

**SEPTEMBER 29, 2025** 

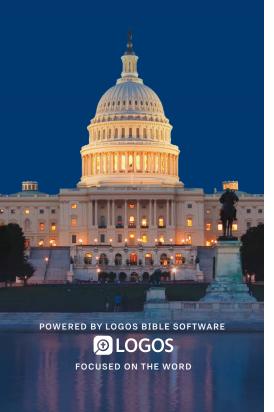
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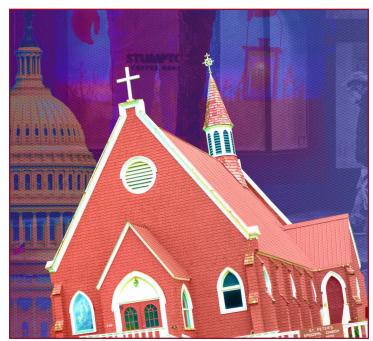
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## Societal Deterioration and the Epochal Analysis of a **Bungling Church**



The Church is the pillar and support of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15) which God intends to herald His Word in and to a fallen world by evangelizing and making disciples. It stands to reason, then, that the degree to which the Church fulfills its calling is the degree to which it is a preserving and illuminating force in a fallen world (cf. Matthew 5:13–14) and, more specifically, in a given nation. However, throughout the major epochs of American Church history—for many reasons—she does not fulfill that specific task. In fact, her efforts to engage culture have been characterized by many clumsy mistakes. The Church is bungling her calling.

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#### **WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES**

White House Cabinet and Governors: Wednesdays 8am (EST), light breakfast served Senate Members: Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served House Members: Thursdays 8am, Natural Resources, Longworth 1334, hot breakfast served

WHITE HOUSE CABINET AMBASSADORS AND GOVERNORS Alex Acosta DC Mike Braun IN Phil Bryant MS Dr. Ben Carson DC Mike Dunleavy AK Greg Gianforte MT Mark Gordon WY Pete Hegseth DC Mike Huckabee DC Sarah Huckabee Sanders AR Mike Kehoe MO David Perdue DC Sonny Perdue GA Rick Perry TX Jim Pillen NE Tate Reeves MS Kim Reynolds IA Brooke Rollins DC Kevin Stitt OK Scott Turner DC

#### SENATORS John Thune

Russell Vought DC Scott Walker WI

Glenn Youngkin VA

Senate Majority Leader Marsha Blackburn TN Katie Britt AL Ted Rudd NC Bill Cassidy LA Kevin Cramer ND Steven Daines MT Joni Ernst IA William Hagerty TN Cindy Hyde-Smith MS James Lankford OK

#### REPRESENTATIVES

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Mike Rounds SD

Tim Scott SC Mike Johnson Speaker of the House Mark Alford MO Robert Aderholt AL Rick Allen GA Brian Babin TX Don Bacon NE Nick Begich AK Michael Bost IL Josh Brecheen OK Tim Burchett TN John Carter TX Juan Ciscomani AZ Rick Crawford AR Jake Ellzey TX Ron Estes KS Glenn Grothman WI Pat Harrigan NC Kevin Hern OK Richard Hudson NC Bill Huizenga MI Dusty Johnson SD Jim Jordan OH Doug LaMalfa CA Nathaniel Moran TX Gary Palmer AL August Pfluger TX David Rouzer NC John Rutherford FL Marlin Stutzman IN Glenn Thompson PA Tim Walberg MI Randy Weber TX Daniel Webster FL Bruce Westerman AR

The views expressed in each Bible Study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study sponsor.

