



AMERICA IT'S TIME TO PRAY!

National Day of Prayer

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[Scriptures from the New King James Version]

Portions adapted from
['100 Bible Verses that Made America: Defining Moments That Shaped Our Enduring Foundation of Faith' by Robert J. Morgan](#)

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INTRODUCTION

Even before the Coronavirus pandemic, Americans were unnerved by the politics of the 2020 elections and the intractable problems facing our planet. With the onset of the virus, things have become much worse. America is in trouble, and it feels like prophetic times.

It's time to pray!

It's time for all of us to pray!

President Donald J. Trump declared Sunday, March 15, 2020, as a National Day of Prayer, saying, "We are a Country that, throughout our history, has looked to God for protection and strength in times like these.... No matter where you may be, I encourage you to turn towards prayer in an act of faith. Together we will easily PREVAIL."

The president's declaration maintains a long and hallowed pattern that began in Colonial times. And it isn't a one-day event. We are called to what Franklin D. Roosevelt called "a continuance of prayer."

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“As we rise to each new day, and again when each day is spent, let the words of prayer be on our lips,” FDR told a frightened nation on the night of June 6, 1944 – D-Day.

To encourage us in prayer, I've selected a few excerpts from my book, *100 Bible Verses That Made America*. We're not in America's first crisis. Our nation has faced one existential danger after another—including medical crises.

As I researched my book, I became better acquainted with a forgotten Founding Father of our Nation—Dr. Benjamin Rush, who is called the “Father of American Medicine.” He was a devout follower of Christ and a skilled physician.

During the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia in 1793, Dr. Rush insisted on staying in the city while others were fleeing. At that time, Philadelphia was the nation's capital and the largest city, and hysteria reigned. President and Mrs. Washington left town along with many others. But many could not flee, and nearly one-tenth of the city's population died. The plague lasted for one hundred days with at least five thousand fatalities.

Calling together his medical students, Dr. Rush told them: “As for myself, I am determined to remain. I may fall a victim to the epidemic, and so may you, gentlemen. But I prefer since I am placed here by Divine Providence, to fall in performing my duty, if such must be the consequence of staying upon the ground, than to secure my life by fleeing from the post of duty allotted in the Providence of God. I will remain, if I remain alone.”

Introduction

Dr. Rush survived and lived for many years, which he used to advance the Gospel.

We are alive in this hour in the Providence of God to stand our ground for the Gospel and for America in prayer.

Time after time, our people have turned to prayer with remarkable results. As Daniel the prophet told King Nebuchadnezzar, “... there is a God in heaven.”

It is time to pray—for the subsiding of fear, for the ebbing of pandemic illness, for the upcoming elections, for our leaders, for our world, for unity, and especially for a sweeping spiritual revival to awaken our nation to God.

May the stories and prayers in this booklet encourage you so you’ll share them with others. No other formula exists for national healing than the ancient words of 2 Chronicles 7:1

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 will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

I now make it my earnest prayer that God . . . would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility and pacific (calm) temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed Religion (Jesus Christ), and without a humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy nation.

—GEORGE WASHINGTON, IN HIS LETTER TO THE GOVERNORS OF THE THIRTEEN NEW UNITED STATES, JUNE 8, 1783

OCTOBER 16, 1746

THE PRAYER THAT SUNK A NAVY

In the 1740s, the American Colonies became a rope in the tug-of-war between Britain and France. One of the harshest periods of conflict, King George's War, raged from 1744 to 1748, some thirty years before the Declaration of Independence.

In the midst of the conflict, in October 1746, Bostonians heard with alarm that the French admiral duc d'Anville was preparing to sail his fleet from Nova Scotia to Boston Harbor to attack the city and ravage New England. It was the largest naval armada to have threatened the American coastline.

The governor of the Massachusetts colony had no adequate way to protect Boston, the jewel of American cities, or its fifteen thousand inhabitants. The French were coming to burn the city to the ground.

