

National Day of Prayer 2023: National Day of Prayer Reminds Us That Freedom Isn't Free

In recent years, whether or not America was founded as a Christian nation has become a matter of heated debate.

What is undeniable, however, is the crucial element Christian faith and prayer played in articulating and supporting the uniquely American vision of freedom.

Our National Day of Prayer is important, in part, because prayer is important. But it's also important because prayer is a core component of our nation's past and future.

Scripture tells us repeatedly to pray: Pray in joy, pray in adoration, pray in times of sorrow, pray in times of need. Pray for all reasons. Pray "continually."

Prayer allows us to know God personally as our Redeemer, our Creator, our Father and our Friend. It allows us to speak to Him directly, with simplicity of heart, at all times. Prayer is at the heart of the Christian life.

But it is just as indispensable to American life. A long line of thinkers from antiquity to modernity, many of whom influenced our Founders' thinking, have argued in various ways that religion is an indispensable component of a free society.

But if you move from strictly political argument into the realm of the gospel, this means that *prayer* is an indispensable component of our free society.

That's because man is fallen. Man, if left to his own devices, will fall into sin and depravity. But the government is no

source of salvation. The government is not here to save us or to convert us away from our wickedness. "Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save," the Bible tells us in Psalm 146:3 (NIV).

The matter of man's goodness, the issue of his fall and redemption, must be worked out with God alone. Only religion can teach real freedom. But once it teaches us freedom, it allows us to be fully part of a free society. We can, in Christ, finally set aside the many commandments of vice to attain self-government in virtue.

Of course, the ability to self-govern is politically essential for the American way of life. Religion is not an idle fact or private reality now, and it wasn't at the time of the Founding. This is shown in our history.

The overwhelming majority of early colonists were deeply pious, fervent Christians. Their faith was relied upon and invoked frequently. For instance, all but four state constitutions mention God one or more times, and the remaining four reference the divine in some way.

That's because the Founders knew that their pursuit of liberty was a dangerous one. Regardless of their personal religious convictions, they knew how weak mankind can be, and sought at every turn to mitigate the effects our vices might have on our way of life.

In a condition of freedom, we confront our moral character directly. This is, in large part, why the Founding was such an audacious project. It was a radical affirmation of the capacity of man to act nobly as well as a shrewdly calculated effort to thwart his vice.

Of course, human nature has not changed between then and now. Man is still fallen and redeemed by his Savior. Man remains capable of great goodness and of great evil. We continue to inhabit a world held captive by death and sin – and live,

despite that, with courage, hope and faith in Christ.

If we are to preserve American liberty, we must also work to preserve our faith. The National Day of Prayer isn't just a call to pray. It's a call to renew our nation, to transform it with our witness to the nobility and true freedom of the gospel. {eoa}

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