

Sermon Reference Sheet, July 4, 2010

America's Godly Heritage in Times of Crisis

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2 Chronicles 34:1-8, 15-16, 18-31; 35:1, 18

On May 24, 1774, Thomas Jefferson drafted a Resolution for a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer to be observed as the British blockaded Boston's Harbor. It passed unanimously:

"This House, being deeply impressed with apprehension of the great dangers, to be derived to British America, from the hostile invasion of the City of Boston, in our sister Colony of Massachusetts...deem it highly necessary that the said first day of June be set apart, by the members of this House as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, devoutly to implore the Divine interposition, for averting the heavy calamity which threatens destruction to our civil rights...Ordered, therefore that the Members of this House do attend...with the Speaker, and the Mace, to the Church in this City, for the purposes aforesaid; and that the Reverend Mr. Price be appointed to read prayers, and the Reverend Mr. Gwatkin, to preach a sermon."

George Washington wrote in his diary, June 1, 1774:

"Went to church, fasted all day." Virginia's Royal Governor, Lord Dunmore, interpreted this Resolution as a veiled protest against King George III, and dissolved the House of Burgesses, resulting in legislators meeting in Raleigh Tavern where they conspired to form the first Continental Congress.

On April 15, 1775, just four days before the Battle of Lexington, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, led by John Hancock, declared:

"In circumstances dark as these, it becomes us, as men and Christians, to reflect that, whilst every prudent measure should be taken to ward off the impending judgments...the 11th of May next be set apart as a Day of Public Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer...to confess the sins...to implore the Forgiveness of all our Transgression."

On April 19, 1775, in a Proclamation of a Day of Fasting and Prayer, Connecticut Governor Jonathan Trumbull beseeched that:

"God would graciously pour out His Holy Spirit on us to bring us to a thorough repentance and effectual reformation that our iniquities may not be our ruin; that He would restore, preserve and secure the liberties of this and all the other British American colonies, and make the land a mountain of Holiness, and habitation of righteousness forever."

On June 12, 1775, less than two months after the Battles of Lexington and Concord, where was fired "the shot heard 'round the world," the Continental Congress, under President John Hancock, declared:

"Congress...considering the present critical, alarming and calamitous state...do earnestly recommend, that Thursday, the 12th of July next, be observed by the inhabitants of all the English Colonies on this Continent, as a Day of Public Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer, that we may with united hearts and voices, unfeignedly confess and deplore our many sins and offer up our joint supplications to the Allwise, Omnipotent and merciful Disposer of all Events, humbly beseeching Him to forgive our iniquities...It is recommended to Christians of all denominations to assemble for public worship and to abstain from servile labor and recreations of said day."

On July 5, 1775, the Georgia Provincial Congress passed:

"A motion...that this Congress apply to his Excellency the Governor...requesting him to appoint a Day of Fasting and Prayer throughout this Province, on account of the disputes subsisting between America and the Parent State."

On July 7, 1775, Georgia's Provincial Governor replied:

"Gentlemen: I have taken the...request made by...a Provincial Congress, and must premise, that I cannot consider that meeting as constitutional; but as the request is expressed in such loyal and dutiful terms, and the ends proposed being such as every good man must most ardently wish for, I will certainly appoint a Day of Fasting and Prayer to be observed throughout this Province. Jas. Wright."

On July 12, 1775, in a letter to his wife explaining the Continental Congress' decision to declare a Day of Public Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer, John Adams wrote:

"We have appointed a Continental fast. Millions will be upon their knees at once before their great Creator, imploring His forgiveness and blessing; His smiles on American Council and arms."

On July 19, 1775, the Continental Congress' Journals recorded:

"Agreed, The Congress meet here to morrow morning, at half after 9 o'clock, in order to attend divine service at Mr. Duche's' Church; and that in the afternoon they meet here to go from this place and attend divine service at Doctor Allison's church."

