

If My People – Patriotic Service

7/4/21

2 Chronicles 7:14

Sunday AM

In 1831, French statesman, **Alexis de Tocqueville**, traveled to the US to study the reasons for our nation's success. He'd later publish his finding in – ***Democracy in America*** – where he shared how he thought the essential key to our nation was not our unique political governance but the reality/vitality of our faith:

*I sought for the greatness of the USA in her commodious harbors, her ample rivers, her fertile fields, and boundless forests – and it was not there. I sought for it in her rich mines, her vast world commerce, her public school system, and in her institutions of higher learning – and it was not there. I looked for it in her democratic Congress and her matchless Constitution – and it wasn't there. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame w/ righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great b/c America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great!*

Today, America is still a great nation, but I fear we're not as good as we once were b/c we've continued to drift further/further away from God. In fact, I think most of us would agree that we're more fragile and splintered as a nation than we've been since maybe, the Civil War. More impatient and self-consumed – less concerned about right/wrong – and moral truth.

**LBH** – we have serious issues w/ crime, racism, immigration, political corruption, morality, a sanctity for human life, greed, and of course – idolatry.

This week as I was pondering the condition of our nation, I thought of the event involving Ben Franklin at the close of the Constitutional Convention of 1787. As Franklin left Independence Hall, a Maryland Convention delegate, Ms. Powel asked, “Well Doctor, what have we got – a republic or monarchy?” Franklin replied, “***A republic..., if you can keep it.***”

**On hearing this phrase**, it's probable some of us are thinking of the struggle we're seeing to fend off what some see as a form of Marxist socialism. Or maybe your thinking of the threats we're enduring b/c of the immigration challenges we're facing or the continuous shenanigans b/w the Democrats/Republicans...

But **WHAT IF** the real threat were something much different? More spiritual and less political? What if, the solution was staring the church right in the face?

May I share what I believe is a critical verse of Scripture to help turn our nation around?

*If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and I will heal their land. 2*

Chronicles 7:14

**Contextually**, this promise/encouragement was given to the Israelites/King Solomon when they were walking w/ God and dedicating the 1<sup>st</sup> Temple. It was a Divine warning against falling away and a prescription for repentance/restoration.

While it was specific for them, **WHAT IF** it had application for us today. What if this truth applied to any nation willing to exist under the blessing of God?

**SEE** – God instructed His people to build a Temple as a place of worship/mission so that Israel would always keep God in His rightful place on throne of their lives. So long as they trusted in the Lord, God promised His provision, protection, power, purpose, and presence.

**But should they drift/turn away**, God would allow them to face the consequences of their actions. He also promised His tough love/discipline to point them to back to His plan for restoration.

I don't know if you've ever noticed, but there were (4) things which set the nation adrift. (4) things that progressively lead down a sinister rabbit hole of idolatry/indifference – it's when God's people were:

- **Prideful** and self-sufficient
- **Prayerless** and disinterested in spiritual things
- Misplaced **Priorities** seeking after worldly ways
- **Presumptuous** of God's grace/goodness

**Let me put it another way** – Israel found themselves at odds w/ God b/c while they claimed to be God's people, they didn't live like God's people but like the world around them. They substituted the one true God, for the gods/idols of this world that they allowed to run rampant in their lives. The result of their spiritual drifting was a nation in peril. They may've looked good, but they were living Godless lives.

I fear the same is true today in our nation, our homes, and in our hearts – we're "good" but Godless.

**WHAT IF** the reason our nation is in the condition it is today is b/c God's people look more like the world around them than the Word w/in them?

And **WHAT IF** the solution to our troubles was not outside our church doors but inside our church hearts?

