Is America a godly nation? Not long ago Newsweek magazine did a feature story with the ominous title, “The End of Christian America,” citing results from a March 2009 American religious identification survey. Some of the findings are staggering: since 1990 the number of Americans who identify themselves as Christians has fallen ten percentage points from 86% to 76% percent. The number of Americans who claim no religious affiliation at all has doubled in that same amount of time. The number of Americans who call themselves “atheist” or “agnostic” has quadrupled since 1990. As of 2009, there are twice as many atheists in America as there are Episcopalians. Only 62% of us believe America is a Christian nation, down from 69% in 2008. Sixty-eight percent of Americans now say that religion is losing its influence in America and only 48% of us think God can solve our problems.

In the Newsweek article Dr. Al Mohler, President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said, “The most basic contours of American culture have been radically altered. The so-called Judeo-Christian consensus of the last millennium has given way to a post-modern, post-Christian, post-Western cultural crisis which threatens the very heart of our culture.” Is this the nation the founding fathers envisioned? Fox News reported on a survey asking that very question, “Would the founding fathers be proud of the nation today?” Seventy-eight percent of us said, “No, this is not the nation the founding fathers envisioned.” Now obviously, we love the United States of America and we want what is best for our country. But these are days of uncertainty and we have never needed God to intervene in our nation more than we do right now.

Look what God says in 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If My people who are called by My name 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.” The promise for ancient Israel is still applicable to the church in post-modern America. In fact, apart from the blessing of God there would be no America. For instance, Benjamin Franklin, one of the founders (and often considered to be the most irreligious of the founders) said toward the end of his life, “God governs in the affairs of men, and if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?” A faith in God’s plan is woven into the fabric of our national spirit. One of the country’s favorite patriotic songs is America the Beautiful by Katherine Lee Bates. In that song we sing, and I believe rightly so, “America, America, God shed His grace on thee,” and it is obvious today that God’s blessing and His grace is, and has been, upon our country. But what happens when a nation turns its back on God? Will we be the generation that sees the fulfillment of Thomas Jefferson’s greatest fear? His fear was this: “God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secured when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just and His justice cannot sleep forever.” Do we live in a time when we ought to tremble at the thought of God’s justice, just as Jefferson once did? In desperate and dark times what is the hope for the nation? May I say without apology or hesitation that the hope for the nation is not in the
White House. The only hope for the nation is in God’s house! That’s where it’s always been and that’s where it’s always going to be.

The hope of the nation rests with the people of God. Notice what the Bible says in verse 14: “If My people who are called by My name 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.” The church of Jesus Christ, revived and full of holy fire, is the last, best hope for the world and the last, best hope for our times. Leonard Ravenhill, a prophet of the 20th century, said 50 years ago, “As the church goes, so goes the world. If the watchmen sleep, the enemy takes the city.” In verse 14, we see the culmination of a prayer that the great, wise King Solomon had prayed. The people of the Old Testament had envisioned a temple, a house for God. David had envisioned it. He’d prayed about it. He could see it, but God wouldn’t let him build it. Instead, God said, “I’ll let your son build it.” So David designed the temple under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gathered the materials, and put the vision inside the heart of his son. When Solomon came to the throne of Israel, he rallied the people and began to accrue the wealth necessary, and he built the great temple of Solomon. It was, at the time of its dedication, the largest, most beautiful, and most prestigious building in the entire world. Can you imagine what the worshiper must have felt like the first time he saw the largest building in the world and watched as the smoke from the altar curled up toward heaven as a sacrificial offering of praise to Almighty God? For days they worshiped, celebrated, and sang.

Solomon was the leader and he was not only smart, he was wise. As Solomon reflected upon the celebration of the moment, he was wise enough to understand at that moment what is recorded in Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart of man is deceitful, above all things desperately wicked. Who can know it?” He began to ponder in his own heart, as the nation’s leader, what would happen if this nation ever turned its back on God. He began to see how the nation could be at a point of vulnerability, both externally and internally, and he began to pray and ask God for mercy if the people ever turned their backs, if God ever lifted His hand of providential care off the nation. If the crops failed, if the economy turned south, if the people were threatened by enemies from every side, would God be merciful at a time like that? Verse 14 is God’s answer to that prayer and notice God did not say, “Solomon, if you keep a big army, you’ll be all right.” Nor did He say, “Solomon, if you keep a big bank account everything will be okay.” No. Solomon knew that wealth, armies, horses, and chariots, as important as they are, are a vain hope if the hand of God is lifted off of the nation. God said, “If My people who are called by My name 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.”

