

INTRODUCTION

Aren't you proud to be an American? I feel like that little boy in Sunday School when they were talking about the creation and the teacher said, “Boys and girls, who can tell me the name of the first man? And the little boy held up his hand and said, “I know! I know! It's George Washington!” And the teacher said, “No, that's wrong. The answer to that is Adam. Adam was the first man.” And the little boy said, “Well, I guess if you include foreigners.”

As we think about the future of America, some people are a bit nervous, because there is a lot of talk that we may elect a female President in 2008. Personally I think I could vote for a female President. I think I could vote for an African American female President. I think I could vote for a single African American female President—but as far as I know, Oprah Winfrey is not running. So we're not here to talk about politics. The word “politics” comes from *poly*, meaning “many” and *tics* meaning “blood-sucking creatures.” We're here today to talk about “One God Over Our Nation.” When we recite the pledge, we say, “One nation [comma] under God” and I'll talk about that in a moment. I want to turn it around and put the primacy on the God who is over not only our nation but the God over all nations.

Let me share with you some scriptures that just verify this. The Bible says in Job 12:23, “He makes nations great, and destroys them; he enlarges nations, and disperses them.” Psalm 33:12 says, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance.” And Psalm 113:4 says, “The Lord is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens.” The Bible teaches that not only does the Creator want to have a personal relationship with you through Jesus Christ, but that God also chooses to have relationships with nations; and nations are accountable before God. I believe we as Americans are blessed more than any nation on the face of the planet and the reason we are so blessed is because God has blessed us. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.” I just want to talk to you today as a friend; not really as a pastor—and of course not as a politician, which I am not. I want to have a little “fireside chat” as a fellow patriot, somebody who loves America like you do, as someone who still gets a tear in my eye whenever I sing the National Anthem. I just want to share my heart with you.

1. We are blessed because our first settlers came seeking a place to freely express their Christian faith

And I want to tell you three reasons why I believe America has been so blessed. Reason number one: We are blessed because our first settlers came seeking a place to freely express their Christian faith. Why is there even an America today? Because during the Protestant Reformation in Europe, Christians were killed and arrested because of the way they believed and practiced their faith, so they flocked to the New World. People talk about our “founding documents” and they think in terms of 1776. Let's go back earlier than that. Let's go back 150 years earlier and read some of the documents from the very first Americans. As you recall the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock and the very first official American document is what we call “The Mayflower Compact” and this is what they wrote:

“In the name of God, Amen, having undertaken for the glory of God and for the advancement of the Christian faith, do solemnly and mutually in the presence of God

covenant and combine ourselves together.”

That’s just the beginning and they go on and talk about how they are there so they can express their faith in Jesus Christ. Most of you know your American history. We began with 13 original colonies, and they really thought of themselves almost as independent nations for awhile—until they realized they had to work together—so in 1643 there was a meeting of some of the New England Colonies and they created a document called the New England Confederation Constitution. It begins:

“Whereas, we all come into these parts with one and the same end and aim; namely to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the liberties of the gospel in purity and peace.”

How much plainer can it be? And did you know when that motion was offered, there was no opposition to it; no debate; because there was no ACLU back in 1643. They said, “This is why we are here... We all came here to express the kingdom of Jesus Christ”

2. We’re blessed because the founders of our nation acknowledged God’s authority over us

Well let me just go on and tell you the second reason I believe we’re so blessed. Number two. We are blessed because the founders of our nation acknowledged God’s authority over us. I realize the Continental Congress was not a revival meeting and many of them weren’t strong believers BUT understand these early American documents acknowledged the presence and authority of God. The Treaty of Paris in 1783 ended the Revolutionary War, but there were two Treaties of Paris: One ended the French and Indian War in 1763. The prelude says, “In the name of the most Holy and undivided Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so be it.” How this early document peace treaty started.

And then we move on to 1776, the day we’re celebrating today, the 230th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. They acknowledged there was a God. They didn’t use Christian terminology and that was by design, because in the culture of the 18th century there was such reverence and respect for the name of God and the name of Jesus, they seldom used it in public usage. Today, Orthodox Jews have never spoken the name of God, or written the name of God, because it’s too Holy. So they use all of these other words to describe God. For instance, you’re all familiar with this famous line from the Declaration of Independence. “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and we are endowed by their Creator...” They believed there was a God who created us and He gave us certain inalienable rights and among them are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” (inalienable means they can’t be transferred to another)

They were pretty smart, weren’t they? They were smart enough NOT to say, “These are our rights: Life, liberty and happiness.” They didn’t say “happiness.” What did they say? “The *pursuit* of happiness,” because I think they were wise enough to know we all may pursue happiness, but it is something we never attain in this life, but it’s our right to pursue it! And they said, “God gave us these rights!” The Declaration of Independence doesn’t give us the rights, the British Monarchy doesn’t give us the rights; even our own nation or our constitution doesn’t give

us these rights. God the Creator gives us these rights!

