

Righteousness Exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any People

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Date: 28 October 2014

[0:00] Proverbs 14, if you'd like to turn there. Proverbs 14, and just one verse to lead in.! Proverbs 14, verse 34.

I want to talk tonight about what actually makes a nation great.! Some will think of a nation's mineral wealth, where there's lots of oil or precious metals in the ground, or they might look at the standard of living of its citizens, or some will measure a nation by the quality of its healthcare system, or the standard of living, or by the gross domestic product, how much the country makes.

But do these things really make a nation great? What actually makes a nation great? In Proverbs 14, verse 34, we read, Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. Let us pray. Lord, we ask you to minister. Speak, Lord, by your word to our hearts.

We ask you to preach each life for your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen. The Bible tells us that what makes a nation great is righteousness. Righteousness.

[1:36] That's what makes a great nation. And in contrast, sin is a reproach. Sin is a reproach. In other words, it's shameful. It's a disgrace.

So let's consider firstly that sin is a reproach to any people. Sin is a reproach. When wickedness prevails in a land, it brings God's judgment.

In Proverbs 29, 2, it says that when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

Righteous people in authority, the people rejoice. Wicked bearing rule, the people mourn. Where is Australia today? Where is Australia tonight?

Some of the following description I read in some commentary about another nation, America, but we could easily apply the same to Australia. So I've kind of borrowed some of these comments because we could just as easily say this of Australia.

[2:42] It's a national disgrace. We are largely a godless nation. We've forgotten God in this land. Our nation is in a fog spiritually.

Sin is a reproach, the Bible says, to any people. And I put it to you tonight that Australia's biggest problem is not global warming or save the whales or whatever it be, all these supposed wonderful causes that we could cite tonight.

But what Australia's biggest problem is today is sin. Sin. Who says what sin is? God does.

God does. God never changes, it says in Malachi 3 verse 6. This is unchanging, the Word of God. What God says and who God is does not change.

God knows what's right and what's wrong. He tells us that. Abortion is sin. Now that's not to say that one sin, just to preface this, not to say that one sin is above any other sin.

[3:55] And if you've had an abortion tonight, then forgiveness is here tonight. Forgiveness is here tonight. This is not to condemn anyone. We're going to talk about a number of things. And if you're guilty of such things, there's mercy with God.

There's mercy with God. Don't feel that you're a write off because you might have sinned. There's many sins we could cite. These are just some examples. But abortion is sin.

It is wrong because God says it is wrong. It does not matter what I think or what you think or what anybody thinks. It matters what God thinks.

All that matters is what God thinks. We need to protect life in the womb. There's about 80,000 abortions performed in Australia every year.

It's a reproach to our nation. It is a reproach to our nation. In Psalm 139 from verse 13, the psalmist says, In other words, the very sinews in flesh, God owns them.

[4:59] Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are thy works and that my soul knoweth right well.

My substance was not hid from thee when I was made in secret and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect.

And in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. God loves life.

And the life that is in the womb is precious to God. God says abortion is sin. God says homosexuality is sin. It's an abomination.

As a nation we need to stand up for what is right and against that which is wrong. Marriage is something precious. Marriage is something very precious that should be held in sacred trust.

[5:57] Marriage is something that is special. God says what marriage is. God defines marriage. It doesn't matter what a government might redefine it as. God says what marriage is. It's the uniting of a male and a female, a husband and a wife as one flesh.

There are moves today to redefine all of that. But it doesn't matter what man says. It matters what God says. In the beginning God made them male and female.

He made them man and wife. There are moves afoot to push euthanasia today. To get rid of older people. To kind of terminate life. At both ends of the spectrum.

It is sin. It is sin. Our nation is increasingly swept by violent and graphic video games. It is sin.

Lying is a sin. There's many things we could say are sinful. Most people today are living for agendas that are popularized by a liberal news media and hellish Hollywood.

[7:03] It is falsehood. It is deceit. It is a lie. God says what sin is. In 1 John 3 verse 4 he says that sin is the transgression of the law.

It's disobeying God. What other things could we think of in this fair nation that we live in today?

There is an addiction to gambling and gaming machines and an expansion of gambling venues.

Sin is a reproach. God doesn't want us to make money or have some illusion of making money through such means but to earn our money through hard work.

Drunkness is prevalent. Drug abuse. We see the damaging effects of alcohol abuse. It damages lives. It damages people. It damages families.

