

God Bless America

Psalm 33

The history of America has been wrapped with the blessings of God. From the very beginning, God gave America a Lord, Himself. God gave America a land, this wonderful land. God gave America a law, the Constitution founded upon the principles of God's Holy Word, the Bible.

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance.”

Psalm 33:12

The Medo-Persians built a great nation, but it crumbled and fell. The ancient Egyptians had a civilization that flourished under Joseph, but soon a Pharaoh arose who did not know the God of Joseph. The nation went down in defeat. Alexander the Great conquered the world at age 32, and he wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. Rome became the proud ruler of the world. With the iron boot of Rome ruling the known world of its time, Rome fell through depravity and decay. In contrast to other nations, America has risen to unparalleled power, unparalleled greatness, because America's God has been the Lord.

I want you to think for a moment about what makes this the greatest nation. Think first about the greatness of our natural resources. Every commodity needed to man is found in America, whether it is minerals in the earth or the grain grown in the ground, the wood from the forest, or the fruit from the orchards. Everything man needs and desires can be found in America.

America is great in natural beauty. Every type of beauty can be found from sea to shining sea. When they talk to us about the coast of the Mediterranean, we can talk about the shores of the Atlantic and the beaches of the Pacific. When they talk to us about the Danube and the Thames and the beautiful rivers of Europe, we can talk about the beautiful Ohio, the mighty Mississippi, and the Colorado. When they talk to us about the mountains of Switzerland, we can talk about the Alleghenies, the Adirondacks, the Smokies, and the Rockies. When they talk to us about the points of interest, we can talk to them about Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone National Park, Redwood Forest, Carlsbad Caverns, and Silver Springs Maryland. Several years ago there was a slogan, “See America First.” I think that's a great slogan because this is the most beautiful nation on the face of the earth.

America is great because of religious liberty. A brave man named Roger Williams was so persecuted for his faith that he fled and founded what we call Rhode Island. Rhode Island's capitol was named Providence which is another name for God. In the Constitution of Rhode Island, he wrote the decree that, “Every man shall be permitted to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience.” When they wrote the Constitution, the founders and the writers of the Constitution borrowed that part from the Constitution of Rhode Island.

America is the greatest nation because it is the greatest place of opportunity on the face of this earth. No one is denied the opportunity to be all they can be in this country. Henry Ford once said to a group of young men, “There is no such thing as no chance in America.”

The main reason America is the greatest nation is because God has been the God of America. Benjamin Franklin said to the Continental Congress, “If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, then a nation, an empire cannot rise without His aid.” Someone came to the Continental Congress and said to an usher, “Which one is General Washington?” They were told, “General Washington is the tall man with the gray hair who bows on his knees when the Congress comes to prayer.” America's security is not in its military might or in its fighting forces, as wonderful as they are. We take nothing away from this flag. We take nothing away from the men and women of our Armed Forces or from our veterans when we say that some trust in chariots, and some trust in horses, but we will trust in the name of the Lord our God. America is still the greatest nation on the face of this earth. No other nation has been as blessed as America has.

Katherine Lee Bates captures this theme in her hymn, "America, The Beautiful." In 1893, a group of teachers decided to visit Pike's Peak, elevation 14,000 feet. Katherine later wrote, "We hired a prairie wagon. Near the top we had to leave the wagon and go the rest of the way on mules. I was very tired. But when I saw the view, I felt great joy: All the wonder of America seemed displayed there with the sea-like expanse. It was then and there, as I was looking out over the sea-like expanse of fertile country, spreading away so far under those ample skies, that the opening lines of the hymn floated into my mind. When we left Colorado Springs the four stanzas were penciled into my notebook."

"O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain's majesties, Above the fruited plain
America, America, God shed His grace on thee;
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea."

What's right with America?

1. America Is Right In Her Founding.

The founders of America were overwhelmingly Christian.

Christopher Columbus, in his Book of Prophecies, describes his desire to discover the new world. "It was the Lord who put into my mind the journey. I could feel his hand upon me. The fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies...all who heard of my project rejected it with laughter, ridiculing me...there is no question that inspiration was from the Holy Spirit, because He comforted me with rays of marvelous illumination from the Holy Bible for the execution of the journey. I did not make use of intelligence, math or maps. It is simply the fulfillment of what Isaiah had prophesied the fact that the gospel must still be preached in so many nations is what convinces me!"

