

Week 51
12/15/11

James: Thank all of you and we welcome you to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison and this is Betty. I was so excited when I saw this book held up on a national television program many months back. It's titled Sacred Fire... very curious about the title. It is about George Washington and I really wondered about the title and we're going to find out by the statement of the author, how in the world he came up with that title writing about our nation's founder? It became the number one bestseller.

The author, Peter Lillback is president of the Westminster Seminary. He pastors a church near Philadelphia, a great Presbyterian church. He is in my opinion a great gift to us today because he has shared an understanding of how our nation came to have such a solid, sound foundation. Would you welcome Dr. Peter Lillback to *LIFE Today*?

Peter: Thanks so much, James. You're really kind to have me here.

James: Good to see you! This is quite a volume. It's quite a book.

Peter: Listen, I tell people to make sure you hold it with two hands; rotator cuff injury is a possibility.

[Laughter]

James: It is! It is an incredible volume. I just have to tell you this, I was blessed years ago to hold the actual penned documents on the parchment, it was so delicate, of the writings, many of them. And I began to read them and I began to weep and the caretakers of those parchments pulled them back because they didn't want me to damage them.

What I read that revealed the principle and character that really shaped this man's life, it not only brought tears to my eyes but it brought me to my knees. I had the privilege of asking a governor if he had by chance been exposed to this man. He said he had and his name was Governor Reagan. It actually preceded his decision, that discussion about George Washington and these principles, he told me had held the same parchments and that he too had wept and that what he saw in this man, these principles, he believed is what made America great and that we needed to move back to them. So this man is important.

And I've got to ask you, why do you think George Washington and knowing the truth about him is important to us today?

Peter: Well, James the question is very, very important because everybody has an opinion about what Washington believed. Everybody knows that he was not a Christian. Everybody knows he was a deist. Everybody knows he wasn't religious. Why do we all know that? Because everybody knows that where you begin determines where you end.

It just so happens that he was religious. That he did believe in God. In fact, he called himself a Christian and he wasn't a deist. He actually criticized deism in his writings. But people realize if they can make George Washington in their image then they can create a country like him and that makes everything a lot easier.

There was a man by the name of Karl Marx who once said this, "Take away the roots of a tree and the tree can be moved very easily. Take away the roots of a nation and you can move it very easily." So the idea of having a founder who is not a Christian, not a believer is very important if you want to create a country that has no values or that can be easily molded in a different tradition than what most Americans historically thought our country was about, that is a country that was under God.

I believe that when we reclaim Washington as the true man of faith that he was, not a perfect Christian anymore than the rest of us are, but a man of principle, integrity, and a man who honored the Word of God and understood the providence of God, that gives us the ability to get back to first principles in our country because we know where we started we can try to reclaim those things. So it is really the very core of the cultural debate that all of us are wrestling with. What did our founders believe? What did they want? And if we have Washington on our side we have the beginnings of creating a true reformation in our culture.

How did you come up with this title? Because it is -- with what had been imposed on people about Washington, that didn't allow them to see the truth, they didn't see the sacred aspect of the fire. He was a bigger-than-life person. He was incredibly strong in his leadership qualities and his enemies couldn't kill him, they couldn't hit him. Even the Indians and the chief who had assigned the assassination or the killing of this warrior acknowledged there was a spirit, there was something going on. So it's a phenomenal story but the sacred aspect.

How did you come up with that sacred fire? Then I want you to tell us about him.

Peter: Okay. Well, here's the way it happened. I knew that I wanted to demonstrate from

my reading in a written form how living his faith was, how much he believed in God, how much he used the Bible, the fact that he actually called himself a Christian. The fact that he collected sermons and read them and actually wrote to preachers about the sermons he had read. I never heard that. I was finding stuff I couldn't believe. So it was real exciting.

By the time I got to about 1200 pages worth I said I've got to give a title to this book. I don't have a clue! I was calling it "Washington," "religion" and all kinds of stuff and I said, "That just doesn't seem right." I remember sitting in my office and saying, "Lord, what am I going to call this book? I've been working on it for 20 years, I need a title."

And it was almost as if the Lord gave me a message. He said, "Don't you remember the inaugural address of Washington where he said 'The sacred fire of liberty has been entrusted into the hands of the American people'?"

Wow! Just right there I said, "That's it: George Washington's Sacred Fire." I was literally crying out and it came from nowhere. I had to go back then and rewrite three or four or five spots in the book because that's the title of the book. That's what it has become, it is like a flame, an ember and every once in a while when the wind of the spirit hits up it flames up again and people read it and it changes their interest.