Sunday, October 16, 1746, was appointed a citywide day of prayer and fasting. Panicked citizens gathered into the city's churches, with hundreds of them crowding into the historic Old

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South Meeting House. The only thing pleasant that day was the weather, which was peaceful and calm. Not a breeze ruffled the waters in the bay, and no threatening clouds drifted through the skies.

The pastor of Old South Church was Rev. Thomas Prince, a powerful force in the Great Awakening, a friend of George Whitefield, and a man of prayer. Climbing into the high pulpit, Rev. Prince earnestly interceded on behalf of the Colonies. "Deliver us from our enemy," he reportedly prayed. "Send Thy tempest, Lord, upon the waters to the eastward! Raise Thy right hand. Scatter the ships of our tormentors and drive them thence."

Suddenly a powerful gust of wind struck the church so hard the shutters banged, startling the congregation.

Rev. Prince paused and looked up in surprise. Sunlight no longer streamed through the windows, and the room reflected the ominous darkness of the sky. Gathering his thoughts, Rev. Prince continued with greater earnestness, saying, "Sink their proud frigates beneath the power of Thy winds."

Gusts of wind caused the church bell to chime "a wild and uneven sound . . . though no man was in the steeple."

Raising his hands toward heaven, Rev. Prince bellowed, "We hear Thy voice, O Lord! We hear it! Thy breath is upon the waters to the eastward, even upon the deep. Thy bell toils for the death of our enemies!"

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Overcome by emotion, he paused as tears ran down his cheeks, then he ended his prayer saying, “Thine be the glory, Lord. Amen and amen!”

That day a storm of hurricane force struck the French ships. The greater part of the fleet was wrecked, and the duc d’Anville either took his own life or died from a stroke. Only a few sailors survived.

In his book *Anatomy of a Naval Disaster: The 1746 French Expedition to North America*, Professor James Pritchard wrote, “Not a single French military objective had been achieved. Thousands of soldiers and sailors were dead. . . . No one knows how many men died during the expedition; some estimates range as high as 8,000. So great was the calamity that naval authorities hastened to wind up its affairs and bury quickly and effectively the memory of its existence.”

Back in Boston, the governor set aside a day of thanksgiving, and according to historian Catherine Drinker Bowen, “There was no end to the joyful quotation: If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Somehow that verse came to people’s minds, reminding them that when God is our advocate, no enemy—not even an entire navy—can overcome us.

This verse comes from the majestic song of Paul at the end of Romans 8, in which he exalts in the grace of the God whose love for us is unending. “What then shall we say to these things?” asked Paul. “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare

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His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8: 31-32).

In nearby Braintree on that never-to-be forgotten day, a child named John Adams knelt with his family as his father thanked God "for this most timely evidence of His favor."

A century later Henry Wadsworth Longfellow immortalized the event in his poem "A Ballad of the French Fleet," written in the voice of Rev. Prince, who said, in part:

There were rumors in the street,
In the houses there was fear
Of the coming of the fleet,
And the danger hovering near,
And while from mouth to mouth
Spread the tidings of dismay,
I stood in the Old South Church,
Saying humbly, "Let us pray!"

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life with godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of our God and Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

--1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

SEPTEMBER 7, 1774

THE FIRST PRAYER OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

Amid fear and rising tensions, delegates from across the Colonies arrived in Philadelphia on September 4, 1774, to convene the First Continental Congress. Before tackling the weighty issues of the day, they acted on a motion by Thomas Cushing from Massachusetts to begin their business with prayer.

Some opposed the motion because of the diversity of denominations represented by the delegates. But Samuel Adams, the firebrand of the Revolution and a devout member of the Congregational Church, rose and “asserted that he was no bigot, and could hear a prayer from any gentleman of piety and virtue, who was at the same time a friend to his country.”

Adams nominated a local Anglican pastor, Jacob Duché, to lead in prayer, and the delegates agreed.

About the same time, a rumor swept through Philadelphia, which later proved untrue, that Boston was being shelled by British cannons. So the next morning when the delegates assembled

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in Carpenter's Hall for the agreed-upon prayer, they were tense and confused.

In that room were such icons as George Washington, John Adams, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and Patrick Henry.

