

WOULD PAUL ANSWER THE CALL TO CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM?

Mark Dinsmore

A number of respected Christian columnists and pastors across our nation are sounding an alarm at the thickening shroud of global governance descending upon our nation. With the presidentially promised “change” now being delivered, the spectre of a militarized one-world spirituality is darkening the horizon of earth under the guise of “hope” and “peace.”

I understand—and share—the righteous anger over the sorry state of the church and its lackadaisical response to the evils of our time. Serious students of God’s Word, however, have been long alerted to these signs: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come... (1 Tm 4:1; see also 2 Tm 4:3-4). Though we take comfort that our Lord could return at any time for His Bride, it appears that even those whose blessed hope is in a pre-tribulation rapture should take heed and prepare for precipitous times ahead (1 Pt 4:12-16).

In light of increasing daily distress over our nation’s economic unraveling and corporate “bailout,” a number of states are introducing legislation to declare their sovereignty and withdraw from this mess, and some patriots have even called for a 2009 Continental Congress to “establish practicable strategies the People can take, en masse, to peacefully reclaim Liberty and restore Constitutional Order.” Indeed, that these are “perilous times” only confirms the prophetic import of increasing global “birth pangs.”

Many well-written books and DVDs document how our nation, and evangelicalism, came to this point, but this lament is not my chief concern, nor is it in suggesting a roadmap for political action. Rather, it is to articulate and apply a biblical response to the foreboding future tyranny that is prophesied (and proceeding) to unite the world in a Babel-like rebellion under Antichrist. Surprisingly, the cause and cure of our nation’s decline is a controversial subject even among conservative Christians. As one columnist whom I respect recently wrote, “A real Christian patriot would never allow his country to be taken over by a gaggle of elitist goons bent on stealing his liberties...”

“Christian patriot.” These two words are inextricably linked in the minds of most Americans who grew up with any kind of serious education regarding the nature of our Constitutional Republic and the faith of our Founding Fathers. The ideals of a “Christian Patriot” are indeed wonderful—to live in a nation that exalts our Creator and whose government is firmly rooted in God’s Word.

But is this our earthly hope and promise prior to Christ’s return? And, is this the mission to which the church is called—to establish “one nation, under God, indivisible...?” Is this the example of our *spiritual* forefathers?

Consider Daniel. Consider Joseph. These courageous men (both types of Christ, among many), were subjected to all manner of trials and temptation, and yet they did not resist the enemy with force. Still, God spared them. They both rose to prominence in pagan cultures that literally worshiped demon-gods—Satan himself—in various manifestations, but did either Daniel or Joseph attempt to overthrow these empires by political persuasion? Did they stir up the faithful to stage a protest or ignite a revolution?

“That’s the Old Testament!” some might protest. Then what of Paul? What of Peter? Did these equally courageous New Testament saints resist their captors with force? Did these powerful apostles of Christ start a political party to declare their independence from the pagan world in which they preached? To a man, no. All of Christ’s disciples except John were martyred—and not for their “inalienable rights” to live in a country that worshiped God nor for their right to “keep and bear arms.”

We have enjoyed (and oft taken for granted) the liberties afforded us at the expense of those who bled and died for our gain. This is a testament to their courage, faith, and God’s grace—but does this mean that the American Revolution is a *biblical* example and pattern of behavior for us to follow? To my own initial confusion and dismay (as it contradicts years of conservative Christian-heritage instruction) there is not a single example in Scripture of “armed revolution” of any kind as a pattern for the church.

Remember, it is the Lord who raises up kings (both just and unjust) and allows them to dictate the rules of the land in order to bring about His will for His people (Ps 75:7; Dn 2:21; Prv 21:1); and, as we have seen in the example of Israel, “judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Pt 4:17).

Grievously, America is ripe for judgment...and so is the church. Though it is difficult for us to “count it all joy” (Jas 1:2-4), the persecution and trials that are coming upon us are for the purification of God’s remnant. As such, a true soldier of Christ seeks to “understand the times” (1 Chr 12:32) and prepare his household, his church, and his community—not for a revolution of might but one of heart and mind.

