

Summer Mix Tape Part 4

The American Covenant

Deuteronomy 4:1-8

Memory Verses: Deuteronomy 4:7

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Deuteronomy 4:1-8 says, "And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you. Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal-peor, for the Lord your God destroyed from among you all the men who followed the Baal of Peor. But you who held fast to the Lord your God are all alive today. See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?"

Indeed, what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us? A nation, not all that unlike Israel, that started when a few religious separatists against all odds, boarded ships, crossed an ocean, and took possession of a new world. A nation that started upon the words and the commandments of the Lord our God. A nation born from full sail rejection of idolatrous tyranny. A nation born of an American Covenant. A covenant which states time and time again, "keep and teach the righteous statutes of the Lord and you will be blessed." And make no mistake about it, God has blessed America.

But just as with the Covenant that was given to the Israelites from Mount Sinai, this covenant is conditional. Though God unconditionally will never forsake his elect; when dealing with nations, there are stipulations to his blessings. Follow his commands and seek his will and things will go well for you. Ignore his commands and seek your own desires and things will go poorly.

Tuesday, as we celebrate the birth of our nation, founded on the principles of the Bible and for the expansion of Christ's kingdom, let it be a warning. We have sunk further from God as a nation than we ever have. We have forsaken his Word and forgotten his will for our nation.

We have become pagans worshipping the gods of the flesh and celebrating demonic perversions and sexually immoralities that our forefathers couldn't even have imagined. Our freedoms are hanging on by a thread and because of this we are more divided as a country than we have been since the Civil War. In short, we are in drastic danger of seeing God remove his hand of blessing from us. You see it and I see it. If not for a miracle the end of the republic is in sight.

So what can we do? A) We can keep our heads down and hope for the best. Maybe if we don't make too much noise they'll forget we are here. B) We can accept our fate and make the best of it. Jesus is coming soon, so save who you can. C) We can take up arms and fight the power. I told you the south will rise again. Or D) we can cowardly switch sides as to avoid capture ourselves. It turned out okay for Benedict Arnold after all. Or E) None of the above! In case you weren't sure, the answer is E) None of the above.

Instead of keeping our heads down, accepting our fate, taking up arms, or becoming traitors, we should return to our roots. In the winter of 1620 over half of the Plymouth settlers died from disease and starvation. It was almost over before it even started. But instead of giving up and going back to England, when the Mayflower set sail to return, not a single Pilgrim got on board. Instead they trusted in their God and the mission he had given them to bring his glory to the new world. They trusted in him for renewed strength and renewed faith. And that's exactly what we need to do. We need to return to the American Covenant; which states in no specific terms, "You are our God, your word is our law, and your glory is our cause. We will follow you and trust in your blessings to prosper us as a nation to be a lighthouse of your goodness to the world." For 250 years he has kept up his end of the bargain. We need to keep up ours! **The only way to save America is individual personal revivals leading to a nationwide awakening for the glory of God.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing I want us to recognize is that... **Our Nation Exists Only By The Grace Of God.** No doubt, many of you have never heard of the American Covenant or that anything like it even exists. Some of you are still probably wondering what a covenant is. So let's back up a bit and define exactly what a covenant is. A covenant is another word for a promise or an agreement that is extremely important and very hard to break. We make covenants in marriage under God, because marriage is a very important thing and should only be broken under the most severe circumstances. At Stone Creek we use the word covenant to describe the partnership between our members and our church body. When one becomes a member of Stone Creek Church they become a Covenant Partner because they enter into a covenant promise to give, gather, grow,

and go for God in accordance with the vision and core values of our Church. No matter if we disagree on the small things, we agree to work through it and strive for the cause of Christ. We don't idly or easily quit on our commitment to the church and each other because we have made a covenant with each other. **Where as a contract is a legally binding agreement a covenant is a spiritually binding agreement.**

And God made covenants with his chosen people, the Israelites. Look again at Deuteronomy 4:1. Listen to and do my rules and you will live and enter into the land. This is what we call a conditional covenant. God is saying if you are faithful to me I will be faithful to bless you.

Deuteronomy 11:26-28 is another passage defining this covenant. **"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known."**

Therefore it is interesting to note that William Bradford, the great Pilgrim governor, wrote that the Pilgrims had in mind to go to America, **"for the propagating and advancing the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world; yea, though they should be but even as stepping-stones unto others for the performing of so great a work... Their ends were good and honourable, their calling lawful and urgent; and therefore they might expect the blessing of God in their proceeding."** Even before the Pilgrims left for America they were already thinking in covenantal terms. "If we honor God with our lives, then he will surely bless us."

