



Transcript

Part 4 - "Declaration of Dependence"

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Well, this has been quite a build-up for this week and then this weekend, with everything around 9/11. It's so funny to think about—my kids were so young when this happened, and it's so emotional to me and for them. I have three teenagers; they are kind of watching it for the first time because of all the news coverage, and to them it's like something that's already in their history books. And for many of us it's still such a reality, and in some ways, it's even more real now than it was ten years ago, because we're sort of experiencing it through multiple lenses and multiple eyes and multiple stories. It's really been a powerful weekend. It's a perfect weekend for me to talk about what we were planning to talk about all along in this series, *Recovery Road*.

If you haven't been here, we're in a series called *Recovery Road*. Essentially, we're taking a pause in our normal sermons and messages to talk about what's on everybody's mind in the United States anyway, this recovery. We've stepped back and said, *Not only are we looking for financial recovery, we're looking for a deeper recovery than that*. And from the very beginning, at the outset of this series, we've asked the question: What can we do as Americans to participate in the recovery while we wait for people we don't know, in a city that most of us haven't visited since we were on a patrol trip? How many patrols do we have in the room that went on a patrol trip to Washington? About eight. We do not have very good citizens here at Buckhead Church. We need to get a higher percentage of people who were patrols. And I wasn't a patrol either. You had to have good grades and behave.

Anyway, so there's a tendency to think if we can just wait for those people in Washington to get their acts together, we can twiddle our thumbs and there will be this big recovery and we'll all benefit from it. And we've been asking the question, *What can we do in the meantime?* And we've actually discovered that maybe more of the responsibility is on our shoulders than we originally thought. And maybe there's more that we could do to effect change than we originally thought. And specifically, if you're a Christian, specifically, if you're part of the local church or a local church or this local church, we pretty much determined that if just the Christians in this country—and I know we don't know if we're a Christian country or not, we're not even sure that Christian is an adjective—but there are enough Christians in this country and enough churches in this country that if just the Christians (and we'll really see this next week; don't miss next week), if just the Christians would do a few basic things that Jesus—remember Jesus—that Jesus told us to do, number one, we wouldn't be in this crisis, and number two, we, just at the church level, would begin to help develop and facilitate recovery.

And so our very first recovery principle was this: that recovery begins with "we" not "they." Let's just say it, because we're trying to get our arms around this. Would you read this with me? *Recovery begins with we, not they*. That was pretty bad. One more time: *Recovery begins with we, not they*. Yeah, yeah, in other words, it's not a matter of somebody else doing something; it's a matter of us figuring out what we can do now. Then we went really deep, and it was maybe the most difficult message I've ever preached. And you came back anyway the next week. I was really happy about that. I beat you up pretty bad. We said this: The second recovery principle was that recovery begins with a fearless moral inventory. In other words, you can't get to where you want to be until you know where



you are to begin with. Right? And what's true of individuals is true of nations. In order to get to where you want to be in any area of your life, you have to look in the mirror and face the facts about where you currently are. And if you don't know where you currently are, you'll never get to where you want to be. I think I learned that from *Alice in Wonderland*. Remember *Alice in Wonderland*? But anyway, we did a fearless moral inventory.

And then last week, I addressed our national leaders, and I challenged our national leaders, assuming they're watching. And why would I think that? I challenged our national leaders, and I said, *We need you to be as committed to maintaining your moral authority as you are to re-election. And we need leaders in our country that are willing to walk their talk, do what they say they're going to do, have moral authority, and they would be as or more committed to maintaining moral authority than they would be re-election.* Everybody just thought that was just awesome. Then at the end of the message, if you stayed that long, I asked you a question. Remember the question? The question was, *What do all of our elected officials have in common?* They were what? Elected. It's back to us. So once again, it's more about what we're doing than somebody else is doing.