Roger Williams TX

Rob Wittman VA Steve Womack AR Rudy Yakym IN



PUBLIC SERVANT ENDORSEMENT

## Steve Daines U.S. Senator, Montana



"I think it is very beneficial for Lawmakers to be involved in a serious Bible study. We should look to the Bible for examples of leaders. In fact, Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, was speaking to a joint session of Congress, and he looked up from the speaker's rostrum and saw Moses is staring down at him. Here is the face of Moses who provided the law. I look at an example of Daniel, and it's very relevant today. Daniel was a Jewish boy who was taken captive to modern day Iraq. The Bible says he was an effective leader who defused some very difficult situations in a hostile environment. Daniel 2:14 says he exhibited wisdom and tact: that is always the prayer I have. Whenever people ask how they can pray for me, I say, pray for wisdom and tact as we lead here in Washington."

Bungling means "making or characterized by many clumsy mistakes." As you read and reflect on this series, I think you'll agree that the word is an appropriate encapsulation that, by in large, best depicts the American Church's ineffectiveness in bringing about positive change in our deteriorating nation.

For nearly one-half of a century now, the American Church's major emphasis in D.C. has been attempts to change the laws of the land. Laws based in biblical precepts (in contrast to the enactment of laws that are untethered to scriptural precepts) are certainly important and worthy objectives, and many in office who name the name of Christ are heavily invested in that noble purpose.

But notice from Luke, chapter 3, that a more important discipline and objective exists to which every believer—and the Church as an institution—should be preeminently committed in order to change the direction of a nation to combat societal deterioration. Allow me to state it this way:

If manifesting biblically-based principles in civil government is a good pursuit, Luke 3 reveals an even more excellent pursuit!

Luke 3:3–14 reveals God's means to change a culture in the here and now. May that which is good not diminish or eclipse that which is excellent!

In addition to understanding the message of Luke 3:3–14, let us also and importantly trace the biblical proposition of Luke 3—specifically the lack of application of Luke 3—throughout American Church history. Put on your thinking cap!

What follows is the first study in a three-part series that examines the primary calling of the institution of the Church relative to each of five major epochs in American Church history. I think you'll find this series most interesting and impacting on your life.

Read on, my friend.

Ralph Drollinger



#### I. INTRODUCTION

For the past 45 years, church pastors and leaders have hotly debated how the believer should best engage in societal preservation, illumination, and change. Given America's moral decline, this discussion is anticipatable. In fact, this topic was my main focus during my eight years of seminary training. While both sides of the societal change debate represent noble motives and seek the same objective, how to best achieve such a transformation is controversial.

This week's passage makes a strong and simple case for the following:

The believer's emphasis on heart change will assuredly result in law and societal change.

Embracing "heart change" is to embrace the long game, whereas to embrace "law change" tempts the believer with the promise of quicker results which may not be achievable or even sustainable due to the essence of the political process. Luke chapter 3 is an insightful passage regarding the guaranteed social benefits that inure to a country where and when the Church prioritizes evangelism.

Contextually in this passage the "he" is John the Baptist who precedes the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. He was an evangelist who preached the need to repent as a necessary component to receiving Christ. Otherwise, when you think about it, why do you need to be saved if in your heart there is no

acknowledgment of being lost? Other than feeling a sense of personal lostness, why would you seek Christ and His forgiveness?

Following are excerpts from that somewhat lengthy passage that will enable you to quickly see my point:

And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3).

"Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance" (v. 8).

And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?" And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise." And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages" (vv.  $10-14).^{1}$ 

I have purposefully edited the passage in order to emphasize and clarify the point of this study: the social implications of John's evangelism immediately apparent. All were profoundly affected by John's preaching and responded with an internal Holy Spirit-driven curiosity and unction characterized by and resulting in the same question: What shall we do?



#### Matthew 5:13-14

"You are the salt of the earth. ... You are the light of the world."



John the Baptist
preached that conversion
should lead to the
betterment of society
not a withdrawal from it.



MINISTRY LEADER PROFILE

## Ivon Valerie State Ministry Leader Sint Maarten



With over a decade of experience leading Bible studies in small group and congregational settings, Ivon Valerie is no stranger to the heartfelt change God's Word brings about. Today, he serves as Capitol Ministry's State Ministry Leader for the island of Sint Maarten, bringing the Good News to local and national political leaders alike.

