

## Let Freedom Ring!

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Today is the Fourth of July. It would seem out of place, this Sabbath being Independence Day, not to address the wondrous birth of our country, the United States and recognize the hand of God in its creation. For many of the ideas and quotations in this sermon I am indebted to a little book called America's Godly Heritage, by David Barton.

Like Adam on Eden's carpet, the Lord took the dust of this ground and formed a nation, and then breathed His breath into it that it might live. It was by divine providence that the pilgrims, seeking asylum from the persecutions that raged on the Continent, risked their lives to cross the Atlantic and carve out a life in a foreign land. Our Founding Fathers recognized and celebrated this providential guiding.

Remembering this heavenly design, on July 4, 1837, 61 years after the Declaration of Independence had been signed, John Quincy Adams spoke these words, "Why is it that, next to the birthday of the Savior of the World your most joyous and most venerated festival returns on this day? Is it not that in the chain of human events, the birthday of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birthday of the Savior? That it forms a leading event in the progress of the gospel dispensation? Is it not that the Declaration of Independence first organized the social compact on the foundation of the Redeemer's mission upon earth? That it laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity?"

Leading out in the military and presidential role of this new government was George Washington, who confessed that his life had been spared miraculously and that he was divinely appointed to his task of being the "father of his nation." While serving with the British in 1755 in the French and Indian conflicts in Pennsylvania, a young 23-year-old Colonel George Washington was dispatched to assist the British General Edward Braddock, whose troops were used to waging battle in the European style. Their assignment was to remove the French from Fort Duquesne, now the city of Pittsburgh.

By July 9, the troops were within seven miles of the fort, only to be ambushed by the French and Indians, who fired upon them from the sanctuary of trees and rocks

while the forces of Braddock were vulnerable in a ravine. The British, unprepared for this style of warfare, were slaughtered. They lined up shoulder to shoulder and were picked off with ease. Within about 2 hours, 714 of the British and American troops were shot. Of the 86 officers, 26 were killed and another 36 were wounded. Washington was the only mounted officer to survive. Those casualties inflicted on the French and Indian forces were accomplished mostly by the soldiers of Washington, more accustomed to this type of battle. He had brought 100 “Virginia Buckskins” with him who knew how to fight in these circumstances. On the return to Fort Cumberland, General Braddock died of his wounds and Washington performed the role of military chaplain in his burial.

At the end of the battle, Washington removed his jacket and discovered four bullet holes through it, but yet no bullet had touched him. During the skirmish, horses had been shot from under him, but he was unscathed. He concluded, “I now exist and appear in the land of the living by the miraculous care of Providence that protected me beyond all human expectation.”

Years later in 1770 when Washington returned to the same woods in Pennsylvania where this battle had taken place, he was met by an old Indian chief, who introduced himself as being the one who had led the forces on the other side. The aged chief explained, “I have traveled a long and weary path that I might see the young warrior of the great battle. I am come to pay homage to the man who is the particular favorite of Heaven, and who can never die in battle.”

The chief went on to tell how he had instructed his braves to focus on the officers and shoot them, knowing that if they were successful in removing the leaders, victory would be assured. Along with the other officers, Washington had been made a target. The chief personally fired at Washington 17 times, with a rifle he had never known to miss, without apparent effect. He then concluded that Washington must be under the protection of the Great Spirit and ordered his soldiers to stop wasting their bullets in firing upon him. Washington remained under conviction that the hand of God protected and preserved his life for a purpose.

Godly principles were embedded in the foundation of this country. The implements by which school children are taught can have a profound influence on young minds. One of the first and foremost educational tools was The New England Primer, first introduced in Boston in 1690 and used widely in America until 1930. It was the book by which many in this country learned to read. Many, of the Founding Fathers, including Benjamin Franklin, not only learned to read from it,

but made sure it was reprinted and circulated so that their children and grandchildren would have it.

In this book, following the introduction of the letters of the alphabet, a special section gave illustrations for each letter by the use of a Bible text. For the letter “A” the passage was given, “A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.” Proverbs 10:1. The letter “B” was followed by “Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith.” Proverbs 15:16. The letter “C” was adjoined by “Come unto Christ all ye that labor and are heavy laden and He will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28. Is such a tool for reading we ask, employing the Bible in its text, available to the children who attend the schools of America today?

For years, Washington’s great Farewell Address was taught to the students of America’s classrooms, in which he stated, “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars.”

John Adams declared, “The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were... the general principles of Christianity.” Because of this, America has enjoyed unparalleled success. Happy is that nation whose God is the Lord. America is now the world’s longest on-going constitutional republic, existing in this form for more than two centuries. During this period in which the United States has had one government, France has had 15, Poland 7 and Russia four just in the last 100 years.