It would appear that the grace of God's providence upon America could suggest nothing less. There are many examples of how by God's grace America was brought into being; how he was already honoring the Pilgrims covenant before they even set sail. It is the providence of God how the Pilgrims came together in England. How each family independent of one another, found others who held the exact same beliefs and came together in the same town. It is the providence of God to spare the Pilgrims from arrest or death in England and Holland. It is the providence of God to allow for charter to the New World and eventually make the journey across the Atlantic. It is the providence of God that the winds did not allow for them settle in Virginia but pushed them to settle in Plymouth. It is the providence of God to spare their lives through a horrible winter, sickness, and starvation. It is the providence of God that they just happened to find the only English speaking Indian to help guide them. It is the providence of God that allowed many independent settlements to all form early documents in favor of representative self-governing societies. It was the providence of God that allowed the colonies to avoid defeat at the hands of the French for almost

100 years. It was the providence of God that allowed the colonists to withstand and ultimately defeat the greatest army in the world. An army that out numbered the Americans 4 to 1. George Washington recounts, **"by the miraculous care of Providence, that protected me beyond all human expectations; I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, and yet escaped unhurt."** Think of the impossible task of Washington's escape from New York and the crossing of the East River. Surrounded by the British army and facing sure defeat, God sent a very thick heavy fog which concealed the retreat of over 9,000 men by boat. If it hadn't been for the fog the war would have been over before it hardly had begun.

So, if the providential grace of God paved the way for our country to exist, wouldn't it make sense that it is only by his grace that it can be saved once again? **The only way to save America is individual personal revivals leading to a nationwide awakening for the glory of God.**

Secondly, I think it is important for us to realize that... **Our Nation Was Undoubtedly Founded Upon Covenant.** Yes the Pilgrims desired a covenant relationship between God and their new country, but how did that play out? Let's go back to the start. In the early 17th century King James the 1st made it illegal to attend any other church than the Church of England. Due to many differences in their beliefs the Pilgrims could not in good faith remain a part of the Church of England and started their own church. Soon they were being arrested thrown in jail, and threatened with death. They came to America on the Mayflower to escape this religious persecution. 50 non-Pilgrim entrepreneurs also joined with the 50 Pilgrims and when they arrived at Plymouth it became apparent that they would need to form an effective government in order to live together amicably. This is when they wrote the first American governing document called the Mayflower Compact, which says, **"In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the first Colony in the northern Parts of Virginia; Do by these Presents, solemnly and mutually, in the Presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid: And by Virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions, and Officers, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general Good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due Submission and Obedience."**

You can clearly see that **the earliest Americans considered themselves within a covenant with God. They would build their society for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith.** Perhaps

God would continue to bless such an endeavor. With the American Colonies now established the flood gates were opened as many others flocked to the new world. In 1630 John Winthrop led a group to settle the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In his paper, "A Model of Christian Charity," he told of the type of government he meant to establish. He wrote, "thus stands the cause between God and us, we are entered into **Covenant** with Him for this work. Now if the Lord shall please to bear with us, and bring us in peace to the place we desire, then hath he verified this **covenant** and sealed our commission." The covenant was clear in his mind. He wrote, "Shall [God] make us a praise and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantations; the Lord make it like that of New England for we must consider we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all 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." The eyes of the world are on us and they will tell the tale of our faith or faithlessness. Unfortunately, John Winthrop would be aghast of what has become of the reputation of New England's faith today.

Later, in 1636, Connecticut was settled and their governing document, the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut was written. Following the same pattern as the Mayflower Compact it stated, "[we] enter into **Combination and Confederation** to gather, to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the gospel of our Lord Jesus which we now profess, as also the discipline of the Churches, which according to the truth of the said gospel is now practiced amongst us." The goal of their settlement was the glory of God and the advancement of the Gospel. They covenanted together with one another and the Lord for this very purpose.

One hundred and forty years later, our thriving society, built on these covenants, again found itself under attack from an English Tyrant, King George the 3rd, who tried to crush the colonies into submission. It then became apparent that the only course of action was to become independent of England once and for all. The Declaration of Independence was ratified on July 7th 1776 and most famously states that, "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." Again making it clear that America fundamentally recognizes the sovereign blessings of a creator God.

