

A Mighty Fortress is our God

By Joni Eareckson Tada

The Bible spends a great deal of time talking about how mighty and magnificent God is. On almost every page, the writers of the Bible extol God as high and lifted up, great and powerful. First Chronicles 29:11 is typical, *“Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.”* You can’t miss it. God is in a class completely by Himself.

Some read I Chronicles and assume that God is on some kind of divine ego trip – but far from it! Biblical descriptions of God's power and majesty are intended to underscore how weak *we* are and how much we need Him. He is great... we are not. He is utterly self-sufficient... we are far from it. All those biblical descriptions of the glories of God simply underscore how *desperately* we need Him.

And, oh, America needs Him as never before! The United States may be a superpower on the global stage, but its citizens are, for the most part, faltering in spirit and feeble in faith. Our country today is in urgent need of help from our mighty God -- it's one reason why "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" was chosen as the theme for the 2011 National Day of Prayer. To liken God to a mighty fortress is to show weak, frail human beings that their only hope for safety and security is God. *“The name of the Lord is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe”* (Proverbs 18:10 TLB).

Ask anyone. The moral seams of our Republic are ripping and unraveling. As a result, our country is in the midst of great turmoil and distress. Just a few decades ago, the American public shared a moral consensus, but today, everyone *“does what is right in his own eyes”* (Proverbs 21:2). Our schools, courts and communities grope blindly for lack of a moral compass, while ignoring the true Source of all wisdom and righteousness. Although the United States was founded on solid biblical moorings and shaped by great Christian leaders, our nation bears little resemblance to the America of our founding fathers.

Not long ago while visiting the US Capitol in Washington DC, I admired the paintings hanging in the Rotunda -- one depicts the baptism of Pocahontas; another, the signers of the Declaration of Independence gathering around an open Bible; the Pilgrims praying before sailing the Atlantic; and other paintings depict explorers planting Christian flags and crosses firmly on American soil. Each painting represents a remarkable, historic connection between the Christian faith and the United States of America. And should any organization seek to remove those paintings from the US Capitol or even eradicate “In God We Trust” from our currency or federal buildings, it can be easily argued that such Christian icons are completely consistent within the historical tradition of the United States. We are a nation founded on Christian principles.

But how far we've fallen! Last weekend I heard Burl Cain, warden of the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, give a message about the various prison ministries in which his inmates are free to participate. At last count, there were more than 30 small church groups in which prisoners could take part. Warden Cain observed, "We're free to pray in our prisons, but not in our public schools. You have to come to prison to pray on government property!"

Americans have forgotten what made this country great over the last two centuries. But we can change that. Prayer not only changes things, prayer changes people. And as honorary chairman of the National Day of Prayer for 2011, I ask you to join me in bringing the needs of our country before the Throne of God's grace. Join me in using the theme for the 2011 National Day of Prayer as fodder for faithful praying; Psalm 91:1-2 says, *"I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'"* Envision the time when every American will respect our historic Christian traditions; look to the time when we will gladly acknowledge that God is our refuge and fortress; may every US citizen and alien within our borders place their trust in God!

The first Thursday in May is traditionally set aside for the people of this land to reflect upon the religious foundations of our country and to pray for our national and community leaders, our courts and schools, the brave men and women in our Armed Services, and for our churches and our families. I encourage you to join the National Day of Prayer efforts being planned in your own community, or gather a group and initiate an event which will welcome and provide an opportunity for the people in your community to gather on May 5th and pray for America. Thank you for being a part of the growing swell of citizens who are deeply committed to pray for our great country and its people!