

Centuries of Prayer Come Full Circle as God's Favor Rests on 2017 and Beyond

Some argue that the election of Donald J. Trump as the 45th president of the United States was the result of the brilliance of his son-in-law, Jared Kushner. Others argue momentum for Trump grew because of increased support from and voter mobilization by evangelical Christians and conservative Catholics. Others argue the purge of democrats from every level of political office stemmed from the sheer volume of those who stayed home. Then, of course, there's the "fake news" narrative that Russian hackers rigged the election.

While these factors are important (sans Russians) they offer only a glimpse of a much larger phenomenon that will be publicly emphasized during the Jan. 20, 2017, Inaugural ceremonies—and the Jan. 21, 2017 National Prayer Service. They represent, in part, the culmination of the single most important factor that impacted every recent crisis in America: prayer.

(Evangelist Rev. Franklin Graham hinted at this in a Facebook post: "In watching the news after the election, the secular media kept asking 'How did this happen?' 'What went wrong?' 'How did we miss this?' Some are in shock. Political pundits are stunned. Many thought the Trump/Pence ticket didn't have a chance. None of them understand the God-factor.")

While the impact of prayer in America in just the last few years was significantly underreported, a few highlights stand out.

In 2014, prayer transformed riots into revival in Ferguson,

Missouri. One pastor's wrongful arrest for praying outside of a police station might have made news headlines, but the true story lost by the media was told by Billy Graham Rapid Response Team members:

We've had gang members the last two days—we're talking about hardened street gangs—and they are curious. They came in, sat down, and prayed with us. They support us and have offered to take us into the community to minister.

We've had people from the community who have been portrayed as being on opposite sides of this division, but who have cried together, embraced each other and prayed together. There is still a storm raging, but they're looking for healing."

And this is only one example of many in 2014.

It was Christian pastors, who in 2015, met in Washington D.C. to pray at a National Service of Reconciliation, Healing and Awakening. Its initiator, Bishop E.W. Jackson, president of STAND (Staying True to America's National Destiny), declared:

... it is time for pastors from every race and background to come together and speak to the nation on the issue of racial division and show the way forward. Without God, we can never get beyond the past, and our future will be infected with bitterness. Pastors and churches must lead the way.

And pastors and churches did lead the way. In the spirit of evangelist Billy Graham's counsel ("We must repent of our prayerlessness and make prayer our priority"), in 2015, hundreds of thousands participated in The Response in Florida, Louisiana and North and South Carolina. Thousands more participated in Pastors and Pews conferences in eleven states. Gary Miller, an integral leader of pastor mobilization, explains,

“Mobilization is consistent with the Scriptural admonition for Christians to be salt and light in a tasteless and sightless world.

“The voting booth and the prayer closet have one thing in common. SILENCE. Politicians listen to the faintest whisper of the voting booth. God inclines His ear to hear the cries of His children rising up to Him from their prayer closets.”

Likewise, within a nine-month-period in 2015-2016, Billy Graham Rapid Response Team chaplains traveled to pray with victims' family members in Orlando, Florida; Roseburg, Oregon; San Bernardino, California; Paris, France; and Brussels, Belgium. Countless pastors and chaplains traveled to minister to survivors of Hurricane Matthew, the devastating floods in Louisiana, Texas, and West Virginia, and the raging fires in California.

It was pastors who came together calling for healing in Charleston, S.C., for peace in Cleveland, Ohio and in Dallas, Texas (sans Obama and Hillary), all emphasizing prayer. Prayer, the Dallas mayor said, was needed, “... to bring our city together and our country together. To heal wounds, not create them.”

The cries of Americans were not pled to Buddha or Allah. Nor were they addressed to an unknown god, a tree, or to galaxy far away. The steady silent intercession of Americans acknowledged the God of the Bible's promise:

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

In 2016, their plea was heard in all 50 state capitals, led by Franklin Graham who encouraged Christians to pray for America,

vote and become involved in their cities. Graham said, "As the walls of our nation are crumbling, we've got an opportunity to make a difference in this country."

Their plea was also heard in 10 states and beyond by pastors and leaders who participated in Pastors and Pews conferences in 2016 who returned home and encourage their friends and neighbors. (Donald Trump joined some 700 leaders in Florida).

The late Evangelical stalwart Chuck Colson once explained the motivation behind such a rallying cry:

I meet millions of people who feel demoralized by the decay around us. The hope that each of us has is not in who governs us, or what laws we pass, or what great things we do as a nation. Our hope is in the power of God working through the hearts of people. And that's where our hope is in this country. And that's where our hope is in life.

The seeds of this hope were tilled with sweat, blood, and the fervent prayers of America's first president. George Washington's ultimate appeal to heaven relied on the 17th-century political philosopher John Locke's admonition:

"... where the body of the people is deprived of their right; or is under the exercise of a power without right, and have no appeal on earth, then they have a liberty to appeal to heaven."

Washington's appeal to heaven also meant action on earth. And he was not the only president who emphasized prayer and action.

In 2017, these appeals have come full circle. The focus of prayer on Jan. 20th and 21st point to what many foresee as "The Next Great Move of God" and possibly a Third Great Awakening. If so, great things lie ahead for America in 2017

and beyond; in concert with fervent prayer, supplication and continuous thanksgiving. {eoa}