

## **Has America Gone Too Far? by Dr. Shelton Smith**

There is recounted in Psalm 105 an abbreviated biography of the major aspects of the life of the nation Israel. Several points are made which merit review.

(1) The point is made that the Lord is God. There is a God in Heaven; He is the great, eternal God of the universe; He is the Almighty. Like or dislike it, believe it or not; but it's a fact.

(2) The point is made that God has not forgotten the covenants that He made with this nation. He does not forget the promises He makes to individuals or to nations. Whatever God promises, whatever covenants and contracts He makes, He keeps.

(3) His Word is always good (vs. 8), even to the extent of a thousand generations. Just because a little time has passed does not mean that God has relinquished His commitments or that He has retreated from what He has established as absolute truth. His covenant is of an everlasting nature (vs. 10).

(4) God established leadership in the nation (vs. 26). He gave them a Moses to lead them day by day. Was God happy about the tyranny of the pharaohs and the slavery, the bondage, the captivity of His people? No! True, it went on for an extensive period of time; but ultimately, on God's timetable of His determination, He gave them leadership to usher them out of bondage and take them to the land of blessing.

And Moses was the man. Although a reluctant leader, he was the one chosen of the Lord, and his brother Aaron was given to be his assistant. God did many things to break the back of the Egyptians in order to get His people loose from the tentacles and shackles of their bondage.

Right at the end of the chapter, God "remembered his holy promise" (vs. 42). He does remember the promises that He makes. He remembered Abraham His servant—a particularly important thing for us to note.

We may sometimes think we're a forgotten commodity, but God remembers every one of us who serve Him.

(5) Everything God gave them was for the purpose that they, in turn, might serve Him.

"He brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness: And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people; That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws."—Ps. 105:43—45.

God did not give you the car you drive today just so you could coast up and down the highway in the lap of luxury, and so you wouldn't have to walk. He gave you that automobile so you might serve Him in a better way and more efficiently.

That could be said for everything that God has "loaned" to you. And you couldn't

do much with any of it without a breath or two to draw today! Amen? He gives you every precious possession which you hold in your hand.

So keep in perspective that God gave all of this to Israel "that they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws."

(6) Rejection of God paves the way to Hell. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Ps. 9:17).

In our society Hell is a cuss word. The intellectual elitists are convinced—and they have tried to convince all of us—that there is no Hell. But there is a very real place called Hell where people who turn aside from the Saviour will spend all eternity. Hell is a very awful place. The Bible says that whole nations who forget God, who go against God, who refuse to remember God in their life and commitments, will end up in Hell.

We need not think, then, that just because everybody else is doing a thing, it's okay for us to do it. Just because Congress passes a law and says it's all right to do a certain thing does not mean that it's all right to do it. Abortion is still just as wrong today as it was the first day of January, 1973.

The Bible says whole nations can go to the Devil and to Hell.

(7) Psalm 33:11 says, "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever." His counsels are absolute.

Again, the intellectual elitists believe everything is relative and that nothing is absolute. But you listen to me carefully on this! Certain things are absolutely true. Absolute right and absolute wrong are absolute truths. They were right or wrong in 1910 and 1810 and 1710; they will still be in the same absolute rightness or wrongness in the year 2010. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."

This generation of Americans feel as if they have a graduate degree in understanding. Since they think they know everything there is to know, they think they don't need God.

Well, the Bible says the thoughts of His heart stand to ALL generations. With all the technology and nuclear age, the space age, the computer age, our generation needs God perhaps more than we have ever needed Him. With tools in our hands that could destroy the planet, we need to know God.

(8) Psalm 33:12 says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." Happy people are those who have given themselves to the Lord.

The establishment media will try to convince you that you will ruin your life if you go with the Lord. Their philosophy strongly suggests that to follow the Lord is about the worst thing you could do. It says your kids will be miserable! It says you will miss out on all kinds of good things if you follow the Lord. But the absolute truth is, "Blessed [happy] is the nation whose God is the Lord."

That means you! That means your kids, your family!

Do you want a happy heart when you are old? Then get with the Lord and stay with Him. That is how it works.

(9) In II Chronicles 7:12 it says, "And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice." God still sets aside places and says to us, "That is My place. That is My time. Give Me My time at My place." God has a claim upon us that He will not relinquish.