All have had access to the same resources. What made the difference for America? To answer that question, political scientists conducted a ten-year research of all the written documents of those whose influence was felt during the formative years of our country. The scholars put together 15,000 representative writings and identified 3,154 quotations drawn from within those documents. They then analyzed and compiled the sources of the quotations cited. It was found that of all the quotations of the Founding Fathers, the political philosopher Charles Montesquieu was quoted a total of 8.3 percent of the total. Legal scholar William Blackstone was quoted 7.9 percent and John Locke was third with 2.9 percent.

These were the three most frequently quoted individuals during this period, but the single most referenced source was the Bible, accounting for 34 percent of all quotes! In fact it could be argued that the source for much of the thought and

philosophy of those individuals was originally the Bible. Blackstone, who was quoted 8.3 percent of the total, wrote Commentaries on the Laws which was used extensively in American courts till the 20th century. In these he drew heavily from the Scriptures. For example, Albert Finney, who became a university president, educator, civil rights leader and revivalist during the Second Great Awakening of the early 1800's, aspired to become an attorney. He set about to study Blackstone's Commentaries. Since the author referred to biblical ideas so often in his presentation of law, Finney confessed that during his study of Blackstone he had read so much of the Bible that he became a Christian and received his call to ministry. It would be foolhardy to argue that the Bible did not play a significant part of our country's formation.

By divine providence and prophetic fulfillment this nation was born. In the stable of primitive America, God cradled the Gospel of His Son. It was His design that this nation be blessed with unprecedented opportunities--so that she could become rich and lethargic? No! It was for the purpose of spiritual awakening in preparation for the end of all things. It was within the confines of this country that many of the 10 great signs of Revelation were uniquely displayed, such as the famous Dark Day of May 19, 1780 affecting New England, followed by the spectacle of the moon arising covered in blood. It was primarily in America that the movement swelled that announced, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh" in the 1840's. It was in America that a small group formed who became Seventh-day Adventists, proclaiming to the world the messages of the three angels in Revelation 14.

What country has enjoyed such prosperity and protection as America? How many invasions on her territory by foreign intruders has she suffered? Not many. Except for Pearl Harbor and 9/11, she has enjoyed a peaceful existence on her homeland. God has blessed this nation with affluence and abundance, for the purpose that she might share with others blessings of material and spiritual things. Indeed, beginning in the 19th century missionaries have been sent out from her coasts to herald the Gospel.

But the sad story of America is the sad story of any and all who fail to live up to the light and opportunities that Heaven sends. The same sad pronouncement made against the talented and gifted angel Lucifer might be said of America today, "How art thou fallen from Heaven?" Gifts that are turned into tools of self-glorification, dissipation and vice become curses. Thus it was for Lucifer who fell from his lofty position and became Satan, the arch-rival of God.

So it was for the nation which God had called, in the pilgrim Abraham, from Ur of the Chaldees to be the depository of His blessings in Canaan. Placed at the very crossroads of society, in ancient Palestine, it was God's plan that Israel share His blessings and His truth with the world. She was to be the special herald of the Messiah's coming to the earth. As they engaged in commerce with those who traveled the caravan routes which intersected their borders, opportunity to tell of the wondrous God Whose blessing brought them prosperity opened. Israel excelled in the commerce of gain, but not the commerce of evangelism. She became selfish. She adopted the customs and religions of her neighbors. She clamored to be like them in lifestyle. She fell from her God-given stature. The tree of God's planting was cut down. "How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Israel!"

What is the story of America? Is it not the same? Was she not planted by the hand of the Almighty for a specific purpose? Was she not blessed with the abundance of natural resources and inventive wisdom so that she could bless others? Was she not given divine instruction in her infancy so that she could mature in the knowledge of Godly principles and heritage?

What has happened? Those of you who are blessed with years know the truth of this. America is not the same as she was. "How art thou fallen from Heaven, America!" What has happened to turn your eyes from your Creator to the despicable worship of futile things? What has happened to cause the wisdom God has given you to be turned into a curse? Your media spew forth trash, filth and blasphemy. Your schools churn out infidels and atheists. Your politicians exhibit anything but the Christian ideals laid out by the Fathers of two centuries ago. A way of life is promoted that has nothing to do with preparing for Jesus' coming and living in Heaven. Pray for America! Pray that she might be healed!

And yet, prophecy predicts another outcome. While this nation, depicted as an animal with lamb-like horns in the great prophecy of Revelation 13, began with Christian ideals and freedom of religion, the Bible foretells a change. The beast that at first appeared as a Lamb will speak as a dragon. Freedom will be replaced by intolerance.

Do we see the beginnings of this happening in America? Yes, we do. Whereas the Bible was once cherished and honored, it is now ridiculed and marginalized. Its principles are nullified and demoted. Those institutions that are held sacred by the Scriptures, such as marriage, are now under open attack. America is fast on the road to total godlessness.