A lot has been written about George Washington. Was he a believer? Was he a deist? Deism is a belief there is a God, but he's far away, uninterested, and an uninvolved God. In fact the philosophy of deism often uses the term “a watchmaker God.” It's like a watchmaker who made the watch, wound it up, set it to ticking, and then left it alone and doesn't affect it. Many deists believe that's what God did. There's a God somewhere that created us and we're here, but he's not involved in our lives right now and George Washington has been accused of being a deist. I urge you to study his life. He was a Christian. He was a believer in Jesus Christ. He was very private about his faith, but he held onto that faith. And when he was sworn in as the first President of the United States—before the Constitution was written—he requested his Bible be used for him to place his hand on to take the oath of office. And although it's never written in our Constitution (later it is required) when he came to the end of that oath of office he said, “So help me, God.” And then he moved that day immediately from the swearing in into Congress and gave his first inaugural speech. Back in those days, they didn't give an inaugural speech to the nation. It was given to Congress. And this is the very first thing the first President of the United States ever said in his Inaugural Address, April 30, 1789:

“It would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations and whose providential aid can supply every human defect, that His benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States.” *George Washington (First Inaugural Address, April 30, 1789)*

George Washington didn't believe God was uninvolved. He believed in a God who presides (present tense) in the councils of nations. Ladies and gentlemen, the very first act of the first President of the United States when he spoke to Congress was, “It would be improper for me to say or do anything before I pray and thank God and seek God's blessings.” Do you know why we are blessed? Because from the beginning our founding fathers acknowledged one God over our nation!

3. America has consistently honored God in our public life

The third reason I think we're so blessed is because America has consistently honored God in our public life. From the very beginning we invited God into our public forum. We've talked to God publicly. We've honored and acknowledged God. It's everywhere. You don't have to look for it. It's not some hidden message. It's on the forefront. A few weeks ago I had the privilege of visiting Washington D.C. and I had never in all of my life had the chance to visit some of the monuments. We rode an elevator to the top of the Washington Monument. If you've ever been in Washington, the Washington Monument dominates the entire landscape. It stands 555 feet tall. It's a perfect obelisk. And there can never be another building in Washington built higher than the Washington Monument. It always will be the pinnacle, the peak. And written on the very pinnacle are the four words, “Let God Be Praised!” America, all we have to do is lift our eyes up and see we have always been a nation who has said, “Let God Be Praised!”

It's on our money, “In God We Trust.” It's in the Pledge of Allegiance, “One nation under God,”

and as you know there are a lot of court cases and discussion today about removing, “One nation under God” from our Pledge of Allegiance—and the people that are against it. They talk as if it was something like affecting or changing the Declaration of Independence or something. Because they say, “Well it was only added in 1954.” That’s right, but the Pledge of Allegiance was written in 1892 by a Baptist preacher named Francis Bellamy. It was a very simple pledge for schoolchildren to say, “I pledge allegiance to my flag.” And then later as it spread and school children began to say it, they realized that probably wasn’t good enough, so in 1923 the United States Flag Conference changed it from “I pledge allegiance to my flag,” because there were so many immigrants they said, “Which flag are we pledging allegiance to?” It was changed to “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.” But for most of the beginning of the 20th century, it really wasn’t said by a lot of adults. It was something schoolchildren did. The Pledge of Allegiance did not become the official pledge until 1942, when Congress designated it. So the Pledge was changing over the short history of the time it was in existence and then in 1954 President Eisenhower said, “We need to add ‘one nation under God.’” Why do you think that was added at the time? Many of you from the Greatest Generation remember the hardships and the struggle of World War II. It was the deadliest war in the history of the world: 62 million people lost their lives; 420,000 Americans died. America had just come out of that. And that generation of leaders understood had it not been for the power and the grace and the help of God, today we might be speaking Japanese or German. They said, “It’s proper for us to say ‘One nation under God’” and I say, “Good for them! May it ever be so in America!”

