



U.S 250th ANNIVERSARY

INDEPENDENCE • FREEDOM • DEMOCRACY

1776 – 2026

July 4, 2026

*Blessed is the nation whose **God** is the **LORD**;*

— PSALM 33:12 —

★ ★ ★

THE FIRST PRAYER

— IN —

Congress

★

A painting by Allyn Cox depicting
Chaplain Jacob Duché offering the
first prayer in the Continental Congress
on July 24, 1774, in Carpenter's Hall,
Philadelphia.





GEORGE WASHINGTON PRAYER AT VALLEY FORGE



- ★ Washington's first General Orders made **worship** his first priority.
- ★ He ordered Divine Service every Sunday and expected officers to **lead by example**.
- ★ He reminded his army that the duties of religion are **higher** than those of citizenship and military service.
- ★ He concluded: "*To the distinguished character of **Patriot**, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of **Christian**.*"
- ★ He knew they needed **God's divine help** to win the war.

Washington believed that devotion to God should come before devotion to country.



THE OPENING WORDS OF THE TREATY OF PARIS (1783)



Chaplain Jacob Duché offers prayer
before the signing of the
Treaty of Paris, 1783.

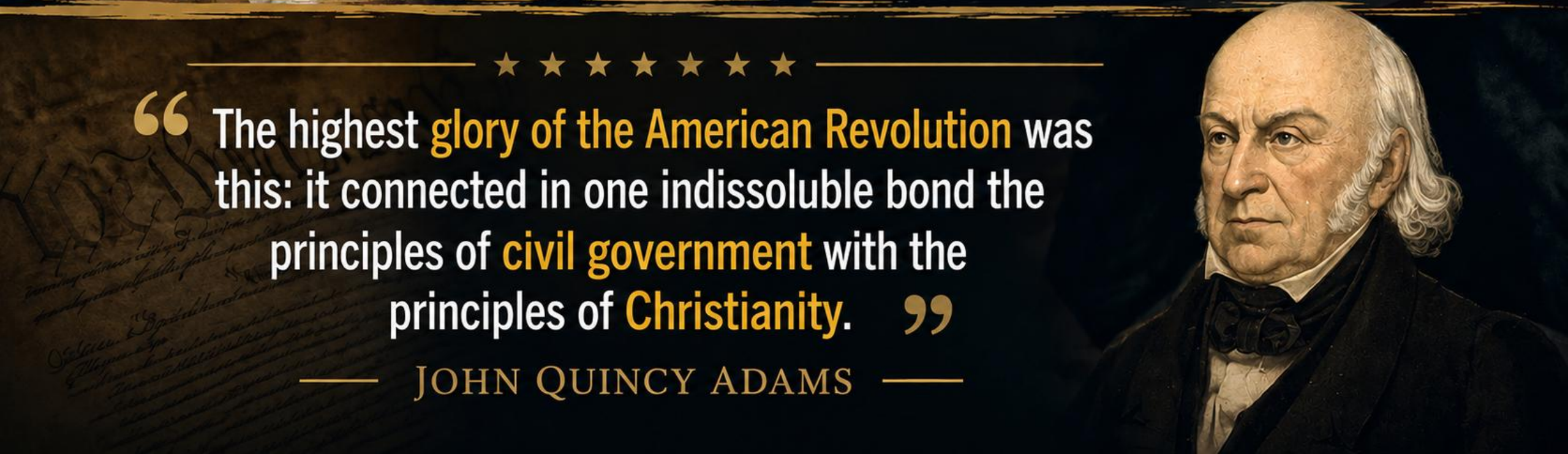
*In the Name of the most
holy & undivided Trinity.*

The opening words of the Treaty of Paris (1783) do indeed read:
“In the Name of the most Holy & undivided Trinity.”



— ★ JOHN ADAMS ★ —

“ The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were the general principles of **Christianity**. ”



— ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ —

“ The highest **glory of the American Revolution** was this: it connected in one indissoluble bond the principles of **civil government** with the principles of **Christianity**. ”

— JOHN QUINCY ADAMS —



THE BOOK OF JAMES

*doers of the Word,
not just hearers.*

SERMON SERIES





— WHO WAS —

JAMES?

