

What Happened to the 56 Men Who Signed the Declaration of Independence? With @BillFederer

July 3, 2026

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, what led up to the revolution that birthed the United States of America? Well, we covered a lot of that in the last program with the great Bill Federer. Bill is back today. And what we're going to cover today are some of the characters, some of the real life people who brought us the freedoms that we have, what ultimately happened to them, because some of them did pay the ultimate price for signing the Declaration of Independence.

And others who signed the Constitution. What happened to them and what can we learn from all this? What does this really mean to us today? Should we be sort of teaching this religiously neutral position to our school children? Should we just say, well, it doesn't matter that the founders were Christians. It doesn't really matter. And we shouldn't really be teaching anything about the Bible or, say, the Ten Commandments or any of these things.

We're going to get into all that today with the great Bill Federer, who comes from AmericanMinute.com. That's his website, American Minute.com. He always is just a fascinating guest to have on. He knows so much about history and how history informs how we should behave today. So here he is again, ladies and gentlemen, the great William J. Federer.

All the way from a bunker somewhere in the free state of Florida, but of course, he travels all over the place. In fact, Bill, tell people right now where you're going to be on the 4th when this podcast releases. I think you're going to be out in your own old stomping grounds of St. Louis. Is that right?

BILL:

Yeah, I'll be at Grace Church, in Maryland Heights, Missouri. Pastor Wesley Martin and Pastor Ron Tucker, who I've known for getting close to 50 years now.

But, going to be a wonderful time. And anyone in the area of St. Louis, please come to Grace Church. This weekend, the 250th anniversary of our independence from Great Britain. 1776. When I was a kid, Bill, I remember the 1976 bicentennial. And I remember we're at this



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fireworks display in Wall Township, New Jersey, where it was the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

I remember looking at my dad and he looked at me and he goes, it's a great time to alive. Two-hundred years after our independence. And here we are 50 years after that. I'm 64, you're 68. We were just talking offline. Didn't your mother have something on the fridge about aging? What did she say?

BILL:

Yeah, it was a little magnet. It says inside of every old person is a young person that says what, the blank happened?

FRANK:

That's right. The time just goes so quickly. And, neither of us are going to see the 300th that we're pretty confident of that. But this country is unique, and so many people are trying to tear it down. So many people are trying to say it's evil and we've got to tear the whole thing down and start over.

And we, of course, on this program, beg to differ. It's the greatest country in the history of the world. It gives more freedom, more prosperity, more ability to preach and live the gospel than anywhere else in the world. And we need to be able to defend its history, point out where it's gone wrong, but also point to a brighter future. But let's go back to the founding of our nation.

I want to talk about several of the founders. One of them isn't talked about enough, and that is the Reverend John Witherspoon. Can you tell us a little bit about this man and what kind of influence he had on the founding of our nation, Bill?

BILL:

Yeah, so he was the one minister to sign the Declaration of Independence. John Witherspoon was there in Europe, and he was recruited from Scotland to be a teacher at Princeton.

And so, the Presbyterians in Scotland were the pushback party. You had a little history here. Martin Luther breaks from Rome and has the Lutheran Church because he had a personal revelation that the just shall live by faith. King Henry VIII, around 1535, wants to break from Rome, but not because he had a spiritual experience, he just wants another wife —

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FRANK:

That's right. He wants to divorce his wife.

BILL: He was married to Catherine of Aragon, the daughter of the king of Spain. After 18 years, she did not have a son. The Pope wouldn't recognize the divorce. So Henry decides to make himself his own Pope. And, then Mary Catherine, Anne Boleyn, she was a Protestant, but then he had her head chopped off. And anyway, there were six wives.

Divorced, beheaded, died. Divorced, beheaded, survived. Henry VIII was not a really nice guy to be married to. Ended up being around 400 pounds. He'd only eat meat. He thought that vegetables and fruit were sissy food. He ends up, getting gout in his leg. And he needed his leg amputated. But nobody wanted to tell him back then because back then if you were a man, your calves showed off your muscular ability.

Today, guys show off their biceps. Back then, men showed off their calves. And so they would have these stockings that they hadn't invented elastic yet, so they would tie them. So you got this 400-pound guy, and he's cutting off the circulation. Anyway, when he was young, he was an athlete, and he liked to show off jousting. And one time he comes out to do jousting on this horse and everybody's yelling.

He thinks they're cheering. They're saying, shut your helmet. He didn't do that. And the other guy's pole hits him right above the eye, knocks him off. And then after that, he gets paranoid that people are after him. And then he begins to crack down on the Protestants. Anyway, a little more Henry history than people need to know. But Henry's advisors tell him if he's serious about breaking from Rome, he should stop using the old Latin Bible, get himself an English Bible.

