

# LINCOLN LORE

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## LINCOLN QUOTES SCRIPTURE

There are certain periods of the year when we give particular emphasis to the Christian faith and its holy book. The Christmas season, the world around, seems to create an atmosphere which invites comments of a religious nature and tributes for those who have exhibited in their own personal lives the basic characteristics of the Christ whose birth is commemorated. Dean Charles Reynolds Brown once said: "If we were starting out to canonize some of our American Protestant saints I should be in favor of beginning with Abraham Lincoln."

It is accepted, generally, that Lincoln's parents were devout members of the church and that the boy was very early in life brought under the influence of his mother's Bible reading. That his simple but impressive diction was greatly influenced by Biblical terminology is admitted and that he continued to read the Bible throughout his life has adequate proof. Alexander Williamson who was at one time tutor of Lincoln's children in the White House claimed that "Mr. Lincoln often studied the Bible with the aid of *Cruden's Concordance*, which lay on his table."

His familiarity with the Bible is evident from his ability to draw upon it at will for some timely comment. It is to be regretted that his reputation as a story teller, in which he excelled, should obscure to a great extent his ability to quote scripture which enriched his speeches, writings, and every day conversation. A few illustrations of his familiarity with the Bible are presented.

### "Salvation Of The Lord"

After Joshua Speed had been happily married to Fanny Henning, Lincoln wrote to Speed stating that he had no doubt God had foreordained their union. Lincoln himself apparently had become matrimonially minded and in the same letter continues: "Whatever He designs, He will do for me yet. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord;" (Ex. 14:13) is my text just now.

### "A House Divided"

Possibly Lincoln's most famous Biblical quotation was used in the House Divided Speech at Springfield on June 16, 1858 when he said: "A house divided against itself cannot (shall not) stand (Matt. 12:33)." The translation in Mark 3:26 reads "If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand."

### "Scattereth Abroad"

Lincoln closed his speech at Cincinnati on Sept. 17, 1859 with this com-

ment: "The good old maxims of the Bible are applicable, and truly applicable to human affairs; and in this as in other things, we may say here that, 'he who is not for us is against us: he who gathereth not with us scattereth.'" ("He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Matt. 12:30).

### "Shedding Of Blood"

Hon. Orlando Kellogg of New York introduced to the President an elderly man whose son had deserted the regular army, but when the Civil War broke he enlisted and distinguished himself for bravery in a charge in which he was injured. However, his former desertion was discovered and the hero was placed under arrest. When the father had finished with the story Lincoln said to him: "Do you say that the young man was wounded?" After having been informed that he was badly wounded the President remarked: "Then he shed his blood for his country. Isn't there something in Scripture about the 'shedding of blood' being 'the remission of sins'?" (Heb. 9:22). Hereupon the President pardoned the son of Kellogg's old friend.

### "Servant A Dog"

Henry Ward Beecher while editor-in-chief of the "Independent" during the early part of the war wrote some editorials severely criticizing the President. Several of them were clipped from the papers and mailed to the President. Reading one after another in succession he was deeply moved by their unjust attack and is said to have exclaimed, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this (great) thing?" (2 Kings 8:13).

### "Sweat Of Thy Face"

On May 30, 1864, Lincoln replied to a visiting committee: "We read in the Bible, as the word of God himself, that 'In the sweat of thy face (brow shalt thou) thou shalt eat bread'" (Gen. 3:19) and then remarked that in the sweat of other men's faces we eat our bread. This theme was also extended somewhat in the Second Inaugural Address.

### "Accuse Not A Servant"

Schuyler Colfax tells of a man who called on the President to complain of the policies of the Secretary of War and then bitterly denounced Stanton. Mr. Lincoln interrupted him before he was through and said: "Go home, my friend, and read attentively the tenth verse of the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs." ("Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.")

### "Four Hundred Men"

After Lincoln learned through the press that there were about 400 men who had attended the Fremont convention at Cleveland in 1864 he recalled this Biblical passage "and every one that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became (a) captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men." (1 Samuel 22:2).

### "With All Thy Heart"

Hon. H. C. Deming of Connecticut on one occasion was calling on Lincoln when the conversation turned to religion. Lincoln is reported to have said: "When any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership the Saviour's condensed statement of both Law and Gospel, 'Thou shalt love thy Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul (and with all thy strength) and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself' (Luke 10:27) that church will I join with all my heart and with all my soul."

### "Judge Not"

On the Sunday night previous to the inaugural program of 1865 George B. Lincoln of Brooklyn, Hon. John A. Bingham of Ohio and F. B. Carpenter, the painter, were seated in the President's office when he came in with a manuscript rolled up and remarked as he put it in the drawer of a desk: "Lots of wisdom in that document I suspect, it is what will be called my 'second inaugural', containing about six hundred words." Undoubtedly he was thinking of the wisdom that is from above for he mentioned deity 13 times. The last half of the Second Inaugural is almost a paraphrase of Biblical lore with at least four passages of scripture quoted in whole or in part. His introductory words are: "Both (north and south) read the same Bible, and pray to the same God." He then comments on the "sweat of thy face" (Gen. 3:19) already noted, but quickly tempers the accusation with "Judge not that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1). He follows with the admonition: "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh!" (Matt. 18:7) and then concludes his direct quotations from the Bible with "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." (Ps. 19:9).

NOTE—Quotations from Oxford Bible.