

Prayer for the Nation Where We Live

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Those of us who are followers of Jesus are now citizens of a new nation. When we read this passage, we accept it as true. It's not some type of religious make-believe language about pretend symbolism.

However, we still have a citizenship in one of the nations of the world – and for most of us who are reading this, that would be the United States. This citizenship is temporary, however, and – compared to the new nation we are now citizens of – rather insignificant.

But we do live here for a while, and God – the one we now serve – gives us specific instructions about what we are to do during our temporary residency here. I will illustrate this with two passages from Scripture – one from the Old Testament and one from the New.

There was a time when the nation of Israel had a temporary citizenship in another country. That country was Babylon, and the prophet Jeremiah gave the people of Israel specific instructions about how they should respond in their situation.

Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. (Jeremiah 29:7)

This doesn't mean that the nation they were temporary citizens of would have peace and prosperity forever – God would eventually have to judge and destroy that nation. However, the command was still given; the prayers of God's people still had an effect on the nation; and that in turn had an impact on the lives of God's people. Even when judgment did come – just like it will for our own nation – the prayers of God's people would have an effect, at least in the lives of individuals.

In the New Testament, we read:

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

Again, our prayers will have an impact on the nation – and this in turn will have an impact on us. It doesn't mean that things will always be peaceful and quiet. (The persecutions of the early church demonstrate this.) But our ultimate goal isn't to have pleasant circumstances in our lives; it is to live in godliness and holiness, as the end of the verse reads. Remember this: For we who are followers of Jesus, our present circumstances – as citizens of the United States (or any other nation) – are temporary. Our focus is on things which are lasting and permanent.

Dennis Hinks © 2008
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