As a leader, member, and regular attendee at church, Pastor Valerie is convicted of a simple truth. "I believe in living out my faith practically," he explains, "and being led by the Holy Spirit, seek to glorify God in every area of my life." This declaration of faith led him to become the senior pastor of Faith and Works Ministries in Sint Maarten.

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The large crowd that John drew represented much of society. Luke identifies the first of the three cultural sectors in verses 10 and 11 as *the crowds*. The second curious sector identified in verses 12 and 13 were *tax gatherers* (for the occupying Romans), and the third section, verse 14, were *some soldiers* (Jewish soldiers, most likely).

The Pharisees regarded these professions as questionable, but before providing a brief examination of each, it is important to note that John the Baptist is not preaching that these people give up their professions. Rather, he instructed the people to remain in their professions but to behave honorably and honestly.<sup>2</sup> This is an important distinction to recognize relative to the thesis of this study.

John the Baptist is preaching that conversion should lead to the betterment of society not a withdrawal from it; that those who are converted to Christ will turn from their former sinful ways and lead lives pleasing to God.

The implication in this passage is that true repentance will always result in a certain form of behavioral change. Let's examine these groups:

#### A. THE CROWDS

These commoners were curious regarding the implications of conversion and were told by John, "let the man who has two tunics share with him who has none; and let him who has food do likewise." A tunic was customarily worn under one's outer garment for extra warmth. Sometimes two were worn or an individual had an extra one. This instruction serves to illustrate the principle, "love your neighbor as yourself,"

as taught by Moses in Leviticus 19:18 and Jesus in Matthew 19:19. Accordingly, the first illustration of the implication of salvation is that we will love others like we love ourselves. In Philippians 2 Paul says *regard one another* as more important than yourselves (v. 3). What a great world this would be if everyone practiced this ethic in culture! Here then is the first implication of what the Bible teaches: there is a relationship between conversion and societal betterment!

#### B. THE JEWISH TAX GATHERERS

Tax gatherers were perceived to have sold their souls to the occupying Roman forces and were despised and hated by their fellow countrymen. In fact, the gospel writer Matthew was a Jewish tax gatherer prior to his conversion. Often, they would exact a tax that was far beyond the profit margin necessary to stay in business and allowed by their Roman franchisor. John addresses this very thing: Collect no more than what you have been ordered to, he says to the onlooker who is counting the cost of coming to Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 2:5, Paul states to the believers, For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed. Greed is characteristic of selfish, fallen individuals and is often the motivation for the exploitation of others. John has just said to the crowds, "Love your neighbors." Now he is saying to the tax gatherers, "Don't rip off your neighbors." Here then is another cultural implication of repentance and conversion: the curtailment of greed. When we come to Jesus, He fills the void, so as to recharacterize our inner being. Someone who is filled with Christ is not in



#### MINISTRY UPDATE

### Capitol Ministries Launched in El Salvador

JUST ACROSS from the President's administration offices, in a beautiful hall of the Sheraton Hotel, thirty members of Congress, high-ranking state officials, and pastors gathered for something historic and unique in El Salvador—the launch of the Capitol Ministries Bible Study for the executive and legislative branches of government. Instead of political speeches or quotations from state documents, the room was filled with prayer, Bible reading, and testimonies of God's work around the world.

Ralph and Danielle Drollinger, founders of Capitol Ministries, together with Latin American Director Oscar Zamora and his wife Elizabeth, traveled to San Salvador for the official launch of the national ministry and to participate in meetings with national leaders, pastors, and government officials.

The Speaker of the Congress Ernesto Castro extended an invitation for a private meeting with Ralph and Danielle. Deeply moved by Ralph's testimony, the Speaker responded, "You have my green light to serve our legislators." Ralph and Oscar then prayed for him and for the open door to begin the Bible study.

