

## WHAT IS THE GLORY OF OUR NATION?

By Roelf L. Ruffner

“In the multitude of people is the king's honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince” (Pv. 14:28).

“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Pv. 14:34).

I love to teach and preach from the Book of Proverbs. It was written essentially as a guide for young men in this life (Pv.1:8, 9). But I also find it of great value as a guide to “less than young men.” Solomon, the wisest man who had ever lived, includes his inspired thoughts on government and ethics as well in this book of wisdom. I imagine rulers such as Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah, Daniel and Nehemiah found great guidance in its pages.

In my notes I prepared for a Wednesday evening Bible study a couple of years ago I put these two verses together with some other verses from Chapter 14 under the heading: “The Morality of a People and a Nation,” with the subheading: “What is the glory of our nation?” Solomon and the Holy Spirit knew what the glory or “honour” of a king was – a multitude of righteous, virtuous people to rule over in his kingdom. This contrasts with the pomp and pageantry of the typical Eastern monarch who had to rule over an unrighteous, immoral people with an iron fist. Such a monarch feared every day for his life from subterfuge and revolt. He longed for a happy, numerous people and the resulting tranquility of rule they exemplified in a kingdom. Without a virtuous people (“the want of people”) he faced only the possibility of destruction and had no glory.

These verses also cause me to think upon my beloved nation. Its founders saw virtue or righteousness as essential elements of the republic they had created. Notice these quotes:

"[V]irtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government." George Washington

"Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become more corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters." Benjamin Franklin

"It is certainly true that a popular government cannot flourish without virtue in the people." Richard Henry Lee

"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." John Adams

"Public virtue cannot exist in a nation without private, and public virtue is the only foundation of republics." John Adams

Where is our nation now on the virtue scale? Our politicians have little if any virtue, which only breeds cynicism in the citizenry. Our popular "culture" is filled with violence, profanity, sexual perversion and moral filth. It is a joke and a reproach to much of the world. From the upper crust of society to the lowest level there is no glory only moral and ethical decay. Americans were once looked upon as hard working, honest, God-fearing folk but not anymore. One cannot help but wonder, "Are we entering a new Dark Age?" As God told Belshazzar, arrogant grandson of King Nebuchadnezzar, after his drunken profaning of the most high God, "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting" (Dan. 5:27).

When faced with this reality are we to just withdraw into ourselves and give up? Should we advocate violent separation, revolution or civil war to regain our nation's virtue (cf. Mat.26:52)? NO! We must continue to serve the Master and our fellowman (1 Cor. 15:58). Our goal should be to bring as many as possible into Christ's kingdom. Only He can make a sinner into a righteous person (Rom.6:16-18). Only the Gospel can purify men's souls (Rom.1:16). In the world of the First Century A.D. the Gospel did that very thing. "For WE ourselves also WERE sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Titus 3:3 Emphasis mine - RLR).

Christians can also make it their goal to be more virtuous. Using the word of God we can root out sin in our lives and exchange it for righteousness (2 Peter 1:3-9). We can be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Mat. 5: 13,14). The world is watching. We will never be able to reform Satan's domain (1 John 5:19) but we can make him miserable. "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:17,18).

<http://www.liberty1.org/virtue.htm> as of April 16, 2014