

Shaping America's Future by Preserving Her Past Through Christian Influence

By

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Text: Jeremiah 6:16 *Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. *

Introduction:

As Christians in America today we are challenged to Shape America's Future by Preserving its Past through our Christian Influence.

I have long been a fan of history. As a child I understood it to be God's story-His Story. I pursued it with fervency in grade school and made it my declared Minor in college.

As the valedictorian of my 1951 eighth grade graduating class my speech, which was titled, "An Eighth Grader Looks at the World," focused on a quotation from George Orwells book "1984" which had been published in 1949 and was required reading for graduation by our teacher. I built my speech around Orwell's quotation "*Who controls the present, controls the past, and who controls the past, controls the future.*"

In his book Orwell depicted America becoming a dystopian society which is the opposite of a Utopians or ideal society. He depicted a society controlled by a one-party governmental deep state which gained power and control rewriting history in order to distort the original intent of the "Founding Fathers."

"An Eighth Grader Looks At The World," imagined "1984" becoming a reality and being the means by which America succumbed to the Ten-Point Agenda for America's overthrow which had been presented by Joseph Stalin in 1935 in the Lennin School of Political Warfare. In my speech I suggested the only hope for America was to "Look for the old ways, the good path" cited by Jeremiah in chapter six verse sixteen.

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. (Jeremiah 6:16)

I freshened up that speech in my Junior Year in high school for a Lions Club sponsored speech contest with the speech theme stated, “How to Protech Our American Heritage.” Although I received a standing ovation from the student body, my speech was disqualified by the speech teacher, and I was barred from future speech contests. Mr. Dickey specifically objected to my presentation of the “Roman Road of Salvation” as the means of getting back to the “...old paths, the good way...” you know, that compilation of Scripture I give at the close of each study, *But It All Begins At Salvation*:

Today the survival of this nation is at a precarious moment, perhaps even beyond the Civil War. The threat today comes from within. Many of our enemies wear the stage costumes of constitutionalists but they carry the placards of socialism and spew the hatred of atheism. They will wear whatever name tag you want them to wear, but their agenda is the destruction of the constitution and the formation of a godless society. Let's take a moment for reflection and then we must address our role as Christians in confronting the circumstances we face today as we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the land of the free and the home of the brave.

I. A Moment of Celebration and Reflection:

I have titled this Fourth of July Celebration Message, “*Shaping America’s Future by Preserving its Past Through Christian Influence.*” Need I say, ...and that Christian Influence will only be effective as we go back to the “...*Old way, the good path...*”

This week we are celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Independence of the United States of America and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Most Americans believe that signing took place on July 4, 1776. The vote to declare independence was actually held on July 2, 1776 but was ratified by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. However it was not signed by the fifty-six signers until August 2, 1776

Thomas Jefferson was selected to write the Declaration but turned it down and Benjamin Franklin was asked to write it. It took him fourteen days to write it and 200 copies of it were printed and signed by the members of the Continental Congress. There are only twenty-six known originals preserved today. When those men signed that document they knew their lives would be endanger and they would be identified as treasonist by the mightiest military at that time. They knew, outside of God's intervention, they could not win but were firm in their convictions they could do nothing else, they must attempt it.

Now here we are two hundred and fifty years later, the strongest, most powerful nation on earth. We are the oldest constitutional republic in history and still operate under the constitution that was adopted on September 17, 1787 and became the law of the land when it was ratified by the ninth state, New Hampshire, on June 21, 1788. It was a Bible based document with more than 1,400 support principles lifted from the Bible, and while the formers of that document never actually claimed “divine

inspiration” they agreed it was pretty close. When they could not agree on a part of it, they would adjourn and go to church for an inspirational sermon and join together in a corporate prayer meeting.

But, as I said, Today the survival of this nation is at a precarious moment, Yes, I believe even beyond the Civil War. Because the threat today is that the enemy is among us, they hold public office, and they even teach your children at school. They brazenly march naked in the streets waving the flags of their immoral practices, commit acts of violence and tell you they are doing these things for you.

