

ONE NATION UNDER GOD

One Nation Under God: "One Nation Under God"

Good morning and Happy Independence Day.

Independence Day (informally the **Fourth of July**) is a federal holiday in the United States commemorating the Declaration of Independence, which was ratified by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776.

The Second Continental Congress declared that the Thirteen Colonies were no longer subject to the monarch of Great Britain, King George III, and were from then on united, free, and independent states. The Congress voted to approve independence on July 2 and adopted the Declaration of Independence two days later, on July 4.

Independence Day is commonly associated with fireworks, parades, barbecues, carnivals, fairs, picnics, concerts, baseball games, family reunions, political speeches, and ceremonies, celebrating the history, government, and traditions of the United States.

But what is so significant about this day that makes Americans of every race, religion, or political affiliation stop to celebrate? Do most people even know what they are celebrating or is it just a day off from work or a free pass out of class?

How timely is our series, ONE NATION UNDER GOD, and that message two falls on the Fourth of July weekend. If you recall, Last week P Mark established a road map of everything we will cover throughout our series to Give God Control in the Government Sphere. He opened up with a key scripture from Matthew 28:18, when Jesus said,

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."

Then he proceeded to unpack biblically what we should know about the government and how we should respond. As a staff, we knew a biblical foundation was essential. Why? Because many don't even believe we should be talking about politics within church. To those people, I would say I agree with you! However, to be clear, we are not talking about politics. We are talking about government and a Christians responsibility in dealing with the governing officials. Let's quickly define these two words:

Politics is the activities associated with the governance of a country or other areas, especially the debate or conflict among individuals or parties having or hoping to achieve power.

Government is the governing body of a nation, state, or community.

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Please know there is a difference between these two words and our heart is to help believers learn how to navigate during these times from a Christian worldview as a citizen, first and foremost, of heaven. If the Lord didn't want us to talk about Government why would He dedicate an entire chapter in the Book of Romans to Authority and governing officials? Amen!

As a reminder, Marks three key points from last week were:

1. Human Government is generally Helpful - We must Hold them in Honor
2. Human Government is thoroughly Fallen - We must Hold them accountable
3. Human Government is occasionally Malevolent - We must Hold Fast

This morning as we embark in understanding the authority of the Government Sphere which was and still is established by God, it is appropriate to understand the mindset of the founding fathers of our nation who set a precedent for what is know as the "great experiment" – a new way of government for our nation – when they signed the declaration of Independence. Many things were written in the declaration and I encourage everyone to go and read it. For this morning, however, we will look at what was probably the most significant words written to establish a framework for this great nation. I have heard this framework to be called 'FREEDOM'S FRAMEWORK.' Let's read these well known words.

We hold these **truths to be self-evident**: that all men are created equal, that they are **endowed by their Creator** with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the **consent of the governed...**

Freedom's Frame by Rick Green

1. Self -Evident Truths - The undeniable fact that moral absolutes exist
2. Rights Endowed By Our Creator - Our unalienable right to individual freedom
3. The pursuit of Happiness
4. Consent of the Governed - We have a voice

As we seek to understand the significance of Independence Day, and how God is within the establishment and success of this nation, my greatest desire is that we would become even hungrier to seek TRUTH! If you do you will come to realize three things:

1. The United States of America was and is a great nation
2. Today, the United States of America is in serious trouble
3. Our children's Children will inherit the USA – and its problems – if we don't properly steward the divine authority given to us by God.

So Let's go back in time to when the founding fathers established this great nation and seek out their mindset.

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First of all, they believed that at the foundation of all nations must be...

GOD & RELIGION

- From the very beginning the leaders of our nation knew that God was essential and should be foundational (upon which everything else is built and is dependent upon)
- Benjamin Franklin who stated in his autobiography that he was a "thorough deist" and arguably the representative figure of the American Enlightenment said,

"In this Situation of this Assembly, groping, as it were, in the dark, to find Political Truth," Franklin asked, "how has it happened, sir, that we have not, hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the father of lights to illuminate our understandings?"

During the American Revolution, the patriots had seen repeated instances of God intervening in their favor. Franklin continues to ask,

"And have we now forgotten that powerful friend?"

Church, if we look at our country today, I believe Benjamin Franklin would ask yet again, "Have we forgotten that powerful Friend?" He continues to make a bold statement that would greatly impact the discussion the founding father's would have. He said,

"I have lived, sir, a long time; and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this Truth, that God governs in the Affairs of Men!"