Duché opened his Anglican prayer book to the prescribed reading for the day, and the delegates instantly sensed the selection of scripture was providential—Psalm 35: “Plead my cause, O LORD, with those who strive with me; fight against those who fight against me. . . . Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor who seek after my life; let those be turned back and brought to confusion who plot my hurt” (vv. 1, 4).

Duché then led in a powerful prayer, lasting about ten minutes, which has been called “the most famous prayer of the American Revolution.”

He said, in part:

O Lord our Heavenly Father, high and mighty King of kings and Lord of lords, who dost from Thy throne behold all the dwellers on earth and reignest with power supreme and uncontrolled over all the Kingdoms, Empires, and Governments; look down in mercy, we beseech Thee, on these our American States, who have fled to Thee from the rod of the oppressor and thrown themselves on Thy gracious protection, desiring to be henceforth dependent only on Thee

Be Thou present, O God of wisdom, and direct the councils of this honorable assembly; enable them to settle things on the best and surest foundation that the scene of blood may be speedily

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closed; that order, harmony and peace may be effectually restored; and truth and justice, religion and piety prevail and flourish amongst the people. Preserve the health of their bodies and the vigor of their minds; shower down on them and the millions they represent, such temporal blessings as Thou seest expedient for them in this world and crown them with everlasting glory in the world to come.

All this we ask in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, Thy Son and our Savior.

Afterward, John Adams described the event in a letter to his wife, Abigail: "Mr. Duché read several prayers in the stablished form, and then read the Collect for the seventh day of September, which was the Thirty-fifth Psalm. You must remember this was the next morning after we heard the horrible rumor of the cannonade of Boston. I never saw a greater effect upon an audience. It seemed as if Heaven had ordained that Psalm to be read on that morning.

"After this Mr. Duché, unexpectedly to everybody, struck out into an extemporary prayer, which filled the bosom of every man present. I must confess I never heard a better prayer or one so well pronounced . . . such fervor, such ardor, such earnestness and pathos, and in language so elegant and sublime, for America, for the Congress, for the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially for the town of Boston. It has had an excellent effect upon everybody here."

The First Prayer of the Continental Congress

According to other accounts, many of the delegates were in tears, and some were on their knees. It was as though the Lord Himself had come down into the room to receive the prayers of the frightened but determined revolutionaries.

Duché's prayer so braced the Continental Congress that he henceforth started each day's session in prayer, becoming, in effect, America's first Congressional chaplain.

Help us, Almighty God, to rededicate ourselves in renewed faith in Thee in this hour of great sacrifice... And, O Lord, give us Faith. Give us Faith in Thee; Faith in our sons; Faith in each.... Let not the keenness of our spirit ever be dulled. Let not the impacts of temporary events, or of temporal matters but of fleeting moment, let not these deter us in our unconquerable purpose. With Thy blessings, we shall prevail.

--FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT IN HIS D-DAY ADDRESS,
JUNE 6, 1944

JUNE 28, 1787

THE PRAYER THAT SAVED THE CONSTITUTION

After the British surrender, the American Colonies had a nation but needed a constitution. The old Articles of Confederation were inadequate. In May 1787, delegates gathered in Philadelphia for a convention to draft a constitution that would establish an effective federal government. They appointed George Washington as chair, but that's about all they agreed on.

From the beginning, the delegates quarreled over deeply held disagreements as to the extent and form of the new government.

That's when venerable Benjamin Franklin, eighty-one, rose to make a motion:

In this situation of this assembly, groping, as it were, in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate our understandings?

In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for the divine

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protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard—and they were graciously answered. All of us, who were engaged in the struggle, must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity.

And have we now forgotten that powerful Friend? . . . I have lived, sir, a long time; and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of men! And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings, that “except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.

Ben Franklin was quoting here from Psalm 127. His entire remarkable speech, short as it was, was filled with biblical quotations and allusions, but this psalm was at the heart of what he wanted to say. Unless the Lord is in any enterprise, it has a limited future. Even building a house without His aid is perilous. Raising a family or a home without His strength is hazardous. Guarding a city without His blessings is futile. Working hard to gain wealth without putting Him first is vain. How much more the establishing of a new nation, one unlike any ever seen on the earth. Surely such an undertaking requires the help of almighty God.

