

America's Christian Heritage

By Dr. Bill Jones

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Bible Text: Psalm 144:15

Preached on: Sunday, June 29, 2008

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...into one verse that is found in Psalm 144.

This verse is also found in the psalm that you just read. And the last verse of Psalm 144 is, "How blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!"¹

In the year 2002 there was a challenge made by an Atheist to the expression found in the pledge of allegiance, "One nation under God." And six years ago that case made its way through the courts. And perhaps you can remember that case. It was offensive to him.

I'm astonished at what is happening in our generation, in our courts. While I cannot endorse any political candidate and keep my tax exempt status, as a preacher of the gospel we can call our nation back to righteousness and the acknowledgment of God.

How could it be that the United States could come to the place in our history when we would seek to rub out any reference to God? And how can that take place in our court systems?

There is a battle on today that has been engaged in for many decades. And it centers around the Constitution of the United States and it has everything to do how the justices in the highest court of our land view the Constitution of the United States. They either view it as strict Constructionists or they view it as a living document. And perhaps you have heard those things and wondered what that is all about.

Their treatment of the Constitution reminds me of the treatment of the Word of God in so many circles today. Is the Bible literally the Word of God? Can it be expounded? Has God really...? Or is it some document that we can go into and pick and choose what we like and say is authoritative?

A strict Constructionist will view the Constitution as a settled body that needs to be interpreted historically with its original intent. In other words, what were our founding fathers saying in this original document?

¹ Psalm 144:15

Those who believe the Constitution is a living document say that it is up to our courts and the highest court in our land to interpret the Constitution and change the original intent and shape America like we want it to be.

There is an agenda. And every president has the opportunity to appoint to the highest court of the land justices that will either go down the vein of the living document and change the Constitution and begin to erode more and more of our liberties. It is very important who we as a people put into the White House.

But while that was going through the courts it might surprise you to know that there were other decisions making their way through courts that you and I didn't hear anything about. A federal judge in Texas warns students that if they use the word "Jesus" in a prayer a federal marshal would arrest them and give them six months in jail. You and I didn't hear about that one, did we?

A federal judge in Alabama ordered undercover monitors into the classrooms to report to him if students engaged in illegal and forbidden religious conduct such as praying over their lunches at school.

I am going to be sharing information from you that is taken from a website called Wall Builders. I highly recommend it to you. And the gentleman on that site is a man by the name of David Barton who has done a lot of research into this history of this country.

You see, the Supreme Court has passed in its precedence three tests concerning the issue of religious liberty. We have the opportunity in this country to assemble in a place like this freely. But I will tell you this. When we move out into the open air and when we are on the public property in New York City, every summer that I am in Union Square or Battery Park or some other...Coney Island. Inevitably I have someone come up to me and look me straight in the face and say, "You have no right being here, for this is public property and there is the separation of church and state." I have been told that on numerous occasions.

Well, the Supreme Court in 1971 decided that the religious clause in the Constitution should be replaced with what it calls its "lemon test." And under this test unless—now get this—unless a public religious activity had a primarily secular purpose, then that religious activity would be unconstitutional. That was decided by the Supreme Court.

In 1984 the Court established its second test called the "endorsement test" declaring that if it appeared that the government was permitting a public religious activity then the activity would be unconstitutional because someone might think that the government was endorsing religion.

And then in 1992 the Court added its third litmus test and they called it the "psychological coercion." And under this test...and it was under this ruling that this Atheist sought to move this decision to rip out "under God" from the pledge of allegiance. This third psychological coercion test says this. If a single individual is

uncomfortable in the presence of a public, religious, public activity, then the Court will make that activity stop.

This is in the United States of America. These are rulings from the highest court in our land.

In a few days you and I are going to celebrate 232 years since our founding fathers declared this country to be independent from Britain, the Fourth of July. And the United States of America is the longest ongoing constitutional republic in the history of the world. And why have we survived as long as we have?

Fifty-six men met on July eighth to sign the Declaration of Independence. On July second two men signed a rough draft. On July eighth the members of the Continental Congress, 56 of them, took the document they had drafted. They stood on the steps of Independence Hall in Philadelphia where the Liberty Bell was and they read the Declaration of Independence and they rang the Liberty Bell.

Does anybody know what Bible verse is printed on the Liberty Bell? Leviticus 25:10, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."²

One of the signers to the Declaration of Independence was John Adams who was what president of the United States? Does anybody know? Who was the first president? George Washington. Who was the second? John Adams. And after that Declaration of Independence was signed... We have got that expression, "John Hancock. Put your John Hancock." Where does that expression come from? From the Declaration of Independence. The largest signature on the Declaration of Independence was John Hancock's. And he wrote it so large, he said, because he wanted the King of Britain to see it.