Many of them wear the stage costumes of constitutionalists but they carry the placards of socialism and spew the hatred of atheism. They will wear whatever name tag you ask them to wear, but their agenda is the destruction of the constitution and the formation of a godless society in which you do their bidding. They do that by rewriting history and getting you to tear down monuments.

So, what are we to do as Christians? What is our role in this threatened society?

II. Our Role Is Defined by Who We Are:

When my great grandson, Caleb, was diagnosed with a cancerous tumor, the most valuable encouragement I could pass on to him was a principle I learned many years ago which has seen me through fatal car accidents, life threatening medical issues, bedside traumas, and a considerable number of walks through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. It is a simple principle, yet one we tend to forget. I said to Caleb, don’t try to figure out what God is doing or why He is allowing these things, instead remember WHO God is. Our circumstances should not be our focus. Our focus must be on Who God Is. Look at the attributes of His character; He is Love, He is Omnipresent, He is Omniscient, He is Eternal, He is Righteous, He is Omnipotent, He is Sovereign.

See! The degree to which we remember “Who God Is” determines the extent of the elimination of our fear and anxiety. The degree to which we know who God is determines the degree of our joy and happiness.

His Sacrificial Love Ensures His Best for us. His Omnipresence Assures His Presence with us, His Omniscience Provides the Certainty of His Awareness of us, His Eternalness Guarantees His Availability to us, His Righteousness Comforts us with His Perfect Justice. His Omnipotence Affirms His Ability for us, and His Sovereignty Declares His Reliability concerning us. See! It is understanding His character and knowing “Who God is” that gives us peace in the midst of a storm.

Likewise, it is knowing who we are that defines our role in this life. So, who are we as believers?

A. First: We Are Citizens of The Kingdom of God:

We have had a bit of exposure to the issue of citizenship this week with the 5-4 decision of the Supreme Court to uphold the current practice of “Birth-Right Citizenship” even for those who are in the country illegally. No! I don’t intend to park here and discuss the absurdity of foreigners being able to come into our country illegally and give birth to a child and have that child be granted citizenship with all its rights and open the back door to allowing other members of that child’s family being allowed to enter on his shirt tail (or diaper pin). I bring it up here because the issue has been called “Birthright Citizenship” and that certainly identifies our citizenship in the Kingdom of God. We are born into the Kingdom of God- we have “Birthright Citizenship.

Salvation is identified as a New Birth – Jesus said *“...except ye be born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God...”* He went on to explain the distinction between physical birth and spiritual birth. Although Adam was created body, soul, and spirit, he died spiritually the moment he ate of the forbidden fruit. Thus through human propagation we are born body and soul and must have a spiritual birth to establish citizenship in the Kingdom of God (John 3:1-6).

Jesus explained it this way, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16)

The Apostle Paul identified it this way in Philippians 3:20-21 *“For our citizenship is in Heaven; from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

Yes! Our citizenship is in Heaven, but we remain here awaiting our transfer into heaven. Meanwhile we are identified as sojourners.

B. Second: We Are Sojourners:

In previous studies we have explored the Apostle Peter’s declaration that as believers we are to identify as Sojourners. A Sojourner is a foreigner not living in his own country, but living alongside of the locals to do business for his king. Our title is “Sojourner” but our role in representing our Kings is defined by our Spiritual Gifting and the circumstances we encounter in our daily life.

We have identified a Sojourner as a foreigner not living in his own country but living alongside the locals to do business for his king. Most of you in the congregation have been through our series on Sojourners, so for detail I refer you

to our website and the study notes in I Peter and the Sermon Series on Sojourners and the Syllabus titled “Sojourners and Our American Heritage.”

But because of its relationship to Who We Are and What we are to be doing as Citizens of these United States of America, allow me to do a brief review of the Doctrine of The Sojourners.

The Doctrine of The Sojourner:

Peter introduces this subject in I Peter 1:1-2.