The German princes have Martin Luther's German Bible. That helped them to break away from Rome. You need an English Bible. Just so happens Henry VIII had William Tyndale burnt at the stake a few years earlier for translating the Bible into English. But now he wants an English Bible. So they take Tyndale's work, polish it up, call it the Great Bible. And Henry orders a copy put in every church in England. He dusts his hands, he says, that's it. We have broken from Rome. No more Latin Bible.

But something unexpected happened. People began to read it and began to compare what's in this Bible to this king divorcing and beheading his wife. So a group started that wanted to purify the Church of England. They were nicknamed the Puritans. So they're inside of the Anglican

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Church. Another group decided to separate themselves. They called themselves Separatists, we call them Baptists. Another group separated themselves but didn't have pastors, and that ended up being Quakers.

But then Scotland, you had Presbyterians. And they pushed back. They were not afraid to get involved in politics. And, so the King sent up the Book of Common Prayer and said you got to use this. But the Presbyterian said no, we don't want to. And so a market lady named Jenny Geddes throws her three legged stool at church and it hits the minister while he's reading from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer.

And it starts a riot, people start throwing stuff, and they chase the King's people out. Well, the King sends them back, the bishop's back, with an army, and it's called the Bishop's war. And the pastors say, you know what, we're just not going to meet in the church, we'll just meet in a field. The King sends his army into the fields, chases these Christians down. Makes it a crime punishable by death by hearing a sermon given at these field conventicles.

And so it's called the Killing Time. And this was in the 1680s, but it gives you an idea of what was going on in England if you didn't believe the way your king did. Why is this important? Because the different denominations came to America, but it was the Presbyterians that were the pushback party. And so King George III said that it was a Presbyterian rebellion.

There was a Hessian German mercenary and he said, call it whatever you will, what's happening in America is a Presbyterian rebellion. Like, 90% of George Washington's generals were Presbyterians. And they were the ones that had a covenant form of government without a king. They were Calvinists. And so that had an immense impact.

So you can't really understand what's going on in the colonies until you understand these denominations. So why is this important? John Witherspoon is a Presbyterian, he's a professor at Princeton, and nine of the signers of the Constitution are his students. And he's teaching them all these principles. He even gives different sermons that says, okay, revolution starting.

This is the same ancient Scottish Anglican battle. We're just taking it over here. And anyway, so founders and political leaders, were influenced by him, including James Madison. And so John Witherspoon signed the Declaration of Independence. Madison went back to Princeton, graduated in 1771, went back for an entire year just to study Hebrew.

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Witherspoon wanted to read the Bible of the political philosophy of the Jews before they got King Saul.

FRANK:

Yeah, Witherspoon had an outsized influence on the founding of our nation. A little bit more about him and others right after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. Back right after the break.

Who are the brave men that founded our nation? We're talking about some of them today. And what were some of the almost miraculous events that allowed this nation to come to be? We're talking to the great William J. Federer. Bill Federer, all the way from the free State of Florida. And we were just talking a little bit about the Reverend John Witherspoon, who came all the way from Scotland and began to teach there at Princeton University.

He had an outsized influence on the founding of our nation. Who did he influence beside himself, signing the declaration of independence? Who came from his tutelage in our nation, Bill?

BILL:

Well, a little background. So you have George Whitefield is preaching the Great Awakening Revival. Someone that's a preacher that gets inspired by him is William Tennent.

And he starts the Log Cabin College primarily to teach ministers to evangelize Indians. But the Log Cabin College turns into Princeton. And so in 1768, you have Benjamin Rush and Richard Stockton, both signers of the Declaration of Independence. Later, because this is 1768, they go over to Scotland and they recruit John Witherspoon to come to preach at Princeton.

So while there, Witherspoon teaches 12 members of the Continental Congress, nine of the 55 writers of the U.S. Constitution, including James Madison. Witherspoon teaches one vice president, three Supreme Court justices, 10 cabinet members, 13 governors, 28 senators, 49 congressmen, 37 judges, 114 ministers.

He's elected as a delegate from New Jersey to the Continental Congress. And then, while there, he said, gentlemen, New Jersey is ready to vote for independence. The country is not only ripe for independence, but we are in danger of becoming rotten for want of it. And, so, he was one of the most educated people in America. And, where most of the Church of England ministers had to have allegiance to the king, he was their boss.

