others do not? Actually, every one of us is guilty of lawlessness because we were born in sin, which means that at our core, our natural response is to resist or rebel against authority, beginning with our parents, including by manipulating or demanding our own way (Psalm 51:5; Proverbs 29:15). “Sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). Every lawless thought, word and deed begins in the human heart (Matthew 15:18-20).

Signs of Lawlessness: Regarding marriage, family, work and society, something I noticed in the Bible is that God often speaks to those under authority first because if the one under authority refuses to respect the one in authority, that relationship or institution or government cannot operate properly or fulfill its purpose. This begins with our relationship with God, and is why He went immediately to Adam when he and Eve sinned because He gave the command to Adam (Genesis 3:9-11). We are lawless beings apart from God, but as you know or will see below, when we bring ourselves under His authority, then everything comes into order and we are able to live in right relationship with God and each other. Failing to do so results in rebellion, lawlessness and chaos. Here are some signs of lawlessness that I see:

- God designed the love, faithfulness, unity and communion in marriage and family to be a reflection of the Trinity, and the place where respect for authority is first taught. But when husbands and fathers neglect or abuse their leadership, or wives refuse to respect their husbands, or children rebel or brake relationship with them, then lawlessness increases (Ephesians 5:22-6:4).
- God designed the Church to be holy and to bring His Presence, Truth, and Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. But when clergy and entire church denominations reject who He has revealed Himself to be, and reject the authority of the Scriptures or refuse to teach Truth, then lawlessness increases. This includes in matters of marriage and divorce, immorality, adultery, sexually deviant behaviors, abortion, the priesthood and leadership of the church.
- When those gifted by God with acting and communication skills use entertainment and media to promote sin and corrupt the culture, then lawlessness increases.
- When educators, called to shape the minds of children and youth with the greatest care and nobility, have deliberately removed the reverence for and knowledge of God, unchanging truths and principles, the truth about creation and our history, and have taught contempt for authority and our Founding Fathers, they have prepared a generation to be lawless.
- God designed civil government to represent Him in doing righteousness and justice, and protecting innocent human life. But when legislators, government officials, and judges have enacted, enforced, or upheld their own laws and policies that directly contradict the Law of God, they have encouraged, promoted and protected lawlessness. This includes authorizing no-fault divorce, teenage immorality, and abortion (by which innocent blood is on their hands too), and prohibiting prayer, the Bible and 10 Commandments (which prohibit these evils, murder, lawlessness, violence, and theft or destruction of property).

With these aspects in mind, and others that may have come to your mind, let us allow the Spirit of God to expose in us any lawless attitudes or deeds, present or past, and any rebellion or pride in our hearts. If we want to see righteousness, peace, and the rule of law restored to our nation, that journey begins with repentance, and obedience to lawful authority. This past Sunday was Pentecost, but the prerequisite for the Holy Spirit to be able to come and dwell within human beings who believe in Christ was the crucifixion of Jesus (which fully satisfied the justice of God and brought forgiveness of sins to us). Similarly for us, the path to redemption, revival and restoration is humility, death to self, death to sin, and forgiveness of others.

Cure for Lawlessness: What can we do to be free of being lawless? I know of only one solution that can change us at a heart level: redemption through Jesus Christ and transformation by the Holy Spirit. Though we “were slaves of sin,” impurity and lawlessness, through faith in Christ Jesus we can be “freed from sin” and “become slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification,” and be “obedient from the heart” (Romans 6:15-19). Jesus Himself “was numbered with *transgressors*,” and this word is the same as *lawlessness*; so Jesus took upon Himself the penalty for all of our lawlessness (Luke 22:37).

“(O)f the Son [Jesus] *He [Father God] says*, ‘YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED **LAWLESSNESS**; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS’” (Hebrews 1:8-9).

To be followers of Christ, we must love righteousness and hate lawlessness, but respond to lawlessness, not with appeasement and approval, but with righteousness, justice, tough love, and mercy where there is humility and repentance, as does the Son of God.

SDG and for the sanctity of human life,

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“Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:4-10).

[1] Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, par. 496.