

Fourth of July -- 2016

In the midst of the most glorious of times in the entire Old Testament, the dedication of the Temple, God spoke to Solomon these words of hope.

2 Chronicles 7:13-14

If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people, who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

This is a really great promise from God that applies to us today. It gives hope to hopelessness, especially for the people of God.

'If' is a conditional phrase. It implies *'then.'*
If things become so bad that there is no hope,
then, God says, "You can count on Me."

In a time of trouble, we can turn to God.

The Psalmist wrote,

"I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord' and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to you in a time when You may be found... You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah." (Ps. 32:5-7).

One of the founding Fathers of our nation, George Washington, offered the very first prayer in the halls of Congress:

O Lord our heavenly Father, high and mighty King of kings, and Lord of lords, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers on earth and reignest with power supreme and uncontrolled over all the Kingdoms, Empires and Governments; look down in mercy, we beseech Thee, on these

our American States, who have fled to Thee from the rod of the oppressor and thrown themselves on Thy gracious protection, desiring to be henceforth dependent only on Thee....

Be Thou present, O God of wisdom, and direct the councils of this honorable assembly; enable them to settle things on the best and surest foundation....

Shower down on them and the millions they here represent, such temporal blessings as Thou seest expedient for them in this world and crown them with everlasting glory in the world to come. All this we ask in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, Thy Son and our Savior. Amen.¹

Our founding fathers believed in the person and power of Jesus Christ. They had great respect for the Word of God and believed it to be authoritative.

Thomas Jefferson, our third president, wrote,

“Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are a gift from God ...Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever.”²

Patrick Henry, (ratified of the Constitution) wrote,

“It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great Nation was founded not by religionists but by Christians, not on religions but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. For this reason alone, people of other faiths have been afforded freedom of worship here.”³

Greg Laurie writes in his book, *Hope for America*,

“If we remove that foundation, if we remove that belief in the Bible as the Word of God, we’re left with a vacuum and

¹ “First Prayer of the Continental Congress, 1774,” Office of the Chaplain, U. S. House of Representatives, <http://chaplain.house.gov/archive/continental.html>.

² U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 108th Congress, 1st sess., vol. 145 – Part 15 (September 5, 2003), 21335.

³ U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 21335.

suddenly this whole American experiment begins to collapse like a house of cards.

What our founders gave us was freedom of religion, not freedom from religion. And they led the way with a strong belief in and respect for the authority of the Word of God.”⁴

At the beginning of our public school system a copy of two books could be found in every classroom: The Bible and The Pilgrim’s Progress, a Christian allegory written by John Bunyan.

“Our great universities, such as Harvard and Princeton, were originally established as Christian institutions. Within Harvard’s original rules and precepts, it was written that everyone shall ‘consider well the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life.’”⁵

I remember the days of my youth when I received inspiration to my Christian faith. The Ten Commandments were posted, prayer was allowed and even led by teachers in the public school classroom, and at Christmastime we joyfully sang Christmas hymns and choruses.

In those days the greatest enemy of the US was communism and the cold war (weapons escalation). After the fall of the Berlin wall and of Communism, however, America was overrun with secularism, which is at its core was the same atheism. Today that philosophy has overrun America, where everything related to God has been banned, even the truth of our Christian heritage.

Sociologist Robert Nisber wrote,

“The ideologies which gained entry into the academy in the sixties claimed that the fundamental intellectual principles of Western culture were illegitimate and must be overthrown. With that destroyed terms like truth, good, evil, and soul could be discarded.”⁶

That’s where we are today.

⁴ Greg Laurie, *Hope for America*, (U.S.A.: Kerygma Publishing, 2012), p. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

In place of God and the Bible young people are taught evolution, atheism, and no right or wrong. Along with disbelief in God, there is conclusively no fear of God, final judgment nor accountability for our actions.

Abraham Lincoln identified the problem more than a century ago, while lamenting the war between the State. He wrote these words,

“We have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious Hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.”⁷

This is such a contrast between the people of God and the faithless world.

One popular song highlights such a response:

Feeling my way through the darkness
 Guided by a beating heart
 I can't tell where the journey will end
 But I know where to start
 They tell me I'm too young to understand
 They say I'm caught up in a dream
 Well life will pass me by if I don't open up my eyes
 Well that's fine by me
 So wake me up when it's all over
 When I'm wiser and I'm older
 All this time I was finding myself
 And I didn't know I was lost⁸

The best response is not to forget the Lord, but to turn to the Lord.

⁷ U.S. Congress, Senate, Congressional Record, 106th Congress, 2nd sess., vol. 146 – Part 5 (May 4, 2000), 6893.

⁸ Song: *Wake Me Up* by Aloe Blacc

and [if] My people, who are called by My name
humble themselves and pray and seek My face
 and turn from their wicked ways,
 then I will hear from heaven,
 will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Notice these words of response to God:

1. Humility
2. Prayer
3. Seeking His Face
4. Turn from all wicked ways

God Promises to...

1. Hear from heaven
2. Forgive their sin
3. Heal their land

At the founding of our nation **George Washington proposed** how we should as a nation respond to God:

“Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor...Now therefore I do recommend...that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country....And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the Great Lord and ruler of Nations, and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions... to promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue.”⁹

Nations have four duties:

1. To acknowledge the providence of Almighty God,
2. To obey His will,
3. To be grateful for His benefits, and
4. To humbly implore His protection and favor.

⁹ *The Providence Gazette and Country journal* (Providence: Oct. 17, 1789), p. 1. George Washington, “A Proclamation,” issued on October 3, 1789, observance date November 26, 1789.

We can turn to God in repentance and experience revival.

Or we can turn to our neighbor and ask him to *“wake us up when it’s all over.”*

It’s either revival with spiritual renewal and national benefits;
Or Judgment day and destruction.

Revival is

...a new beginning of obedience to God... Just as in the case of a converted sinner, the first step is a deep repentance, a breaking down of heart, a getting down in the dust before God, with deep humility and a forsaking of sin.

Charles Finney

The greatest obstacle to the conversion of Nineveh was not to be found in Nineveh. It was not the sin and corruption of the Ninevites, although those were great. It was not the graft-ridden police force or corrupt politicians. It was not the false cults and religions. The biggest obstacle to the salvation of Nineveh was found in the heart of a pious, prejudiced man named Jonah. There was no deceitfulness in all of Nineveh like the deceitfulness in Jonah’s heart.

Jonah was the key to the salvation of Nineveh. God’s people are the key to the spiritual climate of our nation and world.

George Sweeting

Prayer Time:

1. Confess every sin.
2. Purposed repentance of any area not in God’s will
“I turn from this wicked way.”
Get absolutely right with God.
3. Acknowledge God’s rule in my life.
4. Gratefulness for blessings.
5. Plea for God’s favor and protection.