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The king was the head of the church. And so during this time, Virginia was Anglican. But you had George Washington begins to absent himself from communion. Why? Because he was not in communion with the king. He was leaving the church and picking up his gun and fighting the king. And so in Virginia, you began to have people filter out into dissenting churches, which were the Baptists and later the Methodists and the other ones.

So the pastors wore black robes. It goes back to the Catholics. That was actually one of the first issues during the Reformation in England was, should the ministers in England continue to wear black robes? And they finally said yes. And since the ministers were taught at Oxford and Cambridge and then in America, you had Harvard and Yale, which were primarily to teach ministers, the graduates would wear a black robe when they finally got ordained.

And so this became the model for America, that when you would graduate and be ordained, you'd wear a black robe. And then over the years, instead of just ministers, they would graduate lawyers. That was the next career. And then it graduated other degrees and other careers, but they still kept wearing the black robes. And so now every student when they graduate from high school goes out and rents a black cassock robe to wear the priest's robe when they go down to graduate.

They don't even have a clue that they're putting on the religious outfit when they graduate from high school.

FRANK:

Now, Bill, we've heard of a black robed regiment which of course motivated a lot of men to take up arms against the Brits. How did that work?

BILL:

So you had Reverend Jonas Clark, and he was a friend of John Adams, John Samuel Adams, and John Hancock.

His church members were the ones he trained at Lexington, don't fire until fired upon. But if they mean to have war, let it begin here. And at Lexington Green is where the shot was fired heard around the world. So the pastor and his church members stood up to the British. A Reverend James Caldwell, he's nicknamed the Fighting Chaplain in New Jersey.

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They would have rifles and stick in a little sort of a paper wrapped cartridge of gunpowder. And they would have a metal pole and shove it down the barrel. Then they would have a lead ball and shove it down the barrel. But then you would have to stick in some wadding, which is just plain paper, but you'd have to shove it down because if you actually tilted the barrel, the lead ball would roll out, right?

So you had to keep the wadding in there. But they were fighting, and they ran out of wadding. And he comes out of the church with Isaac Watts's hymnals and he says, give him Watts, boys. And so, Caldwell, his wife got shot and killed during the Revolutionary War. And then later he got shot and killed. And then you have Reverend Jonathan Mayhew. He's probably one of the most famous preachers in Boston during the Revolution.

And he's the one that gave a discourse on, regarding submission to higher powers, sort of the Romans 13 type thing. And he said, the king in his coronation oath swears to exercise only such powers as the constitution gives him, from whence it follows that as soon as the prince sets himself above the law, he loses the king in the tyrant.

He does to all intents and purposes, un king himself. And therefore to resist him was no more rebellion than to oppose any foreign invader. And so these pastors would teach on self government, government from the consent of the governed, that the government is to secure God given rights, rights of conscience, equality before the Lord, freedom of speech, assembly and freedom of press.

The idea is God loves you, he wants you to love him back. But for love to be love, it must be freely given. And so take away these government coercions. William Penn, who was in the Tower of London for eight months, says, force makes hypocrites. Tis persuasion only that makes converts. So the reason that they didn't want to force people to be Christian is because they wanted you to voluntarily have the opportunity to love God.

But they never in their wildest dreams would imagine you'd have atheists and Satanists and Islamists come in wanting to indoctrinate and specifically to forbid Christian teaching. They assumed people would be Christian. At the time of the founding, 98% of the country was Protestant. And so, they assume people would drink water and breathe air.

I mean, they assumed people would be Christian. It was just sort of given to them.

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FRANK:

Let's talk about that for a second though, Bill. This is an important point that I think is lost on our generation, and that is there is no neutrality when it comes to teaching, or worldview. Our country was founded on Christian theism. That's what our Declaration of Independence talks about.

And when we teach our kids about American history and we teach our kids about how they ought to and ought not behave, it would seem to be a wrong way to move forward to leave out the most important document in world history, that is the Bible, and to leave out our own history and try and say, well, kids, make up your own minds.

Well, of course, kids are going to make up their own minds, but that doesn't mean you don't inform them as to what is in the scriptures and how our nation was founded. Because if you assume that there is no God, if you assume that that's the neutral position, then you're really not guiding children and educating them as you should.

Am I off here? Jump in.

BILL:

You know, if I were to sum up Judeo-Christian, Western civilization in America, it would be in the one word, individual. That you as an individual have rights because you're made in the image of God. Every other group, every other country, your worth is dependent on what group you belong to. In England, if you are royalty, you're in the in group.