It is sin. There is a constant undermining of Christian values of traditional family values.

[8:06] Our society is in trouble. Why? Because God's laws are just as real as the physical laws, the law of gravity, the laws of science. There is a law here.

The law of the Lord. And it is perfect. God's law. God's truth. And as a society we have abandoned God's truth and to fall for the devil's lie.

Just as in Genesis in the garden where it all began. Those seeds of destruction were sown then and are still evident today in the reaping time of today.

So we ought to be living according to God's word. Only by righteousness can a nation be exalted.

Only by righteousness can a nation be great. Friends today I put it to you that Australia is a disgrace.

It's an embarrassment to the world today. I'm talking in a general sense of it as to where our nation is going and what is going on. I was talking to a man who lives down the road from me.

[9:08] He's 91. 91. He's worried about that we live in the same street. And he's worried about how it's going downhill. It's going downhill. Well you know it's one thing to be worried about the look of your street.

But this is much much deeper than that. Much much deeper than that. A lot has happened in that man's life in 90 plus years of life. But only by righteousness can a nation be exalted.

And we're seeing this disgraceful thing. Our women walk around immodestly. They're rude and crude. Australian women are an embarrassment to our nation. Australian men are an embarrassment to our nation.

As we see the ways of the flesh and the world has just overtaken. The mindset, the thinking, what preoccupies people.

We see these vile sins that God's word condemns. Our nation's leaders are pussyfooting around about them. And our church's leaders in some quarters are thinking, well we won't talk about such matters.

[10:10] Sin is sin. And yet, thank God there's grace today. Thank God for that. We're not wanting to, we're wanting to balance it here tonight.

That whilst there is sin, there is grace. And where sin abounds, grace does much more abound.

Amen. Grace does much more abound in this sinful nation that we live.

Grace does much more abound if we'll but turn to him. Yet sinful men continue this slide. And it's a slippery slope as we get further and further away from what God wants for us.

Our society, our nation grows ever godless as it adopts what the world accepts. You know, when society accepts things, the world kind of adopts these things and follows these courses of action and these philosophies.

It seems like the church almost just follows along. Like there's nothing to it. Like they just kind of just follow suit. And it ends up that the church loses its way as well.

[11:19] What of the church of old time? What of the church back when the going was really tough? I think of a man such as John Bunyan. John Bunyan, he was a man, he was a non-conformist.

You know, he was a man who was outside of the establishment of the day, the established church of its day. In such a time where he was supposed to comply with the government regulation of its day, where he had to be regulated and licensed by the official church, in a way the governmental church of the land of the time.

And he refused to do that. He did not kowtow to those who were deigned to infringe upon his freedom as a gospel minister to preach as God ordained him to preach.

And so the court imprisoned John Bunyan. They imprisoned him for 12 years. They gave him various times to see if they could swing it around and get him to sign a license.

But no, he would not have it. And Bunyan authored the entire book of Pilgrim's Progress. People might be familiar with that. While he was in prison in a dark and unpleasant place, he wrote on the back of milk bottle lids.

[12:41] He had to smuggle the book out bit by bit, piece by piece, in little scraps as it were. And today the book, the Pilgrim's Progress, ranks as one of the highest selling books in history, alongside the Bible.

And Bunyan stood for his Christian convictions and paid the price. He wasn't afraid to pay the price. And work to God today that we had more such men and such women in this land, in this place, willing to pay the price.

In 2 Timothy 3 verse 12, it says that those who shall live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. We don't see a lot of that in Australia today.

Isn't that kind of funny? Maybe we're not living godly enough. Maybe it could be that there's a reproach. When we see in our land people who call themselves ministers, who are a disgrace to the name of Christ.

They're a disgrace to the name Christian. They don't suffer because they are compromising, they are worldly and spiritually dead. They're not in the league of Bunyan.

[13:54] They're not in his league. They value the praises of man above the praises of God. And it's a sad reflection on the church of God today.

Brothers and sisters, I see the trend and it's not a good trend. I don't know if you have the same conviction as me. But nowadays we see the church has lost its way.

And it's become like a glorified nightclub. A mosh pit. Where it's a disco. Where you just use the, throw the name Jesus in every now and again.

And this is what's going on. And some, it's less evident than that. It's less in your face than that. But the slide is still there. The slide on doctrine. And nowadays we see in the school system too.

Our children are ever paganised and humanised at school. They're more godless in the philosophies that they're being indoctrinated in. Which is really sin and abomination.