Question: But there are so many different religions and beliefs about God. People sometimes even fight over religion. Is it okay that not everyone in the country will believe exactly the same thing?

The founding fathers would answer that question YES! Why? Because in the First Amendment of the constitution they stated we should have freedom of religion. What unites all the religions is the belief that:

1. There is a God who created and rules the universe
2. We should worship that God
3. We should treat others the way we want to be treated (The Golden Rule)
4. After this life, we will be responsible for what we did here on Earth

These are fundamental points in all sound religion, and they are powerful beliefs! They teach us right from wrong! They are the foundation of our society and of our government. They unite us as a people. From the very beginning we see in scripture Good and Evil, Right and Wrong.

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"but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die (Genesis 2:17 NIV)."

God wanted us to experience Freedom in relationship with Him. So he gave Adam and Eve the freedom to choose. He placed this tree of Good and Evil in the garden and tells them not eat from it. Why? Without choice, Adam would have been like a prisoner, and his obedience would have been shallow and empty. When we choose obedience, there are great rewards. When we choose disobedience, there are great consequences. And of course you know the story, Adam and Eve chose wrongly and humanity has been struggling ever since consistently choosing things that are not pleasing to God.

So, in God's mercy, he gives his people the Ten Commandments – standards for righteous living – to help expose sin.

The 10 Commandments Exodus 20

You shall have no other God's before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images. ...

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. ...

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it Holy. ...

Honor your father and mother. ...

Thou shalt not kill. ...

Thou shalt not commit adultery. ...

Thou shalt not steal.

Maybe you are still wondering what does this have to do with the government or our nation? Why is it so important that we build on these truths? Well, the founding fathers knew that having a religious people would lead to the next level on the pyramid, which is...

VALUES & VIRTUES

- John Adams (2nd President and he did have a faith) said, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

- When people put God first, it affects every part of their lives. In our context, the ten commandments become principles people use to develop values and virtues to live their lives by.

- What are values and virtues? Values: a person's principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life; Virtues: a quality considered morally good or desirable in a person.

- One might contend that a few Values & Virtues that Americans need for our nation to work are:

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1. BE RESPONSIBLE - be someone people can count on. Do what you are suppose to do and take responsible for yourself. Sound familiar - OWN MY ROLE. Choose what is Right in the eyes of God not in your own eyes (I will come back to this)
2. BE A HARD WORKER - Learn the value of Hard work. Even as parents we want our kids to learn to earn the things that they want. Don't expect to have things just given to you. Don't complain about working but instead find satisfaction in your work and know whatever you do, you do as if unto the Lord.
3. BE GENEROUS - need I say anything more; don't just think about yourself; look around and see how you can
4. BE HONEST - Tell the truth! Live Honorably!

When John Adams said the constitution only works for a moral and religious people its because they needed to be people who had Values and Virtues. Without these, people will inevitably misuse and abuse freedom. Only a virtuous people are capable of Freedom.

"Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor (1 Peter 2: 16-17 NIV)."

When the citizens of our nation are "capable" of this freedom, because they live by God-given values, it take us to the next level of our pyramid which is

PEOPLE GOVERN THEMSELVES

- James Madison, the 4th president and know as the 'Father of the Constitution' said, "We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God."
- Unfortunately, modern media is constantly filling our heads with messages of Freedom without Rules. Just go do whatever feels good to you and by the way no worries about the consequences.
- We can see through scripture that this kind of mindset doesn't work; why? Because every time the people of God in the Bible did things their way instead of God's way they got into trouble. Do a bible study through the book of Judges.
- The purpose of Judges is to show that God's judgment against sin is certain, and his forgiveness of sin and restoration to relationship are just as certain for those who repent (praise God!)
- EXAMPLE: God had helped the Israelites conquer Canaan, which had been inhabited by a host of wicked nations. But they were in danger of losing the promised land because they compromised their convictions, beliefs, and their values, disobeying God.

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- Judges 2:10-11 says, "After that generation died, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the Lord or remember the mighty things he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did what was evil in the Lord's sight and worshipped the images of Baal."
- Over and over again you see this scripture in Judges say, "Then the Israelites did what was evil in the Lord's sight" and each time the people would face disaster and cry out to the Lord to save them.
- In his Mercy, God would rise up another Judge to help rescue the people of God and guide them to repent and turn their hearts back to the Lord.
- Some theologians believe the Key verse in the book of Judges that sums up the entire book is found in Judges 17:6, "In those days Israel had no king, so the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes."
- In order to govern ourselves we must NOT do what we believe is right in our own eyes but what is right in the eyes of God.
- If we have some sort of Moral Code that is founded by God and Religion, the people's values and virtues will be in line with the righteousness of God, enabling them to govern themselves. In other words, they are free to live their lives without anyone controlling them because they are able to control themselves.