The Bible teaches us that when we push God away, we remove ourselves from His protection. This is revealed in what Jesus spoke to the people of His day. With tears in His voice He said to them, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate.” Matthew 23:37, 38.

When God’s protection is removed, Satan delights in bringing destruction, desolation and havoc. He then exults in persuading men that these calamities are brought by God, resulting in people hating the One Who is the Giver of every perfect gift. My friends, engage in no practice that will result in your forfeiting the blessing of God. Neglect no duty that will result in the withdrawal of His hand of mercy.

Can we see that God’s protecting hand has been withdrawn from our fair land? Look about you; there are disasters of every description that crowd the corners of our newspapers. Train wrecks, plane accidents and so many calamities of other vehicles you can’t count them. Murders and violence of every ilk. In the last few years we’ve witnessed disasters in nature that have brought devastation. Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and fires. We’ve become so deadened to these disasters that they don’t make an impression on our minds, unless we are personally involved or know someone who is.

The Bible sometimes makes “shortcuts” in its presentation of cause and effect. We know it to be true that Satan is the author of disaster. We also know that through our choices in driving away God and His protection, the devil is allowed to do that which he could not do otherwise. Because of this cause and effect relationship, the Bible presents these calamities as being “God’s judgments.”

Israel was warned repeatedly through the messengers of the Lord that they should put away their idols, repent and turn to God and receive His blessings. If not, His hand of protection would be removed and Satan would have access to them. While this doesn’t explain all there is about life (witness the experience of Job), it would be a severe mistake to discount this principle. Thus the Bible describes the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar against Israel as being of divine approval. Nebuchadnezzar was His “servant.” Because God is omnipotent, nothing can happen without His permission. Thus, in a sense, He “does” what He “allows”.

In this sense, the destruction that wastes at noon day represents the just judgment of an offended God. We have pushed God out of our schools and out of our minds.

We have murdered babies and called it family planning. We have coddled criminals and contorted justice. Can God continually countenance such behavior? Can His blessing abide on such a nation that flagrantly practices such things?

The leaders of our nation find themselves today with challenges beyond description. They try to patch up a failed economy, but it is with mortar that has the adhering quality of Teflon. Many today are facing an uncertain tomorrow with fear and foreboding. Will there be a solution for the money crisis? Will there be a social security check when I retire? Will the America of tomorrow be a safe place to live? Will one of our enemies launch a nuclear device within our borders?

The answers to these questions can be found only in Christ. The real answer is to study the plan that He has authored for this world as revealed in Scripture and pray, "Thy kingdom come." The problems of this planet will not be solved until the Lord's return. They will become greater. All of these issues will continue to mount and exert even greater pressure on society. The answer is not here below, but up above. Jesus said, "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." Luke 21:28.

Seen from this perspective, there never was a more exciting time to be alive than today! Travail always comes before deliverance. He is coming soon! Everything written in the Bible will come to pass. Every promise and prophecy will be fulfilled. Soon the eastern sky will open and our Lord will come to take us home!

The Israelites had wandered for forty years in the dusty wilderness. Miraculously they had been fed manna and had drunk water from the rock. Given the fact that there were some two million people in their caravan, besides cattle, that Rock must have produced a mighty river! If every person (this calculation does not take into account water for cattle) were allowed only one gallon of water each day, to suffice for all purposes, the water from the Rock would have had to produce the equivalent of a well giving 1,388 gallons per minute, 24 hours each day for forty years.

Nearing the borders of Canaan, however, the supply of water began to diminish. The mighty river slowed to a trickle, and people began to complain. It was the murmuring of the people in response to this situation that brought forth the momentary indiscretion that cost Moses his opportunity to enter Canaan with his people.

There were two ways by which one could view the event. The glass was "half-empty" or "half-full." On the one hand, the people could say, "God has abandoned

us. He brought us all the way out here in the desert to kill us.” That is the approach that most of the people took. But there was another way to look at this circumstance. The people could have said, “The water from the Rock is slowing. We must be nearing home!” One was the response of doubt; the other the response of faith.

Today, my friends, as we scan the horizon of history and see the world falling apart and the fulfillment of prophecy, we should cherish and express the response of faith. “We must be nearing home!” The signs are all about us. God’s hand is clearly seen in the events of today’s world. We must be nearing home!

Today is the Fourth of July. We call it “Independence Day.” That’s true. But let me tell you of the real Independence Day. It will be the day our dear Savior comes back and we will be forever free of suffering, sorrow, pain and death. The invalid will jump as a gazelle. The blind will be free of sightlessness. We will be free from all effects of these mortal bodies. The freedom we will enjoy will surpass every imagination. Even so, Come Lord Jesus! Maranatha!