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The 2018 Nebraska Senate Series: “Good God: Give Us Good Government!”

Patriotism: Prize or Problem?



Captain America. Just the sight of this red, white, and blue patriotic super soldier inspires many in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.

Conceived in the patriotic hearts of comic book artists Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, he was birthed by pencil and ink in March 1941. As politically motivated loyalists, the artists were repulsed at Hitler’s devices. Feeling WWII was looming, they said, “*We wanted to have our say too*” and so created this muscular warrior icon.

Captain was the alter ego of the frail son of Irish immigrants—Steve Rogers. His desire to fight the Third Reich was made possible by experimental infusions of a Super-Soldier Serum giving him peak strength, agility, reflexes, speed, and stamina. At a zenith of human potential, Captain bench-pressed 1,200 pounds, ran a mile in 73 seconds, and had mastered multiple, military, and martial arts. ^a

President FDR bequeathed Captain his circular, nigh-indestructible shield made from an alloy of steel and fictional vibranium. Fighting for America, he regularly threw that circular disc with near perfect accuracy as a boomeranging projectile.

The first issue, “Captain America Comics #1,” went on sale December 20, 1940,^b and showed the protagonist punching Nazi leader Adolf Hitler; it sold nearly 1 million copies. Circulation remained at nearly 1 million copies per month. **Why?**

Is it godly to be glad in military victory against real (or imagined) evil enemies? Biblically, what is a country, and is it okay—is it Christianly—to love your own? What is patriotism? May Jesus’ disciples be proud patriots? Let’s think together.

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier, V.D.M.

^a https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain_America#Abilities

^b https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain_America#Super-Soldier_Serum

Weekly Bible Study During the 105th Legislature’s Second Session

SENATORS: 6:45-8:00 am; Wednesdays, **Room #2010** (Sen. Albrecht). *Hot Breakfast Served.*

STAFF: Noon; Wednesdays, **Room #2010** (Sen. Albrecht). *Catered Lunch & B.Y.O.BrownBag.*



THE TOWER OF BABEL

Before the Table of Nations



*“The Tower of Babel (2242 B.C.) was a post-Flood rebellion against God by Noah’s descendants. God judged them by dividing the single language into multiple language families. As these groups spread out and became isolated, certain features (e.g. skin shade, eye shape) became dominant in certain groups.” **

* <https://answersingenesis.org/tower-of-babel/>



Patriotism: Prize or Problem?

I. BIBLICALLY, WHAT IS A NATION?

A. A NATION IS SOMETHING GOD HAS MADE

The Apostles’ Creed declares, “I believe in God the Father...creator of heaven and earth.” One apostle, Paul, sermonized on Mars Hill in Athens that God created everything, including all the world’s nations.

Acts 17:24 & 26a

The God who made the world and all things in it...is Lord of heaven and earth...²⁶and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth.

God is sovereign over history’s timeline and Lord over the nations. The word “nation” here is the Greek word “*ethnos*,” root word of **ethnic**.

➔ Each ethnic people-group, which has compacted itself together nationally, does so because God Himself has grown history’s family tree. He started in an earthly garden called Eden with one seed— a single male. And his name? Upon meeting his wife Eve, he introduced himself:

“HOWDY MADAM. MY NAME IS ADAM.”

The entire human race began with our one common, great, great grandfather. Its 7.2 billion souls (immortals) have sprouted into 196 nations. Who caused that? God.

GOD USED ONE MAN AND A GRAND PLAN TO CREATE EVERY NATION OF THE EARTH.

Yes, all nations are God’s creations.

B. GOD MADE NATIONS FOR SET SEASONS AND WITH SET BORDERS

There are no borderless nations.

Acts 17:26

[God] made from one man every nation...having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation...

God never needs Google Maps®;

He created the globe, is Lord over the physical earth, powerful, and, sovereign over history’s timeline.

GOD DETERMINES WHEN MEN LIVE AND *WHERE* MEN LIVE, JUST NOT *HOW* MEN LIVE.