People have told me they're going into activism, they're going into history, they're going into ministry. They're teaching their children.

I had one family that told me this last thanksgiving, they said, "Nobody gets to eat thanksgiving dinner until they say something they've learned from George Washington's Sacred Fire this year." That included three teenaged sons.

I said, "That probably had to be the most down thanksgiving anybody's ever had." Right?

They said they sat around the table and they talked about what they had learned. So God's used it. And sacred means holy, the flame of God. Fire -- God revealed himself at the burning bush. Those two ideas Washington put together in his own words as he became the President of the United States for the first time; it's his phrase. So I said, "Let's talk about it."

James: I just got overwhelmed when you just said it the way you said it, the sacred fire of liberty. The truth sets us free.

Jesus is the sum total expression, demonstration, definition of truth. Truth applied, living, abiding in him and that truth sets us free -- it is the liberty. Liberty, the very word "liberty" implies responsibility, which no one understood any better than our founder, and our founders, the father of our nation. We have today talked so much about rights we've forgotten responsibility. But when it is sacred fire, the first thing that comes to life is personal responsibility.

Chuck Colson said you don't need as many cops on the outside if you've got some cops on the inside. This man understood that the liberty that they had given us with their fortunes and their sacred honor and everything they had, and the things this man did to even keep the revolutionary army from revolting when they couldn't be paid, all of the things that he did, the character. Yes, he did pray. It isn't just a painting of him praying. He freed his slaves before he died.

Somehow our founders even knew that the very documents they gave us would rebuke their own life in so many ways. They were giving us something that even in what was a man, had a sacred imprint on it, it had the fire of God; I like to call it the weight of God's presence -- the weight of God's kingdom. And this man was an imposing figure. But as you have revealed so clearly and I wish -- I wish every Christian school, I wish every public school, I wish this would be one of the textbooks that our students have to read.

This is the truth and it is truth that sets us free. He really was a great man. When you look back in history and wonder why were people misrepresented who really did such great things and had such a great effect and such great impact from what they did and such great potential and possibilities, and opportunity and the privilege of blessing others that has been handed to us, it came from a solid foundation.

Now if you don't believe in the one who gives us this, then you want to in every way misrepresent, deny or distort it, and that's precisely what's happened. Dr. Lillback, you are a historian. You're an academic, you're studying, you help students. Our students today have not really learned the truth in so many instances about our founders, about our country. What you've tried to do was take one of the most visible people and let us see the foundation upon which he stood and built and I thank you.

Peter: Well, James, thank you. We about 12 years ago started an organization called The Providence Forum. The favored doctrine of George Washington is the word providence. When he was writing to one of his generals he said, "The man who can't see God's providence in this is worse than an infidel." The word "infidel" was a synonym for "deist." He couldn't have been a deist and write a line like that. But over 270 times he uses the word "providence."

So the Declaration of Independence concludes with a firm reliance on "the protection of divine providence we've mutually pledged to one another, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." That idea of providence is something that we need to recapture and it's written not just in our Declaration of Independence and in Washington, but it was a great doctrine that we find running through our country through its history. You'll never hear that in our schools because providence is about God.

So what we've tried to do with The Providence Forum is to create an educational opportunity that helps people rediscover the founding values that created our country and shaped the United States and its emergence to this very day. So I think one of the things that every person can do if they say that book is too big, I'll tell them how to read it. Get the book, read the first two chapters and you understand what it's all about. The rest of the book, use it like an encyclopedia.

If you say, "I need to know about that." Dip in; you don't have to read it from cover to cover. But you need to see enough of the real words of Washington that show that he believed in providence, that he said, "We must follow Christ, the divine author of our blessed religion if we're going to be a happy nation." We need to see the words that he said in his farewell address that, "Without religion and morality, there is not going to be political prosperity in our country." We need to hear those values taught again. And when we do that they become part of our own inner sacred fire when we're burning with passion for the things that really matter.

So I think the size might be terrifying but I go right to all the original words of Washington. I'm not quoting anybody else but Washington. And if they don't like my thesis, they've got to throw Washington himself out; that's why the book is so big. Because I wanted to turn over every stone and demonstrate that my thesis could not be disproved by Washington himself.

