

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

What the “Declaration” declares

2025 July 20 Dan Fisher - What the "Declaration" declares
(Part 2)

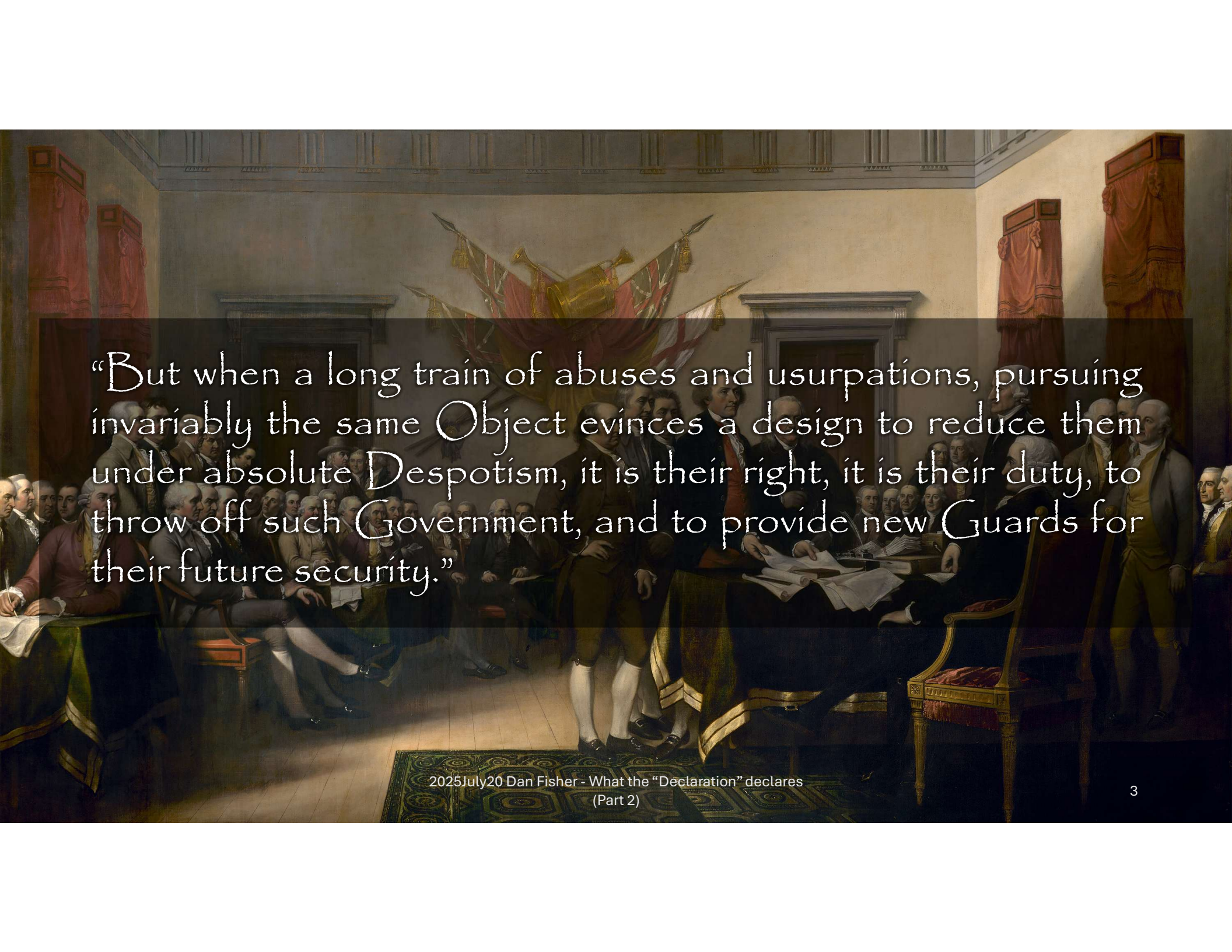


The Framers were not rebels, ignoring proper governmental authority & spoiling for a fight

They did not want to separate from England – their “mother country”

They believed they had exhausted all options for a peaceful solution

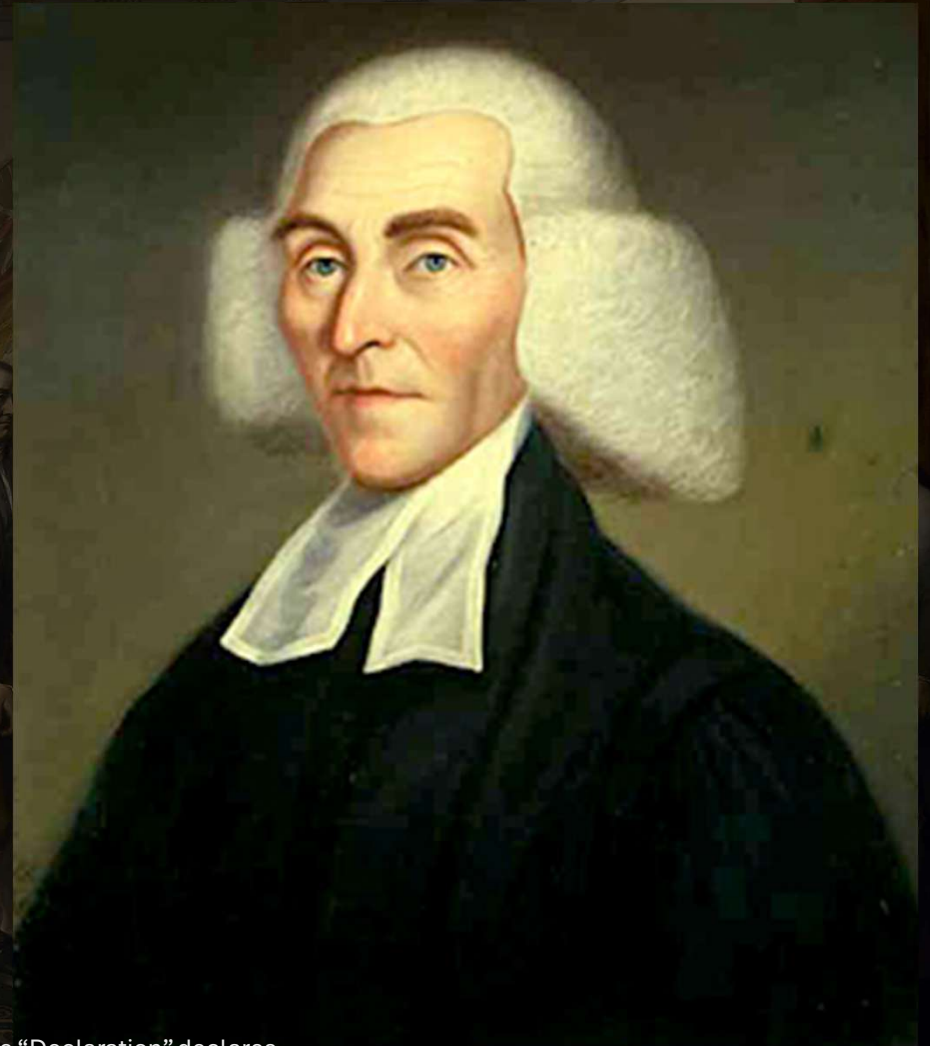
Therefore, they believed they had a *right* and a *responsibility* to stand against tyranny

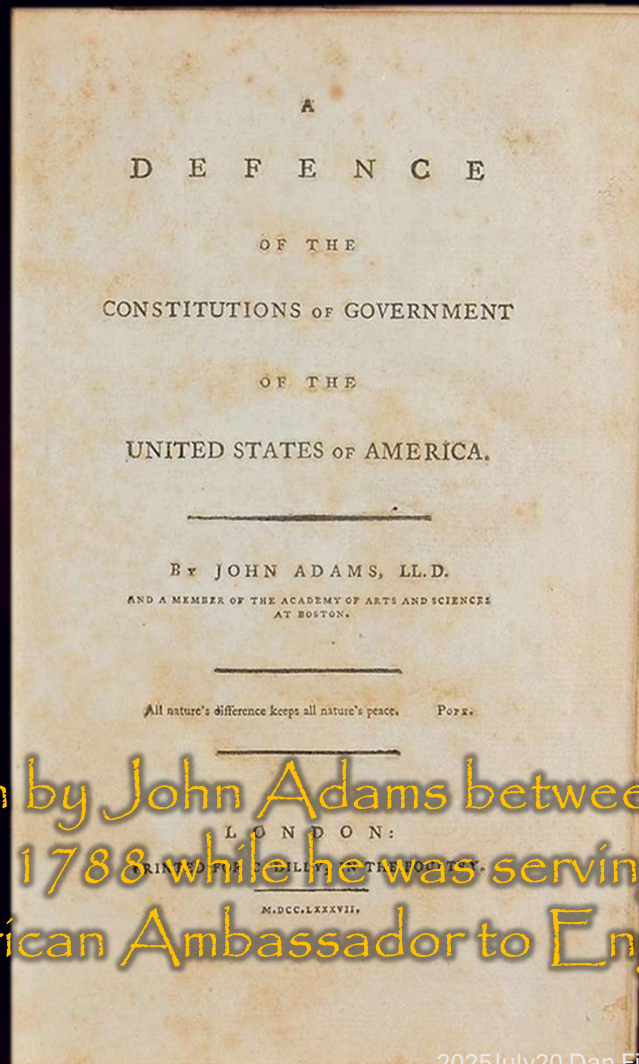


“But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.”

