**“When the Foundations are Being Destroyed…”**

With the celebration of America’s independence having just passed, the observance of Patriot Day and Constitution Day coming up in September, and, of course, the consequential November election, it’s an especially appropriate time to consider the precious freedoms that have been bequeathed to us, and the importance of preserving and defending them.

In November, 1994, a few years after the efforts and influence of President Ronald Reagan, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and Pope John Paul II helped to bring down the “evil empire” of the Soviet Union, and the Berlin Wall, Lady Thatcher addressed an audience at Hillsdale College. Her lecture focused on the moral foundations necessary for freedom and democracy to be established and maintained. The following are excerpts from her instructive speech, which was titled, “The Moral Foundations of Society”:

“…For over two centuries, Americans have held fast to their belief in freedom for all men – a belief that springs from their spiritual heritage. John Adams…said in 1798, ‘Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.’

“…The most important problems we have to tackle today are problems, ultimately, having to do with the moral foundations of society. There are people who eagerly accept their own freedom, but do not respect the freedom of others…They would do well to look at what has happened in societies without moral foundations. Accepting no laws but the laws of force, these societies have been ruled by totalitarian ideologies…Freedom…must exist within the framework of law…Freedom must be informed by the principle of justice in order to make it work between people. A system of laws based on solid moral foundations must regulate the entire life of a nation…Once again, it is important to note that the free societies of America and Great Britain derive such foundations from a Biblical ethic.

“…The American Declaration of Independence and Constitution make it clear that…there are certain rights which are human rights and which no government can displace. And when it comes to how you Americans exercise your rights under democracy, your hearts seem to be touched by something greater than yourselves. Your role in democracy does not end when you cast your vote in an election. It applies daily; the standards and values that are the moral foundations of society are also the foundations of your lives. Democracy is essential to preserving freedom. As Lord Acton reminded us, ‘Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.’ If no individual can be trusted with power indefinitely, it is even more true that no government can be. It has to be checked…

“…Free societies demand more care and devotion than any others. They are, moreover, the only societies with moral foundations, and those foundations are evident in their political, economic, legal, cultural and, most importantly, spiritual life. We who are living in the West today are fortunate. Freedom has been bequeathed to us. We have not had to carve it out of nothing; we have not had to pay for it with our lives. Others before us have done so. But it would be a grave mistake to think that freedom requires nothing from us. Each of us has to earn freedom anew in order to possess it. We do so not just for our own sake, but for the sake of our children, so that they may build a better future that will sustain over the wider world the responsibilities and blessings of freedom.”

Priscilla Poese, *AzFRW Americanism*

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