

We pray you have a safe and enjoyable celebration of our nation's independence, Friends and Partners in this ministry!

"God bless America, land that I love. Stand beside her and guide her through the night with the Light from above." (Irving Berlin, composed 1918)

The passionate plea for God's grace and favor filled the airways, Republicans and Democrats alike united and sang emotionally on the steps of the US Capitol, and the hearts of many patriotic Americans echoed a prayerful refrain after the Twin Towers were attacked in 2001, killing thousands of people. Our nation seemed to be united in the face of that savage terrorism enacted upon a nation by people who hate our country and everything it represents.

The Pledge of Allegiance, recited daily at our school and across the USA, includes the words, *"one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."*

Where are we going as a nation? Do our hearts still zealously pray the words to the song, **"God bless America"**? Are we still **"one nation under God"**?

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." (The Declaration of Independence – Thomas Jefferson)

Two centuries, four decades, and four years ago (July 4, 1776), our forefathers adopted a document that declared the independence of the thirteen colonies from Great Britain. Every Fourth of July, millions of Americans now celebrate the birthday of the United States of America.

Abraham Lincoln would remind the American people some eighty years after that historic document was signed, as we fought in a bloody civil war that threatened to destroy this young nation, that we are a country *"conceived in Liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal"*. In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln avowed that this nation and government of the people **"under God"** should not perish from this earth.

"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure..."

These words from that momentous speech have been echoing through my mind as the news headlines flash across my computer screen or TV set during these past few weeks. We seem to be engaged in another civil war that is threatening to divide our nation.

Videos of hooligans and thugs bent on destruction and chaos, violence and anarchy, subverting and even attempting to dismantle the authority and protection of our law enforcement flood our daily news channels. No one seems to be safe from the rage and devastation, including and it seems especially those for whom they claim to be demanding justice.

What will be the result of all this senseless activity? Will this force a change for the better in our nation? I do not believe so.

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." (James 1:19-20)

These violent "protestors" claim that destruction is the only way to bring about change, but the vivid results of their wanton destruction does not endear these ruffians to my heart. How about you?

For true abiding change to occur, we must turn to our Creator God, who has created us in HIS image, and believe in Jesus, who died on our behalf, who **became sin on our behalf**, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (See 1 Corinthians 5:21)

"The thief does not come except to kill, and to steal, and destroy," Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10, NKJV)

However, it is not only the turbulence and chaos rippling across our country that the devil is using to cause division, but there is blatant antagonism, strife, and a complete lack of unity among the people in the highest levels of our government. It is hardly surprising that we are divided; as the leaders so goes the nation! We are a far cry from the patriotic fervor evident on September 11, 2001.

A change of heart begins by submitting to the fear of the LORD. An unrepentant human heart is in eternal rebellion against God, and the things of God. No law on this earth can legislate people's hearts or conscience. You cannot force people to **love** his or her fellow human being. God is love. Without love, that is, without God, our hearts will continue to race toward evil – one of the seven things the LORD hates. (See Proverbs 6:16-19).

The world will know that we are disciples of Jesus Christ by our love for one another (John 13:35,) and as we let our light shine, they will see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

In Jeremiah, chapter 18, God gave Jeremiah a warning for His people, a warning that is also directed toward any nation:

“Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel! The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.” (Jeremiah 18:6-10)

However, if that nation did evil and did **not** obey His voice, God said that He would **not** benefit the nation with good!

Do you know the people's response to God's warning?

“And they said, “That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart.” (Jer. 18:12)

As President Ronald Reagan once said, if we ever forget that we are “one **nation under God**, then we will be a **nation gone under**.” Collectively, as a nation, we have either forgotten our God, our dependence on Him, our need for a Savior, or we have deliberately rejected Him! God has created us all equal – from dirt! (Genesis 2:7)

“The LORD God took some soil from the ground and made a man. God breathed life into the man, and the man started breathing.” (The Good News Translation)

I do not believe it is wrong for Christians to love their country, as long as our heart's allegiance is first to God's Kingship because He rules over the nations (Psalm 22:28) and He has established the governing authorities. (Romans 13:1-4) A great multitude from every nation, tribe and people will one day stand before the heavenly throne and the Lamb, crying out with a loud voice, “*Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!*” (Revelation 7:10)

As God's people, we **must** do as God implores us in 2 Chronicles 7:14: humble ourselves, pray and seek **HIS face**, turn from any wicked way, *then* He promises to heal our land. It begins with us, and let us not wait until some national gathering to begin!

We must also pray for ALL those in authority over us, “*that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.*” (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

A turning (or a return) to Jesus as LORD in repentance and humility will enable us to have the understanding that “*There is no difference (between us)...Christ is all and in all.*” (Colossians 3:11)

May our prayer be: God bless America - and return our hearts to You - my home, sweet home.

Jessie