

FROM OUR PASTOR

February 20, 2016

Sabbath Greetings to everyone!

In the Roman Republic and later the Empire, Rome's working class were known as the "plebeians." They had little individual power, but learned to work together and eventually elected "Tribunes" who wielded considerable power in the Roman government. Julius Caesar came to power in part as a result of bribing the Plebeians with money, and his successors continued with the bribery.

The way to handle the Roman mob became known as "Bread and Circuses." Free grain, imported from Africa, was handed out to all citizens of Rome, and free entertainment, in the form of bloody gladiatorial contests and chariot races, became necessary for an emperor to stay in power.

The first Flavian emperor, Vespasian, built the huge Coliseum so that his dynasty would be established. Ironic, but the gold and loot taken from the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem by his son, Titus, were used to fund the construction of a building where many Christians were later martyred.

Free bread and entertainment were a part of Rome for two centuries. Thankfully we are beyond that. Or are we?

When politicians promise to give modern day "plebeians" freebies and other people's money it is called "Socialism." Socialism has been tried many times and usually has rapidly decayed into a totalitarian government with people controlled and dependent upon the government.

Our nation was founded on the principle of equal opportunity and education, not equal bank accounts. Based on the wisdom of the Bible, our founding fathers also guaranteed that the average person could own land. In the feudal system in Europe only the "Nobility" owned land. Everyone else lived a life of poverty working for the privileged few. As a result of people owning and working their own land, America became the first nation in history where the poor were in a minority. The blessings God promised to the descendants of Abraham required a system of individual freedom and opportunity.

But we have apparently come full circle. We have had presidents with Socialism beliefs in the past--most notably Franklin Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson--but now we see an avowed Socialist actually winning primary elections and drawing large crowds. If you listen to his speeches, you will hear echoes of Roman emperors promising the mob "bread and circuses."

Ecclesiastes 4:4 says, "Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind."

Long ago God's word warned that people will envy the success of a person who works hard and is skilled. Politicians over the centuries have learned to exploit envy to promote themselves. Sadly, envy is being exploited more and more every year.

It is difficult to see the rapid demise of the greatest nation in history. However, we are comforted knowing that a new, glorious, wonderful kingdom is on the horizon.

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