[14:53] They're told to accept. And not just accept or condone or excuse. But celebrate it.

Celebrate the abomination. God help us. God help us. God help us. Christian parents. God help us in this nation. Sin is a reproach. And it's sad to see when you're seeing this brainwashing program in the secular school systems.

And even in Christian schools there's elements there to be watchful of. These so-called values that come across. The values that we're getting fed through the tube.

Sin is a reproach. Back in the Old Testament there was a man called Achan. From the tribe of Judah. And Achan brought shame to the nation.

To the entire nation. Israel was warned at this time. This is Joshua 6. To not steal. Not to covet anything of the spoils of war. Not to take anything that they found at the battle of Jericho.

[16:00] And they were given these clear instructions. This clear warning. In Joshua 6 verse 18 it says, Keep yourselves from the accursed thing. Lest ye make yourselves accursed when ye take of the accursed thing.

And make the camp of Israel accursed and trouble it. Achan's greed was too great. And he succumbed. He thought he liked the look of a few little things there.

It just seemed fairly harmless. Fairly, you know, just didn't seem like a big deal. Just to keep a few of those forbidden things for himself. But he disobeyed God.

That was the point. And he brought the anger of God against the people of Israel. In chapter 7 verse 1 of Joshua. And so the Lord punished the nation. Why?

Because of Achan's sin. There was sin in the camp. And the Lord punished the nation. Allowing their defeat at the next battle at Ai. And so it was because someone had disobeyed God.

[17:01] Achan brought shame and reproach. And he suffered the consequence. He was stoned to death. In Joshua 7 verse 25.

Sin is a reproach. And we've seen that sin is a reproach.

On the other side, let's look at what we need to do, where we need to go. Righteousness exalts a nation. It's the other side of the coin. Sin is a reproach.

But righteousness exalts a nation. Our nation needs righteousness. It needs God's life and truth and purity. Righteousness. It exalts a nation.

What is righteousness? God gave us the answer in Psalm 119. It says, All thy commandments are righteousness. God's truth, God's life-changing, soul-saving gospel truth is righteousness for us.

[18:07] And there's a place we read that he gives us a robe of righteousness. There's a sense where when you're saved, Jesus Christ himself becomes that covering of righteousness around you.

You know, the Bible speaks how we are hidden in Christ. And our lives are hid with Christ in God. There's a sense where we are in Christ and he is in us. And his righteousness envelops us and fills us and covers us.

And when we lay aside the law of God, his commandments are righteousness, we end up in trouble.

And, you know, I can remember even as a youngster myself, at the time I was in the UK, in a public school, a secular school.

It was the equivalent of year 11 over here. And I was doing the O levels they were called, like an exam.

[19:15] And in the public school assembly, they sang hymns. They sang hymns. They sang some of the songs that we sing in our book, like, Stand Up for Jesus, you soldiers of the cross.

And I don't know whether some of you folk that are of my vintage or such might remember such a time as that. There was a godly heritage in nations like the UK, in nations such as this one, where even in a secular setting, they used to sing songs with Bible truth in them.

Yet today, what do our young people get? They might get some therapy when they've got a problem or there's some question or some moral truth to battle with.

They might get therapy so they feel better about themselves if they have something that might be destructive. But they don't get righteousness. They don't get that instruction. They don't get taught about righteousness, which means right character.

This is what makes a nation great. Righteousness. Righteousness exalts a nation. Righteousness means a rendering to all their due, whether to God or to man.

[20:27] It means right standing with God and godliness. A righteous person, a righteous nation has two dimensions to it.

There's the vertical and the horizontal. Righteousness. Righteousness. In other words, right standing with God, with our maker, when we save, when we trust him, when we trust his saving blood at the cross for our sin.

There's that vertical righteousness. We made brand new and saved for eternity. Given eternal life by his gift. And then there's the horizontal aspect of righteousness.

How do we treat other people? How do we get on with other people? Do we live with integrity? With integrity that we are beyond, above reproach. So that if someone was to question someone you work with, there wouldn't be a mismatch.

The righteousness is 24-7. It's not just on the Sunday service. So righteousness is that uprightness, that vertical relationship, and that horizontal relationship as we live the life that God has called us to live.

[21:40] God-like. Godly. The Bible speaks much of righteousness. It tells us of many righteous things. Righteous speech. Righteous labor. Righteous desires. Righteous fruits.

