This morning as we think about all the freedoms and blessings we enjoy in this great country, there are two scriptures I would like to read; one from Psalms, the other from Proverbs.

The first is in Psalm 33:12 (NKJV)........

_Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance._

The other scripture comes to us from Proverbs 14:34 (NKJV).....

_Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people._

Would you bow your heads and let’s ask God to bless our study this morning.

**PRAYER**

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Every night over half of the world goes to bed hungry, while we in America go to bed with our bellies filled and our cabinets and refrigerators and freezers stocked with plenty of food.

Every night over half of the world goes to bed in a country where their freedoms have been taken away from them by tyrannical dictators and militant governments; while we in America go to bed in a land where we are free to worship......free to speak our minds.....and free to go about our daily business without any fear of our government.

Is all of our abundance and all of our freedom by chance or coincidence? Are these blessings our because of our own hard work......ingenuity......and human effort?

Absolutely not! America owes a debt of gratitude to Almighty God for all that she is and all that she has. Apart from GOD’S BLESSINGS, America would be no different than any other nation.

*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance.* (Psalm 33:12 NKJV)

AMERICA owes her **GREATNESS** to GOD!
AMERICA owes her **ABUNDANCE** and **PROSPERITY** to GOD!
AMERICA owes her **FREEDOM** to GOD!
AMERICA owes her **PROTECTION** to GOD!
AMERICA owes her **GODLY HERITAGE** to GOD!
AMERICA owes her **MILITARY SUCCESSES** to GOD!
And AMERICA owes her **NATURAL BEAUTY** to GOD!
ILLUSTRATION: For many decades our “Pledge of Allegiance” to the American flag was recited in this manner:

“I pledge allegiance, to the flag, of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands.....one nation.....indivisible .......with liberty and justice for all.”

Those of you who are in your 70's, 80's, or 90's probably remember reciting that version of the “Pledge of Allegiance” when you were in grade school.

And you also probably remember that in the 1940's and 50's the global climate began to change dramatically.

- In the 40's there was World War II, and during that time Adolph Hitler and his NAZI regime exterminated over 6 million Jews.

- Communist Russia was rapidly becoming the second world “super power” by conquering one country after another and enforcing their communistic form of government upon the people of those nations.

- And in the 1950's Fidel Castro seized control of the Island of Cuba and brought her citizens under his Marxist Socialist dictatorship.

Citizens of the world were losing their freedom by the millions. And it was in the midst of this world-wide anarchy that Americans came to realize just how blessed we are to have our religious and personal freedoms. It was during that time.....the 1950's.....that a group of citizens working in partnership with the American Legion and The Knights of Columbus petitioned the United States Congress to add two words to our “Pledge of Allegiance.” Those two words were “Under GOD.”
So since FLAG DAY, JUNE 14, 2954 the last sentence in our “Pledge of Allegiance” to the American flag has been recited this way:

“One nation, **UNDER GOD**, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

When we say, “**One nation under GOD**” we are saying that our country is dependent upon GOD!

When we say, “**One nation under GOD**” we are saying that our country owes a debt of gratitude to GOD for all our blessings.

When we say, “**One nation under GOD**” we are not talking about Allah.....or Mohamed .....or Buddha......or Confucius. We are talking about **Almighty Jehovah God**.......**the God of the Bible**.......**The Creator of all living things**.......**The Triune God**.......**God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.**

Those two words “**Under God**” in our Pledge of Allegiance and “**In God We Trust**” on our currency have for decades now “stoked the fires of anger” of those who desire to sever America's ties with the God of the Bible completely.

Even if these godless, atheistic opponents should ever succeed in getting the words “**under GOD**” out of our Pledge of Allegiance and “**In God We Trust**” off our currency, it will never erase the truth that America owes her greatness to Almighty God!

“**Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD.**”

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As our nation prepares to celebrate her **241st Birthday** there are just two simple thoughts I would like for us to consider.
First of all I would have you to consider…..

I. OUR GREAT BLESSINGS

1. Listen carefully once again to that scripture in Psalm 33:12 (NKJV)

   Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance.

2. Of course when the Psalmist wrote this 33rd Psalm he wasn't thinking of the United States of America. The United States would not even be born for nearly 3,000 years. He was thinking of Israel, land of God's chosen people.

3. But it simply does not make a bit a sense that God would bless one nation who trusted in Him as their GOD and not bless another nation who did the same. American history is filled with story after story of people who came to this country in her infancy seeking freedom to worship Almighty God without interference from Government or any State-sanctioned religion.

