

## What Is a Christian Nation? (Pt. 15)

2 Chronicles 18:1-3

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Rev. Greg L. Price

This Lord's Day we continue to apply the biblical principles concerning a Christian nation to practical questions that naturally arise. In the previous sermon, you will recall that we looked at two questions.

(1) Can I as a Christian serve (without sin) in any official capacity in which I am required to swear to uphold and defend a constitution that on the one hand intentionally omits any mention of the Triune God of Scripture as the source of all civil power and authority within the nation (and rather asserts "we the people of the United States of America" to be the source of all civil power and authority within the nation), intentionally omits Jesus Christ as mediatorial King, intentionally omits the Bible as the supreme law of the land (but states rather that the constitution, laws of the land, and treaties are "the supreme law of the land"), and intentionally omits biblical Christianity as the alone established religion of the nation, and on the other hand, intentionally defends, protects (and thereby promotes) idolatry, false religion, blasphemy, heresy, covenant-breaking with God, and Sabbath-breaking? **IF** all idolatry, false religion, blasphemy, and heresy is evil and condemned by God (and it is according to 1 Corinthians 10:14 [idolatry]; Exodus 20:3 [false religion]; Mark 7:22,23 [blasphemy]; Galatians 5:20 [heresies]), **THEN** to swear to uphold a constitution that defends the so-called "right" for people to practice (and therefore to promote) idolatry, to practice any and every false religion (including witchcraft and Satanism), that defends the alleged right for people to utter blasphemy against the Lord our God and everything that is holy and sacred, and protects the pretended right to teach and promote every heresy imaginable is also evil and condemned by God (Exodus 20:7; Isaiah 48:1).

(2) If I myself cannot serve (without sin) in an official capacity because I would be required to swear to uphold and defend what God says is evil, then can I as a Christian vote (without sin) for a person who will serve in an official capacity and who will be required to swear to uphold a constitution that defends and promotes the same evils mentioned above? If I cannot swear to do evil, can I (by my vote) put someone into the precise same situation as my representative wherein he would be required to swear to defend and promote the evil that I myself cannot swear to uphold and defend? According to the text from our previous sermon, “No!” For Paul states, “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins” (1 Timothy 5:22). Although Paul is specifically addressing the ecclesiastical realm in placing a man into authority within the church, nevertheless, the principle is essentially the same in the civil realm with regard to placing one into authority. If one is morally unqualified (by virtue of his religion or life), or if one will be required to swear to uphold and defend what is evil, then if we vote for such a person as our representative, we become partakers of that person’s sin when he actually does swear to uphold and defend what is evil. What we cannot do because it is a moral evil, we cannot put another person into that very place where he would be required to perform the same moral evil.

This Lord’s Day we move on to another practical question: Can I as a Christian serve in the military? The following are the main points from the sermon this Lord’s Day: (1) We as Christians Cannot Join Hands with the Wicked in the Military (2 Chronicles 18:1-3); (2) Another Objection Considered.

## **I. We as Christians Cannot Join Hands with the Wicked in the Military (2 Chronicles 18:1-3).**

A. I should first qualify my remarks by declaring unequivocally that serving in the military is not wrong in and of itself. The issue here is NOT that a Christian cannot serve in the military in any situation, under any circumstances, and at no time because the military and all killing is immoral in and of itself. The pacifist position makes all killing of human beings in all situations, under all circumstances, and at all times to be murder, for they take the words of the Lord out of context, “But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil” (Matthew 5:39). But Christ does not here condemn all cases of self-defense, but rather condemns us taking personal vengeance upon others who do us evil. We are not to resist or literally “to rise up” in violence against those who do us evil in order to personally recompense evil for evil, to personally get our pound of flesh (according to Romans 12:17,19). In fact, the Scripture clearly teaches that personal self-defense is lawful (but not personal vengeance) in Exodus 22:2; Nehemiah 4:13,14; Luke 22:35-38. Likewise, the Scripture also teaches it is right for a Christian to take up arms in a lawful war for national self-defense (as we see in Deuteronomy 20; Esther 8:11; 9:5). And finally, the Scripture teaches that it is lawful for the civil magistrate to execute the evil doer for those crimes authorized by God in His Word where two or three credible eye witnesses confirm by testimony the crimes committed by the criminal (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 19:15-21; Romans 13:4; ). Thus, if it is not unlawful in and of itself to serve in the military, what is that makes it wrong to do so? Let us consider the following sins that make it wrong to serve in the military.

