

True Patriotism: Righteousness Exalts A Nation

–David Sain–

“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34, KJV).

Gratitude

As a Christian, I am thankful for the heritage that is mine as a citizen of the United States of America.

I am thankful for the founding fathers that understood and expressed the importance of this nation being established “under God.” I am glad that they understood that we are endowed by our Creator “with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” I am thankful that the framers of the Bill of Rights, in Article I, guaranteed that the government should not tell us what to believe or how to worship.

I appreciate the countless men and women who endured hardships and blazed the trails to make this the “land of the free.” And I am indebted to all those who have fought to protect and preserve our freedom. Many who have gone before us paid great prices and made great sacrifices that bless us today. Indeed the United States of America is the “home of the brave.”

And, as we take note of reasons to be thankful for our country, let us recognize the blessing of living in a country where we have the freedom to preach the Gospel without hindrance or molestation. We do not have to sneak around under the cloak of darkness, or creep through the backstreets to assemble and worship. And we still have the freedom to openly and publicly proclaim the truth of God’s Word without censorship. (Of course, there are some who are presently trying to enact laws that would deprive us of that freedom – a matter that deeply concerns me, which I shall address later in this writing.)

Concern

With the foregoing expressions of thanksgiving as a backdrop, let me now turn your attention to some equally legitimate reasons for every Christian to be concerned about our nation.

I am extremely concerned about some things going on in this nation. I look back fifty years and compare the morals, values, and philosophies of that era to the morals, values, and philosophies of today—and I fear what this nation is becoming.

If the trends of recent years continue in the same direction, and at the same rate as they have for the last fifty years, I shudder to think what kind of nation this will be fifty years from now. What kind of world will the Christian have to contend with fifty years from now?

The following is a listing and brief discussion about some of the things going on in our nation, about which I am extremely concerned.

(1) *The dulling of our moral senses.* For example, there was a time when fidelity in marriage was the norm, but now studies about “affairs” reveal shocking statistics. We are told that the majority of men and a near majority of women in this country have been sexually unfaithful to their marital vows. And some will admit to having had more than one.

Once, not so very long ago, virginity was respected and expected, but now it is mocked and ridiculed. There are thousands of teenagers who become sexually active every day in this country, and the age at which this takes place is getting younger and younger. And thousands of teenage girls get pregnant every day.

Most young people will tell you that, among their classmates, it is common knowledge that most students lose their virginity by the time they graduate high school. And in colleges and universities across this country, engaging in sex before marriage is so common that “no one

thinks anything about it.” In fact, many students say they think nothing of “having sex” with numerous people in the course of their college years. As one university student said to me, “You would not believe the pressure that is on you. If you let it be known that you are still a virgin, people look at you like you are a freak of some kind, and want to know what is wrong with you.”

We are now told that abstinence is an unrealistic expectation, and that students need to be taught how to practice safe sex. And, related to that, I am very perplexed at the reasoning of some people. On the one hand, they want kids to “say no” to drugs, but, on the other hand, they say, it is asking too much to tell the same kids to “say no” to premarital sex.

Obviously, such things as just described are an enemy to the Christian family in which parents are trying to instill in their children the importance of total abstinence and “waiting until marriage.” And even when the family is at home, within the safe confines of their own house, they will have to confront this dulling of our moral senses through the medium of entertainment. Television, music, and movies are saturated with the message that pre-marital sex and extra-marital sex are “common,” and “normal.” And that same world of entertainment regularly portrays perverted sex (such as homosexual activity) as being “ok.”

It is frightening to think about what subtle, incremental, and cumulative effect that the world of entertainment is having on our society. If some sudden and drastic change challenges our moral ethics, we usually resist it strongly, but when the morals shift incrementally, our resistance to such change may be broken down incrementally. Even if we start out *despising* some evil, we can be influenced to *tolerate* that same evil. Then, in our tolerance of that evil we can be influenced to *accept* it, and, finally, *embrace* it.

I am deeply concerned that our moral senses are being dulled.

(2) *The growing disregard for the sanctity of human life.* First, consider the murdering of unborn infants. Oh, I know the politically correct term is “woman’s choice” and the common word for it in society is “abortion,” but I am calling it what it is— Murder!

Since the infamous Roe vs. Wade decision of January 22, 1973, millions of unborn babies have been killed through this inhumane and sinful action. It is “believed” (remember that many abortions are not entered on the medical records) that of the unintended pregnancies each year among teenagers, that more than half of those pregnancies end in elective abortion. And that is not counting all of the adult women who willfully terminate an unborn life because the pregnancy is “inconvenient” or “unwanted.” What a national shame!