Righteous thoughts. Righteous home. Righteous heart. Righteous paths. Now have a study. It's a good study. A good homework for you tonight. Some of you probably got exams in the morning. But it's good homework for you tonight. So get in your Bible and dig deep and look up the word righteous and righteousness. The Bible speaks much of such a thing. And of the nation that honors its Lord and God.

A nation that honors the word of God. And yet the values of our nation are far, far away. The values of our culture. We've given up our children. Now in the Old Testament days they gave them up on the burning hands of the Moloch idols as they threw their children in.

And we're throwing our children in to the false gods of our culture today. The false gods of materialism and consumerism. And virtues and qualities such as righteousness are neglected.

[22:49] What makes a nation strong? What makes a nation great? National greatness comes from righteousness. Righteousness. Righteousness. And let us pray for our nation.

Let us pray for our leaders. Of whatever color and persuasion they need our prayers. God has blessed us as a nation.

We've got a relatively good form of government. We've got freedom of speech. We've got a country where everyone gets a chance. You can make a life for yourself. No one need be poor in this nation.

God has blessed us with so much. And we've got a country we live in that we ought to love and stand up for and pray for our leaders and our nation and preserve that freedom that we have.

As there's many forces against such things today. You know, you see the world news and you hear of an erosion of freedoms. You wonder what's going to happen next. You know, just in my observations of different nations and goings on where there's economic calamities just around the corner.

[24:01] Nations like Greece and other places. And you see, as we saw when we visited there, the dreadful condition of a nation that's on the brink.

It's on the brink. As we see, Julie and I saw these riot police with their plastic shields and batons and whatever else they were carrying to quell the crowds of protesters.

And on one day we were there, there was two riots about two totally different things. They were protesting about some kind of reduction of university staff and then there was some other protest there.

And it was chaos and confusion. And it was commonplace to see military police with machine guns and such things. And policemen and soldiers and such things.

We're seeing that, friends, I don't know how close we are here when we see such things happen. We don't know. A police state. Who knows?

[25:02] Righteousness exalts a nation. We're called to righteousness. Friends, just to think, some thoughts about righteousness and how can we be a righteous people.

The Bible says that we are a light set on a hill. A city set on a hill. Matthew 5, it tells of glorifying God, of showing you the glory of God in how we go about and shine that light so that others will glorify God.

It says, You that fear the Lord, praise Him. It tells how in Psalm 86, all nations whom they have made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name.

Don't we want to be a nation that glorifies God? There was a time we did. In England, they did glorify God. In the public schools, they don't now. And no wonder they're getting overtaken by other kinds of religions and beliefs in the nation of the UK.

And the Europe, European nations, it's getting desperate times. People, it is getting desperate times. Righteousness exalts a nation.

[26:11] But sin is a reproach to any people. There's much more I could say. But righteousness is something we should strive for. The early church had it. It was demonstrated in how they loved and lived, how they shared and cared, how they gave and gave and gave.

They gave to sister churches. They gave of their goods. And as people had need, they ministered.

Psalm 33, 12 says, Blessed, or in other words, happy is the nation whose God is the Lord.

There's a blessing. There's a joyfulness. There's a wonderful grace of God that comes when we know God, when we trust Him.

And of course, I'm talking kind of corporately in the sense, of course, it's an individual thing. You know, just because if Australia was a righteous nation, it doesn't mean that you're righteous or that you are saved.

You might be coming to a good godly church such as this one or others around about, and you could be part of the furniture even, and a member in good standing, yet be lost forever.

[27:19] And I urge you tonight, it's not about having your name on a church roll or having some religious experience. It's about knowing God. It's about putting your trust in Jesus Christ.

It's about saying, Lord, I've come to the end of myself. I need your grace. I need your salvation. I need you to save me. And that's when righteousness starts, when we trust Him.

And we transfer, as it were, our rags to His robe of righteousness. We transfer our debt to His total repayment plan, and His cancellation of debt plan.

And friends, we can be truly blessed as we trust Him. Sometimes it's hard to say things like this. I know a man called Elijah.

Ahab, when he saw him coming, he says, you're the man who's troubling Israel. In 1 Kings 18, he called Elijah a troublemaker. But we need more people to make some trouble.

[28:20] We need some more people to stand up for what is right, and to stand against what is wrong. People like Moses. He suffered the reproach of Christ rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

He had much temptation, but Moses chose what was righteous and right. We see, Psalm 9 verse 17, that the nation that forgets God will be turned into hell.

