

Peaceful Strategies for a War-Torn Nation, James 4:6-17

Happy 4th of July on the 8th! We're celebrating the 231st anniversary of our Founding Father's signing of our Declaration of Independence today. We have so much for which to give Thanks, not the least of which is the privilege to be living in the greatest country in the world. God Bless America!

At the same time we live in a nation more and more at war without and within. Without are terrorists threatening our soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan and other places around the world, and since 9/11, even threatening our own shores. Yesterday's news said that U.S. diplomats are having to be restricted to their embassies and consulates more than at any other time since records were kept of such things, back to 1924. Political wars between Republicans and Democrats are significant with serious conflicts being waged in our country over Moral issues (definition of marriage, homosexuality and so-called hate-crime legislation, abortion, immigration, stem cell research, etc.). Our study last week, entitled "Blessed are the Peacemakers" from [James 4:1-6](#), asked the question we tried to answer, "Where do wars come from?" This week I would like to continue that same theme specifically trying to offer some *Peaceful Strategies for Christians Living in War-Torn America*. Our James study today begins with Hope for our country *if* Christians put into practice what the Scripture says; i.e. be doers of God's Word, and not hearers only. "America! America! May God shed His Grace on Thee."

6But (in contrast) **He** (God) **gives a Greater** (more) **Grace**. Specifically addressing the Christian's role of living Godly in our country, "Why would God give "Greater Grace" to America? God extends Great Grace when He Draws individuals to Salvation in Christ; and then gives us Greater Grace when He woos Christians back to Him when we stray, thereby Blessing our nation by association. "**If My people, who are Called by My Name...**" [II Chron. 7:13-14](#). THE MOST PATRIOTIC ACTION WE CAN TAKE IS FOR CHRISTIANS TO REPENT AND GET RIGHT WITH GOD! James gives us Strategies for Making Peace with God and man.

1. Christian U. S. Citizens, give up your pride. **Therefore it** (Scripture) **says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO** (resists) **THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.**" People of the Cross have no business being proud, even though we're proud of our country! Understand that Christians are not first Citizens of any nation, but rather Citizens of the Kingdom of God. [Phil. 3:20](#), "**Our Citizenship is in Heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.**" We are not our own, we were bought with a Price, by the Blood of Christ who Rose from the dead and Owns us and Rules us. [I Peter 2:11](#), "**Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.**" As Christians, even Citizens, we are first aliens and exiles in our own country, America.

Jesus Christ is our King, and no human Authority is above him. [I Peter 2:13](#), says "**Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution.**" We Submit to human Authority because Jesus our Lord tells us to Submit for His Glory. Jesus said, "**Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's,**" [Matt. 22:21](#). He meant: Everything is God's, and Surrendering everything to God, we can now render Obedience to Caesar without committing Treason against Heaven. We are first Citizens of Heaven with a mandate to Magnify King Jesus on the earth. His Will for us is to enter all spheres of society and culture, including Government, with the Light and Truth of our Lord Jesus Christ. If My People...

2. **7Submit therefore to God** (and Authority). Our Submission to our American Government was addressed in our Call to Worship, [Rom. 13:1-2](#): "**Let every person be subject to the Governing Authorities. For there is no Authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by**

God. Therefore whoever resists the Authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur Judgment.” Whether a Government exists under the rule of a King, or under a tribal chief who defeated his rivals, or by a people who voted for their candidate; all Authority is there because God put it there. “There is no Authority except from God.” This includes bad Authorities as well because Pilate, a bad Authority that ordered Jesus Crucified, Jesus told to his face, [John 19:11](#), “You would have no Authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.” It doesn’t matter what human means brought the Authority to power (whether you voted for them or not), or whether the power itself is just or unjust. God is behind all Authority and each one has at least some claim on our Submission.

[Rom. 13:4](#) says, “He is God’s servant for your good.” We are all Blessed by God when the evil of the human heart is restrained by civil Authority and Law. Anarchy, mob rule, vigilante justice is terrifying, not comforting. We are to be Submissive to our Governing Authorities, to both our Constitution and the Laws of the land. As well we are to Submit to our President, Congress and Justices, our military, state, city and county Governments, the police, etc. If My People... If we have failed to Submit, here’s what Repentance from “God’s people” should look like:

3. [Resist the devil](#) (*anti*-Jesus is Lord of all! Obey the Lord!) [and he will flee from you](#). If My People...

[⁸Draw near to God](#) (Let go of “hurts, injustices”) [and He will draw near to you](#). Amazing Grace! If My People...

