

What's Right With America?

Psalm 33:10-12

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[Dr. McKinley, *What's Right With America*]

Well, it is wonderful to have Mark and Christi Bovee back here ministering with us today and a..., we thank you for that wonderful song. And before I go any further today I have to just pause and say to our choir, to our orchestra, to Todd, guys last Sunday night was absolutely fabulous, it was fabulous, [pause for applause] and a..., I hope many of you had the opportunity to be a part of it. I've decided that the next step from Prestonwood has to be heaven, cause there can't be any better music and a..., praise and excitement and joy and celebration as what we were able to a..., share together last week and I can't wait until that CD and DVD come out and a..., I know that many of you are going to enjoy it as well. But it was an incredible evening of worship and of praise together and I'm so grateful for all of the work and the effort that a..., has gone into it. I hope you've enjoyed this holiday weekend and are still enjoying it. Worship is an important part of it. But like many of you I enjoyed a..., taking part in a cookout on Friday and then found the edge of a curb up in Frisco to watch some of the fireworks and a..., we had a wonderful fireworks display there but I had a unique experience a..., while Larry and Tina Brubaker are in New York on the mission tour their daughter Christina has been staying with us and a..., Larry is not only great on the trumpet, he's also sort of a techno wizard. And a..., he has one of these new little phones that a..., you can e-mail pictures and they were on the harbor in New York sending pictures of the firework display and so I was watching both New York and Frisco at the same time. It was an incredible experience and a..., just a part of the wonder of technology and the benefit of living in America. I was also thinking the other night as I was sitting there that a..., America's the one place you can live and you can enjoy watching other people blow their money, literally and fireworks and a..., it was a great experience and a lot of fun and it's been wonderful. But you know before the smoke clears from all of the fireworks and the cookouts and all of the festivities that have surrounded this 227th birthday of the American nation I felt that it might be good today to just pause and to take time to stop and to think again about the blessing, about the privileges, about the inheritance that is ours as Americans.

Archibald MacLeish said this:

"The founding of American was more than a political event. It was a promise, a promise to the colonists and to the world at large that people could govern themselves, that they could live in freedom and equality. The assumption was that they would act in accord with reason and with equity and out of this came what we often call, the American dream."

And of course as we sit in this building today, we are the recipients of

that dream and we are the stewards of that dream, today in this hour and in this era. And certainly one of the things that we recognize and that we celebrate on this weekend is the joy and the benefit of sharing in the great American dream. Now why I speak of living in American and this being a dream that is unfolding for us I don't, do not mean for a minute to fail to recognize the reality that we are living in some very challenging times. There are great threats on the outside, across the shores from America and indeed within American. On the outside we continue to be concerned about conflict, about all sorts of terror that exists in the world at large and about a tremendous sentiment against our nation and it's values. And then within we live in a day and a time where there are the voices of anarchy and the voices of activism that would as though it were create great division within this union and would ultimately bring a shadow of darkness over the dream called America. But as we come to this place today, while it would be extremely easy for me like so many other voices to talk about all of the ills and all of the wrongs of America to the degree that we've all become like a group of talking heads just bantering and badgering one another about the ills and the evils of America. I thought that maybe it would be wise for us to just stop one more time and say, not what is wrong with America, but what is right with America. Because while we indeed live in a world that has every evidence of evil and we see the terror of the wicked one who is the enemy of God working in the world and working in our nation. It is important for us who have received this inheritance that we would pause and think about the blessing that we have in American and what is right with American. And so, if you have your Bible I wanna invite you to open it with me to the 33rd Psalm today. I've declared in my life this summer that this is gonna be a summer of Psalms and so I've been reading through the Psalms a..., a few every day and just filling my mind and heart with the message of the Psalms and not long ago I was reading in Psalm 33 and verse 10 and I could not help but pause and think and reflect on this text and really from that has come the desire to share this message with you today. The Bible says in Psalm 33 beginning in verse 10:

The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plan of the peoples to no effect.

I read that and I thought for a minute about all of the positions of power that are held in the world, about all of the strife and the might of the nations. I thought about the prestige and the honor of the offices of presidents and rulers and kings around the world and yet the Bible says so emphatically that God brings the governments, the counsels and the peoples to nothing. He is sovereign and therefore the Bible says in verse 11:

The council of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations.

And then I want you to read out loud with me verse 10 < **should be 12** > if you will, Psalm 33 in verse 10 < **should be 12** >:

Blessed is the nation whose God..

