

One of the men vying to be our next President recently called the Islamic call to prayer "one of the prettiest sounds on earth." With all due respect to the Senator, I couldn't disagree more.

In nations where this call to prayer is regularly heard, nations that are ruled according to Islamic law, people are generally not free. People are not free to decide what they want to wear, what they want to eat, or what they want to do with their lives. Women are treated as second-class citizens. If a woman is raped, SHE is the one who risks punishment. And if a person converts from Islam to Christianity, they do so at the risk of their very life.

More pernicious than the injustices of Islamic law, however, is the religion of Islam itself. "Islam" means "submission," submission to a god called Allah who demands total sacrifice on the part of his followers. Islam fools people into thinking that if they do what Allah says is right then Allah must reward them. It is the same man-made philosophy of work-righteousness that infects every religion - every religion, that is, except the religion of Jesus Christ.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free," Paul writes to the Galatians (5:1a). Nowhere in the world is that freedom as evident as it is right here in the United States. We may worship God as we please. We may wear what we want, eat what we want, and pursue our dreams so long as the exercise of our freedom doesn't violate someone else's freedom.

Of course, with freedom comes responsibility. Our sinful natures want to abuse our freedom and use it as a license to disobey God. That's when we remember where freedom comes from: not from the government, but from God himself in the person of Jesus Christ, who died under the law that we might be free. Free from sin's guilt. Free to serve him in love.

"Prettiness," of course, is subjective. And if some Senator wants to label the prayer call of a false religion as "pretty," he's well within his rights to do so. But for me, on our nation's 232nd birthday, some of the prettiest sounds on earth will be the explosions of fireworks and the playing of patriotic songs. They remind me of what a gift God has given me through this country. They encourage me to exercise my freedom joyfully and responsibly. May these sounds of July 4th do the same for you, too!

Prayer: God, bless our country. Grant her good leadership, and help us to be responsible citizens. While we seek the betterment of our United States, remind us that through your Son we have already been granted citizenship in your heavenly kingdom. Thank you for the freedoms we enjoy now and the perfect peace we will enjoy with you in eternity. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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