

His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.” Is this your conviction and testimony too and what you are out to advance as well, in your home and with others and in your work place and church and community, and for the whole wide world?

If you and I will live holily and for God and good, opportunities will come our way to be of good influence against evil, and in promotion of what is right and true. God is pleased to use His people as instruments for good, as long as He keeps us in this life. In how many ways God’s people can serve to make a difference for good in their society and countries. Don’t God’s people also see this as their Christian God-given calling in life? Living in God’s ways we become as salt in this decadent world, and we serve as light in the darkness. Is that how you will live too? Are you living in promotion of the way of righteousness, for your family and at church, in your workplace and in your nation? What a blessing to your country you then surely are, even when not recognized or acknowledged as such.

We should not forget to mention and emphasize as well the importance of prayer for our nation’s wellbeing and for the influence of the Christian religion and Christian people in all our areas of life. In answer to Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple, the Lord God also said among other things, *“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land.”* [II Chronicles 7:14] Now this was spoken to Old Testament theocratic Israel, and we must be careful in applying that to nations of today, but the principle here holds for all peoples and all times. Humbling ourselves before God in true repentance for our own sins and our sins as a people brings God’s mercy and help, and blessing in different ways. A repentant people become a revived people, and a revived people become a holy zealous people for God and good, and that always brings so much benefit to any country in all kinds of ways, certainly also socially, and economically and politically. In view of this national proverb for us personally, will you personally spend some time in prayer for your land, also in repentance for so much sin and evil in our countries? Would that not be advancing this proverb in a real, good, and effective way even, for God hears and answers prayers still, doesn’t He? *“Righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people.”* Here we have a national proverb for us personally. Will you personally be attentive to it? Personally be applying it? And personally be advancing it? Amen.

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BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST

Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



A 'NATIONAL' PROVERB

“Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”[Proverbs 14:34]

“Righteousness exalteth, that is, lifts up, strengthens, and blesses a nation, but sin is a reproach [a disgrace and shame] to any people.” The theme for this sermon is, “A ‘national’ proverb for us ‘personally’”. No matter where you live, this is a proverb for you and your country. From this inspired proverb, we learn, as one commentator said, “Ultimately a nation’s exaltation [and prosperity] depends on its piety and ethics, and not on its political, military, and/or economic greatness.” A nation’s hope of blessing is directly linked to whether people personally take seriously what this proverb states, *“Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”*

Let us notice first of all that this proverb, indeed, calls for our personal attention. If your country will change for the better in the time ahead, this can only be with her citizens taking seriously God’s holy Word and will for their lives. A nation is made up of people, and interestingly this proverb in its two parts reflects this with using a word in the first half speaking more of a country or nation and a word in the second half referring to the peoples or citizens of that land. For Proverbs 14:34 to have impact on a national scale, it must begin with you, and this Word by God’s Holy Spirit gripping your heart and life personally. Will you be personally attentive to what God’s Word states here?

World history shows that one godless nation after another is brought down by their sin and opposition to God. The decline of nations from ancient Egypt to the countries and regimes of our modern era proves the truth of this proverb about nations against God being brought down in defeat and demise. The Old Testament shows that Israel was blest when they lived in God’s ways, but how often they were punished and brought to destruction when they forsook the Lord. If a nation will live in sin and ungodliness before God and others, she cannot succeed, no matter how she may seem to do so for a time.

Isn’t this proverb most relevant for our day? In how many countries isn’t it the case that God’s law is so much disregarded, despised and disobeyed? For example, God’s Sabbath is broken and His Name is profaned. There is breakdown in marriages, criminal behavior in society, corruption in government, and dishonesty in business. There is grievous moral decline and general evil and violence and injustice and decadence on a mega scale, giving so much reason for grave concern for the nations of the earth. We can

blame the nation, but, and this is my point now, must we not start here with this question, 'Do you take seriously in a personal way what Proverbs 14:34 states, "*Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people*"? Living according to this proverb personally is the only thing that will bring real hope for change for the better in any country, also your country. It is as people personally abhor sin and repent of sin and seek God and follow His Word and will in spirit and truth, that there comes change, reform and reformation in a land. If you are a Christian, you especially should pay attention to this proverb. Listen to these words based on Psalm 105 about God's purpose for His people wherever they live.