So tonight, we continue this series, and what a great topic for this weekend, the recovery principle is simply this: that recovery begins with a declaration of dependence. Recovery begins with a declaration of dependence. If you have ever recovered from anything significant in your life, there was a point of brokenness, where you threw up your hands and you said, *I can't do this by myself. I can't do this alone. I need someone else to help me; I need God to help me; I need a higher power to help me. But I can't do this alone.*

If you've recovered a marriage that was almost gone forever; if you recovered a relationship with a prodigal son or daughter, if you've recovered from any kind of addiction, any kind of habit, guilt, shame—whatever it might be—there's a point in recovery where you throw up your hands and you say, *I can't do this on my own.* For many of us, for many of you, in that moment it is the beginning of recovery. In fact, for some of you here tonight that's what you needed to hear. The rest of this message may be completely irrelevant, but you're struggling with something at a deep, deep level almost nobody else knows, and you've tried and you've tried and you've tried to recover on your own. I just want you to know at some point in your recovery process you are going to have to declare your dependence on someone else—and ultimately we think you'll need to declare your dependence on God.

Now, the problem is that at a national level we have a very difficult time acknowledging our need for God. We have a very difficult time acknowledging our gratitude to God. We have a very difficult time acknowledging our dependence on God. And the national conversation at the national level of all of our national leaders has almost left God out entirely. There is sort of this angst, there is this awkward moment, there is this *I don't know if we can mix politics and religion.* There's all of this stuff. So, consequently, we've backed ourselves into a corner nationally, where it's very, very difficult for us to declare our dependence on God.

The most recent example of this was all the drama, and you surely heard about this or read about this, all the drama around whether or not to have clergy and whether or not to have prayer at the 9/11 memorial service at Ground Zero this morning. Do you remember all that? And it was like, *No clergy and no prayer,* and honestly,



some of us were shocked. It's like—wait a minute—ten years ago; think about it—ten years ago there were more personal prayers being lifted up from that piece of real estate than any other real estate in the world. There were more personal prayers going up from the city of New York than any other city, probably, in the world. And there were probably more prayers being lifted up at a personal level from people in the United States on that particular morning than any other country in the world, and maybe more on that day than any other day in the history of our nation.

So we were shocked that there was angst, there was tension over do we have clergy, do we have a prayer? Wait a minute; do we have a prayer at Ground Zero in commemoration of all that happened on 9/11? All that tension. And the people who planned that event, you know, they had reasons and you read their reasons. You thought, *Yeah; that kind of makes sense, if you see the world that way.* And yet, for many Americans, and even many politicians, it was like, *How could you think of such a thing?* But it's because in our culture, at a national level, there is angst over religion, there is angst over God, there is angst over conversations about God. And I love the fact, and maybe some of you know this, that President Obama this morning, his part, he decided to read a psalm. I found that out this morning between services. I just was absolutely thrilled. I double-checked to make sure I had the right psalm—Psalm 46. And I think he's reading it again tonight at the National Cathedral, another event where there was angst over who gets to say what, and who are we going to offend, and you know, *Whoa, whoa—we've got to be careful, careful, careful!*

Consequently, we live in a culture where, you know, we took prayer out of school a long time ago. Of course you've heard it said, as long as there are tests, there will be prayer in school, but we took official prayer out of school. And now you can't pray before football games. Now, you can still pray before NASCAR but you can't pray before football games. And I had a thought about that. You know people drop out of school all the time, but nobody ever drops out of NASCAR. I don't know if there's like a connection between those things, but anyway. So in our culture there's all this angst and there's all this, *Oh, I don't know . . . What about God?* And so, consequently, it's very difficult for us to have the national "Declaration of Dependence on God," because we're not even comfortable talking about God at the national level. And you know what? I think the thing that kind of bothers some of us is that all of that "let's don't talk about God talk" is camouflaged by "we need to be sensitive" and "we don't want to offend anyone" and "we don't want to hurt anybody's feelings" and "we don't want to make anyone uncomfortable." So consequently, here's where we are; we would rather run the risk of offending God than the eight percent of Americans who say they don't believe in God. That's where we are.

We would much rather potentially offend God. I don't know what it takes to offend God, and we'll talk about that in just a minute, but we would rather run the risk of offending God by not giving him credit, by not giving him, at a national level, credit or gratitude or ask for his help. And, in the meantime, we don't want to offend the eight percent of Americans who don't believe in God. And you know what? About this eight percent—a lot of them don't care anyway. So, this is where we are, unfortunately. Now I don't think that's great, but who cares what I think.