The Pilgrims came to America in 1607. Three boats, barely larger than today's cabin cruisers reached land, and 120 very tired Englishmen came ashore. Crammed and cooped up in a boat for several months, they explored for three days, and then they took a seven-foot roughly hewn cross from the boat that they brought over and put it on the beach. Then they all gathered around it, got on their knees, and began to pray. They prayed that the glory of Jesus Christ would prevail upon this new land.

This place would later become Virginia Beach, Virginia. In the 1930's, a huge monument was erected to honor what those pilgrims did. On this monument, these words were inscribed: "Act one, scene one, of the unfolding drama that became the United States of America."

They had received permission to settle in the northern part of the region known as Virginia to establish a colony and build a church that they hoped would be free and independent of the Church of England. They had come here to worship freely as they chose, not as the Church of England chose for them.

Someone has said, "The difference between North and South America is that the Spaniards went to South America in search of gold, but the Pilgrims and Puritans came to North America in search of God." There is enough truth in that to explain some of the differences in the history and development of our two continents.

On September 6, 1620, the Mayflower set sail across the Atlantic Ocean. The 66 day journey was in a 150-foot-long boat, crowded with 102 passengers. They were seeking religious freedom. There were 40 crew members along with furniture, books, supplies, seeds for crops they would plant, livestock, and a brand new printing press. To create an environment where the pilgrims could survive, God the Almighty, blew their ship 250 miles off course to a landing place where they would find one of the most talented and significant people in American history, an English-speaking native American named Squanto, who showed them how to survive. He wrote and

presented a peace treaty between the pilgrims and the native Americans that kept the peace for 50 years. These pilgrims entered into a covenant with God on October 11, 1620. Here we are today, 425 years later. The sailing across the Atlantic ocean was called, “The modern-day parting of the sea,” and the New World, the modern-day Promised Land. Within days of their arrival, they drafted what became known as the Mayflower Compact.

“In the name of God. Amen. Having undertaken for the glory of God and for the advancement of the Christian faith, do solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, covenant and combine ourselves together.” - Mayflower Compact

“Whereby our said people, inhabitants there, may be so religiously, peaceably and civilly governed, as their good life and orderly conversation may win and incite the natives of this country, to the knowledge and obedience of the only true God and Savior of mankind and the Christian faith.” - Mayflower Compact

“We have come here in the name of God. We have come here to glorify God. We have come here to advance the Christian faith.”

They were saying, “We are unashamedly Christians, and we search for a place where we can worship God the way we feel the Bible teaches us to worship Him.” 23 years later, the New England Confederation was written. Here is what our founding fathers wrote:

“Whereas we all came into these parts with one and the same end and aim, namely to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to enjoy the liberties of the gospel in purity and peace.”

“Whereby our said people, inhabitants there, may be so religiously, peaceably and civilly governed, as their good life and orderly conversation may win and incite the natives of this country, to the knowledge and obedience of the only true God and Savior of mankind and the Christian faith.” - The New England Confederation

Of the 55 colonial delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1774, 52 were members of Christian churches. Only 3 of them considered themselves to be deists. When you study the 17,000 written works of the framers of the Constitution, 34 percent of their quotations came from the Bible. The two most quoted non-Biblical writers were European legal writers with clear Biblical views of law and government.

George Washington, the father of our country, said, “It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.” While revisionists would say that Washington was not a Christian, the truth is that he was converted and baptized by immersion by a Baptist preacher during the Revolutionary War.

James Madison said, “We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.”

The Preamble to the Constitution states that each person is “endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, among these being life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

Thomas Jefferson began the practice of appropriating money for missionaries to the Indians, a practice that continued well into the 19th century. During the time of Jefferson, Bibles were placed in the public schools in Washington, D.C. at Congress’ expense. As you walk up to the steps of the Supreme Court, you can see a row of statues of various lawgivers, each one turned to face the one in the middle, which is Moses holding the Ten Commandments.