The Lord His covenant people planted,
In lands of nations which He granted,
That they His statutes might observe,
nor from His laws might ever swerve!
Let songs of praise to Him ascend—
and hallelujahs without end!

Are you personally living in this way of godliness and holiness before God and others? What an impact for good each godly person and family has on society! Are you helping your nation be a country in the way of righteousness and truth or a country in the way of sin and evil?

"Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people". Not only does this national proverb call for our personal attention, but surely also for our personal application. If any nation will flourish in God's way, how important it is that you and I take to heart God's way of righteousness and that we repent and flee from the pathway of sin and this evil world.

This proverb calls each one of us truly to look to and ever to follow after Christ Jesus the Savior and always to hear and obey His voice as revealed in His Word. The way of righteousness spoken about here is not simply living by God's rules and standards morally speaking, but in the light of all Scripture. The righteousness which exalts a nation is living in faith in Christ and in repentance from sin. Living in righteousness will show in devotion and love to God and His Word and will above all. The way of righteousness is found for us in Christ ultimately and His perfect sinless life and sacrificial sin-atonement death. The way of righteousness is found in Him and flows out from Him, by His grace and mercy, as crucified and risen exalted Saviour of sinners. Christ Jesus leads His people in the way of righteousness, grace, and truth. Are you living in union with Christ and in fellowship with Him and in devotion to Him, or are you allowing sin and transgression in your life in any way at all?

Won't a true Christian take also this inspired proverb most seriously? Does your life show that you personally desire and aim to live in God's way of righteousness; or could it be that you do not care about living in God's way? Will you resolve with the Apostle Paul to live with a conscience that is void of offense before God and man?

"Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Are you personally convicted that not to be in the way of righteousness but pursuing the way of sin and this world instead is so wrong and such a disgrace and wicked thing before God and others? When the text says "*sin is a reproach to any people*", that word for reproach is a strong negative word, found one other time in Leviticus 20:17 where it is translated as that "*wicked thing*". Sin [living contrary to God's Ten Commandments] is, regardless what people may say and think, always a disgrace and a wicked thing and great offense before God and man. What kind of a citizen are you? Do you promote righteousness or wickedness? A true believer in Jesus Christ becomes the best of citizens for his country, even when sometimes a country might not realize this or accept this. When nations persecute and kill true Christians, they deprive themselves of their best, most trustworthy, and productive people! Nothing so blesses a land as God's true people and nothing so hurts a nation as those who will live in defiance of God and all His Word and will for us.

Not only is this a proverb that calls for personal attention and personal application, but also thirdly, and finally, personal advancement in word and deed. You will be advancing this proverb already in paying attention to it and applying it personally. But when doing so, will that not also show, and should that not also be evident in you seeking ways and means personally to advance and acclaim, promote and uphold God's ways of righteousness and godliness, and to combat what is sinful and evil, wrong and unjust in your country and society, as God yet gives you opportunity to do so? How can confessing Christians and God's true people advance Proverbs 14:34 in our day and times? Would not the best and most effective advancement of this proverb be in truly living and promoting the Christian gospel witness in all our life, in word and deed? Being truly Christian and living in a truly Christian way most advances the cause of Christ, and His dominion of righteousness, grace and truth. Christ calls all who confess Him as Saviour and Lord to advance His gospel word and will and righteousness and kingdom.

This will also mean promoting that God's kingdom is not about rules first of all but about relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The righteousness of Proverbs 14:34 is not simply following certain rules of conduct but ultimately it refers to living in faith in Christ and having and reflecting His righteousness credited to us and given to us, by grace through faith in Him, worked by the Holy Spirit through God's Word in our hearts. The more people hear and understand the gospel message, the more we may expect Proverbs 14: 34 to be realized in people's lives and reflected in the history of the nations of the world.

Here it is helpful to think of what we read in Psalm 2. The last two verses of that psalm call out to the nations of the earth and all the peoples thereof, "*Kiss the Son, [referring to Jesus Christ as only Saviour and Sovereign Lord over all;], lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when*