(10) In verse 13 He says, "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain [He can do that], or if I command the locusts to devour the land [He can do that], or if I send pestilence among my people."

Pestilence? We have read about the bubonic plague of years gone by, about the Black Death, the fevers—these things that literally wiped out cities and towns and broke nations apart. Today we say, "Well, that could never happen now." Yet in some of the Third World countries tens of thousands of people have died because of the ravages of poverty, war and other tragedies. Even now a scourge of AIDS is ripping across America, and thousands upon thousands of people are dying. And if the great cover-up continues, there will be more than ever before.

God is telling us that He can send pestilence among His people. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (vs. 14). God is talking directly about the response of His people.

(11) We can have the blessings of God now!

There are some going up and down this street out here today who would not think of turning in the driveway and coming into this church or any other church. They have no time for it, no time nor use for God. They go on their merry way and do whatever pleases them. Yet God says if His people do what He says, then the nation can be turned.

The secularists, the humanists, the liberals—those who have no use for God—continue to do what they want to do, not realizing that their philosophy is flawed and will fail. One day it will be too late for many of them.

But you and I can see. We can know the will of God. We can follow the way of God.

"Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually."—Vss. 15,16.

God reminds us again of His presence "perpetually": it will always be so. Amen! When we look at a passage like the 105th Psalm, we see a beautiful composite of how God honored Himself, kept His Word and blessed a nation.

## **NATIONS CAN DIE!**

But a nation can go wrong, can go so far wrong, so badly wrong, that it falls on

its face, defeated, disgraced and totally decimated. We could look at the stories of nations, dozens of them, who were birthed and flourished, then floundered and died. There is a scrap heap somewhere on which are piled the nations of generations past—nations that no longer exist. How did they die? Some died (1) by might. Some enemy rose up, came and stomped and destroyed them.

Others died (2) by their morals. They crumbled from within. They lived lives of such dissipation that they absolutely destroyed themselves by their immorality or their amorality. Nobody had to come and ravage, pillage and destroy; they simply killed themselves off.

Some nations simply die (3) for lack of morale. They have no heart. They have no spirit. There is nothing to drive them anymore.

Take a nation, tell the people there is no God, tell them there is nothing beyond the grave, and they will lose heart, lose their morale. They will become such a shiftless, lazy, apathetic, lethargic people that you won't be able to get half of them to work. Many will not be motivated by anything.

Nations do die: some by might, some by their morals, some by their low morale. And there are significant indications that we are in jeopardy on all three counts.

I understand that we have great military might in our country, but even there it is not where it was at earlier times in our history. There are forces at work in our nation now that would dismantle all the might that we have.

How many times have you heard, "The cold war is over now"? Have we forgotten that the larger of the communist giants still lives and breathes well in Red China? And they have atomic abilities and nuclear weapons in their arsenal. Even the little tyrants, straining to be somebody, continue to baffle us. Somehow we can't sort out all the little things that make our might seem not quite so mighty.

It's obvious to me that morally and in terms of morale in America, we have a problem. But the "spilled milk syndrome," which is very, very popular among Christians, is not the solution.

"Spilled milk? Where did you get that?" We go around moaning and groaning: "Somebody let the gate down. The barn door was left open; the calf is out of the barn. Where did it go? Who left the gate open?" And we whine and cry about how bad things are! We lament and we fuss! Spilled milk!

Folks, the "spilled milk syndrome" is not the solution to our needs and to our situation. Our generation doesn't look good at all. A court decision doesn't go like we want it to go; some of the people in our society will go out to riot and loot, to rob and to kill, because something didn't go the way they wanted it to go.

Thousands of children are selling drugs, robbing, raping, even murdering. You ask, "Why are kids doing that?" Because they know that our judicial system is so fouled up, they can do just about anything and get away with it.

The welfare system in this country has literally crippled millions. It has gotten people bound and gagged so that they cannot get off it. It is such a fouled-up system.

Parental rights are so seriously eroded that families can no longer legally exercise the kind of controls that they ought to be able to exercise. And our families are in serious trouble because of it.

