

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH
THE PIONEER BAPTIST

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“Preaching the same truth since before Kentucky was a state.”

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I AM THANKFUL FOR WHAT AMERICA ONCE WAS

By: Pastor Tom Ross

As I think about the 236th celebration marking America's Declaration of Independence from oppressive British rule, I am humbled to be a citizen of what has arguably been the greatest civilization in human history. Even with all of the imperfections throughout our history, no other system of government has provided more freedom, religious liberty, and the hope of prosperity to its citizens. No other country has done more Gospel mission work and nation building around the world. America has long been recognized as a political, moral, industrial, and economic leader throughout the world. I am proud of our heritage and history. I am thankful that I was part of something special while it lasted.

Unfortunately, I live in the generation that took our freedoms for granted. I live in the generation that allowed the American Civil Liberties Union to threaten and intimidate our local schools and communities. I live in the generation that took the Bible, the Ten Commandments, and prayer out of the public forum. I live in the generation where the godless religion of secular humanism has infiltrated every facet of society. I live in the generation that made it legal to exterminate living children in the womb. I live in the generation that seeks to destroy the sacred union of holy matrimony between a man and a woman by redefining the meaning of marriage. I live in the generation that promotes idolatry, immorality, and hedonism. I live in the generation that allowed Hollywood, pop culture, and mainstream media to determine the values and morals of millions through in-

cessant indoctrination and intimidation. I live in the generation in which professors in our universities routinely mock the principles of our founding fathers and diminish the value of our Constitution. I live in the generation that has rewritten our history in an attempt to purge God and His influence out of our society. I live in the generation that has promoted an entitlement and welfare mentality among its citizenry, rather than personal responsibility, self discipline, and self sufficiency.

I have witnessed the spiritual downfall of America. I have seen immorality exalted and Biblical standards mocked. I have watched the media glorify proponents of socialism and communism while demeaning law abiding citizens. I have witnessed liberal “so-called preachers” promote false doctrine and plant doubts in the minds of their congregants about the authority of Scripture. We live in a generation where politicians on both sides of the aisle care more about power, popularity, poll numbers, and getting reelected rather than doing what is right in the eyes of God.

I fear that the truth expressed in Isaiah 5:20-24 will soon be a reality in our once great nation: *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are*

mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! Therefore as the fire devoured the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.” Psalm 9:17 declares: *“The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”*

My hope is that God will pour upon our nation a spirit of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is *“the Way, the Truth, and the Life”* (John 14:6). My prayer is that we will return to God in humility, prayer, and repentance as II Chronicles 7:14 declares: *“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.”* The future of our once great nation is in peril. It cannot be fixed by political messiahs or government policies. We must all take personal responsibility for our lives and look to God for direction and strength. *“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer”* (Psalm 19:14).



Our freedoms were secured by the blood and guts of great patriots. Their sacrifices paved the way for our freedoms.

OUR NATION WAS ESTABLISHED BY PEOPLE WITH MORAL CHARACTER

The citizens of early America were people of moral character and conviction that was based on a Judeo-Christian world view. In the main people had a measure of respect for God, His Word, and His laws. I am not saying that everybody in early America professed to be a Christian. However, there was a moral ethic that permeated society that emanated from God's Word and the Moral Law. Honesty, hard work, and self-discipline were virtues that were promoted in families and among society at large. Lying, stealing, intemperance, and cheating were looked upon as vices that were shameful and immoral. These simple principles were emphasized and embraced as being profitable to the general welfare of society. Our founding fathers were leaders who believed that God's Word was essential to a civil society.

George Washington, our first President said: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible." (p. 660, *America's God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations*).

In his Farewell Address on September 19, 1796 Washington said:

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable agents...And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." (Ibid. p. 661)

James Madison, our fourth President, known as the Father of the Constitution wrote:

"The belief in a God All Powerful, wise, and good, is so essential to the moral order of the World and to the happiness of man, that arguments which enforce it cannot be drawn from too many sources nor adapted with too much solicitude to the different characters and capacities to be impressed with it." (p.

131, *Faith of our Founding Fathers*, by Tim LaHaye).

Daniel Webster wrote:

"Lastly, our ancestors established their system of government on morality and religious sentiment. Moral habits, they believed, cannot safely be trusted on any other foundation than religious principle, nor any government be secure which is not supported by moral habits." (p. 29 in *Rebirth of America*).

Noah Webster, the author of the first American Dictionary that bears his name, and cousin of Daniel wrote:

"The moral principles and precepts contained in the Scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws. All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery, and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible." (ibid. p. 33)

Supreme Court Justice Josiah Brewer, wrote the following decision on February 29, 1892, confirming our Christian heritage:

"Our laws and our institutions must necessarily be based upon and embody the teachings of The Redeemer of mankind. It is impossible that it should be otherwise; and in this sense and to this extent our civilization and our institutions are emphatically Christian...This is a religious people. This is historically true. From the discovery of this continent to the present hour, there is a single voice making this affirmation...we find everywhere a clear recognition of the same truth...These, and many other matters which might be noticed, add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a Christian nation." (Church of the Holy Trinity vs. United States, pp. 599-601, *America's God and Country*).

