

Cross Current



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Smog Alert

They were among the blackest days in British history — literally. During the Great Smog of 1952, London was trapped under a pall of deadly darkness that cost thousands of lives in one of the world's greatest environmental disasters.


Not that pollution was anything new. In fact, the word *smog* was coined in London during 1905 to describe the mix of smoke and fog that routinely hung over the city. But that December, London suffered a “temperature inversion”.

Normally, polluted air from the ground rises because it's hotter and lighter than air in the upper atmosphere, which allows the toxins to disperse high above the earth. But when a mass of warm, motionless air formed above London, with no wind to blow it away, it was like a giant lid was clamped over the city.

To pay huge debts from World War Two, Britain was exporting its clean, hard *anthracite* coal and burning the cheap but dirty *bituminous* variety in its homes, factories and power plants. It gave off a black, choking smoke similar to what's produced by a burning tire. Thousands of diesel buses had just replaced London's electric trains, and exhaust-belching cars were everywhere in the city of eight million.

By the evening of December 5th, people were suffering bouts of uncontrollable coughing. Two days later, visibility was down to less than a foot in the middle of the day, soot-covered citizens arrived home looking like coal miners, and the stench of sulphur was everywhere. As tonnes of smoke, acid and sulphur dioxide poured into the unmoving air, businesses shut down. Lost pedestrians stumbled into the





*The life of business
is not the same as
the business of life.*

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Thames River and drowned. People abandoned their cars because they couldn't tell where they were going. Movies were cancelled because nobody could see the screens.

Remarkably, people just accepted the situation and waited it out. Since so many died before reaching hospital and went right to the morgue or a funeral home, even public health officials didn't fully realize how bad things were, and no warnings were issued. Finally, on December 9th, a fresh wind blew the filthy air out to sea. But not before the deaths of 4,000 people. Another 8,000 died in the months following the Great Smog.

That story should be a cautionary tale for those of us concerned about spiritual pollution, which is anything that blackens the heart and obscures the face of God in our world. The problem is, we're already trapped in a moral inversion. Principles that once guided our lives, families and our nation have been completely turned upside down.

Instead of love, truth and respect, we're caught in a sulphuric cloud of self-absorption, mindless materialism, and moral relativism which says there's no such thing as truth that applies to everybody; that anything can be justified, especially if you label it spirituality.

As a result, we're losing our way. We can't see where we are, let alone where we're going. No wonder so many people are choking spiritually, covered in the grime of guilt, regret and unforgiveness. As we suffocate in a dark, deadly soup of angst, anxiety and toxic anger, most people don't even see the danger. In fact, many Christians, and more than a few church leaders, accept the new now. Biblical standards of morality are considered quaint castoffs from an unsophisticated time, even when it's clear post-modern morality is slowly squeezing the life out of our most important relationships.

Rather than just decrying the spiritual pollution *around* us, we believers need to start by acknowledging the same pollution *within* us. We're guilty, too. What we need is the fresh Wind of God to push away the cloud of pollution that obscures our spiritual vision and blackens our souls. Instead of selling out the clean and precious energy of God — and settling for the cheap, toxic things that so often fuel our hopes and dreams — it's time to fully embrace our pure and powerful Father. He'll take away the cloud of guilt and make your life a breath of fresh air.

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