

Title: Is America a Christian Nation?

Text:

If you have your Bibles, will you turn, please, to Acts chapter 17. Acts chapter 17. I would like to begin a series of messages on the topic: ONE NATION UNDER GOD. And I would like to begin this series by asking you the question: IS AMERICA A CHRISTIAN NATION?

That is not an easy question. Obviously it is either YES, or NO. But it is not easy. If you mean, did we establish a nation that promotes and condones an established Christianity as a state religion? the answer to that question is NO. No, America is not a christian nation in that sense.

But if you mean, did Americans, our early founding Fathers, did they gain their insights into the government that was established in the land that was developed here, did they gain their insights and the principles of government from Christianity and the teachings of scripture, the answer is: absolutely YES! It is a difficult question. Not all those involved in the founding of our country were christians. Many of them were. But, many of them were not christians at all.

So, we are going to take a look into our past history and into our present helplessness and into our future hope.

There are notes in your bulletin. And I hope you will follow along.

Acts chapter 17. A situation in which I find a great deal of similarity to our present state of things in America. Paul is in Athens on Mars Hill. He is in a place that captures a view of the surrendering city. He is in a place where he could be heard by many. And he spoke these words.

Acts 17 beginning with Vs 22...(Read Vs 22-31)

JOIN WITH ME IN A MOMENT OF PRAYER

Father, we pray in these moments together on the 4th of July that you will speak to our hearts ..that you would show us clearly what must be done in every one of our hearts as well as in the corporate life of this nation. For we pray this in the name and for the glory of Jesus Christ...Amen.

(1) In looking at our past history, I would like to share with you five facts

Five facts concerning this question: IS AMERICA A CHRISTIAN NATION?

(1) The first of which deals with the planting of the first colony. The planting of the first colony. Every school child knows that the Pilgrims came to America. We read the story of their journey on the Mayflower. And one of the first legal documents of this country which established the first New England colony was done on November 11, 1620 called the MAYFLOWER COMPACT. I would like to read to you out of that compact.

QUOTE: In the name of God, amen. We whose names are under written, the lowly subjects of our dread sovereign Lord King James (who I am add is the one who authorized the King James Bible) by the grace of God having undertaken for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith and in honor of our King and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together."

Now, some believe that the Pilgrims came over to this country for religious freedom. But, I remind you that the Pilgrims were still subject to the king of England. They came over to advance the Christian faith. To seek to extend the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, they said. And so it reads in the Mayflower compact.

In 1629, just 9 years later, King Charles the 1st is now on the throne, and he gave the Massachusetts Bay Charter. Here is what it says..

QUOTE: Where by our said people, inhabitation there maybe so religiously, peaceably and civilly governed as their good life and orderly conversation may win and insight the natives of the country to their knowledge and obedience of the only true God and savior of mankind and the christian faith which in our royal intention and the free profession is the principle end of this plantation."

Yes, friends, in the beginning, before the time of the revolution, it is very clear why people came to this country. And that is to advance the Christian faith.

As a matter of fact they sought continuously to reach the natives. And they continuously reported back to England the progress they were making concerning the advancement of the Gospel of Christ.

In terms of planting the first New England colony it was definitely intended to establish the Christian faith.

By the way, in 1620 one day after receiving the report of the Mayflower Compact, King James gave a New England charter back to those Pilgrims. And here is what He said:

"We according to our Princely desire favoring much your worthy disposition in hope thereby to advance the enlargement of the Christian Religion to the glory of God, Almighty."

Yes, there is no question that the people who originally came to this country had in the mind the advancement of the Christian faith. That is why they came. They considered this new land as a great mission field.

(2) The second fact about our past history deals with the pattern of education that was originally established. Nothing so demonstrates to me the early foundation of our country then this pattern of education that was originally established. The text books, my dear friends, was only one text book. It was the Bible, The brand new King James translation. Now, in the language of the common people. And all the parents desired that their children learn their letters from the Scriptures.

The teachers, I remind you, in early American education were all ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They were the only ones that were educated, I might add.