You may say, “Well, that is a promise to the Jews of the Old Testament. It has nothing to do with us.” I’m telling you, from page to page, from cover to cover, everything in this Bible has to do with you and me! The Scripture says all the promises of God are yes and amen in Christ. That means that the church of Jesus Christ is the spiritual heir of all of the promises of God, and this promise is not just to the church of Jesus Christ in
America. The Bible says, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,” (Psalm 33:12) When the people of God turn back to Him, the entire nation where that church exists can experience the favor and revival of Almighty God. Yes, this Scripture has to do with us. And by the way, the child of God who bows his knees to the Lord Jesus Christ is the person called after God’s name in the New Testament times. In other words, God looks to His people as the pivotal issue for the nation’s blessings. Let me say it bluntly. We, the people of God, are responsible for the spiritual temperature of America. What does that suggest about the church at this moment? Jesus said it like this in Matthew 5:13-14: “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”

Not only are we responsible as the people of God for the favor of God upon the nation but when you look at the despicable condition of our country today and all of the difficulties we face, which no man on earth can untangle, you and I, because of our own rebellion and waywardness and self-sufficiency, may be partly responsible for this desperate situation. There has never been a time when the politicians of this nation were more like blind men in a dark room looking for a black cat that isn’t there. I could say the same thing about preachers. It’s time for God’s people to turn back to God. We need a fresh touch of heaven again. It is an insult to Almighty God that we decry the fact that there is no prayer in the schools when we don’t even have prayer in the home! It’s time for God’s people to turn back to God.

How can we turn our nation back to its only hope? God says four things:

**AMERICA NEEDS HUMILITY TOWARD GOD**

Notice what the Scripture says in verse 14. “*If My people who are called by My name humble themselves...*” The word humble here is an ancient word. It refers to two things and is used in two different ways. First, it’s used to describe the way a bird is held in your hand. In order to hold a bird in your hand, you’ve got to cup and hold its wings. I was outside just the other day, and a baby cardinal was trying to learn to fly from the nest. The birds were flying all over trying to protect that little bird. He was old enough to be out of the nest and practicing, but he wasn’t too effective because he had flown right up to the front door of my house and was sitting there looking at the front door. I could have reached right out and taken him in my hands. I didn’t want to but I could have. So I took his picture instead and showed it to my wife!

This word also describes the bowing of the knee involuntarily. When a king or a military ruler had been defeated by a stronger king or a stronger general, he was brought in front of all of his troops and humbled, forced to kneel before the superior king. That’s the word right here. This is not just God saying, “I’m tired of pride,” although God doesn’t have any respect for pride. The Bible says in Psalm 51:17, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” But
this is not a verse of Scripture against all vanity, ego, and pride. This is a verse of Scripture about one specific thing in its context. This is about God’s people being humble in the presence of God, being dependent on God. When we celebrate American’s Independence Day, let’s not be independent of everything. Let’s not be independent of God. Let’s declare our dependence upon God as never before. Let’s acknowledge that the issue before us is the same issue the church will always have. It is a lordship issue. We’ve got to ask this question at this pivotal moment in history: will we, with our ingenuity, our intelligence, our 21st century mindset, sit upon the throne of our hearts or will Jesus sit there? The issue is the same as it was when the man said it in the 20th century. “He is either Lord of all or not Lord at all.”

**AMERICA NEEDS A HUNGER FOR GOD**

Notice verse 14 again. The Scripture says, “*If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face…” “Pray and seek My face.”* The word for prayer here comes from the Hebrew word *to judge.* Is prayer is to be judgmental?” It is not used in that context, but think about it. A judge’s primary responsibility is not to be harsh but to be what….impartial. When a person is nominated for the Supreme Court both sides want to know one issue — will he or she be impartial? We don't want that judge to take sides. We want judges to go right down the middle according to what….the law. A judge’s responsibility is to be impartial. Ideally, a judge hears the argument of both sides. The man of prayer, the church that prays, intervenes between two sides, between heaven and earth, between God and man, between a rebellious nation and a holy God. We, the church, come and plead before God, “O God, show us mercy just a little longer.”

