



George Washington's Prayers

Robert W. Pelton

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Washington dutifully recorded the words of advice his mother, Mary, gave him when he was leaving home to begin what would turn out to be a lifelong service to his country. She instructed her son with these words: "Remember that God is our only one trust. To Him, I commend you ... My son, neglect not the duty of secret prayer." And did George Washington heed his mother's admonition? Of course he did. Throughout his life, whether while a young man, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, or President of the United States, George Washington showed, by example, how meaningful were his mother's teachings. He'd stand up at promptly 9:00 pm, take his candle, and go off by himself. There, from 9:00pm to 10:00pm, he wouldn't be seen. He was alone on his knees in front of a chair praying. A candle stood on a stand next to the chair. And his Bible was open before him. This he would do even when guests were present. Then promptly at 10:00pm, he would emerge and go directly to his bedroom. He'd get up every morning at 4:00am, and spend another hour in the same room. He could be found kneeling before the same chair, in the same posture, with the same Bible open before him. Washington never, no matter what the circumstances, received visitors on Sunday, with one exception, a Godly friend named Trumbel. They would spend time reading the Bible and praying together. The paintings of George Washington kneeling in prayer in the snow covered woods of Valley Forge are based on fact. We have all probably heard of his prayer that was overheard by a Quaker, a pacifist, a Tory – a man loyal to the Crown. This man returned home shaken and said to his wife: "Our cause is lost! I came unexpectedly in the woods upon a man who was kneeling in prayer. As I drew closer, I heard his voice. I heard the impassioned plea of his prayers and saw the tears on his cheeks. I knew our cause was lost." The Quaker and his wife were so overwhelmed that they became supporters of Washington and the American cause. When Washington took his oath of office as President of the United States, he subsequently bent forward and kissed the Bible on which he had just taken his oath. The Bible was opened to the Book of Genesis. He then led the Senate and the House of Representatives to the church for a two hour worship service.

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