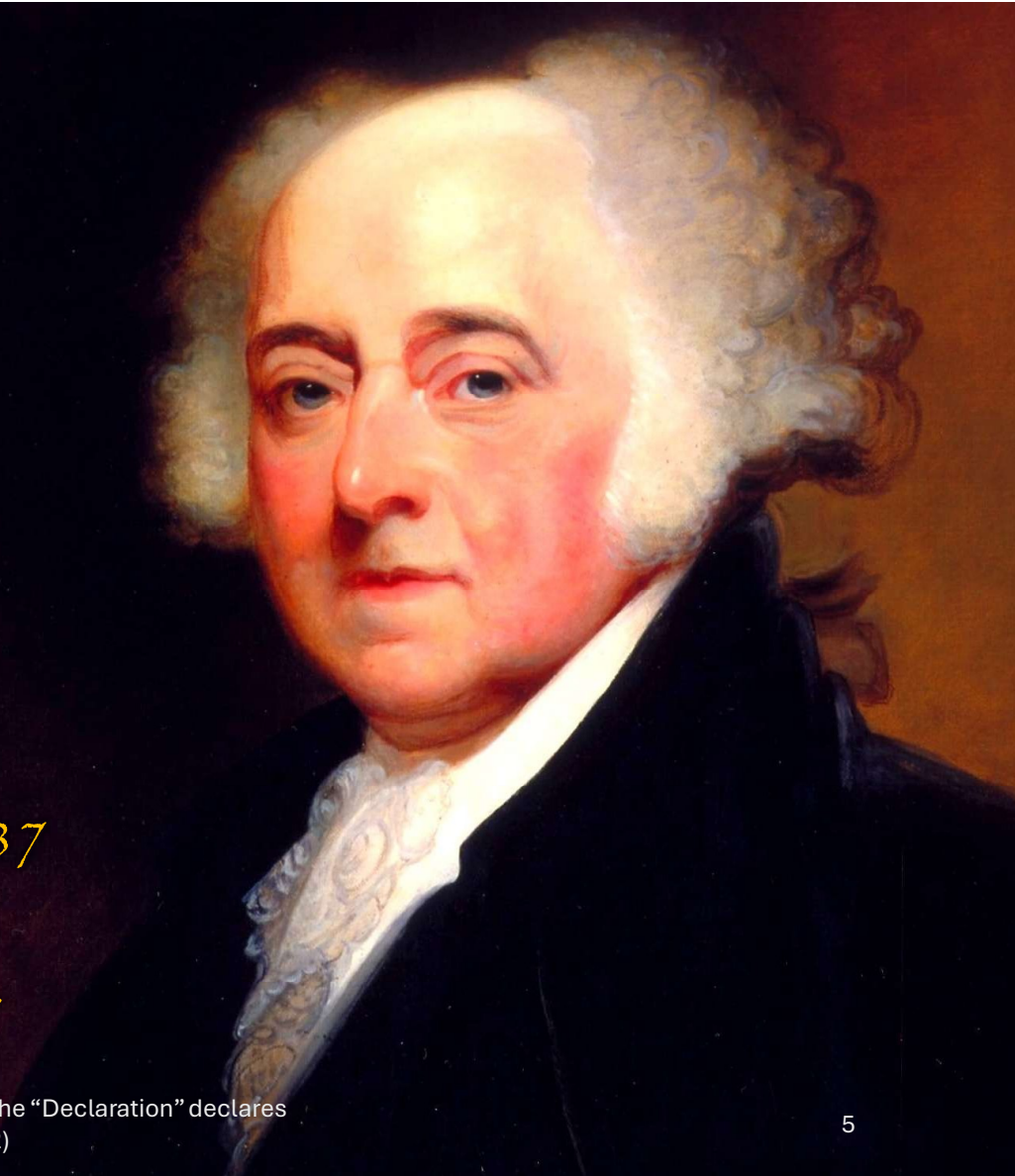
George Duffield
Pine Street Presbyterian
Philadelphia, PA, Dec 11, 1784

“Hard alternative! To resign liberty or wage this hazardous war. And yet none other remained. ... But *Liberty* was the prize. She chose “Freedom or Death” as her motto; and nobly resolved on war with all its horrors; that at least, her last expiring groan might breathe forth freedom.”





Written by John Adams between 1787
and 1788 while he was serving as
American Ambassador to England.

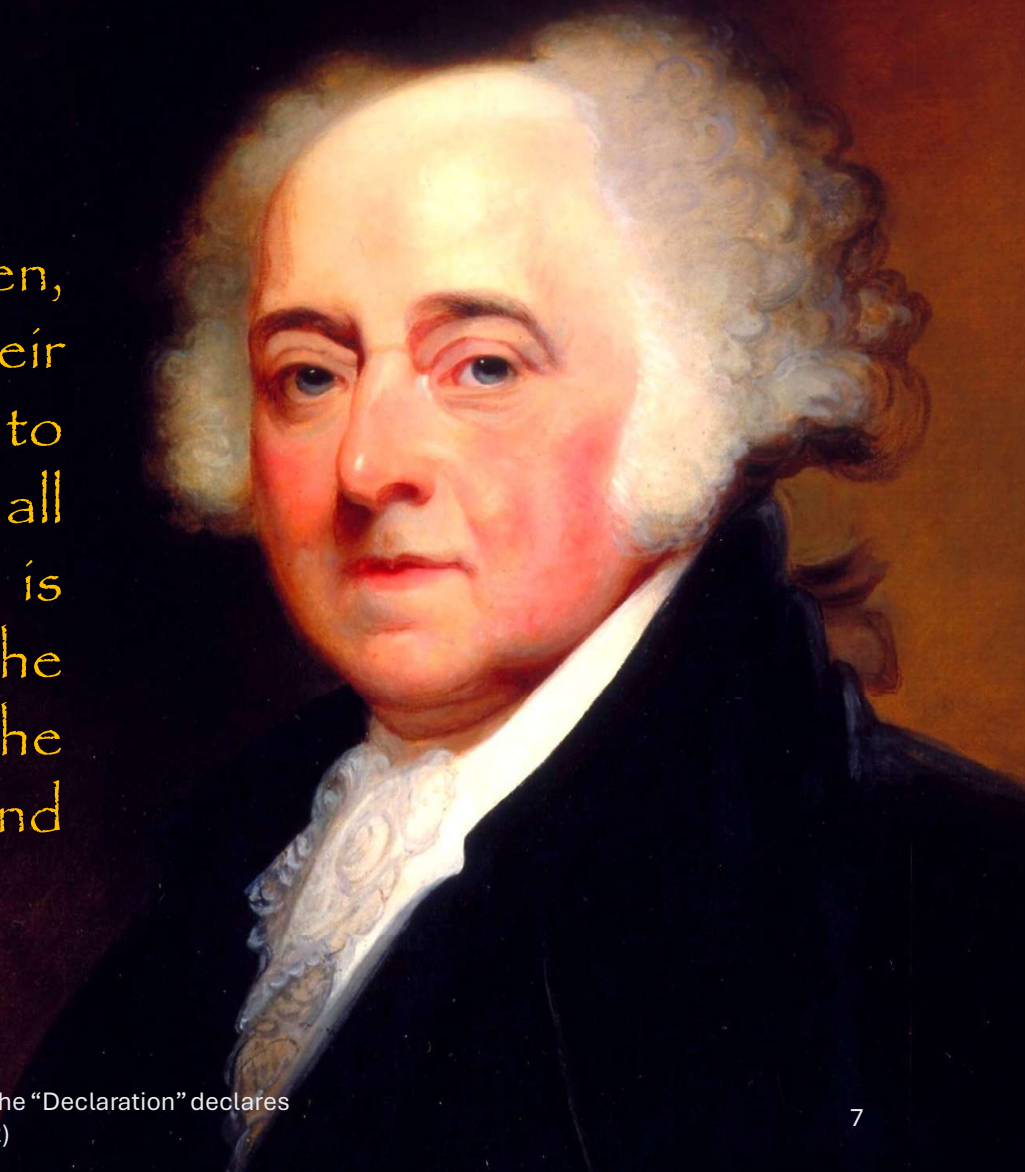


Adams was responding to the criticism of the French economist and political theorist Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, who was criticizing the notion of a bicameral legislature and separation of powers. Adams believed that a complex government structure, with distinct checks and balances, was necessary to prevent both monarchical tyranny and the dangers of direct democracy.



A
D E F E N C E
OF THE
CONSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
BY JOHN ADAMS, LL.D.
AND A MEMBER OF THE ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
OF THE CITY OF BOSTON.
L O N D O N :
PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, IN THE STRAND.
M.DCC.LXXXVII.

“To expect self-denial from men,
when they have a majority in their
favor, and consequently power to
gratify themselves, is to disbelieve all
history and universal experience; it is
to disbelieve Revelation and the
Word of God, which informs us, the
heart is deceitful above all things, and
desperately wicked. [Jer. 17:9] ...



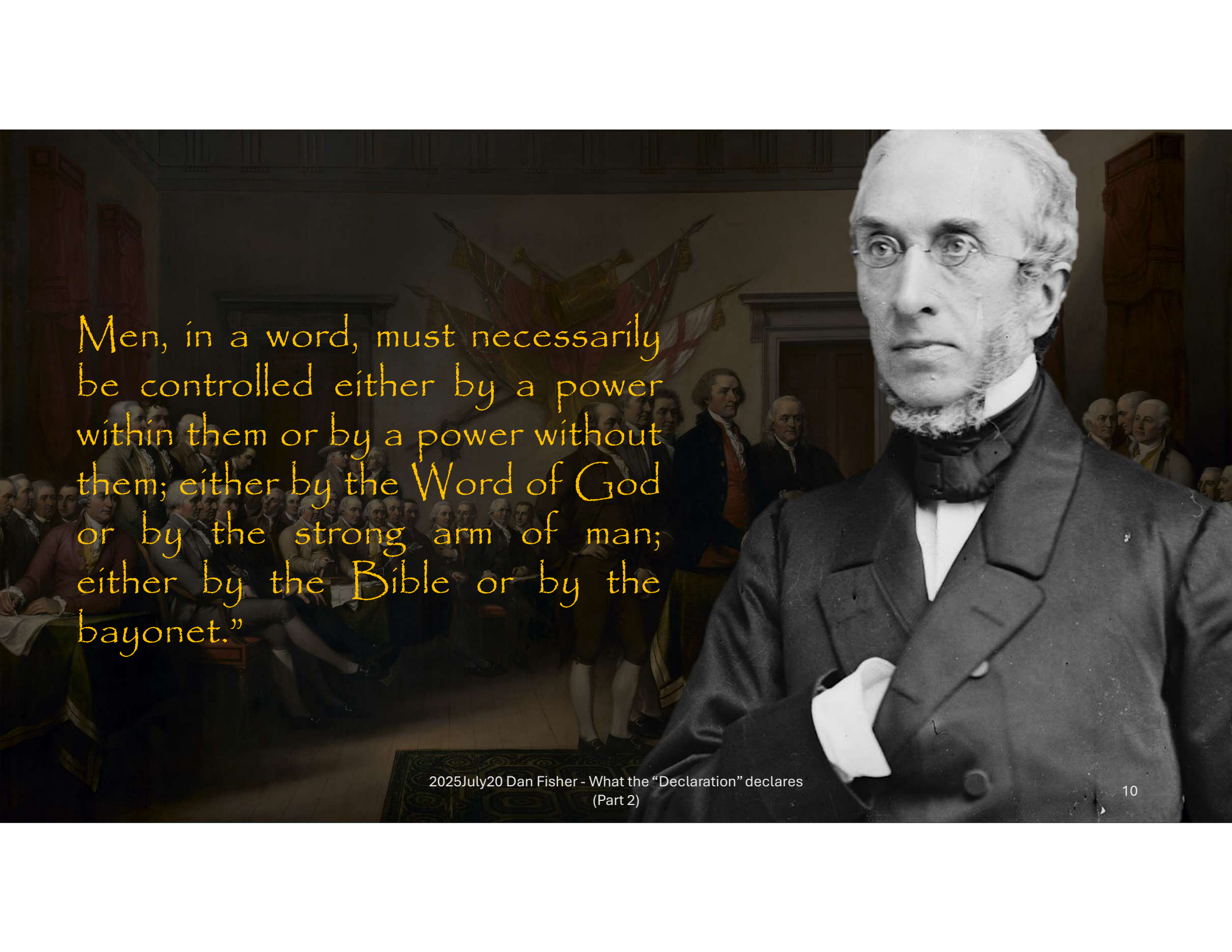
such exalted virtue never yet existed
in any large body of men and lasted
long; ... There is no man so blind as
not to see, that to talk of founding a
government upon a supposition that
nations and great bodies of men, left
to themselves, will practice a course of
self-denial, is either to babble like a
new-born infant, or to deceive like an
unprincipled impostor.”