The class rooms were local church buildings. There were no other buildings. Classes were held in local church buildings.

One of our original colleges, still one of the great colleges of learning today, is Harvard. Harvard college was established in 1636. Some 16 years after the Mayflower Compact. Let me give you a quote from their entrance requirements:

"Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly press to consider well the main end of his life and studies. And that is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life. And therefore to lay Christ as the only foundation of any sound knowledge and learning. And seeing that the Lord, only, giveth wisdom, let everyone seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seek it of Him." End of quote.

Needless to say that Harvard has gotten a little ways away from that requirement.

In 1701 Yale was founded. In 1746 Princeton was founded. Both school along with Harvard..the three schools that established educational patterns throughout this country, all of those schools were established on the foundation of the Scriptures. And the primary motive was to win people to Jesus christ and to train people for the ministry of the Gospel.

It wasn't until many years later that Columbia University under a new modern educational movement begin to plant the seeds of secular humanism. But, that is another story.

(3) The third fact is what we are remembering today. The proclamation of the declaration of independence. The Proclamation of declaration of independence,
On July 4, 1776. And I quote:

"When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the polictical bands which connect them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature, and of natures God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind require that they should declare the causes which impel them, to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights governments are istituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes

destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness." End of quote.

My friends, listen, no matter what you might think about the declaration of independence, it is obvious that there was a consciousness among the signers of that..that this document recognizes the ultimate source of authority for both government and law is God and His revealed Word. I could go on and on as the men who signed that declaration stated very clearly what they believed. They believed that our established government, as it would come to be known, after the Constitutional Convention, should be the result of the laws of God. They did not believe they were subject to the laws of men. That was a part of the background to the Revolution. They believed that they were subject to the laws of God.

They also believe that government as it was established should gain all of its insight from nature's God and His laws.

For example: there were great discussions revolving around each statement in the Declaration of Independence. This was also true in the Constitutional Convention. Each statement as to whether or not it truly reflected a law of God. Or, was it simply an opinion of men.

Are there laws from God about government. I say there are. God who established the institution of individual liberty when He created Adam, Also established marriage as number two. Also, established the family as number three. And also established government as number four.

As Paul said in his sermon in Athens, God has made of one every nation. And pre-determined two things. ONE..THE TIME WHEN THEY WOULD COME TO POWER AND HOW LONG THEY WOULD REIGN. AND THE BOUNDARIES OF THEIR HABITATION--that is, how much territory they would conquer and control. That has all been pre-determined by God.

And what was the purpose of all of that according to Acts 17:27? So that they would seek the Lord.

The ultimate sources of all authority including government is God, himself. There is no substitution for that. And thank God our early founding fathers realized that. Even though certain educators and teachers today and politicians do not seem to understand it. No, it is very clear. Even though they were not all Christian, yet, they recognized that the ultimate source of authority was God.

(4) The fourth thing that I draw to your attention was the proceedings of the CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION. 1787 to 1789. I think it is good that every one of us understand what went on there. Some have described it as a religious gathering.

Benjamin Franklin, the oldest man at the convention, stood up and he said this: "Sirs, I have lived a long time. And the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see that God still governs in the affairs of men. If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without our Father's notice, is it possible that we can build an empire without our Father's aid? I believe the sacred writings which say that except the Lord build the house they labor in vain who build it."

Franklin went on to move that a member of the clergy be invited to participate in the meetings from day to day. And here is why he said that is needed.

"That we might invoke the wisdom and guidance of the Father of light. Or, we shall succeed no better than the builders of Babel."

James Madison, one of the framers of our own constitution said, "we have staked the whole future of American civilization not upon the power of government, far from it, we have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government. Upon the capacity of each one of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, and to sustain ourselves according to the 10 commandments of God."

Listen, do not make any mistake about it. There were a lot of men at that convention who did not want to establish a Christian state. They wanted the freedom to worship. But, I want you to understand that these men knew exactly where authority lies.

