

“THE MAKING OF A NATION”  
(2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10)  
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[East Cobb U.M.C.; 7-4-10]

-I-

1. **[BOTH Services:]** Read Text: 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10 and Pray.
2. As we celebrate July 4<sup>th</sup> this year, I want us to think about the amazing parallels between our own country of America and that of the biblical nation of Israel.

A—Consider, for example, that though both were founded as a people possessing a common faith in God, a common history, and common law and business systems, both also began merely as a collection of independent countries: the United States was at first 13 very different *colonies*; while Israel began as 12 rival *tribes*.

B—Remember, too, that in both cases, it was through the leadership of *one man* that these independent regions were united as one nation: in America, it was George Washington who led us to victory during what we call the American Revolution; in biblical Israel, it was David son of Jesse who united the rival 12 tribes under his Kingship.

C—And consider how in both cases, one of the first official acts of these two men was to establish a new capital city as a symbol of their nation’s unity: in America, we named it after its founder... Washington, D.C.; and today’s Bible story describes how the new city of Jerusalem was established, as well – a capital that (like our own) was *also* given the name of its founder... “The City of David.”

D—So in just these few facts we can see how both America and ancient Israel share some remarkable similarities, and how both have been considered “great” nations in their time.

3. But what goes in to the making of a “great” nation?

A—Is a nation “great” because of its military power? Or because of its economic strength? Or its technology? Or its population?

B—Well, I'd like to suggest that today’s scripture gives us at least **three qualities that go into the making of a “great” nation**. And as we celebrate our own Independence Day, I want to share these for our consideration and remembrance today. (*See Sermon Notes*)

-II-

4. First of all, scripture tells us that a “great nation” has **A GREAT HERITAGE**.

A—Now of course, *all* countries consider themselves “great” if we define “heritage” merely in terms of past history – *every* country, after all, is proud of its history.

B–But in the Bible, “great heritage” has little to do with a nation glorying in its *own* accomplishments, but instead in what almighty GOD has done *for them*.

1–Consider, for example, that Israel's heritage was considered "great" not because of their own doings, but because of what God did *for* and *through* and them.

2–In the same way, in his Inaugural Speech as the first President of the United States in 1789, George Washington once said that,  
*“No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of [people] more than the people of the United States.”*

3–In other words, Washington (like David in the Bible) knew that America's destiny as a great nation depended NOT upon their own strength and power, but upon the strength, power and wisdom of Almighty GOD.

B–America and Israel have had a “great heritage,” you see, because they *put God first*.

1–In Israel's case, though, wherever and whenever they *failed* to do this, the Bible tells us that they got themselves into trouble, and were no longer considered “great.”<sup>1</sup>

2–In some ways here in America today, I fear that we, too, are in danger of losing our “great heritage” because we have an unsettling tendency to think (or at least *act* like) we don't need God in our national conscience anymore.<sup>2</sup>

3–But I would say that if we want to continue to be “great” in the biblical sense, we need to remember and honor our spiritual heritage as a nation, rather than be embarrassed by it.

5. And yet, today's scripture also teaches us that, in addition to a great heritage, a “great nation” also has to have **GREAT LEADERSHIP**.

A–Here again, “greatness” does *not* refer to some physical, mental or charismatic quality.

B–Instead, “great leadership” in the Bible is always measured in terms of “Godliness” – of how closely a leader walks with God and follows God's will, way, and timing.

1–King David was “great” *not* because he defeated Goliath, or was handsome, or because he unified Israel, or even because he captured Jerusalem.

2–No. As Verse 10 of our text for this morning says, *“David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him.”*

3–In other words, he was “great” because he knew that *God* was his source of wisdom, strength, and guidance – he was “great” because he was a godly leader.

C–In like manner, throughout American history, those we think of as “great” Presidents have all begun their terms of office with some acknowledgment of their dependence upon God to guide them as they led our country (i.e., read the inaugural speeches of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and many others).

1–Now, they may not have always *lived up to* their words later in their administration, but at least they were able to correctly identify the *source* of true power.

2–You see, a “great leader” isn’t afraid to acknowledge that his or her source of guidance and strength comes from God.

6. And if we’re to continue the tradition of “great leaders” in our country, I’d like to suggest that it will require several things of *us*, as well:

A–**First** of all, it means that we *all* have a responsibility to **elect Godly leaders** – leaders who aren’t afraid to stand up for what’s right, and who’ll make Godly values a priority.

1–Notice I didn’t say we necessarily have to elect *Christian* leaders. I certainly *do* hope that we would elect many persons to public office who *are* devout and committed Christians.

