

A house divided against itself will fall. (Luke 11:17)

Healing of A Fractious People **(or, Our Dual Citizenship)**

This nation is in trouble. And not for the usual reasons – we’re at war, our economy is stumbling, fewer nations seem to like us anymore, etc. – but because we seem to have lost our purpose, our sense of just why we’re here in the first place.

But whatever may be our situation, whether firmly united under one national government, or split into a number of confederacies, certain it is, that foreign nations will know and view it exactly as it is; and they will act toward us accordingly. If they see that our national government is efficient and well administered, our trade prudently regulated, our militia properly organized and disciplined, our resources and finances discreetly managed, our credit re-established, our people free, contented, and united, they will be much more disposed to cultivate our friendship than provoke our resentment. If, on the other hand, they find us either destitute of an effectual government (each State doing right or wrong, as to its rulers may seem convenient), or split into three or four independent and probably discordant republics or confederacies, one inclining to Britain, another to France, and a third to Spain, and perhaps played off against each other by the three, what a poor, pitiful figure will America make in their eyes! How liable would she become not only to their contempt but to their outrage, and how soon would dear-bought experience proclaim that when a people or family so divide, it never fails to be against themselves.

Students of American history and government will (hopefully) recognize the above passage; for others (like myself) who didn’t look any farther than the basic stuff you were taught in high school and, maybe, college, this is the final paragraph of Federalist Paper #4, written by John Jay using the pseudonym *Publius*, arguing for the approval of the U.S. Constitution as we know it today, instead of three or four different, smaller confederacies as per one alternate suggestion.

Does it look familiar? Like it was taken from the headlines of today’s news? If so, congratulations – your head has not been in the sand, nor has your hearing been overridden by earbuds shoved halfway down them and connected to an MP3 player. Jay wrote this in order to argue for a single, unified government (preferably a republic, as was the design of the Constitution), in order to keep America from being a pawn in the hands of the world powers at the time – England, France and Spain – who were far larger and stronger than she.

Well, we got the Constitution, and 233 years later it’s still holding up well. But the “factions” Jay and Alexander Hamilton and the other Founding Fathers warned us against relying too heavily upon have been growing louder since the Reagan administration. And it’s becoming more apparent why we were warned against them –

eventually, the goal becomes not what is right for the nation but simple victory over your opponents. We are increasingly dis-united over how to answer our enemies, what to do with the wealth God gave us and whether the nation is even worthy of our love. The first stirrings of popular revolt are being heard against a government increasingly out of touch with its people and out of control of itself.

And, just as Jay had predicted, as our government and our people head down this path, the nations of the world who once looked to us with awe and wonder now look upon us with increasing contempt. People are openly suggesting that the dollar be replaced as the world's leading currency. Some members of our own judiciary suggest that we be influenced not by our own Constitution and the wisdom of our Founding Fathers, but by the laws of other lands, forgetting that one of the *other* things those Fathers warned us against is excessive foreign entanglements. It is suggested – sometimes gleefully – that America is losing its position as the world's leading superpower.

How did things come to this? The simple, sound-byte answer is that this nation is walking (sometimes *running*) away from God and the way He wants things to be. The full answer, however, is more complex. The United States of America, as an independent country, has a destiny in the Kingdom of God which we fulfilled at first, but are doing so no longer. Just as God has a plan for the life of the individual person, so He has plans for entire nations. Believers have a dual citizenship in both the nation we were born into and the Kingdom we gain membership in through the Blood of the Lord Jesus. And we will be citizens of the Kingdom eternally, as one day there will be a new heaven and a new earth. There will come a time when nations no longer exist; it will be the Lord and His creation.

Until that day, we must face a few hard facts. First, the United States is not destined to lead the world forever. When the Lord Jesus returns to set up His thousand-year reign on Earth, He will reign from Jerusalem, where the Temple to God the Father will exist. The nations of the world will pay tribute to Him, and any nation that does not will suffer the consequences. This is to be found in the twelfth chapter of the Book of the Prophet Zechariah. Second, contrary to nationalistic variations of “replacement theology,” America has *not* taken Israel's place in the heart of God. The U.S. is not mentioned specifically – either directly or through prophetic symbolism – *anywhere* in the Word, let alone the study of future or end times.

However, author David Herzog (in his book, *Glory Invasion*) expresses the belief that individual nations have distinct manifestations of the Glory of God, citing the passion French believers experience upon Salvation and the imparted knowledge to English and Scottish believers, producing some of history's most renowned Bible teachers. If this is so, then there is a corollary that nations (like individual believers) have a job to do in the Kingdom, with subsequent rewards or lack thereof for how well they are done. And that puts America into a unique position.

