



# BRIDGES

*A Newsletter of New Baptist Church - July 2024*

## **Pray for Our Nation**

What is your July 4th tradition: Hamburgers on the grill, mowing the grass, setting off fireworks? The 4th of July has always been a wonderful celebration to kick off the start of summer. I hope to eat some hamburgers this 4th of July and see some fireworks. A tradition I started a few years ago on the 4th of July that I would like to encourage you to join me in is to spend some time during that day to pray for our nation.

For me, praying for our nation on the 4th of July has come about through the conviction of scripture and God's Spirit. As a Christian, I believe that the kingdom I belong to is a kingdom not of this world. I am a citizen of the Kingdom of God (Philippians 3:20-21), and thus serve in this world as an ambassador of God's Kingdom (2 Corinthians 5:20). This world is not my home (Hebrews 13:14). I am therefore in this world as a sojourner (1 Peter 2:11). In the New Testament writings of Peter, Paul and John, the church is described using the language of God's people living in exile longing for the better country (Hebrews 11:13-16). I long for the heavenly country that is not of this world.

So, what does this mean to me as a citizen of the United States of America? It means, first, that I am not an American Christian, but rather, I am a Christian who is an American. What I mean by this is that my primary identity is as a child of God saved by the grace of God in Jesus. That is who I am, and my earthly citizenship is secondary to my faith in Jesus. It means I have more in common with my brother in Christ living in Africa than with my unsaved next-door neighbor. Again, this world is not my home, and by extension, my earthly citizenship is as one living in exile.



I share all of this to help relate it to what Jeremiah tells the people living in exile during his day. In the days of Jeremiah, the people of Judah were forced into exile by the Babylonians. Jeremiah tells the people that this is the Lord's doing and, therefore, they should seek to be a blessing to where God placed them. This is Jeremiah 29:4-7 which reads, "*Thus says*

*the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. **But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare***

*you will find your welfare.*" Though this passage was written to a people who lived 600 years before Jesus, I believe it applies to us today as well.

As followers of Jesus and Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we, too, live as exiles in a strange land. Thus, we are to seek the welfare (blessing) of the place where God has placed us, AND we are to pray to the Lord on its behalf. This command to pray for the nation is repeated in the New Testament by Paul, who says, "*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions... This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior (1 Timothy 2:1-3).*"

**One of the reasons God has placed you in this land is that you may pray for this land and ask the Lord to heal it and bless it.** I ask that you join with me on July 4th to do exactly that. Please find time during the celebrations of the day to pray for America.

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Trent Eastman