

The Fourth of July July 3, 2005

Proverbs 14:34 (NKJV)

Righteousness exalts a nation,
But sin is a reproach to any people.

Tomorrow, July 4, 2005, we will celebrate the 229th birthday of our nation.

Let me give you a brief history lesson.

First, let me say that the liberty and the freedom that we enjoy in America, and have helped other nations around the world to emulate, has its roots in the Bible.

John 8:32 (NKJV)

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

It is the Bible that provides mankind with a theology of liberty that brings freedom to those individuals and nations who are oppressed.

Jesus made it clear in the first sermon that He preached that He had come to liberate us. He stood in the synagogue and read from the Book Of Isaiah where it is written.....

Luke 4:18-19 (NKJV)

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
[19] To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Jesus came to proclaim liberty to the captives.

We know that His primary focus was internal personal liberty for those who would follow Him but it is equally true that He came to provide a basis for external civil liberty as well.

The time period from approximately 500-1500 A.D. was called the Dark Ages because there was very little or no advancement in civil liberty, scientific discoveries, technology, or anything else. The primary cause of this was that the Word of God was being hidden from the common people.

The one good thing was that the Bible was being preserved by scribes and monks who spent their entire lives copying the Bible by hand. But the lack of access to the Bible kept the common people ignorant during the Dark Ages.

Then, around 1348, the bubonic Plague killed one third of the population of Europe. Shortly after that great catastrophe, a Catholic clergyman named **John Wycliffe**, who did have a Bible because of his position in the church, realized that “Scripture must become the common property of all” that there might be “a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

To accomplish this goal, he translated the whole Bible from Latin into English. This was completed around 1382.

After translating the Bible into English, he got others to make copies of his translation of various books of the Bibles and sent them out to towns throughout England to preach and to share the scriptures with the common people. Most of the common people of that day were uneducated and didn't know how to read so Wycliffe's followers, known as “Lollards”, taught common people how to read so that they could read the Bible.

The translation of the Bible in the hands of the Lollards became such a powerful force, that at the close of the century 14th century, at least half of the population had ranged themselves on the side of the Lollards.

The Lollards exposed many things in the Catholic Church that were not Biblical, but rather than reforming, the church determined that it would eradicate this *heretical* movement from England. They succeeded in driving the Lollards underground, but the seeds of truth had been planted. In 1425, the church ordered the bones of Wycliffe exhumed and burned along with some 200 books he had written.

Something happened in 15th century that changed the world forever. It was the invention of the printing press in 1455 by a man in Germany named John Guttenberg. The first book printed by Guttenberg was the Bible. Before this invention, it took scribes a whole year to copy one Bible. After the invention of the printing press, Bibles and other books could be reproduced by the thousands.

Within ten years of the invention of the printing press the total number of books in the world increased from 50,000 to 10,000,000.

Thirty-seven years after the invention of the printing press, Christopher Columbus, whose name means “The Christbearer” opened up the New World to civilization. In His diary he wrote, “It was the Lord who put it in my mind. I could feel His hand upon me.....There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit, because He comforted me with rays of marvelous illumination from the Holy Scriptures.”

The amazing thing is, Columbus sailed here from Spain, but God did not allow the country from which he sailed to colonize the territory which originally comprised the United States.

Spain was under the control of the papacy and had the original colonists came here from Spain, America would have been under the control of the Catholic Church.

In 1493, the Pope gave Africa, Asia, and Brazil to Portugal and the rest of Latin America to Spain. But every attempt that Spain made to colonize the territory comprising the original United States met with failure.

Then in 1497, John Cabot crossed the Atlantic and landed near the St. Lawrence River, and laid claim to America for England.

Momentous things were happening in the church in Europe. In 1478, the Papacy began the Spanish Inquisition which wiped out virtually all protestants in that nation by 1558.

Martin Luther was God’s instrument to awaken the conscience of man to what was going on in the church. His act of nailing his 95 thesis on the church door at Wittenberg in 1517 is often referred to as a beginning point of the Proreformatio although seeds of the Reformation had been

planted many years before. About 100 years before, **Jan Hus** was burned at the stake for stressing Scripture authority over corrupt papal authority.

Because of the teaching of **Martin Luther**, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden became Lutheran nations in 1540.

John Calvin was also greatly used by God in the protestant Reformation. His writings probably had more impact upon the modern world than any other book, except the Bible.

Calvin established a training center for many French Protestants who became known as "**Huguenots**". They came under severe oppression from the Catholic Church but they continued to grow in number. In 1553 five of them were publicly burned at the stake but rather than quenching the movement, it fueled the fire so that four years later one third of all Frenchmen (300,000) were Protestants.

Two years later in Paris, a national synod convened and wrote the "Confessions of faith of the Reformed Churches" and the Pope responded by making it illegal to read the Bible. But the reformed churches continued to grow. It plunged the nation into a civil war between Protestant and Catholic powers.

In 1572, 30,000 Protestants were massacred while worshipping on St. Bartholomew's Day.

God's man of Reformation in England was a man named William Tyndale.