1. First, when those who serve in the military are required to swear an oath to uphold a constitution that on the one hand intentionally omits any mention of the Triune God of Scripture as the source of all civil power and authority within the nation (and rather asserts “we the people of the United States of America” to be the source of all civil power and authority within the nation), intentionally omits Jesus Christ as mediatorial King, intentionally omits the Bible as the supreme law of the

land (but states rather that the constitution, laws of the land, and treaties are “the supreme law of the land”), and intentionally omits biblical Christianity as the alone established religion of the nation, and on the other hand, intentionally defends, protects (and thereby promotes) idolatry, false religion (polytheism as the national religion), blasphemy, heresy, covenant-breaking with God, and Sabbath-breaking, such an oath to uphold such an immoral constitution is sinful and evil. For all oaths are unlawful that bind us to uphold, defend (and thereby promote) that which is evil. Because all those serving in the military are required to swear such an oath (at least in the United States), serving in the military under this set of circumstances is unlawful.

2. Secondly, when Christians who serve in the military are expected to kill and take lives (or to help in some way those who do), the Scripture is clear that they must not serve under those or with those who are ungodly (or who embrace that which is contrary to Scripture as summarized in a faithful Confession of Faith like the Westminster Confession of Faith, and as summarized in a faithful National Covenant like the Solemn League and Covenant) lest the Christian be led astray from biblical Christianity as he engages in the same military covenant with those who embrace idolatry, false religions, blasphemy, heresy, covenant-breaking, Sabbath-breaking, the murder of unborn children, adultery, and sodomy (Exodus 34:12—16).

a. From our text in 2 Chronicles 18:1-3, we have a similar case in point where a godly Jewish king (Jehoshaphat of Judah) engages in a military covenant with a wicked Jewish king (Ahab of Israel) to go to war against the Syrians (read it). The Syrians were not God’s covenant people, so why shouldn’t Jehoshaphat covenant with Ahab in fighting a common idolatrous enemy who had taken by way of conquest territory and people that belonged to Israel? Jehoshaphat even states, “I am as thou art, and my people as thy people” (2 Chronicles 18:3). In other words, we both descend from the 12 tribes of Israel (though now

we are divided into two distinct kingdoms). We and our people are related. We and our people have a common heritage in being called by the one true living God into covenant with Him. After all, Jehoshaphat may have thought, “Ahab and the northern kingdom of Israel were not the abominable kingdoms of the Canaanites that Israel under Moses and Joshua was commanded by God to destroy.” Of Course, yes, “we will be with thee in war” says Jehoshaphat (in 2 Chronicles 18:3). Was this a lawful military covenant into which the godly Jehoshaphat entered with the wicked Ahab?

b. Jehoshaphat has enough discretion to want the counsel of a faithful prophet of God (2 Chronicles 18:4). Ahab rounds up 400 of his prophets (who are merely Ahab’s mouthpieces not God’s mouthpieces), and these false prophets proclaim that God has sanctioned the war and will grant them success (2 Chronicles 18:5). Jehoshaphat discerns that these are not faithful prophets of the Lord, but mere puppets of Ahab (which should have set off flashing red lights before Jehoshaphat’s eyes with regard to the problem of such a military covenant with Ahab). So Jehoshaphat wants to hear from a faithful prophet of the Lord (2 Chronicles 18:6). Micaiah, God’s prophet, whom Ahab says he hates, is called. Micaiah prophesies the defeat of Israel and the death of Ahab, and urges both kings to send their troops home to their families in peace. But to no avail. Jehoshaphat (under the spell of Ahab) even ignores the Word of the Lord through His prophet and continues headlong down this sinful course. In the course of the battle God spares the life of Jehoshaphat and takes the life of Ahab as was prophesied.

