

## July 4 2020 Can I Still Be Patriotic?

Yesterday was Independence Day, and I hope everyone took the opportunity to celebrate the founding of our nation.

I assume that most Bible-believing American Christians are patriotic. Not long ago, patriotism was one of the distinguishing marks of conservative Christians. Churches often had special services and celebrations marking July 4. Christians had much to celebrate because our nation was founded on biblical principles by God-fearing people. The nation basically upheld and promoted biblical values at the beginning. But much has changed over the past century or so.

Today, we see a large segment of our population rioting, looting, burning buildings, tearing down monuments, and generally behaving very badly. Many people today are ashamed of our founding fathers and the principles that they held. They want to deface and tear down the monuments to our founding fathers. It seems that about half the population is in favor of changing American culture fundamentally. They are not interested in fixing the problems. They think what we need is a total destruction and renovation of America. The whole system of culture and society is corrupt, they tell us, and needs to be burned down and rebuilt.

In light of recent changes, and in light of the current situation, I think it is entirely suitable for us to ask the question, “Can I still be patriotic?” Given the current conditions, can we be supportive of America as it exists right now?

Some people, I suppose, have the attitude, “My country, right or wrong.” That is, no matter what happens in the country, no matter who its leaders are or what the country stands for or what it’s doing, they will be supportive.

Christians need to realize that “this world is not my home.” We are strangers and pilgrims here; this is not our final destination. We are citizens of this country, but in a much more profound way, we are citizens of heaven and of God’s kingdom. When there is a conflict between these two worlds, our loyalties lie with God, not with this world.

Given how things are changing in our nation, is it still reasonable for Christians to be patriotic? How bad do things have to get in our country before we stop being patriotic?

Today, I'd like to offer a few remarks about our relationship to the government/state as it becomes increasingly corrupt and anti-biblical.

- I. We know our biblical responsibilities regarding government. Rom 13:1-10
  - A. Obey the authorities.
  - B. Pray for the authorities.
  - C. Honor the authorities.
  - D. Normally, Christians support the government and do what we are told. We don't protest very often, and we certainly don't engage in riots and looting. It's only when the government authorities try to prevent us from obeying God or try to force us to do something unbiblical that we have the right to disobey (Acts 5:29).
  - E. Patriotism does not require that we must support what our authorities are doing or adopt what our authorities are promoting. We can be very much against the authorities and still obey them, honor them, and pray for them.
- II. Patriotism itself is not a biblical virtue.
  - A. The Bible is not a political document; it says very little about rights and responsibilities as citizens.
  - B. There's nothing in the Bible about loving your country or being a loyal supporter of your country. There is not a chapter and verse that commands us to be patriotic. In Bible times, most people had no choice about the nation they lived in. They had no vote. If you had a bad king or a corrupt government, there was not much you could do about it. Most people lived under various forms of tyranny up until the founding of our country.
  - C. We might think about how Jews were loyal to their nation, but Israel as a country was different from other countries in that Israel was God's chosen people, and their country was directly connected to their religion; there was no separation of church and state. So disloyalty to the nation amounted to disloyalty to God for the OT Israelites.

- D. That was true of Israel, but it's not true of any other nation. There is no direct linkage between loyalty to a nation and loyalty to God.
- E. God's program for the world today is the church, and the church exists in virtually every nation in the world. God's purposes for the church are *not* the same as God's purposes for nations. We get into trouble when we start mixing loyalty to the nation and loyalty to God or to church.
- F. It's easy for Christians to be loyal patriots when their nation is following biblical guidelines. Our nation was founded on biblical, Christian values, and that's why Christians have typically been very patriotic.

Ps 33:12 *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.*

Pr 29:2 *When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.*

- G. We should remember what John Adams said: "Our Constitution is designed only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for any other."
- H. I think it's perfectly acceptable for Christians to be patriotic when those in authority are decent people and when they lead the country to follow biblical guidelines. When Christian morality is commonly upheld within the nation, then we have good reasons to be patriotic. We should want to support our nation when it's standing for righteousness. For many years, that was generally true of the US.
- I. However, when the nation as a whole turns away from God, and when the governing authorities establish laws directly contradictory to biblical commands, then we have a different situation.

- J. We could go through a whole list of laws that have been changed over the years to promote ungodliness. By and large, laws governing moral behavior used to support and uphold basically biblical morality. That reflected the fact that most of the people in the US were professing Christians. Christians were elected into office, and Christians were making the laws. Laws were based on a Christian worldview regarding good and evil. Most people believed in the objective standards of morality given to us in the Bible, and our laws reflected that viewpoint.
- K. I'm sure that you are well aware that all of that has changed. Laws *prohibiting* certain immoral behaviors have been removed. Laws *protecting* those same immoral behaviors have been adopted. What was once called evil is now called good. What was once rightfully suppressed is now shamefully celebrated.
- L. The current administration has turned things around somewhat, and I am very thankful for that. But they have not really reversed things. They have slowed the spread of evil somewhat, but not stopped it.
- M. So the conditions that Isaiah lamented are precisely true today—many in our nation are calling evil good and good evil, they are confusing darkness and light. They protect the wicked and penalize the just. Laws today reward ungodly behavior because that's the way the people want it.