4. Forsake idols/ other loves. [Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded](#). [Psm. 119:113](#); [James 1:6-8](#). If My People...

5. Forsake worldly joys and delights, [Luke 6:25](#). [⁹Be miserable](#) (lament, grieve; contra. grieve Holy Spirit!) [and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom](#). If My People...

6. Give up worldly expectations on earth. [¹⁰Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord](#) (I AM THAT I AM), [and He will exalt you](#). Amazing Grace! [Eph. 3:20-21](#). If My People...

When we, God’s people, Humble ourselves in Repentance, He pours out even “Greater Grace” upon us and our country, [James 4:1-6](#). Repentance begins with a deep sense of Humility (the absence of human pride) and it manifests itself in a Hatred of sin and in the Putting Off of sin. It involves a Cleansing of our hearts and our hands (i.e. our innermost motivations and our deeds). Our wavering double-mindedness disappears, and a single-minded Devotion to Knowing and Serving God takes its place. Repentance involves a Godly Sorrow, [II Cor. 7:10-11](#). James calls for Humility in conjunction with Repentance, [vs. 10](#); cf. Christ’s strong Words, [Luke 3:7-17](#). When we Humble ourselves before God, with “Greater Grace” He exalts us. God takes all sin seriously. Those who are on the path of sin are on the path that leads to death. One can hardly take sin too seriously, [Matt. 18:6-9](#).

7. Don’t speak against Government Authorities, [II Pet. 3:9-10](#). [James 4:11](#) [Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or Judges his brother](#) (or a Government PERSON!), [speaks against the Law](#) (under God) [and Judges the Law](#) (under God); [but if you Judge the Law](#) (under God), [you are not a doer of the Law](#) (not concerned with Obeying) [but a Judge of it](#). [¹²There is only one Lawgiver and Judge](#) (and you’re not Him!), [the One who is able to Save and to destroy](#) ([Matt. 10:28](#)); [but who are you who Judge your neighbor?](#) Contra. “Love your neighbor.”

Sadly, the favorite pastime of Americans (rooted in pride and arrogance) is to find fault with our Government and those in Authority. James indicts us and calls for Humble Repentance. As we are to

be “quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger,” [1:19](#), and in [3:1](#), reluctant to speak as a teacher, now, we are admonished to be slow to speak against (slander) government as that is in fact passing Judgment. Understand what James is and is not saying here. He is not forbidding us to confront Government when they command us to sin against God’s Commands. But when our standards are not clearly Biblical standards (e.g. appropriations, deed restrictions, passports, property taxes, deed restrictions, etc.), we actually pass Judgment on the Law. We are placing ourselves above the Law, rather than under it. When we go beyond the Law, we Judge the Law, and “play God.” If My People...

We must bring God’s Moral Law to Bear on Legislative and Judicial Action, [Rom. 13: 3-4](#). “For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in Authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's Wrath on the wrongdoer.” There is such a thing as good and bad, right and wrong. The Moral Law is objective Reality defined by God, not by Government and not by popular vote. Governments should reward what is good and punish what is bad. The Moral Law is above the Governing Authorities because God is above the Governing Authorities. The universality of the Moral Law is what makes it possible for a pluralistic society to agree on enough things to hold the nation together; [Rom. 2:15](#): “They show that the work of the Law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness.” There is no guarantee it will hold together, because there are always forces at work to obscure the Moral Law. But it is possible.

Right and wrong, good and bad, can be seen by non-Christians, but in limited ways. Unbelievers fail to use their minds and their Moral conscience to focus on Christ and, therefore they never grasp the fullness of what the Moral Law is for—to see Christ and make Him Glorious to the world. But God, in His Great Mercy (common Grace) has been pleased to make some of his Moral Law seen by all men, even if imperfectly. This is why it is possible even in a very pluralistic society for Citizens and Legislators to come to some agreement on what is good for our nation (in a limited and temporal sense). Be Thankful for this. No pluralistic nation could hold together without it. If My People...

Christians have access to God’s Law in a more Clear and Authoritative way in the Bible, and we should shape our political convictions and actions as such. Use the Bible to guide you in what behaviors you seek to put into Law. Behaviors revealed in Scripture as essential to the common good should be aggressively commended by Christians for enactment as Law by every means of persuasion possible, with both Biblical and natural arguments. One example is the present controversy over the nature of marriage and whether it can be redefined as a relationship between two men or two women. Marriage only between a man and a woman is so fundamental to the survival of society that Christians should work for its legal protection. If someone says that we are legislating our Morality we should respond: Laws protecting marriage are in the same category with Laws protecting life and property and contracts. Few would think that the prohibition of murder and stealing and perjury is the legislation of Morality. Neither should anyone complain that the protection of marriage is the legislation of Morality. Marriage between a man and a woman is a Moral and natural reality so profoundly woven into fabric of human life and society that to undo it will eventually be the undoing of our nation, [Rom. 1:18-32](#).

