

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 demons—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 submit 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).

"CHRISTIAN PATRIOTS," ARE YOU READY TO DIE? —Mark Dinsmore

Many readers are undoubtedly familiar with the fun "sword drill" practice that many Sunday Schools and youth programs employ to encourage familiarity with God's Word (which is "sharper than any two-edged sword"). It's even fun for adults—would you like to give it a try? But instead of giving you chapter and verse to look up, let's make it a bit more challenging. I'll quote a commonly cited proverb, and then you find the location in Scripture. Are you ready?

Quick! Give me chapter and verse for "Cleanliness is next to godliness!" While some of you look for that passage, the rest of you locate the verse, "God helps those who help themselves!" Oh, wait. I forgot we're dealing with Bereans here (and probably a few homeschooleders) who are already on to my game. Well, let's try one more. Ready? Grab your Bibles and find, "Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God." Go!

What? It's not there? Please check again.... After all, it's the battle cry of the American Revolution—symbolized by the bright yellow banner, emblazoned with a coiled rattlesnake declaring, "Don't Tread On Me!" The clear implication, of course, is that government oppression will be met with force. Today, this rallying cry is being heard again among many conservatives—including Christian leaders and even pastors—who strongly identify with National Patriotism. In a recent column, one such writer sounded off:

I'm not sure how many of the American people realize that it was the attempted confiscation of the colonialists' cache of arms in Concord, Massachusetts, that started America's War for Independence. Yes, my friends, it was attempted gun confiscation that triggered (pun intended) the "shot heard 'round the world.... And now it would appear that, once again, a central government is on the verge of trying to deny the American people their right to keep and bear arms.... This leads to a very serious question: how many of America's gun owners would allow their government to deny them gun ownership? Further, how many would passively sit back and allow their guns to be confiscated?

From all that I've seen and read, this writer is a commendable, admirable, God-fearing man, and I imagine we would share a majority of non-negotiable Bible doctrines. However, his column proves the point stated in the April 2009 TBC Extra: "*Christian Patriot*. These two words are inextricably linked in the minds of most [Christians]." This inability to separate *Americanism* from God's will and His prophetic word is made abundantly clear with this declaration by the same author: "As humbly and meekly as I know how to say it: as for me and my house, gun confiscation is the one act of tyranny that crosses the line; debate, discourse, discussion, and *peaceful dissent cease and desist at that point*. I say again, it is getting very serious now (emphasis added)." So, the line in the sand has been drawn. Undoubtedly, thousands of Christian Patriots and Second Amendment supporters would agree, on Constitutional grounds. My question remains, however: Is forceful rebellion—to the point of resistance with weapons—against one's government (however tyrannical) *biblically* defensible?

Now, before anyone else accuses me of being "traitorous," I will restate that my heart is not anti-Patriot. It is not anti-Constitution. It is not anti-Second Amendment. It is not anti-defense. My sole purpose is to encourage believers in Christ, who *claim* to revere and adhere to the Bible as God's Word (by which our Creator "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pt 1:3), to distinguish between what is *politically* or legally motivated and what is *biblically* or *spiritually mandated*.

Interestingly enough, it was an earlier column by the same writer that sparked my five-page response (whittled down to a single page for space), which became a bit of a firestarter itself—the April TBC Extra, "Would the Apostle Paul Answer the Call to Christian Patriotism?" The statement to which I initially replied was this: "A real Christian patriot would never allow his country to be taken over by a gaggle of elitist goons bent on stealing his liberties." Although reader response was, overall, humbly positive, I did receive a few calls and letters by some who were angered, confused, or who even felt betrayed. Let me make this abundantly clear: If someone holds a personal conviction to "resist tyranny" with force based on their *Constitutional* right to do so, then by all legal means, get ready to "lock and load." However, if anyone uses *God's name* and His Word to support the cause, he's got an entirely different fight on his hands.

Israel had godly kings and wicked kings. In like manner, America has had good presidents and bad—including some whose public personae have undoubtedly obscured traitorous backroom dealings and personal depravity of which it is genuinely best that we not know (Eph 5:12). But anti-American usurper or not, our current president is God's "chosen instrument"—whom we are not to curse, but pray for (Mt 5:44, 1 Tm 2:1-2).

The Scriptures command us to "earnestly contend for the faith...once delivered to the saints." However, the saints did not rise up with *armaments* to "contend," because Christ's kingdom "is not of this world," and we "wrestle not against flesh and blood." In fact, to our shame and to their credit, many of these saints died without any malice toward those who martyred them. Contrast their praiseworthy humility and meekness with the prevailing tone of anger and hatred that many believers are now exhibiting (understandably so, in the flesh) toward what is unquestionably an anti-Christian, anti-Israel, pro-Muslim, pro-Marxist *Novus Ordo Seclorum*.

Such a prevailing attitude illustrates my point: many Christian Patriots are tragically misusing Scripture to support their cause. In the case of the columnist I've mentioned, this is evident in his unbiblical melding of Scripture with his personal conviction: "*As for me and my house*, gun confiscation is the one act of tyranny that crosses the line...." By quoting Joshua 24:15, "*As for me and my house*, we will serve the LORD," the writer makes a grave mistake by equating "gun ownership" with "serving God."

Tragically, such a statement elevates Second Amendment rights above the right to pray, the right to worship, the right to preach, teach, or even to read God's Word. He considers "gun confiscation the *one* act of tyranny that crosses the line." Surely, the other "rights" I've just mentioned are far more precious to a minister of the gospel! But does that writer (and all those who have similarly pledged to "kill or be killed" over what they believe is their "sacred" right to keep and bear arms) wish to stand before Christ and explain how they "pulled the trigger" to protect the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution? Perhaps some believers would rather wind up in prison instead—and, perhaps God would use this opportunity, as He did through the Apostle Paul, for the furtherance of the gospel. As I stated in my original "Extra:"

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. [But] such an affront would still not be cause to take up arms...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.

Nor did they organize the Hebrew captives to rebel against the Babylonian government (that had just destroyed Jerusalem!) and appoint Daniel as their "Spartacus" to lead this insurrection. Some rightly point out that the Second Amendment protects the First. However, while the encroaching world government can (and at some point, will) take whatever material goods and property it wants from its "global citizens," and while it can (and will) censor free speech in the press and in the public square, it cannot silence our hearts and minds and conscience before God, nor can it silence our lips in whatever "diverse trials" we may face.

I fully and gratefully acknowledge our "Christian Heritage." I daily lament the sale of our freedoms, which spiral like punched-out ticker tape to the floor. I am angered that our way of life and quality of life is literally being "changed" forever before our very eyes. But then I remember: time is short, the earth is not my home, and our eternal hope is not in the flag of the United States. There is only one Banner to which I pledge allegiance—not to "Stars and Stripes Forever," nor to a coiled serpent on a field of gold, but to the Cross of Jesus Christ.

There are those who've asked me sarcastically, "Well, what then, do we just roll over and die?" After much prayer and reflection, my answer is "Yes." The Bride of Christ *does* need to die—to its dreams of "kingdom now" restoration. American Christians, in particular, need to die to their idolatry of nationalism, materialism, and the "pursuit of happiness."

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mt 16:24). We read these words; we hear these words, but how many of us actually *do* these words? (Mt 1:23-25). Truly, the church in America seems accurately depicted in Christ's rebuke to the Laodicean church: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rv 3:17).

Yes, Christian Patriots, we need to die.... Not *for* this nation, but *to* it. (See Mk 10:21). As the faithful hymn exhorts, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face; and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of his glory and grace" (Helen H. Lemmel, 1922).