

## ***America: A Celebration of Liberty***

Good morning!

This is a very special weekend for all freedom-loving Americans, marked by fabulous firework displays all over the United States. It is our nation's birthday, a celebration of Liberty!

Every fourth day in July, we remember something that in 1776 was a staggering event that shook the world with its audacity in declaring our separation from the greatest military power of the time with an even more audacious claim—all men are created by God as **equals** and each had a right to *“life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”*

This was unheard of in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, where status and power were determined by land, birthright, titles, and wealth.

But we decided that we were free to choose our own destiny... a remarkable feat, made all the more amazing by actually winning the Revolution!

And we also pause to remember on the Fourth of July all of those who fought to preserve these liberties, from George Washington to Ulysses Grant to Dwight Eisenhower, men who endured sacrifice, hardship, and even death to protect a country founded on God's principles...Equality and Liberty.

In our politically correct times of 2014, some revisionist historians question God's providence in creating this country on biblical foundations for His glory by men who revered Him.

Poppycock! Do not believe their slanted views on American history.

Consider the men who were actually there as our nation's midwives and what they had to say about His hand in our nation's conception.

Patrick Henry is remembered for his most famous quote, *“Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me Liberty, or give me Death!”*

But he also said this, *“It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. For that reason alone, people of other faiths have been afforded freedom of worship here.”*

And after the Constitution was ratified in 1787, Alexander Hamilton said, *"For my own part, I sincerely esteem it [the Constitution] a system which without the finger of God, never could have been suggested and agreed upon by such a diversity of interests."*

Dr. Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence said, *"I do not believe that the Constitution was the offspring of inspiration, but I am as satisfied that it is as much the work of a Divine Providence as any of the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testament."*

And finally Washington himself said this in 1789 at the First Inaugural Address ever:

*"No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the Affairs of men more than the People of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency."*

Let's look at what Thomas Jefferson wrote, our primary text today, in this all too familiar portion of our Declaration of Independence from Great Britain's tyranny:

*"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."*

Self-evident means what? That Thomas Jefferson invented them with his quill pen? No. They are self-existing truths of God. Look at what John Adams wrote in 1774:

*"These are what are called revolution-principles. They are the principles of Aristotle and Plato, of Livy and Cicero, of Sydney, Harrington and Lock. **The principles of nature and eternal reason.**"*

By these terms, "*nature*" and "*eternal reason*," Adams means they are God-given natural rights, something these aforementioned philosophers also noted.

God intends this to be a principle, a natural truth, and so it is. It is self-evident. The Founding Fathers were merely recognizing His will, and upon that truth or principle they formed a new country to reflect it.

We are so familiar with this famous sentence from the Declaration that we may take it for granted, but if you've ever traveled outside of the United States of America, you can appreciate it freshly when you come home to our land of liberty.

Make no mistake. We are a unique country, one that God has inspired, used as a beacon of hope to millions, and graciously blessed beyond measure.

But we are also under attack, as we have all seen; the morals of our country seem to crumble on a daily basis. It is alarming to be sure, and overwhelming if you watch the

news and shake your head at where we seem to be sliding. It reminds me of a speech that Abraham Lincoln gave in 1838 in Springfield, Illinois:

*Shall we expect some transatlantic military giant to step the ocean and crush us at a blow? Never! All the armies of Europe, Asia, and Africa combined, with all the treasure of the earth (our own excepted) in their military chest, with a Bonaparte for a commander, could not by force take a drink from the Ohio or make a track on the Blue Ridge in a trial of a thousand years. At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer. If it ever reach us it must spring up amongst us; it cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen we must live through all time or die by suicide.*

Our demise, Lincoln predicted, would be from within and it appears to be well underway today. Fortunately, there's a new film that confronts these assaults upon our great country that will inspire you to a whole new level of patriotism.

Dinesh D'Souza's new film, *America*, asks some hard questions about our country and thankfully restores our special place in the world, a place that America has held as a nation of hope and freedom, and despite these attacks, yet still struggles to retain.

Let's take a look at the *America* trailer:

[America Trailer](#)

Despite our blemishes as a nation, and they are many when we consider that flawed men led it (and many hardly Christian leaders), our godly ideals still shine across the globe to a tired and oppressed world that for many inspires them to a brighter future in America.