A thick, dark green brushstroke underline that tapers at both ends, positioned beneath the word "JAMES?".

FACTS ABOUT THE BOOK OF JAMES



JAMES 1:1-4 NLT

1 This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am writing to the “twelve tribes”—Jewish believers scattered abroad.

Greetings!

2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.

3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.

4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.



— PSALM 34:15 —

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
and his ears are attentive to their cry.

— ISAIAH 41:10 —

So do not fear, for I am with you.
Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you.

Three Reasons

— WHY TRIALS COME: —

FOR OUR
MATURATION

FOR OUR
CORRECTION

FOR OUR
DIRECTION



GOD USES TRIALS ***TO MATURE US.***



TRIALS GROW US UP.



THEY BUILD CHARACTER.



THEY BRING US CLOSER TO GOD.

GOD USES TRIALS TO CORRECT US



JONAH

Ran from God.
Learned a lesson.



**SOME TRIALS COME FROM
OUR OWN CHOICES.**



GOD USES THEM TO CORRECT US.



HE DRAWS US BACK TO HIM.



THE PRODIGAL SON

Made poor choices.
His Father welcomed
him home.



JAMES 1:12-15 NLT

- 12** God blesses those who **patiently endure** testing and temptation.

- 13** Afterward they will receive the **crown of life** that God has promised to those who love him.

- 14** Temptation comes from **our own desires**, which entice us and drag us away.

- 15** These desires give birth to **sinful actions**. And when **sin is allowed to grow**, it gives birth to **death**.

The background of the graphic is split into two main scenes. On the left, a large wooden sailing ship is shown being wrecked on a rocky shore with turbulent waves crashing against its hull. A man, presumably Paul, is seen in the foreground, crouching on the rocks and looking out at the sea. On the right, Paul is depicted as an older man with a grey beard, wearing a simple robe, and is actively preaching to a group of people. He has his hands raised in a gesture of emphasis. The people are dressed in traditional robes and head coverings, listening intently. The overall tone is dramatic and historical, with a focus on the biblical narrative of Paul's journey.

GOD USES TRIALS

TO CHANGE OUR DIRECTION

SHIPWRECKED ON MALTA

Acts 27:41-44

God brought Paul safely through the storm to an unexpected place.



SOME TRIALS CHANGE OUR PLANS.

Paul was headed to Rome, but ended up on Malta.



THE HOLY SPIRIT REDIRECTS OUR PATH.

Paul was prevented from going to Macedonia (Acts 16:6-7).



GOD ALLOWS DETOURS FOR HIS PURPOSE.

Instead, Paul was led to Galatia.



TRIALS CAN LEAD TO KINGDOM IMPACT.

A church was planted in Galatia and many came to faith (Galatians 1:2).

STUCK IN GALATIA— A CHURCH IS BORN

God's "no" to one direction became a "yes" to a greater purpose in Galatia.



JAMES 1:5-8 NLT

- 5** If you need wisdom, **ask our generous God**, and **he will give it to you**.
He will not rebuke you for asking.

- 6** But when you ask him, be sure that **your faith is in God alone**.
Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.

- 7** Such people should **not expect to receive anything** from the Lord.

- 8** Their loyalty is divided between **God and the world**, and they are **unstable in everything** they do.

TRIALS

CAN BUILD WISDOM



THEY FACED MANY TRIALS.



THEY ALWAYS TURNED
TO GOD.