- 1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,*
- 2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

The doctrine of the Sojourner deals with the fact that the believer has had a change of citizenship. He now is a Sojourner - an individual who resides in a foreign country alongside the citizens to do business (Ephesians 2:19; Philippians 3:20). The reference here is to a believer that dwells on the earth as a foreign ambassador for Christ (II Corinthians 5:20). Yes, he still retains his citizenship, but his focus is now on the Kingdom of God, and he quickly realizes how foreign he is to the society in which he lives.

When we find these words, elect and sojourners, together (ek-lek-tois)(pa-re-pi-de-mois) we are to understand them as a reference to our role in ministry and service to God.

The Doctrine of Election indicates that we are in the Chosen One - In Christ, and thus we are the elect of God.

The Doctrine of The Sojourner teaches that we are strangers here on planet earth - our citizenship is in Heaven. But - we have an appointment to service here. We are to recognize our purpose for sojourning (the identification of our spiritual gifts will direct us in that matter). Then we are to commit ourselves to that purpose as our single objective of life.

Most believers live their lives without ever understanding who they are and why they are here. For many people, life is a matter of trying to get from the cradle to the grave with the greatest happiness, the least amount of pain and the most toys. For others there is a sincere attempt to make some contribution to society and leave a heritage.

However, for the believer, there must be the recognition of his or her spiritual purpose for remaining here after establishing his citizenship in heaven. That is summarized in four basic statements:

1. Every Believer Has a Unique Ministry:

Each of us is uniquely crafted by God. We have distinct personalities, looks and identity traits. We form part of the body of Christ and have a specific role in our representation of the Kingdom of God.

2. Spiritual Gifts Determine One's Ministry:

There are nine specific gifts that are provided throughout the Church Age, to enable believers to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords. The combination of gifts and the individual measure of each gift results in our maintaining our uniqueness in ministry.

3. We are To Present Our Bodies as Living Sacrifices:

The Levitical Sacrificial system has been replaced in the present age. God no longer requires burnt offerings, meal offerings, peace offerings, trespass offerings or sin offerings. Today God desires our bodies as living sacrifices - holy - and acceptable, that presentation is our priestly responsibility today.

4. Our Priorities Are to Be Based on Personal Ministry:

Where we live, what we own, what we do, where we go is to be directed by the personal ministry to which God has called us. Contrary to the popular phrase, it is not all about me! It is all about Him and our representation of Him among the heathen of the world.

In our text in I Peter 2:11 there is a double emphasis - we are not living in our own country and as foreigners we are living along side the citizens of this world doing business for our King. In order to do that we must abstain from those strong fleshly desires that are at war with the norms and standards of our souls. We are to maintain a pattern of behavior that is representative of our country.

The foundation of the Sojourner is established in I Peter 2:11 and in verse 12 we are given the details of behavior....

I Peter 2:12 says,

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by [your] good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Let's Look at This Verse a Little Closer:

“Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles:

The word *“conversation”* is a translation of the Greek word which means “manner of behavior.” Wherever we live, we are to make it a matter of principle to maintain a behavior pattern that is compatible with our purpose for living here on the earth after our salvation - to do business for the Kingdom of God among those who are not citizens of God's Kingdom.

The purpose of this behavior is stated in the next phrase...*that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by [your] good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Unbelievers frequently refer to Christians as evil doers. In the early church Christians were seen as an extremist group and identified as evil doers. Today unbelievers observe the behavior of Christians and frequently identify them as extremist that want to impose their morality on others. The legalistic Jews often interpreted the liberty of Christians under grace as evil. A little further down in this epistle Peter warns us against the danger of using our liberty and security in Christ as *a cloke of maliciousness*.

So, Peter tells us, that if we maintain the proper behavior before these unbelievers that while they now speak against us as evil doers, as a result of our proper behavior, they have the potential for becoming believers themselves.

Now, look at this next phrase...

“they may glorify God” (dox-a-so-sin) *they may have the potential for glorifying..*

This is in the Subjunctive Mood - our behavior does not guarantee that they will glorify God but at least they will have the potential to do so.

So, if we as believers maintain the proper behavior - a behavior suitable to our purpose for being here - others, while “bad mouthing” us now - will have the potential for glorifying God later...

