

Christianity in America in Biblical Perspective
“God’s Word to Our Nation”
Proverbs 14:34; Psalm 9:5–6, 19–20
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
July 5, 2020 • Sunday A.M. Sermon

We will by looking at Proverbs 14, a foundational text for our nation and then we’ll look at Psalm 9 but I’ll start with the reading of Psalm 9:5–8 which says [5] *You have rebuked the nations; you have made the wicked perish; you have blotted out their name forever and ever. [6] The enemy came to an end in everlasting ruins; their cities you rooted out; the very memory of them has perished.*

[7] But the LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, [8] and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.

Now Proverbs 14:34 which says [34] *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

This is a time where we talk about Christianity *in* America, for the preposition is very important. We are looking at the work of the Gospel in this nation and we try to do three things during this time of the year. One is we try to celebrate God’s good providences to give Him thanks and praise. Two we try to look at the issues where we need to come before God in confession and thirdly we look at God’s call to us as a church in this nation for consecration—how then shall we live in light of what God has done and where we are.

I have to confess to you pastorally that there is bigger burden. Normally I try to look at Biblical passages that have illustrations and are inspirational, encouraging and give instruction that would accomplish that celebration, confession and consecration. Yet this year it’s much more burdensome to my heart so I plan to give you some things that you can meditate and work through in the context of God’s Word to our nation. When I say God’s Word to our nation there is no fanatical idea where I was in a corner somewhere and God gave me a vision to give to you. If I ever do that just pack up and leave. When I say God’s Word from our nation I’m talking about God’s revealed Word. So what is it from God’s Word that would directly apply to us in our nation in this day and time in light of where we are and where we ought to be, after 244 years as a nation and then in this 244th year of our nation?

I’m also not embracing a reckless misuse of Scripture that I see many well-meaning pastors do regularly, where they will take God’s precepts, promises and prophecies to Israel, a covenant nation, and try to make a direct application to this nation. That is just handling the Scripture wrong. There is a special relationship that God had with Israel. There are implications of that, that apply to us but it’s not a one to one. So this is no reckless misuse of the Scripture by God’s grace or fanatical claims of special revelation, but I do believe God’s Word says something very specific to us that has to be framed in a very specific way to understand it. I want to give you five axioms from God’s Word to frame this and I will do this from three texts of Scripture.

Axiom number one is there is only one nation according to God’s Word that qualifies as a covenanted nation with God. You might be thinking ‘Don’t you think America’s a Christian nation?’ My answer would be ‘yes’ and ‘no.’ Yes, I do believe Christianity has been the major influence, but not only influence, therefore the adjective ‘Christian nation’ can be understood to

some degree but I don't believe it is 'Christian nation' in terms of a covenanted relationship with God, according to God's Word. One passage I would use to support this would be Amos 3:2 which says [2] "*You (Israel) **only** have I **known** of all the families of the earth.*" It doesn't mean that God doesn't know the other nations but He is speaking of an intimate, covenantal, marital relationship with them in His use of the word *known* here. There is only one covenanted nation that God has ever had that relationship with.

The second axiom is that God is Lord and King over every nation and all are accountable to Him now and at the judgment. Jesus said at the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–19a, [18] *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19a] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."* Psalm 2 tell us God is Lord over all the nations and they are all accountable to Him. Daniel 4 is another helpful passage. This is where Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that Daniel ends up interpreting for him and twice in Daniel 4 it says 'that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.' He is Lord and King over all the nations. When you read world history, nations by in large, particularly big empire nations, have about 150 to 200 year shelf life. I couldn't help but think of that since this is 244 years for us as a nation. As I look at other nations it kind of looks like they're on borrowed time. It is really interesting how the Lord raises up and brings down nations, because He is King over all the nations.

The third axiom is God blesses the nations that are blessed by His people and those nations who bless His people. When God established His covenant nation He did it by calling Abraham as He promised him that He would give him a seed where that seed would become like the sands of the sea and the stars of the sky. God would put him and his family in a nation that is not his nation to multiply him, mobilize him, and mature him. After 430 years God would bring them back to give them the Promised Land and with them He would bring judgment on the Amalekite and Canaanite nations who had occupied that land. We see the sovereignty of God at work but then when God makes this covenantal promise with Abraham He then in Genesis 12, 15 and 17 says to Abraham, 'In you all the nations of the earth will be blessed.' How does that happen? Not only from Abraham will come forth kings but from Abraham will come forth the King of Kings who will send the Gospel to all the nations and the end will not come until the Gospel has been preached to all the nations. Then God says to him, 'and I will bless all the nations that bless you.'