As you enter the Supreme Court, the oak doors have the Ten Commandments engraved on the lower portion of each door. The wall above where the justices sit has a display of the Ten Commandments. There are Bible

verses etched in stone all over federal buildings and monuments in Washington, D.C. Every session of Congress begins with prayer by a paid chaplain whose salary has been paid by taxpayers since 1777.

The first Supreme Court Chief Justice, John Jay, said, “Americans should select and prefer Christians as their rulers.” On the aluminum cap atop the Washington Monument are two words: “Laus Deo.” You can't see them, but they are placed at the highest point. Translated the phrase means, “Praise Be To God.” The city is divided into four major sections forming a perfect cross: White House to the North, Jefferson Memorial to the south, Capitol to the East, Lincoln Memorial to the West. In the cornerstone of the Washington Monument is a Bible. The walls of the Capitol dome have these words: “The New Testament according to the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” In the rotunda of the Capitol is the figure of the crucified cross. A Latin phrase translated, “God has smiled on our undertaking,” is inscribed on the Great Seal of the United States. Micah 6:8 is on the walls of the Library of Congress.

The greatness of the founding of America is recorded in the ink of her involvement with God—from the Pilgrims to Jonathan Edwards, to the Great Revivals of the 1700's and 1800's. While the Puritans have been criticized as prudes, we are a blessed nation because we were founded by people who sought a land where they could freely worship the true and living God. America is right in her founding. Of the 55 colonial delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787, 52 were members of Christian churches.

The Declaration of Independence, which we celebrate this weekend, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights were founded on a Biblical world view. The Declaration of Independence correctly states our liberty comes from “the laws of nature and nature's God.”

When the Continental Congress, faced with great problems and difficulties, didn't know which way to turn, Benjamin Franklin called the members of the Congress to fall upon their knees and pray. The picture of Moses was on the first coin that was made in America, and today we still have on our money the grand old words, “In God We Trust.”

2. America Is Right In Her Freedoms.

All of the freedoms we enjoy today we owe to our founding fathers. There is an anti-American trend today in America. It is anti-patriotic, and it demeans the sovereignty and the freedom of the United States. These would revise history to undermine the character and the integrity of our founding fathers, saying they weren't who we know they were. They would have us believe that they weren't motivated by principle, but by property and greed and desire for wealth. But that is not true. The men who signed the Declaration of Independence had far more to lose than to gain! They were motivated by a quest for freedom. They had far more to lose than to gain by signing the Declaration of Independence. Most were very wealthy already. Twenty-four were lawyers, nine were rich landowners or rich farmers. Eleven were merchants, the others were physicians, ministers, and politicians. All but two who signed had families. They were educated men of standing in their communities.

They felt there was something more than security: Freedom! Many of the signers paid the ultimate price for their boldness for freedom's cause. They were pursued, captured, and tortured, and many of them died.

God has given us good government. We have a free democracy. May we never have a dictatorship in America. We have tasted freedom through the years, and we must never surrender that freedom to any one man or group of men. There are no concentration camps in America, no secret police, and no confiscation of a man's business. We have no Siberian wastes where an innocent man is sent away to die. We have a free democracy where every person has a vote and a voice.

God has given us freedom of speech and press. I can preach the word of God without fear and without favor, and the pulpit cannot be muzzled. We have freedom of speech and of the press. A person can criticize the president of the United States, the most powerful man in the world, and is absolutely free to do so. Try living in

China and speaking out against the leaders and the government, and you will be in peril for your life. In the communist states, preachers are placed in prison and persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ.

On July 4, 1776, 56 men gathered in Pennsylvania State House to draw up a Declaration of Independence from we, the people of the United States, to King George and England. It was a fortunate hour in our nation's history. It was one of those rare occasions when we had greatness to spare. Those 57 men who birthed America were our founding fathers. They were righteous, God-fearing, Bible-believing, Christ-adoring Christians. Current educators in America's colleges and universities today present them as greedy, malicious, self-serving people. It's not true.

John Hancock said, "We recognize no sovereign but God and no king but Jesus."

