

News & Notes

Sunday, November 30, 2008

Remember in Prayer: Daryl Alberson; David Anderson; Arland Anderson; Mary Bailey; Mary Childers; Vikie Cobb; Diana Hayes; Bobby Hopkins; Lettie Mae Hunt; Dot Ketchum; John and Deliah Mann; Diane Mize; Wayne Orman; Ann Ray; Brandon Ray; Verra Roberson; Austin Robinson; Katherine Shaw; Gary Spence; Jamie Spence; Calvin Ursery; Joan Wilkerson; Alvie Williford;

Pantry item for the month of November is decaffeinated tea bags.

Be sure and check the **bulletin boards** in the foyer for additional information.

Ashland Events: Today: Fellowship meal following the evening service;

Area Events: Beginning today: The Calvary Hill church of Christ in Oxford will be hosting a gospel meeting with Don Bassett;

Sermon in Preview:

AM: Making Our Faith Our Own (2Timothy 1:5)

PM: Last-Sunday-of-the-Month Singing

For the Record (November 23, 2008):

Attendance: 92 Contribution: \$1269.00 Budget: \$1452.00

The Ashland Church of Christ

P. O. Box 25
Ashland, MS 38603-0025
www.ashlandcoc.org
acoc@ashlandcoc.org

Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Worship 10:30 AM
Worship 5:00 PM

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

Shepherds:

Barney King
Jeff Roberson
Carrol Street

Romans 11:33

ASHLAND ANNOUNCER

Increasing in the Knowledge of God



IS AMERICA A HOPELESS CAUSE?

Roger D. Campbell

"God Bless America." Now where have I heard that before? Perhaps I saw those words printed on small flags. I might have read them on a license plate or a bumper sticker. It could be that I heard them in a song.

America has survived a number of intense trials. In its 230-year history, the U.S.A. has survived a number of wars, including the nation-ripping "War Between the States." It survived "The Great Depression." In more recent memory, it has survived "9/11." Time and again, Americans have come together to take on or stand against common foes which somehow sought to destroy us. The "American spirit" has been wonderfully demonstrated in the lives of so many, by folks of all backgrounds and races, from those that served in the White House to those that are just common red-blooded Americans. Yes, the U.S. has truly had some great days.

There are, however, a number of things going on in the U.S. at this hour that ought to be of major concern to every God-reverencing citizen. Statistics compiled by our federal government indicate that violent crimes in America rose in 2006 (the figures for 2007 are not yet available). The production, sale, and use of meth is a nationwide plague. An actor fathers three illegitimate children by three different women and Hollywood names a street after him because he is a "star." Kill a critter that is on an endangered species list and you may pay a fine and/or do jail time, but murder an unborn baby in a government-funded abortion clinic and you are considered a community servant. Such is modern America.

If a public school teacher enthusiastically leads a campaign to indoctrinate students with the theory of evolution, he may be nominated for "Teacher of the Year" honors, while a second teacher who dares to teach that the major elements of evolution are illogical, not provable, and anti-biblical, may lose his job for such. America has legalized prostitution available in the state of Nevada [www.prostitutionprocon.org/law.htm], makes smut available 24/7 on a TV screen in every home, and in some public schools counsels teenagers on how to practice "safe" fornication. This is some "Christian nation," huh?

In our country, if you quote from some God-basher, you are counted as a scholar, but if you openly speak of God as being worthy of praise, you might be censored, suspended from school, or lose your job. Simply quote a Bible

verse that shows God's attitude toward the abomination of homosexuality and you may be called a bigot or charged with homophobia, but if you express the view that same-sex relationships ought to be accepted, you might be praised for being an open-minded, loving person.

The picture in America looks bleak, does it not? In the moral and spiritual realms, America is sick. She needs treatment that only the Great Physician can give. Yes, there is a balm in Gilead (Jeremiah 8:22) which only the great Balm-Giver can supply. Thankfully, He is ever ready to apply that balm to our spiritual illnesses whenever we are willing to humble ourselves and do His will.