Hollywood has a social agenda, and they are pushing it. You turn on the television almost anytime now, and you will find one of these programs—it may be a sitcom; but it has a social agenda. There is something they're pushing. They have some liberal cause they're trying to get across to the American people; and their agenda is basically atheism, socialism, amorality, secularism, and other variations of heathenism.

The philosophy of liberalism, though very faulty and always a failure, is now the theory of public policy in America. They are in control; but it did not just happen with this administration. They have been in control for more than thirty years now and, realistically, probably since the 1930s. Especially in the last thirty years, government at all levels has gotten bigger and bigger.

I can remember when we did not have as much "stuff" as we have now, and we got along really well. But we are to the point where we think we can't get along unless we have all this government to help us! You hear talk now about "essential serv-ices." We could do really well without a lot of the "essential services." And if it's not essential, remand it to the private sector! Amen?

Along with the government's growing bigger and bigger, it has also become more intrusive by the hour. What are they after? With the liberals in solid control, we have begun to hear about "political correctness." That simply means that the liberal mind-set has determined what social things are acceptable, even what speech is acceptable. And if you say the right things, think the right things, do the right things, you are okay, according to them. But if you don't, the "thought police" are out there to jerk you around. They will have your name on the front page in the media.

And if you are not "politically correct" on all these various things, and "not thinking right," and say something out loud that isn't "politically correct"—shame on you! They will get your job. They will have you strung out somewhere. They will shame you till you wish you hadn't said this or done that. We've seen it happen over and over and over.

References to religion have been systematically erased from textbooks and from the public forum all across our nation. And at the same time, the crowd that has done that is vigorously defending pornography, vulgarity and nudity. All of those things are "A-OK" with them, but any reference to God or religious things has to be eradicated.

There was a time when George Washington's Farewell Speech was considered to be the greatest speech ever made by an American president. There was a time when that Farewell Speech was included in every history book.

(If you will pardon me the indulgence, I'll say this so you will know that I'm not a novice when it comes to historical things: I have some grasp especially upon American history by virtue of my training, my interest and my pursuing of it over more than thirty years. So I know a little bit whereof I speak.)

In the Farewell Speech that Washington made, he basically explained after his eight years in office what had caused America to succeed in the early days following the Revolution, and what had not only caused her to succeed, but what would enable her to continue on to greatness. Of the fifteen or so things that he mentioned, four were direct references to God and to religion.

We went through a period of about twenty years or so where you could not find that Farewell Speech in a history book. I have hundreds of history books in my personal collection. I'm talking about all kinds of junior high textbooks, senior high textbooks. I have old ones and new ones. We went through a period of time here where that Farewell Speech was not even in the history books.

Now in the last decade they have begun to put it back in some of the college textbooks. But it has been edited, and those four references to God and to religion are nowhere to be found. That is just one tiny little illustration of what is happening to erase God from the minds of our American population. Now I am an American. I'm very proud to be a citizen of this country. I have a good bit of Cherokee in me. I'm very proud of my heritage. I talk about Kentucky where I grew up. I'm very proud to be a native of Kentucky. And if you are a Marylander or Pennsylvanian, you ought to have some sense of pride in your heritage. I'm a citizen of this country, and I'm also a Bible-believing Christian.

I think I'm entitled to some freedom. When Sunday comes, I ought to be able to come here as I please, and be able to say the things I want to say. Frankly, I defend the right of everybody else to do the same thing. We ought to have freedom, no matter who we are, what we are. We all have the rights of citizenship in this country.

And by virtue of the fact that I'm a Christian, I have a voice, and I ought not be restricted or restrained. I ought not be prohibited from standing up and articulating the values that I believe to be true. I should have the freedom to talk about God, Christ, the Gospel and whatever else, without government license, censure or permission.

## **A NATION WITHIN A NATION**

You see, the role that you and I have in this nation is like a nation within a nation. God has said to us that we are to be salt and light. The secularists don't like our salt, and they are working to put out our lights. They don't want our voice to be heard, and they don't want us to be able to do much. So they go around crying all the time, "Church and state."

You ask, "Where did they get that?" First, let me tell you where they didn't get it. Number one, they didn't get it out of the Bible. It is not in the Bible.

