

INTRODUCTION

This morning, I'm starting a Patriotic series entitled One Nation Under God. Next week this theme will continue with the five presentations of I Love America.

We are living in troubled times. Would you like to guess who wrote the following words: "We are living in a time of fear. Today is a time of division. There is a deep cleavage in our nation. One of the most disturbing things in our day is the breakdown of law and order. We should settle our political grievances through the vote, and not through violence." (Paul W. Powell, November 23, 1969)

During that time our nation was divided over the Vietnam War and there were protests on almost every major campus. Today the issue is political rancor from the last Presidential election.

When we say the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, we insert the important phrase, "ONE NATION UNDER GOD" and then we say "INDIVISIBLE." But let's be honest, we are living in a divided nation today. There is a toxic level of political rancor and hatred being expressed over the outcome of the election last fall. We've reached a new low when a disgruntled Democrat took two guns and tried to murder republican lawmakers when they were practicing for a charity baseball game.

That vicious act reminds us that political hostility has the potential to destroy lives and weaken our nation. If we are going to be one nation indivisible, we will never be one nation under the Democrats, or One Nation Under the Republicans. Our only hope is to reaffirm that we are ONE NATION UNDER GOD! The only way we can be united is under God's absolute Sovereignty. Our Forefathers understood that. But many Americans have forgotten our great spiritual heritage. Many of our students have been the victims of historical revisionism that has attempted to remove any mention of God, Jesus, or the Bible from the lives or writings of our Forefathers. But fortunately we have volumes and volumes of unequivocal evidence that our Founding Fathers understood the importance of honoring God.

There's a beautiful hymn that says, "Faith of our Fathers, Holy Faith! We will be true to thee till death." I want to talk today about the Faith of our Forefathers.

In Psalm 22 we read words that applied to the nation of Israel, and I think they can apply to our nation as well. King David sang, "But you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in you; they trusted, and you rescued them. They cried to you and were set free; they trusted in you and were not disgraced." (Psalm 22:3-5 CSB) In the same way our Founding Fathers cried out to God and He rescued them. They trusted in God and were not disgraced. We need to discover and recover the powerful faith of our forefathers.

As we learn some truths about our Founding Fathers, I will be reading much of their original words. I want you to hear what they said and what they wrote about faith in God.

1. Our Founding Fathers settled this land seeking religious liberty

People who had been persecuted for their faith in Europe left their homes seeking a new world where they could practice their faith freely. An Anglican minister named Thomas Helwys broke away from the Anglican Church when he started reading the New Testament. He fled to Holland where he met a group of people who believed in baptizing believers—not infants. He was baptized there as a confessing Christian. This group was mocked and labeled “Anabaptists,” which means “re-baptizers.” The first Baptists didn’t take their name; it was a name of derision and mockery. It would be like calling a fat boy “slim” or a bald man “curly”.

Thomas Helwys returned to England to start the first Baptist Church in England in 1612. They were persecuted because they weren’t an Anglican church. Helwys wrote a letter to King James (the same one whose name is on the Bible translation) saying that the King was not God, but he was only a man of flesh and blood like everyone else, and that he had to bow to the real King Jesus. Those words got him thrown into prison where he died at the age of forty.

But his writings had a profound influence on a Puritan scholar named Roger Williams. Fifteen years after Helwys died, Roger Williams founded the First Baptist Church in America. They named their city after God: Providence. So that was literally the First Baptist Church of God.

On these shores, the Puritans, the Baptists, and the Separatists, and Congregationalists could worship as their hearts dictated without fear of persecution from the Church of England. And the early documents of these forefathers reveal their deep and abiding faith in God. John Winthrop was a wealthy landowner who arrived on the second wave of English settlers after the Mayflower. He was governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He saw this new world as a fulfillment of the command of Jesus to be a shining city on a hill.

In 1630, Governor John Winthrop said, “We shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all the people are upon us, so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword through the world.”

As all thirteen colonies began to form, every single one of them had some statement of faith and belief. In 1639 the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut expressed the faith of our forefathers: “For as much as it hath pleased Almighty God by the wise disposition of his divine providence so to order and dispose of things... there should be an orderly and decent Government established according to God, to order and dispose of the affairs of the people...to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus which we now profess...which according to the truth of the said Gospel is now practiced amongst us.”

It’s impossible to ignore the desire of the first settlers of America to establish a government that looked to God as the only hope of their success.

The first regional constitution signed on American soil was the New England Confederation signed in 1640. It reads: “Whereas we all came 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.”

Someone pointed out that during this time of exploration, the Spanish were headed south looking for gold, but the Europeans traveled north looking for God. Both found what they were looking for. The strength and stability of our nation is a testimony of a people eager to have freedom to worship the God of the Bible.

2. Our Founding Fathers acknowledged God as the source of liberty.

As people poured into the thirteen colonies, it soon became obvious that being the possession of the English government wasn't going to work. So our founding fathers met to form a new government. In England the government was under the authority of the King of England. The King gave the rights to his subjects. In this new experiment, there would be no human king. They would look to the Heavenly King as the source of liberty.