4. I don't believe any of us here this morning would ever disagree with the fact that we here in AMERICA have been blessed beyond measure by Almighty God.

5. To understand the magnitude of just how blessed we are, consider what life would be like if we lived in countries “who's God is NOT the Lord.”
- If you lived in **Bosnia or Somalia or or Yemen** you would live your life in fear every day of being plundered, raped, or executed by militant rebels.

- If you lived in **Iraq, or Syria, or Egypt, or Libya, or Nigeria** you would live your life in fear of the ISIS terrorists who have taken predominant control of your country.

- If you lived in **Ethiopia , or Burundi, or Sudan, or Haiti**, you would likely be one of the millions of people in those countries who are starving to death due to a gross shortage of food.

- If you lived in **North Korea** you would live in constant fear for your life at the hands of their lunatic dictator **Kim Jong Un**.

- And if you lived in **China and many parts of India** you would have to worship God in secret underground Churches to avoid persecution by governments that are very hostile towards Christianity.

6. This is what life is like in **nations whose GOD is NOT the LORD**. And I think I speak for all of us when I say that “Living in America in her worst days is still far better than living in a godless nation on her best days.”
(A) **Consider God's blessing of OUR NATURAL BEAUTY.**

We sing, *“O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain; for purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain; AMERICA, AMERICA, God shed His grace on Thee. And crown Thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea!”*

Do you realize GOD has blessed this nation with such incredible natural beauty that even if you never set foot outside the State of North Carolina your entire life you would still realize how much GOD has blessed us?

We have the beautiful majesty of the Atlantic ocean brushing the shores of our Outer Banks. We have the incredible beauty of the spacious Pamlico and Albemarle Sounds. We have the beauty of the French Broad.....the Swanannoa.....the Roanoke.....the Cape Fear.....and the Natahala Rivers. And of course we have the beautiful Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains in the western part of our state.

And to think there are 49 more states like us that have been blessed with breath-taking natural beauty by Almighty God.

(B) **Consider God's Blessing of OUR NATIONAL PROTECTION**

I think we take for granted that our city streets and country roads are traveled each day by cars.....and pickup trucks.....and log trucks......instead of tanks.....and ground-to-air missile launchers.....or armored jeeps equipped with .50 caliber machine guns.

I think we also take for granted that our homes.....our schools......our Church buildings......and our communities are not being destroyed by enemy aircraft or mortar fire. For most of our nation's history GOD has placed a “protective hedge” around us as a nation!
Consider God's \textit{PERSONAL} Blessings Upon \textit{YOU} and YOUR FAMILY.

- You are blessed to live in a country where \textit{you can own your home which would be considered “luxurious” by the standards of homes billions in this world live in.}

- You are also blessed to live in a country where \textit{your weekly income makes you wealthier than 90% of the world's population.}

- You are blessed to live in a country where \textit{you have the freedom to pursue employment anywhere you wish to work, while billions of people are forced to work in Government operated facilities or Government operated farms.}

- You are blessed to live in a country that has \textit{over 300,000 houses of worship, while in many countries not a single Church building can be found.}

- You are blessed to live in a country where you can \textit{turn on your radio and listen to contemporary Christian music.....or country.....or rock.....or jazz.....or “talk radio”} while millions in this world get one radio station that only plays government propaganda.

If you want to air your grievances about the Federal, State, or Local government officials, you can do so without fear of repercussions.

If you want to go fishing you can go fishing. If you want to take your family to the beach you can take your family to the beach. If you want to go shopping you can go shopping.
7. Brothers and sisters, do you see how blessed we are? And we owe it all to GOD!

“Blessed is the nation whose GOD is the LORD!”

But along with OUR GREAT BLESSINGS comes……..

II. OUR GREAT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. When one has been afforded the privilege of living in a country that has been blessed as richly as ours' we have a responsibility as God's people to give back to our nation those things which GOD commands us to give back.

2. Let's consider some of our “civic responsibilities” as commanded by GOD.

   (A) We have the responsibility to SUBMIT ourselves to the GOVERNMENT

   Romans 13:1 (NKJV) Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

   You and I may not like the man who sits in the Oval Office as President of The United States. And we may believe our Congressmen and Senators are as inept at governing our land as can be. But this does not exclude us from submitting ourselves to our government officials.