So let me give everybody who is listening today one simple truth, next time someone says to you "Everybody knows George Washington was a deist." -- You hear it all the time. It's on the news, history channels, you're in class rooms, you see it in writing, magazine articles. Say, "I'm glad you think that. That's wonderful! Can you give me one place where Washington ever claims to be a deist?"

You know what they'll do? They'll say, "Oh no. I heard a Pulitzer Prize winner -- I read in this academics book."

"No, no! I didn't ask that question. I didn't ask anything about Pulitzer Prize winners or academics, I want to know from Washington."

"No, no, no. I saw the history channel."

"I didn't ask for television. I want one line from Washington where he says he is a deist."

I want you to know, I looked for 20 years to find that line. It doesn't exist, but I found many, many places where he speaks of himself as a believer, as a Christian, as a man of faith who is totally dependent on the providence of God in history. When he stood up and spoke of the sacred fire, when he gave his inaugural address, the first third of his sermon, I ask your listeners, your viewers, to go back and read that inaugural address, it is a sermon on providence. He was a preacher of providence. He was preaching. And he says there is no country any place in history that has a greater duty to give their honor to the source of all things, providence, than the United States because of the quote "many signal inner dispositions of providence on behalf the American cause." This man was a preacher. That's why you've got to like him.

James: Don't you like what you hear about our founder? Don't you love this?

[Applause]

This isn't just a big book about a big man, it's a book about how big the God was in this big man and how great providence, our God and our father is. They wanted him to be king and he knew who the king really was. He knew who had the authority and the power and it is very important for us to understand -- really it is -- that this nation was a nation blessed by God.

It's founding inspired by people who wanted to be free, who came here looking for God and looking for freedom and these founders gave us, outside the Bible, the most reliable document to govern people and to keep us free that's ever been handed to man, and it is a gift from God through people just like George Washington.

There is a web site where you can learn about what you're doing in the providence, literally, it's become a ministry, an instruction seminar situation, really in so many instances, and this is would be a great textbook for your schools. And you can go online and get it.

You can go to Amazon.com. It did become number one almost overnight. As a matter of fact when I first went out to get it you were having to get reprints to meet all the orders. I actually had to wait a little while for it.

Peter: I had a friend who told me that he could have bought it for \$900 on eBay. Some of them sold. I said, "I would have sold my copy for that!"

[Laughter]

James: It is great!

Let's say thanks to Dr. Lillback and thank God for the father of our nation who understood who the Father really is.

You know, Dr. Lillback, I've had the great joy of not only winning people to Christ all over the world, pointing them to Jesus, but trying to help people to look beyond their world, which obviously our founders did. They looked beyond their world and they saw us, they saw the future. They saw what divine providence would provide for us to bless us that is, God said of Israel and of the church, we're to bless the nations of the world, disciple them, not deceive them -- disciple them, not make them dependent upon Pharaoh or government, appreciate it in its right role but depend on God, and in so many ways be our brother's keeper, love our neighbor, care about others.

You as viewers have helped us put arms of love around people all over the world to save their lives and point them to the source of life. I want you to watch this closely and what moves on your heart... may it move you to action to literally give life. Watch closely.

(Singing)

James: My precious wife, Betty, prayed so many years ago, almost 20 years ago when she saw the food run out and the children crawling down into the barrels and trying to scrape food and saw the panic and desperation. She prayed and she looked out at you and said, "Would you please pray something with us? Pray that the lines to feed these children will always be longer than the line coming to get the food."

Betty, for so many years, I've got to be honest with you, only in the last months and I know there is economic instability and uncertainty, I understand that and I pray for those

of you who are looking for opportunity and God is the one that will open the way and God has promised to bless those who are generous, supernaturally, miraculously and he does. But it is only in recent days now, Betty, that we've actually run out of food.

There is two reasons, one: the support is not quite as strong as it has been and must be. And the other thing is the needs are great just like what's taken place in Somalia where they're telling us a half million could die in the next months and it is very dangerous. And the missionaries are telling us they want to have real strong support to continue to go into areas like that, and what we've been doing in Sudan and in the hard-hit areas of Angola and other parts of Africa.

Betty, I don't want us to run out. I want to be able to say to the missionaries, you're going to have enough. You're going to have more than enough. That's my prayer.

