

***Timeless Wisdom for Today's Worries:
Proverbs for a Nation—Selected Proverbs***

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Dr. Steve Horn

Text Introduction: We have been saying that the book of Proverbs is the most practical book in the Bible. Every line is flowing with God's wisdom. Indeed the book of Proverbs is categorized as a book of wisdom. We have spent some time the last few weeks in the Book of Proverbs, and we have called our study "Timeless Wisdom for Today's Worries."

We conclude our topical study of the book of Proverbs with a collection of Proverbs that give counsel to our nation. On this Independence Day Weekend, what better way to give memory to all the precious lives lost in defense of our country than to remind ourselves of the priorities that make a nation great!

Proverbs 14:34 ~ A Proverb about the Lifestyle of a Nation

*Righteousness exalts a nation,
but sin is a disgrace to any people.*

This particular section of Proverbs contrasts in a variety of ways the upright with the wicked. This Proverb about the nation is stated as parallel thought. That is, a very simple thought is given in a positive and negative way, communicating the same truth. What is that simple truth?

Righteous living exalts a nation!

The opposite parallel thought is "sin is a disgrace." So, whether you want the positive version or the negative version, the truth is the same, "righteousness exalts a nation." What do we want to be known for? My fear is that when other nations think of our nation, one of the last things that others will think of is the righteousness of our nation.

In this simple truth conveyed in this Proverb, there is a promise (righteousness exalts a nation) and there is a prophecy (but sin is a disgrace). Are we not living in the prophetic of this proverb?

But instead of thinking about the sin of others in our country, I would like to think of ourselves. What are you doing to make our nation righteous?

So . . . Seek to be righteous yourself, because the righteousness of the nation begins with the righteousness of the individual!

In 1831, France sent 26 year old Alexis de Tocqueville to the U. S. to study its penal system. But he observed much more about America than just its jails, and he is said to have written these words:¹

"I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors, and her ample rivers, and

¹ Others doubt that de Tocqueville ever said these words. I would contend that it really does not matter, in this particular case, who the quote is attributed to, if anybody. The words are still powerful.

it was not there; in the fertile fields and boundless prairies, and it was not there; in her rich mines, and her vast world commerce, and it was not there. Not until I went into the churches of America, and heard her pulpits, aflame with righteousness, did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”

Proverbs 16:12 ~ A Proverb about the Leadership of a Nation

*Wicked behavior is detestable to kings,
since a throne is established through righteousness.*

The moral character of leaders affects a nation!

Leadership Matters!

- Set the moral tone for our nation.
- Represent our nation to the world.
- Wisdom dwells with the Godly.

So . . . Seek to elect righteous leaders.

There will always be some who argue that the character of a nation’s leader does not matter. That kind of attitude is what many have called a “So what” attitude when it comes to integrity, character, and morality. That kind of logic has no place for us who believe that along with leadership, we depend upon the blessing of God. Think of it this way. Do we want the doctor’s hands to be clean? I want the persons who hold the heart of the nation, state, and the local municipalities in their hands to have clean hands.²

Proverbs 21:31 ~ A Proverb about the Lord of a Nation

*A horse is prepared for the day of battle,
but victory comes from the LORD.*

The righteous Lord establishes a nation!

So . . . Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness!

Our greatest battles as a nation are not military, political, or economic. Our greatest battles are spiritual. Spiritual battles must be fought with spiritual weapons.

Today, it is easy to be pessimistic about our nation. I think of the words of Dr. Roy Fish when asked if he thought there was any hope for our nation. He answered, “My only hope is that God has always done His greatest work when all looked hopeless.”

² Analogy taken from sermon by the late Dr. Adrian Rogers during the Clinton administration.

“We must remember that “The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord is on His throne in Heaven.” (Psalm 11:3-4) He must remember that today He is still in His temple, still on His throne, still in control. And He still makes Sundays out of Fridays.” It falls to us to ask Him to do so.”³

I want to end on a note of optimism taken from two of my favorite verses of Scripture.

Revelation 19:6—“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns.”

Psalm 20:7—“Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God.

³ Taken from article by Max Lucado in the days after 9-11.