The nations of the earth are on the earth and have *physical* limitations and *geographic* boundaries that we call borders. Why? God made it so. Job 12:23 shows God in control:

He makes the nations great... destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away.

C. NATIONS, BIBLICALLY, HAVE SET WORDS—COMMON LANGUAGES

After the ground had dried under Noah’s ark in Genesis 9, God commanded Noah’s three sons to repopulate the planet and spread over the earth. Sadly, eventually, all of Noah’s descendants came to love the power of proximity and were energized by the serum of the synergy of human unity. They disobeyed God in a willful, devil-like disobedience, refusing global scattering. Unified in worshipping their own reputations, abilities, and sky-bound celestials, they built the tall Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. God decided to destroy their evil unity by wielding weird, wild words. Doing so, He realigned them to His transnational global plan.

Genesis 11:1, 7-9

Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.... 7[The LORD said,] “Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.” 8So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. 9Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and...scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

They were literally babbling fools.



➔ In God's brilliant plan, all nations are separated from all other nations (by physical borders and also) by dialect differences. This obstructs demonic alliances of disobedience against the Lord of lords. Possible potentates who would pervert civil power are rightly hindered and so are many maniacal madmen who would lead global, spiritual mutiny. God reduces and separates power in His global strategy for the planet. Now men need *Rosetta Stone*®.

GOD SEPARATED THE NATIONS NOT BY SKIN BUT BY LANGUAGE.

Nations mainly speak one language.

D. BIBLICALLY, GOD GIVES NATIONS SWORDS (LETHAL POWERS)

Swords, lethally avenging evil, are central to civil rulers' cultural role.

Romans 13:4
[Government is] a minister of God to you for good...if you do what is evil, be afraid; it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

Nations have a right to preserve their physical existence by the protection of their borders from enemies outside those borders (and even enemies inside those borders).

PROTECTION AGAINST ENEMIES FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC IS A NATIONAL CIVIL DUTY.

In Biblical summary:

NATIONS HAVE A LANGUAGE, SET BORDERS, LAWS, AND CIVIL RULERS WITH LETHAL POWER.

II. BIBLICALLY, IS PATRIOTISM GOOD?

A. PATRIOTISM: LOVE OF COUNTRY

Is it wrong to be happy in one's country, within the borders which we find ourselves called to live? Speaking geographically of national border lines, King David rejoiced:

Psalms 16:6
The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.

It is not wrong to love your heritage, your ethnicity, your homeland (the land within God's given border lines), your state, your district, your home city, your home, or (for those of us who travel too much) your own bed! It would be sin, though, to turn any of those things into an idol.

B. PATRIOTIC LOVE OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (MOTHERLAND/FATHERLAND)

Paul shows a deep, heartfelt love for his ethnic base of countrymen here:

Romans 9:2b-4a
I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by the flesh, ⁴who are Israelites....

It is godly to feel closest to those to whom we are nearest and most like.

➔ God created men as physical and emotional beings. As such, it is normal and good to grow fond of people, places, and things with which we are most familiar. In *The Four Loves*, Oxford don, C.S. Lewis, said one of four Greek words for love—*storge* (*store-Gaye*: *στορη*)—is the most widely diffused love.

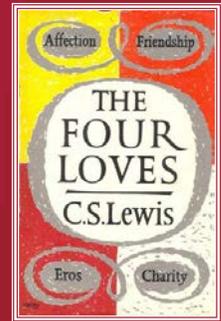
STORGE IS FAMILIAR LOVE.

Second Timothy 3:1-3 reports that being *without storge* (*without natural affection-KJV*) is one trait of sinful people that is worth noting in the terrible times of the last days.

We love old sweaters, old friends, old jeans. We love strolling down memory lane filled with familiar things. Dorothy told Toto, "*There's no place like home.*" An unnatural disconnection to the place one lives is not normal. The love of country is normal and natural even in countries where *imperfect* civil rulers (and citizens) do evil things.

THE FOUR LOVES

By C. S. Lewis



"The Four Loves summarizes four kinds of human love—affection, friendship, erotic love, and the love of God. Masterful without being magisterial, this book's wise, gentle, candid reflections on the virtues and dangers of love draw on sources from Jane Austen to St. Augustine. The chapter on charity (love of God) may be the best thing Lewis ever wrote about Christianity."