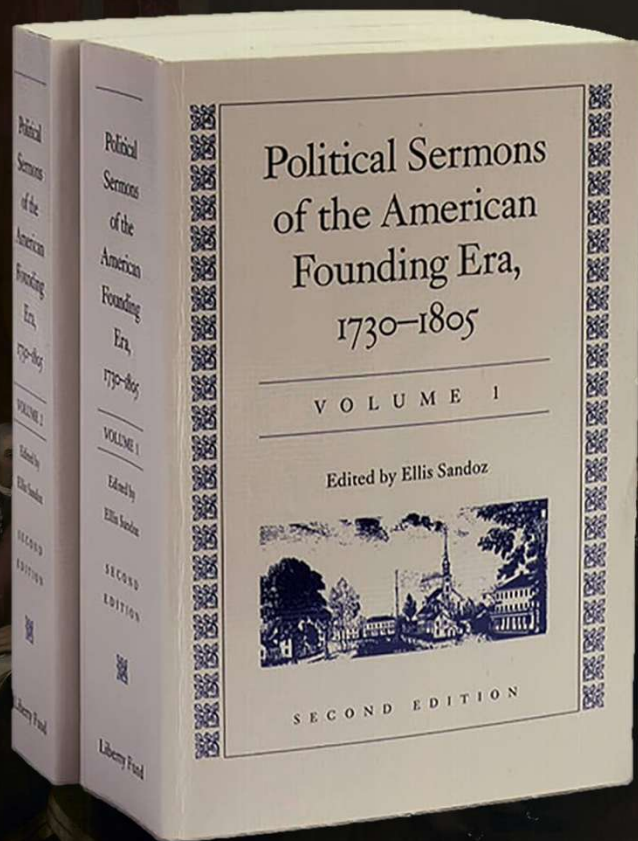


Robert Winthrop, U.S. Speaker
of the House, May 28, 1849:

“All societies of men must be governed in some way or other. The less they have of stringent State Government, the more they must have of individual self-government. The less they rely on public law or physical force, the more they must rely on private moral restraint.”

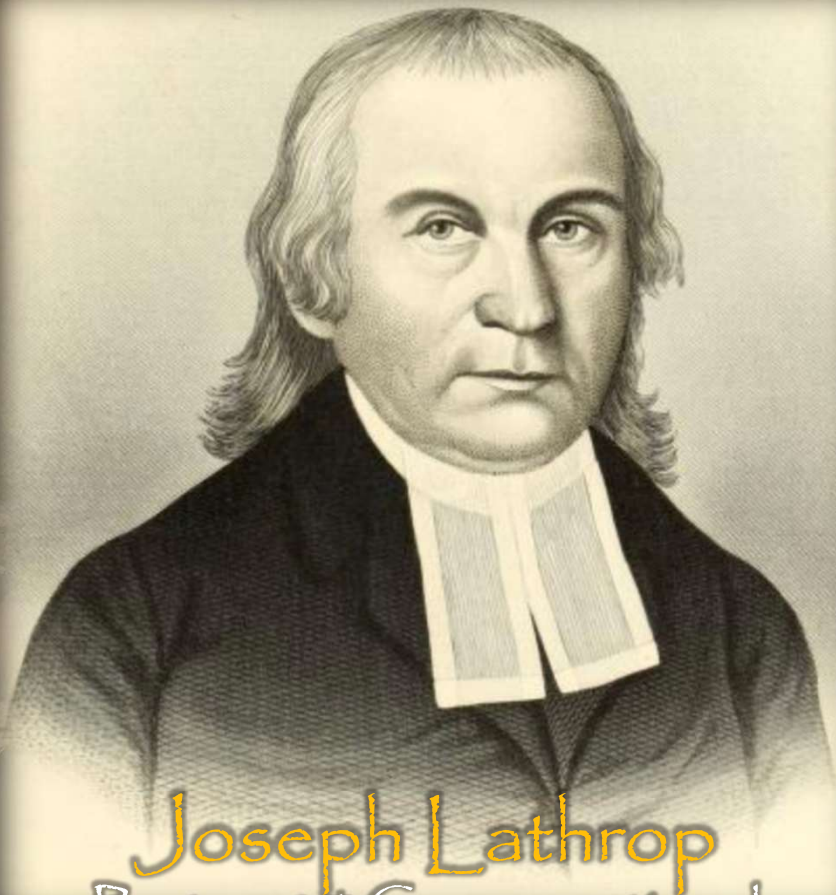


Men, in a word, must necessarily be controlled either by a power within them or by a power without them; either by the Word of God or by the strong arm of man; either by the Bible or by the bayonet."



Elizur Goodrich
CT Congregational Pastor, 1787:

“When a constitutional government is converted into tyranny, and the laws, rights and properties of a free people are openly invaded, there ought not to be the least doubt but that a remedy is provided in the laws of God and reason, for their preservation; nor ought resistance in such case to be called rebellion.”



Joseph Lathrop
Pastor, 1st Congregational
Church, West Springfield, MA

“A Sermon On A Day Appointed For
Public Thanksgiving,” Dec 14, 1787

“Is there no case in which a people
may resist government?” Yes, that is,
when rulers usurp a power oppressive
to the people, ... in contempt of every
respectful remonstrance. In this case
the body of the people have a natural
right to unite their strength for the
restoration of their own constitutional
government.”



Rom 13:1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

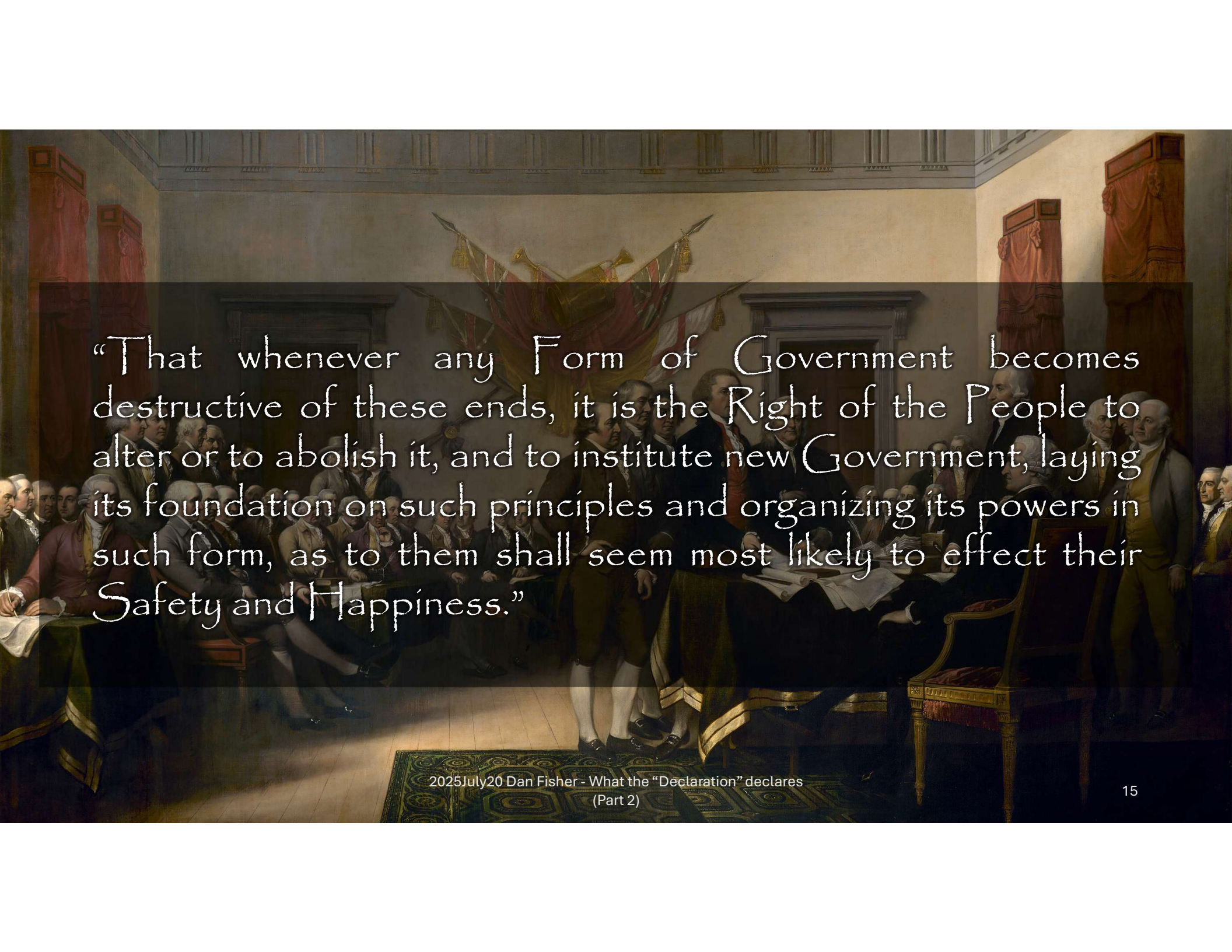
1 Pet 2:13-15 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you (**Titus 3:1-2, 1 Tim 2:2-3**)