2–But there are also people of other faiths and beliefs who may be equally as “Godly” as some supposed “Christian politicians” are (or even more so) – so, the key is to elect leaders who’ll do things that are consistent with Godly values. <sup>3</sup>

B–But not only should we *elect* leaders who’ll honor Godly morals and faith, but **second**, we should also **open ourselves to the possibility of seeking to be elected**, as well.

1–It may very well be that some of you here might sense God calling you to seek public office, not for your own sake or glory, but for the glory of God through you.

2–You see, as Christians, we shouldn’t be afraid to seek out elected office, because if there’s anything our city, county, state, and nation needs today, it’s Godly leaders.

7. But not only does a “great nation” possess a “great heritage” with “great leadership,” but lastly (and perhaps most importantly), it has to have **A GREAT PEOPLE**.

A–Again, by “great” here I don’t mean some inherent genetic or racial superiority.

1–No. As with leadership, in the Bible a nation’s people are “great” when they *honor God* – they’re “great” because they openly acknowledge God as the source of their blessings (when they can they can say “*In God We Trust*” and have it mean more than simply being words on currency).

2–The biblical people of Israel honored God through their festivals and national rituals, all of which were established to remind them that *God* (not themselves) was the source of their blessings.

B–In the same way, after an 1830s tour of America, the French writer Alexis de Tocqueville made this observation about our own country:

*“I have toured America, and I have seen most of what you offer. I’ve seen the richness of the fields and the wealth of your mines. I’ve seen your industrial might, the beauties of the rivers, the streams, the lakes, and the grandeur of the mountains. I’ve noticed the abundance of the forests and the marvelous climate with which you are blessed. In none of these things did I see the cause for the greatness of America. It wasn’t until I went into your churches that I saw the reason for America’s greatness. America is great because America is good; and as long as America is good, America will be great. If it ever ceases to be good, it will cease to be great.”*

C–You see, De Tocqueville knew that a nation’s people are “great” only when – and to the extent that – they honor God. The people who founded America knew this.

1–So perhaps what we need today is a reminder that what makes our people “great” is not the extent of our “political correctness,” but the extent to which we (like the people of Israel, and like our own founders) are willing to display an open, unashamed, public faith in God, and in Jesus Christ as his son and our Savior

2–Now this doesn’t give us license to disrespect the faith of others, but neither do we need to compromise who *we* are in the name of “political correctness.”

–III–

8. You see, America and ancient Israel are both “great” nations. But the qualities that make them (or *any* nation) “great” is that they have...

A–A “**great heritage**” which acknowledges God as the moving force in their history.

B–They have “**great leadership**”– leaders who honor God by their actions and anchor their policy ethics in their faith.

C–And great nations also have a “**great people**” – people who aren't afraid to openly profess God as source of their blessings, or God’s son as Lord of their lives.

9. As we celebrate America's freedom and independence today, let's remember that these things are made possible *only* by God himself – that GOD is the only true source of “greatness” that goes into in “*The Making Of A Nation.*”

10. [PRAYER]

### ENDNOTES:

1. For example, consider all the times the prophets warned Israel that they had turned away from God's ways and tried to do things their own way. Each of these times resulted in military, political, and moral disasters for them.
2. For example, we write Him out of our history books by writing out all references to the faith motivation of our country's founders. We take prayer out of our schools and then don't replace it with any moral anchors whatsoever because we "don't want to offend anyone," and then wonder why children and youth carry guns to school and shoot each other. Regardless of what ones believes about the "rightness or wrongness" of these issues, we must understand that historically, most of these actions are exactly OPPOSITE the intentions of our nation's founders. Rightly or wrongly, *they* didn't believe that we could run government or a nation properly *without* having religion play a part in that government. In 1813, Thomas Jefferson said that,... "*The general principles on which the [founders] achieved independence were... the general principles of Christianity.*" And he believed that without these, we as a nation would fail miserably. Unfortunately, even we Christians have bought into the myth that "separation of church and state" means that religion must stay out of governmental affairs -- which is interesting considering the fact that when Jefferson coined the term, he was referring to the fact that government should stay out of *religious* affairs, NOT vice-versa!
3. Remember that many of *America's* founders were NOT orthodox Christians in the sense we think of today (including Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson). Many of them didn't believe Jesus was the Son of God, and many others didn't support or attend the institutional church. But they *were* people who believed that it was impossible to properly govern a country without belief in a supreme being and the belief that religion provides the moral and ethical underpinnings for society itself. *That's* the type of people we should be looking for in our political candidates.