"God Bless America." Sometimes when I hear or see those words, I wonder to myself, "Why should He?" Think about it. Why should God bless a nation that is so filled with people that love themselves, love sin, and defiantly rebel against the authority of the Almighty? America is not exempt from God's wrath. Powerful nations or empires have come and gone in human history. In the Old Testament we see the truth that God destroyed nations because of their iniquity. They did not simply get overthrown or go out of existence – the Lord God brought them down! That was true not only of "the heathen" nations, but for God's people as well (Amos 1:3-2:8). How America needs to take these words to heart: "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*" (Proverbs 14:34). Are we listening?

I know of no Bible passage which indicates that America is somehow God's favorite little place. Where did anyone ever get such an idea? Apparently some have convinced themselves that God is committed to being on "our side." Who said so? Oh, yes, the Lord has blessed us immensely. No doubt we owe our survival to Him. That does not mean, though, that He has given us a free pass to snub our nose at Him and not have to face the music for such ingratitude and insubordination. God's word still says, "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*" (Galatians 6:7). While it is true that such teaching applies to individuals, it also applies to families, congregations, and entire nations. Are we listening?

God owes American nothing. He promises, however, that we, like all others before and after us, will reap what we sow. American's real strength has nothing to do with our military might and technology. Neither is a strong economy the key to a strong country. Higher test scores by graduating students can be encouraging, but they have no direct link to genuine character and what counts in the sight of our Lord. We can make enormous improvement to our military, economy, and school test results, but still be a doomed society.

It seems to me that making America strong is not about having references to God inscribed on national monuments, nor is getting prayers allowed in public schools a guarantee that our nation will get back on the right track. If we petition for our teachers and their students to have the right to lead prayers in public schools, then if that request is granted, we will get just what we asked for: Muslim teachers leading prayers and praising Muhammed, Catholics praying to Mary, and Hindus praying to any of their myriad of "gods." While I

do not oppose the concept of prayers in public schools, I personally do not see such a privilege as the key to getting God back in America.

Brothers and sisters, the way to get the U.S. in good standing with the Lord is to reverence Him and let His word dwell in our hearts (Colossians 3:16). God's word is a light for our path (Psalm 119:105), and taking heed to it will cleanse our way (Psalm 119:9). "*Blessed are the pure in heart*" (Matthew 5:8) – it all starts with individuals having pure hearts, for only then will there be pure speech and pure conduct.

America is in bad shape, but is our nation a hopeless cause? Some conscientious students of both the Bible and history have concluded that the U.S. has gone so far down the path of wickedness that her doom is inevitable. Time will tell if such predictions are accurate. We know this much: it is God's longsuffering that allows America to continue to exist, and "*the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation*" (2 Peter 3:15). Each day of life that God grants to wayward men and women is a chance for them to obtain salvation. Each day is also an opportunity for those of us who are Christians to season society with our salt and help remove darkness with our light (Matthew 5:13-16). There will be no sudden turnarounds for this or any other country. Darkness is not easily or quickly expelled, but the gospel of light can get the job done (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The apostle Paul once saw a man in a vision who said, "*Come over into Macedonia, and help us*" (Acts 16:9). Paul and his co-workers realized that it was God's will for them to go and "*preach the gospel unto them*" (16:10). Brethren, do you and I really want to help America? If so, then what we need to do is continue to live the gospel and get busy teaching it more zealously.

What America needs is the gospel. Not a Baptist-gospel, not a Pentecostal-gospel, not an interdenominational-gospel, not a Protestant-gospel, and not a Catholic-gospel. Our country needs the one and only gospel of the Lord Jesus (Galatians 1:6-8). Can the Lord count on you and me to get up out of our easy chairs and go tell our fellow Americans of His great salvation? The church of the Christ proclaiming a risen Savior is America's only hope. Do you know what? If God's church is not going to make its greatest effort to educate America in the ways of Jesus (because people will *do* better only when they *know* to do better), then, yes, America *is* a hopeless cause.

Brethren, if we come together in our public assemblies, and in those settings we remind one another that (1) America is in sorry shape, and (2) All people outside of the Lord's church are lost (Ephesians 5:23), those are two undeniable facts. But, after we share those truths with each other and shake our heads in sorrow over the present state of affairs, what kind of effort do you and I go out and make to teach Americans God's nation-changing and soul-saving truth? If we just remain quiet and keep the truth to ourselves, then we are not being helpful to the good old USA, and not only is *it* going to remain in sorry shape, but when *we* stand before the King of kings on Judgment Day, *we* will be sorry for *our* failure to teach God's truth to those who need it so badly.