Jer 5:31 *The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so.*

- N. We have the privilege of being governed by our representatives, those we vote into office. Since that is the case, those who serve in the government are a fairly accurate representation of the people who put them into office. And right now, about half of our elected officials stand directly against biblical morality.
1. They are in favor of abortion and against even reasonable restrictions of this grisly, barbaric practice. Even when the Republicans controlled all three branches of government, they did very little to change the abortion laws.

2. Many are in favor of same-sex marriage and of LGBT rights. Many so-called conservatives tell us that we've lost that battle and we should just move on and accept reality.
  3. Many want to take resources from those who earn them and give them to those who don't.
  4. All those in favor of such things are against God and the Bible. If you are in favor of those things, then you are by definition against God.
  5. So the nation is equally divided on these issues, but the overall movement is away from God and toward paganism, socialism, and Marxism. If the trend continues, not many years hence, laws following biblical morality will be gone.
- O. When the nation as a whole no longer supports or even tolerates biblical morality, why should we be patriotic? Or to put it another way, how bad to things have to be before we'd no longer be supportive of the nation?
1. If the nation as a whole adopts socialism, will you still be patriotic?
  2. If the nation as a whole adopts communism, will you still be patriotic?
  3. When the nation becomes the opposite of what it once was, when it starts calling evil good and good evil, and when the majority of the people want it that way, then I think patriotism is no longer an option for Christian people.
  4. I'm not saying we are there yet, but we are steadily moving in that direction. Sometimes slowly, sometimes very quickly, but that's where we as a nation are heading.

- III. We can support and uphold the original purpose and founding of our country.
- A. July 4 is a celebration of a historical event—the declaration of the independence of our nation from Great Britain. And there are many things about that event that are worthy of celebration, even today.
- B. We all know that America was founded on Christian values. It may not have been established as a Christian country per se, but most of its founders were professing Christians, and the foundational values of the US come from a biblical worldview. There is no doubt about that.
- John Adams** said: The general principles, on which the [Founders] achieved independence, were the only Principles in which [they] could Unite ... And what were these general Principles? I answer, the general Principles of Christianity.
- James Madison** said: We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, ...[but] upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.
- Have you ever read those statements in a history book? Do you suppose they tell public school students those statements?
- C. What are the founding principles of the American republic? To quote from the Declaration of Independence, “All men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” America is the land of the free; we have guaranteed freedoms of religion, freedom of speech and of the press, freedom to bear arms, freedom of peaceful assembly, and due process of law. The bill of rights—the first 10 amendments to the constitution—guarantee our freedoms. Or I should say that they protect the unalienable freedoms God gives to us.
- D. So no matter how far the country moves away from these founding ideals, we can still appreciate the fact that this is where our country started. We had the right ideas to begin with.

- E. So no matter what is happening right now, we can celebrate what happened back in 1776. We can still treasure the founding fathers and their revolutionary ideas—unless you deny that what happened then was good.
  - F. Many people today deny that the founding of the nation was a good thing. People tell us today that America was founded for the purpose of supporting and continuing the slave trade. Everything Americans achieved they did on the backs of the slaves, we are told. The founding fathers were a bunch of hypocrites because many of them owned slaves. So we should *not* celebrate the founding of our country. They tell us our country is bad and has been bad from the very beginning.
  - G. We all know that America is not and never has been a perfect country. The nation has frequently strayed from its founding values. We don't deny that there have been some dark days in the history of our nation.
  - H. But in spite of the nation's failures, we can still look back at the founding principles and endorse them. Our country has done more than just about any other country in trying to correct its errors and do the right thing. We've always been striving to make "a more perfect union" for over 240 years.
- IV. We can support those who want to conserve the good aspects of our nation.
- A. In a two party political system, we sometimes have to vote for the lesser of two evils. We vote for the one who we think will support and uphold the principles we care about. We often end up voting for the one who we think will do the least harm.
  - B. Sometimes the people who do the most in support of those principles are personally not very attractive. We may not appreciate the character or the behavior of our elected officials; but if they are promoting the right set of values and policies, then we should support them because the alternative is far worse.
  - C. As someone said, "You can draw a straight line with a crooked stick." Some of our politicians are like crooked sticks. They may have a number of personal problems, but they may still draw straight lines. I.e., they are promoting the right policies in spite of themselves.

