

Psalms for Turbulent Times
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As I sit to write, a dark cloud hangs over America. A few days ago, at a high school in Santa Fe, Texas, a 17 year-old student shot and killed ten, and wounded ten more. This overshadowed yet another shooting that day which killed one at a graduation ceremony in Georgia. This irrational bloodshed has gone on for years, and is a painful reminder of the unravelling moral fiber of our culture in these last days. *These are turbulent times.*

If I may be allowed a brief digression, the loudest response to these killings usually comes from those who suggest the solution is a political one: Severely curb or abolish our Second Amendment rights (the right to bear arms), and confiscate all guns. (As one quip suggested, why not just lock us all in individual padded cells? – then no one could hurt anyone else!)

The truth which exposes the lie to this ‘solution’ is that while violence and killing has gone on at schools throughout our nation’s history, it has accelerated greatly in recent decades. The upturn began in the 1960s and has continued unabated every decade since. Already, since 2010, there have been about 175 gun killings at schools in the U.S. No political party has been able to stem the tide. The Second Amendment is not new: Something else is the culprit.

No doubt many elements have contributed to this moral blight, but one element is the intentional removal of God from society which began in earnest in the 1960s. In schools, for example, it was 1962 when the U.S. Supreme Court disallowed public school prayers in the morning before class started. Many younger Americans today would be shocked to learn that class prayer was *normal* until the 1960s (picture at right of 1st graders praying in *public school* in the 1960s.)



Did removal of prayer *alone* lead to an increase in school violence? No, but I have *no doubt* that in both symbolic and substantial ways, the attack on anything having to do with God in society, and the progressive removal of recognition of a Creator, is a significant cause of the senseless and bizarre behavior patterns we see today. The delicate balance of our freedoms cannot survive in a vacuum of Godless humanism.

Our founding fathers knew this. John Adams in a 1798 speech warned, “We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion . . . Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, said if education is devoid of “religion” (teaching about God), “there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments. Without religion, I believe that learning does real mischief to the morals and principles of mankind.” How prophetic those words are today.

In the wake of school shootings, some states are realizing the void, and at least eight are pushing bills requiring schools to post our national motto, ‘In God We Trust.’ Others propose making prayer a part of school again. But political solutions *cannot* solve a spiritual problem. We must recognize that *we as a people* have walked away from God, and to avert judgment, repentance and submission to Him – not showy ritual – is required.

To put it simply, *God is the only answer.* In turbulent times, God’s people are called to deepen their walk with Him, and thus draw others to Him. That’s what we are endeavoring to do this summer by focusing on Psalms. In these ancient hymns, we are reminded of God’s faithfulness, and drawn back to intimacy with Him. I hope you re-discover God’s calming strength in these turbulent times as Gary, Robert, and I preach from the Psalms this summer.