Franklin continued:

I firmly believe this; and I also believe, that without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than

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the builders of Babel: we shall be divided by our little partial local interests, our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach. . . . I therefore beg leave to move, that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business; and that one or more of the clergy of the city be requested to officiate in that service.

Even this motion failed because, perhaps, the convention had no money to hire a chaplain. But a few days later, on July 4, 1787, General Washington led the delegates to a prayer service at Philadelphia's Reformed Calvinist Lutheran Church, where Rev. William Rogers offered these words:

As this is a period, O Lord, big with events, impenetrable by any human scrutiny, we fervently recommend to Thy Fatherly notice that august Body, assembled in this city, who compose our Federal Convention; will it please Thee, O Thou Eternal I AM, to favor them from day to day with Thy immediate presence; be Thou their wisdom and their strength! Enable them to devise such measures as may prove happily instrumental for healing all divisions and promoting the good of the great whole . . . that the United States of America may furnish the world with one example of a free and permanent government, which shall be the result of human and mutual deliberation, and which shall not, like all other governments, whether ancient or modern, spring out of mere chance or be established by force. . . . We close this, our solemn address, by saying, as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ hath taught us—Our Father, who art in Heaven . . .

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The delegates joined in the Lord's Prayer, then went back to work. Soon they had a document that began: "We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union..."

James Madison, writing about the event later, said, "It is impossible for the man of pious reflection not to perceive in it a finger of that Almighty Hand, which has been so frequently and signally extended to our relief in the critical states of the revolution."

We thank Thee, O Lord, that this land is still governed by the people's representatives. Let democratic processes be seen at their best in this time of testing.

As these chosen (leaders) discharge their duties, guide them, O God, in the decisions they must make today. Give them the grace of humility, and shed now Thy guiding light into every mind. Break down every will that is stubbornly set against Thine or that has ignored Thee.

May what is done be so clearly right that it needs no incendiary justification. Soothe our still-smoldering hearts and minds with the spirit of forgiveness. Let us be swayed not by emotion or ambition but by calm conviction.

This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

--PETER MARSHALL, CHAPLAIN, UNITED STATES SENATE,
1946-1949

DECEMBER 14, 1944

PATTON'S PRAYER FOR CLEAR SKIES

James O'Neill, chief chaplain of the Third Army, answered the phone on Friday, December 8, 1944, at the Third Army headquarters in the Lorraine region of France. "This is General Patton," said the voice. "Do you have a good prayer for weather? We must do something about those rains if we are to win the war."

O'Neill, looking out his window at the rain that had bogged down the army, promised to find an appropriate prayer. Presently he typed these words on a 3 x 5 card:

Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that, armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory, and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies and establish Thy justice among men and nations.

O'Neill was curious as to how Patton would use the prayer. Was he wanting it for his own private devotions, or did he intend to distribute it among the chaplains? Donning his trench coat, the

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chaplain crossed the quadrangle toward the general's office. Patton read the prayer and said, "Have 250,000 copies printed and see to it that every man in the Third Army gets one."

O'Neill, shocked, simply said, "Very well, sir."

"Chaplain," said Patton, "sit down for a moment; I want to talk to you about this business of prayer." I am a strong believer in prayer. There are three ways that men get what they want; by planning, by working, and by praying. Any great military operation takes careful planning, or thinking. Then you must have well-trained troops to carry it out; that's working. But between the plan and the operation there is always an unknown. That unknown spells defeat or victory, success or failure. It is the reaction of the actors to the ordeal when it actually comes.

"Some people call that getting the breaks; I call it God. . . . That's where prayer comes in. Up to now, in the Third Army, God has been very good to us. We have never retreated; we have suffered no defeats, no famine, no epidemics. This is because a lot of people back home are praying for us. . . . But we have to pray for ourselves too."