Here is the main thing, and you should know this: this is a radical departure for us as Americans. This is a radical departure when you look at our history. This is a radical departure when you think about and look at the



conversations that were had not that many years ago. In fact, this is a radical departure from our national motto. Who knows the national motto? Anybody know what our national motto is? That's right, *In God we trust*. This is our national motto. In 1956, you should know this, in 1956, believe it or not, the Congress, the whole thing, actually voted and decided this would be our national motto. Which means it would be perfectly appropriate in the House and the Senate every single time they meet to stand to attention and to say together, *In God we trust. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, you may be seated and let's get on with business*. That would be perfectly appropriate. Think how weird that is to us. Think how strange that sounds.

In fact, depending on your background, you may say, *Andy, I think that's totally inappropriate*. And you know what, why? How did we get there? How is it we have a national motto that we would feel strange saying? How is it that you carry around in your pocket little pieces of paper that say *In God we trust*—that would be your money. How come it's our national motto, and yet at the same time there is this distancing from God? We can't talk about dependence, we can't be grateful. Now, at the political level, we have these sayings that we throw in at the end of speeches, you know at the end of every speech: *God bless you*. And what's the next line? *And God bless America*. God bless America. And it's like *whoa*. We just throw that in and it's almost meaningless.

But you know what? You know this; it hasn't always been that way. But as long as it continues to go that way, it will be next to impossible for us as a nation to declare our dependence on God, as a nation, to throw up our hands and say, *These problems are too big for us*. To throw up our hands at every level in our society and say, *We need God's intervention*. But what was so interesting was ten years ago today—ten years ago today, we all felt that. In fact, I can remember, as all of you can, you remember where you were sitting. I was sitting in our worship center in Alpharetta. It was the only place we had a television signal, watching what was happening. And I turned to one of our pastors and I said, Sunday will be bigger than Easter. He said, *Do you think so?* I said, *Sunday will be bigger than Easter all over this country*. Because events like this evoke the national conscience, the national faith, the national belief that no matter how strong we are, no matter how powerful we are, no matter how rich we are—and we were a lot richer ten years ago than we are today—no matter where we are as a nation, there is something in us that knows there are things that are beyond our control. And if God doesn't, it won't. If God doesn't, we won't.

And ten years ago our nation—they came together at churches, synagogues—everything was packed the Sunday after that day, because intuitively, instinctively we know we need God. But in the national conversation, it is almost impossible to interject with any meaning and any relevance, God talk. Now it hasn't always been that way here. I'm going to give you an example in just a minute, but here's the cool thing. There's a story in the Old Testament that I think paints a picture of what could be and what should be in this nation, and that will be my opinion and you can judge for yourself. But this story also illustrates this incredible relationship between a national faith and God's blessing, between a nation that is willing to humble itself and say, *We need God, and as smart and as rich and as wealthy and as happy as we may be, we will always need God*. And this story illustrates this coming together—something not that long ago, even leaders in this nation understood, leaders in Europe, at one point, understood. The story takes place in the tenth century, BC. I'm going to give you the context and I'm going to read a little bit to you. At this point in the nation of Israel, the king is Solomon, wisest guy that ever lived, Solomon, the son of David.



Solomon, at this particular point in history—this is kind of cool—this was the Golden Age of Israel. Israel had settled all its border disputes; Israel was a world power. It was a first-world power. Israel was extremely wealthy, and Israel had a standing army that put all the other armies in the area on the defensive. Israel—they had a king, King Solomon, who was so wise that other kings and queens would come to Jerusalem to sit at his feet and ask him the most difficult questions. He was extraordinarily wealthy; he was extraordinarily powerful; there were virtually no problems in the kingdom. Things were as good as they were ever going to be in the life of ancient Israel. And in the midst of all this wealth and all this prosperity, when nothing was going wrong, he completed the temple.

You're familiar with the temple, the Temple of Solomon, one of the ancient wonders of the world. He completed the temple, and he called for a huge dedication service and invited everybody that could squeeze into the city and squeeze into the temple plaza to come to this dedication. They were going to dedicate this amazing building to God. So here's the picture. The roofs are lined with people, windows are full of people, the plaza outside is full of people, the plaza inside the outer court is full of people. As many Israelites as possible have packed into this piece of geography in order to experience the dedication of this incredible, incredible facility to God. And it's within that context that we are introduced to one of the most extraordinary illustrations of a leader who gets it, a leader who understands the connection between political power and humility. Here's how the story unfolds. The event has started, you know the music has played and everybody is there.

