

In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in Him and He saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in Him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.

(Isaiah 25: 9)

Yes, Lord, walking in the way of Your laws, we wait for You; Your name and renown are the desire of our hearts.

(Isaiah 26: 8)

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the Glory of God. Not only so, but we rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.

(Romans 5: 1-5)

A "Christian Nation" as it Could Be **(or, *Want a Christian Nation? Be Christians!*)**

Our nation began as a Christian nation. All you have to do is read what the Founding Fathers wrote to figure that out. Was it absolutely perfect? Certainly not; just as an individual's walk with the Lord has to grow and change over time to stay healthy, so does a nation's. And sometimes both individuals and nations still fall into sin and have to be disciplined and corrected by God in order to keep on the right path. But I have always said that any nation that uses "No King but Jesus" as one of its slogans is calling on God to be their God and places themselves in His hands for the long haul.

To a large extent, contrary to what some believe, we still are a Christian nation. But the key difference between then and now is in our definition of a Christian. There is a lot of talk these days among believers in this country about taking America back to its Christian heritage. But I submit that as long as our definition of a Christian is distorted by the popular culture, so also is our view of what exactly is a "Christian nation."

There are three types of a "Christian nation:"

1. *Christianized Nation*: A nation where Christianity has replaced an older, established form of worship as the official, state-sanctioned religion; a variation may be where the head of state is also the head of the national church. This could describe the Roman Empire after Constantine, or Britain after Henry VIII.
2. *Constitutional Theocracy*: Where Jesus Christ in His role as the Son of God or the second person of the Godhead is specifically declared to be the head of the nation in the governing documents of that nation, or loyalty to Jesus is declared in said documents, or where the Scriptures (including the Gospels and the letters of the New Testament) are specifically declared to be the foundation or model for all of the nation's laws or institutions.

3. *De Facto*: The nation is Christian because, a) the majority of its citizens are *practicing* Christians, b) while not specifically declared as such in its governing documents the Scriptures form the foundation or model for the nation's laws or institutions, or c) both situations are in effect.

The United States is in the latter category. We can argue at length over whether the Founding Fathers were Deists (and just what a Deist actually means) or if Washington, Jefferson and Adams, *et al*, were full Gospel, Bible-believing Christians. A strong argument can be made for the latter from their own writings. But what also has to be taken into account is that the *people*, by and large, were definitely believers. Some of them came to this country specifically to practice their particular denomination without interference or persecution. And if that wasn't enough, God Himself made certain of a nation of believers by the efforts of what has become known as the First Great Awakening, with the preaching of Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield and John Wesley. Beginning in the early 1700s, this revival had radically transformed society in both England and the Colonies, and paved the way for the American Revolution. Many of the Founders themselves professed faith in Jesus, at least in private correspondence. The statement, "Jesus Christ is the God of this nation" was never written into the founding documents because it would have been unnecessary, a statement of the obvious. Everybody knew *that*.

Many of the state constitutions, written after the Revolution, were even more explicit, bordering on a Constitutional Theocracy. The religious tests the Federal Constitution passed on, expressly forbidding anyone to hold a post in government unless that person professes faith in Jesus, were included in many of the original state counterparts. Some even began those documents with praises to God for His mercy in granting the state its freedom. Such provisions over the years may have been either repealed or simply ignored, but this was the prevailing view of the people at the time.

Nowadays, of course, things have changed... much to our shame. Part of the problem is that we are no longer taught the full history of this country, but just given the high points – "No Taxation Without Representation," the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Civil War, before the nation got down to the business of being a world power, often spoken of like it was a bad thing. Especially neglected is the spiritual side of the Founders. Many believers today know most of the arguments denying the Christian heritage of the nation are utter baloney, and yet are unable to articulate the reasons why to others. They have no knowledge to counter the distortions, spins and outright lies that have been told about this nation, or paying excessive – almost exclusive – attention to the mistakes this nation has made. This is one thing that I would like to correct. It is my hope to set up a study of the Christian heritage of this nation by next year.