Second, in recent years, we have been stunned, even shocked, by the shootings in our schools across America. And, as we shake our heads in sorrow, we ask, “Why? Why would a student do such a thing?” Well, although many “reasons” can be speculated, one of the underlying reasons that I see for such behavior is the growing disregard for the sanctity of human life.

Of course, many say it is because guns are so readily available. But, wait a minute. Guns have been around for years and years. In fact, when I was growing up, most families had a gun or guns on a rack, usually by a door, unsecured and readily accessible to anyone who could reach it. And we were normal enough to get mad at our teachers, and we got “picked on” by the bullies of our class—but getting a gun and shooting our teachers and classmates never entered our mind.

What, then, is the reason? Well, could it be that this is the fruit of an educational system that has taken God out of the picture and taught that humans do not come from God? When we teach that man “evolved” from lower animals instead of being created by God, should we not expect that some people would have no more regard for human life than they do for an animal?

Why should we be shocked, or even surprised if someone is influenced to have no regard for the sanctity of human life and has no compunction about taking a human life? In fact, if there were no God (as evolution teaches) what “reason” can you give that would make it wrong for one human to kill another human (except that you just “don’t like it”)? If we remove God from the picture, our moral base collapses.

In a world wrapped up in evolutionary thinking and humanistic influence, Christians are certainly challenged to offset the influence of these God-denying philosophies. I am gravely concerned about the growing disregard for the sanctity of life.

(3) *Disappearance of the traditional family.* It is alarming how many children today live in a one-parent home. And it is alarming how many families today are a broken family, i.e., a family that has been divided by divorce—leaving precious children to be emotionally torn between mom and dad. And even those immediate families that have not been shattered by the words, “divorce granted,” may be affected by divorces in their extended family.

The problem of the disappearance of the traditional family is greatly contributed to by the entertainment industry. Think about it. On how many television programs do you see a “traditional” family (of mom, dad and kids) portrayed in the sense that God’s word teaches the family to be?

In the real world more and more heterosexual couples are choosing to “live together” without the commitment or responsibilities of marriage vows. In the real world, more and more homosexual couples are “living together” — engaging in the deviant sexual behavior characteristic of such people. And, more and more, such living arrangements shock us and concern us less and less.

This disappearance of the traditional family is a great challenge facing the Christian home. I wonder about our children who are growing up in a society where dysfunctional families are so common that such families appear to be *normal*. And if this trend continues and only gets

worse, will the time come that our children will think of the family that is as God intended it, to be *abnormal*?

In such a society, the Christian is challenged to stay focused upon God's plan for marriage and the family, and steadfastly oppose that which is contrary to what God's Word teaches about these matters!

(4) *The growing lack of respect for authority.* Of the various conditions in our nation that concern me, I believe that the lack of respect for authority is the root of many problems in the home, in government, in schools, and in the church.

Authority is the great regulator of life. It is the means by which we establish and maintain order. Without authority and the proper respect for authority, society ends up in chaos and anarchy. No society can survive without it!

Presently, the lack of respect for authority is a problem for everyone in any position of authority. Every time the policeman pins on the badge and goes on patrol, he is at risk because of a lack of respect for authority. Teachers in our schools are at risk because of a lack of respect for authority. Officials of athletic events and coaches are subject to physical and verbal abuse because of the growing disregard for those in authority.

It discourages Bible class teachers. Elders find it necessary to spend time in business meetings discussing problems that arise because of it. And many of the issues that are troubling the church of Christ are linked to a lack of respect for the authority of the Word of God!

And, of course, parents experience many anxious moments because of it. Few are the homes where mom and dad have the last word, and dad can quiet a room with just "a look." Now, instead, children are allowed to be rebellious and defiant. (I read about one child who sued his parents, claiming they had "too much say-so" in his life.)

Our culture has been a breeding ground for the lack of respect for authority. In the throes of humanism, relativism, etc., we are told, “No one has a right to impose his values upon you.” “No one has a right to tell you what to do.”

The lack of respect for authority permeates our society. Starting in the home, where children are allowed to defy the authority of their parents, it continues in all arenas of life — on the street, in the classroom, in the work place, and in government.

Indeed, this is a serious problem that ought to be of grave concern to the true patriot of this nation.