Benjamin Rush, signer of the declaration of independence, said, "My only hope of salvation is in the infinite love of God manifested to the world by the death of his Son Jesus Christ on the cross. Nothing but His blood will wash away my sins. I rely exclusively upon that. Come Lord Jesus, even so come quickly. Amen."

Patrick Henry said, "It cannot be emphasized too clearly and too often that this nation was founded, not by religionists," (that means people who believe anything) "not on religion, but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

John Jay, the first Supreme Court Chief Justice said, "Providence has given to our people the choice of their ruler. And it is the duty as well as the privilege of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers." That means elections, which means if you are a respectable citizen in America, you go vote on election day.

Charles Carroll, a signer of the declaration of independence, "Without morals, a republic cannot subsist at any length. Those who are decrying the Christian religion, whose morality is so pure, are undermining the solid foundations of morals. The best security for the duration of our nation is morality." What was the best security for America? The solid foundation of morality.

King David wrote in Psalm 11:3, "*For if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*"

Consider the sacrifices our founding fathers made for our freedom. Thomas Jefferson finished a draft of the declaration of independence in 17 days. Congress adopted it July the 4th, 1776. King George III denounced all Americans as traitors. On July 4, 1776, freedom was born, but it was paid for in the blood, the sweat, and tears of our founding fathers. Their prospects, if they won the war, was going to be years of hardship in the development of a new nation. If they lost, they were going to be hung until dead. They signed with ink and paid with their blood. They fought, they bled, and they died for your freedom and mine.

Of the 56 signers of the Declaration, few were to survive for very long:

- 5 were captured and tortured by the British before they died.
- 12 had their homes ransacked and burned to the ground.
- 2 lost their sons in the American Revolution.
- 1 had 2 sons captured in the war for your independence.
- 9 fought and died from wounds of the Revolutionary War.

Few of them benefited from their bravery, and most lost everything they owned, but not one recanted his original Declaration of Independence. These men were courageous and valiant and brave, and because of them and others, we have the privilege of being here today, and living in the greatest country in the world. We are a great nation.

As John Adams signed the Declaration of Independence, he said, "Whether we live or die, sink or swim, succeed or fail, I stand behind this Declaration of Independence. And if God wills it, I am ready to die in order that this country might experience freedom."

Abigail Adams wrote over 1,000 letters to her husband in Philadelphia. She said, "Posterity who are to reap the blessings will scarcely be able to conceive the hardships and struggles of their forefathers."

"I am not adequate for this job, but God is using me beyond my ability." General George Washington

There were cold winters where soldiers on watch would freeze to death even though they were changed out every 30 minutes. There was a severe lack of food. They were so hungry, and when a flock of geese would fly over, they were commanded not to fire because it would waste precious gunpowder.

"Great necessities call out great virtues." John Adams

"I have often thought how much happier I would have been if, instead of accepting a command under such circumstances, I had taken my musket upon my shoulders and entered the ranks. Or if I could have justified the measure to posterity, and my own conscience, had retired to the backcountry and lived in a wigwam. If I shall be able to rise superior to these, and many other difficulties which might be enumerated, I shall most religiously believe the finger of providence is in it." January 14, 1776 General George Washington

"The reflection upon my situation and that of this army produces many an uneasy hour when all around me men are wrapped in sleep, I am comfortless. Few people know the predicament we are in." February, 1776 General George Washington

"The future happiness or misery of a great portion of the human race is at stake – and if we make a wrong choice ourselves, our posterity will be wretched." May 16, 1776 General George Washington

"These are the times that try men's souls." December, 1776 Thomas Paine

Thomas Paine said, "The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth."

The war took the lives of an estimated 25,000 Americans, or roughly 1 percent of the population. The Revolutionary War lasted until 1783, which was the longest war, except for Vietnam. It was the bloodiest war per capita.

Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seven seas to pay his debts. He lost his home. He lost all properties, and he died in rags. He pledged his life, his fortune, and his sacred honor. He kept his honor. He lost his fortune. He lost his life for your freedom and for mine.