   As ineffective and inefficient as our government can sometimes be, it is still far better than living under a dictatorship or militant government.
We have the responsibility to PRAY for our GOVERNING Officials

1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NKJV) Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

It's very easy to gripe and complain about our government officials. They do things and say things that open themselves up to sharp criticism and judgment. But in this passage the LORD tells us we have a responsibility to pray for those who govern over us.

But we aren’t to just pray for them because we have been commanded to. We are to pray for them because they desperately need our prayers. These men and women bear a tremendous responsibility to lead our nation. They have taken on a task that I dare say none of us would ever want to take on.

President Trump and Vice President Pence desperately need our prayers as they face the onslaught of criticism by the liberal news media and Hollywood elites. Our Congressmen and our Senators desperately need our prayers as they make important decisions. The members of our Supreme Court desperately need our prayers as they make judicial decisions which could effect our lives for generations to come.

You see, it just makes sense to pray for our nation's leaders, because these people are in a position to make decisions that can affect our families, our Churches, and our communities for a long, long time.
We also have the responsibility to **PAY** Our **TAXES**.

Do you remember what Jesus said about this in *Mark 12:17* (NKJV)?

> And Jesus answered and said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they marveled at Him.

Notice it says, “**They marveled at Him.**” They could not believe Jesus would actually command them to pay taxes to Rome......taxes that would fund the extravagant lifestyle of Caesar and pad the pockets of the corrupt Roman government officials.

As Christians, we must understand we have a responsibility to pay our taxes regardless of how much we may dislike our government officials, regardless of how much they waste our tax dollars, and how much they use our tax dollars to fund their own luxurious lifestyles.

While our tax dollars may be used for a lot of things we don’t like, we **must also remember our tax dollars help pay for roads, and bridges, and National Parks, Social Security, and our Military and National Defense.**
We also have the responsibility to **OBEY** the **LAWS** of the land.

Let's go back to that scripture in **Romans 13** again.

**Romans 13:1-5 (NKJV)**

1. Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.
2. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.
3. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.
4. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to **execute** wrath on him who practices evil.
5. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake.

We must remember it is GOD who created government to **establish order, punish evil, and promote justice**. We must remember that those in positions of authority over us such as our government officials, judges, Sheriff’s and Sheriff’s Deputies, Highway Patrol Officers, and Wildlife Officers are in God-ordained positions to make or enforce the laws of the land. It is our responsibility to obey the laws of the land.
Are there instances where GOD permits us to violate the laws of man? Yes! When man’s laws put us in a position of violating God’s laws we are to obey GOD first and foremost.

In Acts 5 Peter and John were commanded by the Jewish authorities to stop preaching the Gospel. God commanded them to preach. When challenged about their refusal to obey the Jewish authorities Peter said, “We ought to obey GOD rather than men.” (Acts 5:29 NKJV)

And finally, we have the responsibility to live godly lives as citizens of this country.

II Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV) If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Just like Israel of old, despite the countless ways GOD has blessed AMERICA, this country has turned her back on GOD. As Christians we must understand our nation’s revival and survival rests squarely upon our shoulders. Godless people are never going to lead this country back to God. That is our responsibility as God’s people: to humble ourselves.... to pray fervently for our nation.....to seek GOD with all our hearts....and to repent of our own wickedness.
I was born on July 4, 1776, and the Declaration of Independence is my birth certificate. The bloodlines of the world run in my veins, because I offered freedom to the oppressed. I am the United States of America.

I am 325 million living souls, and the ghost of millions who have lived and died for me. I am Nathan Hale and Paul Revere. I stood at Lexington and fired the shot heard around the world. I am Washington, and Jefferson, and Patrick Henry. I am John Paul Jones, the Green Mountain Boys and Davy Crockett. I am Lee, and Grant, and Lincoln.

I am the Brooklyn Bridge, the wheat fields of Kansas, and the granite hills of Vermont. I am the coal mines of West Virginia, the Smokys, the Rockies, and the Adirondacks. I am Mount Rushmore, and Independence Hall, and the Statue of Liberty.

I am three million square miles of forest, and fields, mountains and deserts, rivers and streams and lakes. I am quiet sleepy little towns and huge cities that never sleep. I am baseball, hot dogs, and apple pie.

I am State Fairs and County Fairs and 4th of July picnics. I am the Super Bowl, and March Madness, the Kentucky Derby, the Indy 500, and the World Series. I am country, and rock and roll, bluegrass, and jazz.

Yes, I am the United States of America, home of the free, land of the brave. I am one nation under GOD!

“Blessed is the nation whose GOD is the LORD!”