

“For the Sake of Ten Righteous”
Genesis 18:20-33

Today, we will trace the *Spirit of Revival* through the eras of American History. We will look at three key moments of spiritual revival. The Founding of our country, the Civil war period, and the post WW2 era. We will see how Christianity influenced the country, and how God’s people responded in times of national distress. We will do this by examining the times, and the songs of the church in America during these monumental periods.

PERIOD ONE: AMERICA’S INDEPENDENCE

Born out of the Great Awakening. Among the great preachers of that period were Jonathon Edwards 1703-1758, George Whitefield (1714-1770), and John Wesley (1703-1791).

Almost all of the Founding fathers were devout, practicing Christians. Those who were not, all held a Christian world view and regarded “religion” as an essential support for our Republic. **Murray Hornsby** writes *“97% of the Founding Fathers were practicing Christians and exercised their faith in public office, at work, at home, and had it taught to their children in their schools. 187 of the first 200 colleges in America were Christian, Bible teaching institutions (including Yale, Princeton, and Harvard). Entrance in Harvard required strong knowledge of the Bible “* SOURCE: **Murray Hornsby** “Our History and Faith in God, American Heritage Alliance.

George Washington said of the importance of our Christian foundation, *“Of all dispositions and habits which lead to a political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.”* George Washington, Farewell address

Every State Constitution included a reference to God. Some outright required that elected officials be Christians.

Notice in the Declration of Independence, the emphatic statements about God, especially in the beginning and ending of the declaration.

*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.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.... (complaints against the British King omitted for brevity)

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do

*all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. 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.*

From this era, we sing a hymn, originally written in London in 1787 by Dr. John Rippon, London, "*How Firm a Foundation.*"

PERIOD TWO: Civil War

Both sides possessed godly leaders. Some on the South were terribly wrong about slavery. Some in the North, while on the right side of the slavery issue, were otherwise ungodly men. But for the most part, Americans realized that their sins led to the war. Both sides maintained frequent days of fasting and prayer for forgiveness.

Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address summarizes the attitude held by many, that God was judging the entire nation for the national sin of slavery. That although both sides were Christian, God was purging them for their sin: "*Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope -- fervently do we pray -- that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said f[our] three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether"*

The war brought America to its knees. Economically. Emotionally. **Spiritually.** It was in the middle of this period of national broken that Julia Ward Howe, her husband, and their pastor, Dr. James Clark were the guests of Governor Andrews of Mass. During their stay, they visited wounded soldiers recovering from their wounds. Julia heard them singing a catchy, majestic tune, but as she listened, she heard that the words were the kinds of things that young, rough soldiers might sing. "*John Browns Body Lies A-molderin' in the Grave.*"

Julia was upset that such a majestic melody should bear such uninspiring words. Pastor

Clark challenged her to write something better. She returned to their hotel and couldn't sleep. She thought of the terrible price of the war. After the horrors of seeing so many wounded soldiers, limbs gone, no means of livelihood, she thought "will this war ever end?" She realized that the only hope for this world is the glorious return of the Lord Jesus. She started writing "mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord..."

On her return to Boston, she showed the poem to her neighbor, James T Field, who was also the editor of the Atlantic Monthly. He published the song under the title, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." (Source, Al Smith, "Hymn Stories," 59).

PERIOD THREE: After the Second World War

- Once again, the nation was rocked by the tragedies of war
- Somber after the details of the Holocaust were revealed
- Millions of Believing soldiers returned home with a burden for unreached people in Africa, South America and Asia.
- Israel's statehood flamed the fires of Christians as the Imminency of the Lord's return became apparent.
- Revivals of Oliver B Green, R G Lee, and most famously, Billy Graham.
- Renewal of Patriotism and the importance of Spirituality in America

TWO SONGS reflect that spiritual climate of this period: "Revive us Again," and "God Bless America"

What are the Righteous to do?

What is the BEST THING that I can do to help my country?

As we sense that our culture is falling apart, believes must recognize that their greatest responsibility, and the best way to preserve this nation, is to live a righteous life.

- I. God's Judgment will Come. 2 Peter 2:4-10
 - A. Wickedness in America
 - B. Moral decay
 - C. And we seem to know it. Almost four in five American voters -- **78%** -- **think the Founders wouldn't be proud of the country they helped launched 234 years ago.** Opinion Dynamics poll, July 2, 2010
http://www.foxnews.com/projects/pdf/070210_patriotism_web.pdf
 - D. We have become like Sodom and Gomorrah!
- II. God knows How to Protect the Righteous. *"If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of*

judgment.” (2 Peter 2:9)

- III. God’s Care for the Righteous has a momentary benefit for the wicked
 - A. Genesis 18:20-33
 - B. God was willing to spare Sodom for the sake of Ten Righteous!
 - C. Events of Sodom and Gomorrah
 - 1. Two angels come to visit Lot (Gen 19:1). The two angels went from the PRESENCE of the LORD, to the PERVERSION of Sodom!
 - 2. Men of Sodom want them for sexual pleasure
 - 3. God spares Lot and his family
 - 4. Sodom is destroyed (19:24-25)
 - 5. Lot’s wife looked back (19:26)
 - D. “Sanctifying Effect”
 - 1. A righteous wife *“if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives”* 1 Peter 3:1
 - 2. A godly family. *“For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.”* 1 Cor 7:14
- IV. We are much like Lot. We’re living in Sodom.
 - A. Our attitude should be that our “righteous souls are tormented.” *“For that righteous man, living among them day after day was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard.”* (2 Peter 2:8)
 - B. We often criticize Lot for staying in Sodom, but many of us bear more guilt than Lot!
 - C. We are not even tormented, but rather take part with them!
- V. What Can I do for America?
 - A. Political Action or Righteous Behavior?
 - B. Righteousness will lead to change.
 - C. Will God spare Vineland for Ten Righteous?
 - D. Will God spare NJ for Ten Righteous congregations?
 - E. Will God spare America for Ten Thousand righteous?
 - F. I will be one of those.