**AMERICA NEEDS A HEART FOR GOD**

Along a similar line, God said, “*Seek My face.*” The word for *seek* means *to inquire diligently, to search after aggressively.* He didn't say, “Seek My blessings.” I'm for blessings, I know God wants to bless you more than you want to be blessed, and I'm absolutely convinced that every one of us are going to die having never claimed all the blessings that God has for us. God has more blessings than you can even imagine because the Bible says, “*Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think…*” (Ephesians 3:20) But far more than giving you His blessing, God wants to give you His presence. He wants to give you Himself. That’s why He said, “Seek not what’s in My hand. ‘Seek My face.’” That's the Hebrew word *paniyim.* It means the presence of God. *Seek My face* means seek *My presence.* Seeking the face of God means we love Him, and we want to spend time in His presence. God desires to give you His presence far more than His presents! God wants to bless you, but the greatest blessing you will ever have is when you know Him in His fullness….when you know Him face-to-face.
How do you know when you’re seeking His face? Have you ever noticed people’s behavior when they are at the airport? Most people at the airport are getting off of a long flight, they’re jet-lagged, they’re in a hurry, and they’ve got to get on a shuttle to ride out and find their car. They’ve got to get home late at night and they’ve got to drag a big, heavy bag, and they're not all that happy. They’re just glad the flight’s over and they’re ready to get either to the hotel, home, or on to the next thing.

But there’s always a little group of people who are waiting for a loved one, and you can spot them a mile away. They see that loved one coming down an escalator toward the baggage claim, and their faces light up, their eyes light up, and they get big smiles! When loved ones see each other, they become totally oblivious to everyone else in the airport. They become, for a moment, the spotlight of everybody’s attention, but they don't even know it because all they see is each other. It’s not unusual for the ones waiting at the bottom to be carrying a bouquet of flowers, balloons, or a sign that says, “Welcome home.” When the loved one who’s been away finally reaches the family waiting, they don’t pay much attention to the balloons or the flowers. They just wrap those other people up in their arms and begin to hug them and kiss them and they get real loud! Everybody in the airport can hear them. They don’t pay any attention to those flowers. They don't pay any attention to those balloons. They don't pay any attention to that homemade placard that says, “Welcome home.” All they can see is the face of the one they love.

Child of God, God has lots of good things for His church, but the thing He wants to give you more than anything is the face of God Himself. He wants you and me to behold Him and desire Him as He is. He said, “Seek My face.”

**AMERICA NEEDS A HOLINESS BEFORE GOD**

_If my people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways…” Their wicked ways. Do you think America would be better if the people that you disagree with the most would get right with God? The Bible does not say here if the people who vote different than you would get right with God and start voting like we vote, then He would heal the land. The Bible doesn't say if the people who make you mad would just get right with God and think like you, then the nation would be all right. No, the Bible doesn't say any of that. The Bible says if you would repent, If My people would turn from” – what? – their casual sins? No. It says they must turn from their wicked ways. The word for wicked is the Hebrew word for malignancy. The worst part of malignancy is that it spreads. The Bible says it’s time for surgery: For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the Gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17)

I am absolutely convinced that revival can occur, and this nation can be changed. I’m absolutely convinced that the ones who are the most bitterly opposed to the things you
and I hold dear can have their hearts changed. That change, however, does not occur first with them, it begins when you and I admit, “I have sinned against God.”

When’s the last time you went before God and said, “O God, I have sinned?” When is the last time your sin really bothered you? When is the last time you honestly the felt deep conviction for your own unholiness, unworthiness, and sin in the presence of the Holy God who will someday bring everything that you have done in to account and in judgment? Do you even believe that you are going to be held accountable and judged? The Bible says we will all stand before the judgment seat of God and give an account for the things done in the body whether good or bad. When’s the last time you acknowledged the fact that there’s a payday someday, and there’s a day coming when every idle word a man speaks will be held against him? Everything whispered in the corners will be shouted from the housetops. Everything hidden will be revealed, and one of these days you and I will stand before the One whose eyes glow and burn like fire. One of these days, the things that we have so carefully concealed will be busted wide open before the God of the universe who is the judge of all mankind. Standing beside Him will be the brokenhearted Son of God with the nail-scarred hands, and we will be reminded that it was the sin we have desperately coddled and concealed that sent Jesus to the cross. The Bible says that judgment will begin in the house of God and God is asking this question: “When will My people turn to Me?”

I once heard of the funeral of a great Christian leader, and several speakers came to assist in the service. Each one said virtually the same thing, “There will never be anyone like him again.” Even people as they were leaving had picked up that theme, and were saying the same thing, “There will never be anyone like him again.”

But after most of the congregation had gone, a church custodian, who had been at the back of the church listening during the funeral service, slipped down to the steps of the altar and was overhead praying quietly, “Lord, do it again. Do it again. Do it again.”

Skeptics and unbelievers and even some discouraged Christians may think it’s too late for America to see a great move of God. But you can pray, “Lord, do it again.”