Growing in Faith (2 Peter 1: 3-7 NLT)

³ "By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. ⁴ And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

⁵ In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone."

- God always intended to lead His people through a loving relationship. His people were the ones who ask for a King. Why?
- "Liberty is not a human yearning or instinct. It is a value that has to be learned and taught. Human instinct is to be taking care of. Most human beings would prefer to be taken care of than to be free." - Denis Prager

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Even before King Saul and King David, God's people wanted to put control in the hands of man. They wanted Moses to go before the Lord for them. Gideon, through his obedience, led the Israelites to victory so they said, "Gideon, you be our leader. You and your sons and your grandsons be our rulers." They didn't want to govern and rule over themselves through obedience to God; they wanted someone else to figure it all out and take care of them.

The founding fathers fought against a tyrant King and had no desire to go back to that kind of rule. So they attempted to establish a new government, rooted in God's principles or righteousness to build a people who grew in values and virtues and the power of God; a people who would learn to govern themselves.

So why do we have government you may ask? A government's main purpose as we have stated already is to PROTECT. Protect what? OUR UNALIENABLE RIGHTS.

LIMITED GOVERNMENT to protect the peoples rights

James Madison said, "The powers delegated by the Constitution to the federal government are few and defined."

Declaration of Independence ... "That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

So Government protects the people's rights they already have (freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to assemble, freedom to bear arms...)
Possible example "The Good, the bad and the bunch of Cows"

The Governing bodies in order on the pyramid are:

1. Family
2. City/Town
3. County
4. State
5. Federal

Knowing now what our founding fathers intended; how are we doing? The root issue of our country today is we are trying to remove the foundation of our nation! God and Religion.

Abraham Lincoln said, "We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God."

James Madison states, "If we lose these virtues or pursue the opposite of them, then the great cause that we know as America will be betrayed, dishonored, and finally destroyed."

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To put an exclamation point on the matter, Benjamin Franklin said, This new government could "end in despotism, as other forms have done before, when the people have become so corrupted as to need despotic (to have complete power and control) government, being incapable of any other."

Thomas Jefferson, "The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield, and government to gain ground."

Example of SuperFED (We look to the government to save us; to be the solution for everything; when they aren't suppose to be! They are only suppose to protect our rights so WE THE PEOPLE can turn to a moral God and become the solutions.

Our nation wants to go from Moral foundation to a Secular foundation.

"Cut flower culture" or "Cut flower ethics" [taken from Wikipedia]

Herberg is credited with coining the phrase "cut flower culture" to describe the spiritual rootlessness of modern European and American societies. The epithet is typically taken to imply that these societies cannot long survive without being re-grafted onto their Judeo-Christian roots. In Judaism and Modern Man, Herberg wrote:

The attempt made in recent decades by secularist thinkers to disengage the moral principles of western civilization from their scripturally based religious context, in the assurance that they could live a life of their own as "humanistic" ethics, has resulted in our "cut flower culture." Cut flowers retain their original beauty and fragrance, but only so long as they retain the vitality that they have drawn from their now-severed roots; after that is exhausted, they wither and die. So with freedom, brotherhood, justice, and personal dignity – the values that form the moral foundation of our civilization. Without the life-giving power of the faith out of which they have sprung, they possess neither meaning nor vitality.

Cut Flower Ethics Explained by Dennis Prager. Prager is an American conservative radio talk show host and writer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChQRhFTyzR4>. [43 second clip)

We need limited government to protect our rights so that we can govern ourselves through our values and virtues that are established by who? God!

THIS IS WHY WE MUST GIVE GOD CONTROL, EVEN WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT SPHERE.

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No matter where you believe we are as a nation, I think we can all agree we are in a decline and the root issue is the way our society has taken control away from GOD and His biblical principals that founded this great nation; not perfect but great never the less.

We can be proud of our Nation in all its imperfection because of the presence of God at its core and our hope is that that core will not be diminished but will grow to be a defining characteristic of America.

Today we celebrate Independence Day and our founding fathers cause for Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. In short, today we celebrate FREEDOM!

But FREEDOM was not free. It cost many their lives who fought for this freedom.

To celebrate those many lives we have prepared a special song Called "Because of the Brave" Take a listen to this and remember those who fought for our Freedom.