

As we gather to celebrate the Fourth of July, we pause to remember one of the most remarkable moments in human history—the day a group of ordinary men made an extraordinary declaration. On July 4, 1776, America's founders announced to the world that liberty was not a privilege granted by government, but a right endowed by our Creator.

Those words changed history.

Yet, the struggle was just beginning. The American Revolutionary war had started over a year before in April, 1775 at Lexington and Concord, and it took until 1781 and the defeat of the British at Yorktown, to stop the fighting, and the Treaty of Paris in 1783 to codify America's sovereignty before the US Constitution was ratified, and finally enacted in 1789, thirteen years after July, 1776.

The Declaration of Independence was more than a political document. It was a statement of principle. It proclaimed that all people are created equal and possess certain God-given, unalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These ideas were revolutionary then, and they remain powerful today.

The foundations of both the Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, and most of our legal system, were built on Judeo-Christian beliefs and tenets. That our humanity comes from God, not the rule of man. As John Adams said to the Massachusetts militia in 1799 “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” Our current danger is we are operating under a Constitution that was built for a people who hold Judeo-Christian beliefs. And yet we are trying to operate it on a secular basis mainly because we did not stand firm in the breach when faith in America was challenged in the last generation.

America is defined by an idea—the belief that free people, guided by our faith and governed by the rule of law, can build a society that offers opportunity, dignity, and hope.

The Fourth of July is also a time for gratitude.

We are grateful for those who came before us and laid the foundation of this nation. We are grateful for the freedoms we enjoy: the freedom to worship, to speak our minds, to pursue our dreams, and to chart our own course in life. These freedoms have attracted people from every corner of the globe, all seeking the promise that America represents.

But most of all, we are deeply grateful to God for the blessings and protections He has poured out on America since our earliest pilgrims.

As we look to the future, we should ask ourselves: What kind of nation will we leave to the next generation? Will we be worthy stewards of the liberty we have inherited? Will we preserve the values that have made this country a beacon of hope for nearly 250 years?

The answer depends on each of us.

It depends on citizens who participate in their communities and churches. It depends on neighbors who treat one another with respect. It depends on families who teach the virtues of faith, responsibility, integrity, morality, and service. And it depends on all of us remembering that despite our differences, we share a common heritage and a common destiny as Americans.

So as fireworks illuminate the sky, let them remind us of the courage of those who first dared to dream of a free nation. Let them remind us of the sacrifices made to preserve that dream. And let them inspire us to carry that dream forward for future generations.

And as we celebrate, it is important to remember that freedom is not merely an inheritance. It is a responsibility.

May we never take our freedoms for granted. May we remain thankful for the blessings of liberty that are God-given. And may God continue to bless the United States of America.

Happy Fourth of July, and thank you.