Up to this point I would live and die on what I have just said because it's pure Bible but now I'm about to speculate. I have often wondered why our nation has received so many providential blessings from God, because with all due respect I don't believe that America is exceptional so God has blessed us. I believe God has exceptionally blessed us and that's why we have enjoyed what we have enjoyed here. I think it's of Him, from Him and to Him. I ask myself constantly 'why' because I don't think we deserve it any more than anyone else. I do believe there is one thing that God keeps affirming and that takes me right to the first amendment, whereas the nation that said the state is not going to enforce a religion but we are going to protect the free practice of religion and Christ's church has been blessed with the free practice of religion. I believe God blesses the nation that blesses His church for it to freely function within its boundaries.

I believe it's part of the blessing we enjoy here and part of what God has done, because there is this principle He established where He is going to bless all the nations that bless His people. In the Old Testament that would have been God's covenant nation, Israel but in the New Testament God's covenant people are coming from all the nations into His church. His church is

the Royal Nation that is found in all the nations and when His covenant people is blessed by those nations then God blesses them because that is what He promised to do. So He blesses nations through His covenant people then He blesses nations that bless His covenant people.

The fourth axiom is while the Great Commission sends God's covenant people to make disciples of all the nations, it is not inconsistent to have a specific patriotic burden for your native nation. Jesus is not the tribal God of America or any one nation for He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and the Gospel of His Kingdom is to go to all the kingdoms of this world, but I do not believe it is inconsistent to have a specific, prioritized concern and love for your native nation. Why would I say that? To help you work through this with me I want to ask you some questions.

So you believe that God through the Gospel brings blessings to families? I would hope so because of the promises in the Bible—I will be a God to you and your children after you, believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved, you and your household. God blesses families. Do you want God to bless other families? I hope you would say 'yes' for it's not wrong to prioritize and seek God's blessing for your family. In fact it's your integrity to desire for other families to be blessed to seek the priority of Him blessing you than through you to other families. We give attention to our families, not exclusive to other families. Do you want the Gospel to go to all the nations? Absolutely and growing up due to being raised in the Christian Missionary Alliance church I love missions. One of my prayers right now is that God would not allow our mission's conference get put off this year due to the pandemic situation we're currently going through. But I don't think it's wrong for us to have a national mission's conference in October or for what missions needs to happen right here. I don't want to send it out there without a priority commitment right here. I want the Gospel to go to everyone but I want to examine myself. So to make something a priority does not prevent you from fulfilling the breadth of it, in fact it shows the integrity of what you want God to do out there as you look at what you want Him to do here.

Bless the families—let's go to work on mine Jesus. Bless the people—let's go to work on me Jesus. Bless the nations—let's go to work on this one Jesus. Do you think the Apostle Paul had a heart to take the Gospel to all the nations? I do, in fact he is the Apostle to the Gentiles. In Romans 1 Paul says to take the Gospel to the Jew first and then to the Gentiles and he didn't see that as an obstacle to his heart for the nations. He goes even further than that as he utters a self-directed anathema if necessary for his native nation to be reached with the Gospel, even though his calling was to all that nations, in Romans 9:3 which says *[3] For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* I don't know how you get to that kind of selflessness.

When you go to Geneva that became the reclaiming of the Apostolic doctrine and the Gospel, you see this glorious Reformer John Calvin as he is training all these people. He is sending missionaries everywhere. In the early 1560s he sent a missionary team to what is known today as Rio de Janeiro Brazil. He sent missionaries to Africa and all over Europe. In my research of him there was something I didn't know. He sent 1300 missionaries to France, his own country and he made regular trips at the peril of his own life to visit those missionaries. Another person he trained was John Knox who was a pastor in Geneva, who ended up sending missionaries all over the world. When Knox left Geneva to return to his own country of Scotland, when he got on the shore there he said 'Give me Scotland or I die.' That is not inconsistent to wanting to reach all the nations, where you would have a passionate priority for your own.

How about the English Reformers like Latimer and Ridley. Outside of Oxford on an October morning, the kindling is piled, the Sulphur is placed, the torch is lit and Ridley says ‘Tie my bonds that I may not leave my post.’ Latimer hears him, and there tied beside him says ‘Be of good cheer Master Ridley, for today by God’s grace we shall light a candle for Christ that shall not be put out in all of England.’ They had a heart for the world but that did not mean they could not be passionate and committed to reach their own nation. We can embrace the Great Commission with all integrity and still have the passionate priority of reaching our own, not exclusively but initially to reach the world.

