

Sermon outline and notes:

© Dr. Stephen Felker, Pastor

[Swift Creek Baptist Church.com](http://SwiftCreekBaptistChurch.com), 18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834

July 4, 2010

Psalm 33:12 “The Founding of a Christian Nation”

Intro. On April 6, 2009 President O’Bama declared before a Turkish Muslim audience that “although as I mentioned, we have a very large Christian population, we do not consider ourselves a Christian nation or a Jewish nation or a Muslim nation.”¹ In one sense that is certainly true. There are plenty of people today who do not consider the United States to be a Christian nation. I would even agree that today, we are less of a Christian nation than we were in years past. Probably less than 20% of our people are born-again Christians. However, in another sense, we were certainly *founded* as a Christian nation. In fact, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States*, 143 U.S. 437 (1892), said “this is a Christian nation.” They meant that this nation was founded on biblical principles, and that those who brought these biblical principles to this land and who implemented those principles in our system of government were for the most part professing Christians who were actively involved with Christian churches.

A major reason for the Christian influence upon the founding of our nation was the first Great Awakening, led by George Whitfield, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, & others. Beginning around 1740 revival “spread throughout every colony from Nova Scotia to Georgia and to... every class—rich and poor, educated and uneducated...”² The leaders of this movement had a greater impact upon the early formation of our nation than did our early political or military leaders. They reinforced the conviction that God had a special destiny in store for America.

I believe that God has indeed blessed America, largely because of our general commitment to God, & to the principles of God’s Word. The Declaration of Independence concluded with these words, “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.” Well, by God’s aid & Providence we were able to defeat the greatest military power of that day during the American Revolution. We see other evidences of God’s providential care in the War of 1812. In 1814 Great Britain defeated Napoleon & then sent greater forces in the war against America. They occupied Washington D.C. with little resistance, & began to burn the city. Yet later that night, a fierce storm with hurricane-force winds came over the city without warning & drenched the fire, & forced the army to their knees. A tornado ripped through the British forces that night as well. A British historian wrote: “More British soldiers were killed by this stroke of nature than from all the firearms the American troops had mustered.”³ Then, when they attacked Baltimore’s Fort McHenry, a two-hundred pound fused bombshell landed at the storage facility of a large amount of ammunition & gun powder. Miraculously, the bomb did not explode. The fort held, & our flag still waved after a horrendous bombardment. Francis Scott Key witnessed the battle & wrote *The Star Spangled Banner*. Then, in the battle of New Orleans, Andrew Jackson’s forces were largely outnumbered. Yet when the

¹ http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Joint-Press-Availability-With-President-Obama-And-President-Gul-Of-Turkey/

² Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973), 67.

³ The following day, more fires were started but once again thunderstorms saved America’s capital.

British Army made their attack, just about every British officer was mortally wounded, and the army fell apart from lack of leadership. We lost comparatively few of our men.⁴ Years later we were victorious in WWI, and in WWII we defeated the mighty German allies *and* the Japanese Empire. Up to this very day we have become the world's superpower.

Furthermore, with God's blessings, we developed a great educational system, and were home to many of the world's advances in science. We built the greatest industrial complex & economy the world has every known. Yet America is not great & prosperous because *we* are great, but because we have leaned upon, honored and served the one true God!

But in my lifetime I have seen major change come to America. In most respects we are not changing for the better but for the worse. And if we continue to abandon the principles that have made this nation great, we cannot expect God to continue to bless America with such greatness.

So as we celebrate Independence Day, I want to call upon you to join me in doing several things. First:

I. REMEMBER OUR FOUNDING AS A CHRISTIAN NATION

If we do not remember our history, we will be more likely to abandon the principles that have so contributed to the greatness of America. President Ronald Reagan said, "If we ever forget that we are One Nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under." That is simply a reflection of Psalm 9:17, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget about God."

So is the modern secular progressive right when he says that we were not founded as a Christian nation? You cannot say that if you understand our history. I want to show you that America was indeed founded as a Christian nation. First of all:

A. As Seen in Our Founding Fathers – When you think of our founding fathers, name the ones that you have heard of the most. Of course, Thomas Jefferson & Benjamin Franklin come to mind. Why is it that modern history books, & especially school text books, focus on them? One reason is because they were Deists. Many people have the impression that most of our founding fathers were Deists. However, you may be surprised to learn that at least 51 of the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention were members of Christian churches.⁵ Prior to that, at the first gathering of the Continental Congress, the chaplain rose to begin the meeting with the reading of scripture. He turned his Bible to Psa. 33:12-18, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.... No king is saved by the multitude of an army.... Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him...." The chaplain & others understood that an army cannot save us if we do not put our trust in God.