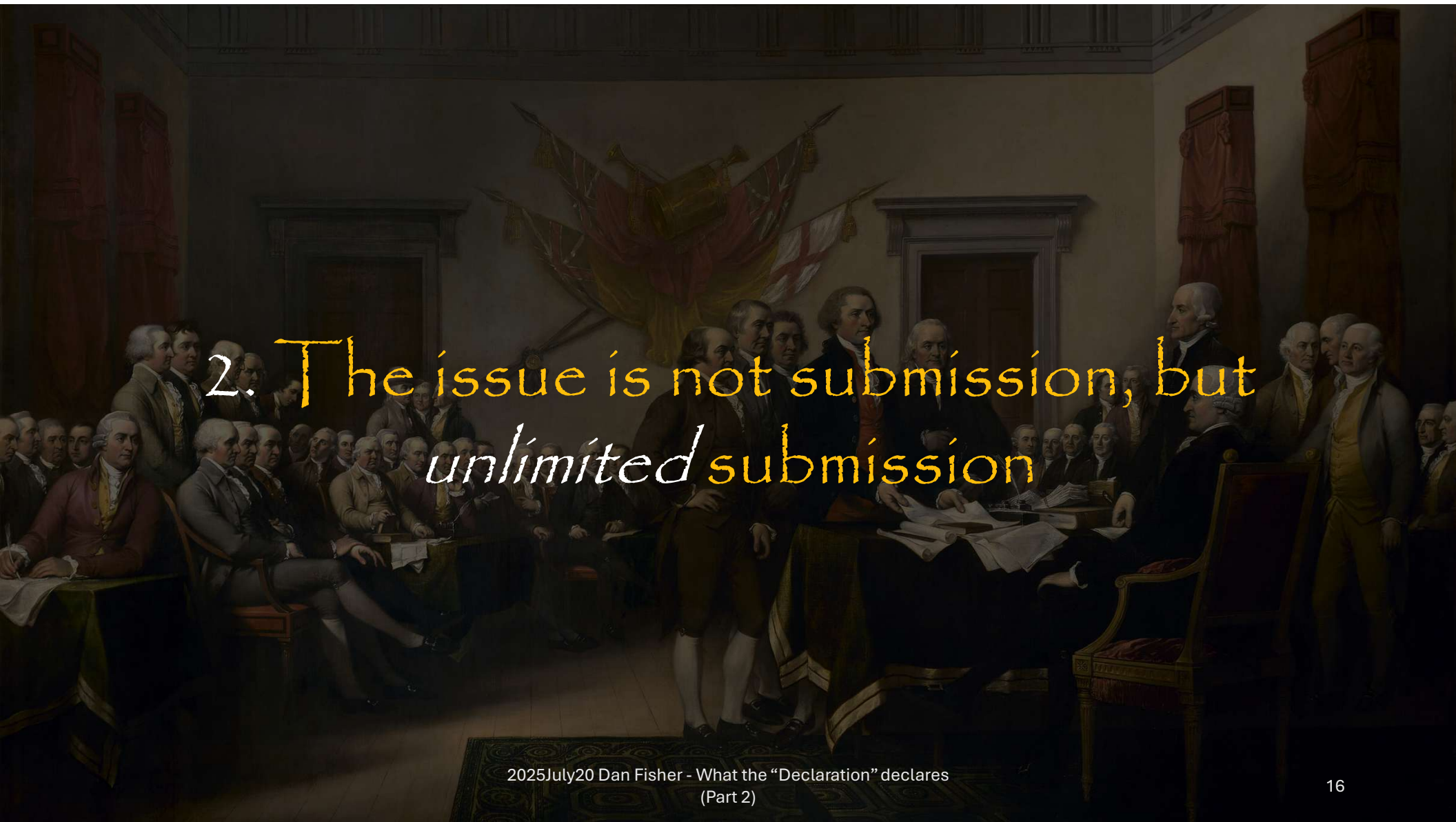


1. Submission & cooperation are not always the biblical options

Rom 12:18 “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”



“That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”



2. The issue is not submission, but
unlimited submission



Jonathan Mayhew, 1750:

“No government is to be submitted to at the expense of the sole end of all government ... The only reason of the institution of civil government and the only rational ground of submission to it is the common safety and utility. If therefore, in any case, the common safety and utility would not be promoted by submission to government, but the contrary, there is no ground or motive for obedience and submission, but for the contrary.”

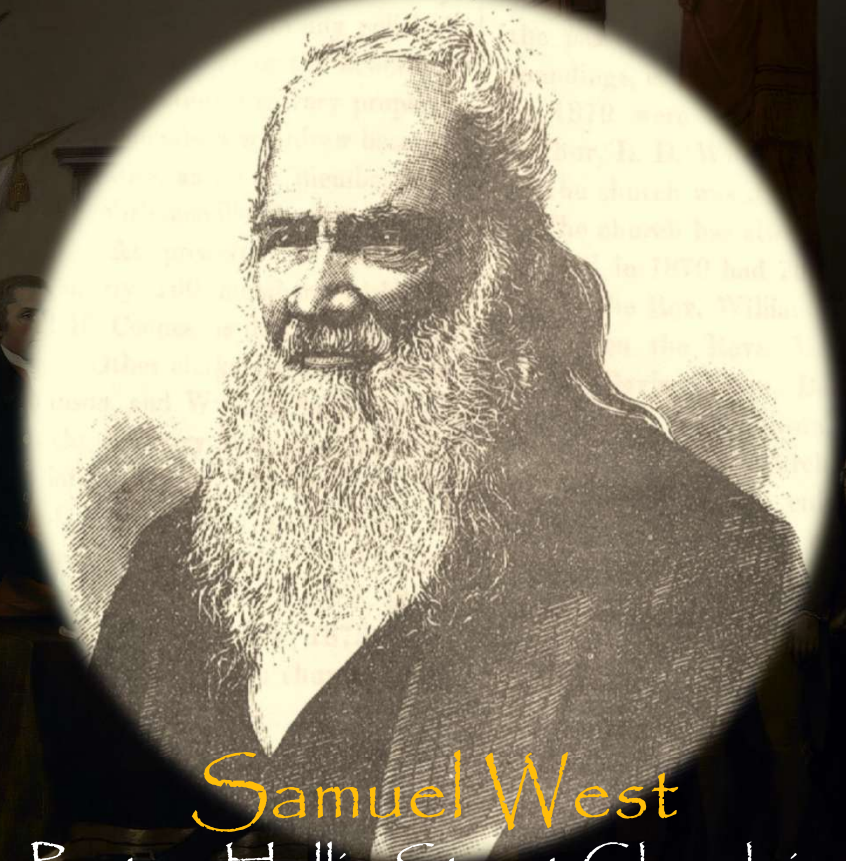
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The duty of unlimited obedience, whether active or passive, can be argued neither from the manner of expression here used [Rom 13:1-7], nor from the general scope and design of the passage. When once magistrates act contrary to the end of their institution; when they rob and ruin the public, instead of being guardians of its peace and welfare; they immediately cease to be the ordinance and ministers of God; and no more deserve that glorious character than common pirates and highwaymen."

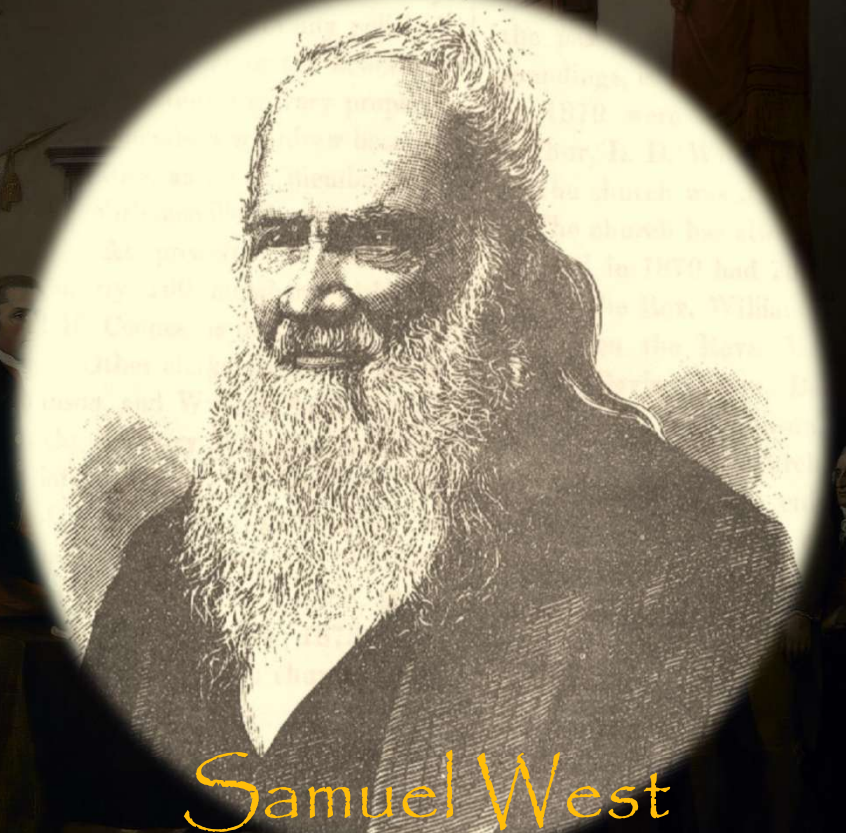
To the MA legislature, 1776:

“A slavish submission to tyranny is proof of a very sordid and base mind. ... all good magistrates, while they faithfully discharge the trust reposed in them, ought to be religiously and conscientiously obeyed. ... if magistrates are no farther ministers of God than they promote the good of the community, then obedience to them neither is nor can be unlimited; ... for it would imply a gross absurdity to assert that,



Samuel West
Pastor, Hollis Street Church in
Boston, MA

when magistrates are ordained by the people solely for the purpose of being beneficial to the state, they must be obeyed when they are seeking to ruin and destroy it. ... Unlimited submission is due to none but God alone. ... Whenever the ruler encourages them that do evil, and is a terror to those that do well, ... he becomes a tyrant, he forfeits his authority to govern, and becomes the minister of Satan, and as such, ought to be opposed.”