Here is the fifth axiom—the providence of God has indisputably revealed a multitude of undeserved blessings upon our nation. There was the Great Awakening from 1735 to 1765, a second one from 1785 to 1880 that leads to the formation of this country. There is the Declaration of Independence and its framing—what was lacking and what was right about it. There is the intervention of God in the War of Independence and the War of 1812. There is the mending of our flaws where it’s clear we didn’t deserve it for there are national sins all around us. I could go into so much more detail on each one of these I’ve just mention yet God has given providential blessings time and time again. You’re not being humble when you deny to give praise to God for His providential blessings. We don’t deserve it, but you have given and it’s undeniable that you have done that but with blessings come responsibilities that we have before the Lord. Therefore then we want to hear from the Lord. How then shall we live in light of what God has done already for this nation?

I remember the great blessings in all the chaos in the 1960s when I was in high school, heading up to college. In the midst of all this was racial tension, the Vietnam War, politics and corruption and then on the sands of the beaches of California came this Jesus People Movement that just began to spread. It was an unbelievably, unexpected blessing. It wasn’t perfect by any means but it was a glorious movement of the Gospel and it started with students which God seems to love to do. The first Great Awakening started with students at Oxford, the next was from students at Williams College and it’s amazing what God loves to do in those moments to surprise us.

So, where are we as nation and what would be God’s Word to us? He is sovereign Lord over all the nations, not in a covenanted way and He has given multiple blessings. We have multiple responsibilities and much has been entrusted to us. The passage God laid on my heart was the one I read from Proverbs, from the wisdom literature which is given most often in parallelisms. Parallelisms are given many times with statements that are antithetical and that’s what we have here from Proverbs 14:34 which says *[34] Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*

When righteousness begins to work when you preach the Gospel of the gift of righteousness perfect that comes from Christ, when out of love to Christ you pursue righteousness, and that Gospel call begins to work with redeeming grace and the overflow of common grace as it penetrates a society in salt and light that’s what lifts a society up from its depraved bent to sin and depravity. If you don’t have that Gospel of grace that proclaims that perfect righteousness of Christ and the pursuit of righteousness for Christ then you will have sin and sin is a reproach.

Now you may disagree with what I’m about to say and I’ll be happy to have a side conversation with you on it but on the sides of that parallelism I don’t see ourselves on the pursuit of righteousness and the proclamation of the perfect righteousness of Christ. I see us in reproach. God’s creation law of marriage has been discarded, dismissed and actually an object of

mockery. Sexuality within marriage has become a byword and nothing more than a sense of a relic past replaced by the notion ‘you can do what you want to as long as you consent.’ The sanctity of gender in creation where God made them male and female in His image with all of its dignity has been declared as marginalized as we identify with what we say we will be. I’m not talking about valid adolescent issues of gender dysphoria but I’m talking about the rebellion of ‘we will not be what You made us to be.’ The sanctity of life is no longer as we find fabricated legal reasons in our courtrooms for the unhindered destruction of preborn life. I am amazed at God’s patience. Our sins are many and they are a reproach to us. Instead of being a reproach how can the sins be confessed and repented? And how can righteousness be known?

Righteousness is revealed in God’s Word. You don’t know righteousness without God’s Word and you don’t know God’s Word until you hear God’s voice. How will this nation hear God’s voice? I believe God’s Word to our nation is God’s Word to us. I love the doxology when we say it—Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear His voice. You and me, we are the divine appointed vocal cords. God speak through His people to all the nations, now how does He do it? I know what most of want—the bumper sticker that is going to turn this whole thing around or the church program or an election or a court decision. I like some of those but that’s not it. That is not the way it happens in the Bible or in history. It happens through God’s people and here are five things that deserve more treatment than I can give in this study but here is how it happens. It happens in this way.

One, it happens when God’s people commit themselves to fervent, regular prayer on a daily basis, personal basis and in small groups. I call it A.C.T.S prayer—adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. I am not opposed to mass prayer meetings but I have found many times mass prayer meetings are an event we go to and then we don’t pray. I am talking about a lifestyle of prayer—in the closet personally and in small groups together. We need to confess our sins personally, as a family and nationally. I’m not saying you are culpable for abortion, marital chaos but we are in solidarity with a nation.

Look at Ezra 9, Daniel 9 and Nehemiah 9. These men while they culpably didn’t do them, they acknowledged they were part of a nation that had done it and we have to call upon God with lament—God these are the sins of our nation. But we don’t lament in despair for that’s what the world does. We lament with the hope of the Gospel. You can be forgiven and changed by the grace of God and what are our greatest sins can become the greatest testimonies of God’s grace because God’s grace is greater than sin. We need to confess the sins of our nation, whether its discrimination, life, marriage, sexuality and we come with lament that we are a part of this, maybe not culpably but in solidarity. God, please be patient and bring to us repentance and change us from the inside out.