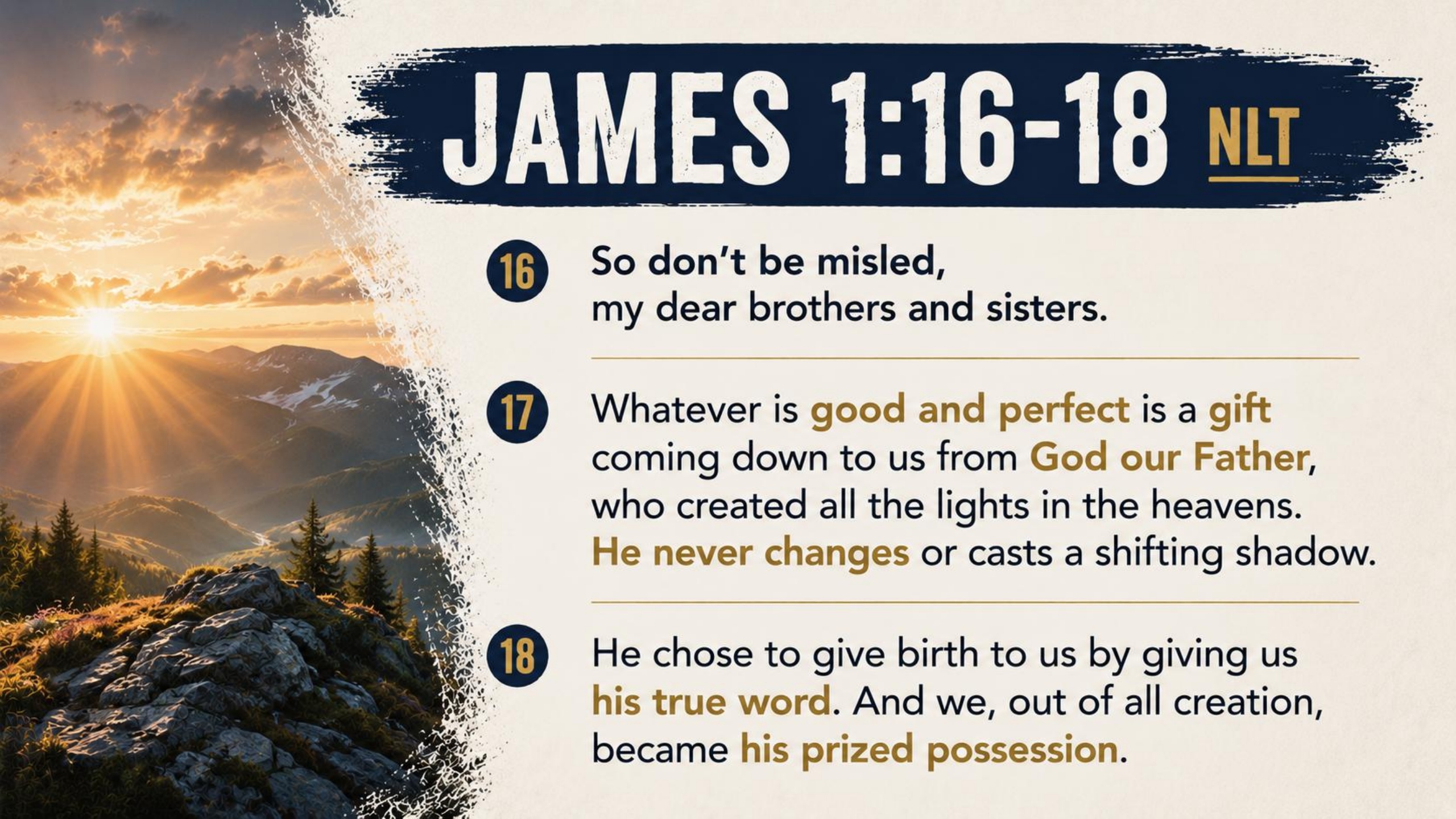
GOD GAVE THEM
TREMENDOUS WISDOM.

DANIEL

Stayed faithful.
Gained wisdom.

JOSEPH

Endured betrayal.
Used for a greater purpose.



JAMES 1:16-18 NLT

16

So don't be misled,
my dear brothers and sisters.

17

Whatever is **good and perfect** is a **gift**
coming down to us from **God our Father**,
who created all the lights in the heavens.
He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.

18

He chose to give birth to us by giving us
his true word. And we, out of all creation,
became **his prized possession**.

WE WILL ALL *FACE TRIALS.*

1.

SURRENDER TO GOD'S PROCESS

Trust that God is using your trials to mature your faith and fill you with His wisdom.

2.

EMBRACE GOD'S CORRECTION

When God corrects us, our response should be to renew our pursuit of Him and live and walk by His Spirit.

ROMANS 8:5 • GALATIANS 5:16

3.

FOLLOW GOD'S DIRECTION

Trust God to direct your steps, even when His plan looks different than yours.

God *never* wastes a trial.
If we trust Him, He will use every one of them to *mature* us, *correct* us, and *direct* our lives.