(5) *Discrimination Against Christianity.* Who would have ever thought that, in the United States of America, that Christian students would not be allowed to express their faith at a school event? Who would have thought that teachers would be allowed to teach evolution in the classroom, but Christian students would not be allowed to pray in the same classroom?

This nation was founded upon Judaeo-Christian principles. Who would have ever thought that we would reach the point that children cannot be taught those Judaeo-Christian principles, but those same impressionable children can be taught Islam?

Who would have ever thought that we would live to hear Christianity blamed for such things as violence and perversion? Who would have ever thought we would live to see the day when it is “open season” on Christians, but Christians cannot speak out against sinful behavior or a false religion without being accused of being intolerant and bigoted?

What a challenge we have to practice our Christian faith in such a world! And, we must admit the grim likelihood that things will only get worse.

However, we are not the first Christians to live in a sinful society, and God has told us how to behave ourselves in such a society. So, let us consider what his Word teaches us about our conduct on earth.

The Christian As a Citizen of the United States of America

The following points are a partial listing of the things that God has taught his children regarding our earthly existence.

(1) *We are first and foremost citizens of a spiritual kingdom.* Physical Israel was God's chosen nation, but the United States of America is not the counterpart to Israel. Instead, the counterpart to physical Israel is the church -- God's chosen generation (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. Rom. 9:1-8).

Christians are part of the kingdom of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:13-14), and his kingdom is not of this world.

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence“ (John 18:36).

In the apostles Paul's letter to the Philippians, he reminded them that the Christian's citizenship is in heaven.

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20, NKJV).

The apostle Peter pleaded for abstinence from fleshly lusts with the reminder to his readers that we are sojourners.

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;” (1 Pet. 2:11).

As one of our beloved hymns reminds us, “This world is not my home. I'm just passing through.”

(2) *As citizens of the Lord's Kingdom, our highest loyalty is to our King, Jesus Christ.* When Peter and the other apostles were threatened and told by the Jewish authorities to

stop preaching about Jesus Christ, their bold reply was, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Anytime that there is a conflict between what man wants and what the Lord wants, the Christian must obey God.

(3) *As citizens of the Lord’s Kingdom, we are to abstain from the evil of this world.*

As we have traditionally said, “The Christian is in the world, but the world is not to be in the Christian.”

Note these divine commands:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2).

“Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22).

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12).

(4) *While I live on earth, I have a dual citizenship.* Not only am I a citizen of the spiritual Kingdom of Christ, I am also a citizen of an earthly country. As a citizen of the United States, I am to be a law-abiding citizen (as long as doing so does not conflict with God’s laws - see #2 above).

As earthly citizens, we are specifically taught to do three things:

- (a) *Be submissive to those in authority* (Rom. 13:1-7), and the apostle Paul wrote in that scripture that if one defies those in power, he actually defies God (v. 2). This injunction from Paul is appreciated more when one remembers that the reigning “authority” at the time Paul wrote this was the evil Nero Caesar, who inflicted severe persecution upon Christians. God’s children are to be respectful and supportive of all Governmental officials, as long as doing so does not set aside God’s will.
- (b) *Pay taxes.* “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom

tribute is due; custom to whom custom... (Rom. 13:7). When Jesus Addressed this matter, he succinctly taught, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mk. 12:17).

(c) *Pray for those in authority.* Paul specifically commands us to pray for kings, and for all that are in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-2), and it is noteworthy that he added that we should pray that may lead a quiet and peaceable life (v. 2).

True Patriotism: Righteousness Exalteth a Nation

It is becoming harder and harder as a Christian to be a patriot of this nation. The more man enacts laws legalizing and legitimizing abortion, homosexual behavior, and etc. the more difficult it is to be a supportive, loyal citizen of this country. And it is not easy to shrug off the way that Christians, especially conservative Christians, are being attacked.

Nevertheless, we must mentally prepare ourselves to be strong and faithful regardless of how difficult things may be.

To inspire and embolden us, consider these examples of people who did the right thing in a world filled with evil:

(1) Noah lived in a time when the thoughts of man's heart were evil continually, to the point that it repented God that he had made man. When God determined to destroy man, he found only eight righteous people, and they were Noah's family. What a marvelous example Noah is to us. In a world filled with evil, Noah was a righteous man and saved his own family.

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7).