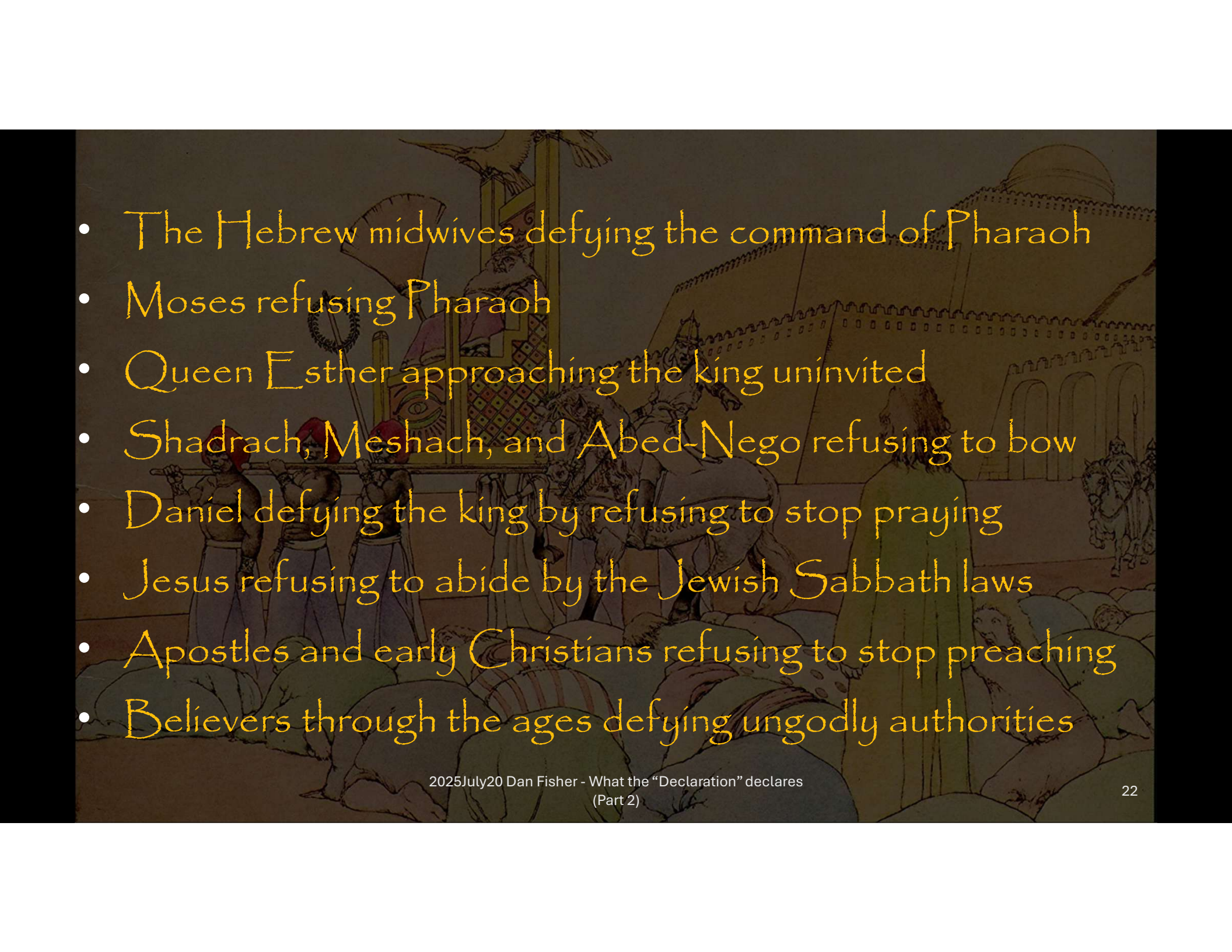


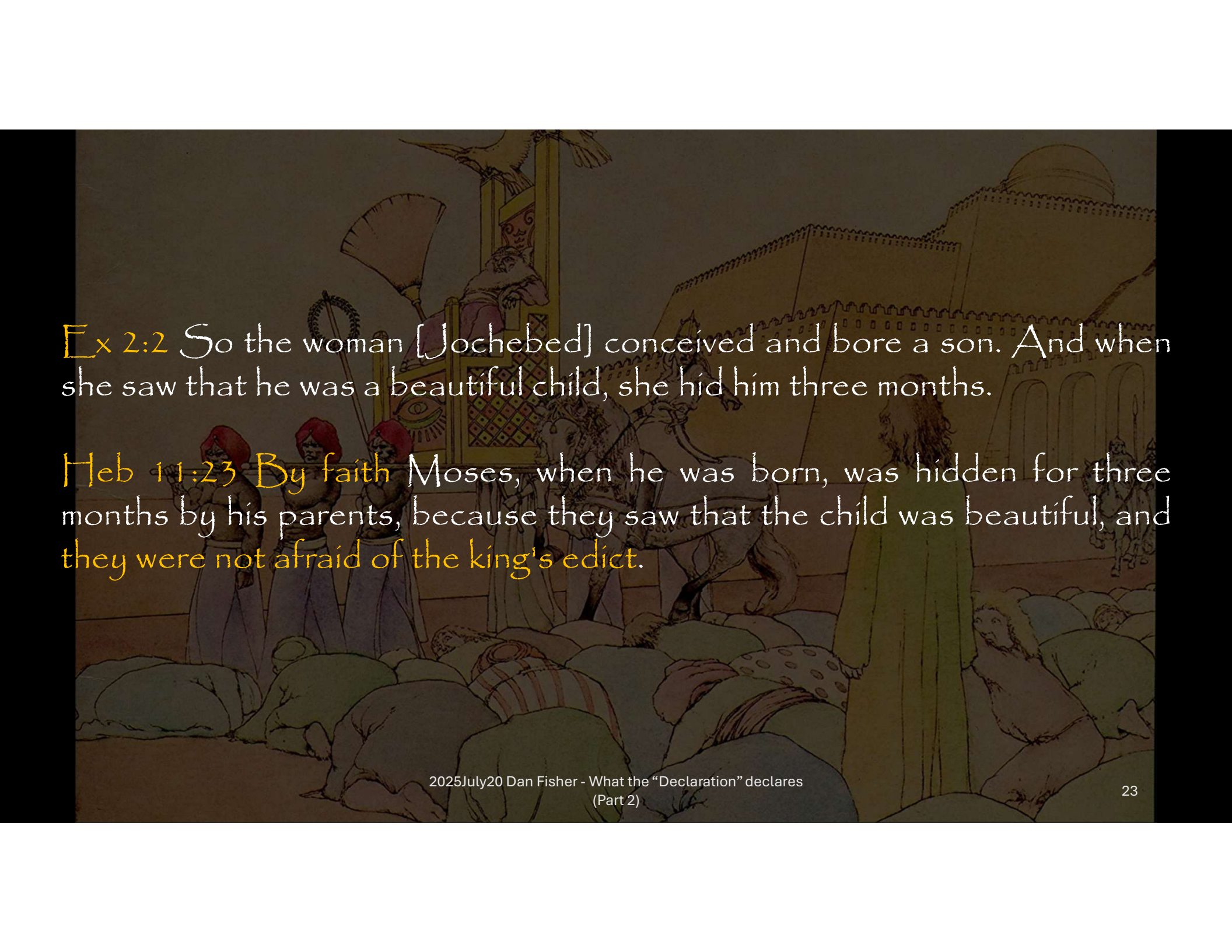
Samuel West
Pastor, Hollis Street Church in
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Believers have not always believed in
unlimited submission

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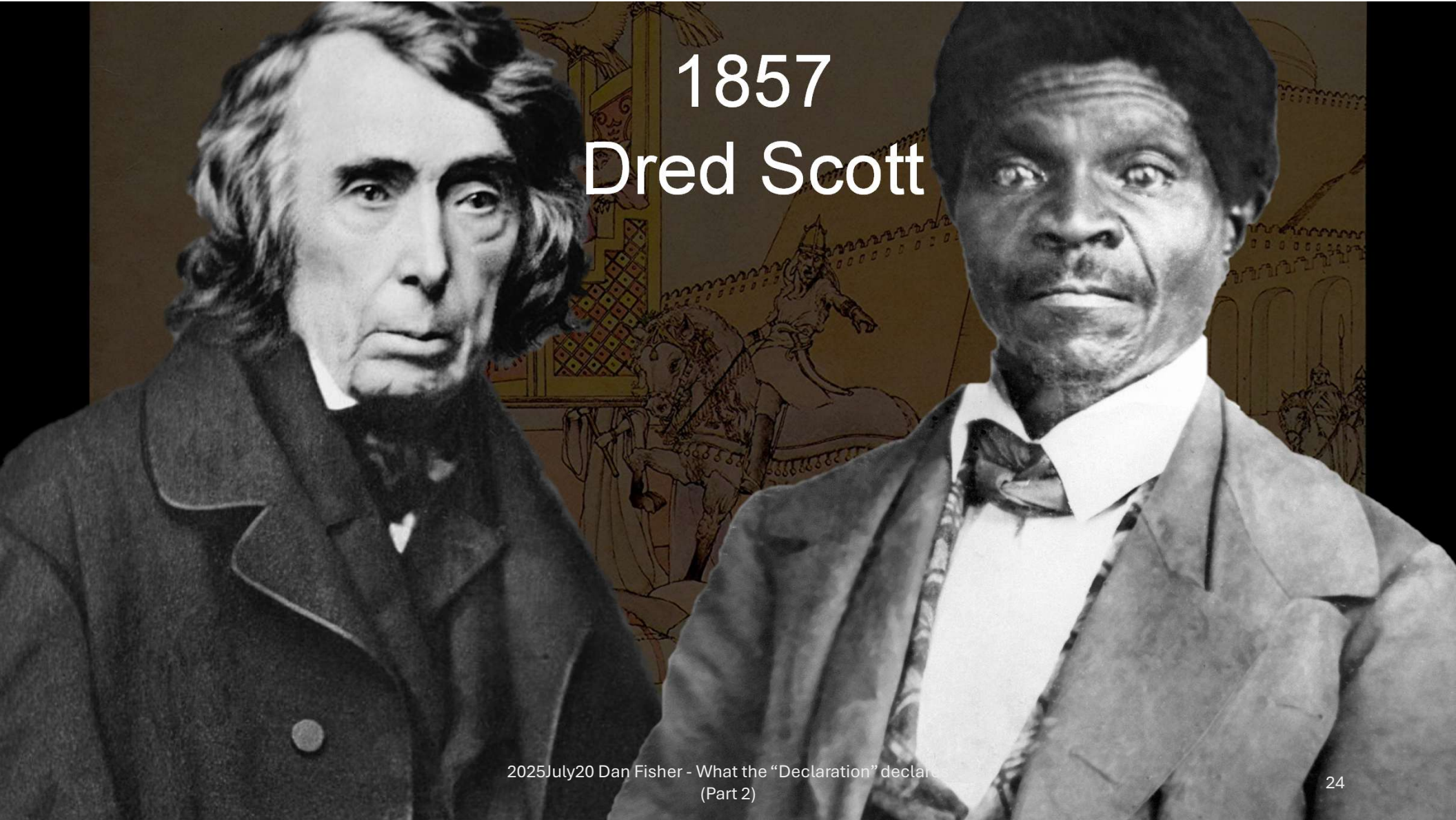
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- The Hebrew midwives defying the command of Pharaoh
 - Moses refusing Pharaoh
 - Queen Esther approaching the king uninvited
 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refusing to bow
 - Daniel defying the king by refusing to stop praying
 - Jesus refusing to abide by the Jewish Sabbath laws
 - Apostles and early Christians refusing to stop preaching
 - Believers through the ages defying ungodly authorities



Ex 2:2 So the woman [Jochebed] conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months.