Are you out there? I'm sorta hearing a few of you. [pause for congregation laughter] Now you did better than that when you were singing today, okay? So I'm counting on you to deal with it. Let's look right up here together and say it.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,...

Now clearly, I understand, that this text, this Psalm was written to echo the blessing of God upon the nation of Israel and I fully understand that the course of human history indeed carries a strand of God's covenant made with Abraham and with his descendants, but I want you to know that while I believe specifically that to be a promise made to the nation of Israel under the le...rulership and the leadership of King David, I believe with all of my heart that in principle, that principle has been a part of the truth and of the blessing of American, because we have been a God blessed nation. I do not for one-minute buy into any idea that what we are experiencing and what we have seen in the short 227 year history of America is simply the result of fate and of fortune. I believe that it is clearly an evidence of faith and of blessing and today as I stand before you thinking about what is right with America I want us to just isolate and to consider the blessing of God upon our nation and number one the reason that we today can say there's something right with America is..

Because of **OUR SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS**, our spiritual foundations, no matter how much the revisionist historians and the scornful courts try to move and to work in this day and in this era to exorcize God from the public life of American history, the reality is, is that history in our documents, history born in the monuments of remembrance, history recorded in the speeches of our leaders all bear witness to the fact that the strength of America has been in her deep spiritual roots. And today I want us just to think a minute about those roots and about the blessing that we have received because of them. I'll begin with our charter document, the *Declaration of Independence*. In this document there are 3 specific references to God in the opening or the preamble, as though it were, it says this:

"...We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their..."

What? [congregation "Creator"]

"...Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness..."

And then at the close of this same document we read these words:

"...And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the

protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

Ladies and gentlemen this wasn't just an effort to create passion or to somehow create drama, this was the heart, this was the very core of the essence of this declaration of the people in that day and in that hour. And just in case we wonder if we're reading in to it, on the day that the Declaration was signed in July of 1776, John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail these words, he said:

"It ought to be commemorated as a day of deliverance by the solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty."

He made it clear that it was all about a spiritual commitment in their hearts. While indeed, this Declaration created a statement of independence from Great Britain, the secret of this Declaration is that it was a statement of dependence upon God and it was that dependence upon God and that honor of His Word and that understanding of His law that would frame the very source of all that we would be as Americans. And again, in case we're wondering whether or not Adams really intended to identify the God of the Bible that we preach and worship today, 50 years after the signing of this Declaration his son, John Quincy Adams, in 1837 wrote these words:

"Is it not the Declaration of Independence, first organized the social compact on the foundation of the Redeemers mission upon earth? That it laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity."

You see his son made it clear? This wasn't just about the American dream, fame and fortune, it was a statement of faith and indeed it was a faith that was born in the hearts and the minds of our forefathers and of the early colonists. All 13 of the state constitutions of the original 13 colonies bear a specific reference to dependence upon Almighty God. And then 150 years after this signing Calvin Coolidge, the President of The United States said on July 5th, 1926:

"Equality, liberty, popular sovereignty, the rights of man; these are not elements which we can see and touch, they are ideals. They have their source and their roots in the religious convictions. They belong to the unseen world. Unless the faith of the American people in these religious convictions is to endure the principal of our declaration will perish. We cannot continue to enjoy the results if we neglect and abandon the cause."

You see in the public discourse of American life, for many years there have been records that have been kept and that echo this reliance upon God, a spiritual foundation. But not only is it found in that discourse it is found in our national monuments. If I could take you today to Washington, DC, we could walk into the beauty of the rotunda of the Capitol building and there are a variety of portraits there that are beautiful and wonderful and that tell the heritage and the history of American. But did you know that just off of the rotunda there is a prayer

room? It is a prayer room that was built and that was established in order that the Congress, whenever they would meet, could seek the wisdom and the council of God and if we were to go ~~into that e...~~ into that prayer room you would find that there is a stained glass window and guess who's on that window? Our 1st President George Washington, and as he kneels beside him is the Scripture, Psalm 16 and ~~verse 11~~ **< should be verse 1 > :**

Preserve me, O God, for I put my trust in You.

Preserve me, O God, for I put my trust in You.

It's significant that this would be true of Washington, because Washington was clearly a man of faith. He demonstrated that faith throughout the revolution and the founding of our nation and so significant was his faith that in his farewell address to the United States he said these words on September 17th, 1796:

"And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of a refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principals."

George Washington! Oh by the way you know there's a beautiful monument to his legacy and to his memory. It's as though it were the cornerstone of the National Mall in Washington. It's the marquee of our nations capitol and do you know that if you were to go 550 feet up in the air and look at the top of that marquee, do you know what words are inscribed on the top of that monument?