- D. Our current president is a very crooked stick from all appearances. But he's done some very good things to support and promote policies we care about. He's getting some good things done in spite of his personal issues. He has a large set of personal problems, and we may find many things about him objectionable, but he's better than the alternative.
  - E. That doesn't mean that character doesn't matter. It certainly does. But frankly I'd rather have a flawed person in office who is moving the ball in the right direction than someone who totally drops the ball. If I can't have both good character and good policy, I'll choose good policy—good laws, good judges, fewer regulations, greater freedom, good decisions that move things in the right direction.
- V. We must not trust the government to uphold Christian virtues.
- Psalm 118:9 *[It is] better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.*
- A. For many years, the government and the church were largely in agreement morally. The church was a major influence in the culture, and the government mostly had respect for basic Christian virtues like honesty, fairness, and human value. The government, in many cases, upheld and supported biblical values.
  - B. Today, after 60 years of moral revolution in our culture, many people in powerful places of authority have no respect for Christianity or biblical virtues. They are actively fighting against them.
  - C. With the election of President Trump, there has been a bit of a reprieve/reversal. The government has become less hostile to the church over the last few years. But if the leftists gain the upper hand again, all of that will change.
  - D. Many of us thought that if we elected the right people into office, and if we could get the right people on the courts, we could swing the country back to the right direction. With the right people on the courts, the moral revolutionaries could not change the laws by legislating from the bench. But we were wrong. It's been republican appointees who have been responsible for the greatest damage coming out of the SCOTUS.

1. They legalized abortion and kept it legal.
  2. They gave us same-sex marriage.
  3. They redefined laws granting privileges to LGBT people.
  4. Just the other day, Chief Justice John Roberts, appointed by Bush, sided with the leftists on the court to strike down a Louisiana law that would have put a very small restriction on abortion providers.
  5. Electing the “right” people into office and putting the “right” people on the courts has *not* been very effective against the rising tide of leftism in our country.
  6. Today, the constitution in which we put so much trust and hope is not the real authority over the nation. Five justices on the SCOTUS are the real authorities in our land. They have taken the responsibility, not only to tell us if a law is constitutional, but also to rewrite laws. They are not merely interpreting laws; they are revising laws according to their whims. Even the supposedly conservative justices legislate from the bench.
  7. So we no longer really have the rule of law. The law means what five justices on the SCOTUS say it means. And they are willing to change it if they don’t like it.
- E. So by this time we should have learned that we cannot and should not trust the government to uphold and support biblical values.
- VI. We must stand against the direction our country seems to be moving.
- A. What direction is our country moving? What do the following historical landmarks suggest about the direction of our country?
1. 1962 prayer in public school was made illegal.
  2. 1972 Abortion was made legal.
  3. 1973, the SCOTUS opened the door for increasing tolerance of pornography (Miller v. California)
  4. 1980 posting the 10 Commandments in school was made illegal

5. In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down sodomy laws.
  6. Five years ago (26 June 2015), the SCOTUS made same-sex marriage legal.
  7. Just a few days ago, the SCOTUS decided the sexual orientation and gender identification are protected status under the 1964 civil rights laws.
  8. People around our nation are rioting, looting, pulling down statues and monuments, and desecrating tombstones. Governors and mayors around the country are telling the police to stand down and to not respond to this violence.
- B. I think these signs, and many more like them, tell us that in spite of occasional, temporary reversals, the nation as a whole is moving away from its founding principles and toward imminent disaster.
- C. A large segment of our nation supports perversion, pornography, abortion, gambling, gender confusion, violence, and socialism. At least half of the country promotes the kind of behaviors that the Bible expressly condemns. And it is a distinct possibility that we will soon have a president who supports and encourages the exact opposite of what the Bible commands.
- D. I can support our founding fathers and the foundational principles upon which the nation was built. I can appreciate the freedoms guaranteed to us in our founding documents. I admit that we have some good people in government and occasionally some good things happen.
- But our nation is not what it once was. It has been radically transformed through a moral revolution into a place that the founding fathers would hardly recognize.
- E. Can I still be patriotic? Only in the sense of an appreciation of the ideals upon which our country was founded and which were operating for many years. We can be patriotic in the sense of supporting any movement back toward those principles. We can be patriotic in the sense of supporting the people who still adhere to the founding principles. That is becoming a smaller group all the time.

Isaiah warned about the coming judgment that was about to fall on the nation of Israel because of their sin. Babylon would invade and destroy the nation.

We don't know what God has in mind for the USA. Perhaps God will bring about a great revival that will move our nation back toward its founding principles. That has happened in the past, and maybe it will happen again.

Or perhaps our nation will simply continue to decline little by little. God will withdraw his blessing as the people of the nation turn away from him. The salt and the light associated with the Gospel will steadily decrease in its influence. God's judgment will fall; it already is falling. Within a few decades or less, America will be what Europe is today—nearly destitute of a robust Christian influence.

We can hope and pray that America will somehow regain some of its former greatness. American greatness always lay in its commitment to its founding principles, which were essentially Christian principles. That commitment is now at the breaking point. I hope and pray for a return to those values. That would make it easier for me to be patriotic again.