

George Washington's Unwavering Faith That Shaped America

George Washington (1732-1799) was providentially prepared for his role as the commander who would lead the bedraggled **colonial army** into victory over the superior British forces and then serve as the **nation's first president**.

His life was miraculously spared on numerous occasions, not least at the Battle of Fort Duquesne in 1755 during the French and Indian Wars, when his clothing was shredded with bullets and two horses were shot from under him.

He emerged unscathed and gave glory to God, saying, "I was saved by the miraculous care of Providence." In his *History of the United States*, George Bancroft records the words of a Native American chief who was fighting that day on the side of the French. Concerning Washington, the chief said: "Our rifles were leveled, rifles which, but for him, knew not how to miss. 'Twas all in vain; a power far mightier than we shielded him from harm. He cannot die in battle. The Great Spirit protects that man, and guides his destinies. He will become chief of nations, and a people yet unborn will hail him the founder of a mighty **nation**."

The chief's prophecy was fulfilled and Washington became the most beloved of the **Founding Fathers**. In 1789 he was unanimously elected by 69 electors as the first president of the United States. "First in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen," was an endearing adage attached to Washington because of his heroic, sacrificial service. Feeling the effects of time and preferring to retire to his home at Mt. Vernon, he accepted the unanimous call to serve as president solely out of a sense of patriotic duty, saying, "My

movement to the chair of government will be accompanied by feelings not unlike those of a culprit going to the place of his execution." Named the "father of his country," he guided the new nation into maturity and sought to impress upon its inhabitants the importance of morality and faith in the **God** of the **Bible** as foundation supports for the nation's success.

When Washington was sworn into office in New York City on April 30, 1789, he placed his hand on a Bible as he repeated the oath to uphold and defend the **Constitution**. This act has been repeated by every president since, although it is questionable as to how many have held the same respect for the Bible that Washington exhibited in his daily life. For him it was no mere political formality but signified his recognition of the Bible as the authoritative source of guidance and inspiration for his administration. He once declared, "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."

After his inaugural address, which was filled with references to God and the Bible, Washington and the Congress proceeded to St. Paul's Chapel to participate in a worship service. He also once publicly prayed, "Bless O **Lord** the whole race of mankind, and let the world be filled with the knowledge of Thee and Thy Son, Jesus Christ."

A prayer journal has been discovered that Washington kept when he was in his 20s. He called it *Daily Sacrifice*. The very first entry reads in part, "Let my heart, therefore, gracious **God**, be so affected with the glory and majesty of Thine honor that I may not do my own works, but wait on Thee, and discharge those duties which Thou requirest of me."

The following Monday morning, his recorded prayer reads, "Direct my thoughts, words and work, wash away my sins in the immaculate blood of the Lamb, and purge my heart by Thy **Holy Spirit** ... daily frame me more and more in the likeness of Thy Son **Jesus Christ**."

Some have challenged Washington's **faith** because he was a slave owner. But what is often not told is the fact that when Washington was challenged on how his keeping of slaves was inconsistent with his profession of faith in Christ, he began setting in motion a compassionate plan, at great personal cost, to make Mt. Vernon slave free. He offered freedom to all who wanted to go, but realizing that some did not have the knowledge and skills to prosper on their own, no one was forced to leave. Those who chose to stay began receiving wages for their work. Washington was much beloved by the black workers on his plantation whom he fed well, encouraged to marry and build families, and made sure they were well instructed in the gospel. Many, therefore, chose not to leave and became employees of the estate. Children were not released until they were of age and were provided with food, clothing, shelter and education. His own actions expanded his vision and he wrote, "I clearly foresee that nothing but the rooting out of slavery can perpetuate the existence of our union."

Washington's devotion to his faith was confirmed by Isaac Potts, a Quaker, who lived near Valley Forge, Penn., when the **Continental Army**, led by Washington, was wintering there under much duress in 1774 to 1775. Potts was a Quaker and a pacifist who opposed the war until he had a life-changing experience while riding through the woods one day during, perhaps, the bleakest period of the war.

He said: "I heard a plaintive sound as, of a man at prayer. I tied my horse to a sapling and went quietly into the woods and to my astonishment I saw the great George Washington on his knees alone, with his sword on one side and his cocked hat on the other. He was at prayer to the God of the armies, beseeching to interpose with his divine aid, as it was ye Crisis, and the cause of the country, of humanity and of the world. Such a **prayer** I never heard from the lips of man. I left him alone praying. I went home and told my wife I saw a sight and heard today what I never saw or heard before, and

just related to her what I had seen and heard and observed. We never thought a man could be a soldier and a Christian, but if there is one in the world, it is Washington.

In his Farewell Address of 1796, Washington reminded his hearers of the characteristics that would make the newly formed nation successful. He said, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."

Interestingly, the very things that Washington said are indispensable political supports for our nation – **Christianity** and **morality** – are the very things that are under attack in our nation, and that are being dispensed by our political leaders. We are in a spiritual battle for the soul of our nation and only another great spiritual awakening will turn the tide. To learn more about how this can happen, check out my book, *America's Revival Heritage*, which documents the link between the Great Awakening (1726-1760) and the founding of the nation in 1776.

Dr. Eddie L. Hyatt is a seasoned minister of the gospel, having served as a pastor, teacher, missionary and professor of theology in the U.S. and Canada and having ministered in India, Indonesia, England, Ireland, Sweden, Poland and Bulgaria. His ministry is characterized by a unique blend of the anointing of the Holy Spirit with academic excellence and over 40 years of ministerial article was derived from Dr. Eddie L. Hyatt's latest book entitled America's Revival Heritage, and is available here.