

Can America Again Trust in God as It Once Did?

Happy 247th Birthday America! You look pretty good for your age.

I love our great country and was raised to be patriotic. When my parents disciplined me, they gave me stripes and I saw stars.

God has allowed and aided America's rise to unrivaled greatness in world history. Benjamin Franklin asked the Continental Congress, "If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?"

July Fourth—Independence Day—commemorates how we broke the chains of tyranny from our oppressive mother country England. The closing clause of the Declaration of Independence is actually a declaration of trust in and dependence on God. It reads, "In support of this declaration, with a firm reliance upon the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

The 56 men who signed it realized that writing their autograph on that document was an act of treason and, without God's help, they were doomed. Thomas Jefferson expressed what they all knew inside, "We must all hang together or most assuredly we will hang separately."

Despite its flaws, America is still the bread basket and the melting pot of the world. It is a beacon of hope to those oppressed by dictatorships; a bastion of freedom for those longing for liberty; a shining city on a hill the world looks to for humanitarian, military and financial aid when tragedy strikes.

But prosperity has lulled us to sleep and we have forgotten the source of our blessings. As our country becomes more secularized, many bite the hand that feeds them, spurn God's moral laws and spit in the face of Him whose blessings they enjoy. Jefferson's words still ring true, "I tremble for my country when I remember that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep forever."

I am not a doom-and-gloom preacher, but many of our recent calamities like national debt, prolonged wars, terrorist attacks, mass shootings, natural disasters, the opioid crisis, runaway inflation, anarchy and social upheaval are indicators of God's favor lifting. Abraham Lincoln said, "It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God . . . and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proved by all history, that those nations only are blest whose God is the Lord."

He was quoting Psalm 33:12, which states, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." What was true of Israel in biblical times is also true of America now—as long as we stay in covenant with God, we will we remain strong and free. Ronald Reagan warned, "If we ever forget that we are 'One Nation Under God,' then we will be a nation gone under."

On July 30, 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower approved a resolution adopting "In God We Trust" as our national motto and requiring it to be placed on all U.S. currency. He observed, "In these days when imperialistic and materialistic communism seeks to attack and destroy freedom, it is proper to remind all of us of this self-evident truth that as long as this country trusts in God, it will prevail."

The origin of this motto is probably the final stanza of the *Star Spangled Banner*, written by Francis Scott Key in 1814. This verse is rarely sung but its lyrics are rich with spiritual meaning, "O! thus be it ever, when freemen shall

stand, between their loved home and the war's desolation, blest with victory and peace, may the heaven rescued land, praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation! Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just, and this be our motto—'In God is our Trust;' and the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave, o'er the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave."

Benjamin Franklin, one of the least devout of the Founding Fathers, implored the Continental Congress to have prayer in their sessions after weeks of endless debate turned into gridlock. He reminded the delegates of how God intervened during the Revolutionary War and answered frequent prayers in the colonies' favor. He wondered, "Have we forgotten this powerful Friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance?"

On the National Day of Prayer, April 30, 1863, Abraham Lincoln reminded Americans of our true source of blessing. "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 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. It behooves us to humble ourselves before the offended power, to confess our national sins and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

America is teetering on the brink of bankruptcy (financially, morally and spiritually). Common sense has been abandoned and our government spends money like a drunken sailor. Congress'

solution is to keep raising the debt ceiling (kick the can down the street for the next generation). Of all the major civilizations in history, most collapsed when they reached the state of moral decline America is now in.

One author noted, "When any nation becomes overly pleasure seeking, history has already begun to write its epitaph." Here's the good news, although America has forgotten God, He has not forgotten us. Isaiah 49:15 provides a powerful promise, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you."

This promise, spoken over Israel, applies to God's people of all nations. The only hope for America is a nationwide spiritual awakening. David said it best, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses [military might]; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God" (Ps. 20:7).

America was built on the firm foundation of faith in God and His Word. We have drifted far from our heritage, but a strong, spiritual root system remains a vital part of our national identity. Secularists want to remove "In God We Trust" from our currency and the phrase "One Nation Under God" from our pledge of allegiance. They may try to rewrite history but America's Judeo-Christian roots remain unchanged.

Some claim the center verse of the entire Bible is Psalms 118:8—"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." My sincere hope and prayer is that America will continue to place its trust in God, for as Jeremiah 17:5, 7 declares, "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord . . . Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord." {eo}

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