2 Chronicles 6:12 (TNIV)

¹² Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly [So now he's out where everybody can see him.] of Israel and spread out his hands.

And the person writing this then backs up and gives us a little bit more detail about the context of what's happening.

2 Chronicles 6:13 (TNIV)

¹³ Now he had made a bronze platform, five cubits long, [A cubit is about a foot and a half.] five cubits wide and three cubits high, [So it's about five feet high.] and had placed it in the center of the outer court.

So, he places this little tiny platform in the center of the outer court so that everyone can see what's going on. [Now you've got to picture this.] So here comes Solomon, I mean pomp and circumstance, he's the king, he's got it going on, he's so wise, he's so wealthy, he is the son of David, he's an architect, he's a genius, he's a poet, he's a writer, I mean it goes on and on and. So here comes King Solomon, one of the most sought after human beings in that particular point of time on the planet and here's what happens.

2 Chronicles 6:13(TNIV)

¹³ He stood on the platform



Where everyone could see. And then the king did the unthinkable.

2 Chronicles 6:13 (TNIV)

¹³ and then knelt down before the whole assembly of Israel

You have to understand that kings didn't kneel. Kings certainly didn't kneel in public. They certainly didn't kneel in front of their public. And in this moment, the king, instead of giving a speech, instead of doing something to draw attention to himself, King Solomon, with no problems, with nothing to solve, didn't need anything specific from God at this point, there are no enemies at the gate, he kneels. And I guarantee you, the Bible doesn't tell us this, but when the king knelt, I assure you everyone in the plaza, everyone in the windows, everyone on the rooftops knelt, as well.

And in this moment, King Solomon declared to the world through his body language that he recognized that though he was king, he was not all-powerful—that though he was a king, he was a king under a higher authority. He was a king that acknowledged a higher power. He was a king that ruled under the authority and the sovereignty of almighty God. And in that moment, he declared his humility, and he declared his dependence on God in front of the whole assembly of Israel.

2 Chronicles 6:13(TNIV)

¹³ . . . and spread out his hands toward heaven.

Can you imagine that picture? And then he prayed and his prayer said something like this: *God, please inhabit this temple. And God, please bless your people. And God, when your people are disobedient we want you to discipline us, but when you discipline us and we cry out for help, we want you to hear our prayers. Please don't abandon us when we sin; please don't abandon us when we walk away from your law. And God, when we walk away from your law and we notice the pestilence and we notice plagues and we notice that there are enemies that are about to attack us, in those moments move us to repentance. And God, when we repent, hear our prayers from this sacred place and deliver your people and keep your covenant promise with the nation of Israel.* And even in his prayer, he declares his dependence at a time when he was “the guy.” They had the army; they had the power; they needed nothing. But he recognized even with all of that, he was as dependent on God—the nation was as dependent on God as it would ever be.

And then, in the middle of this prayer, he prays for you and he prays for me. Listen to this, this is so incredible, because this was at a time when Israel was at the epicenter of God's will and with what God was up to in the world. But Solomon was so wise that he realized that God's agenda was broader than any one nation, that God's agenda was broader and had more to do with the nations than it did the nation of Israel. Here's what he prayed:



2 Chronicles 6:32 (TNIV)

³² *“As for foreigners who do not belong to your people Israel*

That would be me; that would be most of you. Look at this:

2 Chronicles 6:32 (TNIV)

³² . . . *when they come and pray toward this temple,*³³ *then hear from heaven, your dwelling place.*

He knew that it was God’s temple, but God wasn’t going to be confined to a box, to a building, and he says this:

2 Chronicles 6:33 (TNIV)

³³ *Do whatever the foreigner asks of you*

God, I don’t want you to just hear Israel’s prayer, I want you to hear the prayer of any nation, any individual that recognizes that you are the one, living, sovereign God. Hear their prayer so that all the peoples of the earth—and here’s God’s agenda:

2 Chronicles 6:33 (TNIV)

³³ *so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel,*

This is unbelievable. Solomon, it’s hard to even imagine, even in that moment recognized God was up to something that went beyond the borders of Israel. That God was up to something in the world. And he prayed, *God, any individual from any nation and any nation that recognizes you, God, hear their prayers and honor those prayers in such a way that you continue to draw to yourself the power and the glory that you ultimately deserve.* Well, at the end of this day, I’m sure they stayed up late into the night feasting and celebrating, eventually Solomon goes to his private quarters, and he goes to sleep. And in the middle of the night, God wakes him up.

