



**"No Cross,
No Crown"**

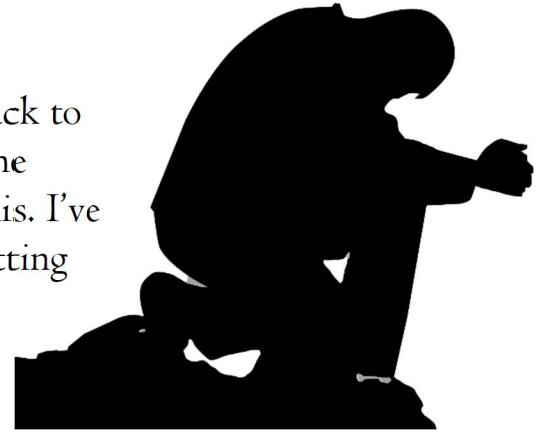
The Cross and Crown

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One of the evenings in our annual week of prayer this year was devoted to praying for our nation, with II Chronicles 7:11–14 as our guide. As a church, we took time, first, to humble ourselves, acknowledging our obligation to submit to God. Next, we prayed and sought God's face, giving him permission to examine our actions and motives, and, finally, we confessed our shortcomings as a church, promising to turn from our ways as he directs.

Like you, I grieve for our nation and desire to see it turn back to God. God makes it clear that we cannot expect to impact the world for him unless we first align our hearts and wills to his. I've said it before, and I fully believe it: If we have to rely on getting the right people into public office, on the courts and on school boards in order to effect change in this country, our religion, to put it bluntly, stinks!



The Israelites had that mistaken point of view, and, for that reason, they missed the Messiah when he came. Even Jesus' disciples, after the resurrection, asked him whether he was going to restore the Davidic kingdom. However, Jesus never gave any energy to changing earthly kingdoms or establishing political rulers. Instead, he carried the Kingdom of God to the individuals, crowds and rulers of the day whom he encountered.

A remarkable thing happened in Ephesus in the time of Paul and the early church's ministry: People who had practiced sorcery burned a fortune's worth of scrolls in the public square. A silversmith who earned a lot of money by making shrines incited a riot, afraid of losing business as people turned away from idols and began believing in God. These things didn't happen because the Ephesian city council banned books on sorcery or outlawed shrines; – it happened because the Holy Spirit transformed the Ephesian people's lives!

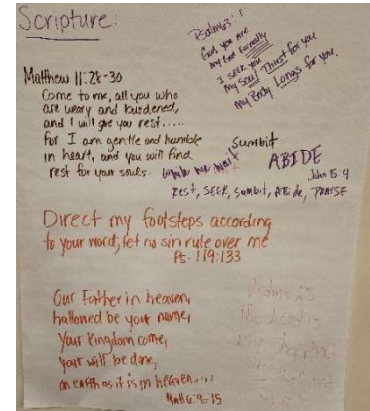
Let us not put our hope in the systems of this world. The best laws and the best intentions cannot right this nation. Only God can change us. Let us begin by humbling ourselves before him and seeking him with all our hearts.

*Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save.
Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God.
(Psalm 146:3,5)*

Thanks for Praying!

The new year brings new opportunities – and new challenges!
Please join us in prayer for:

- a real move of the Spirit in our church and our mission field in 2024,
- finding a new insurance company (before March!),
- several who are mourning family members lost this year, and,
- God’s direction and provision as we move ahead.







Reflections from our “listening to the Spirit” session during Week of Prayer

We’re praying with you!

If you’re on our mailing list*, you’re on our prayer list! If there’s anything specific that we can join with you in praying about, please let us know.

Thanks so much to those who keep in touch! It’s so encouraging to hear from you!

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* **Important:** If you’d rather not be on our mailing list, we won’t be offended! Just call or drop us a note, and we’ll remove you. (We’ll still keep you on our prayer list!)

If you’d rather receive this letter via e-mail, please let us know!

Did you know?

The value of the scrolls that were publicly burned in Ephesus was “about 50,000 drachmas.” (Acts 19:19). A drachma was worth about one day’s wages, so this was about 136 years’ worth of earnings! According to the Social Security Administrations tables for national average salary, this comes out to almost nine million dollars!

We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them.

(Acts 14:15)



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