

THE SOWER
ARTHUR (L) CHURCH OF CHRIST
Ron Bartanen, Evangelist

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Be sure to visit the “Christian Evidences”/”Apologetics Press” links, in both English and Spanish.**

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

No, this is not a Fathers Day article, although it could be. Every Fathers Day in the Arthur congregation we make it a point to sing the song, “Faith of Our Fathers.” (We even sing it on Mothers Day, only substituting “mothers” for “fathers.”) However, with Independence Day coming this Wednesday, I feel it important to stress the role that the Christian faith played in the hearts of our founding fathers in the establishing of the United States as a nation of unprecedented liberty, without the despotic intrusion of government. We were formed as a nation “of the people, by the people and for the people,” not in a secular humanistic sense, but in recognition of the fact that we are endowed, not by government, but “by our Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” They viewed our freedoms not as being dispensed to us by government officials seeking to take charge of citizens’ lives, but by God, recognized as our Creator. They viewed government, not as seeking the control over all its citizens’ lives, but as the protector of its citizens’ God-given lives and liberty. Through our history men and women have shown themselves ready to die in order that this spirit of independence might be handed down from generation to generation. For those of us who have never been beyond our shores, it is perhaps difficult to realize as we should the value of the incredible gift of liberty. It would be well for us to recognize that liberty has its strongest roots in the principles set forth in God’s word, the Bible. Although our founding fathers could not all be accurately described as Christians, yet the respect for the Bible was almost universal. While some would seek to erase Christian influence from the history of our nation, under the guise of a misunderstood “separation of church and state,” the fact remains that faith in God—not faith in government—was

the driving force that made the United States the envy of the world. Other forces at work in the world, such as Islam and Marxism, have served only to bring people into bondage. It would be well to remind ourselves of our roots in the Judeo-Christian ideals that gave birth to, and once nourished our nation:

The Mayflower Compact began with the words, “In the name of God, amen.”

The Declaration of Independence speaks of “Nature’s God,” and “the Supreme Judge of the world.”

Ben Franklin, whom some have portrayed as being a Deist (one who believes God created the world, but abandoned it to natural law without divine intervention) speaks quite differently. To delegates during the war, he said, “Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered.” At the same convention 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.”

Closer to our time, President Ronald Reagan, speaking at a prayer breakfast during the party’s national convention, said, “I believe that faith and religion play a critical role in the political life of our Nation and always has.... Those who created our country understood that there is a Divine order which transcends human order.” Of course such plain language resulted in a storm of protest from politicians who are set on propagating the myth of “separation of church and state” as somehow being the American way.

As we see a spirit of humanism pervading our nation, let us pray that the “faith of our fathers” will prevail—faith that God is, and that **“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD” (Psalms 33:12).** —Ron

RESCUED FROM THE DOMAIN OF DARKNESS

“For He has rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13-14).

Most of us, I’m quite sure, prefer light to darkness. Without Jesus, all of us were in darkness, members, although we may not have known it, in the kingdom of Satan. Our heavenly Father desired that we all come to a saving knowledge, and has provided the means through His Son, the Lord Jesus. We are glad that we can share in the inheritance He has for us (Col.1:12).

The Word of God describes this transformation as changing kingdoms. We have been brought out of darkness into the marvelous light of the Gospel. The terminology used here by Paul is a military illustration. It pictures Rome going into a free country, and as a result of waging war and winning, they subdue that nation and take them into captivity. But in the spiritual realm we are the ones in bondage, and when we accept the Lord Jesus and obey the Gospel we are “transferred” (NASV) or “translated” (KJV) or are “conveyed” (NKJV) out of that bondage into the light of the Gospel. But it does not end there. Since we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins (Col.1:14), we must put our new-found faith to the test. We have been called out of that dark kingdom, changed by the light of the Gospel and now have the privilege to go back into that kingdom, now empowered by the Holy Spirit and utilizing the Whole Armor of God (Eph. 6:10-20) to help others find their way out. We can never work our way to heaven, but, upon salvation, we are to be the best workers the Lord has. Let’s be found letting our light shine for Jesus (1 Peter 2:10)!

--Larry Miles (our web site manager)

JESUS IS—

- The One who often wept (John 11:35), yet He dries our tears (Revelation 7:17; 21:4).
- The One who was sold for the price of a common slave (Exodus 21:31; Matthew 26:15), yet He redeemed man from his sins (1 Peter 1:18-19).
- The One who was led as a lamb to the slaughter (Acts 8:32), yet He is our Good Shepherd (John 10:11).
- The One who gave His life (Galatians 2:20), and by His dying made it possible for us to be saved (Mark 16:16).

—V. P. Black,

House to House/Heart to Heart

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain” (Rev. 5:12).

“The test of character is not whether you conform to moral standards when they are the community norm, but whether you continue to adhere to them when the community strays elsewhere.”

A FISH OUT OF WATER

While as Christians we rejoice in the liberty granted us through Christ—set free from sin and the law as a means of justification, it is troubling to know that many see this as an excuse to continue in conduct that is out of harmony with our calling as children of God. Paul wrote, “Brethren, we have been called unto liberty: only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13). Humanists view Christians as being in bondage, suggesting that liberty should loose us from moral restraints. For instance, Carliss Lamont, chairman of the National Emergency Civil Liberties Union, wrote: “Much of the emphasis in supernaturalist ethics has been negative, calling on men continually to deny many of the most wholesome impulses in order to keep their souls pure and undefiled for that life after

death, which is so much more important than life before death.”

A fable I once read illustrates the limits of liberty: “A fish felt restricted and bound by the banks of the shore. Deciding he was going to break out, he flounced out of the water, and onto the shore, exclaiming, ‘Now I am free!’ The poor fish, thinking himself to be free was free only to die outside the water, the water being the environment for which he was created.”

Christians are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” Eph. 2:10).

–Ron

"REPAIRING FOUNDATIONS" will be today's message, with Psa. 11:3 as the text. This is a break from the series on "HEAVEN", which I plan to continue next week.

OUR SICK LIST is unchanged from last week, except for an update on Wayne Polk, preacher at Shelbyville. There were complications from the removal of his feeding tube, which caused much bleeding. However, the bleeding was stopped, and he is now home, recovering.

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY!