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Osama's Letter, Washington's Warning: Charting a Course for Change Looking Back To Go Forward

It's hard to watch millions of young people clamoring to and lauding a letter from terrorist Osama Laden. Recently, his "Letter To America", a sort of manifesto giving the United States the reasons he ordered airplanes to fly into the twin towers in Newy York City, The Pentagon, and possibly the Capitol building in Washington, DC. And then to watch them march in solidarity with the Hamas-led Palestinians all across the country in a wave of antisemitism that would make Hitler proud is just a tad more disheartening. Hatred wrapped in flags of blatant sin and insufferable and revolting support of the extinction of an entire nation of civilized people can't be tolerated long before it starts to turn inward and attacks a sleeping and self-centered church. Christians need to search our nation's history to see how we got to this point, and if there is a way to avert further societal degradation and perhaps destruction. You see, we've been here before and former presidents told us it could happen and even how.

George Washington's Farewell Address

Our first president, George Washington was a big man, both physically and politically and he served two terms when he could have served for the rest of his life if he wanted to. We'll never know how that would have turned out, because he elected to step down and let someone else take the reigns of the newly formed nation with its constitution helping to find its collective way. Usually the first thing you address is the most important in that person's mind and Washington made it abundantly clear that unity was at the forefront of maintaining our freedoms. Here is but one quote addressing this:

While then every part of our country thus feels an immediate and particular interest in union, all the parts combined cannot fail to find in the united mass of means and efforts greater strength, greater resource, proportionably greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations; and what is of inestimable value! They must derive from union an exemption from those broils and wars between themselves which so frequently afflict neighboring countries not tied together by the same government, which their own rivalships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which opposite foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues would stimulate and embitter.

Before he got to this point, he took the time to mention the strengths of each region of the country from the north to the south to the east and then the west. Together he warned us that we must realize that we were held together by the things we all shared as seen in this quote:

The name of American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together. The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils and joint efforts—of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.

Unity Is Under Attack Again

It was a simpler time for Washington, and that must be said. But mankind rarely changes its stripes or spots as seen in our propensity for pride and self-love. Generally it was Christianity that held America together, not because it was a mandated national religion, but because it wasn't. Religious freedom was the rule of the land, but the Bible allowed people to believe as they wanted even if it wasn't Christianity. The concept of free will even to not adhere to its principles can be seen from **Genesis** to **Revelation** with ample examples of choosing God or not. But one of the common threads is that we can freely obey or disobey its teachings, love, or loathe our Creator and receive the rewards for either choice. Washington knew that. Jefferson knew that. And Madison knew that as all three helped write this farewell. They fought and were willing to die for these freedoms and ensured that freedom was to remain the hallmark of America. And it is not a coincidence that we are also called the UNITED States of America. It was Washington's hope and dare I say prayer that we always remember that and protect that. He saw the seeds for the ending of our nation if we split into four or more different localized "countries" and really prophetically saw the possible breaking away of whole swaths of states that reared its ugly head in the costliest internal war to this day: The Civil War.

Lawlessness And Party Affiliations

This portion of his address really hits the nail on the head for what we are experiencing today. And while we will want to give Washington some great powers of prophetic discernment, he really just knew his Bible really well and could see the patterns of Israel rising and falling and the reasons were the same every time. Here is what he added:

The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.

All obstructions to the execution of the laws, all combinations, and associations under whatever plausible character with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction; to give it an artificial and extraordinary force; to put in the place of the delegated will of the nation the will of a party, often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community; and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the mirror of the ill concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common councils and modified by mutual interests. However combinations or associations of the above description may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government, destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.

Stay In Your Lane

And if you want more of cautions from our first commander-in-chief, this quote will further explain what we see today. In it, Washington describes the current despotism formed when all three branches of government work in concert with each other as opposed to checking each other:

It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution in those entrusted with its administration to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power and proneness to abuse it which predominates in the human heart is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power, by dividing and distributing it into different depositories and constituting each the guardian of the public weal against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern, some of them in our country and under our own eyes.

If raw and unchecked political power has a better example of what Washington stated here playing out, our current regime has no need to take a backseat to any previous one.

We're Fooling Ourselves

The main culprit in societal degradation that is evidenced by the riots and hardly peaceful demonstrations we see in our youth, but not only them, is explained in this very salient and telling quotes from the first presidential farewell address:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

All of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence knew this statement to be true, regardless of how religious they were. And after a mere 8 years, this warning need to be written and disseminated. To say it is prescient for today's America is hardly a stretch.

And Those Other Presidents

Lest you think I forgot my lead comments, I didn't. Of all the presidents of America, two tend to get top billing in any list of the greatest ones. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. One helped found the country, while the other kept it together when it could have been split into two. And Lincoln, who knew his Bible as well as any president before or since, would often dispense wisdom found in its pages whether he quoted from it or not. He opined a great deal on education and the education of our young people. Herewith are a few that address what we see in the younger generation and their thinking and behavior:

“Education does not mean teaching people what they do not know. It means teaching them to behave as they do not behave.”

And then there is this quote:

The philosophy of the school room in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next.

But what if the teachers themselves don’t know how to behave? And what if they think you can merely teach knowledge without morality? But worse, what if you teach education that engenders immorality or a morality based on something other than the Ten Commandments?

And here is another quote from a previous president, Theodore Roosevelt:

To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.

What we are seeing play out in our streets and on social media is a direct result of many generations being taught without morals or with immorality disguised as morality. When you can’t see the writings of Osama Bin Laden as the evil it is, but instead see it as a revelation of righteous thinking and morality that justifies the killing of babies in their mother’s wombs and beating and killing elderly women, well you understand how Roosevelt’s quote is a revelation of the overall problem.

Biblical Admonitions

It is bad for those who call what is sinful good, and good sinful, who say dark is light and light is dark, who make bitter sweet, and sweet bitter! (Isa 5:20, NLV)

If this verse doesn’t speak to what ails our society, nothing will. Young people now are doing this, but let’s not forget they had leaders to learn this from as well. Parents and teachers espoused this and then social influencers touted this thinking and let’s not forget politicians who are the arbiters of saying what gets them power, not what is right. We are living in the times that another verse describes:

In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 21:25, NKJV)

Without Biblical standards, or no king, they just did what they thought was right. And they also didn’t listen to their conscience, getting perilously close to searing it altogether. Today is no different. The question is, is there hope for righting the direction of the ship? Without God, there is no hope, but with Him, there is always hope.

Changing Hearts

It’s not a quick fix, but God will give us teachable moments if we ask Him to provide them.

That’s what we as individuals can do. However, we can also use online media to influence people. However, I feel many of us think that what we need is a huge do over. Fortunately, God can do that, too. It’s called revival and that, my friends starts with His people in His church using His message preached by His pastors, His teachers, His missionaries, and His evangelists.

Sounds simple, right? And when His church has repented, then they need to disciple the nations as Jesus told us to do just before He ascended to Heaven. The power to do it was sent on the day of Pentecost. We have hope and we have to not only let it change us, but the world around us.

Are we ready to roll up our sleeves and tell God we’re ready to change ourselves and then change our world if only one heart at a time? If the answer yes, it starts with our hearts first.