

Franklin Graham: We Must Stay on Guard

In just a few weeks, Donald Trump will stand on the west steps of the U.S. Capitol, put his hand on the Bible, swear to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America and become the 45th president of our great and storied nation.

This extraordinary occasion certainly wasn't anticipated by very many. Just a few months ago, even days before the Nov. 8 election, virtually every poll showed Hillary Clinton with what appeared to be an insurmountable lead.

The mainstream media were clearly forecasting her triumph, even to the extent that *Newsweek* magazine had already put together and printed an election edition with a picture of Clinton and the title, "Madam President." A social media image surfaced showing Clinton autographing a copy of the issue on her plane.

Were they ever wrong. As we all know, Trump won 30 states, garnered 306 electoral votes and swept the election despite losing the popular vote, with most of that margin coming from two states, California and New York.

The media have offered an infinite variety of reasons why Donald Trump won and Hillary Clinton lost, but I believe there is one crucial component that played a huge part in the election process and eventual outcome.

I've called it "the God factor."

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ—millions and millions of Christians—called out to Almighty God in prayer throughout the year, asked for His providential hand to restore and guide our nation and engaged in the political process by flocking to rural and urban polling places to vote.

I spent most of 2016 traveling across America from one state capitol to another—all 50 of them, starting in Des Moines, Iowa, in January and ending in Raleigh, N.C., in October. In every state, thousands of people came in the middle of the day to call on God in prayer as we confessed our sins and sought His face.

It was powerful. People wept over sin—their own and the transgressions of our wicked nation. We asked for God's forgiveness and for His hand of mercy. Hundreds of men and women received Christ as their Lord and Savior.

They pledged to back up their prayers with continuing action, going back to their churches and communities to form prayer groups that would continue to intercede for our country. They also committed themselves to look at candidates running for office on every level—local, state and national—and to cast their vote for those who best represented biblical values.

That wasn't an easy task. Every candidate was flawed to some degree, especially on the presidential level, but there were some clear moral distinctions in the party platforms on issues such as abortion and potential nominees to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Many voters cited the latter concern as a large contributing factor to their choice of candidate, and I doubt it will be long before Donald Trump's high court nominee will come before Congress for confirmation. That individual will have the opportunity to lend a conservative voice to an increasingly liberal, left-leaning court.

I am hopeful our nation's highest court will once again protect the religious liberties that have been so severely eroded in the past decade, including the rights of Christian businesses and individuals to operate and live by a biblically informed conscience. I am also hopeful that hundreds of new judges—federal and state—might be appointed who respect the

Constitution and will guard our religious freedoms.

I believe the Lord has given us a window of opportunity for our nation to repent, turn away from our iniquities and turn back to Him. God is gracious, merciful and long-suffering, and I am so glad that He is.

But He is also a holy, righteous judge who will execute justice one day soon. He will only delay for so long. "In yet a little while, He who is to come will come, and will not wait" (Heb. 10:37).

The fundamental core of our nation's troubled state isn't a political, economic or social issue. It's a spiritual problem—a hardened heart bent toward rebellion against God and His ways. A people, a nation that honors and acknowledges God will reap the blessings of obedience. A nation, a people, that repeatedly defies and dishonors God on a corporate or personal level will ultimately reap the bitter fruits of disobedience.

This is not a time to let our guard down. This is not a time to sit back and trust that politicians will solve our problems. As I said over and over on our Decision America Tour, I have no hope in either the Democratic or Republican party. I do not hope in kings or presidents. I do not hope in senators or representatives.

My hope is in Almighty God alone.

So as we begin 2017, let's commit ourselves afresh to love and honor the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's ask for the power of the Holy Spirit so that we may live holy and pure in every arena of our lives, remembering that the world around us is closely watching our behavior. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Let's pray fervently. Pray for our leaders. Pray for a spiritual awakening across our land. Pray for revival and

renewal of souls in our churches. Pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin, righteousness and judgment.

Most important, let's never miss an opportunity to share the gospel. At the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, we just witnessed the convicting power of God during our recent festival in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. More than 170,000 people came to hear the gospel preached, and thousands came forward to make a decision for Christ.

That's the power of the gospel—the power to transform lives, even nations. Nothing in this world is more valuable or eternal than our souls, which will live forever either in the presence of the Savior in heaven or away from His presence in hell. ©2016 BGEA {eo}