"Praise be to God."

From a prayer room in the Capitol building to the top of a monument that re...recognizes the legacy and the life of our 1st president to the city of Philadelphia, the Liberty Bell, old, cracked, rung to declare the Revolution and the statement of the Declaration of Independence. But by the way, do you know what surrounds that Liberty Bell? These words:

"Proclaim liberty throughout the land."

Do you know where they came up with that idea? They didn't come up with that idea simply because it was an idea to announce their liberty; they found it in the Word of God in the book of Leviticus chapter 25 in verse 10, the Scripture appears there on our Liberty Bell and this sacred trust of the American dream and this monument as though it were to our freedom bears again the testimony to the Word of God.

If you were to go to the Jefferson Memorial there in Washington, once again you would find these words of Thomas Jefferson who today has, of course, become the defending voice of all that is liberal and all that is indulgent in American a..., legislature and all that is indulgent in

American law. But the reality is, is that history would record some different things about Jefferson and these words are found in his memorial:

"God, who gave us life, gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we remove their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of people that these liberties are a gift from God."

The monuments, the money, I hold a United States quarter here in my hand and of course as you look at the quarter or any denomination of American currency you find on our money:

"In God we trust."

When we look at that beautiful flag as we saw it displayed a moment ago and how it moved us in that moment, we remember that every time we stand and put our hand over our hearts that we pledge to:

"...one nation under God..."

It is a part of the spiritual foundation that is the heritage of our lives as Americans. And whether we sing the song *American The Beautiful* or *God Bless America*, ladies and gentlemen we have been blessed of God because we have had spiritual foundations.

Patrick Henry, the voice of the Revolution...

"Give me liberty or give me death."

...said this in 1776:

"It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often, that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians, not on religion, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. For that reason alone people of other faiths have been afforded freedom to worship here."

You see the fingerprints of God's blessings are upon all of our nations past and history and today we are the recipients of a marvelous spiritual foundation and we must never forget it, we must never loose sight of it and when we celebrate our nation's birthday, we have to pause and say one of the things that is right with American is that we have spiritual foundations. But today my heart cries with the words of the psalmist found in Psalm 11 and verse 3:

If the foundations are destroyed, What will the righteous do?

If the foundations are destroyed, What will the righteous do?

For you see the Bible says: [Proverbs 13:34]

Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.

And our great heritage has been marred by our great sin. What is right with American? Our spiritual foundation but secondly what is right with American? Why is it that our nation has been blessed of God?

It is **OUR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS**. Our individual freedoms, there is nothing that is more a part of the very fabric of who we are as Americans than the theme that is rehearsed again and again, we are the land of the free and freedom and liberty are, as though it were, the most magnified of all qualities in American society and where did we get this theme, where did we get this heart cry for freedom? Was it simply some genius of our founding fathers? No! It was rooted in the theme of the very Word of God. The Bible speaks of love. The Bible speaks of faith. The Bible speaks of hope. But the wonderful proclamation of the Bible in the gospel of Jesus Christ is that if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. And Jesus came to proclaim liberty to the captives and you see the very essence of our freedom was a value that was found in the Word of God and therefore was written into these documents and written into the discourse of American life because it was the way of blessing, it was to recognize the honor, the dignity, the equity of every human being and to help them to live in freedom. So great is this value of freedom in America that every week of so we read about a group of people who will get in some rickety boat and try to make their way to the American shoreline. We read horrific stories about people who get in heated boxcars and tractor-trailer trucks to try to find their way into this nation in order that they might share what is the highest of all values in America. It is freedom! But may I quickly say that while freedom is the birthright of every American, freedom cannot be separated from responsibility, because freedom is only existent if there is a nation and a society of people who protect and preserve that freedom through their own responsibility. You see it was the very essence of our a..., framers of our Constitution, who wrote The Constitution in order that they may ~~protect~~...protect and to preserve the freedom of every individual and they believe that the greatest form of government was the least invasion of government and therefore the founding principle of our nation was a principle of self-government. But may I remind you that we cannot have self-government unless we have self-control and we will not have self-control unless we have a foundation of morality and of religion that underscores and undergirds the responsibilities of every individual so as to preserve the well being and the freedom of the whole. Yes, this is:

"...a government of the people, by the people, for the people..."

But that never was intended to indicate anarchy whereby every man does what is right in his own eyes. You see it was always intended to be a part of a self-government that was rooted in self-control. Listen again to the words of John Quincy Adams in 1798:

"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to govern any other."

