

Roots in Ripon

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Chuck Roots

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Blessing America

A few months ago I was approached by a friend who asked me to write a series of articles for the Manteca Bulletin about the formation and history of the United States of America. The purpose for the request was to highlight the seminal moments and grave decisions that were critical in the establishment of our nation.

It has been solemnly stated, and rightly so, that if we forget our history then we are doomed to repeat it. However, in the case of the United States the opportunity to repeat the mistakes may be our undoing. Here's what I'm referring to.

Our nation came through the crucible of discord, rancor and war before anything remotely close to normalcy settled across our land.

There is good reason for the phrase, "God Bless America." The pilgrims who first set foot on the shores of Virginia and Massachusetts struggled mightily in dealing with the obstacles and adversities they faced. There were innumerable instances where nothing except the hand of God was responsible for the outcome as these colonialists were learning to breathe the air of freedom.

A cursory study of the life of our First President, George Washington, should put you in a state of awe, realizing just how much he and our forefathers at that time had to endure for this nation to be free from the tyranny of the British monarchy. During the French and Indian War, Washington proved to be a valiant and courageous leader. In the battle of Monongahela in 1755, for instance, Washington was atop his horse leading his men against a fierce Indian force. The chief of the Indians instructed his warriors to aim their muskets at Washington. During the battle, Washington had two horses shot out from under him and four bullet holes were discovered in his cloak. Later, in meeting the Indian chief, Washington was told that the reason the Indians eventually surrendered was the belief that the Indians had determined that Washington was a mighty leader who was being protected even against bullets.

So then, was George Washington blessed by God? I firmly believe he was, and not just because of the one instance mentioned above, but because a list of similar miracles that surrounded his life and the lives of so very many of the other Founding Fathers.

Almost without exception, a key element in the lives of the framers of our nation was a strong belief in God. This was not some tip-of-the-hat acknowledgement of the Creator, nor did they think of themselves as good people because they attended church regularly. No, these were men who took their faith in God seriously. The evidence of this is all over our most important documents: The Mayflower Compact, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights, to name just the primary ones.

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What was the one key factor for America surviving and then thriving? In my humble opinion it was prayer. George Washington was a man of prayer, taking time each morning to search the Scriptures in prayer. And no less a worthy than Benjamin Franklin was given to prayer, conveying its importance at the Continental Congress during that delicate time when none of the states' delegates could seem to agree on the form of government the United States should have. Read what 81-year-old Ben Franklin said to the assembled delegates.

"In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard; and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful Friend? Or do we imagine that we no longer need His assistance?"

"I have lived, sir, a long time; and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see in this truth – that God governs the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writing, that 'except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it.' I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel; we shall be divided by our little partial, local interests, our projects will be confounded and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a byword down to future ages. And, what is worse, mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing government by human wisdom and leave it to chance, war, or conquest.

"I, therefore, beg leave to move:

"That hereafter prayers, imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service."

Washington, Franklin and a host of others were (and still are) a blessing to America for one simple reason: They trusted in God. And they lived their lives so as to be a blessing to our nation and to the world.

You and I will no doubt never have our names remembered the way these men did. But you can be just as great a blessing to your nation and the world by being a person of prayer.

So instead of imploring God to bless America, you be that blessing because it is through you and your faith in God that God will gladly bless America today and into the future.