Well, John Adams made this statement. He really felt that this day would be celebrated in the future by the people of these United States as a tremendous holiday. And he said this about the Fourth of July celebration—quote—"It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God almighty."

John Adams believed that the Fourth of July should be a religious ceremony, a religious holiday in which the nation would solemnly worship the God who had provided this deliverance. Can you imagine that being advertised at a modern Fourth of July Celebration?

But why would the...why was...why were these 13 united states seeking to separate from England?

Someone throw out a reason. What? The freedom of religion. Ok. What's that? Ok, no taxation without representation.

² Leviticus 25:10

Now let me say this. That is usually what is being taught today. There has been in...since the 1920s, 40s and especially the 60s, a revision in American history that is being taught in the public schools and it has been done on purpose. These educators are coming along and they have literally stripped out of the textbooks any references to God or the Christian heritage of this nation and they are teaching that the real reason that we separated from Britain is that we had taxation without representation.

There are 27 reasons in the Declaration of Independence as to why we separated from Britain and that one is reason 17. But prior to that, as has been mentioned, the colonists here in the United States of America were separating from England for religious reasons. In 1762 the king vetoed the charter for America's first missionary society. The colonists wanted to set up a missionary society in the United States and the king of Britain vetoed that.

They wanted to print an English Bible here in the United States and the king of England vetoed that. They listed this—some of these men—as why they were entering into this American Revolution. Not only did they have these religious issues, but they had moral issues. And the greatest moral issue of that day was slavery. And these 13 colonies wanted to eradicate the slavery that was here in the United States. And they moved toward abolishing that with their laws and in 1773 the king vetoed anti slavery laws here in the United States. And these men said, “We want to be free of Britain so we can abolish slavery in these colonies.”

Of course, there were many other issues. But you will not hear in our celebrations today much about the role of the pastors and the Christian leaders whom God used to form this civil government. But you will hear about a number of things.

One of the things that was sung here today is how these men put their land...we sung it today how they put their land into treasure in front of...they didn't put their land into treasure in front of the freedom that they were seeking for this country. And they gave it up freely.

There was a man by the name of Robert Morris from Pennsylvania. Here it is, the American Revolution. We don't have any money. Who is going to loan these colonies the money to fight the British? For three years no one loaned money to the United States. But a man by the name of Robert Morris of Pennsylvania was a very wealthy man and he borrowed money on his own credit, tens of thousands of dollars, to finance the American Revolution. You probably never heard about him.

Or how about the man John Hart. He was a strong Christian gentleman and he was the speaker of the House of Representatives in New Jersey. And he promised the colonies that in his life he would give guidance and leadership for the American Revolution. He had to flee his home because the British were seeking him and the rest of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, all 56 of them, the British wanted to put to death. So he left behind his home, his farm. It was ravished. His timber was destroyed. His cattle were slaughtered for the British. And when he was able to return he found out that his wife

had died and his kids had scattered. He lost literally everything, but for the liberty of this country he gave it all up. He kept his word.

John Hancock was a very wealthy individual. He had a mansion in Boston, a huge mansion. And all of his assets right there. And when the British occupied Boston and the leaders of the revolution decided the only way to push them out was to burn down Boston, John Hancock said, "That's ok. Burn up my mansion. Burn up all my assets. I wan the freedom of the United States."

A man by the name of John Peter Muhlenberg. He was a pastor. On January 21, 1776 he preached, verse by verse, from Ecclesiastes three, that passage that tells there is a season for everything, a time for everything.³ There is a time of war and a time of peace.

When he got to the eighth verse and that section, "There is a time for war,"⁴ he stopped his sermon and in front of his congregation pulled off his clerical and he was dressed in the array of the continental army. And he made his way to the back of his church and ordered a drum beat begin. And 300 men from his congregation joined him to become a part of the Pennsylvania brigade to fight the British. You don't hear much about that pastor, do you?

How about Reverend James Caldwell, another minister leader in the revolution? He was fighting the British outside his Presbyterian Church and all of the soldiers that were there with him that day, they began to run out of wadding. If you know anything about guns in that day you had to, you know, put the...put the powder in there and then your shell in there and then the wadding in there and then you hit the trigger. Well, they were running out of wadding. And so he went back into the church and he came out with a whole stack of hymnals, Watts' hymns.

