

# In God We Trust

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How should a Christian feel about being a citizen of the United States of America? "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." How many times Christian people have lingered over this statement and felt this promise! And how many times Christians have prayed that their own country might take note of this great truth. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." We are going to be thinking together about the prospect that lies before a Christian, living in a country such as the United States of America. This country, this nation has a history. Actually the United States of America is really a modern nation. Of the large nations in the world, it is a late one: it has emerged only recently, in the history of the world.

The history of the United States is well known. There were records kept from the first and those records are clear and unmistakable. As we think about what a believer in Christ could be thinking, and about what could be in his mind as he looks forward in America today, there are some things about the history of this country that will seem very important. The first thing he can think about which will bless his heart is this: the founding fathers believed in God. There is no question about that. They believed in the God of the Bible. They knew whom they had in mind. They said so. Many of those people were very well educated, and many of their writings have been preserved to this day. From the very first you will find from the very inscriptions that they left behind them, the papers that they wrote, the statements that were made, and the books that were written, there was no question they believed in the God of the Bible: the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Moses, the God of the Ten Commandments. They believed in the God and Father of Jesus Christ. They believed in Christ Jesus as the Savior of sinners, and as the One who came to seek and to save the lost.

It is quite possible there were individual people living in the United States from the very first, from the early time of the early colonies, who did not believe in God. But they were not the rulers. The pioneers who led the way, the people who had the vision and the courage and the tenacity to carry out the plans that were laid out for people to follow, were people who believed in God. They worshipped God. The founding fathers of this country, of this nation, of this United States of America, worshipped God.

They were very anxious and very sensitive to the idea that each man should worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. They resisted the attempt on the part of anybody to tell another man how he should worship God; but that they believed in God, there was no question about that.

It is a matter of history that the founding fathers thanked God. This is the only nation that has a distinctively national Thanksgiving Day. The first Thanksgiving proclamation is still well known, has been repeated many many times. Believing in God, trusting in God, receiving from God, counting on the Providence of God, these early settlers who were face to face with the great natural obstacles and problems of living in this new land thanked God for His gracious Providence. His Providence was kind to them and gave them the good crops that they had.

The founding fathers of this nation honored God. You only need to read their public proclamation. Today there may be a great deal of argument and discussion about God from the standpoint as to whether or not there is such a Person. There may be a question whether one has any responsibility to God, and whether He has anything to do with such as do not believe in the archives of this nation. But such ideas do not belong to the founding fathers.

There might have been those in that time who were selfish. There may well have been those in that time who were sinful. There may well have been those in that time who were disobedient. But the persons who were the leaders shared in the common public attitude to honor God. To be sure they were a thrifty

company of people who were sharp as traders. They were diligent about their business and the epithet of "the yankee trader" was known all around the world. There was no question about that! But they were not putting on an act, and they were not dissembling when they put on their silver and gold coins "In God We Trust." That is exactly how they felt and they let the whole world know.

There are some other practical things that any person today might well keep in mind. The early Americans believed in education. That may seem a far cry out from what we have been discussing, but it is not. You see, education has to do with enabling a man to make the best of himself. The style of life that we have in this country gives every man his chance. Each man has his turn. Since every man has his chance, because every man has his turn, it is very important that he do the very best that he can. For that he must have education.

Whenever a settlement was founded, when a number of families got together and established their permanent home, one of the first things they built in addition to their own houses to live in, was a school house to learn in. It was not that these people specially trusted human nature. They did not. They did not expect too much from men. They knew that human beings were faulty. But they accepted their responsibility that each man would have to do his part; they accepted the tasks that were given to them, and that is what they naturally looked forward to, and expected to handle. They wanted to learn that they might be able to do their tasks well. This was not because they were particularly pious, but they were practical. They were genuine. They were real. They wanted knowledge to know how to do. They wanted an attitude that would lead them in the right way. They wanted skills that would enable them to do their work, and for that they needed to learn, and for that they needed to have schools. And so they built their schools, and they built their colleges.