This historic step would not have been possible without Juan Angel Castro, CapMin's Ministry Leader for El Salvador and pastor of a large church that embraces the biblical mandate of serving those in authority. Pastor Juan explained that while several legislators already attend his church, bringing a Bible study directly into the halls of Congress represents a profound new opportunity.

Pastor Juan's church has faithfully held Summer Bible Schools for children across the nation for more than 40 years. In a moving moment, the Speaker of the House recalled attending one of those Bible schools as a child. "I remember you," he said with a smile, to which Pastor Juan warmly smiled back.

Prior to the official August 28 launch, Oscar Zamora and his wife Elizabeth traveled to San Salvador to prepare the groundwork. They met with Vice President Félix Ulloa, Jr., who affirmed the timeliness of the ministry's arrival, saying:

"The visit comes at a particularly timely moment, coinciding with the creation of the Secretariat of Values, which will serve as the executive authority on ethical, moral, and spiritual guidance. ... This meeting marks the beginning of a cooperative relationship ... promoting a values-based approach to governance for the well-being of its citizens."

One of the governors who attended the launch, after hearing Ralph share how Capitol Ministries impacts legislators worldwide, approached Oscar and said: "What you are doing is a noble and honorable work. Next time you are here I want to gather other governors so that they can hear this as well."

For Ralph Drollinger, this came as no surprise. He has witnessed the same hunger for God's Word in many nations and often reflects on Jesus' words in Matthew 9:37: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." He expressed gratitude for Pastor Juan's passion to reach and disciple political leaders in his homeland. "We need more leaders like him," Ralph said, "to step into the harvest field and partner with Capitol Ministries in our mission to bring the truth of God's Word to public servants in every country and city of the world."







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He uses his gifts to disciple, preach, and oversee regional and local outreach initiatives.

Aside from his pastoral duties, Pastor Valerie has also authored multiple books to help others deepen their Christian faith. These include *The Meaningful Life, Mantled: The Prophet's Manual, The Unknown*, and the *Trauma Detox Series*.

Regularly, he teaches in Sint Maarten and other Caribbean islands on topics of faith, leadership, discipleship, and how believers can live practically. He specializes in working with church leaders, new believers, and the youth.

Pastor Valerie is married to Jeanetta Valerie. Together, they have two daughters and lead a family-centered ministry that focuses on spiritual wholeness, healing, and revival.

Pastor Valerie earned an associate's degree in advanced leadership from Valor Christian College in Ohio. He also received two honorary doctorates, one in ministry and another in leadership. Afterwards, he went on to earn a certification from Yale University. Then the pastor completed several Christian

Continued next page

constant want. What a different place this world would be if this were true of everyone, *The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want* (Psalm 23:1)!

#### C. SOLDIERS

The last of the three illustrative groups that Luke records are the soldiers who came to John the Baptist. Most commentators agree that these were Jewish soldiers who provided protection and enforcement for the Jewish tax gatherers.3 John is directly instructing them not to extort money by violence. The Greek word he uses means to "not shake violently." If you are coming to Christ and desire His Lordship in and over your life, it means you won't shake down people anymore! John tells the powerful in society that if you desire to follow Christ it means you will no longer misuse your power to take advantage of others but rather be content with *your wages.*<sup>4</sup> What a different place this world this would be if those in power did not practice violence! Leading them to Christ is the biblically revealed solution to such abuse!

Conclusively, Luke 3 is a significant passage that serves to illustrate the pragmatic implications of societal betterment that stem from the institutional Church solely focused on soul conversion. Each individual representing the three segments of culture is instructed by John to bear character qualities that will most certainly benefit society! Here then—and it is very simple to see from the redundancy of the passage—is the best way for believers to effect societal change in the long run. To disagree with this is to disagree with the simple, clear narrative passage.

