

Response of the Statesman to Challenges Beyond His or Her Ability

There isn't a leader who has the ability, by themselves, to cope with the challenges that our nations face. Many, when they look at the challenge of the coronavirus, see such a challenge.

Let us begin with the example of Abraham Lincoln. Between the time he was elected and the time he actually entered office, what was the United States of America had disintegrated and entered a civil war, from which there seemed little hope of recovery. Lincoln was beyond his ability to deal with the crises he faced. As he faced the crisis before him, he expressed his need for help beyond himself, in particular from God:

I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had absolutely no other place to go.

Throughout his battle, he expressed his need for God's help in expressions such as:

I have always taken Counsel of Him, and referred to Him my plans, and have never adopted a course of proceeding without being assured, as far as I could be, of His approbation.

I have had so many evidences of His direction, so many instances when I have been controlled by some other power than my own will, that I cannot doubt that this power comes from above. I frequently see my way clear to a decision when I have no sufficient facts upon which to found it. But I cannot recall one instance in which I have followed my own judgment, founded upon such a decision, where the results were unsatisfactory, whereas, in almost every instance where I have yielded to the views of others, I have had occasion to regret it. I am satisfied that when the Almighty wants me to do or not to do a particular thing, He finds a way of letting me know it.

I should be the veriest shallow and self-conceited blockhead upon the footstool, if, in my discharge of the duties which are put upon me in this place, I should hope to get along without the wisdom which comes from God and not from men.

If it is probable that God would reveal His will to others, on a point so connected to my duty, it might be supposed He would reveal it directly to me....It is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence in this matter. And if I can learn what it is, I will do it!

In response to acknowledging our dependence upon God, we have the confidence that:

a. God will guide the man or woman 100% committed to obeying Him.

For it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to will and to act for His good purpose. (Philippians 2:13)

I am always with You; You hold my right hand. You guide me with Your counsel. (Psalm 73:23-24)

b. We are dependent upon the help of God.

I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26)

c. We are accountable to God for the way we handle the stewardship to which we have been entrusted.

Authority, accompanied by power, has been placed at the disposal of governing officials for the purpose of doing good for the people. The statesman understands his/her accountability not only to the people but to the Judge of the Universe. Jesus said:

Much will be required of everyone who has been given much. And even more will be expected of the one who has been entrusted with more. (Luke 12:48)

Jesus described the distracting temptation every governing official faces:

What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? (Matthew 16:26)

This is a rhetorical question, and our expected response is clear. Jesus speaks to the leader about the power that can be seductive. And yet, every one of us will stand before the Judge of the Universe at the end of our life on this earth. It is the expected words of Jesus at the time we appear before Him that is the ultimate reward of the statesman: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21,23). Our Lord's servant is ultimately what we are!

d. God will give us His peace in the midst of the crisis.

Jesus: Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

e. There is divine significance in the responsibility he/she holds and in the actions taken.

Statesmen views themselves as an instrument of God in the actions taken on behalf of the people.

Statesmen have a sense that God has called them and that their responsibility is to accomplish a mission that is greater than they are – one that may forever change their nation. Clearly, William Wilberforce and Abraham Lincoln were convinced there was divine significance in the vision that drove them. Lincoln expressed it as being an instrument in the hands of the Almighty:

In the very responsible position in which I happen to be placed, being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, as I am.

I hold myself in my present position and with the authority vested in me as an instrument of Providence.

This sense of divine significance causes statesmen to endure, especially in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. William Wilberforce, Lincoln, George C. Marshall, and Nelson Mandela all showed this. Their sense of divine significance causes statesmen to overcome the human instinct for self-preservation. Furthermore, I am convinced that the way one responds to seemingly impossible challenges may be the crucible that makes a statesman.

Let us return to Lincoln's response to the crisis before him as we face global crisis before us:

I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had absolutely no other place to go.

Let us pause to pray and express our dependence upon Almighty God:

Almighty God, you have given me responsibility for this precious people whom you love so much. Now, they and I face a challenge I am not prepared for. I am confident this is not a surprise for You. I know that You intend good for those I am called to serve. I need your help and I humbly receive it as I reach out my hand to You. Thank you.