I want to give some examples of the Christian faith of our founding fathers. John Adams was a signer of the Declaration of Independence; one of two authors of the bill of rights; & second President of the United States. He wrote, "The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity."⁶ Samuel Adams, another

⁴ History Channel, 7/2/10.

⁵ John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution: The Faith of Our Founding Fathers* (Baker Book House, 1987, 2008). In Bradford, M. E., *A Worthy Company; Brief Lives of the Framers of the United States Constitution*, the # stated is "at least 50."

⁶ From a letter from John Adams to Thomas Jefferson on June 28, 1813.

signer of the Declaration of Independence wrote, “I . . . [rely] upon the merits of Jesus Christ for a pardon of all my sins.”⁷ Charles Carroll, another signer of the Declaration of Independence, wrote, “Grateful to Almighty God for the blessings which, through Jesus Christ Our Lord, He had conferred on my beloved country in her emancipation and on myself in permitting me, under circumstances of mercy, to live to the age of 89 years, and to survive the fiftieth year of independence, adopted by Congress on the 4th of July 1776, which I originally subscribed on the 2nd day of August of the same year and of which I am now the last surviving signer.”⁸ John Hancock, another signer of the Declaration of Independence, called on the entire state to pray “that universal happiness may be established in the world [and] that all may bow to the scepter of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the whole earth be filled with His glory.”⁹ Patrick Henry, revolutionary general & ratifier of the U.S. Constitution, wrote, “it cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists but by Christians, not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ.” John Jay, author of the federalist papers and original chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court said, “The Bible is the best of all books, for it is the word of God and teaches us the way to be happy in this world and in the next. Continue therefore to read it and to regulate your life by its precepts.”¹⁰ James Madison, signer of the Constitution, author of the federalist papers, & fourth president wrote, “A watchful eye must be kept on ourselves lest, while we are building ideal monuments of renown and bliss here, we neglect to have our names enrolled in the Annals of Heaven.”¹¹ Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence, Surgeon General of the Continental army, & ratifier of the U. S. Constitution said, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ prescribes the wisest rules for just conduct in every situation of life. Happy they who are enabled to obey them in all situations! . . . My only hope of salvation is in the infinite transcendent love of God manifested to the world by the death of His Son upon the Cross. Nothing but His blood will wash away my sins [Acts 22:16]. I rely exclusively upon it.”¹² George Washington said, “While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion. To the distinguished character of Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of Christian.”¹³ Minister John Witherspoon, signer of the Declaration of Independence & ratifier of the U. S. Constitution said, “Christ Jesus – . . . the hope of Israel [Acts 28:20], the light of the world [John 8:12], and the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth [Romans 10:4] – is the only Savior of sinners, in opposition to all false religions . . .; as He Himself says (John 14:6): ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.’”¹⁴

⁷ From the Last Will & Testament of Samuel Adams, attested December 29, 1790.

⁸ Lewis A. Leonard, *Life of Charles Carroll of Carrollton* (New York: Moffit, Yard & Co, 1918), pp. 256-257.

⁹ John Hancock, “A Proclamation For a Day of Public Thanksgiving” 1791, given as Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

¹⁰ John Jay, *John Jay: The Winning of the Peace*. Unpublished Papers 1780-1784, Richard B. Morris, editor (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980), Vol. II, p. 709, to Peter Augustus Jay on April 8, 1784.

¹¹ James Madison, *Letters and Other Writings of James Madison* (New York: R. Worthington, 1884), Vol. I, pp. 5-6, to William Bradford on November 9, 1772.

¹² Benjamin Rush, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush*, George W. Corner, editor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), pp. 165-166.

¹³ George Washington, *The Writings of Washington*, John C. Fitzpatrick, editor (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1932), Vol. XI, pp. 342-343, General Orders of May 2, 1778.

¹⁴ John Witherspoon, *The Works of John Witherspoon* (Edinburgh: J. Ogle, 1815), Vol. V, p. 255, Sermon 15, “The Absolute Necessity of Salvation Through Christ,” January 2, 1758.

I could give many more examples of other founding fathers who were devout in their Christian faith. We would do well to follow their example. Paul said in Philippians 3:17, “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.”