You don't hear much about Watts. But he is the man that wrote the hymn, "Oh God, our Help in Ages Past." He is the man that penned the son we sing at Christmas, "Joy to the World" and "Jesus Shall Reign." They ran out of wadding. The preacher goes back into the church, carries out the hymnals, holds up that stack of hymnals and tells all the soldiers, "Give 'em Watts, boys. Give 'em Watts." And they tore the sheets out of that hymnal and put them in their muzzles and continued to fight.

These were Christian leaders in the very foundation of this country and you don't hear much about them.

Nine of the original 13 colonies had an official state church. When you read in our Constitution that there is not to be the...to prohibit the free exercise of religion, that is in the Constitution.

Have you ever heard the expression, "The separation of church and state"? Where is that found? Ok. Thomas Jefferson wrote it in a private letter to a group of Baptist ministers

³ See Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

⁴ See Ecclesiastes 3:8

who were thrilled that he made it all the way to the White House. And they were concerned that the federal government would establish a one religion, one aspect of the Christian religion in the United States and they would lose the ability as Baptists to serve the Lord. And Thomas Jefferson came back to them and assured them that our Constitution has not established a particular religion. In other words, there is the free exercise of religion. There is a separation between church and state. That is what it meant originally, that the federal government would not establish one religion in the United States.

But how is it used today? It is used by everybody in a secular progressive society to tell Christian people that you have absolutely no right to practice your religion publicly. And there ought not to be any government funds used to further religion.

It might interest you to know that Thomas Jefferson was the author of the first plan of public education and he adopted his plan in the city of Washington, DC. And among other things he said this. "The Bible and Isaac Watts' hymnals are to be the principal books that are used to teach reading in the public schools in Washington, DC."

Can you imagine today President Bush saying that the Bible and Watt's hymnal is to be used in the public schools all across this nation to teach kids how to read?

It's a little different today in America, isn't it? It might interest you to know that in virtually every state public office holders were required to affirm their belief in biblical teaching. As a matter of fact in the Delaware Constitution there is this formal oath—quote... If you are going to serve in Delaware, their Constitution says this—quote—"I do profess faith in God the Father and in Jesus Christ his only Son and in the Holy Ghost on God blessed forevermore. And I do acknowledge the Holy Scriptures in the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration"—unquote.

In 1777, one year after the Declaration of Independence, the Continental Congress ordered that 22,000 Bibles would be distributed throughout this Bible so that the people—quote—"would be well supplied with the political textbook of this nation"—unquote.

I don't have the time this morning to go through all the legal rulings, but you can go to this website and find them. And you will discover the incredible legal precedence in the beginning of the history of this nation that were founded on Christian principle.

Woodrow Wilson, who was a president of the United States said this—quote—"American was born a Christian nation. America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelation of the Holy Scriptures"—unquote.

Calvin Coolidge. He was also a president of the United States. And he said this—quote—"They, the founding fathers, were intent upon establishing a Christian commonwealth in accordance with the principle of self government. They were in an

inspired body of men. It has been said that God sifted the nations that he might send choice grain into the wilderness. Who can fail to see in it the hand of destiny? Who can doubt that it has been guided by divine providence?" That was a president of the United States.

And you can go all the way back...and I am just going to share a few examples this morning. Go to this website and there will be page after page of quotations from our founding fathers about Jesus Christ, about Christianity and about the Bible. And you would never know that our country had this incredible Christian foundation by what is being taught to our kids in the public schools.

John Adams who was the second President of the United States said, "The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence, were the general principles of Christianity. I will avow that I then believed and now believe that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God." He went on to say that the Christian religion is, above all the religions that ever prevailed or existed in ancient or modern times, the religion of wisdom, virtue, equality and humanity. He said, "I have examined all religions and the result is the Bible is the best book in the world." Can you imagine a modern president saying that? That was said by the second President of the United States.

The sixth President of the United States was also an Adams. His name was John Quincy Adams. Listen to what he said. He said—quote—"My hopes of a future life are all founded upon the gospel of Christ and I cannot [?] or quibble away the whole tenor of his conduct by which he sometimes positively asserted and at other times countenanced his disciples in asserting that he was God." That was a president of the United States.

"The hope of a Christian is inseparable from his faith. Whoever believes in the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures must hope that the religion of Jesus shall prevail throughout the earth. Never since the foundation of the world hath prospects of mankind been more encouraging to that hope than they appear to be at the present time. And may the associated distribution of the Bible proceed and prosper until the Lord shall have made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." That was the sixth President of the United States of America.

You have heard of Samuel Adams, considered to be the father of the American Revolution. And this is what he said. "I rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ for the pardon of all my sins."