And if you're not, you're a commoner. In Muslim countries, if you're a Muslim male, you're worth more than a Muslim female. Muhammad said that it takes two women to testify in court against one man because a woman's mind is deficient. In Egypt, they have a marriage license. One line for the man, four lines for wives. And all the guy has to do to divorce his wife is say, I divorce you three times. Now all they have to do is text them three times, I divorce you, and they're out.

A woman's not equal to man. In India, they have a caste system. And if you're a Brahmin in the highest caste, you're near divinity. If you're an untouchable Dalit in the lowest caste, you got to take care of the dead bodies in the sewers. In communist countries, your worth is dependent on your utility. If you're useful to the state, the state keeps you alive. If you're not useful to the state, they'll harvest your organs.

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In America, you're worth something. Not because you're a Muslim male, not because you're a Brahmin, not because you're useful to the government. You're worth something because you're made in the image of God. And this God is not a respecter of persons. In Islam, Allah has no image. In Hinduism, there's 300 million different gods. So which one are you in the image of? In atheism, there is no God. The very common concept that you're made in the image of God is a Bible concept.

And so this God is not a respecter of persons. And since you have rights from the Creator, the purpose of the government is to guarantee to you your creator given rights. If the rights came from the government, the state, the social contract, well, what the state giveth, the state can taketh awayeth. So our founders had to go above the government's head. I think it was Eisenhower that said our founders had to refer to the Creator in order to make the revolutionary experiment make sense.

We had to go above the king's head and said, we have rights from a creator, and the King is infringing on our creator-given rights. Here's the list of 27 things the King's doing to infringe on our creator given rights. Therefore he's unkinged himself, and we're justified.

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, as we've said on this program many times before, but just to reiterate it, if there is no God, there are no rights. Everything's just a matter of opinion.

And yet we intuitively understand there are certain rights that we have. We ought to be teaching that to our kids, that our rights come from God. That's what our founding document says. If you don't like that, you can go to another country. But there's no such thing as neutral education. It all starts with some sort of worldview. Our worldview, which I think we can defend intellectually and historically, is that Christianity is indeed true. There is a God.

You are not him. God created us. He gives us certain rights. Those rights are enshrined in our Constitution. And if, we teach that and show kids that this is the truth, they still have to make up their own minds if they're going to accept that There's a difference between teaching people that something is true and trying to get somebody to believe in it. We can't get anyone to believe in anything.

All we can do is teach them that something's true. And it seems to me entirely deficient that we have a public education system. Bill, That leaves out, first of all, our founding, leaves out the foundation of Western civilization and assumes that that's just a neutral point of view. It's not.

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BILL:

Yeah, you know, the founders had Europe as their framework of thinking, and every country in Europe picked one denomination as their national denomination.

Germany was Lutheran, England Anglican. And so when we're breaking away from Britain and these 13 colonies are creating a new federal government, they have one fear, that the new federal government is going to pick one denomination and make it the national one, or that they'll combine the two biggest, which was Anglican and Congregationalist. And their fear was a federal Walmart denomination coming into town, putting out of business, their mom and pop denomination.

So they wanted to tie the federal government's hands. So Joseph Story, the first Chief Justice, says the whole power of the subject of religion is left exclusively to state governments. And so that's why when you read the state constitutions, they're all Christian.

FRANK:

Much more with the great Bill Federer after the break. We're going to get into some of the miraculous things that happened during the revolution, and then talk about the fate of some of the founders. You're not going to believe this.

Don't go anywhere. We're back right after the break.

AD: Could you answer this question? Why doesn't God let everyone into heaven? Or do all religions get you to heaven? Well, Frank Turek can. And now you can. Watch him tackle the toughest questions from his latest college tour appearance. See real students challenge Frank and watch how truth stands up under pressure. Subscribe to our Cross Examined YouTube channel right now to watch that.

That's Cross Examined, two words on YouTube and sharpen your faith for the real world.

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, how do you teach yourself and teach your kids the importance of what we've been talking about here today? I'm talking to the great Bill Federer. We're talking about our history in the United States. And as you can see, all this is tied together. I asked Bill a question about, say, Reverend Witherspoon, and he actually starts with a king in England, and what was going on at the time, because it's all connected.

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Well, what about our founding? This is the book that you want to get, at least one of the books you want to get of the great Bill Federer. It's called *America's God and Country: An Encyclopedia of Quotations*. And as he said on the first program, if you didn't listen to the first show we did, you got to go find the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast and listen to it. Because he talks about this book was actually quoted in a Supreme Court decision.

It's got just quotes from everybody you could imagine in our history related to our founding and related to the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and God. So check out *America's God and Country: Encyclopedia of Quotations*. Also, sign up for Bill's email at americanminute.com. Also coming up here soon, *The War on Reality*.