Listen to the words of Abraham Lincoln:

"Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in the exclusion of religious principles."

And then the words of Daniel Webster:

"Liberty exists in proportion to wholesome restraint."

And then Theodore Roosevelt:

"To educate a persons mind and not in morals, is to educate a menace to society."

He literally said, if you give a man an education without morality you create a "Clever Devil." And ladies and gentlemen I would submit to you that what we see in our society, in the media, in the halls of education, in the cooperate business we...arena of America, every one of these things represent talented, gifted, well-educated, aerodyne people who have lost the moral fabric that promotes and preserves freedom in life. And so ladies and gentlemen I'm simply saying to you today that one of the greatest things about our nation is our individual freedom but we cannot have freedom if that means that we will not restrain ourselves and we will not share a common system of values. One of the greatest freedoms that we have in America and one of the greatest blessings is that we have an abundance of a..., infrastructure that provide roadways and traffic patterns and many of us have automobiles and you know one of the greatest points of liberty that you have is the ability to go out of here today, to get into your car and to go anywhere you wanna go. As long as you have time and money there's not anywhere you can't go border to border, sea to shining sea in America, you have a right to get in your car, to lock the doors, to position that seat in any of the how ever many of positions it will hold, to put a CD in, to listen to any variety of music that you want to, to run with the windows down or the windows up and the air one. You can do anything you wanna do as long as you live within one statue of limitations, it's called the speed limit. But let me just tell you today that for all the things you can do in your car the one thing that you cannot do is to get out on the North Dallas Toll Road and begin to drive that automobile at a hundred miles an hour exceeding the speed limit. Now, I recognize a lot of people exceed the speed limit on the North Dallas Toll Road, but the reality is, is that when you exceed the speed limit then you have the ability to loose your license, you have the ability to loose your freedom and you can ultimately be incarcerated. Why? Because your freedom to drive is protected by a statue of limitations on how fast you go. You see we can't have any idea that we can have a society where everybody just does whatever they wanna do and it's protected by the Constitution. That is insanity. That's not liberty, it is insanity and we are living in a day of insane thinking because the heritage of our lives, is a heritage of freedom and of liberty, self-government based on self-restraint and it is one of our greatest blessings and yet many times one of our greatest curses in the world in which we live and in the society in

which we share today. It was for this reason that Ronald Regan said in 1984:

"The frustrating thing is that those who are attacking religion in America claim that they are doing it in the name of tolerance, freedom and open-mindedness. Isn't the real truth that they are intolerant of religion and they refuse to tolerate it's importance in our lives?"

That's where we stand today in America, with a blessing and an inheritance of freedom but a freedom that can never be divorced from responsibility. What's right with America? Our spiritual foundations, our individual freedoms, there's a 3rd thing that's right with America and that is...

OUR TRADITIONAL FAMILIES, our traditional families, now let me very quickly say that when you hear the word traditional family, many of you think okay he's gonna talk about us 4 no more, and that's not what I'm implying today. There are a variety of families in American, a variety of families in this room, a diversity of backgrounds, a divo...diversity of cultures. The reality is, is that some people in this room are single parent families and not 2 parent families. Some because of death, others because of divorce and while there may be a variety of different families to whom we care for and minister and embrace within American society, one of the things that has been the hallmark of the strength of God's blessing upon America is that America has been a provider for and a promoter of the well-being of the family as it is defined in the Word of God. And therefore we understand that the strength of American culture has been in it's cornerstone commitment to build liberty and life and happiness for the American family so that values may be transmitted to children and that families may be protected within society and the family for 227 years has been defined in America in the Word of God, Genesis 2:24:

Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

Our nation, it's courts, it's civic society has embraced together the picture of a husband, of a wife, of the intimacy and the purity of the act of marriage within the confines of marital commitment. It has tried to promote and to preserve the well-being of the family and yet at the same time we have recognized the injury and the tragedy of divorce. Even as Jesus spoke in the book of Matthew 19, but Jesus said: [verse 6]

"...Therefore whom God has joined together let not man put asunder."

And so there have been laws to protect, even the breakup, and the dismantling of a family, but we have never debated the issue of the family until today and today and this past week there was a ruling by the Supreme Court that may redefine the future of the family in America and it may have everything to do with what America will be like in the days to come. So significant is this issue about the sexual orientation of men and of women and how that defines family in America that the Supreme Court has made a ruling and now many other courts will be in response that we need

to be looking at and we need to be active in our concern for this issue in America. Next Sunday when our pastor returns he's going to address specifically this issue and the gay agenda in American life and I believe that it is an important thing for us to hear, to see, to know from a biblical perspective and within our civic and social responsibility that we may live with compassion, that we may live with conviction about what is a family in America, because a part of what is right with America is the traditional American family. Only our homes can secure our values for the future. So what with right with America? Our spiritual foundations. What is right with America? Our individual freedoms. What is right with American? Our traditional families. What is right with America?