**Note again God's statement to His people –**

*If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and I will heal their land. 2  
Chronicles 7:14*

**This is a conditional statement** – meaning, if we do what we've been asked to do, then God will absolutely do what He's promised to do – ***He will release His favor just as soon as His people repent of our sin.***

I God's People must **HUMBLE** Themselves

**pride** in the OT meant ***to rise or swell up***. It refers to how the ocean waves rise/swell giving the appearance they're more than what they really are – referring to how people can often think more highly of themselves and their abilities than they do of God. Pride says – *I don't need God b/c I can make my own way.*

But God has a better plan! He calls on His people to ***humble themselves***.

*Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. James 4:8-10*

**humble** – to bend one's knee and bow one's heart; to place one's self under God's authority.

To humble ourselves before the God is to see ourselves rightly before Him – realizing just how unworthy and undeserving we really are and how desperate we are for His grace, favor, and intervention in our lives.

Yet, so long as we perceive we only need God in the big moments of life, we will never trust/follow Him in the everyday moments of life. **Humility is depending on God and not ourselves all day, every day.**

## II God's People must **PRAY**

I once heard that prayerlessness is the first cousin to pride b/c prayerlessness screams – *I don't need the Lord's help b/c I'm capable of handling things on my own and in my own way.*

**SEE** – prayerlessness doesn't say – *God is all I need*, but *I am all I need*. Prayerlessness relies on *me* instead of *Thee*. It refuses to lean on/trust in God.

True prayer looks to God in all things/in all ways – and says, “*I can't, but you can!*” Prayer acknowledges our personal/profound dependence on the Lord.

**In a sense**, (God was telling the Israelites what He could be saying to us) – *the reason the nation is dying on its feet is b/c God's people are refusing to live on their knees*. God's people are no longer seeking God's heart and will for themselves or for the nation.

Folks, this means onus is on *saved* not the *lost* if we're to see healing in our nation. It's painfully clear that our nation has gone astray b/c the hearts of believers has grown cold to the heart of God. **We must seek Him.**

## III God's People must **SEEK** His Heart/Will

It's not enough that God's people humble themselves and pray, our priorities also must be God's priorities. It can't be our will be done but only His will be done.

This is what Jesus called us to pray/prioritize when He was teaching us how to pray in the Lord's Prayer – *Your Kingdom come; Your will be done – on earth as it is in heaven...*

This refers to asking God to help us to keep our focus and priorities on Him. **SEE** – when God is our 1<sup>st</sup> priority, the things He cares about will be the things we care about. The things that get His attention will be the things that get our attention. But if our attention is on us – and we drift – so too will our nation drift.

**It begs the question** – who/what is our real priority? What is really #1 in our lives? The answer is found in asking: (1) where do I invest my time? (2) where do I spend my money? (3) and what occupies my thoughts?

There is (1) other thing God's people must do if we hope to see Him heal our nation – **we must repent!**

## IV God's People must **TURN** from Sin to God

We can't expect God to heal the hearts of our lost nation so long as the church lives in a carnal state. So long as we ignore the plank in our own eye for the sin in the lives of our neighbors, nothing will change.

**When the church is good but Godless** – it's not good for our nation. Maybe more so now than ever, what we need is a season of repentance. A times where we set aside our excuses for sin and truly seek God's holiness.

Sadly, we're good w/ our excuses and quick to rationalize our behavior. We're too quick to fall for temptation and way too slow to fall on our faces before the Lord to confess our sins and receive His grace and forgiveness. Yet, until we come clean before the Lord, God cannot release His healing hand upon our lives or our nation. *Unknown*

**What does this mean?** It means the only way our nation will be able to sustain our republic – the only we can *keep it* – is dependent upon the ability of God's people to walk w/ God.

**The question is** – will you do your part? Will you search your heart? Will you audit your priorities? And will you join others in turning your heart to Him.

I want to close w/ a passage in Psalms 85 – where the Sons of Korah pleaded w/ God for his nation and for God's forgiveness and restoration of His people.

*You, Lord, showed favor to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger. Restore us again, God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us. Will you be angry w/ us forever? Will you prolong your anger thru all generations? Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your unfailing love, Lord, and grant us your salvation. Psalm 85:1-7*