Other examples could include behaviors that destroy children, like abortion, or behaviors that destroy the environment. Christians should make a case from Scripture that God means for us not to burn the house down that he gave us to live in. If My People...

If we indeed feel like our Government is commanding us to disobey Scripture or to obey what is against God's Word, what guidelines should be used for how a Christian disobey civil authorities? The words of Jesus rule out all vindictiveness and all action based on the mere expediency of personal safety. The Lord cuts away our love for possessions, and our love for convenience, [Matt. 5:38-42](#). Instead, by Trusting Christ, become the kind of person who is utterly free from these things to live for others (both the oppressed and the oppressors; both the persecuted and the persecutors; both the dying children and the killing abortionists). The tone and demeanor of this Christian civil disobedience will be the opposite of strident, belligerent, rock-throwing, screaming, swearing, violent demonstrations.

We are people of the Cross. Our Lord Submitted to Crucifixion willingly to Save his enemies. We owe our Eternal Life to Him as Forgiven sinners. This takes the swagger and arrogance out of our protest. If, after every other means has failed, & we must disobey man's law, first remove the log from your own eye, causing enough pain & tears to soften your indignation into a Humble, but unshakeable, "NO!" The greatest battle we face is *not* overcoming unjust laws, but becoming Christlike people. If My People...

Scripture would not have Christians to use physical force to advance the Kingdom of Christ. Jesus said to Pilate, "[My Kingdom is not of this world. If my Kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting,](#)" [John 18:36](#). The Kingdom of God is established only by Faith in Christ, and "[Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ,](#)" [Rom. 10:17](#). Faith cannot be coerced or forced by physical means. It is Awakened by the Word of God. Therefore preaching and teaching the Word of God are the most precious Freedoms that Christians have. Fight for them.

Christians are to be tolerant of other faiths not because there is no absolute truth or that all faiths are equally valuable, but because the One Who is Absolute Truth, Jesus Christ, forbids the spread of His Truth by the sword. Christian tolerance is the commitment that keeps lovers of competing faiths from killing each other. Christian tolerance is the principle that puts Freedom above forced conversion, because it's rooted in the conviction that forced conversion is no conversion at all. Freedom to preach, to publish, and to assemble for Worship flow from the heart of the Christian Faith. Therefore we protect it for all. One day Christ will come and end all tolerance. He will sweep away all unbelievers. But until He Comes that is not our right or our desire. Our desire is to preach Christ and in politics to work for the Freedom that secures the rights for all to persuade and preach and assemble.

May the Lord give us Great Zeal for the Glory of His Gospel, Great Love for the lost, and Great Wisdom and Courage to Commend His Truth in the public square. If My People...

8. Give your's and our country's future (and the fear of the future) to God's Will. [13Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."](#) [14Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.](#) [15Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."](#) Repent and Forsake arrogant presumption (Being in CONTROL of our future). [16But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil;](#) [Prov. 27:1; Luke 12:16-21](#). How easy it is to make assumptions about the future; e.g. 1) that you will be alive in the future. One split second of time could change that. 2) that you will be in a certain place at a certain time; contra. traffic jam. 3) that you will start a successful business and make a profit within a specified period of time. Most all agree that such is a very high-risk venture. James rebukes anyone who would be so arrogant as to say that "I am the

master of my fate, and the captain of my soul.” He reminds us of the brevity and uncertainty of life. Life is very delicate, just a puff of smoke, just a vapor. Don’t presume on God. If My People...

“I know not what the future holds, but I know Who Holds the future.” We can say, with great confidence, that ***if the Lord is willing***, we shall do this or that. It is not, “What will be, will be,” as though no one was in control. It is not, “What I will, will be.” It is, rather, “What God wills, will be.”

James says that anyone who boasts about the future does so out of pride/ arrogance, and it is evil; but, Humility is at the heart of all Repentance and Obedience. What is the FUTURE of America? If My People...

[17Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it \(volition\), to him it is sin.](#) May we As Gods’ People not sin against God and our country by forgetting that we are to be Salt and Light in a wicked and perverse world, and to Pray for all those in Authority, **[1 Tim. 2:1-4](#)**. THE MOST PATRIOTIC ACTION WE CAN TAKE IS FOR CHRISTIANS TO REPENT AND GET RIGHT WITH GOD! God Bless America!