Madison's words are still ringing. This nation that is turning its back upon God's moral laws and the 10 commandments is hiding for bondage and slavery just like the Bible predicted. Why the Magna Carter of freedom of this country is the 10 Commandments. God said that it would guarantee their freedom as they came out off Egypt. They would no longer be in bondage and slavery if they followed his laws.

Madison knew that. And he said the whol future of America is depended upon we ourselves will governor ourselves according to the laws of God. Namely, the 10 Commandments.

George Washington--there are all kinds of quotes from him, and there are a lot of opinions about what he did or said that I am not so sure we can varify. But there is one thing that I like that he said at that constitutional Convention. I will just give you a small quote from what I believe is a fantastic speech.

But, he said this..(quote) "The smiles from heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which heaven, itself, has ordained."

Washington knew what they had done. And he believed that all those rules of right and order established in the constitution were a part of which heavn itself had ordianed. And if you could go through the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention you would think it was a religious gathering. Every point was discussed as to whether or not it was truely a law of God.

Now, I am not saying that the constitution is perfect. But, the constitution is a guarantee to protect --not to provide--It is a protector of the God given rights of the individual. It is based, by the way, in the belief of the depravity of man. Which is what Puritan theology consistently taught. That man is lost. That he is sinful. That it is dangerous for one man to have power. The most famous expression of their belief in the depravity of man is the check and balance system in our Constitution. Between Legislative, Judicial, and executive branches.

The main motivation as to why it was established was the depravity of man. That man was lost and sinful. That it is dangerous for one man to have power above the others.

According to the Bible, a passage to which they referred, is found in I Timothy 1:9. There we read "realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious."

Laws were not made in the beginning of the country for the righteous law abiding person. They were made to protect that person from the lawless. It was just like the Bible said. And brother we have come a long way from that principle.

That principle led to the first statement in our constitution. That congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercises there off.

Do we have separation of church and state? YES..

Do we have divorcement of God from government? NO

Each of these men recognized that God alone is the source of all that we believe. The idea of a secular state was totally foreign to our founding fathers.

(5) But, the fifth thing about our past history is probably the one that disturbs me more than any thing else in reading history. It is totally ignored. And it is something that Christians ought to all understand.

Dear friends, the greatest single factor on the cause of the revolution in the eyes of many, many Bible teachers and many historians was the presence of a moral and spiritual revival in this country. 35 years before 1776 people were saying that there was no hope for America. Morality was abandoned. They said that there was no hope for this country. They lost their moral convictions and their moral courage. And yet some fantastic things happened. God sent a man to these early colonies from England. His name was Evangelist George Whitfield. An unusual man to say the least. Do you know that when he arrived in this country and started preaching to the Americans, he would stand in market places, in small gatherings, in country side, and where ever he could be heard. They threw things at him. They spit upon him. And they did many other things that should not be repeated.

But, God began to work on people's hearts as George Whitfield called America to repentance. And God began to break people down. A few here

and a few there. Some people shed some tears and got right with God and got rid of the sin in their life.

He was followed by John Westly. And inspired by the ministry of John Westly was a man by the name of Frances Asberry, who probably did more than the other two. Even though they led in the whole revival movement.

President Calvin Colliage many years later wrote.. "American was born in a revival of religion. In the back of that revival were three people: John Westly, George Whitfield, and Francis Asberry.

Benjamin Franklin said, at the height of this revival, "it is wonderful to me to see the change so soon made in the manners of our inhabitance. We now have hope for our country. From being thoughtless and indifferent about religion, it seems that all the world is growing religious. So that no one can walk through our town in the evening without hearing songs sung in different families on every street."

Benjamin Franklin said that. He was aware that God was doing a mighty thing. Preparing these people for the hour of revolution.

Revolution was preached from the pulpits, whether you like that or not. There are many questions as we look back as to whether that should have been done. But, one thing is for sure. America's revolution was born in the spirit of revival.

(11)

British prime minister David Lord George said this..."I do not know the exact figures of Britants debt to American. But, I am told that it is in thousands or millions at the present moment. But, it is nothing to the debt that America owes us. Write on the balance sheet..Debtor: one thousand and 90 million...Britant to America. And then on the other side write --Creditor: John Westly and George Whitfield America to Britain.