My new book I wrote with the great Phoenix Hayes *Recovering Truth in a World that Celebrates Lies*. There are so many lies being taught, not just on social media, but even in our schools, about God, about our country, about reality. There's a war on reality, and that's what we deal with in a fun way. By the way, in this book. There's a lot of humor in this book. Phoenix is very funny, and I have a few dad jokes in here as well. *The War on Reality*.

Please pre-order it. It will help many more people see that book. All right, let's talk, Bill, about some of the divine providence, maybe even miraculous events that occurred in our revolution. Let's start with the traitor Benedict Arnold. What happened there?

BILL:

Yeah, so you have the British general Johnny Burgoyne lands in Canada, meets with the Mohawks, offers them money for scalps.

And so they're going in front of the American army scalping people, and they happen to go to a British area around Fort Stanwix, and they scalp a woman who was engaged to David Jones, and her name's Jane McCrae. Anyway, when the British soldiers find out that the Indians scalped a British, a pro-British woman, they get the king, the general to meet with the Mohawks and tell them to tone it down.

They get offended and leave. And now the British army is in the middle of the New York forest, and they don't know where they are at. And at the Battle of Saratoga, they get captured, 6,000 of them. But the hero of the Battle of Saratoga was Benedict Arnold. He leads a flank charge, captures the British redoubt, gets shot in the leg, and he has to recover. He's made the military governor of Philadelphia, and he's like the war hero, even though he's got a limpy leg.

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And, there is a loyalist family named the Shippen's. And Peggy Shippen is this young woman, and she takes a liking to Benedict Arnold and they end up getting married. And she's used to a wealthy lifestyle. And he's had his business ships captured in Rhode Island. So he was hurting financially. And so he's in charge of requisitions, of goods for the army.

Confiscating goods. And he was accused of selling some of it on the side to make a quick buck so he could live in a really nice house to make his wife happy. And so he has to go through a court-martial trial. And he keeps getting put off because there's more battles and more battles. And it drags on for a year. Meanwhile, his wife, Peggy Shippen, keeps nagging him. You know, if you were working for the British, they would treat you well. They would know what a great general you are.

And she nags him. And now he's healed up enough, and George Washington makes him in charge of West Point, our biggest military base in America, on the Hudson River, which is key because the Hudson River cuts not just New York in half. It cuts America in with the New England colonies on one side, middle Southern colonies on the other. And so Benedict Arnold agrees to meet with the British spy John Andre.

And they're meeting on the banks of the Hudson River. And some Americans see this British ship and they start firing at it. And the ship withdraws, leaving Benedict Arnold on the shore with John Andre, the spy. And so they don't know what to do. So Benedict Arnold takes John Andre back to West Point, has him dress in civilian clothes, tells him to walk across no man's land back to the British with a map of West Point.

Now, for those not familiar, if you're captured and you're wearing a uniform, you're kept alive for prisoner exchange purposes. If you are captured and you're wearing civilian clothes, you're called a spy, and you're killed right away. And so people say, why did Benedict Arnold make this guy John Andre, dress in civilian clothes? And they think, well, he was jealous.

Here, his wife has been keeping in touch with another man secretly on the side. Anyway, who knows? But nevertheless, he's dressed as a civilian. John Andre is just about to cross a bridge and be in British controlled territory. But before he does, out of the woods comes some soldiers dressed in Hessian uniforms. The Hessians were German mercenaries hired by the British.

And Benedict Darnold blurts out, it's finally good to see some men on our side. And the soldiers say, what do you mean, our side? He goes, well, you're Hessians, you're with the British. And they say, no, we're Americans dressed in British uniforms to try to find those who are not loyal.

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And he's like, you know what, you can never know nowadays. And he tries to talk his way out of it. And they search him once, search him twice. They're about to let him go when they tell him to take off his boot.

And in his stocking is the map of West Point, with a big arrow attack. Here he tries to talk his way out. They say, let's have you explain it to our commanding officer. And this ripples back to West Point to Benedict Arnold. Hey, we just caught the spies about to betray your fort. Benedict Arnold runs away, gets on a ship called the Vulture, goes down the Hudson, joins the British, leaves his wife there.

And Benedict Darnell had planned to betray West Point on the very day George Washington was coming to visit. So Washington would have been captured too. And so the wife, Peggy Shippen, is left in there. And when Washington walks in, she yells it's all your fault, this and that. Anyway, she acts like she's crazy and they lock her in a room. And then finally they put her on a boat and send her down the river to her husband.