Heb 11:23 **By faith** Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

1857 Dred Scott



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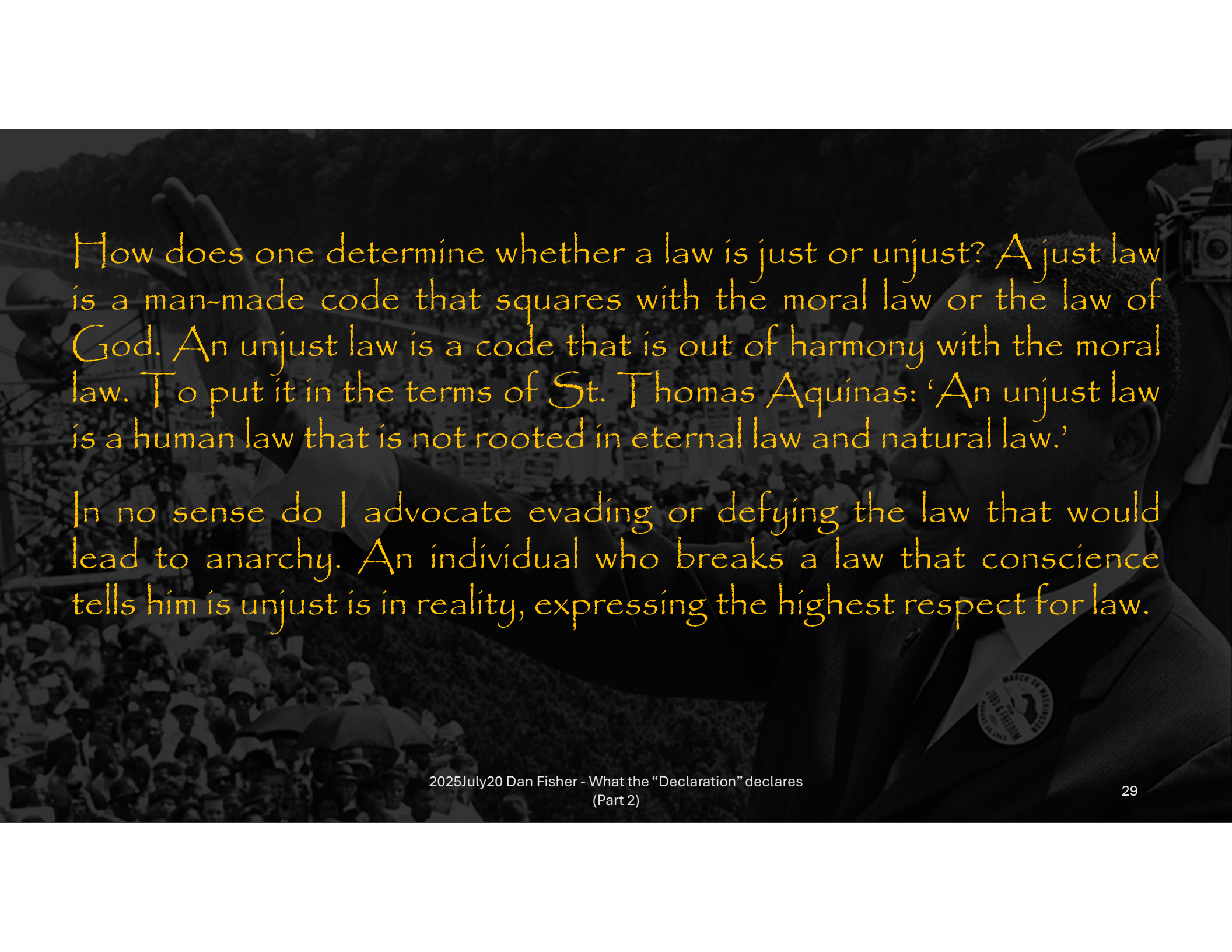




Birmingham, Alabama jail, April 16, 1963:

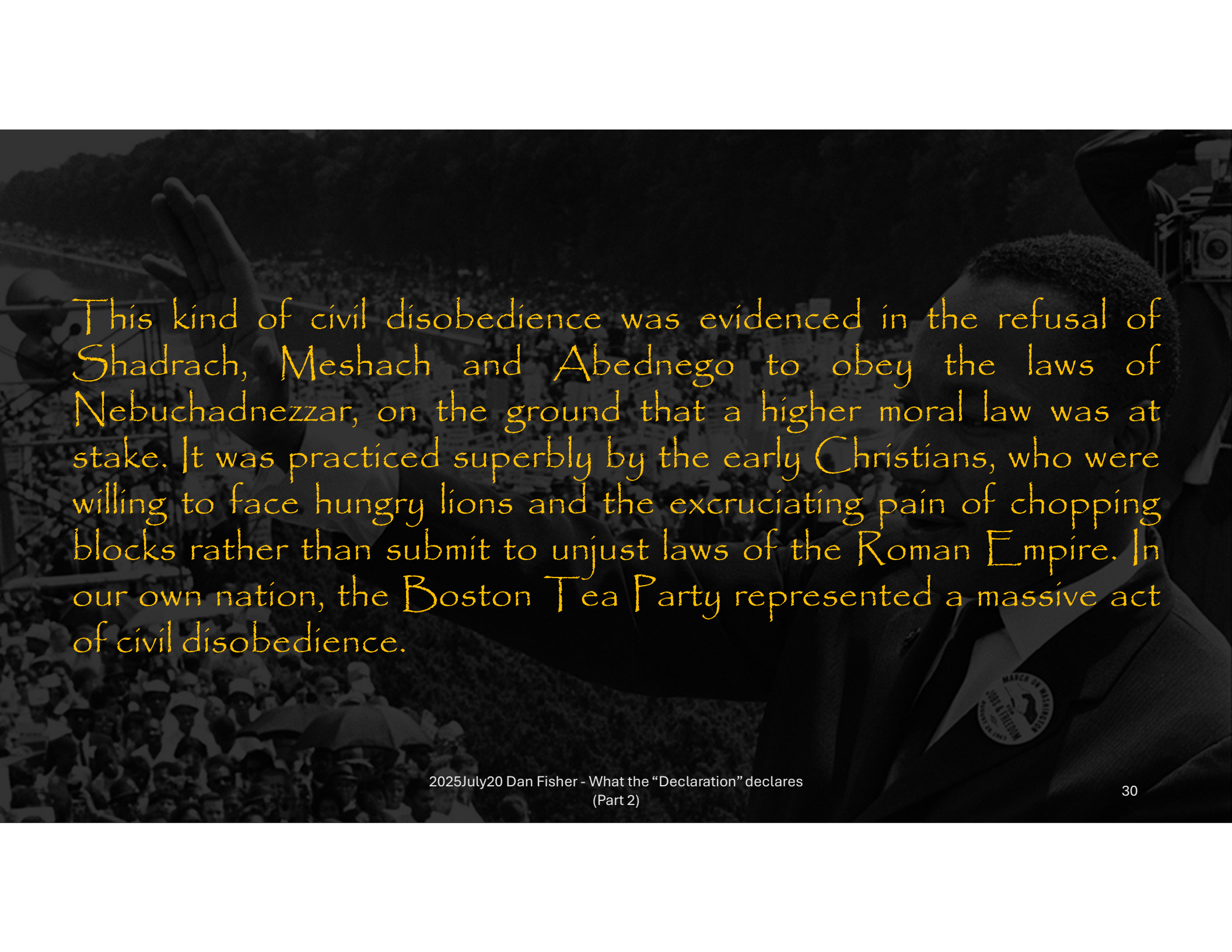
We know that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.

One may well ask: 'How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?' The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that 'an unjust law is no law at all.'