“by your good works”

The Greek text should be translated, “*...by the good works observing....*”

“works” (ergon) *assigned employment or assigned task....*

This refers to your specific and individual work God has assigned you.

“in the day of visitation”

There is coming a day of visitation for all who live upon the earth...

“of visitation” (eh-pis-ko-pehs) of formal inspection held in order for them to give an accounting...

Judgment is coming and we are here to provide the potential for earth-dwellers to become part of the eternal kingdom of God.

The Expanded Translation of Verse 12: ***“Constantly make it your principle to continually maintain your manner of life characteristic of that which is well adapted to its purpose and circumstances in the presence of the ethnics: in order that, in the very thing they presently continue to speak against you as an evil doer, as a result of constantly observing you perform the task for which you have been employed in a manner that is well adapted to its purpose, they may have the potential for glorifying God in a day of formal inspection held in order for them to give an accounting.***

C. Third: We Have Personal Assignments:

Your role as a sojourner is revealed in two ways, (1). your gifting and (2). your circumstances. Your gifting is determined by God Himself and is bestowed through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. It is important to discover your gifting in order to be a good steward and have an honorable accounting when you stand before God. You have at least one of the nine gifts identified as operating through the church age (1). Administration (2). Teaching (3). Service (4). Exhortation (5). Word of Knowledge (6). Word of Wisdom (7). Mercy (8). Helps and (9). Giving. (See the study notes on Spiritual gifts on the website spheresofgrace.com). Your gifting dictates your role in society today.

The use of our gifts is directed by our circumstances. Nothing happens by chance and there is no such thing as "Good Luck" or "Bad Luck." The circumstances we encounter are all the result of cause and effect.

We should view our circumstances as divine appointments, and this is especially true of Believers, because of our role as Sojourners- we are here to do business for our King. Thankfully we have been able to operate in an environment that has at least been tolerant of our doing the Kings business.

But that is changing today as we see a more hostile attitude towards Believers. So, the challenge in this two hundred and fiftieth year celebration of the Declaration of Independence this year, is to reaffirm our commitment to Christ and become more diligent in recognizing those "Divine Appointments" as we live out our role as Sojourners.

We still have the right to vote and along with that right comes the responsibility to do so. The Apostle Paul was dedicated to his apostleship and spiritual gifting, but he used his citizenship as a Roman to take the gospel message to Rome and then even the house of Caesar. Your role is Sojourner, but you function as stewards, servants, husbandmen, and ambassadors, "...consider first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." (Matthew 6:33)

Conclusion:

So, wave your American Flag. Fire your canons. Set off your fireworks. Join in on a stanza of "God Bless America" and beat the drum to the rhythm of The Battle Hymn of The Republic. Run for public office if that's within your gifting, we need good Christian leaders. But in it all don't forget who you are and why you are here...You are a Sojourner. You are here to do the King's business. You are living alongside the locals to model the Christian Way of Life.

The Founding Fathers understood that a constitutional Republic could not stand if it divorced itself from the Bible and the Christian faith. The Ten Commandments were to establish the morals for the country. Those who oppose our freedom have been rewriting our history, lying about the intent of the founding fathers in order to destroy your freedom. They are about to succeed.

The Apostle Paul exercised his Roman Citizenship to facilitate his ministry. We must use our freedom to facilitate our ministry, and we must be vocal in the present, about the past, in order to preserve the future. As Americans we must remember who we are and the heritage from which we sprang, but not for one moment forgetting, "...I am a stranger here, within a foreign land, my home is far away upon a golden strand, ambassadors to be of realms beyond the sea, I'm here on business for my king." That is the first hymn I memorized as a boy. It was the theme song of the Royal Ambassadors, a boy's organization in the Southern Baptist Convention and it helped shape my path as a youth.

Let us help shape America's Future, by preserving her past through our Christian Influence.

But it begins at Salvation:

*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God...
The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life...
With the heart man believes unto righteousness...
But with the mouth confession is made unto salvation...
For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!*

"God Bless America"