You see England gave us the two men who stured a revival in this county that led to the American revolution. Whether you like the fact that that happened or not. It is beside the point. Historians must come back and face the fact that America was experiencing a moral and spiritual revevial.

IS AMERICA A CHRISTIAN NATION? It was certainly not estblished that Christianity be a state relegion. We don't want anymore of the days of Consatine when Christian was a hypocricay. When everybody by the point of a sword was forced to believe. NO! We want to garantee the free excersis of religion, no matter what. Freedom to worship as we please. Freedom to believe the Bible as we understand it. Freedom to be different from others even in the general body of Christ.

(2) But, secondly, I see a tremendous fact about America's need of Christian principle and teaching, now, in her present helplessness. Just let me share with you a few things as America faces which way she will turn. This hour of our present helplessness, every thing that is going on in America, I would like to share four things with you.

(1) One, Dear friends, the only answer to our moral depravity is the person and work of Jesus Christ. His forgiveness. A lot of us could try to change and reform our own lives. We could make a vow to turn over a new leaf. That some how we would stop what is going on. The moral crisis that we are in and the depravity all around us. Let's turn over a new leaf. Let's reform ourselves.

Hay! That will not do it. The slums are not outside, friends, they are in our own heart. Man is a sinner. And he needs to be saved.

Yes, I see a real importance, today, in Christianity been spread throughout this land. I see real importance in Christians standing up and being counted. And sharing the wonderful Gospel of Christ in boldness such as never before. WHY? BECAUSE THE ONLY ANSWER TO MORAL DEPRIVITY IS NOT NEW LAW AND REGULATIONS. IT IS THE FORGIVENESS OF JESUS CHRIST.

(2) And number two, the only answer to social disorder is Jesus Christ and His love. It is amazing how our early founding fathers said that over and over again. Even at the Constitutional Convention. They said that the only way to avoid the social crisis that will come and cannot be stop by the Constitution is to share the love of Christ.

Listen, those men knew something that we don't know. Social problems are enormous throughout the country. All kinds of problems that

(13)

are consistantly paraded in our newspapers. What is the answer to all of

that? The answer is not new social programs. The answer is Jesus Christ and his love.

Our self centeredness has to be replaced by the love..the self sacrificing love of Jesus Christ.

The serious social problems of our day, no matter what they are, can not be solved in an atmosphere of hatred and specian and pride and greed and materialism. It must be answered by the love of Jesus. That I care about my brother or sister. That I am willing to sacrifice whatever is necessary. Jesus said that the whole world would knew that we are his disciples if we have love one to another.

Jesus said that if you see your brother in need and you say be warmed and filled, but you do not give him what is needed for his body, what good is that. It is nothing but faith without works and it is dead.

Jesus Christ ans his love is the only answer.

(3)Number three. The only answer to our emotional distress is Jesus Christ and his peace. Jesus said "Peace I leave with you. Not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled."

Emotional distress. Some psychologist say that there is no hope for America, emotionally.

From March 1, 1995 to March 1, 1996 in this country, 36 million, 6 hundred thousand Americans changed there place of residence.

(14)

It is growing every year at one tremendous rate. Psychologist are

asking why? Is it simple to get the new house? If that is so, then maybe that in itself is an indiment against the moral and spiritual life of the country.

Maybe it is job change. And there is true in that. But, facts show that even though it was true 30 years ago, studies show that is no longer the case.

American need not move as they once did. Studies show they move because they are restless. Restlessness...emotional conflict...nervous breakdown...

We all know what is going on. And it is getting wrose and wrose. And the only answer is found in Christ and his peace. Jeus will give us peace.

(4)And the only answer to our spiritual darkness is Jesus Christ and his light. Amos predicted that in the last days there would be a famine for the Word of God. Men would be groping like blind men in the darkness asking, "where is the truth...where is the authority..where is the light..who is right and who is wrong."

Boy, if there ever was a day, it is today. The only answer to the spiritual darkness in America is Jesus Christ and His light. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of light."

The moment you become a believer in Jesus Christ you are born again spiritually. And the lights come on.

