

The Declaration of Independence in Congress, July 4, 1776

*... 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*

Thus reads the Declaration of Independence adopted unanimously on July 4, 1776 – 231 years ago and celebrated this coming Wednesday throughout this country.

How did the “founding fathers” get to this point?

Leif Eriksson was the son of Erik the Red, and was born in Iceland around 970. Norse legend has it that Leif Eriksson may have landed in Newfoundland and could have possibly made it as far as Minnesota around 1000. He could have gone that far west either through Hudson Bay or the Great Lakes.

In 1492, we know that Christopher Columbus, funded by Queen Isabella of Portugal, and in search of a new route to India, landed in the Caribbean. In 1497, John Cabot, sailing in the service of Henry VII, King of England, reached the North American mainland and, on the basis of this voyage, England later claimed the entire continent.

The founding of Saint Augustine, now in Florida, by the Spanish in 1565 (73 years after Columbus) marked the beginning of colonization.

During this time, the English were challenging the Spanish domination of the seas with their Armada. The near annihilation of the Armada in 1588 was a major turning point in the claims to land in North America.

However, the first permanent English settlement was Jamestown in 1607 (115 years after Columbus, 110 years after Cabot and 42 years after Saint Augustine – named for, and under the control of, James I.

In 1620 a party of English Separatists, a dissident sect that had previously withdrawn from the Church of England, received permission from the London Company to settle in Virginia. Through an error in navigation, the Mayflower, which brought the group to America, entered Massachusetts Bay and dropped anchor in what is now the harbor of Provincetown, Massachusetts.

Yet it was still 156 years, or 284 years after Columbus – 279 years after Cabot – before the Declaration of Independence was adopted.

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To put that into a different perspective, 284 years ago was 1723 – we haven't been a nation for as long as it took us to become a nation! 156 years ago was 1851 – the California Gold Rush had just begun 2 years earlier!

And all of this was done because Columbus couldn't find India, because of an unpredictably powerful storm at sea dooming the Spanish Armada and an error in navigation of the Mayflower.

Did Columbus feel like a failure? Was the Spanish Armada humiliated? Were the Separatists angry with the Mayflower's navigator? Things did not go according to their plans.

Luke 19

- 29 And it came to pass, when He came near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples,
- 30 saying, "Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here.
- 31 "And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you loosing it?' thus you shall say to him, 'Because the Lord has need of it.'"
- 32 So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them.
- 33 But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, "Why are you loosing the colt?"
- 34 And they said, "The Lord has need of him."
- 35 Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him.
- 36 And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road.
- 37 Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen,
- 38 saying: " 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!' Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"
- 39 And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."
- 40 But He answered and said to them, "**I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.**"

“The stones would cry out”!!!

It didn't matter what man wanted. It didn't matter what the Pharisees wanted!!!

Acts 5

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- 12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.
- 13 Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.
- 14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,
- 15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.
- 16 Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.
- 17 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation,
- 18 and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.
- 19 But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,
- 20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."
- 21 And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.
- 22 But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported,
- 23 saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!"
- 24 Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be.
- 25 So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"
- 26 Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.
- 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,
- 28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"
- 29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.
- 30 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.
- 31 "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

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- 32 "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."
- 33 When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.
- 34 Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while.
- 35 And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men.
- 36 "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing.
- 37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.
- 38 "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing;
- 39 "**but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it--lest you even be found to fight against God.**"

This nation, the United States of America, was founded, created, established because of the will of God – not men. It is fine that we give some credit to Columbus, to Cabot, to Sir Walter Raleigh, to Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Hancock, Samuel Adams, John Penn, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Abraham Lincoln. We do well to recognize the achievements of Martin Luther King, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell and others.

But, in all our adulation to human beings, we must remember who is really in control.

Luke 10

- 19 "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.
- 20 "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Dwight D. Eisenhower was credited with saying one of my favorite phrases “Planning is essential; Plans are useless”. I would like to believe that he said this knowing that God is in control. It was, after all, under his presidency that we added “under God” to our Pledge of Allegiance that has come under fire this past week. Without planning, Columbus, Cabot and the Mayflower would never have set sail – the English would never have attempted to fight the Spanish Armada. And we see how their plans worked out.

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Genesis 48

- 13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him.
- 14 Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn.
- 15 And he blessed Joseph, and said: "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has fed me all my life long to this day,
- 16 The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."
- 17 Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.
- 18 And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."
- 19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude (**a melting pot**) of nations."
- 20 So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will bless, saying, 'May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!'" And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

The evidence is strong that Manasseh, the younger, describes the USA, while Ephraim, the older, represents Great Britain. Just as God intervened to make Israel alter the normal blessing, He intervened to make sure historical events caused the fulfillment of this prophecy.

With the history we have studied, can we ever doubt that His will will be done? It may not be done quickly according to our assessment of time. The devil will begin to work more quickly as he runs out of time, but God will make things happen according to His plan and according to His timetable – not ours.

John Adams said "Our Constitution was made only for the religious and moral people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other." The founding fathers of the United States fully expected the Church to be the guardians of our culture.

Benjamin Franklin said "As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters." Today, we see this growing exponentially in the USA as more and more laws are being created. For every law that is added to the books, the innocent, moral people are

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punished by having their rights further restricted. The corrupt and vicious persons simply find a way around each new law.

Americans are woefully ignorant of the US history and heritage. We have lost the understanding of what real liberty is. Freedom today is widely accepted to mean that we are free to do whatever we please as long as it doesn't hurt or offend someone else. We don't trust our neighbors to do what is right.

God's Law gives us true freedom.

John 8:

- 31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.
- 32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Matthew Henry's commentary says:

The truth shall make you free; that is, First, The truth which Christ teaches tends to make men free.

Isaiah 61:

- 1 "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

Justification makes us free from the guilt of sin, by which we were bound over to the judgment of God, and bound under amazing fears; sanctification makes us free from the bondage of corruption, by which we were restrained from that service which is perfect freedom, and constrained to that which is perfect slavery. Gospel truth frees us from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and the more grievous burdens of the traditions of the elders. It makes us free from our spiritual enemies, free in the service of God, free to the privileges of sons, and free of the Jerusalem which is from above, which is free.

Secondly, The knowing, entertaining, and believing, of this truth does actually make us free, free from prejudices, mistakes, and false notions, than which nothing more enslaves and entangles the soul, free from the dominion of lust and passion; and restores the soul to the government of itself, by reducing it into obedience to its Creator. The mind, by admitting the truth of Christ in the light and power, is vastly enlarged, and has scope and compass given it, is greatly elevated and raised above things of sense, and never acts with so true a liberty as when it acts under a divine command.

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2 Corinthians 3:

- 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

The enemies of Christianity pretend to free thinking, whereas really those are the freest reasonings that are guided by faith, and those are men of free thought whose thoughts are captivated and brought into obedience to Christ.

The farther the United States gets from the truth of the Bible, the more we lose our founding fathers' intended liberty and freedom. Remember this above all things as you celebrate the 4th of July this coming Wednesday.