Number two, they didn't get it out of the Declaration of Independence. It is not in the document. And number three, they didn't get it out of the Constitution. It is not in there. Those words do not appear in either the Declaration or the Constitution. And the First Amendment was never intended to keep religious values from public life.

In fact, they're trying to convince us now that our Founding Fathers were atheists, agnostics and deists. But Patrick Henry said once:

It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

John Adams, our second president, whose signature appears on the Bill of Rights including the First Amendment, knew that our Constitution would only work for those people who could control themselves by religious values and religious standards. Adams said:

We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.

George Washington said in his Farewell Speech:

Of all the habits and dispositions which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert those great pillars.

Up until the time of the Revolution, the Founding Fathers had been under British control. The constitutions of the various colonies had been British. And when they went back home, they began, after 1776 (the Declaration of Independence) and 1789 (the Constitution), to put the constitutions of the various states together themselves. And the Founding Fathers did some very interesting things. For instance, in Delaware, our first state, the original constitution of that state said:

Every person appointed to public office shall say, I do profess faith in God the Father and in Jesus Christ His only Son and in the Holy Ghost, one God blessed forevermore; and I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.

That was in Delaware's constitution. Does that sound like these guys wanted to separate religion and God from public life? It doesn't sound to me like it.

And what was true in Delaware was true in most of those early states.

John Quincy Adams, President Number Six (1825—29), on the 4th of July in 1837, said:

Why is it that, next to the birthday of the Saviour of the world, your most joyous and most venerated festival returns on this, the 4th of July?

In other words, he is asking, "Why are Christmas and the 4th of July the two most popular holidays in America?" He went on to answer:

Is it not that, in the chain of human events, the birthday of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birthday of the Saviour, that it forms a leading

event in the progress of the Gospel dispensation? Is it not that the Declaration of Independence first organized the social compact on the foundation of the Redeemer's mission upon earth, that it laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity?

How about that!

And John Jay, first chief justice of our Supreme Court, said:

Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.

There is much more to be said. The Supreme Court ruled in 1892 (just over a hundred years ago):

Our laws and our institutions must necessarily be based upon and embody the teachings of the Redeemer of mankind. They must. Our civilization and our institutions are emphatically Christian.

Has America Gone Too Far?

But we live in a time when much of that has changed. With America declining morally, spiritually and financially, is there any real hope? Will the bad news ever stop? Does it really matter whether or not you and I get involved? After all, isn't God going to make everything come out the way He wants it? (A lot of Christians have the idea that God is going to make it all come out.) Can we really turn things around in America, or has the country gone too far?

I want to tell you two things about that:

First, yes, America has gone too far. It has gone much too far down the pike, and there will be a bitter wage to pay for a long time to come.

Second, no, America has not gone too far. We are not to the bottom yet, we are not dead yet, and this nation is not done for yet. There is a way back. And you and I need to sit up, stand up, show up, and speak up. This is my country, and I want it back!

"Are you promoting politics?" you ask. No, I'm promoting people. If a good person is running for office, I don't care with whom he is affiliated. If he is a good person, standing where he ought to stand, then I'm for him.

## **CAN WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

Can we really make a difference if we get involved?

A few years ago, just a few hundred yards from here, a full-scale pornography store operated in one of these shopping centers. It took us five years to get it closed and run out of the county. Opposition to it started right here in this pulpit. We began to beat on it, to pound on it, to drive on it until other people in this community got on board. Finally, some people in public office said, "We'll help you." And we got it out of here.

There was a time when there were three "head shops"—drug paraphernalia stores—operating in this town; I mean, since I've been pastor of this church. Somebody came to me and asked, "Do you know that there is a store right over

here in this shopping center that sells nothing but drug paraphernalia?"

I said, "You've got to be kidding! That couldn't possibly be!"

But you members know me: I got on my horse and rode over there. I marched in just like I was "somebody" and looked around. My mouth is still hanging open! I couldn't believe it! I found out there were three of them in town.

I'll tell you what: They are not here anymore! They are not only not in our town; they are not in our county. And they no more operate in the state of

Maryland. The whole state is now cleaned out of them. Where did it start? Right here in this pulpit. I didn't do it by myself, but I began to beat on it, hammer

on it, go after it. I went to see some people in public office. I talked to some people until some people out there began to say, "We'll help you get it done!"

