

George Washington and His Character  
Psalm 33:12; Psalm 9:17

INTRO: It is my firm belief that God blesses or curses a nation in accordance with its morals; not only in the citizenry, but especially in its leaders.

The blessing, the well being of a nation, greatly depends on its leaders. George Washington knew how important godly leadership is as is indicated by these words from his Farewell Address: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion, and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the attribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these foremost props of the duties of man and citizens....reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion or religious principles. It is substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government."

- I. BELIEF OF WASHINGTON IN GODLY PRINCIPLES (ISA 28:10)
  - A. George Washington was a man of sterling character. Attacks against his Christianity and morals are unfounded.
  - B. He believed that we must, as a people, live by Biblical principles or be doomed.
    1. Washington said: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."
    2. On May 12, 1779, George Washington said to the Delaware Indian Chiefs, "What students would learn in American schools above all is the religion of Jesus Christ."
    3. "To the distinguished character of Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of Christian" (Washington, May 2, 1778 at Valley Forge).
    4. When George Washington was inaugurated as our first President, he took the oath as prescribed by the Constitution. To what was prescribed, he added several spiritual components to the official ceremony. Before taking the oath, he called for a Bible on which to take the oath, and it was he who added the words, "So help me God!" to the end of the oath. After taking the oath of office, Washington leaned over and kissed the Bible.
  - C. At age fifteen, Washington wrote out 110 Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Convention. As I read these, I found that as a child in South Mississippi, I was taught many of

these principles. Some of these principles will be given by number:

- 5<sup>th</sup> *If You Cough, Sneeze, Sigh, or Yawn, do it not Loud but Privately; and Speak not in your Yawning... put Your handkerchief or Hand before your face and turn aside.*
- 7<sup>th</sup> *Put not off your Cloths in the presence of Others, nor go out your Chamber half Drest.*
- 11<sup>th</sup> *Shift not yourself in the Sight of others nor Gnaw your nails.*
- 15<sup>th</sup> *Keep your Nails clean and Short, also your Hands and Teeth Clean yet without Shewing any great Concern for them.*
- 22<sup>d</sup> *Shew not yourself glad at the Misfortune of another though he were your enemy.*
- 23<sup>d</sup> *When you see a Crime punished, you may be inwardly Pleased; but always shew Pity to the Suffering Offender.*
- 24<sup>th</sup> *Do not laugh too loud or too much at any Publick [Spectacle].*
- 38<sup>th</sup> *In visiting the Sick, do not Presently play the Physician if you be not Knowing therein.*
- 51<sup>st</sup> *Wear not your Cloths, foul, unript or Dusty but See they be Brush'd once every day at least and take heed tha[t] you approach not to any Uncleaness.*
- 52<sup>d</sup> *In your Apparel be Modest and endeavour to accomodate Nature, rather than to procure Admiration keep to the Fashio[n] of your equals Such as are Civil and orderly with respect of Times and Places.*
- 56<sup>th</sup> *Associate yourself with Men of good Quality if you Esteem your own Reputation; for 'tis better to be alone than in bad Company.*
- 60<sup>th</sup> *Be not immodest in urging your Friends to Discover a Secret.*
- 71<sup>st</sup> *Gaze not on the marks or blemishes of Others and ask not how they came. What you may Speak in Secret to your Friend deliver not before others.*
- 76<sup>th</sup> *While you are talking, Point not with your Finger at him of Whom you Discourse nor Approach to near him to whom you talk especially to his face.*
- 77<sup>th</sup> *Treat with men at fit Times about Business & Whisper not in the Company of Others.*
- 82<sup>d</sup> *Undertake not what you cannot Perform but be Carefull to*

*keep your Promise.*

89<sup>th</sup> *Speak not Evil of the absent for it is unjust.*

90 *Being Set at meat Scratch not neither Spit Cough or blow your Nose except there's a Necessity for it.*

91<sup>st</sup> *.....lean not on the Table neither fault with what you Eat.*

97<sup>th</sup> *Put not another bit into your Mouth til the former be Swallowed [I]et not your Morsels be too big in the Gowls.*

98<sup>th</sup> *Drink not nor talk with your mouth full neither Gaze about you while you are a Drinking.*