In fact, Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world... [else] would my servants fight” (Jn 18:36). Do not misunderstand—I am not a pacifist by strict definition. I support the Second Amendment; I’m teaching all three of my sons how to be responsible marksmen, whether for food provision or self- and family defense. But here’s the difference: the right to “keep and bear arms” was not granted to us by God. If (when) our government knocks on my door and demands my weapons under threat of violence or imprisonment, would it be a biblical response to resist or “open fire!”?

Thousands of neo-Patriots cheered, as did I, when former NRA president and “Moses” actor Charlton Heston declared that the only way he would surrender his weapons is when the enemy (our own government) “pried them from [his] cold, dead, hands.” But through study, prayer, and reflection, I’ve come to the conviction that it would be foolish to give my life for this “right” given to me by man. Though my flesh is reluctant, I pray that I will “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mk 12:17; Rom 13:1-7). If necessary, I’ll defend my family with my life *without* a rifle, but we must trust in God’s ability to deliver us from that “temptation,” or trial, when it comes (Ps 22:4; Jas 1:2-4).

My fear today is that if Christians answer a “call to arms” to fight whatever totalitarian regime is being plotted (in preparation for Antichrist), then godly men will be imprisoned or die, leaving women and children behind to be ravaged both physically and spiritually. Going down in a “blaze of glory” like the Revolutionary “heroes” sounds good to our own flesh, but how can dead men minister the gospel under whatever pagan ruler or communist culture rises to replace our Constitutional Republic?

We are in a spiritual battle, but we must choose on which hill we are willing to die. Dying for Nationalistic Pride or even for our “Rights” is not the same as dying for the cause of Christ. Far better for godly men to survive in a pagan nation and submit to rule of law (which God ordains) and to subsist by His Word—unless (or until) we are asked to bow down and worship a false god. Such an affront would still not be cause to take up arms. In the life-and-death trial of the fiery furnace, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah did not go into the flames as “National Patriots,” willing to die for their “Bill of Rights,” nor did they offer any physical resistance to their captors. Like Christ’s, theirs was a peaceful obedience and demonstration of submission to God, who alone is able to save (Dn 3:17-18; Jas 4:12; Heb 7:25).

Does this mean, as some Christian “patriots” suggest, that I am weak, unfaithful, or lazy? Does it mean that I am consigned to our nation’s “fate”? No! On the contrary, I am reminded that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood,” which causes me to re-focus God’s precious resources of time and energy on eternal things—not on fulfilling the “American Dream” for myself and my posterity, nor on establishing God’s “kingdom now.” Rather, we must earnestly set about “redeeming the time” (Eph 5:16) with renewed fervor to preach the gospel and make disciples—not for an earthly hope of heaven *here*, but with an eye on his kingdom to *come* (Christ’s *eternal* kingdom). Scripture is clear that this present terrestrial globe “shall melt with fervent heat...and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pt 3:10). That includes every church building, every mansion, every monument, every false god, and every political power structure built or imagined by mankind—whether Democrat or Republican, Communist or “Christian.”

Scripture tells us that “peace on earth, goodwill to men” (Lk 2:14) cannot come until Christ rules and reigns on earth. As Christians, we should protect and defend human life wherever we are. We should never deny Christ in order to save our lives, but to throw ourselves in front of an advancing tank that threatens our “Constitutional” liberties would only crush and silence our voice for God, and would do nothing for the cause of Christ.

Even John Adams acknowledged that it is fruitless to force “biblical government” upon an “immoral people,” hell-bent on conspiracy against their Creator. In spite of the courageous speeches and admirable acts of our Revolutionary heroes like Paul Revere, was theirs a biblical response? Or, is the *Apostle* Paul our model of Christ, when he said, “Therefore I endure [suffer] all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tm 2:10).

These are difficult issues that one must prayerfully work through. May our Lord continue to sharpen us all for His glory and His purpose, “having done all, to stand” (Eph 6:13) and, as He commanded, “Occupy till I come” (Lk 19:13)—doing so not in a passive state but in a state of action for the gospel and cause of Christ. “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rv 22:20).