B. As Seen in the Founding Documents of Our Nation - Did you know that leading American political figures in the founding era quoted the Bible far more than any other source? While the writings of the Enlightenment period had a impact, the Bible had the greatest impact upon the thinking & actions of our founding fathers. In fact, in a ten-year study undertaken at the University of Houston, researchers examined 15,000 documents from America’s founders and determined that 34% of the quotations came from the Bible, the highest by far of any source. And the ideals on which they framed the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are ideals that they derived, directly or indirectly, from the Bible. That’s because the Founding Fathers, with few exceptions, did not read the Koran. They read the Bible, and they heard the Bible preached on Sunday mornings.

Now I want to give you some examples of the Christian teachings & references found in our primary founding documents.

1. Man, including Government, Is Subject to the Laws of God – The Declaration of Independence mentions “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God” as the basis of authority for the Declaration. Rom. 2:14 says, “for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves.” Though natural law should govern all men, most believed that we should be subject to the Bible as well. This meant that because the American consensus was that the Bible was TRUTH, the tyranny of a few or even the tyranny of the majority could be overcome by one person standing up and appealing to the Bible!

A corollary of this principle is the American principle of the Rule of Law. This concept is a direct descendant of Hebrew law and the Ten Commandments.

2. Man Was Created by God & Endowed with Unalienable Rights – They understood that rights are not conferred by government, but by God. In fact, John Dickinson, a signer of the Constitution, wrote, “[Governments] could not give the rights essential to happiness... We claim them from a higher source: from the King of kings, and Lord of all the earth.” These rights are inalienable & absolute because they were given by God. They are not subject to the whims of any human authority. Yet without God, ethics and rights are defined by whoever has the most power.

Now what are the rights delineated by the Declaration & Constitution? Obviously the right to life & liberty is rooted in Scripture, but even “the pursuit of happiness” is rooted in Scripture. Ecclesiastes 3:13 says, “that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God.”

Beyond those basic rights, virtually every one of the ten articles contained in the Bill of Rights has Biblical foundation. The First Amendment recognizes the right of freedom of speech, religion and assembly. The concept of liberty is rooted in the Word of God. Gal. 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Acts 5:29 gives the principle that no human government should interfere with the free exercise of religion, for the apostles said, “We must obey God rather than man.” Even the Second Amendment has Biblical foundation. Our Lord said in Luke 11:21, “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace.” Shortly before His

death, Jesus said in Luke 22:36, “But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.” The Fourth Amendment says, “The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated....” Notice what Deuteronomy 24:10-11 says, “When you lend your brother anything, you shall not go into his house to get his pledge. You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you lend shall bring the pledge out to you.” The Fifth Amendment affirms the biblical principle of property rights. It says that we cannot be “deprived of ... property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.” Well, Ex. 20:15 says, “You shall not steal.” Acts 5:4 says, “While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?” This idea of government forcing the redistribution of wealth through progressive taxation is not biblical. This is why Declaration of Independence rebuked King George, “For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent.”

3. Human Nature Is Sinful – The Protestant Reformation had a major impact upon Western & American Society, and the fact of the depravity of man is a major teaching.

Now because human nature is sinful, several other basic American principles were established:

a) Government power must be limited & restrained. Both the Bible & history taught our founding fathers that absolute or even great power in the hands of sinful man leads to tyranny. So the Constitution provides for a system of check & balances to curb sinful excesses. This is evident in the horizontal plane of executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. By the way, these three branches of Government are based on Scripture. Isa. 33:22 says, “For the LORD is our Judge, The LORD is our Lawgiver, The LORD is our King....” You can see that our judicial, legislative, & executive branches of government reflect the very nature & work of God. James Madison referenced this verse when he proposed these 3 branches at the Constitutional Convention of 1787.

In addition to horizontal checks & balances, our Founding Fathers also established the vertical plane of federalism—states’ powers versus federal powers. If we ever allow the Federal Government, or any branch of government, to become all-powerful, we will lose our freedoms to sinful tyranny.

Furthermore, the Constitution limited what the Federal Government could do. Read the Constitution. It says very little about what the Government is going to do for you. It mainly tells what the Government *can't* do.

b) One primary role of Government is to restrain evil & protect us from evil – Paul wrote in Romans 13:4, “But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for [the civil servant] is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.” By the way, the government is also to reward good behavior. Romans 13:3 says, “Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.” Today, this concept is being turned on its head. We bail out people for bad behavior, and punish hardworking Americans with higher taxes.

4. Historically, State Laws Supported the Biblical Concept of the Family – Thus, acts that tend to harm or destroy the family were outlawed. Thus, we have had laws against adultery, sodomy, fornication, incest, all based on the Bible. Divorce was regulated & discouraged (see Ex. 20:12, 14, Mat. 19:1-12, Rom. 1:18-2:16). As we have departed from the laws, the family has suffered irreparable harm.

