

SBC President on the Alarming 'Vision' of America

This is the time of year when millions of Americans tune in to hear our president give his State of the Union address. He will give his assessment of *our* national security, *our* priorities and *our* vision for the future.

This is a tricky word—"our."

For these days it seems as if America can hardly find "*our* vision" for any thing, much less the future. Our nation is deeply polarized around our political parties, and totally unrelenting in *our* commitment to fighting against one another. Despite growing national security threats, violence erupting, escalating racial tensions, the devaluing of human life and economic insecurity, we find ourselves unable to agree on almost anything.

What's especially alarming to me, serving as the president of the Southern Baptist Convention, is that we fail to realize how the spiritual health of our nation affects the state of our union. As our spiritual lives go, so goes the nation.

It wasn't meant to be this way in America, for one of the reasons our Founders so cemented Judeo-Christian principles in our nation is that they were skeptical of man's ability to govern themselves. So America would be a nation first subject to God—and subject to His higher law—so that our respect for our Creator would provide a baseline for our "more perfect union."

We would at least be united around important things when we couldn't find unity among many things. Where are the leaders in America today who can bring people together rather than separate us?

For our Founders knew that the moment we no longer saw ourselves subject to God—and to His higher law—that we would begin to fight over everything in an attempt to gather God's authority for ourselves.

When our political leaders and the people of America lack fear of God, we become subject to that awful temptation we find in Judges 17:6, "to do what is right in their own eyes."

For since the beginning of time, we have been tempted to "be like God" and when a nation's leaders and her people lose their fear of God and replace it with their own authority then we begin to live in a kind of chaotic unity—not with one another—but in an unholy union with that very sin that brought sin to earth in the Garden of Eden. Aside from all of the others, we fail to follow the very first commandment given to us through Moses, "thou shalt have no other gods before me."

In America, we have replaced God with government, and granted politicians the ability to circumvent God's higher law at will. It's our fault as citizens because we are a country that elects our leaders.

While we profess to remain "one nation under God"—and while we have inscribed such belief on our currency and in marble all over our capital—we seem to be more interested in "God bless America" than in actually being "one nation under God."

The first phrase infers what we want from God, and the second phrase infers what God requires. We want His blessing, but His blessing comes with our being subject to His authority.

Rarely is God ever mentioned in the State of the Union address except with that customary salutation, "God bless America." It's all about what we can get from God, and less about what we need from Him.

So, what is the actual *spiritual* State of Our Union?

It is very simple.

We need to repent, come back to God and put our trust in God alone. America needs a Great Spiritual Awakening.

Now is the time to elect leaders who fear God and we need to learn to fear God again ourselves.

We need not say phrases like "God Bless America" because they are our tradition. We need to speak them with a holy reverence for God's authority, for without God there never would have been an America at all, and without God at its center America will not exist as it has.

I'm trusting that 2016 is a year where we apply a simple verse from 2 Chronicles 7:14, *"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."*

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