THE RECONCILER

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INDEPENDENCE DAY & DEPENDENCE DAY

Two American holidays were created by American presidents - **Independence Day** celebrating America's ***independence from*** other nations and **Thanksgiving** celebrating its ***dependence on*** God. America chose to be both an independent nation and also a nation deliberately dependent on God. Without dependence on God our independence disintegrates into mere self-centeredness. Only by wedding the two concepts of independence and deliberate dependence on God that can we achieve true freedom.

Thanksgiving Day

Thanksgiving Day - a day set aside to thank God for His goodness and acknowledge His innumerable blessings - has never been so relevant. On this day the entire nation acknowledges God's existence, its dependence on Him and the fact that everything we have is a gift from Him.

President George Washington made the ***first nationwide thanksgiving celebration*** in America marking November 26, 1789, *"as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God."* He called on all Americans to *"unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions."*

In 1863 **President Lincoln** made Thanksgiving ***an annual national holiday*** *"I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, …to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving... And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him …, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon*

as may be consistent with Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union."

These two great presidents recognized that thanksgiving towards God can be a powerful demonstration to unite the nation. They recognized that (no matter how we differ by culture, ethnicity or political view) a common awareness of our dependence on God, and the debt of gratitude we owe Him can unify us as a people.

In calling for days of thanksgiving they were not merely exhorting the citizens to develop a positive state of mind - an attitude of gratitude - but to specifically recognize THE PERSON to whom we owe everything and from whom all blessings flow. While not dictating how people express their faith they understood that the bond of faith - acknowledging and depending on God - is the greatest way to unite the nation. The idea of a secular God-ignoring society was alien to them.

Thanksgiving & Blessing

The phrase ***"Give thanks"*** or its equivalent occurs over 100 times in the Bible! At the dedication of the Temple as the leaders and people sang together *"Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, for his steadfast love endures forever,"* the glory of God came down upon them with such power that they were unable to stand. (2 Chron.5.13-15) Nothing brings the presence of God on the scene as much as thanksgiving.

Today - no matter how troubled our world or difficult our personal circumstances - we give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and steadfast love which hold our lives and world together. We thank Him *in* everything because *we know* from His word that He makes *"all things work together for the good of those who love God."* (Romans 8.28)

The spirit of thanksgiving to ***Our Loving Heavenly Father and Generous Provider*** is a major foundation of the nation's blessing and source of its unity.

Pray that Thanksgiving toward God will unite our nation especially in times of division and strife. ***There is nothing our God cannot do!***

WHAT OTHERS SAY

"To be grateful is to recognize the love of God in everything." - Thomas Merton,

"The tone of victory is thanksgiving and praise in the midst of great tribulation."
—Watchman Nee

"Thankfulness opens our hearts and our clasped hands to receive and to give more freely. It erases all those lines we draw between ourselves and others." - Joe Kay

" How can God entrust great things to one who will not thankfully receive from Him the little things?" - Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

"If we ever forget that we are One Nation Under God, then we will be a nation gone under." - Ronald Regan

"When thanksgiving is filled with true meaning and is not just the formality of a polite 'thank you,' it is the recognition of dependence." - Billy Graham.

"If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you." - William Law

We ought to give thanks for all fortune: if it is good, because it is good, if bad, because it works in us patience, humility and the contempt of this world and the hope of our eternal country. – C.S. Lewis