So you see, our founding documents & laws were clearly influenced by the Bible & Christian teaching. It is indeed fair to say that we were founded as a Christian nation.

Yet we have witnessed a deliberate departure from the founding principles that have made our nation great. That's because many of our politicians & judges have rejected the Bible as our source of our American laws & principles. That will surely lead to the loss of freedom, & the diminishing of our prosperity.

II. TAKE ACTION TO PRESERVE THE FUTURE OF OUR NATION

If we do not realize how far we have fallen from the ideas of our founding fathers, and if we do not take action to reverse the trend toward liberalism, humanism, & socialism, we are going to lose our freedoms & suffer the loss of prosperity. So this is what I am calling upon us to do:

A. We Need to Confess & Repent of our Sins – Jesus said in Revelation 2:5, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works...." He said in Revelation 3:3, "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent...." 2 Chron. 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 will forgive their sin and heal their land."

We cannot expect the unbelievers & nominal Christians of our nation to repent until we in the church repent of our sins. 1 Peter 4:17 says, "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God...."

B. We Need to Affirm & Practice Biblical Righteousness - Prov. 14:34 says, "Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people." Thus, we need to obey the moral principles & laws of the Word of God.

C. We Should Confess our Need for God – Many politicians & voters have been allured by the hope & promise that Government will solve our problems, & provide for our needs. And the more we have relied upon government, the more we have turned from God. Listen, our founding fathers did not trust in government, but God. We know that's the case because they limited what Federal & State governments can do. Back in 1956, our nation adopted "in God we trust" as our national motto. However, that motto started appearing on our currency as 1864. A variation of that motto appeared in The Star Spangled Banner.

D. Preachers & Churches Need to Reassert a Prophetic Voice to our Nation – As we have seen, strong preaching & strong churches have had an important impact upon the founding of our nation. If we are going to preserve our nation, we need to reassert a prophet voice to the political leaders of our nation. The so-called doctrine of the separation of the church & state does not mean that political leaders should pay no attention to the religious leaders who proclaim God's Word as a higher authority. We see this principle in the Bible. King Saul needed a Samuel. David needed a Nathan to say, "You are the man!" Herod needed a John the Baptist. Caesar needed a Paul.

Many believe that the First Amendment says that church & state must be separate. It doesn't say that. Thomas Jefferson interpreted the First Amendment that way, but the First

Amendment does not limit individuals, but it only limits what government can do. Preachers & other Christians have as much right as anyone to seek to influence our government to follow righteous principles. Even government workers & others at government functions should be able to express their religious faith & beliefs as long as it doesn't reflect an established position of the government. Since God's morality is ultimate and universal, society benefits by the Christian's participation in the public square.

Sadly, most in society today reject the concept of absolute moral truth. Yet God has instilled the voice of conscience in humanity. If we are faithful to proclaim the truth, God's truth will do its work.

Conclusion: What do you see as the future of America? Are we heading toward more freedom or more bondage through government restrictions & regulation? Are we becoming more righteous or more morally corrupt? Are we become more prosperous or less prosperous? Do we see evidence of God blessing America, or God withholding His blessing from America? If we do not remember our past, turn back to our Christian roots, repent & confess our sins, walk in Biblical righteousness, confess our need for God, and speak out regarding the Christian faith, our future will be dark, not bright. Let us begin a revival or of the principles that have made this nation great!

Sources: Chuck Baldwin, "Bible Inspired America's Founding Documents" (<http://www.newswithviews.com/baldwin/baldwin114.htm>); David Barton, "The Founding Fathers on Jesus, Christianity and the Bible" (<http://www.wallbuilders.com/LIBissuesArticles.asp?id=8755#R137>); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Randal L. Ross, "What Makes America Great?" (www.sermonsearch.com), unknown author: <http://www.faithfacts.org/christ-and-the-culture/the-bible-and-government>. Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

ABOUT THESE SERMON NOTES

© Dr. Stephen Felker. These notes may be used and even shared for personal study or ministry, but not for commercial purposes. The author credits the sources listed above and footnotes for much of the content. Since Dr. Felker's sermons are generally preached without notes, the "live" recording of this sermon will be more completely in the author's own words. To obtain DVD of this message, you may send \$3 plus \$2 shipping & handling. Make checks payable to Swift Creek Baptist Church, P.O. Box 235, Colonial Heights, VA 23834. Dr. Felker's email address is S+Felker&2@aol.com (remove signs). Email the author for how to obtain a PowerPoint presentation of this message.