On March 6, 1776, General Washington ordered:

"Thursday, the 7th...being set apart...as a Day of Fasting, Prayer and Humiliation, 'to implore the Lord and Giver of all victory to pardon our

manifold sins and wickedness, and that it would please Him to bless the Continental army with His divine favor and protection, ' all officers and soldiers are strictly enjoined to pay all due reverence and attention on that day to the sacred duties at the Lord of hosts for His mercies already received, and for those blessings which our holiness and uprightness of life can alone encourage us to hope through His mercy obtain."

On March 16, 1776, the Continental Congress passed without dissent a resolution presented by General William Livingston declaring:

"The Congress....desirous...to have people of all ranks and degrees duly impressed with a solemn sense of God's superintending providence, and of their duty, devoutly to rely...on his aid and direction... We do earnestly recommend Friday, the 17th day of May be observed by the colonies as a Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer; that we may, with united hearts, confess and bewail our manifold sins and transgressions, and, by sincere repentance and amendment of life, appease God's righteous displeasure, and, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, obtain this pardon and forgiveness."

On May 15, 1776, General George Washington ordered:

"The Continental Congress having ordered Friday the 17th instant to be observed as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, humbly to supplicate the mercy of Almighty God, that it would please Him to pardon all our manifold sins and transgressions, and to prosper the arms of the United Colonies, and finally establish the peace and freedom of America upon a solid and lasting foundation; the General commands all officers and soldiers to pay strict obedience to the orders of the Continental Congress; that, by their unfeigned and pious observance of their religious duties, they may incline the Lord and Giver of victory to prosper our arms."

On April 12, 1778, at Valley Forge, General Washington ordered:

"The Honorable Congress having thought proper to recommend to the United States of America to set apart Wednesday, the 22nd inst., to be observed as a day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, that at one time, and with one voice, the righteous dispensations of Providence may be acknowledged, and His goodness and mercy towards our arms supplicated and implored: The General directs that the day shall be most religiously observed in the Army; that no work shall be done thereon, and that the several chaplains do prepare discourses."

On April 6, 1780, at Morristown, General Washington ordered:

"Congress having been pleased by their Proclamation of the 11th of last month to appoint Wednesday the 22nd instant to be set apart and observed as

a day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer...there should be no labor or recreations on that day...Chaplains will prepare discourses suited to the...Proclamation."

On October 11, 1782, the Congress of the Confederation passed:

"It being the indispensable duty of all nations...to offer up their supplications to Almighty God...the United States in Congress assembled...do hereby recommend it to the inhabitants of these states in general, to observe...the last Thursday, in the 28th day of November next, as a Day of Solemn Thanksgiving to God for all his mercies."

On November 8, 1783, at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, Massachusetts Governor John Hancock issued:

"The Citizens of these United States have every Reason for Praise and Gratitude to the God of their salvation...I do...appoint...the 11th day of December next (the day recommended by the Congress to all the States) to be religiously observed as a Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer, that all the people may then assemble to celebrate...that he hath been pleased to continue to us the Light of the Blessed Gospel...That we also offer up fervent supplications... to cause pure Religion and Virtue to flourish...and to fill the world with his glory."

On February 21, 1786, New Hampshire Governor John Langdon proclaimed: a Day of Public Fasting and Prayer:

"It having been the laudable practice of this State, at the opening of the Spring, to set apart a day...to assemble...with one heart and voice, penitently confess their manifold sins and transgressions, and fervently implore the divine benediction, that a true spirit of repentance and humiliation may be poured out upon all...that he would be pleased to bless the great Council of the United States of America and direct their deliberations...that he would rain down righteousness upon the earth, revive religion, and spread abroad the knowledge of the true God, the Saviour of man, throughout the world. And all servile labor and recreations are forbidden on said day."

At the Constitutional Convention, 1787, Ben Franklin stated:

"In the beginning of the Contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for Divine protection."

Proclaiming a Day of Prayer, Ronald Reagan said January 27, 1983:

"In 1775, the Continental Congress proclaimed the first National Day of Prayer...In 1783, the Treaty of Paris officially ended the long, weary Revolutionary War during which a National Day of Prayer had been proclaimed every spring for eight years."