He translated the Bible into English and made it available to the common man. In 1536, he was arrested and killed as a heretic by the Catholic Church.

When Henry VIII became king of England in 1509, Roman Catholicism was the established religion in all of Europe including England.

Most people, when they think about Henry VIII, they think about all his wives. His first wife, Catherine of Aragon, had not given him any sons so he decided to divorce her and Mary Anne Boleyn. But in order to divorce her he had to get permission from the Pope. His request was denied so he decided to divorce himself and England from the Catholic Church.

Henry VIII and England split from the Roman Catholic Church and around 1534 set up the Church of England in its place.

At the time, the only difference between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England was that Henry VIII was the Pope over the Church of England instead of the Pope in Rome.

The Reformers in England didn't see any difference in the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England so they started a movement to reform the Church of England.

The people wanting to reform the Church of England were called "purifiers" or "puritans".

They were able to flourish under Henry VIII's son **Edward VI**, but when he died, his half-sister, Mary, became the Queen. She earned the title of "**Bloody Mary**" because she put hundreds of the reformers to death. She never liked the fact that her father had separated from the Catholic Church.

She caused 286 Reformed Anglican leaders to be burned at the stake.

Because of this, thousands of Puritans fled from England to places like Geneva to avoid being put to death.

After "Bloody Mary" died, she was succeeded by her half-sister, **Elizabeth**. At first, Elizabeth tolerated the Reformers, but after a few years she prohibited further reform.

At this, some of the Puritans gave up hope of ever seeing the Church of England make the reforms they wanted so they separated themselves from the Church of England. They were called "**Separatists**".

I am telling you all of this because it has a direct bearing on the history of our great nation.

Many of the "Separatists lived in and around the town of Scrooby in the north of England.

One of them was a man named William Bradford.

Because of the persecution from the Church of England, He and many of his neighbors fled to Holland in 1608. Twelve years later he led a group to America. They were called **Pilgrims**. 102 of them sailed on a ship called “**The Mayflower**” and landed at a place called Plymouth Rock on Cape Cod in 1620.

They came to this New World to escape religious persecution and to establish a nation where men and women would be free to worship God as they felt they should based on the Bible and not on the dictates of the Catholic Church or the Church of England.

Actually, the first permanent settlement in America was in Jamestown, Virginia in 1607. The settlers there were lead by Captain John Smith. He wrote that part of the reason for coming to America was to propagate the “Christian Religion”.

I won't go into all the details, but all of the early settlers who came to America were drawn here to find religious freedom. They were the “**Puritans**” and the “**Separatists**” who were coming here to search for religious and civil liberty. They established their colonies under British rule.

Finally, after many years of British rule and taxation, which reached unbearable levels under the rule of King George III, leaders of the colonists conceived the idea of independence. They called a meeting to be held in Philadelphia to declare the colonies independent from England and establish a republic.

They chose a man named **John Adams** to write a document that would declare their independence from England. He wrote the document we call the **Declaration of Independence**. It explained the reasons and purpose for “dissolving the political bands” that had connected the colonists to England. Fifty-six men signed the document.

During the debate it is reported that **John Hancock** urged unanimous support of the Declaration. He said, “There must be no pulling of different ways. We must all hang together.”

Benjamin Franklin then said, “Yes, we must hang together, or most assuredly we shall hang separately.”

On the evening of July 4, 1776, the Declaration Of Independence was officially adopted. We will celebrate that event tomorrow. It was another seven years of war before America's independence was fully realized.

Those 56 men who signed that document immediately became outlaws and faced execution. If they were captured by the British army they would be killed. Most of them paid dearly for their desire for freedom.

Our nation was established by men and women of the Christian faith. We must not let it be destroyed by atheists and infidels and people of other religions whose intention it is to destroy Christianity.

July 4th is a good day to be reminded of our Christian heritage and to reaffirm our commitment to keep America free.

There is an orchestrated effort to whip out Christianity from our land. The courts in America, including the Supreme Court, have made rulings that are destroying our Christian heritage.

God has blessed this land because this nation based its laws on the laws of God written in the Bible. Now, Bibles cannot even be displayed in the courts of our land. The Ten Commandments are being removed from our public buildings.

It is unbelievable that this could happen in America knowing that our laws are based on the Ten Commandments but it is. It doesn't seem to matter that statues of Moses carrying the Ten Commandments are found throughout the Supreme Court Building.

All I can say is, if America doesn't repent, it will not enjoy God's blessing as it has in the past.

My text for today is.....

Proverbs 14:34 (NKJV)

Righteousness exalts a nation,
But sin is a reproach to any people.

Righteousness is defined by God's standard not by man's standard.

Our forefathers chose the righteousness of the Bible as it's guiding light.

Listen to the Words of God to the nation of Israel.

Deut. 4:5-9 (NKJV)

Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. [6] Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' [7] For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? [8] And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?

[9] "Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren,

America has been exalted because of righteousness. But make no mistake about it, sin will bring reproach to this or any other nation.

America has been great because of God. If we fall, it will be because of our failure to honor God as our Lord. Christians must stand up for what is right.

Give Invitation!