Thomas Lynch, Jr. was a third generation rice farmer, aristocrat, a large plantation owner. After he had signed, his health failed. With his wife, he set out for France to regain his health. The ship never arrived in France. He was never heard from again. Thomas McKean of Delaware was so harassed by the British that he was forced to move his family five times in five months. He served congress without pay. His family lived in poverty and in hiding. And he did all of that for you and me and your children and your children's children that freedom might be born. Vandals looted and burned all of the properties of Ellery, Clymer, Hall, Gwinnett, Walton, Heyward, Rutledge, and Middleton. They sacrificed everything they had. They lost it all so that freedom might be born in America.

Thomas Nelson, Jr. of Virginia raised two million dollars on his own signature to provide for the fighting troops of George Washington. After the war, he personally paid back the loans, which wiped out his entire estate. He was never reimbursed by our government. In the final battle at Yorktown, Nelson urged general George Washington to fire on his own house because it was occupied by the British general Cornwallis. His home was totally destroyed. Nelson died bankrupt and was buried in an unmarked grave. He gave his life, his fortune, and his sacred honor. He pledged everything for your freedom.

John Hart was driven by the British from his wife's bedside while she was dying. Their 13 children fled in all directions from the house as the British were approaching. His fields and grist mills were laid waste. For more than a year, he lived in a forest and cave. He returned home after the war to find his wife dead, his children gone and his properties gone. He died a few weeks later of a broken heart. He pledged his life, his fortune, and his sacred honor.

These 56 men paid a price for liberty and freedom. They were not poor, hungry, wild-eyed pirates in desperation. They were men of means. They enjoyed luxury and ease in their personal lives. They had much to lose, but they gave it up gladly for your freedom and for my freedom. Freedom was born July 4th, 1776.

During the battle of Valley Forge, there were people who were calling for the resignation of George Washington. The army of the American Revolution were farmers with pitch forks. They were up against the best army in the world, the British army. They were starving. Most of them didn't have a contract with the government to stay more than six weeks. George Washington gave each of them a coin that said, "Victory or death."

At Valley Forge, you see an image of an American patriot. His head is stained with blood. He has no shoes. His feet are wrapped in rags. He's hungry from starvation because they hadn't had food in days. He's standing in the snow leaning on his musket, looking back at this audience. And he's saying, "I stood in the snows of Valley Forge without shoes to give you the right to vote, and you stay home on election day because the weather is bad." I hear the echo from Valley Forge, "I left my family destitute so that you could have freedom of speech, and you remain silent because it might be bad for business or politically incorrect." I hear the echo from Valley Forge, "I orphaned my children to give you a government to serve you. And through neglect, you permitted government to become your master, and the master of your children, and the master of your grandchildren."

President John Quincy Adams said, "So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children began to read it, the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country and respectable members of society. I have for many years made it a practice to read the Bible through once every year."

History calls Abraham Lincoln "The Greatest President" because he held America together in the great Civil War and produced the 13th amendment that will forever remove slavery. God bless his sacred memory. Abraham Lincoln said, "I believe the Bible is the best gift God ever gave to man." The Bible says, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked rule, the people mourn."

The vast majority of Americans are totally ignorant of the history of fasting and prayer by our forefathers. In 1797, our relationship with France collapsed. The French Revolution had plunged that nation into chaos and rebellion. These were the four objectives of the French revolution: to close the churches, to stop Christian worship, to rewrite history, and to topple the statues of national heroes.

When the Continental Congress, faced with great problems and difficulties, didn't know which way to turn, Benjamin Franklin called the members of the Congress to fall upon their knees and pray.

There is a famous portrait of General George Washington at Valley Forge. His little army was almost starving and freezing to death. Everything they held dear was at stake. They were fighting against humanly

insurmountable odds, but out in the snow George Washington was down on his knees in prayer.

France's new leader seized America's ships and demanded that millions of dollars in bribes be paid by America to France to sponsor the revolution. America refused to pay these French terrorists. President Adams visited General George Washington. The both of them put their minds together and they came up with this solution: "On March 23, 1798, they called upon the American people for a day of solemn humiliation, fasting and prayer: that the citizens on that day abstain from their secular occupations, that they may call to mind our numerous offenses against the Most High God, they implore his pardoning mercy through the great mediator that we may remember righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people."