—Michael Joseph Gross, editorial review.
<https://www.amazon.com/Four-Loves-C-S-Lewis/dp/0156329301>





1. **Patriotism:** Love of and devotion to one's country.
2. **Nationalism:** Devotion to the interests or culture of one's nation.
3. **Jingoism:** Extreme nationalism characterized especially by a belligerent foreign policy; chauvinistic patriotism.

Jingoism is nationalism in the form of aggressive foreign policy, such as a country's advocacy for the use of threats or actual force, as opposed to peaceful relations, in efforts to safeguard what it perceives as its national interests.

Colloquially, jingoism is excessive bias in judging one's own country as superior to others — an extreme type of nationalism.



1. *Where's your flag?!! Don't you love America?!*
2. *Aren't you a patriot?!!*
3. *Here, take these and fly 'em!!!!*
4. *There! Now I'm off to donate blood, write a check for disaster relief and say a prayer for the country.*

C. ARE "HONOR AND RESPECT" A PART OF PATRIOTISM?

Both Testaments say that the godly person honors and respects the king and, in that sense, country. Honor and respect are forms of love. Paul wrote to Roman Christians in a key government passage (Rom. 13:1-7):

Romans 13:7 (NIV)
Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes...if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

The Apostle Peter writes similarly: *1 Peter 2:17*
Honor all people...fear God, honor the king.

King Solomon teaches his young son Rehoboam civil principles here: *Proverbs 24:21 (NIV)*
Fear the LORD and the king, my son, and do not join with rebellious officials.

➔ Honor is part of patriotism. The late SCOTUS Justice Antonin Scalia explained in a 2012 CNN interview, "If I were king, I would not allow people to go around burning the American flag." Personally, he saw it as dishonoring, but he voted as a judge to allow it since the main type of speech tyrants would have tried to suppress was expression against the government. Personally, I love America. I feel privileged to live, by God's will, within our border's lines.

MY HERITAGE PLEASES ME.

While at times unhappy with my country, state, city, and those civil leaders, I patriotically still try to show the honor and respect which the Bible says is due our leaders.

D. GODLY PEOPLE ARE TOLD TO SEEK THE GOOD OF THEIR CITY

If there is any place where a person could be justified in hating the country where God has placed them, it would be a place of POW imprisonment. Nonetheless, note a prophet's forecast of captivity, yet commanding goodhearted loyalty:

Patriotism: Prize or Problem?

Jeremiah 29:7 (NIV)
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 will too.

IT IS GOOD TO SEEK THE GOOD OF THE PLACE GOD HAS YOU.

Seeking a nation's prosperity and praying patriotically are good.

III. BIBLICALLY, CAN MEN MAKE NATIONS INTO IDOLS (NATION-OLATRY)?

A. JONAH: A GREAT PROPHET WITH TWO IDOLATROUS SINS

Jonah 2:7 (NIV)
When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to You, to Your holy temple.

Jonah 2:8 (ISV)
Those who cling to vain idols leave behind the gracious love that could have been theirs.

It took a night watery death by drowning to make Jonah see his Tower-of-Babel-like defiance to God's call to travel and preach to enemy Ninevites. In the first human submarine ride, he realized his sin was nothing short of idolatry. To what idols did Jonah cling? To love one's race and one's country is not wrong, but Jonah's racism and hyper, ultra-nationalism were sins.

JONAH'S IDOLS WERE RACISM AND HYPER-NATIONALISM.

The love of race, heritage, success, and victory can be *taken too far*. So too, something like Aryanism is *not patriotism*; flag-waving jingoism is *not patriotism*; cruel triumphalism is *not patriotism*, but severe sin.

B. DUAL CITIZENSHIP: HOW CAN YOU BE TRUE TO TWO COUNTRIES?

Listening to sermons on patriotism, I was saddened to hear fallacies of "either/or" thinking regarding having a love of Christ OR country.