(2) After Joshua succeeded Moses as the leader of Israel, he led them through the conquest of the land of Canaan. When he became an old man, he called the people together and reminded them of how God had blessed them and provided for them. He charged them not to go back and serve other gods, and then he spoke those well-known inspiring words,

“Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:14-15, emphasis mine -ds).

What a challenging statement. What leadership! And the Bible records that Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua (Josh. 24:31; Judges 2:7). Regrettably, after his death and another generation arose that knew not the Lord, nor the works which he had done for Israel, we are told that Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, and they forsook the Lord God (Judges 2:8-12).

(3) Judah, the southern Kingdom, was captured in 606 B.C., and taken into Babylonian captivity, by King Nebuchadnezzar. Four young men of Judah were chosen by the King to be prepared for service to the king. They were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Later, Daniel interpreted a dream for Nebuchadnezzar, and was given a position of authority by the king. Daniel had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon. Some time later, Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold and commanded all to bow down and worship. Whoever did not was cast into a fiery furnace.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down to an image of gold and worship, and they were cast into the furnace. However, by the providential care of God, no harm came to them, causing the king to be impressed with the God whom these young men served.

There are three lessons to learn from the behavior of these young men:

(a) *Never Compromise With Evil Or Religious Error.* They could have reasoned that, "When in Rome..." Or they could have rationalized that they had good positions, and could not afford to displease the king. They knew that idolatry was against the will of God (Ex. 20:4), and they firmly refused to participate!

(Cf. Ephesians 5:11; Romans 12:2; I John 2:15-17; Matthew 6:33.)

(b) *Never Give Up Because Circumstances Are Against You.* God is almighty (Eph. 3:20-21). Pray, seeking his will, and trust him to provide.

(c) *Obey God, Regardless Of What It May Cost You.* Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego believed that God would save them (3:18), but they were determined to be faithful to God, even if it meant dying. How determined are you to be faithful to God? What "price" are you willing to pay in order to be a faithful child of God?

Just as the faithfulness of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was a positive influence upon Nebuchadnezzar, your faithfulness will have a strong influence upon those around you (1 Pet. 2:11-12; Mat. 5:16).

God blessed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego for their faithfulness, and he will bless you if you are faithful!

(4) The story of Daniel in the lion's den continues to inspire and motivate Christian to do what is right, regardless of the consequences (Daniel 6). Recall the story with me.

The land, which had been the Babylonian empire, had become the empire of Persia, with Darius reigning as king. Darius gave Daniel a position of high rank and authority, which made the other princes and rulers very jealous. So, they tried to find some fault in Daniel to bring to Darius. They knew that three times every day he went to his room and opened the window toward Jerusalem, and made his prayer to God. So, Daniel's enemies went to Darius and

persuaded him to sign a law that for thirty days no one could ask anything of any god or any man except King Darius. If anyone broke that law, he was to be cast into a den of lions.

Daniel knew that the new law had been made, but every day he still went to his room and opened the window and prayed to Jehovah. The jealous rulers saw him doing it, and they came to the king and told him. Darius was deeply saddened because he loved Daniel, but the jealous rules forced him to carry out the sentencing of Daniel to be thrown into a den of lions. And, of course you know the rest of the story. Daniel was not hurt by the lions (through the providence of God), and he was set free and restored to his position of prominence. The men who had plotted against Daniel were cast into the same lion's den, along with their wives and children, and were devoured by the lions.

What a wonderful story of bravery. What a marvelous example of abiding commitment to serve God regardless of the consequences. If he disobeyed the King's edict, he would lose his job, but, more importantly, he would be thrown into a den of lions. Yet, he did not waver. He did what was right regardless of the consequences.

May God help us to be just as brave and committed.

Conclusion

True patriots are needed in the United States of America. Christian patriots are needed in this nation.

The true Christian patriot realizes that the highest form of authority is not the civil government, nor the politicians and legislators of this country. Instead, the highest authority in his life is the creator – the Lord of all men,

The true Christian patriot will put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:11-18), and defend Christ and his church against the enemies of the cross -- including those who are within the body of Christ.

The true Christian patriot will study his Bible and know what it teaches; equipping him to face the fiery darts of the devil, wherever they come from.

The true Christian patriot will steel himself to obey God. As a citizen of the Kingdom of God, to disobey God is to be guilty of the worst form of treason!

When the apostle Peter wrote his general epistle, Christians were being persecuted. Corruption in government abounded, and children of God were surrounded by evil influences. To fortify them, he wrote the following words, which are obviously relevant for us.

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king” (1 Peter 2:13-17).