Then Patton brought up the biblical character of Gideon and asked O'Neill to put out a training letter on prayer to all the chaplains. "Write about nothing else," he said, "just the importance of prayer. . . . We must ask God to stop these rains."

O'Neill returned to his office and prepared Training Letter No. 5, which Patton approved. It was published December 14, 1944, calling the Third Army to prayer.

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As chaplains it is our business to pray. We preach its importance. We urge its practice. But the time is now to intensify our faith in prayer, not alone with ourselves, but with every believing man. . . . Those who pray do more for the world than those who fight; and if the world goes from bad to worse, it is because there are more battles than prayers. . . . Gideon of Bible fame was least in his father's house. He came from Israel's smallest tribe. But he was a mighty man of valor. His strength lay not in his military might, but in his recognition of God's proper claims upon his life. . . . Urge all your men to pray. . . . Pray when driving. Pray when fighting. Pray alone. Pray with others. Pray by night and pray by day. Pray for the cessation of immoderate rains. . . . This army needs the assurance and the faith that God is with us. With prayer, we cannot fail.

O'Neill's training letter harkened back to Judges 6 and the story of Gideon, who was one of the Bible's greatest military strategists. His prowess came from the God who empowered him in battle. He thought himself ill-equipped for leadership, but the angel of the Lord said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!"

That has become the motto of many soldiers.

Patton's Prayer for Clear Skies

Soon 250,000 soldiers had Patton's prayer in their hands, and thousands of copies of Training Letter No. 5 were distributed to chaplains and organization commanders down to the regimental level.

O'Neill later wrote, "On December 20, to the consternation of the Germans and the delight of American forecasters who were equally surprised at the turnabout—the rains and the fogs ceased. For the better part of a week came bright clear skies and perfect flying weather. . . . General Patton prayed for fair weather for Battle. He got it."

Our Father and Our God, we praise You for Your goodness to our nation, giving us blessings far beyond what we deserve. Yet we know all is not right with America. We deeply need a moral and spiritual renewal to help us meet the many problems we face. Convict us of sin. Help us to turn to You in repentance and faith. Set our feet on the path of Your righteousness and peace.

We pray today for our nation's leaders. Give them the wisdom to know what is right, and the courage to do it. You have said, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." May this be a new era for America, as we humble ourselves and acknowledge You alone as our Savior and Lord. This we pray in Your holy name, Amen.

--BILLY GRAHAM

CONCLUSION

I have tried here to provide you with a few of the many stories from the history of America when the power of prayer absolutely made the difference in our nation. There are many more such stories included in *100 Bible Verses That Made America*, as well as even more from the annals of the spiritual history of our nation that I have not told.

The United States of America is unique in its biblical heritage and spiritual guidance.

We have a God of holiness, righteousness, and justice whose hand has led and lifted our nation through the centuries. In times of sin, we've sought His forgiveness. In times of war, we've sought His aid. In times of division, we've sought His unity. In times of peril and weakness, we've sought His strength.

He is not a God to be trifled with, ignored, or rejected.

The heavens sing of His holiness, and the cosmos reflects His greatness.

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In love, He sent Jesus Christ to bear the cross, shed His blood, and rise from the dead to save us from our sins. Yet millions in America know little of this. May we every day—even on the most difficult days—demonstrate His love and share His grace.

He is also a God who loves to hear and answer the prayers of His people, for the Bible says we should always pray and not give up, for the fervent prayers of righteous people are powerful and effective (see Luke 18:1 and James 5:16).

May God bless you.

May God bless America, the land that we all love.

Please share this burden with others and tell them:

America, it's time to pray!

Conclusion

On the eve of the National Day of Prayer called by President Trump, Dr. Benjamin Carson, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shared with the American people the following statement:

The President has called for a National Day of Prayer. And you know we've gotten away from prayer and faith a lot in this country. There's nothing wrong with Godly principles, no matter what your faith is: loving your neighbor, caring about the people around you, developing your God-given talents to the utmost so that you become valuable to the people around you, having values and principles that "govern your life." Those are things that made America zoom to the top of the world in record time and those are the things that will keep us there too.

--BEN CARSON