This nation was founded by people who sought freedom to worship the Lord without interference from the state or who were... encouraged... to pack up their wacky, God-fearing ways, which were a thorn in the sides of the established churches that cared little for personal salvation as the Word demanded, and leave (“*and take yer friends witcha...*”). Once here, a system of government was designed not to interfere with basic individual freedoms such as faith, but would provide basic services (defense, an economic system, the laws for the good of the public). The practice of other faiths was permitted, but the majority of the Founding Fathers were believers, often writing about the connection between their faith and the life of the nation. In 1792, the Congress authorized printing of the first English language Bible in North America (after ordering 20,000 copies of the Word in 1777), and the building that would become the U.S. Capitol housed church services *while still under construction* before Congress ever sat in session there. The freedom the new American nation enjoyed soon attracted people from other lands.

Since, as Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence, the freedoms then nation fought to secure were granted by God, the idea was for America to be a microcosm of what God wanted in the world. People from other lands would hear about the Gospel in this country (since it was preached so freely and was reflected in its governmental systems) and receive Salvation. In the course of time and circumstance, some of those people would return to their birth countries for whatever reason – and take the Gospel with them, spreading the Word there. I believe America’s national characteristic is one of *evangelism*; the problem is, in recent generations the focus has shifted from the Gospel to that of our own perceived greatness.

Throughout our history, America has tried to export our system of government to the world; sometimes it worked, sometimes not. This has been accelerated in recent years, most notably in areas where the American System has attempted to succeed that of an iron-fisted dictatorship. Tapping into people’s basic desire for freedom, our leaders have tried to export that as a commodity like grains or manufactured products, forgetting that it is the Lord who is the source of all liberty. Without being surrendered to His Will, freedom rapidly deteriorates into licentiousness and selfishness, until one of two things happens; the process of deterioration ends in anarchy, or strong measures are employed by government in order to restore order. Either way, freedom is lost.

The fact remains that our system of government is still a human construct that has its limitations. Thomas Paine, arguing for independence in his pamphlet “Common Sense,” made the statement that even the best possible form of government is a necessary evil; like clothing, it is a reminder of mankind’s fallen state. That is why the Founding Fathers largely counted upon the ability of the people to regulate their own behavior in order for the republic established for the United States to work. As John Adams put it in a letter from 1776,

[W]e 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.

If this is so, then it can also be argued that the effects of the most tyrannical form of government can be ameliorated by an infusion of the Righteousness of God. Ultimately, the issue is not one of which *form* of government is better, but Who sits in control – self or God?

There have always been factions in American history (despite the dire warnings of the Founding Fathers to stay away from that stuff), but a sense of a people united by a common purpose and the blessings of God has always been an overriding factor; in short, patriotism and faith trumped politics with everything usually working out all right. But today, patriotism is sneered at and faith is under assault. Without those balancing factors, the darker side of politics – victory over your opponents instead of what is right for the nation – is left to spread and grow into polarization and strife, as we see happening today.

Revival is coming, and can restore the blessings of God and, perhaps, this nation's place in the world until the Lord Jesus returns. But until then, believers have a job to do – we are the “watchmen on the wall,” as the Lord described in the book of Ezekiel (third chapter). And part of that job includes wise use of the resources that God gave us that are still ours to employ. We must stop thinking like Republicans and Democrats and think instead like citizens of the eternal Kingdom we have become heirs to through the Blood of the Lord Jesus. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, good ideas from both the right and the left can rise to the top for the benefit of all. God loves this country as He loves all countries, enough to sacrifice His only Son so that their citizens will not be left to die in their sins. He desires that none perish, but that all would come to repentance and eternal life. Under His guidance, that must be our overriding, bottom-line consideration when considering who and what to support when various issues arise. It is only when the Lord becomes the overriding factor in the life of this nation once more that an increasingly fractious people can be healed.

Charles Finney, as recorded in Number 15, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, (published in 1868) expressed that:

[T]he time has come that Christians must vote for honest men and take consistent ground in politics or the Lord will curse them. . . . Christians have been exceedingly guilty in this matter. But the time has come when they must act differently. . . . Christians seem to act as if they thought God did not see what they do in politics. But I tell you He does see it - and He will bless or curse this nation according to the course they [Christians] take [in politics].