Like so many things in theology and life, the answer is not *either/or*, it is *both/and*. You can love country without loving it more than Christ.

Jonah's ultra-nationalistic, race hatred of his political enemies—the Assyrian Ninevites—put country over kingdom and calling. That Semite was patriotically prejudiced.

Nazi Germany metastasized into her world-famous anti-Semitism, blinded by her hyper-nationalism. Limping from defeat in WWI, they hoped a Third Kingdom (or *Reich*) would restore her former greatness. A too-deeply-seated love of country became sickly idolatrous as Hitler morphed from Leader (*Führer*) to monster. Blinded by unquestioning love for the (*Fore*)Fathers' Land, (*Vaterland*), the Germans loaded immortal humans into boxcars.

C. LOVE FOR HEAVEN MUST TRUMP ONE'S LOVE OF COUNTRY

The Bible says Christians are citizens of heaven but also in this world (even if we are not of it). Our primary patriotism is to the "better country" of Heaven where we will one day submit to King Jesus in His benevolent monarchy. Of "*the four loves*," *agape* (αγαπη) love is "God's kind of love." Lewis rightly taught that the love *of God* and a love *for God* must dictate and direct all other loves. If Jonah had loved the LORD, he would have kept His command to preach to his racial and militaristic national enemies. Jonah *deeply* loved Jews. He "*was a super-patriot, he was, he was.*"

The danger in anything we love is loving it *too much*. To have an idol is to love a good thing *too much*.

AN IDOL IS MADE BY TURNING A GOOD THING INTO A GOD THING.

That is a real danger in patriotism. The love of the nation where God has ordained you to live is a good thing. Beware: do not let that *good thing* become a *god thing*.

IV. BIBLICALLY, SHOULD YOU HATE YOUR NATION?

A. TREASON IS A HATRED "FOR KING AND COUNTRY" AND IS UNBIBLICAL

In Moses' civil law, treason was a capital crime for which the penalty was death. Treason still is, in Jerusalem's Unicameral Knesset, a capital offense. Treason is the opposite of healthy patriotism and negatively informs us of God's will.

B. ALL CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, WITHOUT JUST CAUSE, IS WRONG

Another form of anti-patriotism is unwarranted civil rebellion—severe or mild. All acts of truly criminal evil are the opposite of God's will, anti-country, and unpatriotic to our Christ Who said that to love Him was to keep His commandments. He ordered His followers to follow the leaders and laws of the land in which He ordained them to live.

Romans 13:1a (CEV)

Obey the rulers who have authority over you...

WHILE THERE ARE NO PERFECT NATIONS, WE SHOULD RIGHTLY LOVE OUR OWN COUNTRY!

CAPTAIN NEBRASKA?

Dear State Senator:

You may not have a vibranium disk-shield, never punched Hitler, and never enter the George W. Norris chamber dressed in red, white, and blue, but God can infuse you with the Super Soldier Serum of his Holy Spirit to make you a *civil savior of sorts*. May you seek to serve Him inside the border lines of where He has determined you to live. As you do, may you be part of the answer to our prayer: "**Good God, give us good government!**" May God bless you and the great state of Nebraska. Faith and I have been *honored* to serve you for Christ and the Capitol.

A proud patriot of *two* countries,


 Rev. Perry M. Gauthier, V.D.M.
 Cell/text: 402.770.6270

Governments bear the sword. God gives borders to nations. Is patriotism a good thing?



The Oath of Allegiance

(must be taken by all immigrants who wish to become United States citizens)

I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen;
that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic;
that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same;
that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law;
that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law;
that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law;
and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.

— [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oath_of_Allegiance_\(United_States\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oath_of_Allegiance_(United_States))

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VERSE OF THE WEEK



King David of Israel

Psalm 16:6

"The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me."



Making disciples of Jesus Christ in the political arena throughout the world

Capitol Ministries® provides Bible studies, evangelism, and discipleship to political leaders. Founded in 1996, we have started ongoing ministries in over 40 U.S. State Capitols and dozens of foreign federal Capitols.

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My Personal Application

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