But General Nathaniel Greene writes, treason of the blackest dye was yesterday discovered. General Arnold, who commanded at West Point, was about to cause a deadly wound, if not fatal stab. Happily, the treason had been timely discovered to prevent the fatal misfortune. The providential train of circumstances which led to its discovery affords the most convincing proof that the liberties of America are the object of divine protection.

Yale President Ezra Stiles writes, a providential miracle at the last minute detected the treacherous scheme of traitor Benedict Arnold, which would have delivered the American army, including George Washington himself, into the hands of the enemy. Continental Congress has a day of Thanksgiving, October 18, 1780. Remarkable interposition of his watchful providence in rescuing the person of our commander-in-chief and army from imminent dangers at the moment when treason was ripened for execution.

It is therefore recommended a day of thanksgiving to confess our unworthiness, offer fervent supplications to God to cause the knowledge of Christianity to spread over all the Earth. I just think it's interesting. Here they are thanking God West Point wasn't captured. Thanking God Washington wasn't captured. Oh, yeah, we want to thank God that the knowledge of Christianity is going to spread over all the earth.

It's like they just slip that in they were Christian. Right?

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FRANK:

Of course, of course.

BILL:

Anyway, so that's just one of the many. There's others. There's the Battle of Cowpens. And if you want, I can share that.

FRANK:

Yeah, that's in South Carolina, not far from where I sit right now. I'm in North Carolina, but just over the line into South Carolina. Battle of Cowpens. Tell us about that. We got about three minutes for the break.

BILL:

So if you saw the movie The Patriot with Mel Gibson, that the Battle of Cowpens is portrayed there.

And then the British have a Colonel Tarleton. He's 26 years old; he's nicknamed the Butcher. He's in charge of their light cavalry. And at the Battle of Waxhaw, he has his men with their sabers hack 300 Americans to death. And anyway, so this Colonel Tarleton of the British is chasing the American General, Daniel Morgan. And Morgan has an entire army.

Wagon's really slow, and so he can't outrun them. But he decides where to fight. In front of the Broad River. Now, if you're ever going to fight a battle, you never want to fight in front of a river because if you're losing, it makes it really hard to run away. But he did it on purpose because he wanted to lure the British into a trap. And so Tarleton shows up with his cavalry. He sees the Americans in front of this river and says, what fools.

Now there's two groups of American soldiers, militia are guys off the farm, sharpshooters. but after a couple of shots, they run away. And then the Continental soldiers, who had been in lots of battles and they won't run away. And so the British are charging. The militias shoot once, reload, shoot twice, they run away. And the Continental soldiers act like they're going to run away.

And then at the last minute, they stop, turned, lower their rifles, and at point-blank range, they kill a hundred of the British light cavalry. And then the Americans that ran away, they just go in a circle and attack the British from the side. 800 of the British throw down their weapons and

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surrender. Colonel Tarleton rides off when word gets to Lord Cornwallis that his light cavalry, which were the fastest thing on the battlefields like the air force, was captured.

Cornwallis was leaning on his sword. He leaned so hard the sword snapped in half. And so Cornwallis is chasing Daniel Morgan, who's then met up with General Nathaniel Greene. And they're making a mad dash out of South Carolina, and they cross the Catawba River into North Carolina. Well, the Americans cross. The British show up. But before the British can start crossing, there's a flash flood.

River goes over the banks, and the British are delayed. Now they're making a cross of the Yadkin River. The Americans cross, the British show up right behind them. But before the British can cross, a second flash flood, and the British are delayed. Now they're racing to the Dan River into Virginia. And the historical marker there says Boyd's and Irwin's ferries were used by Nathaniel Greene in his passage at Dan River, 1781, while Cornwallis was in close pursuit.

And so the Americans cross the Dan River before the British can cross another flash flood. And the British are delayed. The British commander Henry Clinton writes here, the Royal army was again stopped by a sudden rise of the waters, which had only just fallen, almost miraculously, to let the enemy over, who could not else have eluded Lord Cornwallis's grasp, so close was he upon their rear.

And so Ezra Stiles, president of Yale, said, shall we not ascribe to a supreme energy, talking about God, the wise generalship of General Greene, leaving the roving Cornwallis, to pursue his helter-skelter, ill-fated march into Virginia? And then Washington later writes, we have abundant reasons to thank providence for its many favorable interpositions in our behalf.

It has at times been my only dependence for all other resources seem to have failed us. And of course, the word providence, Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary. It says, by providence, is understood God himself, the care and superintendence which God exercises over his creatures.