107<sup>th</sup> *If others talk at Table be attentive but talk not with Meat in your Mouth.*

108<sup>th</sup> *When you Speak of God or his Attributes, let it be Seriously & [wt.] Reverence. Honour & Obey your Natural Parents altho they be Poor.*

109<sup>th</sup> *Let your Recreations be Manfull not Sinfull.*

## II. BATTLE DISCIPLINES OF WASHINGTON

- A. One of the very important things that General Washington did for the Army was to command that every regiment have a chaplain.
- B. The General desired that his army be Christian in practice and belief. "The General hopes and trusts, that every officer and man, will endeavour so to live, and act, as becomes a Christian Soldier, defending the dearest Rights and Liberties of his country" (6).
- C. The famous painting of Washington kneeling in the snow at Valley Forge is not mythical. It is reality, based on fact. He believed God would lead him to victory. He sought and believed in Divine guidance.
- D. First hand observer, Anthony Sherman, says: "You doubtless heard the story of Washington's going to the thicket to pray. Well, it is not only true, but he used often to pray in secret for aid and comfort from God, the interposition of whose Divine Providence brought us safely through the darkest days of tribulation."

## III. BELIEF IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE (ROM 8:28)

- A. Many quotes could be given as to George Washington's belief in Divine providence, but we shall share only a few.
- B. By 1778, George Washington had so often witnessed God's intervention that on August 20, he wrote Thomas Nelson: *The Hand of providence has been so conspicuous in all this, that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more than*

wicked, that has not gratitude enough to acknowledge his obligations.

- C. Washington declared in his Inaugural Address: *It would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the Universe. 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.*”

#### IV. BESEECHING GOD IN PRAYER–THE PRACTICE OF WASHINGTON (JERE 33:3)

- A. Many of Washington’s daily prayers are recorded in his daily diaries.
- B. Examples of Washington’s prayer life:

*O most Glorious God, in Jesus Christ my merciful and loving father, I acknowledge and confess my guilt, in the weak and imperfect performance of the duties of this day. I have called on thee for pardon and forgiveness of sins, but so coldly and carelessly, that my prayers are become my sin and stand in need of pardon. I have heard thy holy word, but with such deadness of spirit that I have been an unprofitable and forgetful hearer, so that, O Lord, tho' I have done thy work, yet it hath been so negligently that I may rather expect a curse than a blessing from thee. But, O God, who art rich in mercy and plenteous in redemption, mark not, I beseech thee, what I have done amiss; remember that i am but dust, and remit my transgressions, negligences & ignorances, and cover them all with the absolute obedience of thy dear Son, that those sacrifices which I have offered may be accepted by thee, in and for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ offered upon the cross for me; for his sake, ease me of the burden of my sins, and give me grace that by the call of the Gospel I may rise from the slumber of sin into the newness of life. Let me live according to those holy rules which thou hast this day prescribed in thy holy word; make me to know what is acceptable in thy holy word; make me to know what is acceptable in thy sight, and therein to delight, open the eyes of my understanding, and help me thoroughly to examine myself concerning my knowledge,*

*faith and repentance, increase my faith, and direct me to the true object Jesus Christ the way, the truth and the life, bless O Lord, all the people of this land, from the highest to the lowest, particularly those whom thou has appointed to rule over us in church & state. continue thy goodness to me this night. These weak petitions I humbly implore thee to hear accept and answer for the sake of thy Dear Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

V. BAPTISM OF WASHINGTON

A. George Washington was baptized by John Gano.

B. Dr. Charles W. Koller, President of the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago, gives the account in "The Northern," February, 1946 issue, and we quote his words: *Warmly cherished among the records of the venerable First Baptist Church of New York City is the account of the baptism of George Washing.... Among the many expressions of the faith of George Washington, none glows with brighter luster than his request for baptism. The war was over, the peace treaty had been signed, and George Washington was in camp at Newburg, on the Hudson, where the signing of the treaty was celebrated, John Gano, pastor of the First Baptist Church of New York City, who had served as chaplain through the war, was still with the troops, expounding the Word of God. The General had heard him preach, and had been searching the Scriptures. Approaching the chaplain, he requested baptism as taught and practiced in the Scriptures. The baptism took place quietly and simply in the Hudson river, with only forty-two witnesses.*