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A Nation Struggling to Recover and Reunite in the Midst of a Pandemic

*Ps 33:12 Blessed is the nation
whose God is the LORD; and
the people whom he hath
chosen for his own inheritance.*

*Prov 8:15, 16 By me kings reign,
and princes decree justice. By
me princes rule, and nobles,
even all the judges of the earth.*



Singapore turns 55 today since our independence on 9 August 1965 (although we received self-government status from the British in 1959 under the leadership of the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew). This tiny red dot of about 5.8 million people on 720 square kilometres of land has come a long way in its nationhood and survived against all odds by the sovereign grace of God since Sir Stamford Raffles founded it in 1819.



The nation has since been transformed from an unknown fishing village to an international economic export-oriented IT hub and financial centre in Asia and beyond.

There were many challenges to the life of this relatively new nation with the Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945, the *Konfrontasi* with Indonesia from 1963 to 1966, and the withdrawal from the Malayan Federation in 1965. The British announced its withdrawal of its troops in 1967 which finally took place in 1971. This was a significant milestone for

the nation. National Service was introduced on 17 Mar 1967 for every able-bodied male aged 18, following the model of the Israeli system in building up the national defence of our country. Today, the Singapore Armed Forces is a formidable and modern fighting force to be reckoned with in this region, with its advanced weapons and a vigilant and well-equipped defence force amidst a highly educated populace.

The Role of Christian Missionaries

We also fondly remember the notable 19th century pioneering missionaries who contributed to nation building in the building of churches, old folks' homes, mission schools and hospitals catering to the spiritual and social needs of the populace. For example, Rev Benjamin Keasberry started the Malayan Mission Chapel in Prinsep

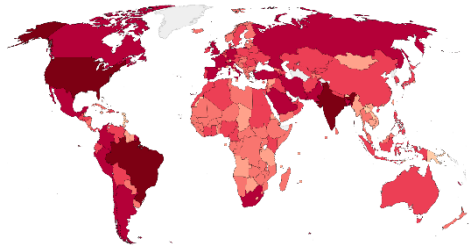


Street, William Oldham initiated the famed Anglo-Chinese School, Miss Sophia Blackmore started the Methodist Girls' School, and Dr. Charlotte Ferguson was with the Anglican Mission Hospital. There was also the memorable revival of 1935 where Dr. John

Sung of Swatow, China came and preached to the salvation of souls where tens of thousands of people were transformed and converted. Many would later become leaders of the various denominations, including the Bible Presbyterian churches. By 1938, there were 11 percent Christians in Singapore and they contributed to the growth the nation in their unique ways in enhancing its spiritual, economic and moral vitality and stability over the years. Today, there are more than 500 churches in Singapore with 18.7% of Christians (in 2015) making an impact in the lives of many families and the different sectors of the economy and this is still growing.

The national leadership of the previous era has built up the nation over this half a decade with sound housing for the masses, universal education for all, and a vibrant economy with jobs for most people, with the exception of these past 7 months as a result of the health crisis.

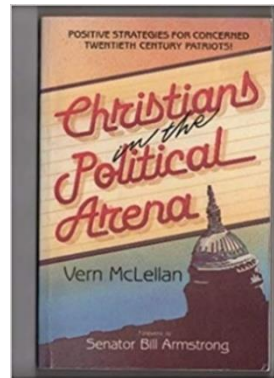
It has been a tumultuous year for us in 2020, especially with the intense fight against the fast-spreading coronavirus pandemic that has consumed us for the past 7 months. It will continue to affect the us and world till next year, and perhaps even further as the Lord permits.



The economic outlook is bleak as we are in technical recession where more than 2 quarters of the year saw negative growth. It is expected given that more jobs will be lost as workers are almost invariably retrenched as more businesses close down. However, while the outlook is bad, the uplook is good we humbly look to the Lord for divine mercies and grace.

Below is a notable comment that is relevant for our situation although the context is descriptive of the US:

"When America was still young, Alexis de Tocqueville, the well-known French political analyst, came to visit America and learn what unusual quality enabled a scant handful of people to break the tyrannical grip of the British. He said he looked for greatness in USA harbours, rivers, plentiful fields, endless forests, mines and seemingly unlimited natural resources. He studied USA schools, government, leaders but he failed to find the secret of the new nation's strength. Not until he visited America's churches, where he heard pulpits ringing "afame with righteousness", did he find the real answer. "America is Great", de Tocqueville reported to his countrymen "America is good and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great". More than a century later, General Douglas MacArthur insisted, history fails to record a single precedent in which nations subject to moral decay have not passed into political and economic decline. There has been either a spiritual awakening to overcome the moral lapse or a progressive deterioration leading to ultimate national disaster."