FRANK:

And then there is the amazing story of Washington in Brooklyn, which we don't have time because we're running up against a break here, which.

And when you look at that, the fog rolls in at just the right time so Washington can evacuate his troops across the East River. And the Brits could have ended it right there. That was in August of

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1776, ladies and gentlemen. Bill, what's the book that you're getting a lot of this from? You wrote a book called what, *Miracles*.

BILL:

Miracles in American History.

FRANK:

Miracles in American History by William J. Federer and his wife.

It's fabulous. It's got stories like that and that you ought to know, your kids ought to know. What were the fate of some of these people, though, that signed the Declaration of Independence and were involved in the revolution? You're not going to believe what happened to son of them, or to some of them, they really did pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. Don't go anywhere. We're going to talk much more with the great Bill Federer right after the break. I'm Frank Turek. See you in a couple.

Everything you ever wanted to know about the history of America, Bill Federer knows. And we're going through some of the amazing stories surrounding the founding of our country. Some of the people that signed the Declaration of Independence, there were 56 of them. Some of them paid the ultimate price.

And some of them just were treated so poorly. They died just by doing what they were trying to do, to just free themselves from the tyranny of King George. Let me start with a name that's familiar in New Jersey, although you might not know who the name Stockton comes from. There's a Stockton College, at least there was when I grew up there. It belongs to Richard Stockton, who was one of our founders, signed the Declaration of Independence.

What happened to Richard Stockton, Bill, before we move on to some other, maybe more prominent names?

BILL:

Yeah, so he was, by the way, his son is the one who captured California.

FRANK:

Oh, yeah, I didn't know that.

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BILL:

Yeah, Commodore Stockton. And so, but he was 46 years old. Richard Stockton signed the Declaration of Independence. He was dragged from his bed at night and jailed.

The British would go to people saying, if you can snitch on the Americans, will you know, pay you off. They would pay people in gold for giving information on Americans. But Richard Stockton, he was an associate justice of the Supreme Court in New Jersey.

A Member of the Executive Council in New Jersey. His son, as I mentioned, was a U.S. Senator. And another son, Robert, was a naval Officer, War of 1812. Helped free slaves, and helped found the country of Liberia, West Africa. And Robert captured California.

But Richard, in his last will, Richard Stockton says, as my children will have frequent occasion of perusing this instrument. And may probably be peculiarly impressed with the last words of their father, I think it proper here not only to subscribe to the entire belief of the great leading doctrine of the Christian religion, but also in the heart of a father's affection, to charge and exhort them to remember that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

And so here he's saying that he's a Christian and then for the kids to fear the Lord. But just an amazing man. Now he was captured and imprisoned by the British. And so he suffered greatly, Richard Stockton.

FRANK:

And he had six kids. And he, as you were just reading from his last will and testament, died shortly thereafter he was released.

And I think he was tortured so badly at one point, Bill, that the Americans captured, I think a British general and said we're going to torture this guy until you let Richard go. And that kind of ended the torture. What about? Here's a name you haven't heard, most of us haven't heard. Carter Braxton. Who was he and what happened to him?

BILL:

Yeah, well, he was, let's see here.

One of the major ones. Forty years old when he signed the Declaration of Independence. He lost his entire fortune during the war. Which many of the other ones did as well. So when they

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pledged their lives and their fortunes and their sacred honor, many of them did. I use the phrase; our founders sacrificed their prosperity for their posterity.

Yet today, unfortunately, we see many people sacrificing their posterity for prosperity. Saddling kids with an unpayable debt, 40 trillion dollars. But when you look at the whole idea of posterity, that's a concept that we don't have nowadays. But they definitely had back then.

FRANK:

And I don't think we recognize what these men did when they signed the declaration. It would be like today if you wanted to rebel against the current government in a way that you wanted to physically overthrow the current government, and you made it known you wanted to do, do that, you would be hunted down by the current government. And that's what happened to so many of these men.

I mean, from a macro perspective, Bill, how many of them died? How many of them were captured out of the 56?

BILL:

Well, the list is quite impressive. So I have one of my American minutes where I go through a brief overview. Eleven had their homes destroyed, 5 were hunted down and captured, 17 served in the military, 9 died during the war.

A short list. Twenty-seven-year-old George Walton signed, and he was captured at the Battle of Savannah. Twenty-seven-year-old Edward Rutledge, and 30-year-old Thomas Hayward, and 34-year-old Arthur Middleton were made prisoners at the siege of Charleston. Thirty-eight-year-old Thomas Nelson had his home used by the British as a headquarters during the siege of Yorktown.