c. It is obvious to us all that Jehoshaphat disobeyed the Lord in going to war. But what was the stated reason why the Lord forbade Jehoshaphat from going to war with Ahab? Was it too dangerous? No. Was it a war in order to seize territory that was not theirs? No, for Syria had taken Ramoth-gilead which belonged to Israel,

which God had graciously given it to Israel in the division of the promise land under Moses (Deuteronomy 4:41-43). Did the joint forces of Israel and Judah not have the military resources to take back the city of Ramoth-gilead from Syria? No, nothing is stated to that effect. In fact, if God could deliver over 120,000 Midianites and Amelekites into Israel's hand by Gideon's 300 men (who were heavily armed to the teeth with a trumpet, a lamp, and a pitcher), then surely the Lord could have granted victory to Ahab and Jehoshaphat. So what was the stated reason why the Lord forbade Jehoshaphat from going to war with Ahab?

d. As we turn to 2 Chronicles 19:1,2, we see that another faithful prophet of the Lord meets Jehoshaphat upon his return from battle with a message from God (read it). The stated reason why this military covenant with Ahab was unlawful is because Ahab was ungodly and demonstrated through his idolatry, his counterfeit religion, and his wickedness that He did not love the Lord (regardless of any pretense on his part to indicate he loved and worshipped the one true living God). In effect, Hanani declares, "Shall we join hands with the wicked even to promote what appears to be a noble cause in taking back the rightful territory of Israel (which God gave them) from the Syrians?" Dear ones, Jehoshaphat did evil that good might come (which principle Paul condemns in Romans 3:7). Jehoshaphat by virtue of his military covenant with Ahab became partaker to some degree of Ahab's sins.

e. This was the very issue that was at stake within the covenanted nation of Scotland when the Protestors (consisting of ministers like Samuel Rutherford, James Guthrie, Patrick Gillespie etc.) would not budge from their biblical position of opposing the Resolutioners who held a majority of the church and state under their sway. The Resolutioners had enacted certain laws in the civil and ecclesiastical realm which allowed the those who were ungodly, those who were disaffected to the covenanted reformation and the Solemn League and Covenant, those who were under censure of the Church of

Scotland (or were worthy of being under church censure) to serve in the military and in places of authority. The Resolutioners compromised the very laws of church and state they had passed just a couple years earlier in order to gather as many men together to fill the military ranks against the onslaught of the covenant-breaking Cromwell who was invading Scotland. Thus, the Resolutioners engaged in military covenants with those within their own nation who in one way or another demonstrated that they did not uphold and defend the righteous and faithful Solemn League and Covenant by which they were bound. The Lord delivered Scotland into the hands of Cromwell for Scotland's gross covenant-breaking in joining hands with the wicked in a military covenant which proceeded from unbelief that God was unable to deliver them even if they only had the equivalent of Gideon's 300 men.

f. This matter has recently been brought into even a greater degree of light in that now the U.S. military openly and officially sanctions sodomy to be practiced within its ranks. "Don't ask, don't tell" permitted and tolerated sodomy if one was not too vocal about it (just like it also permitted heterosexual fornication and adultery which likewise are serious violations of God's Law), but now the military officially sanctions sodomy for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by God. Christians can add the official sanction of sodomy to the ever growing list of egregious sins defended and promoted by the U.S. military of which a Christian by joining hands in a military covenant becomes partaker.

g. Thus, dear ones, when a Christian engages in a military covenant with the ungodly, he violates the Moral Law of God (and especially when the military covenant is with the armed forces of his own polytheistic and immoral nation). Once again, I remind you that it is not easy for me to report such truths to you, because I love my country and pray earnestly for her repentance. But I hate the idolatry, false religion, blasphemy, heresy, covenant-breaking, Sabbath-breaking,

murder of unborn children, and gross immorality that she constitutionally defends and promotes and which is defended and promoted presently in her military.

