

Listen, if anybody's ever told you that the United States of America was not really founded on Christian principles, let me read these quotes to you, and we'll see if you can guess who they came from.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists, but by Christians.

Not on religion, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Patrick Henry.

How about this one?

Do not let anyone claim tribute of American patriotism if they even attempt to remove religion from politics.

That was George Washington's farewell address.

The First Amendment has created a wall of separation between church and state, but that wall is a one-directional wall.

It keeps the government from running the church, but it makes sure that Christian principles will always stay in the government.

That was Thomas Jefferson.

Our Constitution was made for a more religious people.

It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.

That was John Adams.

One thing that maybe you don't know about the American Revolution is you get the picture that it was our country versus Great Britain, but that isn't the truth.

Do you realize that a third of the colonists were loyal to Great Britain, and they were called Tories.

So one-third of the people sided with Great Britain, one-third of the colonists.

Another third really didn't care.

They were disinterested.

They were just doing their own thing and they didn't care.

That meant that one-third of the colonists had to carry out this battle for the independence of our country.

And of course it was very costly as thousands died.

What about the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence?

You think they paid a price?

You've heard of some of their stories, right?

Of the 56 men, five were captured by the British and tortured to their death.

Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned.

Two lost their sons in the revolution.

Another 2 sons were captured.

Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds and hardship of war.

Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw all of his ships sunk by the British Navy, so he sold his home and properties to pay off his debts, and he ended up dying in poverty.

Thomas Nelson, one of the signers.

When General Cornwallis took over at the Battle of Yorktown,

He lost his home.

It became General Cornwallis's new headquarters.

So what did he do?

He quietly ordered George Washington to open fire on his home.

The home was destroyed and Nelson died bankrupt.

Another signer, John Hart, was at the side of his very ill wife at the time the British came.

He and the children had to flee for their lives.

Their 13 children

ran off, his fields were destroyed, and for over a year, he lived in forests and caves, returning home only to find his wife had died and his children had vanished.

A few weeks later, he died from exhaustion.

So don't let anybody tell you that our country, that all of this is just made-up stuff.

that there wasn't a true religious cause.

So what's the history lesson here?

Well, number one, so that we can remember today that it takes great sacrifice to have a great nation.

And it takes ongoing sacrifice.

So that vote to create a free nation on July 2nd, and then the ratification of the Declaration of Independence on July 4th, cost everyone who believed in it, everyone who signed it.

And I remember as a little boy making that pledge of allegiance.

I've made it throughout my life to our country.

But another reason that we talk about this is that we can remember that our nation and trust in God are inseparately connected.

Our country was never, ever founded to be a secular nation.

And yet, ultimately, we know, right, that our allegiance is to the kingdom of heaven.

and the King of kings.

And if there's ever a divide between following a president and following Jesus, we must follow our Lord.

See, as believers, we've agreed to a declaration of Christian freedom from sin and Satan itself, yes, but a declaration of dependence on our living Lord.

So how do we carry out our declaration of Christian dependence?

If you have your copies of Scripture, turn to 1 Timothy chapter 2, we're going to be looking at verses 1 through 6 in this very well-known passage of Scripture written by the Apostle Paul to his young son in the faith, Timothy.

And I'm going to pick up in verse 1.

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.

For kings and all who are in high positions, that we may to lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior.

Then verse 4, who desires all people to be saved.

and to come to the knowledge of truth.

For there is one God and there's one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

So as we break down this passage of scripture, it's obviously first telling us to pray boldly, yes?

Let me ask you, what is your intercessory prayer like?

One day a week, seven days a week, a minute or two.

I mean, how do you pray for yourself and other people?

What does yours look like?

We're called in Scripture to pray boldly.

And here Paul lists several different types of prayers.

He says, I urge that supplication.

You know, a supplication is when you're just crying out to God.

I mean, you believe in what you're praying for.

right?

It's A heartfelt cry to God.

Prayers is a general word for prayer.

Intercessions, that's when you pray for other people, right?

Like right now, the Bible says that Jesus Christ is at the right hand of the Father and He's interceding for you and for me.

Romans 8 says the Holy Spirit is doing that.

Who are you interceding for on a daily basis?

And he says, and thanksgiving.

Part of prayer is thanksgiving.

And I've mentioned it two or three times, whether it's the ACTS, A-C-T-S, acrostic, or P-R-A-Y, it

involves thanksgiving.

P is praising God for who he is and thanksgiving, what he's done, right?

It involves thanksgiving.

And it goes on to say then, for who?

All people.

Verse 2, for kings and all who are in high positions.

And so it's not just kings and leaders, although we should be praying for them, it's all people.

And you can't do that every single day, can you?

What does your personal prayer plan look like in your week?

I'll give you mine, not to copy it because it's different for every person, but on Sundays, I pray for pastors and churches.

let me back up.

Every single day, I pray for my lovely wife sitting right there and my four children and my 7 grandchildren every single day.