The governor of New Hampshire called on the people of New Hampshire to confess before God their aggravated transgressions and implore his pardon and forgiveness through the merits and the mediation of Jesus Christ that the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ may be known to all nations, pure and undefiled religion universally prevail and the earth be filled with the glory of the Lord.

Charles Carroll, he was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, a framer of the Bill of Rights, a US senator. He said this. “On the mercy of my Redeemer I rely for salvation and on his merits, not on the works I have done in obedience to his precepts. Grateful to almighty God for the blessing which, through the Lord Jesus Christ, he has conferred on my beloved country in her emancipation and on my behalf in permitting me under the circumstances of mercy to live to the age of 89 years and to survive the 50th year of independence adopted by Congress on the Fourth of July, 1776, in which I originally subscribed on the second day of August of the same year and of which I am now the last surviving signer.” He and John Hancock signed the first draft. There was only two signatures on the first draft, 56 on the final draft. He was one of the two.

And he says this. “I, Charles Carroll, give and bequeath my soul to God who gave it, my body to the earth hoping that through and by the merits, suffering and mediation of my only Savior and Jesus Christ I may be admitted into the kingdom prepared by God for those who love, fear and truly serve him”—unquote.

The Congress in 1854 said this. “The great, vital and conservative element in our system is the belief of our people in the pure doctrines and the divine truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Can you imagine the current Congress saying those things?

Incredible quotes from John Hancock, Patrick Henry, “Give me liberty or give me death.” He says this. “Being a Christian is a character which I prize far above all this world has or can boast.” He said, “The Bible is a book worth more than all the other books that were ever printed.” He said that righteousness alone can exalt America as a nation. And whoever thou art, remember this. And in thy sphere practice virtue thyself and encourage it in others.

These founding fathers, my friends, of this country were Christian men. And our kids are being taught that, no, this is a secular country founded on secular principles by secular people.

That word “deist.” Have you heard that?

“Oh, these men weren’t followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. You Christians are making all this stuff up. We are a secular... This isn’t a Christian nation.”

John Jay was one of the first chief justices of the United States Supreme Court. And he was also the governor of New York. And you ought to read what he says about the Lord Jesus Christ and about giving the Bible to the people. He said, “The Bible is the best of all books for it is the Word of God and it teaches us the way to be happy in this world and in the next. Continue thereof to read it and regulate your life by its precepts.”

Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States, third President, said this, “I am a Christian in the only sense in which he wished anyone to be, sincerely attached to his

doctrines in preference to all others. I am a real Christian that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus Christ.”

And I could go on and on this morning quoting from these fathers, these founding fathers of this nation about the incredible Christian heritage, the Judeo Christian ethic on which this country was built. And I would invite you to go that website, Wall Builders, and get a hold of these quotes. And read them and they will encourage your heart.

And I want to close by sharing from a document that was submitted last December in the 110th Congress by a group of representatives from several states in our union, a resolution in which they want the Congress of the United States to designate the first week of May as a religious recognition of the heritage of our country. And they listed point after point in the history of the United States. They listed that the first act of America’s first Congress was to ask a minister to open with prayer and lead Congress in the reading of four chapters of the Bible.

Throughout America’s founding Congress—now get this—frequently appropriated money for missionaries and religious instruction, a practice that Congress repeated decades after the passage of the First Amendment. Can you imagine Congress appropriating money today?

We have got faith based initiatives, right? But you know what happens with government money? We had local government money offered to us as a ministry, \$5000 check was waiting for us to take and cash. And before we could ever take it I had to fill out an application that was over 26 pages long. I know because when I got to page 26 there was a statement in there that if I took this money I could not proselytize people. I couldn’t pray. I couldn’t do anything that was religious in nature. And so I had to write a letter and thank our council lady for offering that money to this organization, but I had to turn it down because I said that this is what we do here.

Listen. We needed that \$5000. But God knows that.

But in the founding of this country Congress appropriated money for missionary outreach. Can you imagine that?

When you look at the Declaration of Independence, there are four references to God. The Liberty Bell framed in Leviticus 25:10. In 1777 Congress facing a national shortage of the Bible wanted Bibles for our schools and families and public worship in our churches. And they desired to have a Bible printed underneath their care and ordered 20,000 copies of the Bible to be imported into the different parts of the united states of the union. Can you imagine Congress saying we need 300,000 Bibles to be spread through this land so that the people will read them in our churches and in our schools and in our families?

In 1782 Congress pursued a plan to print the Bible that would be a neat edition of the holy Scriptures for use in the schools. They wanted to print the Bible.

So I could just go on and on here.

