

# Independence Day - Remove Not the Ancient Landmarks

## 1. An American Vision.

There is something that is exciting about the 4th of July. Imagine the hearts of those who participated at the recent Naturalization Ceremony at the White House on July 2. In his remarks, President Biden carried forward one of the most enduring concepts at the foundation of being an American:

America is the only nation in the world founded on an idea. Every other nation in the world is founded on the [basis] of either your geography, or ethnicity, or religion. You can define almost everyone else based on those characteristics. But you can't define America...There is one thing that does define us as a country. We were founded on an idea, that we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men and women are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights: life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness.

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<https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/joe-biden-naturalization-ceremony-speech-transcript-july-2>

What nobler words could be spoken to those who were to enjoy their lives here as citizens of the United States than this sense of Divine vision?

Prov 29:18 Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he.

Every year we celebrate Independence Day we celebrate that vision. But we must also zealously guard that vision. In our times we are challenged by a new, jaundiced way to see America defined by catering to people's grievances.

A grievance based way of seeing the world is not vision oriented. It is absolutely doomed to failure. The reason why this is so is because what the natural man does with grievance is to employ it for power for sustaining self. There is no moral foundation for living by lust. This is what is meant by the second part of vs. 18, "he that keepeth the law, happy is he." The vision that sustains us is tied to God's law, not just any sense of law.

If morality is not a God-based morality then it is an Amoeba-based morality. Without God, there is no such thing as goodness. The atheist might try to claim that he doesn't need God to be good but that is absolutely wrong. You might try to say that you can be well behaved without God, but that is too generous. What you *can* say is that you can be *conveniently* behaved without God. *Conveniently* because your behavior comports itself to do whatever is convenient to maximize self benefit.

Such living in cooperation with others is done only out of convenience to achieve self interest. This is why I call it an Amoeba-based morality. An amoeba lives only to consume. It conforms itself to its food source to consume it. I can't even call it its prey because that would suggest there is a mind to an amoeba. Righteousness exists only because of God. That which is not consistent with the righteous nature of God is immoral. A moral view of America based on satisfying grievances is a Godless view.

Tony Perkins of the *Family Research Council* interviewed Carter Conlon, the pastor of Times Square Church in New York. Although there are certain differences that I would have with Pastor Conlon, I thought his remarks are those any Bible preacher would be in agreement with for our nation.

Pastor Conlon: The slogan of America is out of many one. We are now experiencing a spiritual attack against this nation, taking that slogan and trying to actually invert it to say out of one many, knowing that as Dr. Ben Carson said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." ...[People are] tired of our children being indoctrinated into a grievance based view of life... just simply tired of it, just simply wanting to get back to living a rational normal life under the governance of God and with a living relationship with God. ... [In] my opinion a spiritual awakening is our only hope for the future.

Tony Perkins: Pastor Carter, there is a tendency to often times want to avoid conflict and controversy so we have compromised. Right now ...[we see] this intensive effort to redefine America's history to rewrite it, to undermine it, to cloud the minds of our young people and others to suggest that there is nothing good or redeemable about America. From a Biblical perspective, why does the history of a nation matter, and what does the Scripture say about how we should approach it?

Pastor Conlon: If we don't know where we have come from, we don't know where we are going. God Himself warned in the book of Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 10,11

Prov 23:10-11 Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:

11For their redeemer *is* mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

Don't try to change the history of your country. Don't try to put this revisionist movement

into motion in our schools and lie about what our past is, what our country is. Don't go into the fields of children because the Redeemer is mighty and he will plead their cause against you. I think that this is where we are at as a nation today in America, that we are actually invoking the ire of God Himself....I don't know how that is going to look but I don't want to be standing in the pathway of God when He finally says this is enough of perverting the children of this nation, enough of baptizing them in immorality and a false world view and a false perspective on your own history. ...You have to help parents get back and involved in what your children are learning in the schools and if they can't take their children out of that environment at least counter the lies that are being propagated to try to form their minds...in a twisted way that they don't really understand. [There was] incredible power and blessing that came on this nation, and God is willing to give us to go into the future if we are willing to reconcile to Him and to one another. In my viewpoint, this is the crux of the whole matter.<sup>1</sup>

We celebrate the *vision* of America and the vision of America was good. Our most basic founding document contains what should be one of the most commonly known statement that undergirds all that follows, "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." This statement reflects the fact that our whole vision is based on the Creator.

When someone refuses to stand to the flag and the anthem and then say they can't stand for a nation that is so imperfect I roll my eyes. Such johnny-come-latelies are dabblers when it comes to indignation over sin. Bible preachers have decried sin for ages. I want to respond, "No, you're kidding me! Do you mean to say that people are sinners? I'm shocked, shocked, to find out that people sin." What we stand for, though, is *not* how sinners fall short. What we stand to are the *ideals* of liberty that are founded *in the righteous character of God*. If you look at the past through the lens of grievance then you will never be satisfied.

Isa 55:2 Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is not*

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<sup>1</sup>[https://prayvotestand.org/get.cfm?c=PVS\\_VI\\_DEOS&playItem=WC21F03](https://prayvotestand.org/get.cfm?c=PVS_VI_DEOS&playItem=WC21F03)

bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which is* good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

Israel's focus on their dissatisfaction led them to tempt the Lord.

Exod 16:3 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, *and* when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

It is hard to write a document that articulates your constitution, or what defines the nature of an organization. This is why it is so difficult to write a Statement of Faith for a church. Anything that declares your belief will not have a hard time being dissected by the nit-pickers. This is why we teach that our Statement of Faith is helpful but it is not God-breathed. The only thing that we *can* actually declare is absolutely what we believe is found in the Bible itself. With this in mind we can imagine the difficulty that the framers of our Declaration of Independence and the Constitution had.

