

Sunday, June 25, 2017
Did You Know?

Canada at 150

There are so many anniversaries and celebrations this year! It's the 500th anniversary of the Reformation (Oct 31). It's also the 40th anniversary of Young Nak Church (Nov 12) and we can't forget that it's the 150th anniversary of our great country -- Oh Canada! What an amazing year to be able to celebrate our faith, our church, and our country. Wow! Let's talk about our country.

One of the amazing blessings of living in Canada is that freedom of conscience and religion is protected in our constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is a freedom we must not take for granted. A recent article in *The Economist* (2017) tells us that religious freedom worldwide is on the decline.

State restrictions on freedom of worship are concentrated in the Middle East and North Africa, the origin of the Abrahamic faiths. In that region, 95% of governments engage in harassment and the use of force against religious groups, with Egypt's policies the sternest of all. However, European countries, including some of the continent's secular liberal democracies, can be intolerant as well.

A Pew research study from 2015 says that 40% of countries had high or very high levels of religious restrictions. In the same article, it tells us that the highest levels of government restrictions on religion are found in the Middle-East/North Africa, where we find much of the Muslim world. In second place is the Asia-Pacific where we find China and North Korea. At the bottom of the list, the region where there is the least amount of government enforced religious restrictions, is the Americas.

However, we shouldn't become complacent, as we have seen increasing clashes in North America where religious beliefs and cultural beliefs have conflicted, especially in the area of sexuality and gender. It doesn't seem like these will end any time soon. Christians must pray for wisdom and resolve as we face a society and government that is becoming increasingly secular and hostile toward Christianity. It is also important to remember that as much as we remain loyal to our country, it's even more important that we remain loyal to our God who is the judge of all humans and governments, by resolving to accept the words of the Bible as the only source for truth for all life and practice, believing that God has given it to us for our flourishing. And, anything that goes against Scripture is to the detriment of society and human good.

As we celebrate 150 years, give major thanks to God for Canada and the freedoms we enjoy here. At the same time, let's not forget to pray for our nation, for our government leaders, and especially for the Church in Canada -- that the bride of Christ would love and serve her Bridegroom, for His sake, and for the peoples of the world that have come to our great country.

Soli Deo Gloria

Pastor Peter