Do not despair. We are still a God blessed nation of hope, and should be proud of our history of charity, liberty, and freedom to dream.

Now let's take a look at what makes our nation, under God's watchful eye and influence, such a unique land of opportunity that warrants our genuine patriotism and pride. And more importantly, why we unabashedly associate God and patriotism so closely in America because America represents godly virtues that our Founding Fathers embraced.

## **Our Revolution**

*"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people (Proverbs 14:34)."*

When we consider the idea of revolution in history, it almost always ends badly.

Think about the French Revolution and the masses guillotined by Robespierre, the Russian revolution of 1917 and the millions murdered by Lenin and Stalin, China's

revolution under Mao, Castro and Cuba, the Mexican or Cambodian revolutions that are still hurting their countries today.

Chaos, instability, economic upheavals, and death mark most revolutions. They are almost always tragedies that end in murder and even genocide.

But when we consider our American Revolution, it is an astounding rarity that resulted in just the opposite...new freedoms and rights and equality for all, with a remarkable document that is still today the wonder of the democratic world. It is very nearly a miracle that God ordained such a peaceful example of a country espousing His values of Freedom and Equality, not to mention winning a war we had no business winning.

Truly, as we can see by the leadership in the world that the United States has possessed, righteousness does exalt a nation. But in 1783, when the Treaty of Paris was signed, what chance did this democratic experiment really have to last? No one knew, but all the world doubted.

## **An Eyewitness**

Many Americans today are unfamiliar with Alexis de Tocqueville, a French aristocrat who visited America in 1831 to observe this democratic experiment 50 years after its birth. He wanted to know why it succeeded. What made America tick?

As a politician and social scientist, he made some extremely insightful observations, as noted in the film *America*, about our burgeoning experiment and was impressed enough to write a two volume work called *Democracy In America*.

He was so impressed with the growth and uniqueness of America that he sought to find its secret for such a wild success story. Consider his statements about our mix of faith and freedom.

*“I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers – and it was not there . . . in her fertile fields and boundless forests and it was not there . . . in her rich mines and her vast world commerce – and it was not there . . . in her democratic Congress and her matchless Constitution – and it was not there. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great.”*

And again, he wrote:

*“On close inspection, we shall find that religion, and not fear, has ever been the cause of the long-lived prosperity of an absolute government.”*

Clearly, the Founding Fathers had in their purpose a biblical mandate to foster in their new country and government, founded on truths that were already self-evident, a Christian foundation. They merely had to articulate these truths to the people of the world. Tocqueville returned to France convinced that faith was the engine to our greatness and Liberty.

## Liberty

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, **to set the oppressed free** (Luke 4:18).”*

Let’s consider the virtue of Liberty. A simple definition is that we are set free from oppression, free to then choose, and that we are not coerced in making that choice.

In Colonial America this was not so. Great Britain determined our choices, and those were decreed by a monarchy thousands of miles away, namely King George, and his soldiers living amongst us.

This is a very foreign notion to us, serving a King, but common in most European nations. A monarchy decreed what choices you had in life, and your station in life, your status, was determined by your birth (name, title, land, and wealth).

This system oppressed the common man, and by 1776, the colonists had had enough and threw off the British yoke and declared themselves independent and free to choose their own destiny because *“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.”*

But is that truly Liberty? Yes, and no.

In America today, Liberty’s meaning has changed. Freedom means “to do what we want to do, no matter whether it is right or wrong, so long as two consenting adults agree, and a third party is not harmed.” Moral or immoral, abortion or homosexuality, Liberty means doing what you want to do in America today.

In 1860, Lincoln helped show how muddy the definition could become when he said this about slavery:

*“We all declare for Liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. With some the word Liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labor.*

*Here are two, not only different, but incompatible things, called by the same name—Liberty. And it follows that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names—Liberty and Tyranny."*

Clearly Liberty can be twisted, and redefined, even to be its antithesis...Tyranny. So what is Liberty exactly? True Liberty is God's idea, so let's look at it in a spiritual sense.

## **God's Liberty**

*"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, **serve one another** humbly in love (Galatians 5:13)."*

Paul shows here in Galatians a whole new level of freedom, a freedom that was never intended to be used for selfish purposes, but for the benefit of others. When you think of all of America's charities and relief organizations that assist other countries, this makes sense doesn't it? America cares and shares its blessings with others in need.