Now, friends, I urge you. Now, we can only pray in the context of our own lives and our own circle of influence, but we want to be that, don't we? We want to be salt.

We want to be light. We know that, ultimately, it's God's plan that he'll have to take over planet Earth from ungodly forces. But, friends, let's be salt and light while we can.

Righteousness exalts a nation. Just quickly, some thoughts about three institutions that God calls to righteousness. Firstly, the home.

[29:26] Genesis 2 and 3, God calls the home to righteousness. Now, we can have our little part of heaven on Earth in that home place, in the family place.

God's primary institution for righteousness is under attack. The home, the very marriage unit, it's under attack. The devil wants to redefine what is a family and what is a marriage and what makes a home a home.

The home is God's primary institution for righteousness. Secondly, the government, spoken of in Genesis 9 and Romans 13. The government is God's protective institution for righteousness.

He means such that those who bear rule and who oversee laws and governance should be those who have a regard for what is truthful and righteous.

And the moral foundations that once made government are under attack today, too. We need to pray for more godly people to be in government at all levels. And thirdly, we see the church. [30:33] The third institution, the church, is also under attack today. We see, I've been alarmed by some recent news about what's going on in churches, even of our own persuasion.

Persuasion. Sad, sad things are going on in the church today. The church is under attack. It's a bit like in Samuel's day, in a time where there was a high priest called Eli. And Eli was lazy and he was complacent. And he kind of had a couldn't care less kind of attitude about the things of God. And he didn't care about his sons who are corrupting themselves. He allowed that. He allowed them to be corrupted and he allowed the worship of God to be corrupted. And under his leadership, Eli allowed adultery and sinfulness to overtake the temple. He wouldn't stop what was going on. He could have and he should have. And then the Lord wrote, Ichabod, the glory of the Lord, the spirit of the Lord has departed.

[31:42] I think God could write Ichabod over some church institutions today. We see where they used to be. Churches that were founded by people who would stand in open places and print the gospel.

Churches that were built are now places where they fly rainbow flags. Brothers and sisters, there's much need for prayer.

In Nehemiah's day, the walls of Jerusalem were in ruins. The city was a large pile of stones. And it's a picture of the church in some quarters where we see there was little or no witness left.

The church backslidden as in Nehemiah's day. And God raised up Nehemiah. He raised up a righteous man. And God moved. God worked.

And Nehemiah said, get all the rubbish out of the temple. All the filth. All the idolatry. All the idols of the land that the people had kind of just gathered and placed in the place of worship.

[32:54] Nehemiah said, get rid of it. Take it all out and burn it. Nehemiah wouldn't pussyfoot around. He said, get rid of the idols. And Nehemiah was a man of prayer.

And in Nehemiah 1 verses 6 and 7, he prayed to God. He said, I confess the sins of the children of Israel. We have dealt very corruptly against thee and have not kept the commandments.

And his prayer came before God. And friends, we can pray for our nation of Australia today, tonight. We can fast. We can pray. Our only hope is that God will remove the reproach of sin and replace it with righteousness that will exalt a nation.

We must get real with God. We must get serious. We must pray for our nation's leaders, our premier, our prime minister, and the various opposition leaders.

Pray for our mayor. Pray for the mayor of your place. Pray that God will work. I know this morning there was reference made.

[34:02] Write letters to the editor. Write letters to your politicians. Speak up. Speak up now. We've got freedom in this land to do that, haven't we? Let's make use of it while we can.

And let's pray that our nation will be truly great as we get back to the Bible. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you love this nation, this land, this people, these ones here tonight.

Those watching, Lord, we pray. Minister, help us, Lord, to be such that will call out as Nehemiah did. We'll take action. We'll take the idols and throw them out and burn them.

Lord, help us to be a people that will recognize that sin is a reproach, but righteousness is a blessing. And righteousness will exalt this nation.

We pray that that will be the case. You'll help us to be that salt, that light, that godliness and righteousness can be supported and stood for while we can.

[35:05] Give us grace, give us courage, give us boldness that we might be such that even though they may think of us as Ahab thought of Elijah, a troublemaker, yet we know that our nation is in trouble unless we speak up and stand up.

We pray that any here tonight yet to trust you, that personally they will. Personally they will. They'll know the grace of God. They'll know the righteousness that comes by faith as we put our trust in you.

In Jesus' name. Amen.