When they declared their independence from England they listed a theological reason for their desire for liberty. They said, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The first thing we see is that our founders believed in absolute moral truth. They believe there is a basis of right and wrong. Truth is not relative. Truth isn't what the King or the British Parliament decree. The Bible teaches there is a God-given sense of right and wrong placed in every human heart: A conscience. This truth is self-evident.

And what is the self-evident truth? Here they really spat in the eye of the British. That all men are born, created equal. And they capitalized Men to mean humanity—all men and women. All people are created equal. Not just white people but all people. Not just Jews, but all people. Not just Protestants or Catholics all people are created equal. In England you were either born into the aristocracy or into the common pool. There were and still are different class levels in England. You are born into royalty, nobility, or sadly you are born a commoner. The British Parliament is still comprised of a House of Lords and a House of Commons. When the declaration of Independence was written, there were only certain upper social classes who were called ladies and gentlemen. But these crazy revolutionaries said, “No! We believe every man is created equal!” What a radical idea!

Now these men weren't perfect. Many of them were slave-owners when they wrote that all men were created equal. It would take another century before the country would really understand that powerful truth and abolish slavery. But America still struggles with racism. A few weeks ago after LeBron James had the gate to his house spray painted with racial slurs he said, “It's still hard to be a black man in America.”

On July 4, 1965, Dr. Martin Luther King preached a sermon on the Declaration of Independence. He said, “The founding fathers were really influenced by the Bible. The whole

concept of the *imago dei*, (image of God), is the idea that all men have something within them that God injected. And every man has a capacity to have fellowship with God. And this gives him worth; it gives him dignity. And we must never forget this as a nation: there are no gradations in the image of God. Every man from a treble white to a bass black is significant on God's keyboard, precisely because every man is made in the image of God. One day we will learn that. We will know one day that God made us to live together as brothers and to respect the dignity and worth of every man."

In addition to being created equal, our founding fathers clearly acknowledged that each of us have a Creator. There is a God in heaven who has made us and all that is around us. And it is this personal God who gives us rights, not the King or some government. And every created person has many God-given rights. They didn't name all of them; they mentioned only three: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. Our founding fathers were pro-life. The Bible says God knit us together in our mother's womb, and our forefathers declared that even those precious children in the womb have a right to Life. But our "enlightened" culture has ignored this right and ripped away the lives of 60 million tiny Americans.

We also have the right to Liberty; that means freedom. That can be a very vague term. But when Franklin Delano Roosevelt was President, he said liberty involves freedom in at least four areas. Eleven months before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor he made a famous speech in which he said that every American should have freedom of speech; freedom of worship; freedom from want; and freedom from fear. Those freedoms come from God not the government.

Our founding fathers didn't say we have the right to happiness. They wisely said we have the right to *pursue* happiness. Different things make different people happy. But as you seek happiness, remember WHO gave you this right. It isn't our government. It is the God who created you. The book of Ecclesiastes is a journal of man seeking happiness in everything under the sun. He never finds satisfaction in wealth, pleasure, or fame. He concludes with the formula for true happiness: "Remember your Creator in the Days of Your Youth."

Our Founding Fathers recognized God as the source of our liberty.

3. Our Founding Fathers were willing to die to preserve our liberty.

If you haven't done so in a while, I would encourage you to read the entire Declaration of Independence. After the prologue, the writers list 27 specific charges against the King of England. But then they end the document by repeating their belief and trust in God. They conclude: "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."

When those 56 men signed their name to that document, they knew they might be signing their death warrants. They were willing to die and lose all they had if that was the cost of

freedom. And several of them did die during the war. Many others were arrested and some watched as their houses and crops were burned.

What a radical move! They challenged the leading military power of the world that day: the British Empire. The British would send 50,000 British troops to fight and hire 30,000 Hessian mercenaries. They had the largest navy in the world. George Washington wrote that he never had more than 20,000 soldiers at any one time. The American navy consisted of a few merchant ships whose captains added cannons. The odds greatly favored the British from the beginning. It would be like Mexico declaring war against the U.S.

But the Americans had the edge because they were fighting for freedom and to defend their homeland. And when the French decided to join with the Americans, the war was soon decided in favor of a new nation called the United States of America.

But the fight wasn't over. The British were back in a few years. And from the beginning of our country until this day, brave patriots have been willing to die to preserve our freedom.

So what should we do in light of all that I've shared with you?

TAKEAWAY TRUTH: We must warn our nation about the danger of forgetting God

"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." (Psalm 9:17 NKJV)

Many of our Forefathers left us clear warnings about what would happen to our nation if we ever turned away from God. When George Washington gave his first inaugural address, the first official act he performed was to acknowledge God and to thank Him for His blessings. But toward the end of the same speech, he offered a solemn warning. He said: "The propitious [favorable] smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained." God was smiling on or nation when we acknowledge Him as the source of our Liberty. When God looks at us today, is He smiling?

Yes, American is a deeply divided nation. But never forget that the time of our worst division was during the Civil War. And in the middle of that terrible, bloody, conflict, President Abraham Lincoln called the nation to prayer. Let's hear and heed his words again: "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!" (March 30, 1863)

May we once again be One Nation Under God!

OUTLINE

Our Founding Fathers:

1. Settled this land seeking religious liberty
2. Acknowledged God as the source of liberty.
3. Were willing to die to preserve our liberty.

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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