

**THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
THE 238<sup>th</sup> CELEBRATION OF INDEPENDENCE DAY  
July 6, 2014 - Deuteronomy 8:10-20**

10 When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. 11 Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. 12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13 and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 15 He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. 16 He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. 17 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." 18 But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today. 19 If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. 20 Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.

July 4th is called Independence Day. Do you know why? It was 238 years ago last Friday, nearly to this hour, that 56 courageous men signed their names to the document that set forth the independence of a new nation. Those 56 men made a declaration of independence from an earthly power and at the same time a declaration of dependence upon an Almighty God. The closing words of the Declaration states: "**With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.**" What these men did as they signed that document and we still celebrate today, are not just some beautiful words; they knew that the best they could expect were years of hardship in a struggling new nation.

Did you know that of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence:

- five were captured by the British and tortured before they died;
- twelve had their homes from Rhode Island to West Virginia sacked, looted, occupied by the enemy or burned;
- two lost their sons in the army;
- one had two sons captured; and,
- nine of the 56 signers died in the war that ensued, either from its hardships or its bullets.

On this day, as we celebrate and enjoy the freedom of liberty, let's look back to see that America was a nation established by God, is still a nation under God today, and with the continued prayer and action of its Christian citizens will remain a nation free and under God.

With the help of God's Holy Spirit and based on the words of our text from Deuteronomy 8:10-20, let's consider as our theme:

**"GOD SHED HIS GRACE ON THEE."**

**I. AMERICA - A NATION ESTABLISHED BY GOD.**

GOD ALMIGHTY SPOKE THROUGH HIS FAITHFUL PROPHET, MOSES.

The Children of Israel were on their way to the Promised Land. They would conquer it and settle in it. They would eat of its productive land. They would build homes and enjoy what God was giving them. Most importantly, they were to remember to praise the Lord. He reminds them of the mighty acts, which he had done for them in their history.

God was also reminding his people what would happen to them if they forgot him. In God's foresight, he knew what would happen to his people. He knew they would conquer the land and become prosperous. He knew

they would build and become the strongest of all the nations for about 50-60 years during the reigns of Kings David and Solomon.

God also knew that they would forget him. The people forgot where all their wealth and prosperity came from. This harsh warning was really a promise. They acted just like the other nations and were treated just like them. In spite of the great blessings they received they would be conquered, carried off, and then forgotten. Yes, it happened just as he said.

THESE WORDS COULD HAVE BEEN SPOKEN TO THE SIGNERS OF THE DECLARATION.

They would have answered just as the Children of Israel did: **"Everything you command, we will do!"** I am convinced they would have answered that way for they were men who believed that an almighty gracious God was directing what they were doing. They would have said it with meaning, as did the Children of Israel. And so the warnings are there also for us today as we celebrate this national day of Independence.

God has truly shed his grace on America. America's first white settlers were very religious people. The Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth, MA, in 1620, first thanked their God for bringing them safely to their new land. If we look at their rules and laws we find them established and based on their religious beliefs. What has happened since the Pilgrims? Today it is almost wrong to bring a Bible into a public school classroom. Today prayers cannot be spoken at a graduation exercise. Students who want to express their faith openly have to do so with fear of punishment. At one school graduation there was a moment of silence (which is permitted) and someone in the audience stood up and began to recite the Lord's Prayer. Almost all of the people immediately joined in and afterwards there was applause and cheers. Today we live in an America where clergy and Christians are often portrayed as old-fashioned or bumbling idiots by the media or in the movies. What has happened to America?

## II. AMERICA - A NATION UNDER GOD TODAY.

LET'S REMEMBER OUR HISTORY.

Did you know - in 1777, during the Revolutionary War and again in 1780 the US Congress approved special orders to import 20,000 Bibles and distribute them throughout the nation? Did you know - all of the Ivy League schools (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth, and Brown) owe their origins to the Gospel? It was on these campuses where the primary training of ministers to preach the Gospel began in America.