And I pray for this church every single day.

And there's other things I pray for every day.

But on Sundays, I pray for pastors and churches.

On Monday, I pray for missionaries.

personal friends of mine that are in London and Africa and the European country of Georgia and other places.

I pray for International Mission Board missionaries, North American missionaries who are church planters here, and I pray for our government on Mondays.

On Tuesdays, I pray for lost people that I've come in contact with.

I have an impact list, and I pray for them on Tuesdays.

Wednesdays, I pray for my extended family.

her family, my family, nieces and nephews, everybody on Wednesday.

Thursdays, I pray for other Christian groups in the country, right?

I pray for things like Samaritan's Purse, Operation Christmas Child, you know, Navigators, Campus Crusade for Christ.

I pray for other groups that I know of, Parachurch Ministries and all that.

Friday, I pray for my Christian friends by name.

Saturday, because of my special connection through the IMB and through an orphanage we started in Africa and a Christian school we built in Sudan, I pray for Africa.

I pray for our orphanage in Zambia.

I pray for our Christian school in South Sudan.

And then I'm back to Sunday again, praying for pastors.

So that's how I break up my day, because I can't pray for everybody every single day.

I would suggest that you would get a prayer plan as well so that you're covering the basis if you really believe in prayer.

And I would challenge you, make sure in that schedule you're praying for our president, whether or not you agree with everything, that you're praying for Congress, you're praying for the Supreme Court, you're praying for our national leaders.

It's important and it's strategic.

Well,

We can't underestimate the power of prayer.

Samuel Chadwick said this, the one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying.

He fears nothing from prayerless prayer.

less studies, prayer less work, and prayer less religion.

He laughs at all our work, mocks at our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray.

E.M.

Bounds, the famous prayer warrior, says this, What the church needs today is not machinery or better new organizations or more novel methods, but men and women whom the Holy Spirit can use, men and women mighty in prayer.

The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through men and women of prayer.

Can somebody

Can you say an amen about that?

I'm praying every day for you and for this church and for the future of this church.

And it might mean that there needs to be some changes, but the power is going to be through prayer.

The power of the Holy Spirit.

James 5.16, the prayer of a righteous person is what?

Powerful and effective.

So have a prayer list, get a plan, be strategic, have a weekly prayer format, and pray big prayers.

I mean, pray big prayers for our country.

Second Chronicles 7, 14, right?

If my people, which are called by my name, that's us.

It doesn't start with the people out there.

It's us.

If my people, which are called by my name, would humble themselves and seek my face, right?

And pray.

That's when the change is going to come out.

God says that if we do that, that He will hear our prayers, forgive our sins, and what will He do?

He will heal our land.

He will heal our land.

And so we pray.

So Paul is saying in this passage, pray boldly.

He's also saying, look at verse 2, to live distinctively.

Verse 2.

that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

In every way.

And as we do this, we can see that He is calling us to an element of holiness, that we may lead peaceful and quiet lives in all, one version, my version here says, godliness and holiness.

What does holy mean?

Means to be what?

Separate, set apart, called out.

The church, Ecclesia, were the called out ones.

We cannot live like everybody else.

We are called to be different.

And you remember what I said about the Revolutionary War?

One-third of the colonists sided with Britain,

One-third of them fought, and one-third of them just, they weren't called out.

They weren't separate.

They did nothing.

And we can't be that way.

We're called out to be singled out.

And it's the same way for the citizens of heaven.

We can't act like everybody else.

Jesus says, if anyone wants to come after me, what must he do?

Deny himself, take up his cross, how often?

Daily, and follow me.

Those are our marching orders.

That's going to make us look different.

And we're going to get pushback from our friends, neighbors, our relatives, when we truly take up our cross, truly take it up and follow Him.

And Jesus says this warning, Luke 7, not everybody who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

Many will claim, but few will actually follow through.

How will the world ever change if you and I act, use the same language, spend our money in the same way, live our lives exactly like people who do not have the Holy Spirit of God directing them, who do not know the Word of God, giving them precepts and principles?

There's no way we can influence

anybody.

So the question is, do your friends, your neighbors, your work associates see you living a distinctive life?

Anything different about you?

Right?

Is it something they see at work?

Is it something they see at home?

Is it them seeing you getting up and going to church on the holiday weekend like you are?

Is that the thing that's different?

Is it the way you treat people?

Is that you don't use certain language that's really popular now?

I mean, what's the difference in your life that's going to cause people to notice you?

So show people your allegiance to Christ, to the church, to the Christian foundations of our country.

You know, we all say God bless America, but really the blessing is going to come

not on whose side God is on, but on what nation is on God's side.

And the United States does not have a monopoly on that.

And so we've got to live distinctively.

And in this passage at verses 3 through 6, we can see also it's this exhortation to speak passionately.

This is good.

Verse 3, look at that.

This is good and is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved.