But knowing the history is merely an initial step. The second is absolutely crucial to the advancement of the Kingdom. Many believers talk of the reclamation of America as if we have to turn around as a nation and reverse course back to a time when we were, to quote the authors of the Constitution, "a more perfect union." But this nation has yet to reach its full potential, spiritually speaking. The mere fact that the problems in this nation's history have been overplayed and overemphasized does not detract from the fact that we have some things both past and current that must be put right. Instead of looking back, we must look forward to a nation that is fully sold out to the Lord, has learned from

both its history and its mistakes and in full knowledge is ready to accept its calling from the Lord.

Just as individuals have spiritual callings on their lives, so do nations. Just as individual believers will be reviewed for their reward (or lack thereof) for what they did in their walk with God, so nations will be judged when the Lord Jesus returns to set up his thousand-year reign on the Earth. A particular believer may be called to preach, to organize, to be a prayer warrior, to counsel, to heal, or do any one of a number of things the Holy Spirit enables them to do. A nation can be called to either multiple tasks or a single one.

Looking back over history, the United States has had two major callings; to promote the Gospel and to be a friend the Jewish people, even to the point of helping give rebirth to the state of Israel. We are a people that are very good at promoting things. This is the nation, after all, that gave us P.T. Barnum, shopping malls and the television commercial; in fact, perhaps as many people watch the Super Bowl for the new TV ads as for the game itself.

We began by turning this peculiar talent of ours to the Lord. One of the first acts of Congress under the new U.S. Constitution was to authorize the printing of Bibles, both for citizens, and for the Native Americans we encountered. The food and material aid we have given to other nations was prompted by the values we as the people received from the Gospel, sharing the blessings the Lord gave us with those in need. In the process, other nations learned about us and about the God we serve.

Today, we as individuals still contribute to charity; we still support the work of missionaries and groups that promote the Gospel in other countries. But the principal export of America is the “American Way,” especially when it comes to government. Instead of praising God for His blessings, we tell other countries about how great we are. Most other nations know this already; people are trying to get into this country by means legal and otherwise. They hear the age-old pitch, but see that we are mired in things like drugs, pornography, music and other forms of entertainment that promotes values that are the antithesis of a happy life. And they have to wonder why this country got to where it did.

We as believers have fallen into the same trap. Our focus has been in recent years to pack the government with people who believe, or at least are sympathetic to them. In our nostalgic dream of “turning back the clock,” we falsely believe that by making government less hostile to religion, things will be well with this country once again. But the problems will remain. We as believers must face up to our part in the decline of this nation because we have been lazy. We create great communication networks but expect them to do the work of witnessing to the Kingdom of our God for us. We try to increase political power for ourselves, forgetting that government and its operating system of politics is limited in its capabilities. We think that by mimicking the world in the way we present the Gospel that it will be more palatable to sophisticated tastes and less likely to be rejected. All the while we sit in churches that preach that God can be manipulated into giving us more material stuff or preach the use of politics instead of training workers for the fields of the Lord, people who will be salt and light for this generation. How can we be a “Christian Nation” when we don’t even know what it means to be a Christian anymore? The church needs to repent, and be the hands and feet of the Lord Jesus in the world, but get our heads out of it and reconnect ourselves to our Head, who is Christ.

If you want a Christian Nation, we who are citizens must be Christians. We must do the work of the Lord, which is to show the kindness and mercy of the Lord Jesus to those who He wants to bring into His kingdom, even the ones who fight it tooth and nail. We must train up our children and their children to be Christians, which means teaching them to live out the Gospel not just with fellow believers but with our neighbors, fellow-workers, total strangers and anyone we meet. This is how we fight the cesspool we have let this culture deteriorate into for the past two or three generations, by showing the alternative, letting the Lord shine through us and lifting Him up so that all people are drawn to Him. Our theme in church this month is “faith and patience;” we have the faith, but do we have the patience to be in this for the long haul again? Unless the Lord intervenes, which He certainly can, the re-conversion of America will not take place overnight. Do we have the stuff to let God take us where He wants us to go, even if we don’t see the road ahead or understand where He is taking us? Do we trust Him enough to let Him make us into a “Christian nation” as *He* would have it, and not our own ideas about what it should be?

For the Glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ
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