

118.5 Don't Give Up the Ship: God's Providence on Lake Erie September 9-10, 1813¹

I don't know much about WWI, the Spanish-American War, or the **War of 1812**. I mainly remember the "War to End All Wars," the Rough Riders at San Juan Hill, Cuba, and the Star-Spangled Banner at Ft. McHenry. The War of 1812 has been called "Our Second War of Independence." The British encouraged Indian attacks on American settlements and seized ships impressing thousands of American sailors. This escalated into the conflict in 1812 with the British invasion of the US, including Washington City.

You may remember the famous instance of God's providence. On August 24, 1814, 4,500 British soldiers marched into our Capital city and burned the White House, the Capitol, the Treasury, the Department of War building, and the Library of Congress.

Suddenly, dark clouds rolled in, wind and thunder grew into a "frightening roar," and lightning began striking. A tornado touched down, sending debris flying, blowing off roofs, and knocking down chimneys and walls on British troops.

The book, *Washington Weather*, recorded British Admiral **George Cockburn** exclaiming to a lady:

"Great God, Madam! Is this the kind of storm to which you are accustomed in this infernal country?!"

To which the lady replied:

"No, Sir, this is a special interposition of Providence to drive our enemies from our city."

The War of 1812 was not limited to the eastern states and the US Capital. The British sent ships on Lake Erie to resupply Fort Malden in Amherstburg, Ontario. Captain Oliver Hazard Perry blocked them near Put-In-Bay, Ohio.

President Madison recommended September 9, 1813, as a Day of Humiliation and Prayer. The next day, September 10, 1813, Perry, with many of his sailors being free Blacks from Ohio, confronted the British squadron, commanded by the one-armed Commodore **Robert Barclay**, who had helped defeat Napoleon's fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar.

Strong winds prevented Perry from getting into a safe position, and the long-range British cannons splintered his flagship, the USS Lawrence, killing many of his crew. Faithful to his battle flag, "DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP," twenty-eight year-old Perry and his men courageously rowed a half mile through heavy gunfire to the USS Niagara. The wind suddenly changed directions and Perry sailed directly across the British line, firing broadside. After fifteen minutes, the smoke cleared to reveal that for the first time in history an entire British squadron been disabled at once.

The British abandoned Fort Malden. U.S. General **William Henry Harrison** then recaptured Detroit, defeating the British and their Indian ally Shawnee Chief **Tecumseh** at the Battle of the Thames, October 5, 1813. In their victory on Lake Erie, **Oliver Hazard Perry** exclaimed, "We have met the enemy, and they are ours!"

¹ Federer, Susie. *Miracles in American History: 32 Amazing Stories of Answered Prayer*, (Virginia Beach, VA: Amerisearch, Inc, 2016), pp. 91-92.

The American victories secured the Northwest Territory for the nation. To the sailors on deck, Captain Perry remarked: "The prayers of my wife are answered." Perry wrote the following to the Secretary of the Navy:

It has pleased the Almighty to give the arms of the United States a signal victory over their enemies on this lake. The British squadron, consisting of two ships, two brigs, one schooner, and one sloop have this moment surrendered to the force of my command after a sharp conflict.

President **James Madison** stated in his 5th Annual Message on December 7, 1813:

It has pleased the Almighty to bless our arms... On Lake Erie, the squadron of superior force, a sanguinary conflict ended in the capture of the whole.

We don't want to get too philosophical or put God in an "American Box," but to all appearances, God intended for America to be a nation of Liberty. Americans relied on Him and His providence to protect our independence. Perhaps there is an application to **Isaiah 14:24** (NKJV) for us. It reads:

The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying, "Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, And as I have purposed, so it shall stand:

Christian and non-Christian Americans are undergoing a hard lesson from God. We have distracted ourselves from the important with the urgent and have turned away from following God. There is a lesson we must learn.

As Joshua took the reins of leadership for the nation of Israel, God gave him (and us) a principle we must take to heart. He said:

⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. ⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."²

Our forefathers and mothers understood the value of God leading their lives. They experienced divine intervention after fasting, prayer, and humiliation. He providentially came to their aid when the people chose to reengage with Him.

We have the same God they did. We have tyranny and an invasion. The corrupt regime ignores its duty to protect its citizens constitutionally. We must return to a firm reliance on Providence. God never fails us though we may fail Him (**2 Timothy 2:11-13**). If we return to Him, He will return to us (**Malachi 3:7**).

Keep The Light of *Not Giving Up the Ship* Burning!

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² Joshua 1:7-9 (NKJV)