Has somebody told you

that God only desires some people to be saved?

That's not my theology.

I'm certainly not an Armenian.

I'm way more reformed than that, but I believe that God desires all people to be saved.

And so I want to be on the lookout every day for an opportunity to say a good word, to do a good deed, to help move somebody just a little bit closer to the living God, because I believe this verse.

that he wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

For there's one God, there's one mediator between God, man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

That's something to talk about.

That's something to live out.

And when it talks about a mediator, I love that.

It's the one that goes between God and a person, that mediator.

Now, I know everybody here probably believes in Jesus Christ, but can I ask you a question?

Is He your personal mediator?

Amen.

You know, because you are trusting Him to be the go-between, the personal mediator between you as a sinful person and God, a perfect God.

You need a mediator, and so do I.

and his name is Jesus.

And he came and did this for you.

And that is the gospel.

That's what we proclaim.

That's what the United States of America needs to hear over and over and over and over, because people don't get it the first time.

And so we speak passionately about the mediator that God has sent to us.

You see, you've made a declaration.

When you trust Jesus, you've made a declaration of independence from your former life.

from your signature sin.

And yeah, you get tripped up just like I do, but you get back up and you keep, you remember that pledge of allegiance and you keep walking with and toward your Savior.

And you've made a declaration of dependence on Jesus, that you need Him, and that really He's the one who lives your life.

The Galatians 2.20 thing, right?

I've been crucified with Christ, it's no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me.

and gave himself for me.

Joshua 24.15, a declaration as, you can finish this one, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

So really a declaration of, your declaration is a declaration of dependence on Christ, the one who can set you free.

One of my favorite presidents, maybe yours, Abraham Lincoln,

I'm going to have you remember something that he said that I'm sure you've heard or read before.

Is he called back in 1863, so context, the Civil War had not ended yet, right?

And he called for a day of, not just prayer, we call it the National Day of Prayer now, he called it a day of national humiliation, fasting,

in prayer.

How long has it been since you were humiliated because you stood up for Jesus and people didn't understand what you were doing?

You were brave enough to speak up thinking people might condemn you for it or make fun of you.

How long has it been since you gave up a meal so you could focus on the Lord?

Abraham Lincoln says this, we've been recipients of the choicest boundaries 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 own hearts that all these blessings were produced, listen to this, by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.

Intoxicated with unbroken success, we 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, then, to humble ourselves before the offended power, capital P, and that's not the president, to confess our national sins and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Amen.

We need to come back to that.

A day of humiliation, a fasting, of prayer.

And because he had that compass in his life, he knew that God had called him something special that would be hard.

In the end, it took his life.

He said, I know there is a God and that He hates injustice and slavery.

I see the storm coming and I know that His hand is in it.

If he has a place in work for me, and I think he has, I believe I am ready.

Let me ask you, church, are you ready?

In a nation that's growing increasingly secular,

Are you ready to pray boldly, to live distinctively, to speak passionately about the God that you say you believe in?

The time has come for us to step up and to stand out.

Psalm 107 says this, Give thanks to the Lord for His good, His love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord

say so, right?

Say this, these he redeemed from the hand of the foe.

I've got an image for you.

I'm going to put it up there on the screen.

Left side is a what?

Thermometer.

On the right side is a thermostat, right?

You might have both of them in your home.

And thermometers are good.

I actually use mine on my phone and see what the forecast is going to be, what the temperature is, how cloudy, what the wind's going to be, all that kind of stuff.

But thermometers are really good because they reflect the environment.

Well, you can be a thermometer, but the thing about it is if you're just a thermometer, you change nothing.

You are just going to reflect what's going on around you, the culture around you, the way people talk around you, the way they spend their money, what they spend their money on around you.

If you're just a thermometer, you're not going to change anybody's life.

God has called us to be thermostats.

A thermostat sets the temperature.

A thermostat impacts the environment.

You see, I want to be a thermostat, don't you?

As I go out of my way while I'm on my way, I want to be a thermostat.

I want to say something to somebody in the day.

I want to do something.

I want to point, somehow, someway, people to Jesus.

I want to be a thermostat.

And I thank God that our founding fathers weren't thermometers.

They were thermostats.

And I guess what I'm saying is the time has come to stand up.

Nathan Hale, of course, said, some things are worth fighting for, some things are worth dying for.

I regret that I have but one life to give for my country.

I regret that I have but one life to give for my Savior.

Church, let me encourage you.

Fight for our country.

The Christian principles.

Don't let anybody tell you that it wasn't founded on Christian principles.

Fight for our country.

Can I say this?

Fight for this church.

The time has come to step up in the way you pray for this church, for the future of this church, for the leaders of this church, for the ministries of this church.

The way you fight for this church by inviting people to come.

Fight for this church and fight for your faith.

The enemy's trying to steal your faith every single day.

People around you are trying to steal your faith every day.

Fight, fight, fight.