Now, when I was a kid I didn’t like these kinds of stories. You know my dad; I’m a preacher’s kid. So, we would read these stories about God speaking, and my parents would read these stories to comfort me and they would just scare the heck out of me. I would say, *Can I just pray that God won’t wake me up? Dear Jesus, don’t talk to me. I don’t want to hear any voices.* I don’t know. And so we don’t know how this worked—if it was a person, if it was a voice, if it was a dream—we don’t know, but in the middle of the night God speaks to Solomon. Here’s how that happens:



2 Chronicles 7:11-12 (TNIV)

¹¹ When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the Lord and in his own palace, ¹² the Lord appeared to him at night

And probably, as you read this story, it looks like it might have been that very same night. And here's what God said to Solomon:

2 Chronicles 7:12 (TNIV)

¹² the Lord appeared to him at night and said: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices.

In other words, this is the spot where I want the people of Israel to worship me. And then he goes on and says this:

2 Chronicles 7:13 (TNIV)

¹³ "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people,

And what God was saying is this: when the nation is under judgment, when the nation has been disobedient, when the nation is being disciplined because they have abandoned my laws and my decrees, when that happens, God says:

2 Chronicles 7:14 (TNIV)

¹⁴ 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 I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

And in this moment, God confirms what Solomon had hoped: that there was a relationship between the obedience of a nation, and specifically, the obedience of the leaders of a nation and God's blessing. Now, here's the thing: this was a promise to Solomon. This was a promise to Israel. This was not a specific promise given to every nation on the earth, but what this was, was a confirmation between the relationship between obedience and blessing. Some of you have experienced that. Some of you look back on stages of your lives where you were running from God, running from God, running from God, running from God, and life was a mess. And then you came running to God. You ran to God, you ran to God, you began to read the Scriptures, you began to obey God, and things got better.



And you have experienced the blessings of God because of your obedience. And what is true of individuals is true of families, and what is true of families is true of communities, and what is true of communities is true of nations. And this promise that God gave to Israel, that if you'll obey me and you'll follow me I'll bless you and I'll protect you, is a principle that is true of all nations. And the reason we know that is because of this verse I read just a minute ago: *Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you.* So, that's the promise, and that's the challenge. And that's the reason it doesn't make any sense to me, and to some of us, for our national leaders to distance themselves from a God that most of them believe in, but have grown uncomfortable talking about publicly, because there is a relationship between a nation's humility, a nation's obedience, and a nation's dependence, and the blessing and the presence of God.

Now here's the thing—this isn't a new idea. There are many, many leaders in our past that understood this and were very overt in their declaration of dependence on God, overt in their prayers, a willingness to say publicly that we thank God for our blessings, and we trust God for his protection. One of the most interesting examples to me happened actually in the middle of the Civil War. Now, one of the things that's difficult to us about the Civil War is that we already know how it turned out, don't we? To us the Civil War is something in storybooks, it's in history books, and we've seen the movies. Right? But what we can't imagine was the sheer agony and the terror of living in the South or living in the North, not knowing how the war was going to go. And in the middle of the Civil War, a Senator from Iowa, who lived in the north, came to Abraham Lincoln—his name was James Harlan—came to Abraham Lincoln and he said, *I have written a resolution that I am going to present to the Senate.* He presented it to the Senate, and the Senate voted to adopt this resolution, and it was a resolution calling for a national day of prayer and fasting in the North.

