

Message #1060
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"DECLARATION OF DEPENDENCE"

{1 Timothy 2: 1-4}

Trinity Presbyterian Church

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INTRODUCTION

When I was in the sixth grade the Freedom Train rolled into my home town, South Bend, Indiana. Our entire class went to Union Station to see some of the great historic documents traveling across the country on this train painted red, white, and blue. I can remember standing in awe as I observed "THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE".

I saw the document again about ten years ago while on a tour of the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C.

Those introductory words still send chills up and down my back...

"When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

"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..."

The first signature is one with which we're all familiar: John Hancock. Men from the thirteen colonies signed this one by one including such notables as John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Witherspoon among the 56 signatures. These men were declaring their independence from Great Britain...and, at the same time they were declaring their dependence upon one another as they now formed the United States of America.

The final sentence of this historic document also demonstrated that these men were dependent upon yet a higher power--Almighty God: "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!"

In the same breath our forefathers declared independence from foreign rule, they also declared their dependence upon Almighty God...and one another. Signing this document was as if they were signing it in their own blood--but these longed for freedom even if it cost them their lives!

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S CALL TO PRAYER

Historians are more often than not nowadays look back upon some of our forefathers and cast negative aspersions about their character and beliefs. Frequently, Benjamin Franklin is depicted as a philandering

humanist; however, his own words contradict as least part of that image.

During the Constitutional Convention, the 81 year old statesman directly addressed President George Washington with these words: "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. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, sir, in the

Sacred Writings, that 'except the Lord build the House, they labor in vain that build it.' I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel: we shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and byword down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing governments by human wisdom and leave it to chance, war, and conquest. "I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate at that service."

Benjamin Franklin recognized the need of our nation to be built upon a solid foundation...and...it couldn't be done without prayer and the help of Almighty God. It is for this reason that we have the words, "In God we Trust" on our coins...why the words "One nation, UNDER GOD" were added to our Pledge of Allegiance. {And, may I add, thank God the Supreme Court of the United States recognized this last month in their ruling to leave these words in tact.}

GOD CENTERED LAWMAKERS

It should be noted that most of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence were Christians... and those who weren't had been influenced by believers and they had a Christian world view. That's so important...

...sometimes we wonder about our leaders spirituality today

...there is a trend of remove God from our government under the guise of separation of church and state

...our own President has been criticized on PBS and TIME magazine for his devout evangelical faith

...remember when our schools were allowed to have Christmas programs...sing carols...?

...remember when cities had nativity scenes...a cross in prominent places without challenge?

...what has happened?

...what is happening today?

The main concern of those who wrote our constitution...our Declaration of Independence...was not keeping religion out of the government; but, rather keeping the government out of religion!

...they wanted to make sure that government didn't try to interfere with how religion was supposed to be done!

...how far we've moved from that position!

COMPLACENCY AND APATHY

Unfortunately too many of us take for granted our religious freedom.

...it has been said that one doesn't appreciate freedom until it has been stripped from them

A few months ago the Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship was banned from meeting on the campus of Tufts University. Why? Because they wouldn't allow a gay student on their campus leadership team and they were accused of being intolerant towards homosexuals! This is not the only campus where a Christian organizations have blacklisted and/or banned from meeting.

...anything people don't like about the Christian faith...

...about the Bible...

...can become a source of contention!

HOW DO WE OVERCOME OUR COMPLACENCY?

The answer is found in I Timothy 2: 1-4

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men/women to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth!"

Our freedom of religion is not as much a right as it is a privilege!

...it's a privilege that can be taken away

...therefore, we need to do everything we can to maintain it.

Paul's words in this text shows our DEPENDENCE upon Almighty God for the well-being of our country BY PRAYING FOR our leaders!

Note the words used in the text...

...requests

...prayers

...intercession

...thanksgiving

Paul is saying--PRAY THOROUGHLY--

...pray that our leaders will be granted WISDOM

...that they will make GOOD DECISIONS

...that they will recognize their DEPENDENCE upon Almighty God!

...pray that they will carry out GODLY PRINCIPLES

Isn't it ironic how the evangelical Christian movement is under constant scrutiny of the press--not just what some call the "radical religious right!"

...do they not have as much right to proclaim what they believe as a labor union?

...do they not have as much voice as the National Council of Churches of America?

What is Paul suggesting? Take some serious time on your knees--not just

a quick "bless 'em Jesus" prayer and not just before a national election "let my candidate win, please God!" prayer!

We are commanded to pray for our leaders--

...George W. Bush

...Dick Cheney

...Colon Powell

...Donald Rumsfeld

...Condelessa Rice

...Diane Feinstein

...Barbara Boxer

...Arnold Schwarzenegger

...Ron Gonzales

...Mike Honda

...Norm Mineta

...they need our prayers!

...like 'em or not

...Republican, Democrat, Green Party...

We also need to be involved!

...I'm not calling you to become a political activist

...we can write letters about issues that concern us

...we can attend city/county council meetings

...voice our opinions

...we can write letters to the editor

...don't just sit on your "pity pot" complaining!

And remember--most of all--GOD IS IN CONTROL! He is the Sovereign God of the

universe! We can do our part by praying and expressing our opinions and leaving the rest in His hands.

PUT AWAY SELFISHNESS

God has blessed us as a nation! Ask Vincent, John, Wieke...those who have come to America. They see us as a privileged, rich, nation.

Vincent has told me that in Indonesia America is known as a Christian Country.

...God HAS blessed us--let's not take that for granted

...and God expects for us to bless others not bully

...to be generous not stingy

We live in the land of opportunity...

...we need to assist those in other lands who don't have the opportunities that are ours

CONCLUSION

God's ultimate goal however is found in the last two verses of the I Timothy passage...

"This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants ALL men/women to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth!"

God expects us to bring others to Christ

...to be that city on the hill that Ronald Reagan spoke about

...to serve as a Christian example to a non-Christian world

...bright lights...not dim bulbs...in a darkened world

We need to take our privileges seriously...

...thank God for our independence

...and to make ourselves dependent upon Him to let our lights shine brightly