And he reportedly offered American soldiers five guineas for the first man that could hit his home with a cannonball.

FRANK:

Because the Brits were using it.

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BILL:

Yeah, and many of them didn't get paid after the war was over. Then you had a 42-year-old Thomas McKean and he was hunted like a fox by the enemy, compelled to remove my family five times in three months.

And then Richard Stockton, as I mentioned, was dragged from his bed and jailed. Fifty-year-old Lewis Morris had his home taken and used as a barracks. Fifty-year-old Abraham Clark had two sons tortured and imprisoned on the British starving ship Jersey. Now, what is a starving ship? So the Americans would capture British and on their promise not to raise arms against America, they'd let them go.

I mean, we didn't have prisons, and we couldn't spare soldiers to guard them. And so it was an honor system. When the British captured Americans, they would imprison them in homes, in churches, and on ships. And so they would have ships in the harbor. The Scorpion, Hope, Falmouth, Stromboli, Hunter, and the Jersey.

And so, Yale president Ezra Stiles writes, oh that my head were waters and my eye a fountain of tears that I might weep for the thousands of our brethren who have perished on British starving ships. On the Jersey lying in New York Harbor, 11,000 died in three years.

FRANK:

Eleven thousand! How big were these ships?

BILL:

Well, they kept dying, and they kept putting more on the ship.

They would starve you. They were filled full of disease. You couldn't jump overboard in the freezing water in an emancipated state and make it to shore. And so they have a monument in New York at Fort Greene Park, in the New York City borough of Brooklyn dedicated to the prison ship martyrs. It's called the Prison Ship Martyrs Monument.

And so that's sort of a chapter. Now, why is that number 11,000? Interesting? Because that's the same number that were there at Valley Forge. And about 2,500 died at Valley Forge and about 500 women. The women were called camp followers, but that term doesn't do them justice because they did everything. They scavenged for food, they cooked the food, they sewed clothes and uniforms for the soldiers.

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They even used their own warm garments to fashion clothes for the soldiers. They took care of the wounded; they took care of the dying. There was, it was a thrown-together army. We didn't have a medical unit to take care of them. It was the women off the farm. And Andrew Jackson's mom was following the army and took care of the soldiers. And she died there in South Carolina because she caught whatever the disease was on the ship.

We mentioned Reverend Witherspoon. His son James was killed at the Battle of Germantown. And then I mentioned Abraham Clark and his two sons were tortured. They told him if he would take his name off the Declaration, they'd let the sons go. And he says, I cannot take my name off the Declaration, and God help my sons.

You had a 60-year-old Philip Livingston sign the Declaration. He lost several properties to the British occupation, and he died before the war was ended. So he signed the Declaration, but never saw the end of the war. Sixty-three-year-old Francis Lewis found out that the British plundered his home, carried away his wife Elizabeth and put her in prison. And the British wanted to make an example of her.

So they denied her a change of clothes for months. They denied her a bed. They didn't let her sleep in a bed. They gave her nothing but the most meager food. They broke her health so harshly that she was dying, and they let her out, and she died right after she got out. The British were brutal. There's stories of them going on to farms and raping the women, and won't get into it all.

There's 65-year-old John Hart, and he had his home looted and had to remain in hiding. And he died before the war ended. So he never saw that.

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, 80 to 85% of people that were brought on those ships died. That's more than Japanese prisoner of war camps in World War II.

Fifty-six percent of Americans died in Japanese war camps. One or two percent died in Nazi war camps. Eighty to eighty-five percent of revolutionary soldiers, Americans died on British war, British starving ships, absolutely brutal. And we had Eric Metaxas on the show a few weeks ago to talk about his book *Revolution*, Bill, and he was mentioning that the Brits did not appear to have a Christian worldview.

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They were mocking the Christians here on this side of the pond who appeared to believe in the Bible.

BILL:

Yeah, they turned churches into stables like in Boston, the Old South Meeting House. They would turn the pews on their side and use them as horse troughs and have manure all over the floor. You know, 41-year-old John Adams wrote, posterity, you will never know how much it cost the present generation to preserve your freedom.

I hope you will make good use of it. If you do not, I shall repent in heaven that I ever took half the pains to preserve it.

FRANK:

We need to preserve it, ladies and gentlemen, and the way you can do that is get informed to stand up. Go to americanminute.com, americanminute.com. Sign up for Bill's fabulous email. Also get his book *America's God and Country* and his book on miracles and the founding of the nation.

Happy birthday, America. We're going to lose it if we don't work to keep it. Hope to see you here next time. God bless.

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