Now let's look at what Jesus said about true Liberty, spiritual Liberty, in John 8:31-36:

*"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

*They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"*

*Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."*

These are essentially the same ideas of Liberty or freedom, but with one caveat. Jesus is talking about more than the freedom to choose, He is also talking about the power to freely choose to do right. Much the same as Paul said, "*to serve one another.*"

Before one accepts Christ, that is, repents of their sin, surrenders to God as Lord, and believes the gospel that Jesus' blood will cleanse them from all sin, they are slaves to Sin. They cannot do right because of the tyranny of Sin in their very being. They are slaves to their sinful nature and as Jesus said in Luke about His purpose, He came "*to set the oppressed free.*"

Upon becoming a believer, the Holy Spirit literally inhabits the Christian's body and gives them the power to choose to do right.

God's liberty, a spiritual liberty is different from our national Liberty. It is not a license to choose only...but a freedom to choose what is right. The Apostle Paul clearly lays this out in Galatians.

*“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery (Galatians 5:1).”*

In other words it is the freedom to do what we ought to do, what is right and good and moral. Christ gives us this power to choose to do right. This is true Liberty.

Now let’s look at one other virtue, another biblical concept that the Founding Fathers wanted us to get...Equality.

## **Equality**

*“For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink (1 Corinthians 12:13).”*

A second virtue that is mentioned in our primary text from the Declaration of Independence, very close to Liberty, is Equality. Let’s read it again:

*“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 is something as Americans we take for granted, but in 1776 it was a stunning claim. People were definitely not equal. To Great Britain, and the rest of the world, it was extremely radical to declare them so. It was revolutionary to the extreme!

In order to see the biblical value of Equality, and to get an eyewitness definition, let’s consider Tocqueville again:

*“Zealous Christians may be found amongst us whose minds are nurtured in the love and knowledge of a future life, and who readily espouse the cause of human liberty as the source of all moral greatness. Christianity, which has declared that all men are equal in the sight of God, will not refuse to acknowledge that all citizens are **equal** in the eye of the law.”*

In other words, we are not bowing to anyone. In America, there is no caste system, no monarchy of kings, dukes, and earls. We are all to be treated the same in the eyes of the Law and each other, and God.

Another revolutionary concept in 1776, when all of Europe operated in the exact opposite fashion, we declared all men equal. Let’s look at one immigrant’s take on the American idea of Equality from Dinesh’s film, *America*.

**Film clip 114:47 to 116:30 (Bono)**

America, a land of Liberty and Equality, is an idea that we shared with the world after God revealed it to our Founding Fathers! Look what Jefferson wrote in the last year of his life to Richard Henry Lee (1825):

*This was the object of the Declaration of Independence. Not to find out new principles, or new arguments, never before thought of, not merely to say things which had never been said before, but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, and to justify ourselves in the independent stand we are compelled to take. Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, not yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion. All it's [sic] authority rests on the harmonizing sentiments of the day, whether expressed in conversation, letters, printed essays, or in the elementary books of public right, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney, etc.*

In other words, self-evident truths. Truths from God's Word, revealed to them, and shared with the world as a new country's foundation. And again, noted by these philosophers as natural truths.

In closing let's remember that, as you'll see in this film *America*, we should not lose heart even though we don't have a Washington, Lincoln, or Reagan to lead us today, we can all make a difference in our beloved land because we have **us**. We can each make a difference for righteousness.

Consider these words from President Reagan about the power of one American:

[Reagan's Speech](#)

Despite our countries mistakes and sins because of flawed men leading her, we still have much to be proud of as a Christian nation, at least founded clearly on Christian principles by men who were believers, or at the very least, God-fearing men.

America has done much more good in the world than probably any other nation, because we have taken to heart the biblical mandates to use our freedom as Paul said, "... *serve one another humbly in love.*"

And despite those who demean our values and heritage, we can all stand up for her, one at a time, and do what we can to preserve these godly pillars that have meant so much to so many for so long. As Dinesh's *America* points out, we do have **us**.

Let's pray

*\*All Bible verses NIV translation unless otherwise noted*

Additional verses:

*“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20).”*

*“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us (Acts 17:24-27).”*