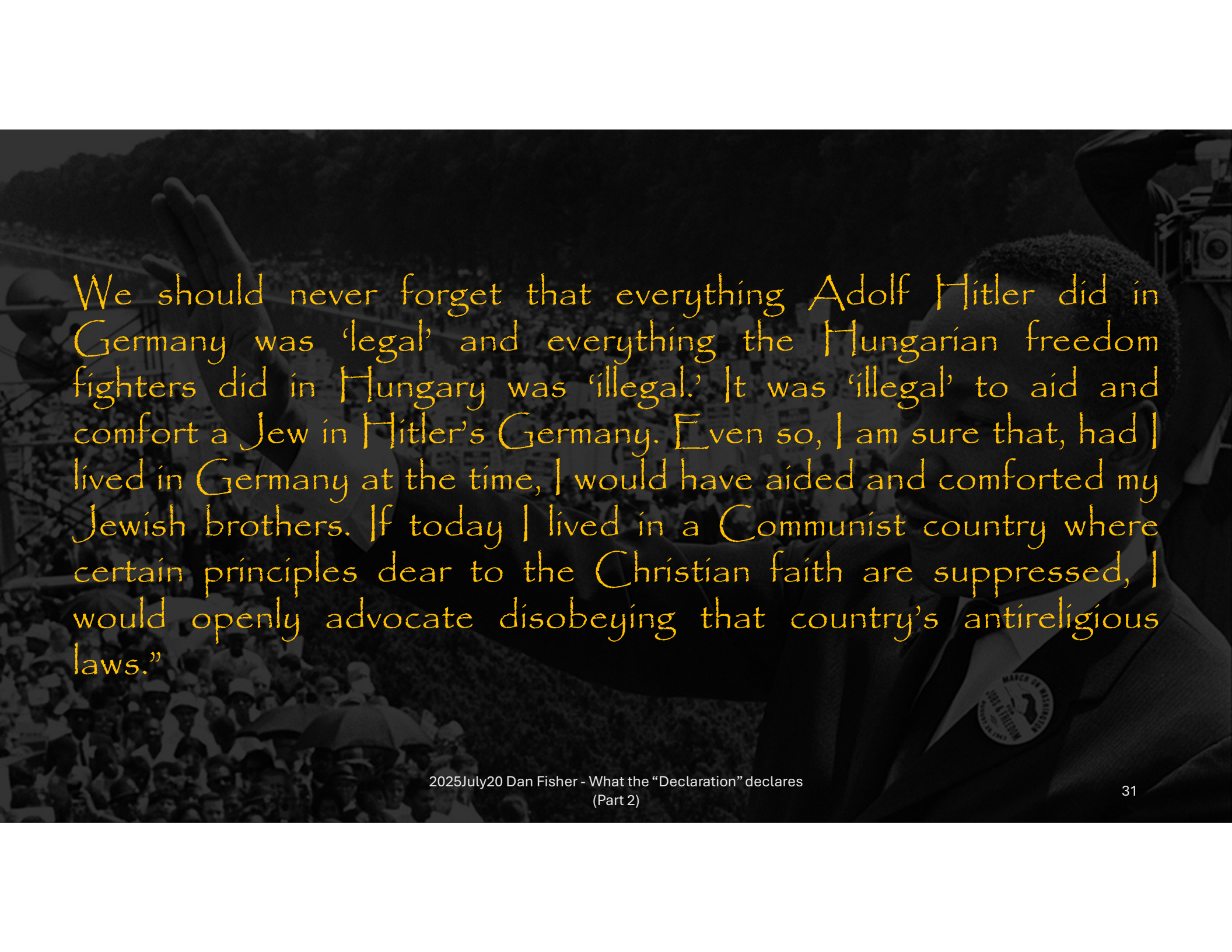


How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: 'An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law.'

In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law that would lead to anarchy. An individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust is in reality, expressing the highest respect for law.



This kind of civil disobedience was evidenced in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to unjust laws of the Roman Empire. In our own nation, the Boston Tea Party represented a massive act of civil disobedience.

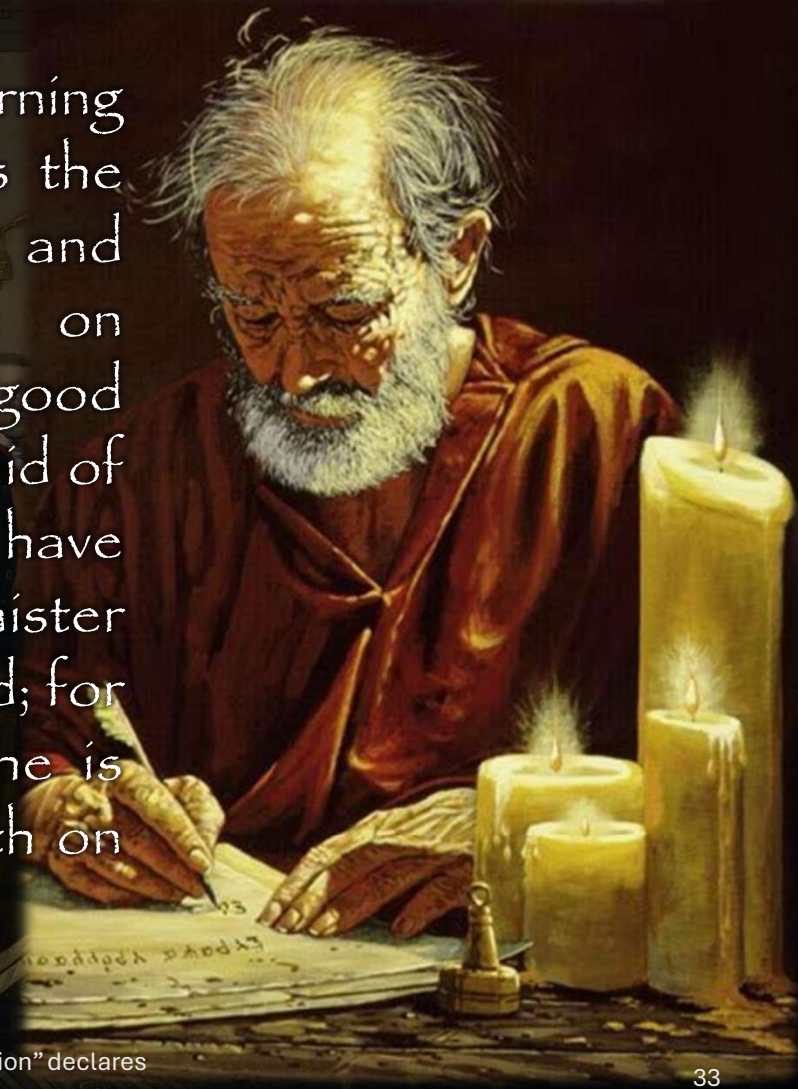


We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was 'legal' and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was 'illegal.' It was 'illegal' to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws."



3. Paul does not teach *unlimited* submission in Rom 13

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. ... ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. **Rom 13:1-4**

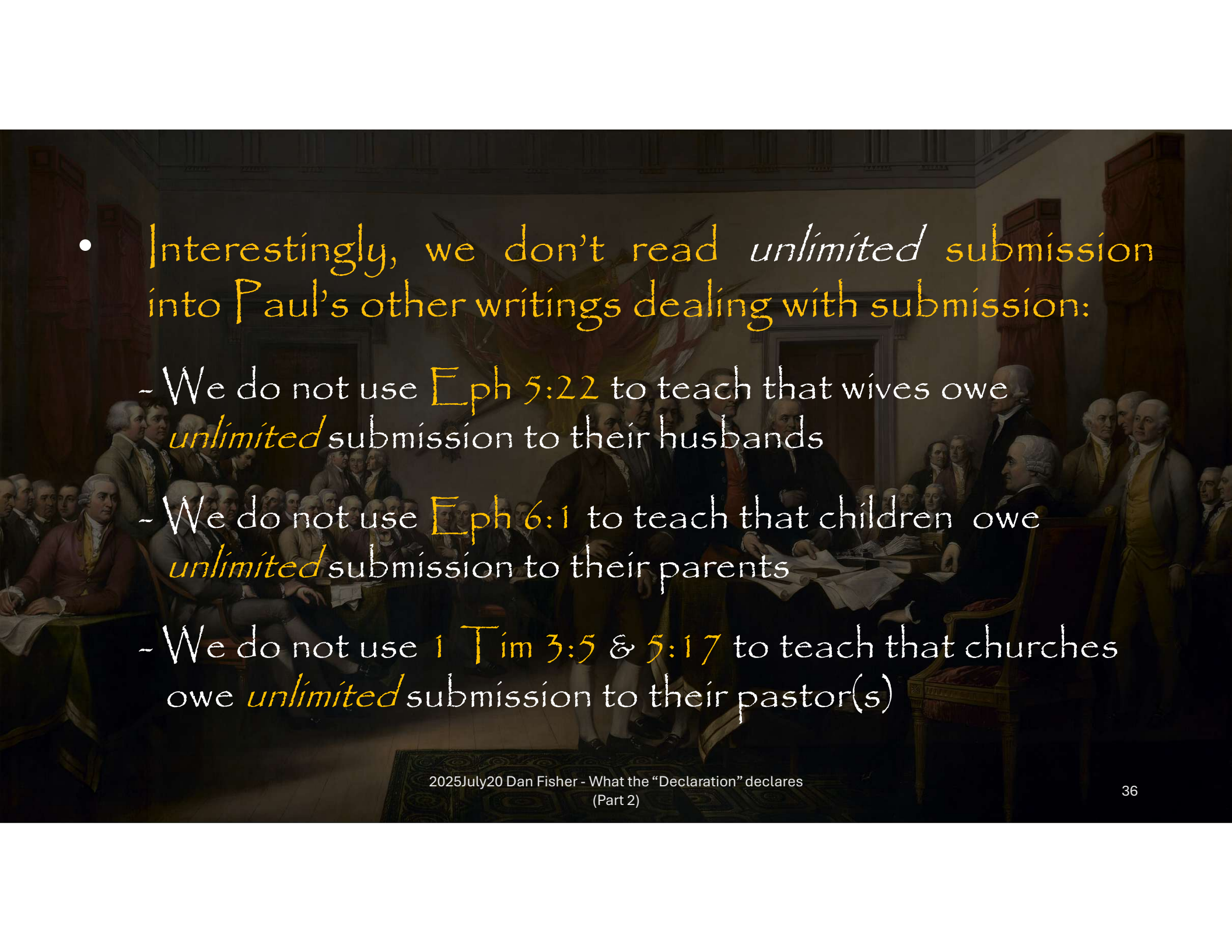


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- Just as the Black Robe preachers and MLK emphasized, Paul is referring to a *biblically proper* government – not a tyrannous one.



Paul defines a biblically *proper* government as:

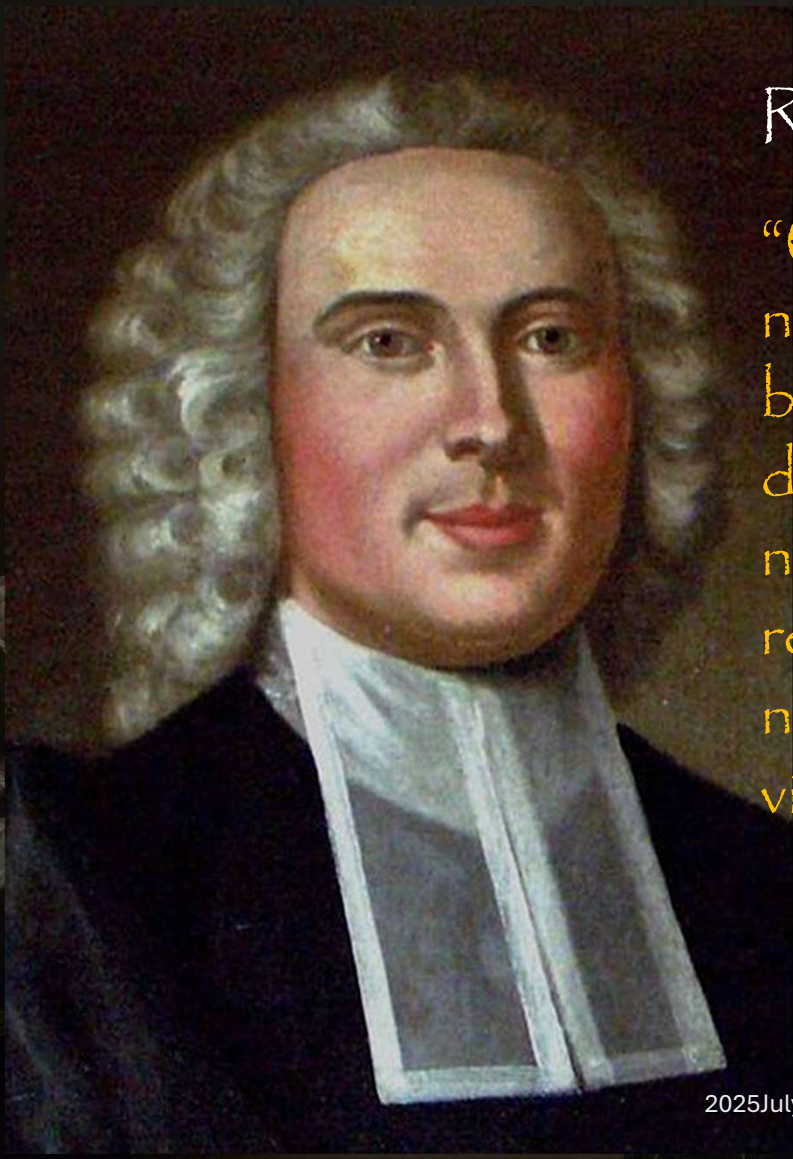
- One that acts as God's minister for good. (13:4)
- One that punishes the bad guys. (13:3-4)
- One that protects/rewards the good guys. (13:3)