Warning: “The wicked return to the grave and all the nations that forget God.” (Psalm 9:17)

But God gives every nation a warning in Psalm 9:17. “The wicked return to the grave and all the nations that forget God.” The biggest danger we face as Americans is that we will let those voices that want to remove God from our public forum to take over. We must stand up for what’s right! We must humble ourselves before God and continue to seek his face. As bad as it was in World War II and as bad as we think we may have it right now with this worldwide war against terrorism, it’s nothing like it must have been during the Civil War with brothers killing brothers and our nation ripped apart. That’s why one of our greatest Presidents, Abraham Lincoln, called for “A National Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer.” I think these are words we need to pay attention to today.

“Whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.”...“We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and

preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!”...“All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the Nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings, no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering Country, to its former happy condition of unity and peace.”

Abraham Lincoln said, “You know what’s wrong with America? We’ve forgotten God and that’s why we’re so divided.” And we’re a divided nation today too. We’re divided morally. We’re divided politically. And we need to do the same thing Abraham Lincoln said to do in 1863. We need to seek the face of God and confess our national sins and when we do that, God will restore our nation. What can you do? Pray! Pray for those in authority as the Bible says. Vote! Get involved in the political process and let the voice for morality and the voice for the Word of God be heard! Because I promise you those who have agendas other than a biblical agenda are mobilized and they are loud and they are active and we truly are part of the silent majority and as someone has said, “The hottest place in hell is surely reserved for those who in times of national crisis remain silent.”

CONCLUSION

You never know when you’ll have the opportunity to stand up for America. Rick Monday played baseball for the Chicago Cubs and the Dodgers and other teams. He played for nineteen years. He had a lifetime batting average of .264. He’ll never make it to the Hall of Fame, but he did one thing on one night that puts him in my Hall of Fame. It was April 25, 1976, thirty years ago. The Cubs were playing at Dodger Stadium and Rick Monday was playing center field. Suddenly two people leapt out of the stands and began to burn an American flag. And Rick Monday ran out there, grabbed that flag and ran away with it. He rescued it! Ben Scully was announcing that night and said, “Wait a minute! There’s an animal loose! Wait! Two of them! I’m not sure what he’s doing out there. It looks like he’s going to burn a flag! And Rick Monday runs in and takes it away from him!” And when he did that, the crowd stood to their feet and cheered and spontaneously began singing “God Bless America.” Thirty years later Rick Monday commented on what happened that night. “I don’t remember if we won or lost the game but I’ll never forget the crowd singing! That little piece of cloth represents a lot of rights and freedoms that people have given up their lives to protect.”

We sing the National Anthem all the time. But have you ever noticed we only sing one verse of it? And that verse ends with a question. It’s a question. We end the song with a question. What’s the question? “Oh, say, does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave o’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?” It does! But do you know why it does? Because we’ve honored God. We’ve recognized God. And you may not know it, but when Francis Scott Key wrote the poem that became our National Anthem, there’s a last verse we never sing. Most people don’t even know the reason the flag still waves is because of the last verse of this poem.

*Oh thus be it ever when free men shall stand
Between their loved homes and war’s desolation
Blessed with victory and peace may the heaven-rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us as a nation*

*Then conquer we must when our cause is just
And this be our motto, "In God Is Our Trust!"
When we do that then the Star Spangled Banner
In triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.*

The only hope for America is for us to honor and acknowledge the one God over our nation!

OUTLINE

WE ARE BLESSED BECAUSE...

1. The first settlers came seeking a place to freely express their Christian faith

“In the name of God, amen. Having undertaken for the glory of God and for the advancement of the Christian faith, do solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, covenant and combine ourselves together.” *Mayflower Compact (1620)*

“Whereas we all come into these parts with one and the same end and aim, namely to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to enjoy the liberties of the gospel in purity and peace.” *New England Confederation Constitution (1643)*

2. The founders of our nation acknowledged God’s authority over us

“In the name of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So be it. Article I. There shall be a Christian, universal, and perpetual peace, as well by sea as by land, and a sincere and constant friendship shall be re established between their Britannick, Most Christian, Catholick, and Most Faithful Majesties, and between their heirs and successors, kingdoms, dominions, provinces, countries, subjects, and vassals, of what quality or condition soever they be” *Treaty of Paris (1763)*

“We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” *Declaration of Independence (1776)*

“It would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations and whose providential aide can supply every human defect, that His benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States.” *George Washington (First Inaugural Address, April 30, 1789)*

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God’s warning: “The wicked return to the grave, and all the nations that forget God”
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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes