

Scripture Reference: Proverbs 4:23

Date: February 17, 2013

Title: "A Great Man"

Focus: Faith shapes character.

### **Intro:**

Presidents Day, a term not used until the 1980s, is a holiday that now celebrates all who have served as President of the United States. However, it was originally Washington's Birthday (this remains the day's official name), a celebration of George Washington's Birth.

In this day when anyone who is well known is considered worthy or recognition, it is profitable to examine why this nation decided in 1879 a day of remembrance was needed for President Washington.

Throughout the 19th century, George Washington was the towering figure of U.S. History to the American public. In honor of the man who commanded the Continental Army and led the American colonies to victory in the Revolutionary War, served as first President of the United States and earned the title, "The Father of Our Country," the holiday was established.

Washington left a legacy of fairness, prudence and integrity. How did he become a man of such character?

### **Body:**

#### Character Does not Arise out of a Vacuum

- Jesus pointed out that from the *"abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks"* (Matt. 12:34).
- Though his faith is questioned and marginalized today, at his core George Washington was a man who loved Jesus and devoted himself to God.
- Jared Sparks, a noted writer and historian of the early to mid 1800s who compiled a 12 volume work of George Washington's writing said, *"To say [George Washington] was not a Christian would be to impeach his sincerity and honesty."*
- His adopted daughter said, *"I should have thought it the greatest heresy to doubt his firm belief in Christianity. His life, his writings, prove that he was a Christian. He was not one of those who act or pray. 'that they may be seen of men.' He communed with his God in secret."*
- George Washington; *"What students would learn in American schools above all is the religion of Jesus Christ." "It is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favors."*
- Washington was by no means perfect. But, his relationship with God drove his character and actions. One needs look no further than this for the explanation as to the things he did.
- The Holy Spirit works to refine out the selfish and sinful desires of man. In its place He creates the very character of God.

**See Galatians 5:18-25.**

- Who a Christian is rises out of the nature of who God is. Our actions declare His character. I am who I am because He is who He is.

The *Heart* Drives Life

- Throughout history it has been people of reverend conviction who have stood for righteousness and in opposition to evil.

i.e. Those who opposed Hitler; Bonhoeffer, Canaris, Dohnanyi, von Stauffenburg, von Tresckow, Olbricht, and Mueller, the leading figure to end slavery in England, William Wilburforce, and Robert Raikes, who brought education to children as the best intervention to prison, which became what we know today as Sunday School, all of these people were convicted Christians.

- It was the Spirit of God transforming their lives that moved them to act against sin and injustice. Their endeavors were not the result of enlightenment brought to human reason. Instead, they were motivated by the truth God instilled within.

- Who a person is at the center of his or her being shapes the direction of life. This is Solomon's admonition in Proverbs 4:23.

- In western thought the heart is the center of emotions. Therefore we see this as an emotional call.

- However, this is not the case in the Ancient Near East. The heart was understood as the seat of decision and will. It is who a person truly is.

- People need to protect their hearts. They need to examine the condition of their inner person. For it is the determiner of the life they live.

- Jesus told us, "*A good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasures what is evil.*" (Matt 12:35).

- He also said people will be known by the "*fruit*" their lives produce. "*Grapes are not gathered from bushes nor figs from thistles are they? So every good tree produces good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit*" (Matt. 7:16-17).

### **Closing:**

1. It is a faith in Christ that causes a person to act in such a manner as this. What made George Washington the man he was, was his relationship with God.

2. Who is the shaping force in your life?