- 
- Interestingly, we don't read *unlimited* submission into Paul's other writings dealing with submission:
 - We do not use Eph 5:22 to teach that wives owe *unlimited* submission to their husbands
 - We do not use Eph 6:1 to teach that children owe *unlimited* submission to their parents
 - We do not use 1 Tim 3:5 & 5:17 to teach that churches owe *unlimited* submission to their pastor(s)

The background of the slide features three oval-framed portraits of men in 18th-century clerical attire, including white wigs and black robes with white cravats. They are set against a dark, atmospheric background of a church interior with architectural details like columns and a high ceiling. The man on the left has a large, curly wig and a slight smile. The man in the center is older, with a more receding hairline, and is gesturing with his right hand while holding a book. The man on the right has a large, wavy wig and a serious expression.

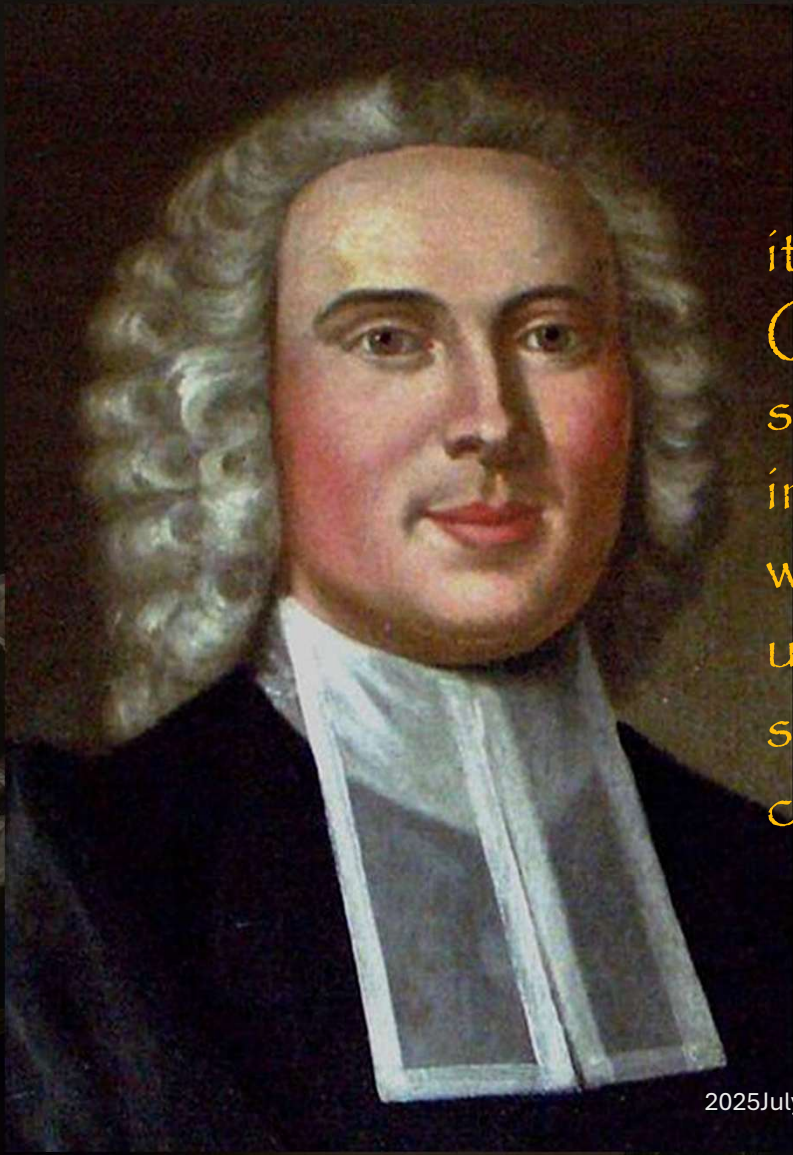
4. The founding preachers did not preach *unlimited* submission

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Rev Jonathan Mayhew, 1749-50:

“Common tyrants and public oppressors are not entitled to obedience from their subjects by virtue of anything here [Rom 13] laid down by the inspired apostle [Paul]. ... For a nation thus abused to arise unanimously and resist their prince, even to dethroning him, is not criminal, but a reasonable way of vindicating their liberties and just rights:



it is making use of the only means, which God has put into their power for mutual and self defense. And it would be highly criminal in them not to make use of this means. It would be stupid tameness and unaccountable folly for whole nations to suffer one unreasonable, ambitious, and cruel man to wanton and riot in their misery.”

The background of the slide is a historical painting depicting the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. It shows a large group of men in 18th-century attire gathered in a grand hall, with some seated at long tables and others standing. The room is decorated with flags and banners.

Samuel Phillips Payson

Congregationalist pastor
Chelsea, Massachusetts



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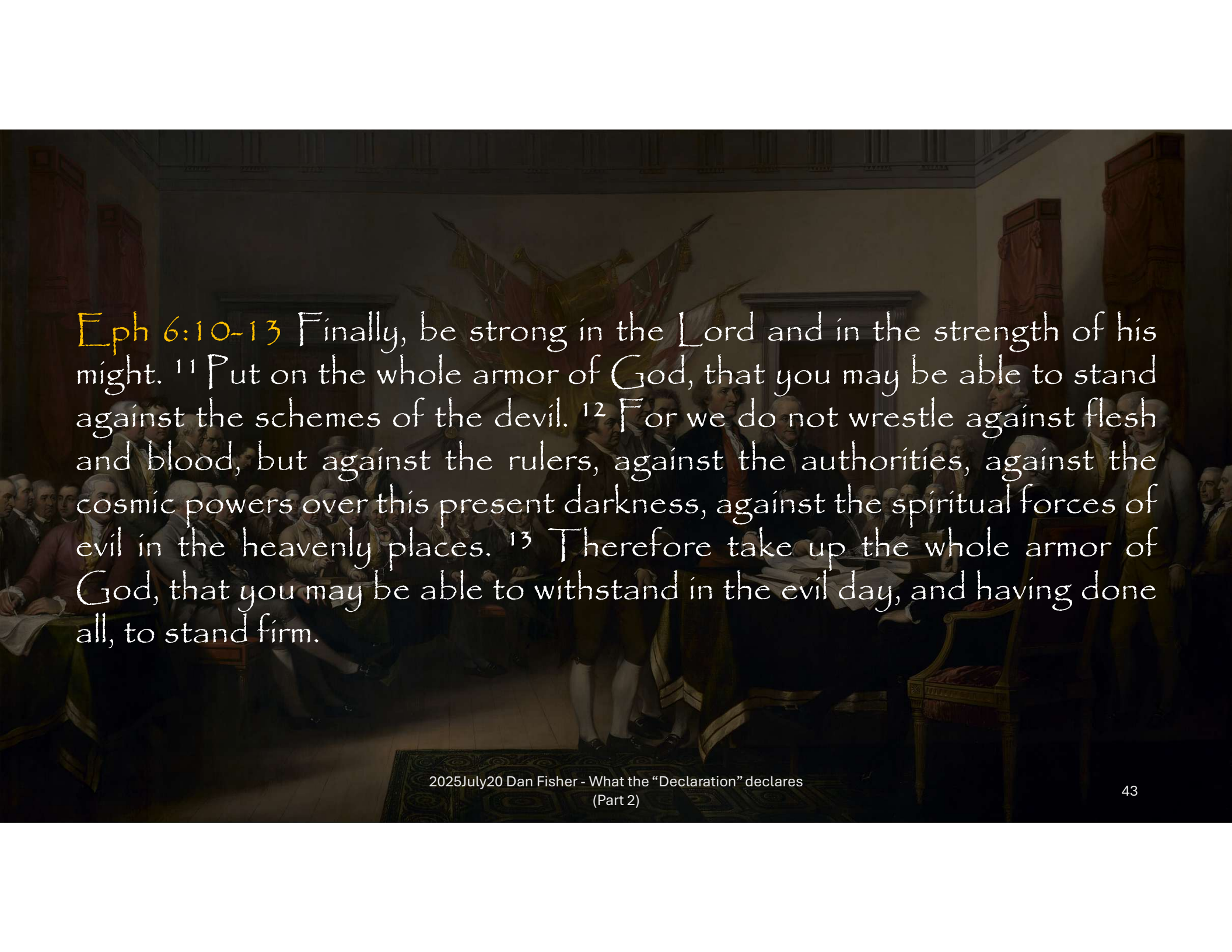
Joel Headley, historian, 1864:

“The brutal outrage at Lexington transformed this peaceful scholar and meek divine into the fiery, intrepid soldier, and seizing a musket he put himself at the head of a party, and led them forward to the attack. The gentle voice that had so long spoken only words of peace suddenly rung like that of a prophet of old.



To a body of British soldiers advancing along the road, he poured into them such a destructive volley that the whole were slain or taken prisoner. He was a man of peace and conciliation, but the first citizen's blood that crimsoned the green grass made a clean sweep of all his arguments and objections, and he entered with his whole soul into the struggle."





Eph 6:10-13 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.