Can we make a difference? We can! I don't have time to tell you how many other good things we've gotten done. I'm convinced we can make a difference. We have to do what we can. We must not throw in the towel, must not acquiesce to the liberals, must not lose heart in the process.

Somebody is always saying, "Preacher, why don't you ease up and not drive so hard? Why don't you get over there in the 'begat section' and preach on something that doesn't touch us where we live? Get off this stuff that is out where we live."

I'm sorry. I'll help you learn the begats too, if you are intensely interested in that; but we will continue to talk about stuff going on in our area of the world. I'm convinced we can make a difference in our city—and in our country!

## **WHAT CAN WE DO?**

A preacher named Stillwell was in Boston during the time of the American Revolution. He was pastor of the First Baptist Church there for forty-two years. He stood in his pulpit and preached in support of the American Revolution. John Adams and others often sat in his congregation and listened. He tremendously influenced the minds and thinking of some of our Founding Fathers.

The preachers across New England, by and large, supported the American Revolution. This was while we were still under the dominion of the crown of Great Britain. Were they afraid of politics? Evidently not!

You ask, "If we really want to do something, what can we do?"

1. We can get right with God! We can make an unashamed, unreserved commitment to God. We will not get anything done until we walk with God, follow Christ!
2. We can give ourselves to serve the Lord through His church. God gave us the church, and the church is where the action is. It is where we will get things done that need to be done, and where the difference can really be made—more than Band-Aids—the real solutions. We should hold up this precious old Book, the Bible, as the inerrant, infallible Word of God with full authority in our lives.
3. We can become ambassadors for Christ, let our voice be heard and not be afraid nor intimidated by those who try to get us to shut up and dry out. Real

ambassadors publish the Good News and the good tidings and get as many people saved as they can. Going soul winning regularly will make the difference in our society. If we get enough folks saved in this county, it will make a difference on the street where you live. It will be safer in your neighborhood. All kinds of good things will come.

4. We can wage the war against the forces of evil in our time, in our town. I mean, wage the war! If drug dealers try to come in, we get on board, we wage the war, we say, "We're not going to have you here."

If the pornographers come in, we chase them out. If other devils come in, we say, "Not here! Not here!" We wage the war. We are willing to be counted.

You say, "But some may not like me if I do that." Listen! The Devil already doesn't like me. If anybody wants to line up with him and not like me, that is okay. You have to know that when you stand up for Christ, you will take some hits. But we must not play it safe! We must get up and get at it!

We can begin to exercise our freedom to its fullest. When Moses crossed the Red Sea, wouldn't you have hated to have missed that? Probably some Israelites were off chasing some pretty rainbow somewhere and weren't there to see what happened.

When Elijah called down the fire from Heaven, I would have hated to have missed that. I would have wanted to have been there, wouldn't you?

Here we are in the last part of the twentieth century. God wants His people to be on board with Him! We must stand up and be counted. I hope you don't miss that.

5. We can catch the Spirit of Christ and zealously and enthusiastically go out each day determined to serve God and be what we ought to be! Stay on the firing line!

6. We can go to the polls and cast our vote in the ballot box. Every Christian ought to vote in every election on every issue! Don't leave it to the worldly crowd. Vote without fail!

7. We can put literature in the hands of the people that will influence them and mold their thinking. THE SWORD OF THE LORD is our source for it. I'm talking good, solid material that stands straight and true; not the weak, anemic stuff so available everywhere.

I'm encouraged in one sense that a wave of conservative ideology has swept across the country. With all that the liberals have done, I think we may still outnumber them. They may have severely impacted maybe half of the American population, but there are some strong indicators that a lot of the people in this country still have some pretty traditional basic values. It doesn't mean they are all Christians, but the liberals have not succeeded in everything either.

I'm encouraged about that, but we're still waiting for revival to come. We need a sweeping revival where people confess their sins and get right with God, where folks turn out in bigger crowds at the church house than they do at the ball game, and where the old-time religion still gets top priority! Amen!  
Has America gone too far? Yes, way too far! Has America gone too far? No, there is a way back, and we can bring her back, and should.  
Don't be afraid to be counted. Show up, stand up and speak up.