

Christianity in America
“George Washington—The Providence of God
and the Three ‘No’s’ in the Founding of America”
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I would like to give a vignette as we celebrate God’s good Providence to this nation and how He has been gracious to us in many ways. We had a great Gospel awakening that gave birth to our nation from 1735 to 1765. We had another great Gospel awakening from 1785 to 1880 with multiple revivals that the Lord used to maintain our freedoms. Also, one of the things the Lord has done is He has raised up men and women of significant character rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There are many but in this study I’m going to talk about one, our founding father, George Washington. He had an amazing relationship with the Lord and I know all the history books say he was a deist but that is not accurate at all. What is accurate is that he had a warm, evangelical relationship with Christ but he was a man of self-control, dignity and reserve so you have to listen to him carefully and in the profundity of what he says.

I unabashedly recommend the book titled *George Washington’s Sacred Fire* by Peter A. Lillback. In it, it describes Washington’s sacred liberty, sacred cause and the sacred fire that God Himself has entrusted to us through the true religion of His Son Jesus Christ and the research on this book has been extraordinarily well done. Dr. Lillback is the President of Westminster Seminary and I think you would enjoy the great work he has done with this book.

I want to give you an insight from it called the three “no’s” from the founding father that God used to give us this country. When George Washington was drafted by the Continental Congress to serve as a commanding officer he was actually the second choice to serve in this capacity for Charles Lee was the first choice but Benjamin Franklin stood up the next day and said ‘I don’t feel comfortable with this for I think we need to pray about it and consider George Washington.’ I’m glad he did for it was that choice that made quite a difference as they turned their attention to him he became the commanding general in the war of independence.

In this position he was faced with many challenges, not the least of which was Valley Forge. The disease, lack of resources, sickness, demoralization and the capture by the British of Philadelphia, the capital at that time were all things Washington faced as commanding general. Not far outside of Philadelphia was Valley Forge and it was there he kept together these few thousand faithful. While Washington lived in Philadelphia his pastor was Jacob Duché who was the pastor of Christ Church. This pastor wrote Washington a letter in which Washington quickly opened and read it and then his countenance fell.

By the way, this pastor is the one who uttered the very first prayer for the very first Continental Congress. He read the prayers from the Common Book of Prayers and then extemporaneously in that meeting went into another prayer as everyone commented how robust, vital, personal and uplifting it was. That prayer is recorded in many places today.

So as Washington gets this letter expecting another uplifting moment, instead reads that this man when the British capture Philadelphia decides to turn his pulpit back over to England. Then on behalf of England, at the direction of England, he writes this letter to Washington calling upon him to engage in no further useless sacrifice saying the cause is lost and urging Washington to surrender at Valley Forge. Washington sent a reply back to his pastor saying ‘If I had known what was in the letter to tempt me to abandon this sacred cause I would have never

have opened it and my heart sinks to think that you wrote it to me.' So to the pastor's appeal to him to surrender, Washington said 'no' to the surrender at Valley Forge.

There is another time when Washington said 'no.' When everything seemed to be faltering where the Congress was not doing its job, the people were discouraged and seemingly there was no way that the colonies were uniting, it was Washington's young men who followed him. These were the young men who said to Washington 'You may have no biological son but you are our father and the father of our country' and they pleaded with him that he would become king but Washington said 'no' and that would lead to a third 'no.'

The third 'no' was after serving so effectively for two terms they pleaded with him to maintain the office perpetually and to even consider keeping it within his family line. Washington said 'no.' Here was a man that was tempter for fame and fortune and yet could say 'no.'

There are a lot of things that we need to say 'no' to but you will never say 'no' until you have a bigger 'yes.' There are many "yes's" that Washington fled to and one is that if I have a sacred cause I cannot surrender. Two he believed strongly in the movement that this country would be different. It would have no king but its constitution. Lex Rex which is the law is king so he said 'no' to being king. He knew with every leader you not only get his strengths but you get his weakness. Washington imposed term limits on himself and set the precedent for us.

It is not only that he had the right "yes's" but he had an even bigger 'yes.' That bigger 'yes' was the 'piety and practice of our true religion in Jesus Christ' which was Washington's own quote. I hope that you are encouraged this day by this message but while we are grateful for our country we are most grateful for the King of Kings of all nations who has blessed this nation.

God has blessed this nation with men and women who have said 'no' to selfishness and 'yes' to selflessness and we honor them who have served in our military. There are also those who have served faithfully as civil magistrates in our nation and there are citizens who have said 'yes' to Christ and in the name of King Jesus have said 'yes' to being a citizen that honors Christ. That's the 'yes' we want you to say for that's where it begins.

Jesus, yes I'm a sinner. Yes, You died on the cross to set me free. Yes, I will live with the liberty of Christ. Yes, I will say 'no' to anything and everything that would defame You. Now, use me in my marriage, my family, my community, my church, Your church, and my country that Christ Jesus would be lifted up. When I say 'yes' to that He will draw men and women to Himself who will say 'yes' to Him. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You that while we have been blessed with many blessings, one of the significant ones are men and women who have stepped into the breach, stepped up at the point, who have willingly taken the challenges and have made the decisions that are only explained by wisdom from above. It is not explained by the world's wisdom that brings dissention and destruction of others but from wisdom from above. We thank You for that character that is forged and framed in the blessings of the Gospel so that in the circumstances of life they do not dictate our responses, but the circumstances of life reveal the opportunity for our responses and that opportunity is to do the next right thing for the right reason in the right way for the glory of the God of glory and grace, revealed in Christ, the One whom we see, trust and praise because of the Spirit of God who has granted us eyes to see and ears to hear, in Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.