Secondly, a relentless commitment to share the Gospel of Christ in word and deed at any time to anyone in any place. There are so many illustrations of this. Take an Andrew who goes and gets his brother Peter who comes to Jesus. Peter stands up and preaches and 3,000 come to Jesus. Praise God for Andrew who brought Peter who brought the 3,000. Praise God for the man who talked to John Newton and Newton went and talked to a Parliamentarian named William Wilberforce. Wilberforce served 47 years and finally his nation eradicated its chattel slavery, not with a war costing 700,000 lives but with persuasion because of a pastor who reached the man. That’s why I thank God today for the congressmen, senators, judges and those we have here that we can pour into and go make a difference in common grace in public policy to reflect Christ, but it doesn’t happen without us being willing to share the Gospel of Jesus

Christ anytime, anywhere, with anyone at any place. Ask God to give you a holy fearlessness to share His Good News with others.

Thirdly, is an unalterable commitment to be discipled and to disciple others. Everyone here ought to be discipling someone and I believe everyone here ought to be discipled by someone, either in your personal life, small groups or those concentric circles of your life. People just don't function out on their own. Just look at Jesus' ministry for He had the three, the twelve, the seventy, etc for everybody is working with somebody and everybody is working on somebody. That is how we learn to grow and make disciples and learn all about what the Lord has commanded us.

Number four is a passionate commitment to intentionally participate worship, fellowship, discipleship and evangelism which produces believers who worship and witness with humble boldness. Lord's Day Christians are the key to everyday Christians. You can come to the Lord's Day and not get to everyday but I don't believe your everyday witness is going to be vital and effective without a right embracing and understanding of the means of grace on the Lord's Day. A word to our church so that we can say a word to our nation that righteousness exalts a nation. Sin is a reproach. The church that brings that word to a nation is a church that hears the Word of God together of the Lord's Day is committed to disciple and be discipled, is committed to sharing the Gospel in word and deed anytime, anyone, any place and is regularly on its knees in prayer personally, in a secret closet of prayer, and together.

Fifthly and finally, is salt and light. Now we bring the Word as a witness for Christ, Christians who are growing in grace, speaking to a nation as those who love mercy, do justice and walk humbly with their God as they learn how to do all that God has commanded to them. I believe the word that God has to our nation is—righteousness exalts a nation, sin is a reproach—that word from God will not be heard unless it comes from us with true love and I don't believe we'll do it unless we embrace those five things.

Alexis de Tocqueville said 'America is now great because her churches are great, if her churches cease to be great she will cease to be great.' Edmond Burke said 'America, it's her small platoons.' When he goes on to define 'small platoons' he was talking about the village churches. That's the difference. By God's grace that spiritual vitality is what we need today so that while we thank God for 244 years of the Declaration of Independence today, we make as God's people a declaration of dependence.

When we have new members join or baptisms or ordaining of elders there is one thing in every vow we make in this church. It is that they all start will 'in humble reliance upon Divine grace and the power of the Holy Spirit we will endeavor...' It's not a dependence of passivity or a dependence of apathy but it is a dependency of desperation—without You we can do nothing—but we're tired of doing nothing. Strengthen us O God and may the earth hear His voice. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Anyone reading this who has been seeking this Savior who sets men and women free, you're looking for Him and want to know Him, I invite you to Him. Simply He died for your sins, this Savior who works in the nations with the glorious Gospel that liberates us from the slavery of sin and brings us into a loving obedience of Him to serve Him, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. If you want to make this decision and pray with someone please contact us at (205) 776-5200 for we'd love to help you get started in this personal relationship with Him. God, would You please be at work in

our midst? God, I know You can do things in a moment but seldom do you do that. You work in us, to us, through us and from us. You build Your church to go to the nations. God, do that in us and I pray You begin with me for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

FIVE AXIOMS FROM GOD'S WORD TO OUR NATION

I. Only one Nation according to God's Word qualifies as a "covenanted" Nation with God—Israel

II. God is Lord and King over all the Nations and all are accountable to Him now and at the Judgment

III. God blesses the Nations that are blessed by His People and those Nations who bless His People

IV. While the Great Commission sends God's people to make disciples of all the Nations, it is not inconsistent to have a specific Patriotic burden for your native Nation

V. The Providence of God has indisputably revealed a multitude of undeserved blessings upon our Nation

God's Word to our Nation

FIVE ADMONITIONS FROM GOD'S WORD TO OUR NATION

I. A purposed commitment to fervent, regular "ACTS" prayers daily—personal and small groups

II. A relentless commitment to share the Gospel of Christ in Word & Deed—anytime—anyone—anyplace

III. An unalterable commitment to be disciplined and to disciple others—small groups

IV. A passionate commitment to intentionally participate in corporate Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Evangelism with humble boldness

V. To be "salt and light" as public witnesses for Christ who "love mercy, do justice and walk humbly with our God" {note}

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Celebration—Confession—Consecration