In Ephesians 2, the apostle Paul declaratively states the same thing that Luke has illustrated via the life and preaching ministry of John the Baptist: prior to coming to Christ, we *were dead in* [our] trespasses and sins, in which [we] formerly walked (v. 1). We ... all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging in the desires of our flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath (v. 3). But to those who have repented and are regenerate in Christ Paul states, you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth) (5:8-9). The sequence of both Luke's and Paul's passages serve to illustrate the contrasting nature between those who are unregenerate and the repentant who have bowed the knee and come to Christ (cf. John 1:12).

Many other parallel passages exist, but if you have no more time to further read this study, I have herein made my point: evangelizing the lost is the biblically revealed means by which the Church is to go about changing culture.

Parts 2 and 3 will provide you with a more profound understanding as to how the American Church has *repeatedly* bungled—in fact in every major epoch of its history—the simple message that John the Baptist and the apostle Paul herein heralded!

In its attempt to change the country by focusing on better laws, American Evangelicalism<sup>5</sup> has discounted and woefully underemphasized the power of what John the Baptist and the apostle Paul are illustrating: Evangelism! And look at what has happened: the nation has only





"Saint John the Baptist Preaching to the Masses in the Wilderness" Pieter Breughel the Younger (1564–1638), Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

gotten worse; it has not changed for the better! In the past 45 years of attempting to change laws rather than hearts, the Christian activist movement has little to show for its efforts. The country is increasingly secular and increasingly sticking its finger in the eye of God.

Would you agree with me that it is time for believers to make evangelism a priority in the Capitol?

With the diminishment of the Religious Right movement in recent years, the time is now to discover, commit to, and emphasize the simple biblical formula for effecting societal change as illustrated in Luke chapter 3 and the book of

Ephesians. What follows is a brief history of how this lack of what I will hereinafter summarily refer to as a "Luke 3 emphasis" has played itself out in American Church history in its underemphasis on evangelism. What follows will provide a broader historical perspective relative to this important topic and will result in helping you shape a better-informed, deep-seated conviction concerning the preeminence of evangelism—not only as it relates to building God's kingdom in heaven, but also to social change in our nation. What follows is an examination of this matter via the major epochs of American Church history.

Next week, in Part 2, the eschatology of the Puritans and the encroachment of Theological Liberalism will be examined. leadership and ministry programs relating to church governance, pastoral care, and more.

As Pastor Valerie partners with CapMin, the vision is certain. From the grassroots to the government, he wants as many people as possible to know the saving grace of Christ. "I believe the transformation of a nation begins with its leaders," he shares. "I have seen firsthand how political leaders often lack spiritual guidance and biblical counsel."

Through meaningful Bible studies, Pastor Valerie will be able to "to disciple leaders not for political gain, but for Kingdom influence." He understands that every conversation can be helpful, every Bible study impactful, and every leader changed for the better in some way.

The end result will be public servants with hearts dedicated to Christ. That means a top-down national transformation through what the pastor describes as the "righteousness, wisdom, and justice" of God's Word.



#### Societal Deterioration and the Epochal Analysis of a Bungling Church - Part 1

 Four examples of parallel passages to Luke 3:3–14 and Ephesians 2 and 5—passages which similarly connect evangelism/repentance with positive benefits to society in the here and now—are as follows (among many others):

"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1:16–18).

"But kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance" (Acts 26:20).

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22–24).

Having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (Philippians 1:11).

- I. Howard Marshall, The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 142.
- 3. Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, the Gospel According to St. Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 96.
- "A soldier's remuneration was in fact low and the temptation to increase it by rapacious dealings was strong." H. W. Heidland, *Theological Dictionary* of the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans) Volume 5, 591f.
- 5. Note I have specifically referred to the Church now in a more specific manner: Evangelicalism. I am incorporating this change to more narrowly define what I mean as the Church. The Church as used to depict broader Protestantism (in the sense of Theological Liberalism), or Catholicism, or the Orthodox Church are not what I intend to include when I use the word Church in the context of this Bible study. I believe Evangelicalism, biblically, is more representational of the biblical definition of the Church than the latter forms.

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