

# God Governs in the Affairs of Man

by Kimberly Fletcher



The Constitutional Convention had reached a tipping point. Arguments had become heated and several members of the convention threatened to leave and the work of writing the Constitution would have been abandoned—most probably forever.

At this crucial moment in history a lone voice spoke out from the back of the room. Quietly, Benjamin Franklin, the respected elder statesman, then 81 years of age, stood and addressed the convention.

“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...And have we now forgotten this powerful friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance?”

I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: that God governs in the affairs of man. 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 Writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this. I also believe that, without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel...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, henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessings on our deliberations be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business.”

\*\*\*

“We on this continent should never forget that men first crossed the Atlantic not to find soil for their ploughs but to secure liberty for their souls.”

—Robert J. McCracken

# A Time For Remembering

by Tammy Hulse



It was early autumn in Boston, Massachusetts. The year was 1746. The entire community of Boston was in turmoil. The most powerful fleet of the time was sailing from France under the command of French Duke d'Anville. There were 70 ships carrying over 10,000 troops with a mission to burn Boston to her very foundations.

The governor declared a day of fasting and prayer to petition the help of Almighty God to deliver the community from the horrific invasion. The men of Massachusetts, some of whom were veterans of the earlier French war, with their old outdated weapons, gathered at Boston Common in preparation for the coming attack. The following account is based on William J. Federer's *American Minute* and pages 10-12 of Catherine Drinker Bowen's book *John Adams and the American Revolution*.

"The fleet was at their doorstep when reverend Thomas Prince, from the pulpit of the Old South Meetinghouse prayed before his congregation. The morning was clear and calm. 'Deliver us from our enemy!' the minister implored. 'Send thy tempest, Lord, upon the waters to the eastward! Raise Thy right hand. Scatter the ship of our tormentors and drive them hence. Sink their proud frigates beneath the power of Thy winds!'

He had scarcely pronounced the words when the sun was gone and the morning darkened. All the church was in shadow. A wind shrieked so hard that the great church bell struck twice. Thomas Prince paused in his prayer, both arms raised. 'We hear thy voice, O Lord! We hear it! Thy breath is upon the waters of the eastward, even upon the deep. The bell tolls for the death of our enemies!' He bowed his head; when he looked up, tears streamed down his face. 'Thine be the glory, Lord. Amen and amen!'

Historian Catherine Drinker Bowen related that as he finished praying, the sky darkened, winds shrieked and church bells rang 'a wild, uneven sound... though no man was in the steeple.' A hurricane subsequently sank and scattered the entire French fleet. With 4,000 sick and 2,000 dead, including d'Anville, Vice-Admiral Cornelle's threw himself on his sword. The French attack never came. A week later details were provided by other vessels entering Boston from the northeastward. The French fleet was nearly lost. All who survived the sudden storm suffered from a pestilential fever. The great Admiral Duke d'Anville was dead. The few remaining ships, half manned, were limping off to the southwestward, headed it was thought for the West Indies."



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote the following Ballad of the French Fleet:

**Admiral d’Anville had sworn by cross and crown, to ravage with fire and steel our helpless Boston Town... From mouth to mouth spread tidings of dismay, I stood in the Old South saying humbly: ‘Let us pray!’.. Like a potter’s vessel broke, the great ships of the line, were carried away as smoke or sank in the brine.**

This story is just one of many accounts of divine intervention on behalf of the United States of America. Our heritage is rich with accounts of faith, sacrifice, devotion, and the miraculous hand of God in the building and establishment of the United States and its Constitution. The challenges and threats to freedom for the early colonists were great, yet brave men and women rose to the challenge of their day, exercised faith in the God who brought them to this land, and participated in the miracle and making of America.

Enemies of freedom have always been present from the beginning of time. And thus, a free America will always have her enemies. But there is a difference in the threats we experience today in comparison to the challenges we have faced before. This difference is found in the memory of the American people. Unfortunately, the memory of the faith, the character, and the patriotism of our Founding Fathers is waning. Too many of the rising generation are unfamiliar with the great patriots of the past. Karl Marx stated that “a people without a heritage are easily persuaded.” We can see evidence all around us of the vulnerability of Americans who are unfamiliar with her heritage and legacy.

How do 21st century Americans rise to the challenge of their day with the strength and power of our Fathers before us? Has the day of miracles ceased in regards to America? Or can we as Americans today dare to believe that God will come to our aid?...I believe He will.

Hope is on the horizon as modern day patriots connect with the faith, character, and patriotism of the past. The connection that modern day Americans have with the faith and power of their forefathers can be found in one word – **remember**. Remember the courage and the sacrifice. Remember the perseverance and faith. Remember the virtue and morality. Remember the heroes. Remember those who were lost.

The word, **remember**, carries great power because it maintains a link to the lessons of history and the inspiration of the past. The richness of American heritage will infuse life, purpose, and meaning into her future. The power of the past begins to flow within the veins of modern day patriots the moment they participate in a story, memorial service, event or activity that causes them to revisit an episode in America’s dynamic history. Furthermore, when “remembering” experiences are repeated frequently, they will create a propelling force that will move America towards a promising future.

*“It is when people forget God that tyrants forge their chains.” –Patrick Henry*

We encourage families to take a few moments to remember our heritage by attending a concert, visiting a museum, reading a story, participating in a community celebration or other activity . . . as America commemorates significant dates and moments in her history.

## Discussion Questions

- ★ *What is an example, from either article, of blessings that the early Americans received when they exercised faith?*
- ★ *What does it mean to you that God governs in the affairs of man?*
- ★ *In what ways can we follow in Benjamin Franklin’s footsteps and remind our families, friends, and communities of the “powerful friend” that God wants to be for us?*
- ★ *What other thoughts do you have about the first article?*
- ★ *What do we learn from Tammy’s article about facing incredible odds with faith in Jesus Christ? Share your thoughts and feelings about how faithfulness is demonstrated by both God’s people to Him, and God to His people.*
- ★ *How have you seen God coming to the aid of Americans today?*
- ★ *Both of the articles highlight the importance of remembering the past and prayer. How do you think the two are related?*
- ★ *What is something or someone you choose to “remember” in times you are seeking courage?*