Included in the moral dignity and integrity of early Americans and the founders of our nation was a sense of personal responsibility and a strong work ethic. People had a mind to work. They were rugged individualists who pioneered the building of our great nation. They despised sloth and venerated the virtue of a good work ethic. Proverbs 13:4 & 11 state: "The soul of the

sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat...but he that gathered by labour shall increase." Proverbs 14:23 declares: "In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury." In early America there were no entitlements. There was no welfare state. Those who were unable to provide for themselves due to poor health were helped by families and churches. I am amazed at the amount of work our forefathers were able to get done by the sheer force of their will to persist and overcome all obstacles. They were able to clear the land, build their homes, and provide for their families without all the modern technologies we now have.

I agree with what Lyman Abbot wrote about America's greatness:

"A nation is made great, not by its fruitful acres, but by the men who cultivate them: not by its great forests, but by the men who use them; not by its mines, but by the men who build and run them. America was a great land when Columbus discovered it: Americans have made of it a great nation.

...And so they have for they pioneered a continent, subdued the elements that at first worked against them, molded a society of peoples from all over the world. America's initiative and ingenuity are known across the earth. Other nations have looked on in awe at her ability over the decades to produce not only her own needs, but much more." (pp. 23-24 in *Rebirth of America*).

Thomas Jefferson, the writer of our Declaration of Independence and Third President was known for his self-discipline and temperance. John Abbot, in his book "Lives of the Presidents of the United States" wrote the following about the habits of Jefferson:

"In college he often devoted fifteen hours a day to hard study...In the winter he rose punctually at five o'clock. In the summer, as soon as, in the first gray of the morning he could discern the hands of the clock in his room, he sprang from his bed. At nine o'clock in summer he retired; at ten o'clock in winter...Gambing he so thoroughly detested that he never learned to distinguish one card

from another. Ardent spirits he never drank, tobacco in any form he never used, and he was never heard to utter an oath.” (pp. 99-100)

Oh, that we might learn from the moral character, religious principles, study habits, and work ethic of our ancestors! May God deliver us from the vain and worldly pursuits that steal our time and talents! Ephesians 5:15-17 declares: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”

OUR FOUNDERS WERE PATRIOTS AND FREEDOM LOVERS

It sickens me when I hear elitist college professors and self proclaimed intellectuals trash and demean our founders. Our founders were patriots in the truest sense of the word. By the grace of God, determination, and unmatched courage the colonists were able to defeat the most powerful nation on earth at the time. The fight for independence from Great Britain and the ultimate victory our forefathers secured is one of the most remarkable feats in all of human history. Our freedoms were secured by the blood and guts of great patriots. Their sacrifices paved the way for our freedoms.

The signers of the Declaration of Independence put their lives on the line when they put their name to the venerable document of freedom:

“We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies, are and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States...And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

On page 15 in the book *Rebirth of*

America we read:

“The fifty-six courageous men who signed that document understood that this was not just high sounding rhetoric. They knew that if they succeeded, the best they could expect would be years of hardship in a struggling new nation. If they lost, they would face a hangman’s noose as traitors.

Of the fifty-six, few were long to survive. Five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes, from Rhode Island to Charleston, sacked, looted, occupied by the enemy or burned. Two lost their sons in the army. One had two sons captured. Nine of the fifty-six died in the war, from its hardships or from its bullets.”

On March 23, 1775 Patrick Henry gave one of the most noteworthy and oft quoted speeches before the Virginia Convention:

“Sir, we are not weak, if we make a proper use of the means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed in the Holy cause of Liberty, and in such a county as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us.

Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battle alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations; and who will raise up friends to fight our battle for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave...

Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death.” (p. 288, *America’s God and Country*)

I could go on and on with quotes from our founders who risked everything to give birth to the greatest nation in human history. However, I will conclude with two quotes from our second President, John Adams.

On July 1, 1776 Adams spoke at the Continental Congress to the delegates of the 13 Colonies:

“Before God, I believe the hour has come. My judgment approves this meas-

ure, and my whole heart is in it. All that I have, and all that I am, and all that I hope in this life, I am now ready here to stake upon it. And I leave off as I began, that live or die, survive or perish, I am for the Declaration. It is my living sentiment, and by the blessing of God it shall be my dying sentiment. Independence now, and Independence for ever.” (Ibid. pp. 8-9)

On July 3, 1776 in a letter to his wife Abigail, John Adams wrote prophetic words regarding the celebration of Independence:

“The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever.

You will think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil and blood and treasure that it will cost to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these States. Ye through all the gloom I can see the rays of ravishing light and glory. I can see that the end is worth more than all the means; that posterity will triumph in that day’s transaction, even though we may regret it, which I trust in God we shall not.” (Ibid. p. 9)

May God be pleased to raise up another generation of patriots and statesmen in our fair land. We need men and women who embrace the principles of freedom and liberty that have guided our republic for the past 236 years. Let us fight with every fiber of our being to defend the sacred principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness so that we may preserve the legacy of our great nation.



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