Betty: That's still my prayer. It continues to be. When you're there and you see these children, they stand in line for hours upon hours waiting, the hope -- they've been offered hope that there is going to be some nourishment there. We're going to put some soup in their bowl and they're not going to go away hungry, James. But when you do run out, to see that one that's next in line, the look in their eyes, the distraught, like where's mine? What happened? And they crawl down into the barrels trying to get the last little scoop up with their little tiny fingers and the barrels are hot, James, because we have to keep it heated up so that it will be good nourishment for them. It breaks your heart. I don't want that to happen again. I know you don't either. I hope you will join with us and let's keep the barrels full so their little bowls can stay full.

James: When you have had no hope and all of the sudden you see hope, and then right at the last moment, like Betty said, it disappears, it's not only difficult for that child, it tears at the heart of the missionaries, and it tears at our heart because we're doing our best.

This is the last week and we need an outpouring of love that is expressed in action. We need your help to meet those needs and there is a joy in doing it. And the joy of the Lord is our strength. God gives us strength. When we bless others, we're blessed in doing it, and he blesses those who bless others -- there is no question.

Would you this last week please dial that number? Take your bankcard, please do it now, make the largest gift you can. A \$100 gift enables us to feed ten children for the next months. \$50, we can feed five. \$30, we can feed three.

We're offering the bronze and this is the last time it will be offered to those of you who will help us care for 100 children and feed them and meet their needs.

We have the book that Beth has written, her awesome teachings. We have *The 90-Day Bible*. We want to be a blessing to you. Call right now. If you write a check, make it to *LIFE*, but call us and tell us you're mailing it. Or you can go online, LifeToday.org and make that special gift. Please do it. If you get a busy, be determined. Dial until you get through because we do need your help.

Begin video clip

Announcer: At this very moment a child is drawing her last breath struggling to stay alive due to a lack of food. Sadly, this impoverished child is not alone and without our help, many like her throughout Africa face death as well.

Today you can make a difference. You can save a life! *LIFE*'s mission feeding teams are in place right now ready to answer the hunger cries of hundreds of thousands of suffering children in remote areas of Africa.

With previous food reserves gone and parts of Africa facing its worst famine and food shortage in more than two decades, we desperately need to replenish our supplies for the feeding programs immediately! Your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five, or ten children for three full months.

With your gift we'll send you Beth Moore's book, *The Life that Overcomes*. This Life Outreach exclusive featuring a collection of messages from Beth's heart will inspire you to live an overcoming life each day!

With your gift of \$100 or more to help feed ten children you may also request our new 90-day Bible designed to help you read through the scriptures in just 90 days.

Finally, as a special challenge please prayerfully consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and save the lives of 100 children. And you may also request the beautiful "Heart of the Father" bronze sculpture.

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online today at LifeToday.org.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: As I kneel here by these beautiful children, I want them to be healthy. You can look at this little girl's complexion right here, if she will step out in the light. See she's got some of the beautiful glow but she still has a little bit of the red tint in her hair, which

simply means that we're bringing them up to a norm, and this is a very poor area and if we don't continue to feed these children they will just reverse and they will go back into serious trouble. And we want to keep that going. We want these children to have an opportunity to get ahead in life. We don't want them to just survive. We want them to have a future and a hope because this is what God has for them.

But it won't happen without your love. So I pray you'll respond today. Make the largest gift you can. If you could put arms around, see, here's five children right here. You just put arms around these five or maybe you could extend your arms all the way back here and you just take ten children into your arms, would you help care for these ten children? Would you do that?

End of clip

In the studio:

James: This is the last week that we're offering "The Heart of the Father" bronze. It is an absolutely beautiful collectible. Thank God for the artist that make it available. You help us care for 100 children or more if you can.

We really need to hear from you this week. And if you help today, and you'd like to have this incredible -- incredible look into the life of truly the father of our nation who understood the father, really understood divine providence, you're going to actually see the documents and the writing. You'll actually see what the documents looked like, the parchments where he wrote and read what he said. It will bless you. We'll gladly send it to you today if you'll just help us feed as many of these children as you possibly can.

Join Betty and me in saying thanks so much to Dr. Lillback. Thank you! Thank you for the 20 years that you put in there. God bless all of you for watching. Sacred Fire, I pray it gets on every one of us. To God be the glory!

Begin video clip:

James: Everyone is rightly concerned about who will lead our nation? Who will fill the various offices?

I've written a commentary that I believe God put on my heart. It is critically important. It is titled, "What, not who." We must understand the "what" to find the right "who" and insist to right what is done.

Go to the web site. Get a copy and pass it on.

Announcer: Join us next week to find out what it really means to have more than enough as we explore God's plan for your financial peace and provision.