

Thoughts on
"American Independence"

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In our first segment, I read excerpts from a speech Samuel Adams gave 235 years ago. I read it to you because it contains timeless truths and questions that are still relevant today.

He began the speech by pointing out that America was founded to, in his words, "throw off the yoke of popery." That is, America was founded to allow freedom of religion. The first settlers came here so that they could worship according to their conscience, not according to the dictates of the pope. But Americans were still subject to what Adams called, "political popery." King George was oppressing Americans politically in their new homeland just as much as the pope had oppressed them religiously in their former homeland.

When Adams said, "We have this day restored the Sovereign, to whom alone men ought to be obedient," he was saying that the Declaration of Independence made us one nation under God, not under King George.

Adams went on to point out that God has given to all men various talents and abilities, and that God intended that each man profit from his own labor. It was never God's intention that some men would, by virtue of their political office and presumed intellectual superiority, take what other men have earned and use it however they saw fit.

At the time there were some who felt the colonies should remain loyal to the king because the king had protected them. Adams' response is that the king only protected the colonies from selfish motives. Britain was making a good profit trading the produce of the colonies with the rest of the world, and wanted to keep it that way.

The timeless question Adams asked was, "Did the protection we received annul our rights as men, and lay us under an obligation of being miserable?" In other words, how much freedom should we give up in exchange for security? It is a question that people still ask today in the context of airport security and government healthcare.

Adams' answer was, "Who among you, my countrymen, that is a father, would claim authority to make your child a slave because you had nourished him in his infancy? It is a strange species of generosity which requires a return infinitely more valuable than anything it could have bestowed: ... It is inconsistent with common-sense to imagine that any people would ever think of settling in a distant country on ... condition ... that the people from whom they withdrew should forever be masters of their property, and have power to subject them to any modes of government they pleased."

Clearly, to Adams, freedom was more important than security.

Furthermore, Adams didn't think America needed the protection of Britain because he believed America was under the protection of God. He expected God to give the military victory to underdog America because God believed in America as strongly as America believed in God.

This speech was given just one month after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, so the Revolutionary War was just beginning. Nevertheless, Adams was confident in victory. He based this belief upon how God had already blessed America, giving examples of the agricultural and industrial prosperity that God had already granted to America. He expected God to give the victory to the underdog because the underdog was under God.

Looking into the future, he recognized the danger that as the British government grew, it would have to raise taxes even more to support that massive government. If the colonists did nothing, then their children and grandchildren would be saddled with a massive debt they could not pay to support that oppressive government. His speech was designed to encourage the colonists to act now before it was too late.

Referring to those who initially settled the American colonies, Adams said, "They dethroned one usurper only to raise up another: they refused allegiance to the Pope, only to place the civil magistrate in the throne of Christ, vested with authority to enact laws, and inflict penalties in his kingdom. And if we now cast our eyes over the nations of the earth we shall find, that instead of possessing the pure religion of the gospel, they may be divided either into infidels who deny the truth, or politicians who make religion a stalking horse for their ambition, or professors, who walk in the trammels of orthodoxy, and are more attentive to traditions and ordinances of men than to the oracles of truth."

In other words, at that time, America was the only nation where pure Protestant Christianity still existed. Other nations, like France, were officially atheistic. The Church of England was concerned more with political power than the pure religion of the gospel. And professors of religion in other countries were so obsessed with examining new interpretations, traditions, and human rules, that they had lost sight of Christianity completely.

Adams expected God to bless America because America was the only place in the world where men could worship God as their conscience dictated. Adams was right. God did bless America as a reward for her pure faith.

The questions facing us today are, "Does America still have that faith?" and, "Will God continue to bless America if she doesn't?"