2 Corinthians 4:6 says that the God who commanded the light to shine

15

in the darkness has shined in our hearts to give us the knowledge of a

glorious God in the face of Jesus Christ

Christ is the only answer.

(3)WELL, WHAT ABOUT OUR FUTURE HOPE? I want to give you four things which I believe the Bible teaches are necessary in order to have hope for the future.

(1)Number one, her dependence upon God. Our little motto: IN GOD WE TRUST. Oh, I cannot begin to share the amount of Scripture that comes to mind. We don't have time for it. If you are a student of the Bible, I am sure you are thinking of Proverbs 3:5 and 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all they ways acknowledge Him and he shall bring it to pass."

The same verse is applied to nations as well as individuals. Over and over again God says..The hope of any nation ..the hope of any individual is consistent trust and dependence upon God.

(2)Number two, I believe the second thing relating to our future hope as a country is our determination to follow the moral standards of the Word of God. It is obvious that a nation that continues to reject the moral standards in God's Word is hiding for destruction. And our future, our hope as a nation is centered in our determination to follow the moral standards of the Word of God. And that is true of you as an individual. You are hiding for tremendous ruin in your life, if you do not face this truth.

(16)

(3)A third factor which might surprise some of you but the Bible supports it. And that is our decision to support Israel. You say, "Now you are talking

(17)

As we want to get away from it...as we want to change it...we want to just stop being faithful to those principles...we want to go our own way..we want to develop humanistic social order that says that freedom is doing whatever I want to. Listen, that is not God's Word. Freedom always has restrcut;ion. Restructions according to the Word of God. We are freee to love only when we are basing our love upon the moral commitments of the Scripture.

WE have the freedom to private property only as we understand it is a violation to steal.

We must get down to basics. God's Word garantees the freedom that we enjoy. Dedication to basic principles. Understanding that God is the one to whom we must give an acount.

Here is what we all need to do.

(1)Number one, receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal saviour. That is your greatest need.

(2) Number two, a personal commitment to prayer for our nation and her leaders. Pray for a revival. Pray that this nation will expearience a revival.That our leaders would turn back to God. Have you prayed?

(3)Number three..a personal commitment to the principles of good

governorment and Godly leadership. I believe that is necessary. Psalms 33:12 says "blessed is that nation whose God is the lord."

(4)And fourth, I believe we all need to come back and make a personal

politics." Oh, no I am not. I am not talking politics at all. I am not interested in discussing the Jewish - Araba problem at all. I am interested in whether or not you understand what the bible says about supporting Israel. God says that he will bless the nation that blesses Israel. He said that he will curse the one who curses it. I support Israel's right to be in the land based upon a God given right recorded in the scriptures. And I also believe that if I attack that, if I challenge that, if I become anti-semitic in any way, shape, or form, I am asking for the judgment of God upon my life.

The Bible says in Zechariah that if you touch the apple of his eye, which is Israel, you are touching the heart of God. And he will not stand for it. Listen, every nation that has cried out, "WE WILL PUSH THEM INTO THE SEA AND GET RID OF THEM, that nation has been judged by God.

Hilter thought that he could exterminate every Jew. And God judged Germany such as it has never been judged before.

Nasar wrote his death warrent when he said, "I am going to take every Jew and run them into the Mediteraine sea." And in just a few weeks time we read of Nasar's death.

Dear friends, the Bible teaches that a nations hope for the future is primarily drelated to their understanding of the Abrahamic covenant to

Israel. And her willingness to support Israel.

(4)Finally, I believe America's hope for the future is going to be based upon her dedication to the basic princeiples upon which this nation was founded.

commitment to evangelism. This nation need christ. And I ask you to make that commitment to evangelism. We have left it up to the professionals for too long. The ministry of reaching the lost was given to believers. WE need to invite people to come to Christ. That is the greatest need in our country. People coming to a personal faith in Jesus Christ. Without christ there is no hope. Our messagae is to preach Christ and him cruified. And I hope you will join in that commitment.

LET'S CLOSE IN PRAYER