In 1789 the first federal Congress, the Congress that framed the Bill of Rights including the First Amendment appropriated federal funds to pay chaplains to pray at the opening of all sessions. That continues through this day.

Do you realize that when they first built the capitol they built it to be church, too? They were holding worship services in the capitol of the United States on Sundays at 11 AM.

You wonder why churches have their 11 AM services. They started...

Hey, listen. They opened up the capitol. We are going to have our chaplains come in. They were having services in the House of Representatives and in the Senate for the Lord's...Can you imagine that happening today?

In 1789, the same day that Congress finished drafting the First Amendment it requested President Washington to declare a national day of prayer and thanksgiving. The first President of the United States, we need a national day of prayer. And every year we come to that period in our calendar and we celebrate as a nation the national day of prayer.

In 1800 Congress enacted naval regulations. Mark had us sing this song about the land, the sea and the air. Just think about our armed forces. And that Congress said that divine services are to be performed twice every day aboard all ships and vessels in the navy with a sermon preached every Sunday. Can you imagine that taking place in the United States of America today?

That church in Washington, DC capitol was the largest church in DC for many years. In 1864 by law Congress added "In God we Trust" to American coinage. And what are they trying to do now? Take it away.

In 1954 Congress added by law the phrase, "One nation under God," to the pledge of allegiance.

In 1956 Congress enacted by law and made "In God we Trust" the national motto of the United States.

We could go on and on and on and on. And I invite you to go to that website and to download these things that demonstrate that the founding fathers of this nation were outspoken Christian people who wanted the gospel of Jesus Christ to flow through this land, who wanted the gospel of Jesus Christ to flow through this land, who wanted the Word of God to be spread among the people.

You can go to Washington, DC and walk among monuments. Some of you have done that and you will see everywhere in the Washington Monument, in the Lincoln Monument. What will you see posted everywhere? Bible verses.

If you were to go...listen. They got rid of a judge down in...where was it? Alabama? Who had the 10 Commandments in his court, this big granite block. They made him move the 10 Commandments out. They stripped him of judgeship because he posted the 10 Commandments in his courtroom.

If you were to go to the Supreme Court what would you see? Here are these justices sitting there and right of their head this frieze with the 10 Commandments. There are doors that enter that room that have the 10 Commandments posted on there.

You can go in the Library of Congress and you will see a statue of Moses holding the 10 Commandments.

There are Bible symbols everywhere. It might surprise you. You can go into New York City in downtown New York in Rockefeller Center. You look at the buildings. Do you know what you are going to see on some of these buildings? Scripture.

My friend, this country has had a spiritual heritage from its very founding. And the men and women that provided the leadership and the blood and the sweat and the tears to make America what it is, most of them were Christian people who loved the gospel and loved the Word of God. So don't allow the progressives and don't allow the secularists to strip you of your understanding that this is one nation under the God of heaven. And "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD"⁵ "And if my people that are called by name will humble themselves and pray and turn from their wicked ways and seek my face, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and I'll heal their land."⁶

And what America needs is a divine intervention of healing. And we, as Christian people need to raise our voice for the glory of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, how can we even thank you that in your grace you have smiled on this nation with your favor, the greatest country in the history of the world? And, Father, we believe it is, then, because of the commitment of the founders and your people through the centuries to you and your Word and the gospel of your dear Son. And yet, Father, we are seeing that slowly erode, stripped from the history, stripped from the public forum. And, Father, we have seen put forward in our nation by leaders godlessness. Father, we as a nation have watched for decades as the life of innocent babies have been aborted and murdered. Father, in your grace, in your kindness, would you spare the life of the innocent? And will your people advocate for that?

Father, we have seen most recently the push to take the traditional family and put it in the background and to push unnatural perversion in this country with same sex marriage. And, Father, we know that in your sight you call it an abomination. And yet, Lord, the leaders that would push this agenda and your people have remained silent. And we are

⁵ Psalm 33:12

⁶ See 2 Chronicles 7:14

asleep as the enemy has come in and sown the tares among the wheat. Father, have mercy on us your people.

And, Father, we have taken your Word from our public schools. Have mercy on your people. And we have blasphemed your name and acted as if the gospel of your Son did not exist. And we have said that this country is a Hindu nation and a Buddhist nation and a Christian nation. And yet, Father, we acknowledge that you in your sovereign grace establish this country on the principles of the gospel of your dear Son and the revelation of your Word. And I ask that you will have mercy on us as a nation.

And, Father, this week as we celebrate 232 years of freedom may we with solemn acts of devotion remember your kindness through the years?

And, Father, return us to our greatness as we return to you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's close our service by singing "America the Beautiful." Mark...