

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

May 2, 2021

Our Nation's Declining Religious Values

Before discussing the subject referred to by the above title, I think it well to emphasize that merely being religious is not enough. It is possible to be religiously wrong; it is possible to be caught up in a false religion; it is possible to be highly and conscientiously involved in religious activities and in that which is called "worship," and still be lost! This is clearly implied in Matt. 7:22-23 wherein Jesus is recorded as saying, "*Many will say unto Me, in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' (23) 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!''*"

The world is literally filled with man-made churches, man-conceived religious creeds, catechisms, church manuals, etc., all of which are in violation of Rev. 22:18-19 wherein Jesus condemned the practice of adding to or taking from the word of God, and which necessarily infers a lack of faith in the all-sufficiency of the word of God to direct us in matters religious, and which belies the plain teaching set forth in 2 Tim. 3:16-17 (please read).

For the record, I believe the church Jesus built (Matt. 16:18), and shed His blood to purchase (Acts 20:28), is the "*one body*" wherein both Jews and Gentiles are reconciled unto God (Eph. 2:16). Any church other than the one described in the Bible, and different from the one Jesus built constitutes a religious "*plant*" which our "*heavenly Father has **not** planted,*" and which will "*be **uprooted***" in that last day, Matt. 15:13.

However, "*righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people,*" Prov. 14:34. And when people in general cast off any semblance of religious values, the morality of the nation itself will suffer a serious decline. And it is a well-documented fact that more and more Americans are becoming less and less religiously oriented. To illustrate the statement just made, I now refer to a computer article posted by "Wired Conservative," entitled "**Less Than Half of America Are Church Goers.**"

In the aforementioned article, it is stated that "according to a recent Gallup poll" that "Churchgoers now make up a mere 47 percent of our population." It is further stated that, according to Gallup, "U.S. church membership was 73% when Gallup first measured it in 1937 and remained near 73% for the next six decades, before beginning a steady decline around the turn of the 21st century."

It is stated that “some of this is believed to be the result of COVID-19 and the pandemic, as most churches were forced to shut down due to strict lockdowns and health safety reasons.” Of course, most people had the opportunity to go online and stream the services of another congregation, but only about 34% had streamed any online church service.

Fortunately, however, various states and churches are beginning to re-open, but it was stated that “the public is not precisely being hasty about their return to in-person worship.”

The statement that “the public is not precisely being hasty about their return to in-person worship” affects me on a personal level. You see, there are some members at **Seffner** who, hopefully, because of their fear of contracting the COVID-19 virus, have stayed away from the worship assemblies of the church. And once people miss for several weeks (or even months!) their **desire to assemble** even under the best of conditions generally begins to wane. If this continues, even when everyone has been vaccinated, and when there is no fear whatever of contracting the virus, such persons will generally absent themselves from the public worship of the church because (truth be known) they have **lost all desire** to assemble to worship God! And then they take the risk of committing spiritual suicide, or lapsing into the condition outlined in Heb. 6:4-6 and Heb.10:26-31 (please read)!

The less often we assemble to worship God, and the less often we pause to read our Bible, the weaker we become in resisting temptation. That this is true is suggested by Ps. 119:11, *wherein the Psalmist praised God, saying, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”* It is further illustrated in Matthew 4:1-11 wherein we read of Satan tempting Jesus, and in each instance, Jesus dealt with the temptation by saying “*it is written,*” and then citing the Scripture which related to the particular temptation He was facing. Indeed, we must “*resist*” the devil (I Peter 5:8-9), but successfully resisting Satan becomes almost an impossibility for those devoid of Bible knowledge and consistently absent from the worship assemblies of the church! Frankly, I am not nearly as afraid of what COVID-19 will do to my body as I am of what regular absence from the worship assemblies of the church will do to my **soul**!

However, aside from COVID-19 and what has already been stated in this article, as it relates to “Our Nation’s Declining Religious Values,” there are several factors at work, about which we should be concerned, and prepared to deal with to the extent of our opportunity and ability. Some of those factors are listed below, such as:

1. The Breakup of the family. God intended for marriage to be between a man and a woman (Gen. 2:21-25), and it was divinely designed to be an “until death do you part” relationship (Matt.19:6; Rom. 7:1-3). Children from broken homes are many more times as likely to become involved in crime, suffer failing grades in school, and mimic their parents in forsaking their marital vows.

2. Public Education. To survive in our modern society, one needs an education. And I am very thankful that many Christians are school teachers! But our national teacher’s union is much more committed to the curriculum espousing the philosophy of secular humanism than the biblical principles of morality. It is sad, but true, the faith many of our nation’s children obtained in the home, is being destroyed in our nation’s schools, colleges, and universities. It is a known fact that skepticism and atheism are becoming more and more acceptable in modern society.

3. Immorality among religious leaders! It is a fact that child-abuse on the part of Roman Catholic “clergy” has shaken many people’s trust in “organized religion.” Reportedly since the late 1990’s when sex abuse scandals really surfaced among the Roman Catholic “clergy” that membership in the Catholic church has “declined at twice the rate of Protestant membership, 18% versus 9%, respectively.” Keep in mind that I can not biblically endorse either

Catholicism or so-called Protestantism, but the facts just cited illustrate what happens when supposedly God-fearing religious leaders lose their morals!

4. Modern Recreation. There should be a place in our lives for clean recreation. Solomon said “*A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones,*” Prov. 17:22. Sadly, however, in much of modern recreation, it is a case of “anything goes,” with every imaginable form of immorality being engaged in, and so often without any rebuke from the public officials, religious leaders, or even the parents of those involved! We rightly bemoan the loss of faith among so many of our nation’s citizens, but it is a fact that many first lost their **morals**, and then lost their **faith** because they could not reconcile their manner of life with the thought of having to give an account to God for their conduct!

5. Immoral public servants. Our nation’s leaders should live exemplary lives as it relates to morals and living upright lives, but, sadly, many of our leaders have become immoral reprobates! Solomon said, “*When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: But when a wicked man rules, the people groan,*” Prov. 29:2. In 2 Chronicles 28 we read of Ahaz being made King in Judah and of the fact that “*he did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord, as his father David had done,*” 2 Chron. 28:1. Then we go just 18 verses further, where we read that “*the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the Lord,*” 2 Cor. 28:19. Sadly, especially in the last few decades, many of our nation’s leaders have “*encouraged moral decline*” in America, and it will, unless it is corrected, result in the Lord bringing America “*low!*” When our nation’s leaders lie profusely, commit adultery, promote the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender movement, and do everything they can to divorce our nation from God, “Our Nation’s Religious Values” will continue to plummet!

Conclusion: Much more could be said, but we have run out of space. Suffice it to say that as Christian we must “march to the beat of a different drummer!” We must “*obey God rather than man*” (Acts 5:29); we must “*shine as lights in the world*” (Phil. 2:15), we must be willing to suffer “*as a Christian*” (I Pet. 4:16); we must sound out the word of the Lord (I Thess. 1:8), and we must live godly lives in this ungodly world! By so doing, we **can** make a difference!

**** —B. Witherington