They built their institutions for learning when they did not have much money. They had to scrape to get enough to get it done, but this was one of the things they did. The early Americans believed in churches, not just because they believed in God. It was not only that they believed in the benefits and the blessing of spiritual experience of trusting in God, but they believed in the public corporate worship of God. They believed in doing something together in the community that was honoring to God. Just as when the homes were built they built the schools. So when they built the school, they built the church. Many and many a time in the small community the school was on one corner, the church on another. Many times it happened when buildings were scarce, the same building housed both the school and the church.

In every community there was the school master. There might be very few professions, very few trades, but one thing was sure. Somebody would be designated as teacher so there would be the school master; just the same as in the church there was the minister. The school master and the pastor were among the first two professions that served in this country among the people. Oftentimes it would be the same person; so the man who would preach to them on Sunday was the man who would teach their children during the week.

No one reading history with an open mind can ever question the fact that so far as the United States of America are concerned, the pioneers believed in God. It was no wonder that they put on their coins, "In God We Trust." That was their phrase. We remember it to this day because they used it. We think about this, when today we ask ourselves how shall a Christian person, a person believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is a citizen of the United States of America, how shall he understand his situation as to what he must do? We have a marvelous history he can think about. Any young person entering into life today in the United States of America can be conscious of the fact that there is a backlog of a great heritage. This country has a great Christian heritage without apology to anybody.

This nation of the United States of America today, has a problem. This problem has not been forced upon it, but this problem is unavoidable. It is the problem of human nature. One of the things that will concern everybody involved is that the people who make up the United States of America are human beings. Each person is human. I am emphasizing this because I want to tell you what that means. That just

means simply this, that each person is naturally selfish. Naturally selfish! If you tell me that you know some people that are not selfish, I will tell you that you know some people who have come in touch with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The believing person today needs to open his eyes to this fact, that there is sin on every side. The interests of self are to be found everywhere. This is the problem that confronts everybody.

Because there is so much to be had in this society in which we live as man moves around and walks around in this country, there is so much he can lay his hand on: so much he can take for himself. Because of this selfishness flourishes. Personal ambitions become rank in their strength. There is covetousness. Every person wants to get. He wants to get anything he can lay his hands on. Regardless of how it happens, he wants to get it and keep it for himself.

The believer in Christ reads in the Scriptures that covetousness is idolatry. Yet this is so common. It is around on every side, so much that we hardly recognize it as a fault at all. That one thing we are interested in is getting things. We want to get our hands on as much as we can and keep it for ourselves. Associated with this is greed. We become actually greedy about what there is to be had. Not only do we want to get so that we might have enough, we want to get so that we can have as much as possible. We want to get all we possibly can to have as much as we possibly can, in any way we possibly can. This leads us into all kinds of unholy activity.

Envy is very common. One person looking at the other person actually is inwardly burdened, even actually changed inside. This one person who does not have so much is tempted very much to hate the person that does have much. This inward comparison that they make between people causes them to envy others they think are better off than they are.

With this envy there is jealousy. It is a sad fact that greed and envy and jealousy are grounded in covetousness. Jealousy is a common thing that marks so much of life. It is found on so many different levels. It is found in reference to money. It is found in reference to family. It is found throughout the neighborhood; it is found in business. How often it happens in business that people become jealous of other people. In any organization when there are different people having different tasks and performing in different ways, jealousy develops and grows. This causes people to do all manner of things that are wrong, because they are jealous of one another. Jealousy leads into partisanship.

Partisanship means that society breaks up into parts: this one has this group, and that one belongs to that group, and that one belongs to the other group. Soon the community is broken up into various units: various groups of people: each with their own ideas. When people begin to develop this party spirit they begin to favor the people of their own party. They look around to hunt out the people of their own party, that they may favor those, and be unfair to others who do not belong to their party.

All this is actually what can be called self-centeredness. This is important because self-centeredness is actually the cause of war.

From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts (James 4:1-3).

James pointed out that men desire, and get jealous of each other, so they hunt out in any way, shape or form how they can get an advantage of each other because they want things for themselves. On every side, all through the country, on all levels, there is this ample evidence of self-centered conduct.

The believer in Christ needs to be aware of this trend. He needs to be careful he is not caught up in it. The evidence that this prevailing attitude exists among people; the prevalence of this self-centeredness, is most disturbing. Selfish conduct is the rule of the day. It is not what is good for everybody, but what is good for me and mine, for me and for us. This is to be found everywhere. It is found in the home, in one's

own house. People generally do things to please themselves. People will open a window because they like it. They shut a door because they like it. They turn on the radio because they like it. They turn off the light because they like it. They go to the phone because they like it. They stay on the phone because they like it.