President Adams quoted Proverbs 14:34. Years later, in a third time, when the survival of America during the Civil War was clearly on the line in one of our greatest crises ever, when 600,000 Americans had died for the sin of slavery, our nation then, as now, was bitterly divided. Abraham Lincoln called for a national day of fasting and prayer on the first Thursday of August in 1864. His appeal to the American people went this way: "I do hereby further invite and request the heads of the executive departments of government together with all legislators and all judges and magistrates and all the other persons exercising authority in the land, and all other law-abiding people of the United States to assemble in their preferred places of public worship on that day in fasting and prayer." The war miraculously ended shortly thereafter.

The family is under attack. People want to redefine it. They want to blow it apart. It is almost like culture has declared war on the family. If you dare to stand up and declare that a family is made up of a man and a woman, you are accused of being bigoted. Most of the social breakdowns can be related directly to the collapse of the family.

Our entire history has spanned only 4 generations. When Thomas Jefferson died, Abraham Lincoln was 17 years old. When Lincoln was assassinated, Woodrow Wilson was 8. By the time the nation mourned the death of President Wilson, Ronald Reagan was a boy of 12.

But even though we have a short history, God has richly blessed us. We are the richest nation in the world. Our natural resources are still the greatest of all nations. We need the blessing of God upon our nation again. We need to turn to God again and ask Him to bless America.

"Lord, you have poured out amazing blessing upon this land." Psalm 85:1

In a 10-year study by the Political Science Professors at the University of Houston, researchers found over 15,000 writings of the founders, they isolated 3,154 direct quotes in these writings, of these direct quotes, 34% of these come directly from the Bible, another 60% were quotes from people like John Locke and Sir William Blackstone, who directly quoted the Bible. Over 94% of the quotes found in the writings of the founders came from the Bible.

It was that kind of patriotism which led men, armed with little more than hunting rifles, to engage in battle with the most powerful nation in the world. These were young men leading the revolution. George Washington was 43. John Hancock, the president of the Continental Congress was 32. Nathaniel Greene, the Rhode Island General, was 25.

"Many of our forefathers paid a terrible price in the Revolutionary War, but finally they won the victory so that you and I might be citizens of this land of the free and home of the brave." John Adams

"From the time of the Declaration of Independence, the American people were bound by the laws of God, and the laws of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which they all acknowledge as the root of their conduct. We all came together to obey the Word of God." - John Quincy Adams

- “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” was written by a Baptist minister, Samuel Francis Smith.
- The Pledge of Allegiance was written in 1892 by a Baptist minister, Francis Bellamy.
- The words, “In God We Trust” are traced to the efforts of Rev. W.R. Watkinson.
- Rev. John Witherspoon, a Presbyterian minister, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence.
- The first act of the United States Congress was to authorize the printing of 20,000 Bibles for the Indians.

The concept for three branches of government can be found in Isaiah 33:22.

“For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; it is he who will save us.” Isaiah 33:22

The basis of tax exemptions for churches was found in Ezra 7:24.

“You are also to know that you have no authority to impose taxes, tribute or duty on any of the priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, temple servants or other workers at this house of God.” Ezra 7:24

Each of the state constitutions mandated that Christian teachings would be included in a child’s education. The New England Primer said the Bible was the standard textbook in schools beginning in Boston in 1690.

Look at the first colleges and universities in America’s stated purposes:

Yale: “Seeing God is the giver of all wisdom, every scholar, besides private or secret prayer... shall be present morning and evening at public prayer.”

Princeton: “Cursed be all that learning that is contrary to the cross of Christ.”

Harvard: “Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus which is eternal life. John 17:3, and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning.”

106 of the first 108 colleges formed in America were founded on Christian principles.

By 1900, it was extremely rare to find a university president who was not an ordained clergyman.

“The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time.” Thomas Jefferson

If you have ever been to a U.S. sporting event—professional, college, or high school—you know the routine. People stand, some place right hands over their hearts, men take off their hats, soldiers salute, sometimes fighter jets roar overhead. Then, six of the most recognizable musical notes in American culture are played, and the crowd belts out the first five words: “O say can you see ...”