Now, the interesting thing about the resolution, and I'm going to read you part of it, actually, I'll read you the whole thing in just a minute, was that this was at a time, again, where men were dying every day. Boys were dying every day. Boys were coming home from the North and the South to hospitals—they would never walk again, they would never work again—the sheer horror and the terror of the Civil War. Again, we don't get to smell it, we don't get to see it, we don't get to hear the sounds, and we don't get to live with the chaos. In the middle of all this horrific mess, and again, they didn't know which way it was going to go, the group of senators came to the President and said, *Would you sign, would you personally put your signature on this resolution and call for a national day of prayer and fasting in our nation?* And the President signed it and declared it, and here's what the resolution said. Now, as I read this to you, just imagine such a thing today. It's almost unimaginable that it would ever happen today, but ask yourself this question: Why not? Have we become too sophisticated? Have we gotten too smart? Are we not desperate enough? Do we not believe enough? But here's the resolution that Abraham Lincoln signed during the Civil War:

Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God, in all the affairs of men and of nations, has, by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation.

You're like, *Humiliation!* Well, that just meant fasting. But they wanted a day where the entire nation, at



least in the North, stopped doing what they were doing and got on their knees and declared their dependence on God for their nation.

And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions . . .

Pause; wait, wait, wait, this doesn't make any sense. Wait, you're in the North. You think you're right. If you live in the South, you think you're right. Don't you mean to declare the transgressions of the other team? Don't you mean to declare the transgressions of the other side of this conflict? And yet, the Senate of the United States of America realized that in the North, even though they believed they were in the right when it came to the war, that in order to garner God's blessing and favor they must acknowledge their national sin and confess it to Almighty God. Imagine such a thing.

And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon . . .

This sounds like a sermon, doesn't it? I mean this sounds like something you would read in a devotional book.

. . . that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures . . .

You can't talk about the Holy Scriptures in the Senate. You can't talk about a resolution that the President and all the senators are going to sign that recognizes the Holy Scriptures. What were they thinking? What are we thinking? Why our resistance? Why has this fallen out of favor? Why is it that this sounds so strange to our ears?

. . . the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

That's a quote from Psalms, I believe, Psalm 33. Isn't it amazing? It's unthinkable, isn't it? It's unimaginable, it's awkward, it's like, *I don't know; maybe that's too far*. But that's where we were when our nation was split in half and neither side thought they may ever, ever, ever recover unity and recover financially. And just for me, if it's good enough for Abraham Lincoln, hello, why are we too big for our britches and think we can't talk in those terms and ask God for that kind of blessing?

So, if I could use his phrase: recovery begins with a declaration of dependence on Almighty God . . . that recovery begins when we decide it's okay to offend a minority of people in order not to offend Almighty God. That recovery begins when we can agree with President George Washington, with President Abe Lincoln, with King David when they declared from Psalm 33, *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord*. Perhaps recovery begins when we change our national rhetoric and we quit saying things like, *We're the United States of America and we can solve this problem. We're the United States of America, and we can recover. We're the United States of America, and*



we can figure this out. And maybe we begin to say things like this: *We're the United States of America; in God we trust and by his grace and with his help we can and will recover.* Why is that so difficult? Why is that so awkward? But perhaps that's what our heavenly Father is waiting for, because there was a time in this nation when that was not awkward, it was not unusual. It was the norm, even though in those times there were men and women who were offended and didn't believe.

James, the brother of Jesus, said a lot of interesting things, imagine the stories that James, the brother of Jesus could have told. James, the brother of Jesus, wrote in his epistle, he said this:

James 4:6 (NKJV)

⁶ "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. I wonder, I don't know, I wonder if God resists the proud, I wonder if God resists proud nations. And I wonder if the same grace that is available to humble individuals is available to the nation whose God is the Lord, to the nation who is willing to take a step back and say, *In spite of all we have, all we've been blessed with, and all we've accomplished, we are no less dependent on God, who is the Lord.*

So, my prayer for our nation and my prayer for our national leaders is that the national leaders that are congressmen and congresswomen who are Christians would have the courage to step up their declaration of dependence and gratitude to God . . . and those that aren't would understand that there is a value to that, that it represents American values, that it represents the majority of people, as we saw ten years ago when churches and synagogues were flooded with people, when we felt our dependence like we had never felt it before. And my prayer for our nation, and I hope your prayer for our nation, as well, is that the dependence that we all carry in our hearts would once again become part of our national conversation. ***Because at the end of the day, recovery begins with a public declaration of dependence.***

Let me pray for us.