The founding documents of this country represent the genius of this country. It is a genius that was born of a centuries long line of philosophical and political debate and examination. But, even the founders knew that they could not have anticipated every possible situation and so wrote into it the ability to amend it, which was also a move of genius. They also knew that amendments should not be made on a whim and so set a high bar to be able to do so; and amend it we have. If there was any clarification to be made, the process of amendment has been available.

There are those who feed the propaganda machine who seek to cast aside the promise of the potential of those ideals. They denigrate the foundry of history that forged the freedom of this country. Their complaint is that the government created by those ideals has not produced a utopia. They are deeply conflicted because they want to acknowledge those ideals are high while disdaining them. They want to say that the founding ideas of this country could not have been so great because they were used as tools of oppression. Instead of building on and being vigilant to apply those ideals, they want to cancel them altogether.

The issue, however, is not how successful man is in carrying out those ideals. Such people do not understand the whole nature of a vision. Instead of living up to a vision, they nurture a grudge as they focus on their grievances. Their grievance based movement carries a poison pill in it. Whatever plan man

conceives to satisfy the lusts of grievance will find itself consumed by new plaintiffs. Karl Marx taught that "Communism...is the genuine solution of the antagonism between...man and man....When...class distinctions have disappeared."<sup>2</sup> However, with each new generation educated to be on the lookout for grievances to be eradicated, they will always find the aggrieved. Some of the latest solutions to social disparities have only produced new grievance groups. The way Godless communism has dealt with inconvenient classes has been to cancel by death, according to some reports, between 60 and 150 million people. No government can satisfy the lusts of its people. Instead, America was founded on a Godly vision. The very nature of a vision is something that is impossible to fulfill. Whatever degree of fulfillment you *do* reach cannot sustain itself. It has become quite fashionable that whenever you refer to America you have to tack on a little disclaimer, "America is not perfect, but..." or, "America's past is filled with sin, but..." We do not need to add a disclaimer. The American ideals are just fine.

## 2. A declaration of dependence.

Ps 144:15 Happy *is that* people, that is in such a case: *yea*, happy *is that* people, whose God *is* the LORD.

Ps 33:12 Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD; *and* the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

Preachers have often made a play on the reference to the Declaration of *Independence* and called for a Declaration of *Dependence*, or dependence on God. Baptists in American history were instrumental in encouraging the freedom of religion and a government with no state church. We are guaranteed the right to the *pursuit* of happiness. In our liberty, each one is responsible for his own stand before God. But, this does not mean that America has not been a Christian nation. If by Christian nation you mean a nation with an official church, then no, we are not a Christian nation. If by a Christian nation you mean a nation that has been formed and is characterized by Christian ideals and virtues, then we are most decidedly a Christian nation. As we are a people whose God is Jehovah, then we will not only pursue happiness but we will find happiness.

We need to be careful to notice the solution that Pastor Conlon offered. It was not to merely embrace a political philosophy. It was to turn to God in repentance. We must be very careful to notice that whatever ideals we have they must be founded on our relationship with

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<sup>2</sup>D. James Kennedy, *What if the Bible Had Never Been Written?*

Christ or they are so much smoke. The Creator that was recognized in creating a nation founded on righteous liberty needs to be embraced.

2Chr 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Abraham Lincoln reflected this when he spoke of that government of the people, by the people, and for the people. These words taken out of context might appear to be promoting a humanistic philosophy founding the authority of government on man. In the context of the Gettysburg address, though, we see that Lincoln related the government of the people to that which had been conceived "four score and seven years" earlier by the Declaration of Independence which recognized the *Creator* who made all men equal. Lincoln did not just suggest a human authority for government. What he said in full was, "that this nation, **under God**, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." - John Adams, Second President of the United States

"God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever." - Thomas Jefferson, Third President of the United States

Remove not the ancient landmarks of repentance and faith in God that defined our nation. By teaching our children the true foundation of being one nation *under God*, grateful for the responsibility He has bestowed upon us rather than stewing in how unfair everything is will save us.

### 3. Thank God for America.

One might wonder what would happen to Egypt if the believers emigrate to America and so the Egyptian brethren might be a little conflicted about coming to America. However, they are challenged with the same sense of evangelistic mission we should all have. In Egypt, witnessing to Muslims can be life threatening...but that is not so here in America. They need to take advantage of

the freedom we have here and rise to the challenge of evangelism. But what is true for them is no less true than for the rest of us. We might not have the same history of persecution that they have, but we *do* have the same freedom to share Christ with the lost.

We are reminded by a parable in Luke 19 of that responsibility. A master left his servants in charge of his investments till he could return.

Luke 19:13,15-17 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

15And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

To demonstrate our gratitude to God we need to use that liberty He has bestowed upon us to share the Gospel. At the same time, we will be keeping the ancient landmarks in place that will continue to guide this country in righteousness.

I do not think it trite to point out how thankful we should be that if someone does not love this country that God has given us then they are free to find one that is better. Better still, rather than slipping into focusing only on grievances, make sure you are on God's side by turning your heart to Him in repentance and salvation.

John Phillip Curran, an Irish lawyer during a July 10, 1790 speech in Dublin said, "The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance." His words were published in many American newspapers. On Jan. 28, 1852, an abolitionist, Wendell Phillips, gave a speech to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, during which he echoed those words when he said, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty; power is ever stealing from the many to the few." This is so much more true for believers today. We must be careful to serve God with the freedom He has given us and can never let down our guard or shirk our Christian responsibility.

1. An American Vision. Prov 29:18, Prov 23:10-11, Isa 55:2, Exod 16:3
2. A Declaration of Dependence. Ps 144:15, Ps 33:12, 2Chr 7:14
3. Thank God for America. Luke 19:13,15-17