

Remembering the Four R's

Proverbs 14:34

Sometimes preachers are guilty of taking passages written specifically to Israel and applying them to America. But tonight I want us to briefly look at a blanket promise made by God to **ANY** nation! We find this statement in Proverbs 14:34, "**Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.**" History is littered with the ruins of nations that failed to heed this wisdom. Nineveh, the Egyptian Dynasty, Greece, the Roman Empire, Hitler's Third Reich, to name just a few have fallenand others will follow, but what of our beloved United States?

The First R - Righteousness

Righteousness exalts a nation...

This first word is a word seldom uttered outside of conservative churches today. You don't hear our politicians speak about righteousness. You don't hear the news media say anything about it. There are at some clear implications of the word, righteousness.

If there is such a thing as righteousness, then Someone sovereign must determine what it is. Human-kind has a varied idea of righteousness. We could never in a million years agree on what is righteous and what is unrighteous. God, however, is an authority on right-eousness. Psalm 71:19, "**Your righteousness, O God, is very high, You who have done great things; O God, who is like You?**"

Righteousness - implies there is a standard for human conduct. Our forefathers believed there are absolute truths derived from the Bible, whereas today, there are many in our country who now believes that all truth is relative. Society today does not want a standard; they will not even acknowledge that one exists. In 1963 the Supreme Court ruled that Bible reading was unconstitutional in the Public School. In 1980 the Supreme Court outlawed the Ten Command-ments being displayed in the public schools. There is danger though in this moral relativism.

The Second R - Reward

Righteousness exalts a nation...

Who can doubt that America has been exalted among the nations? One of the meanings of the word "exalt" is "**to be lifted up, to be made high.**" (Wilson's Word Studies,

pg. 151) *The Bible teaches us that God Himself is exalted, the scripture is exalted, and Israel is exalted above the nations. But in this verse we find a promise that the righteous nation also will be lifted up and made high. Surely there is no nation in the history of the world which has been lifted up and exalted more than America! The United States has dominated history throughout the 20th century. As America celebrates her 235th birthday this July 4th – it is a testament to God’s protection and preservation!*

Think of the probability of the thirteen struggling colonies defeating the most powerful nation in the 18th century world, the British Empire. Yet, it happened. We take for granted our victory in the Revolutionary War. It was a miracle from God that America gained her freedom from England.

The protecting hand of God has been evident many times done through the years. The American Revolution would have been over in March, 1776 at Boston Harbor before it even began and the American troops would have undoubtedly been destroyed had not a fierce storm prevented the British from landing any troops. This event provided America with its first victory of the war.

Again the hand of God can be seen at a battle at Staten Island in August of 1776. In this battle 1,500 Americans were either killed or captured and Washington’s retreating forces would have captured as well had not a perfect calm prevented the British fleet from maneuvering. Then a dense fog rolled in from the ocean and allowed all 9,000 men and nearly all their supplies to be moved to safety.

*George Washington himself recognized the hand of God when he said in his first Inaugural address, “No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible Hand, which conducts the affairs of men, more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.” [Mike Randall. “The Greatness Of America’s Heritage.” **Baptist Bible Tribune**, (June/July, 1995) p. 15.)*

In the early 19th century, French historian Alexis de Tocqueville, traveled America from coast to coast. When he returned to France he wrote, “I searched for the greatness of America and her commodious harbors, her flowing rivers, her abundant factories that I did not find it there. It was only when I went into the churches of America and found it ablaze with the righteousness that I found the greatness of America.” Then he made his prophetic statement, “America is great because America is good, but if America ever ceases to be good America will cease to be great.” (Democracy in America) Righteousness exalts a nation. That’s why God has blessed us. That’s why God has exalted America truly above all the other nations of the earth.

The Third R – Rebellion

*"...**But sin** is a **reproach** to any people."*

We now come to the depressing aspects of God's promise to "any nation." As surely as righteousness exalts a nation, sin destroys it. Today, many people want an "Oprah style"- pick and choose kind of religion. They want a God who is merciful, loving and kind, but have no room for a God of judgment. People turn away from such a God.

*But here is a problem. This verse is a couplet, having two parts. The parts are opposite and contrasting. But one cannot be accepted without the other. They stand together as a testimony of God's unapproachable holiness. The truth is that God **WILL** judge sin! He will not wink at it, forget it, or misplace His records. To understand this truth, let us examine the meaning of the word "sin."*

America does not demand greatness of itself anymore. We do not honor what is good and right. To the contrary we honor and reward the evil and the disobedient.

America has taken for granted the blessings of God, assuming that He will continue to bless and protect us in spite of our sin.

The Fourth R - Reproach

*"...**But sin** is a **reproach** to any people."*

Sin brings a reproach, whether it is in the life of the individual or in the timeline of a nation. We see this by examining what the word "reproach" means.

*One definition of "**reproach**" is "**to be brought low, to go from the heights to the depths.**" [William Wilson. "Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies." (McLean, VA: MacDonald Pub) p. 350]*

*Nehemiah reported, "**The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.**" (Nehemiah 1:3) Those who had not been carried into captivity are in "**distress and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and are gates are burned with fire.**" Israel's sin had caused them to be taken into captivity and now their capital city stood in ruins. The remnant was brought low by their sin. It he judged his people the children of Israel, God is bound to judge sin. He will not turn a blind eye to America's sin.*

*Another definition of "**reproach**" is "**to be ridiculed, to rail on, to revile.**" In 1 Samuel the story is told of how Goliath stood and blasphemed the God of Israel. Young David arrives on the scene and asks "**What is being done to take away this reproach from Israel.**" (1 Samuel 17:26) On a daily basis Goliath and the Philistines ridiculed Israel and their God. .*

America is beginning to know something about what means to be ridiculed. We are one of the richest and most developed nation in the world, but we are reviled by much of the world. The Muslim nations in particular have little or no respect for our system of government or our culture.

*The final definition of "reproach" means "**to pluck or strip away all that is good.**"*

Our culture is in the process of doing just that.

Conclusion:

*President Ronald Reagan stated it clearly when he said, **"If we ever forget that we are one nation under God, then we will be one nation gone under."***

*America has been great because of God. If we fall, it will be because of our failure to honor God as we should. What would God's personal message to America be if He spoke to us audibly in this day? I believe he would say, **"Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people."** Let us pray for our land and resolve to do our best to make America great again.*

*[Indebted to Robert Cobb. **"God's Message To America"** Prov. 14:34-
www.sermoncentral.com]*