h. We as Christians cannot join hands with the wicked in a military covenant even to do that which might seem noble. In this regard, I want to testify as a Christian that I reject the alleged nobility and lawfulness of war (and the shedding of blood) when intervening in nations and defending nations against so-called tyrant so that those nations can continue to practice false religions that are hostile to biblical Christianity and nations that wage war against biblical Christianity. The very so-called “democratic protesters” in these Islamic nations that we continue to support with our military, inevitably become even more fierce persecutors of Christians and biblical Christianity within their borders. I also reject the alleged nobility and lawfulness of war when the stated reasons for war are said to be for our own “national security interests” (which often means territory vital to our economic interests, i.e. oil, or a passage way through oceans and seas). Dear ones, it is not ours to debate with the Lord how lawful wars ought to be waged and by whom. He has revealed these matters to us in His Word. Our duty is not to debate with Him, but to faithfully obey Him. As in every other situation, the duty is ours, the consequences are the Lord’s. And our duty is found in Acts 5:29: “We ought to obey God rather than man.”

## **II. Another Objection Considered.**

A. This objection looks at the founding of the United States and its war with the greatest naval power of the world at that time (Great Britain). The objection goes something like this: “God’s providential deliverance of the United States from the might of Great Britain and the subsequent prosperity of the United States to become the most wealthy



and most powerful nation on the face of the earth surely demonstrates God's favor and blessing upon the United States as a Christian nation."

1. Dear ones, we do not determine whether an individual is a Christian by merely looking at providential deliverances or providential blessings, or whether a nation is a Christian nation by merely considering providential deliverances and providential blessings (the wicked often prosper under God's hand according to Psalm 73:3-5,12). God has providentially delivered from destruction and economically blessed many individuals and many nations who were not Christian nations (whether it be God's deliverance of wicked Ahab from the Syrians in 1 Kings 20, or whether it be the prosperity and success of the idolatrous nation of Assyria, or whether it be the deliverance of communist Russia from the invasion of Nazi Germany in WWII etc.). God raises up kings and kingdoms and puts down kings and kingdoms for His own holy and wise purposes, and He blesses economically whom He will as well (Daniel 4:25,35; Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17). Providence tells us what God has done in delivering nations and in prospering nations so that they might turn to Him through the revelation of His Word. The patience and forbearance of God in not bringing immediate judgment upon wicked individuals and wicked nations is a kindness that should lead that person or that nation to repentance (Romans 2:3,4), rather than leading them to officially tolerate, defend, and promote idolatry, false religion, blasphemy, and heresy. Individuals and nations that reap deliverances and material blessings of God (but do not repent of their polytheism and wickedness), only prepare themselves for a far greater judgment from God. I submit that such is the case with the national deliverances and blessings God has wrought on behalf of the United States. Through the national deliverances and blessings, God has been calling the United States to repentance for her official toleration and promotion of idolatry, every false religion, as well as the murder of unborn children and almost

every form of sexual immorality—not delivering her and blessing her because she was a righteous and godly Christian nation.

2. Dear ones, the way in which you judge a nation to be a Christian nation is by its distinctly Christian constitution, laws, treaties, and enforcement of righteous laws. As we have noted many times over throughout this series of sermons (as in Psalm 2), a Christian nation in reality is one that constitutionally and legally acknowledges the Triune God of the Bible to be the source of all civil authority, constitutionally and legally pays homage to Jesus Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords, constitutionally and legally submits to the Moral Law of God found in the Bible as the supreme law of the land from which the lawful rights and duties of men are derived, and constitutionally and legally establishes biblical Christianity (as summarized in a faithful Confession of Faith like the Westminster Confession of Faith and as summarized in a faithful National Covenant like the Solemn League and Covenant) as the only official religion of that nation. When the United States is judged by these standards, it falls desperately short of any claim to being identified as a Christian nation.

Dear ones, I ask you to look from the United States to yourselves, for if the riches of God's goodness in delivering you and in blessing you are not leading you to humble repentance every day, you too are only aggravating your sin against the Lord who calls you to Himself through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord calls His people to stop playing games with Him. To eye the mercy of God in Christ Jesus as they turn from their lives of comfort, security, and prosperity to see how quickly all this could be taken from us. Dear ones, a covenanted reformation is certain to come to this nation and to the world, but are you praying daily for not only that larger reformation, but praying and looking to Christ by faith alone to continue His reformation in your life and in the life of your

family? Dear ones, begin where you can with reformation and sincere repentance in looking to the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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