Most people then mumble through the rest of the song. A recent poll reports that two-thirds of Americans do not know all the words to the first verse of their own national anthem. Perhaps if people know the amazing history of how this song came to be, they might find it easier to remember. Here is the story behind the “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

Francis Scott Key was an American lawyer and an amateur poet. In the years prior to 1812 the British had imposed restrictions on American trade, boarded American ships and forced the impressment of American sailors into the Royal Navy. America had declared war in Great Britain and the British had again invaded America. The British war machine greatly outnumbered the young U.S. army and navy. The war was bad for American business, since Great Britain had been the biggest trading partner of U.S. merchants.

U.S. forces struggled to match the British on land, sea, and the Great Lakes. In August 1814, British forces raided Washington, D.C. They burned the White House, the buildings that housed Congress, and other government buildings. The destruction of the U.S. capital was a huge blow to American morale.

On September 13, 1814, Key and a U.S. official rowed over to a British warship at the mouth of the Patapsco River outside of Baltimore, Maryland. Their mission was to seek the release of some American prisoners. The meeting with the British officers went well, and they even dined together. But when it came time for Key and his companions to paddle home, their hosts said hold your rowboats. British ships were moving into position to bombard Fort McHenry, about eight miles away. Once they captured the fort, British troops would then raid the city, like they had in Washington. The British could not let Key and the others report on what they had seen. British ships let loose with their cannon as night fell. Hour after hour, they lobbed rockets and shells at the fort, more than 1,500 cannon balls in all.

Major George Armistead, commander of Fort McHenry, had commissioned a large American flag, known as the Great Garrison Flag, from Mary Pickersgill. It was made to be large enough to be seen from a distance, measuring 30 by 42 feet. As dawn neared, Key squinted through the gloom and smoke. He prepared himself to see his fears fulfilled: the British flag flying over Fort McHenry. The huge American flag still waved there. The British attack had failed and Baltimore was saved. As soon as Key was released, he pulled an envelope from his pocket and began writing on the back. Out poured a poem about how the U.S. had withstood Great Britain's armed might:

*Oh say can you see by the dawn's early light
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
O! say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?*

3. America Can Be Right In Her Future.

We can blame America's problems on the politicians, on Hollywood, or on the pagan culture in which we live, but the future of America is dependent upon the people of God.

2 Chronicles 7:14 says, *"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land."*

- The People God Has

God says, *"If my people, who are called by my name."* Today, the church is the body of Christ. We are God's people. Vance Havner wrote these words: "There is a striking parallel between the condition of the country and the church. As the Constitution means little to Americans today, so too the Bible means little to the average church member. Church members generally are as ignorant of the Bible as are Americans of the Constitution. Too many people within our borders are Americans in name, but un-American in their hearts and anti-America in their conduct. There is a great need for God's people to recognize our responsibility as keepers of the flame of faith and it is we who must first turn to the Lord."

- The Pride God Hates

The Bible says that God is near to the contrite, but He resists the proud. *"Will humble ourselves"* means we

recognize our dependence on God and confess that we have sinned against God. Proud means living your life for self without regard to what God would have you to be. If won't humble ourselves, then God will do it for us, and believe me, God knows how to do it.

- The Prayer God Hears

The verse says if God's people will humble themselves, "*and pray*" and seek God's face, he will hear from heaven. Our greatest weapon against the ungodliness that has our nation in its grip is prayer. Seeking God's face means to turn away from every human solution and turn to God for the answer. Too often we seek the hand of God rather than the face of God. When we seek God's hand, we come asking God for things. When we seek God's face, we will discover what the Father asks of us. We will seek to know and do His will, not our will.

- The Promise God Honors

God says, "*I will hear from heaven, I will forgive their sin, and I will heal their land.*"

I believe that America can have a bright future, but we need the healing of our land. Our land is in need of healing today. We have racial strife, the oppression of the poor and the weak, corruption and graft in government, and greed in our economic system. It all begins with you and me. The solution is not in the White House, the State House or the Court House, but in God's house and your house and my house!