The believer in Christ does not leave his home on that account. So he does not get out of the country because there are selfish people, but he is faced with a real problem. He must deal with it. Not only is this true in the home in various ways, but it is true out in communities. In traffic you will find people are each one out for himself: each one trying to get there first. Each one wants to take the parking place. When people are parking, many times they carelessly, casually park their cars in such a way that instead of putting their car into one space, they actually crowd over in such a way that they take up two spaces. Everytime I see that I am deeply disturbed in myself because I am seeing something that is contributing to the breakdown of our whole community life.

The same trend can be seen when you go downtown for example. In the matter of jaywalking on the street some person cuts across the highway. He goes plainly across the highway knowing it is against the law, and in so doing he jeopardizes everybody else including himself. He could cause trouble and often does in this fashion. Why did he cross the street? He wanted to. The same trend to self-centered conduct is seen as people drive on the highway. I drive a great deal, and I have noticed that if I am going to drive paying attention to the speed limit of 55 miles per hour, I have to drive over in the right lane for slower traffic, because these others are going by me all the time. This is not only certain persons. It is not only the young people who go by me; but older persons, business men, successful looking people. This is true not only for some young reckless people, but mothers of children will drive by at a high rate of speed without any regard either for their own safety or the law of the land.

The same trend is true in business. There are all manner of decisions made in business so that various things are done, about which they will say, "There is nothing illegal about it." This is true even in church. Right in the church itself, in the church organization, among the officers of the church, among the women of the church, in the Sunday School organization, even among the preachers, you will find selfishness, selfishness, selfishness. I have seen people do things in church that were the meanest things that I have ever seen. I am not against the church. I think there is more goodness to the square inch inside the church than there is anywhere. The church is a great institution, and I am in favor of it, but we have some people in it that are no good. It is like this country which has people in it that are no good.

What shall a believer in Christ do? What shall a believer do in this country where he lives? What shall a believing person do as a citizen of the United States of America? It is really very simple. Obey God. That is all! Just obey God. With reference to God Himself, be reverent. Nobody else is? The believer in Christ should be reverent.

With reference to those who are in authority, and there are people who are in authority, he should be respectful. He should respect the people who have the law of the land in their hands. The believer in Christ will obey and support his local police. He will stand by his local sheriff. Someone may say the believer only wants to go along with the establishment. I frankly do not know what that means. I think half the time the people who use that phrase do not know what they mean. If they mean that I am in favor of the city council of the community I live in I would say "Yes!" If they mean I am in favor of the people that I depend upon to protect me, who actually supervise the whole community in such a way that my holdings in the community are safe, who will protect my house and my home, I would emphatically say "Yes!" If they mean I am in favor of the person who will actually help me, so that traveling on the highway will be reasonably safe, that I am in favor of the patrolmen, I would say "Yes!" Is there anything wrong about that? The believer in Christ will be respectful to those in authority and those who are over him.

The believer in Christ will be considerate of his fellowman. He will be thoughtful of other people. He will be charitable to the poor. Someone may ask, "How can anybody live like that in the world like this? How can anybody live like that in the community where he is?" There is one simple answer: let him lay

this down as a rule: "In God we trust."

We can put our trust in God. Our nation has a prospect. The United States of America can look ahead and remember that God is available. Even so the believer in Christ who is living in this country can realize that so long as there is freedom, he can do as he really feels led to do. Then let him act out his faith. He should go to church. He should read the Bible. He should pray. He should witness to others about God. A believing person can do all that. There is no law against it.

As long as there are other believers, as long as there are people in the community who believe in God, let them build churches. Let them build orphanages. Let them support schools. Let them promote missions. So long as there is liberty, so long as a person can do as he feels led to do, let him join hands with all believers in witnessing and praying. Let the record of history in generations to come, when they point back to this generation where you are now living, let them say that man, that woman, those people in that home, they trusted in God. And as far as you and I are concerned, let us lay it down as our simple rule and from this day out, here we go. "In God we trust."