

## Proud to be an American: Personal Responsibility

October 25th, 2020 by Kasey Crawford

Today's Passages: Phil 3:20, 2 Thess. 3:10, Gen. 1:28,2:15, 1 Cor 10:31

As Americans, we have a rich, godly heritage that has been bestowed to us as a mighty \_\_\_\_\_, that as Christians, we can be proud to preserve, defend and promote.

*"A wise and frugal government, which shall leave men free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor bread it has earned – this is the \_\_\_\_\_ of good government."*

-- Thomas Jefferson

Or put differently, the government is not responsible to give you a good life. The government is supposed to create the space for you to have the opportunity to build a good life and thus "pursue happiness."

An American ideal to be proud of: personal responsibility.

The two earliest English settlements, Jamestown and Plymouth, each tried a "\_\_\_\_\_ " agrarian society. It was a disaster for both.

Governor William Bradford of the Pilgrims at Plymouth said that the collective agrarian attempt caused much *"confusion and discontent, and retard[ed] much employment, that would have been to their benefit, and comfort" and caused people to "allege weakness and inability."*

After many literally starved to death, Bradford made two very important changes by implementing private property and free enterprise. After these changes...*"This had very good success; for it made all hands very \_\_\_\_\_, so as much more corn was planted, than otherwise would have been; by any means the Governor or any other could use, and saved him a great deal of trouble, and gave far better content."* – Gov. William Bradford

Jamestown was experiencing similar "sloth and idleness" until Captain John Smith instated the rule that: **"If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat."** 2 Thessalonians 3:10

This is tapping into some core aspects of how God made us. We can be tempted toward idleness and laziness. But we are made to work. It is good for the soul, in it's proper place.

**The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. Genesis 2:15**

This is before the fall. Work is part of God's \_\_\_\_\_ creation.

In the reformation, Martin Luther furthered this perspective through his teaching that even the lowly workman has a noble "vocation" and "\_\_\_\_\_ " because: **"whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."** 1 Corinthians 10:31

This noble vision of work breeds passion, perseverance, creativity, innovation and prosperity. This type of work ethic became famously known as the "\_\_\_\_\_ work ethic," (Max Weber-1904), seen especially clearly in the American Experiment.

The ideas of Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" were also crucial to the founders: *"every man is left perfectly free to pursue his own interest in his own way... the sovereign is completely discharged from a duty for which no human wisdom or knowledge could ever be sufficient; the duty of superintending the industry of private people"* -Smith

What you see in the constitution in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution is an attempt to provide these "Smithian" types of economic opportunity based on personal responsibility.

True, healthy, personal responsibility is recognizing that work and productivity have their important place within the spheres of life with God, in which each area of life is to be stewarded well for God.