Over a decade later, in 1778, the Constitution of the United States was ratified. It is the longest surviving written charter of governance in the world and it outlines the God given rights of the citizens of America. "We the people" is the world's premier system of self-governance and freedom. For almost 400 years, since our humble beginnings in

Jamestown and Plymouth, we have been that lighthouse to the world for the glory of God. We are the most free, prosperous, and powerful nation the world has ever seen, and yet, how much longer can we expect God's blessings on us if we continue to stray from his Word and his way? We must each individually renew our covenant with God, confess our sins, beg for his mercy, and revive our faith in his will if we are to have any chance as a country. **The only way to save America is individual personal revivals leading to a nationwide awakening for the glory of God.**

The last thing I hope we can see this morning is that... **Our Nation is Built Upon The God Inspired Design of Self-Governance.** Is America a Christian nation? It most certainly is according to the system of government it established. From the Pilgrims to the Founding Fathers, all understood the Biblical mandate of self-governance. That is to say that each understood that every person is responsible for themselves. We see this principle in verses like **Galatians 6:1b** which says, "keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted." And **6:4-5** which states, "but let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load." We see this in the ordering of the governance of family and church where in **1 Timothy 3:5** Paul instructs, "for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?" Even in the Old Testament, Israel was given an organized self-governing structure where in **Exodus 18:21** Moses was instructed to "look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens."

The Bible draws a line for all to see. There are really only two functional forms of government in the world. One which is free and self-governing, or one which is regulated and state-governing. All governments fall on a spectrum leaning between one of these. Until America, every society on the planet with the exception of Israel, had leaned towards a regulated state run government with dictators and tyrants who told people what they could and could not do. **America stands alone upon the biblical model of government that all men should be free to govern themselves.** This is why our constitution begins with "We The People." It's not for the Crown or for the State or for the Party... its for "we the people" who determine our own laws and our own leaders. Unfortunately today, America is increasingly moving away from individual liberty and freedom towards state controlled socialism. Some would say that this is a good thing because the state will take care of me. In some instances that may look like the case, but the more the state is responsible for your well-being, you must recognize, the more the state controls your life. You see how this played out over Covid. Look at all the personal liberties we were told to relinquish in order to feel safe by the federal government. The right to gather, the right to

medical freedom, etc... This is not God's plan for us. God wants us to be responsible for ourselves and be self controlled, rather than dependent upon the state for all of our needs and wants.

In a way this is why Christ died for you, to give you the free choice of salvation. This is why our forefathers fought so hard against the English, for our freedom. And this is why brave men stormed the shores of Normandy, and why brave men and women still defend our nation today. To make us free to govern ourselves. And this is why we talk about individual revival. Many of us, myself included, often think, all we need is for God to move and bring revival. But real revival starts in the hearts of individuals who are broken. It starts when we are so convicted of our sins and a desire for godliness in our culture that it drives us to our knees in desperation. We aren't hoping for some flash in the pan manifestation of revival. No, we are hoping for and praying for a new awakening. And it starts with each of us. We are responsible for our own personal revival and when many individuals are revived together, only then will we see a national revival. **The only way to save America is individual personal revivals leading to a nationwide awakening for the glory of God.**

Application

So where do we go from here? I think the answer is clear. Individually and as a country we need to beg God for his grace again. The same grace that providentially and miraculously formed our country is the same grace that we need to save our country. Individually and as a nation we need to renew our covenant with God. We need to renew the covenant of our forefathers who made it clear that their goals for America were God's glory and the advancement of the Gospel. And individually and as a nation we need to reclaim our freedom to self-govern and become a people not dependent on the highly regulated and limited benevolence of the state but to be a people with self-control and personal responsibility; a personal responsibility dedicated to the Word of God and the ways of God in our society. Then we will see revival. Because if we don't we are done and the US of A will be nothing but a historical anomaly. We must have revival. **The only way to save America is individual personal revivals leading to a nationwide awakening for the glory of God.**

Conclusion

I will conclude with some thoughts from one of the greatest Presidents of the past century, Ronald Regan, who said, "We mustn't feel despair, because it's not appropriate to the times. We're living in a dramatic age. Throughout the world the machinery of the state is being used as never before against religious freedom. But at the same time,

throughout the world new groups of believers keep springing up. Points of light flash out in the darkness, and God is honored once again. Perhaps this is the greatest irony of the Communist experiment. The very pressure they apply seems to create the force, friction, and heat that allow deep belief to once again burst into flame."

For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call upon him! Church it's time to call upon him again!