OUR BIBLICAL FAITH. You say well what is the difference in spiritual foundations and biblical faith? The spiritual foundations reflect where we were, but the biblical faith reflects who we are and what we are today. Ladies and gentlemen as I stand before you this morning I am simply one man in one church who is come today to take this book, the Word of God and proclaim this to be the truth of all eternity, the message of the gospel of salvation to everyone who believes. But, while I am one, I am one of hundreds and of thousands of men from shore to shore in America who will stand in pulpits this weekend and preach this book as the inerrant, infallible Word of God, preaching the message of change and transformation in Christ and America has been, as though it were, a fortress of faith and of blessing because of her churches and because of her commitment through her churches to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. And today I thank God for the what is right with America is the fact that there are many who name the name of Jesus and who proclaim the gospel of Christ and who understand that liberty and freedom are first and foremost found in a relationship with God through our Savior Jesus Christ. You see, we cannot make ourselves free, God sets us free. We are encumbered and shackled with the chains of sin. We have failed morally before a holy God and we have no hope in and of ourselves, but God in His mercy and yes in His amazing grace 2000 years ago stepped out of heaven, stepped into earth, Jesus Christ the God Man, one of a kind, came and lived and walked among us and then He was chained to a cross with the nails of love. His blood was shed for us so that He might purchase, pardon and freedom and the hope of everlasting life. And the message that is the message of power and of change, the hope of the future of America is the message of Jesus Christ. And today I have that privilege in a free land with spiritual foundations and individual freedom, with many families and friends and others here to stand and to preach the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and it is this message that is the hope, that is the light, that is the future of our land. What's right with American today? Are people who believe the gospel of Christ and believe it to be the power of God and to salvation to anyone and everyone who believes. From those who are in prison to those who have poverty, to those who have a variety of social and physical needs in life. From the hospitals to the courtrooms, to the legislature, to the White House, to the churches, what's right is a biblical faith that can change and transform peoples lives. [pause] But while all of these things are right with America it does not necessarily mean that America is right. You see for all the things that are right the

question is, is the heart of America right? And that's really the individual question that has to be pressed to you today. You're an American, you're a citizen of, of this great nation. But the question today is not just what's right with you but are you right? Are you right with God? Are you right with others. You see I said many times our benefits and our blessings become our stumbling blocks in life and for many of us in this room today, the very things that are right with us are the very things that are wrong with us. Many of you in this room have a spiritual foundation, you had a mom or a dad who were godly and loved Christ and prayed for you but you strayed from that foundation and their faith was real and faithful and subservient of Christ and you've sort of had an nominal faith. For many of you in this room you've enjoyed the benefit of freedom, freedom to make choices about school and about marriage and about occupation and those freedoms have been wonderful things, but many times we've made our choices and we've left God out of the choice. For many of us we have a good family, you've been blessed, you have a wonderful wife or a wonderful husband and fabulous children and you're blessed as a family person and it's one of the badges of honor that you wear, but the reality is, is that you've let that family and the well-being of that family stand in the way of a biblical faith that would bring commitment and follow-ship of Jesus Christ and for some of you, you live in an arena where you can hear the Bible and you can receive the instruction of the Word of God and you can attend great worship services like this and you're in the arena of spiritual blessing, but the blessing is not real and direct to you. You see there are a lot of things right with you, but it doesn't mean you're right with God. There're are a lot of things right with America but it doesn't mean that American is right with God. And ladies and gentlemen, the appeal of this message and the heartbeat of this pastor today is that you and that I would humble ourselves before God and seek His face and that we would get right with God and that we would see that one life at a time we can make a difference in the future of our land and in the future of the world. The Bible says:

[Romans 10:9-10, 13]

⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart we believe unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

¹³For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

You can be made right with God, not by your effort, not by your will, not by your life, but by your heart receiving the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And today I'm going to pause and I'm going to pray and I'm going to invite men and women and boys and girls all over this building to just, in this moment, to pray and to confess and to receive Jesus Christ. Jesus will make you right with God. He is the one mediator between God and man and today I wanna encourage you to hear and to receive the message of Jesus Christ.