



July 4, 2025

One Nation under God

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast of lower Alabama. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

This week's letter will come out on the Fourth of July. On this day, most Americans observe Independence Day—a holiday commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. That document formally declared the thirteen American colonies' separation from Great Britain. The adoption of the Declaration marked a pivotal moment in the American Revolutionary War, signifying the colonies' intent to become an independent nation.

Most of us who live in the U.S. celebrate publicly with parades, marching bands, patriotic speeches, grand displays of fireworks, and family cookouts or picnics. The red, white, and blue American flags fly from businesses, private homes, and most public office buildings during this day, and subsequent days prior and after.

I've lived in multiple states here in the U.S. over the decades. And, on July 4th my mind is still flooded with multiple memories. Some of my earliest memories of grade school include my teachers instilling within me a sense of national loyalty, pride, and patriotism connected with this Independence Day. Back then we were taught genuine concern for our country and our countrymen. During those years of the late 1960s and early 70s, we started each school day with the Pledge of Allegiance and I still remember singing the national anthem at school gatherings, and baseball and basketball games. As a young man, along with my fellow classmates, we became mindful of our unique national heritage and learned to appreciate the freedom and blessings that have been bestowed upon the United States of America.

For most of my childhood years “we were patriotic”, as most adults would say.

I remember, it was not until partly through high school, that I discovered that some people believed patriotism was a form of idolatry—of putting another god ahead of God—and therefore a sin.

Ouch! I began to search diligently in God’s Word to answer the question “Does the Bible teach us that it’s wrong to love or be devoted to our country?”

I remember being shocked, when a pastor I respected stated that there is a “kind of patriotism which is wrong in the sight of God”. Decades later someone showed me an article by him stating the same thing.

My mind grappled again with multiple things I was hearing. So, what was that wrong type of patriotism to which he referred?

So, here’s the logic.

Firstly, we need to recognize that sin is the breaking of God’s spiritual law (1 John 3:4). That law is summarized by the two great commandments: love toward God first and, second, love toward neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). Okay, I got that.

What’s important, was that those laws do not allow us to love ourselves as much as God. We must love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. But, I also read, the law instructs us to love our human neighbors as much as ourselves.

As humans, most of us inadvertently fail to keep the spiritual intent of the law. Why? Because well, we humans are basically self-centered. Whether or not we like to admit it, the consciousness of the average person centers primarily on self. In the psychology realm we classify it as being “self-absorbed”.

In our teachings and messages we most often refer to this common human failing as part of our “Human nature,” It’s simply the subconscious pull of a definitive

attitude or state of mind. It is the same attitude that became our adversary Satan's. It's the natural attitude implanted from infancy by that invisible being. It is the attitude of vanity—of self-concern—of lust and greed. It is the attitude of hostility to others, and resentment of authority over it.

In other words, human nature is essentially selfish and evil—not selfless and good, as many suppose. In my post graduate studies, time and time again I heard by instructors “humans are basically good, not evil”.

The opposite, which Christ taught, was being selfless and serving others. Basic human selfishness goes way beyond mere concern for one's own person.

Patriotism includes one's family, friends, neighbors, church, favorite sports team—and yes even country. But it goes even further than that.

At its core, patriotism is expressed in the form of loyalty to country, as opposed to other countries. It often includes an automatic hostility toward other countries—either passive or active. God's Word, the Bible ... classifies this as ... one of the “deeds of the flesh”—as opposed to the “fruit of the Spirit”.

Because the normal, fleshly attitude in man is evil, it looks on those outside its extended self, as, you guessed it, its enemy. And when we examine carefully the subject of national allegiance or patriotism, we often see man is generally loyal toward his own country or chosen political party—because they are part of his extended self—in opposition to other nations or parties. And, this can become a form of hatred toward others.

I've watched for decades the polarization not only within our nation, but among students, teachers, friends, coworkers, and sadly even family at times.

The world's entire civilization is based on this partisan spirit. Might we take the current state of United States politics? For example, in the run-up to the presidential election, politicians, lawyers, judges, and the news media were

working diligently to build a warring spirit between two political parties. And not only are the two main political parties polarized against each other, there's not even any real unity within the parties themselves. It's so obvious. One would have to be half asleep to not notice.

Over the decades, some of our leaders have recognized that a nation divided cannot stand; and although some have spoken out against such division, their words have gone largely unheeded and/or ignored. Those of you who love history, will site Theodore Roosevelt as one example. He saw the imperative need for a spirit of unity—of right patriotism—among citizens of the United States. He said in his 1918 speech, “There can be no 50/50 Americanism in this country. There is room here for only 100 percent Americanism.”

So, today we fail to see genuine, leadership of high caliber, based on wisdom and right judgment. Instead, we see rivalry, hatred, and the constant slinging of mud, as each side attempts to achieve what is best for them. We see “love for my party and hate for yours”. It's masked in all kind of catchy phrases that sound so good.

This fleshly spirit permeates all facets of society. The general attitude of humans, whether passive or active, is to get, to win, and to acquire for one's self. Sadly, it is also to hurt, injure, harm and take from the other—whether an individual, another sports team, a political party, a specific race of people, or a nation. It's a spirit of competition and hatred. Eventually, all will have to come to admit such—and repent and turn to God—if there's ever to be true lasting peace.

That's why Christ must return. Man simply is not capable of such.

The patriotism that loves its own and hates or feels prejudice against any others is a direct violation of God's law—and therefore it's sin.

That being said, it's not wrong to love your own country—or even to love your own self.

But God's law says it is wrong to love yourself *more* than others. It says "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 27:39). And then as we read, more importantly, you should love God with "all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (verse 37). That love does not permit hostility or hatred for any people, nation, or child of God.

The Pledge of Allegiance, for example, expresses that principle, specifically including the words "one nation under God."

That's clear that our allegiance is to God before country.

With those principles in mind, we can see that the love, concern, and preference for one's own country—without discrimination or prejudice against any other nation, people, or race, but with our primary focus on God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ—is a right patriotism.

Enjoy your 4th of July...

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



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