Vern McLellan, *Christians in the Political Arena in "America's Return to God"* by Thomas Weng, 2006

These are noteworthy observations and warnings for us today in Singapore as we persevere on as a nation.

The Prowess and Weakness of a Country

We are thankful to God for blessing our country with honest and responsible governance and its progress over five-and-a-half decades. Every nation strives to be great but what is it that really makes it great?

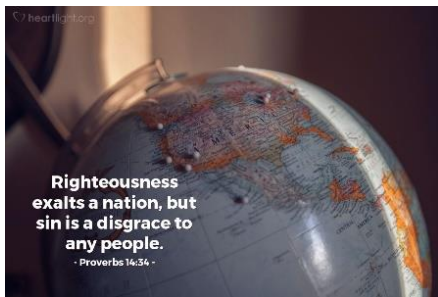
Is it its military might or its impressive economic, scientific, and technological growth? Is it its architectural grandeur, its historic or magnificent structures, or super highways and other infra structures? Or does it come with winning the World Cup, the Nobel Peace, the Pulitzer Prize, the coveted Olympics, organising the Commonwealth Games, the Miss Universe contest, or having a permanent place in the security council of the UN, the world's political watchdog? Could it be its high GDP per capita, high literacy rate, or high life expectancy? The Pandemic shows that all these accolades can be short lived and can be wiped away in just a few months



Is Singapore a great nation with a multi-cultural population in the heart of Southeast Asia? We are still fighting a deadly virus with more than 55,000 affected (95% being migrant workers) and we are not out of the woods yet. We are a humble democratic parliamentary republic

preserved by the providential hand of God in the midst of a global health crisis. By the grace of God, this tiny independent state has a GDP per capita of about US\$64,000 (2018) with a low inflation rate, a low crime rate, a literacy rate of 93.2%, average life expectancy of 84 years, a low infant mortality rate, a world class airline, airport, and seaport, high global connectivity, a sound balance of trade and prudent monetary and fiscal policies with an efficient civil service and government-linked companies, renowned local universities, medically advanced hospitals and world class research facilities, a strong and potent military, police and civil defence force, and so on. Having said this, a virulent coronavirus can destroy all our achievements but more important in the eyes of God, is not the economic factor but the spiritual regeneration of the hearts of men. This is what matters. We pray that men and women in our nation will seek the God of the bible as their Saviour and repent of their sins, beseeching divine saving

grace and humbling themselves before the living and true God who made the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1-27, 2 Chr 7:14).



Note what the Word of God says in Prov 14:34, Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people and Isa 58:2, Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me

the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

This is a delight to God if we are to seek Him first and His righteousness (Matt 6:33).

The Progress or Regress of a Nation

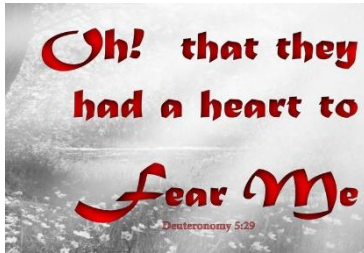
When America became independent in 1776 from the British, it was built on sound biblical foundations of divine grace of freedom of worship and speech and association and the nation flourished over the next century or more. Thanksgiving Day was instituted to give glory and thanks to God every year in November. However, over the past few decades, America has witnessed a decline in its spiritual and moral values and convictions. As a world power who used to lead the global scene in many international issues, it is slowly losing its influence and power in the world stage over these past 20 to 30 years.

In the eyes of heaven, a great nation is not about a huge military arsenal and nuclear prowess, or economic and scientific advancement. Rather, it is a humble and united people who is hardworking, gracious, and enlightened who fear God and honour his Word, seek and honour Christ first, and value justice, peace, equity, and righteousness.

We are to pray for and honour our national leaders as God has chosen and enable them to govern the country in His sovereign will. (Rom 13:1-7) For us as citizens or permanent residents, or even the more than 1 million of those who are on a Work



Permit, (including our domestic helpers), S-Pass or Employment Pass, let us pray and fear God and honour the King, remembering Rom 13:1 which says, Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.