Did you know - almost every government building and statue in our nation's capital has God or something to do with God inscribed? The Capital has a small room for private prayer with religious symbols, stained glass windows and biblical pictures. The Supreme Court has a huge painting of the Ten Commandments protected by a great American eagle and pictures Moses among the great lawgivers of the world. While the Washington Monument is a huge shrine to the Masonic lodge it has a number of scripture passages inscribed on it. The Library of Congress has numerous scripture passages, one especially reminds each American of his/her responsibility: **"And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and walk with your God."** The Lincoln Memorial is rich with numerous statements like: **"That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, and by the people shall not perish from the earth."** It also has these words: **"As was said 3000 years ago, it must be said again, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."** The Jefferson Memorial has inscribed on its walls: **"God, who gave us life, gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever."**

WHY THIS TOUR OF HISTORY?

Our text says that when you have all these things then praise the Lord. The men who helped establish and lead this nation in its early years knew what it meant to look to God for their strength and help. What has happened? Is God still shedding his grace on us? Haven't we done just exactly what God warned his people about centuries ago? Have we forgotten the Lord God who made this nation what it is today?

What is happening today in America is what happened to God's chosen people. Materialism, self-centeredness, and pride have taken over. God has taken a back seat to man himself. Each of us can decide in his own eyes what is right and wrong (as in the days of the Judges). Today what God says never seems right - it all depends on the situation we are told. Courts and other ruling bodies that once legislated against immorality are giving people the right to do whatever he/she wants. Lines of right and wrong have become more blurred. When God fades from a nation's conscience, one can justify almost anything.

Look at more examples. God says, "**You shall not murder.**" Since 1973 almost 40 million unborn children have been murdered legally. Today we like to camouflage sin with new terminology. God says it's drunkenness, we say alcoholism, or a social disease. God says it's sodomy; we talk about gay rights or an alternate lifestyle. God uses the word perversion; we say adult entertainment. God talks about immorality; we talk about the new morality. God says it's cheating; we say it's abnormal social behavior. Absolutes have been dissolved; crime rates have spiraled, costing taxpayers millions of dollars. The cold hard fact is that we are living out the truth of God's Word given to a past generation in the words of our text.

#### WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

With all the depressing news should we celebrate? I submit we can and should. But there are some things we should also do. Let's look at what we can do. We can pray. Never underestimate the power of prayer. We can pray that the Lord continue to watch over and protect our country. We can pray that Lord guides our President, cabinet, the congress and the courts to put forth, enact and back up legislation and programs that are God-pleasing. We can work to elect people who will fight for those traditional values.

We can live as Christian citizens. Christ once said we are "**the salt of the earth and the light of the world.**" Don't give up the Word of God as old-fashioned. Don't fall for the latest propaganda. In the first century Christians were thrown to the lions for their confession. We are thrown into the face of a thought that everything is all right for us. In order to withstand these challenges, to make America what it once was, we need to teach, uphold, espouse and live the basic principles of the Old and New Testaments. Believe and live the dignity of human life. Believe and live the traditional monogamous family. Believe and live the idea of human decency. Believe and live the American work ethic. Believe and live the idea that God is the center of our education. As God says, "**Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.**" Believe and live the divinely God ordained establishments in our society. Believe, teach and live that it is God who established the home where Mom and Dad and the kids live under Christ. Believe, teach and live that it is God who established the government. Believe, teach and live that it is God who established his church - a church attacked by Satan, but a church God has promised will remain always strong and triumphant.

As Christian citizens we will want to realize that we who believe in a holy God, whose Son shed his blood for us and the entire world, works through his Spirit to keep us in the one true faith. Things may not look too good, but we have the cure-all, the solution for what ails America. **IT IS THE PRECIOUS WORD OF GOD, WHICH CAN HEAL, RESTORE, BIND, REVITALIZE AND MAKE OUR NATION GREAT ONCE AGAIN.**

Peter Marshall, the famous chaplain of the United States congress many years ago said it well: "**The choice before us is plain, Christ or chaos, conviction or compromise, discipline or disintegration. I am rather tired of hearing about our rights and privileges as American citizens. The time has come and the time is now, when we ought to hear about our duties and responsibilities of our citizenship. America's future depends upon her accepting and demonstrating God's government.**" Amen.

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