



## THIS WEEK'S PONDERING

JULY 1, 2021



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*“For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.”*

Hebrews 13:14

When I was in Philadelphia recently, I toured the area that includes Independence Hall, the adjacent two buildings that housed the Supreme Court and Congress (*a two-story building that had an “upper chamber” – 2<sup>nd</sup> floor for the Senate, and “lower chamber” – 1<sup>st</sup> floor for the House, monikers that remain to this day*), and within a short distance, lots of other buildings of significance to our nation’s founding.

Not surprisingly, there were statues ... lots of them. One of them portrays one of Philadelphia’s favorite sons and a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Dr. Benjamin Rush. He was quite a remarkable man – very bright and known for his compassion tending to any needing medical care in the city, and even on the early battlefields of the Revolutionary War. Granted, he was big on “bloodletting” and “purgings” as a cure for most anything – practices that now seem quite draconian, and he was the developer of quite the pill for constipation.

According to Wikipedia *“Dr. Rush's Bilious Pills”, (were) laxatives containing more than 50% mercury, which have since colloquially been referred to as “thunderclappers.” The meat-rich diet and lack of clean water during the (Corps of Discovery’s 1804-1806) expedition gave the men cause to use them frequently. Although their efficacy is questionable, their high mercury content provided an excellent tracer by which archaeologists have been able to track the Corps' actual route to the Pacific. Well, there you have it!*

Dr. Rush was a man of faith. Religious identity could be quite fluid in those days, but he more or less identified with Presbyterianism. He was an advocate for folks who were mentally ill, who were addicted to alcohol, and though he did own a slave, he also was part of the early abolitionist movement in the country. Of the God-given impetus for the United States and the so called “American Experiment” he was unequivocal, writing *“I do not believe that the Constitution was the*

*offspring of inspiration, but I am as perfectly satisfied that the Union of the United States in its form and adoption is as much the work of a Divine Providence as any of the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testament.”* In 1798, after the Constitution's adoption, Rush declared: *“The only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid in Religion. Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican government”*.

It may not have been universally held by the architects of the nation, but a good many of them believed a constitutional, democratic republic would be all but impossible to maintain apart from faith – commonly referred to in those days as “religion.” The tolerance and respect for one another that religion teaches was foundational to what the so called “framers” hoped our nation could become.

I admire them, and we should once again be grateful for our founding – imperfect as everyone knew it was then, and imperfect as we understand it to be even today. Rush was correct in that the founding was a bit of a miracle and its endurance no less so. Because of that, or in spite of it, Christians should take much comfort in knowing that “our city” (and here you can read into the writer of Hebrews use of the term “city” - “nation”) is not the enduring one. Psalm 46 says *“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her... she will not fall.”* That Psalm goes on to say that *“nations are in uproar and kingdoms fall.”* Sobering words to citizens of nations, but The Psalmist knew that our highest allegiance is to that “eternal” city.

But that should not stop us from thanking God this July 4<sup>th</sup> for those who deigned to construct a nation that not only allows, but assumes, the faith of its people will be its greatest virtue and surest defense. Christians, as I said last week in my sermon, ought to be the best of citizens. I hope that you’ll take a minute and review the lives of some of those who passed a resolution “in congress” in a hot, sweaty hall in Philadelphia 245 years ago. Some of them are quite fascinating – if imperfect people. Take note that most of them knew that the *“city that endures”* was not to be confused with any that humanity might endeavor to construct here on earth, but nevertheless they bequeathed to us a nation that has endured a good long while, and deserves some celebration now and then – this weekend being a great time for one.

I hope to see you at the City of Brookfield’s “July 3<sup>rd</sup>” parade – 10 a.m. right in front of Calvary!

In Christ,



Pastor Ken