More importantly, Moses' prayer for all of us before the Lord in Deut 5:29 says, O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me (i.e. God) and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

We thank God for his longsuffering, mercy, and grace upon this tiny city state of 55 years of nationhood, which is still progressing, notwithstanding our own set of political and social problems. These problems include the rise of homosexuality, dysfunctional homes, spousal violence and recalcitrant children in the breakdown of the most basic building block of society which is the family, as well as increasing social and moral problems with the growing numbers of reckless teenagers and a greying population. The rise in Asian and worldwide terrorism, regional calamities, and national and international disasters (i.e. earthquakes, floods, and tsunamis) and this particular unprecedented worldwide pandemic reveal how vulnerable we are. The destinies of nations are not in kings and

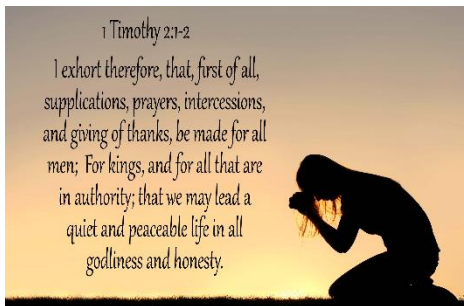


princes but in the sovereign hand of the Almighty God. We need to humble ourselves before Jehovah as a nation and pray for wisdom for our national leaders to handle this fast-growing coronavirus pandemic prudently amidst a growing global threat. The greatness of a country lies in the greatness of her God, that she should revere, worship, serve, and obey His laws.

Solomon in Prov 21:1 says, The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will and reminded us in Prov. 29:2 When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

The Prayer and Petition for Our Leaders

There is much to pray for regarding the newly sworn-in Cabinet and the rest of the government as the 4th generation of leaders are poised to take over soon. Christians have a sacred duty to earnestly supplicate for the spiritual and physical well-being of the President, Prime Minister



and cabinet ministers, Judges, Permanent Secretaries, and leaders that God has appointed over us (for which we are grateful and appreciative). We pray that there be a strengthening in the moral and spiritual fibre of society and a great revival of the land in the reformation of true religion to the saving of souls, the spiritual betterment of homes, and the nurturing of the young in the fear of God. We need to raise up the next generation and leave behind a godly legacy as we nurture and teach our children to be prayerful and God-fearing in a fallen world of declension and depravity. May the citizens of the land seek the Lord Jesus in faith and evangelical repentance while there is still time (Deut 6:6,7 and 2 Cor 6:2).

As responsible Christian citizens, we need to intercede fervently for the movers and shakers of this tiny island state, as Paul tells us in 1 Tim 2:1,2, I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

Conclusion

We need to pray for God's providential guidance upon the newly-elected national leaders that they will rule and govern this land prudently in the fear of God, to preserve and protect our people, the churches, our children, and strengthen families (and schools, camps, and other institutions) and make and execute policies prudently in the midst of a health crisis.

So that we can lead a quiet and peaceable life and build up covenant homes and our churches that men may be awakened to spiritual reality and be saved by Christ, ready for the imminent advent of our Lord Jesus Christ in these last perilous days. What should we do then? Let us heed the counsel and prayer of a wise ancient Jewish king as we close:



In 2 Chr 7:14, it says 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.

Jack Sin



Thank God for our weekly Wednesday night prayer meetings via Zoom. We had 15 brethren from 4 countries praying together last Wednesday!

Memory Verse

Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Announcements

1. Welcome to our Worship Service! Kindly comply with the safety measures available on the notice boards. For our visitors, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave.
2. Rev Jack Sin speaks today on “The Demonstration of Faith” (Luke 7:1-11), continuing the Jul to Sep 2020 theme of “Examining the Ministry & Teachings of Christ”.
3. Rev Jack Sin speaks next Sunday on “The Eternal Profit of a Soul” (Mark 8:27-38).
4. Sunday School classes continues in church after the worship service
5. Chinese Fellowship meets on Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom.
6. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom.
7. The Church Annual Congregational Meeting (ACM) will be held on Sat 29 Aug 2020 at 2pm via Zoom. Details and reports will be sent to all church members.
8. Those who would like to help with the cleaning or safe management procedures of the church, please see Dn Yue Kay.
9. Those who have a testimony to share may submit to Pastor for the weekly.
10. Pastor is still available for counselling via WhatsApp, Email or Mobile.
11. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
 - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mailed to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
 - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB** Account **392-308-825-1**
 - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**