

## The Long Term Planning of the Statesman

We all recognize that a major part of the genius of the Statesman is the ability to see into the future and to effectively plan for it – to make decisions that impact much longer than the term in office. As expressed by Edmund Burke in the eighteenth century:

*The great difference between the real statesman and the pretender is that the one sees into the future, while the other regards only the present; the one lives by the day, and acts on expediency; the other acts on enduring principles and for immortality.*

In other words, the Statesman does not simply plan to meet the needs of the people over the time in office and will not simply be driven by aspirations of reelection. Rather, the Statesman cares about needs that will improve the quality of life for the people long after leaving office. This represents sincere concern for the people that will make their lives truly better and not just meet needs that will briefly satisfy the people. I believe Burke's key was when he used the phrase "for immortality". Burke is suggesting that the Statesman operates with an eternal perspective. I want to explore with you the significance of Burke's phrase "for immortality" as it applies to the making of Statesmen.

Let us begin by looking at the eternal perspective that can provide this foundation. When Jesus was about to have His life cut short, He encouraged His followers by helping them to see into the future:

*Your heart must not be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if not, I would have told you. I am going away to prepare a place for you. If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and receive you to Myself, so that where I am you may be also. You know the way to where I am going (John 14:2-4).*

Jesus clearly described the reality of a future life of living in the presence of God that would be eternal in existence for those who would embrace it. We are told about our eternal body we will be robed in:

*Jesus Christ ... will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subject everything to Himself (Philippians 3:20-21).*

One of God's servants addressed the issue of looking forward to this privilege, compared to living in this earthly body:

*For we know that if our temporary, earthly dwelling is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal dwelling in the heavens, not made with hands. Indeed, we groan in this body, desiring to put on our dwelling from heaven, since, when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. Indeed, we groan while we are in this tent, burdened as we are, because we do not want to be unclothed but clothed, so that mortality may be swallowed up by life. And the One who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as a down payment (2 Corinthians 5:1-5).*

We are admonished to remember that we have an eternal existence to look forward to as we live out these short years on this earth. Then, our Creator clarified through this servant that the body in which we currently live is temporary and we must look forward to the permanent body that we will become if we will allow our Creator to do His work on our behalf. God's spokesman then addressed how we should live as we look forward to our heavenly existence, based upon our assurance that the promise of Jesus is certain:

*So, we are always confident and know that while we are at home in the [earthly] body we are away from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight, and we are confident and satisfied to be out of the body and at home with the Lord. Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the tribunal of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or worthless (2 Corinthians. 5:6-10).*

God summarizes our expected response to this truth:

*We make it our aim to be pleasing to [God].*

I submit to you that having such an eternal view on our own lives affects the way we live each day and the decisions we make, all as we look forward to eternity with our loving Creator. We recognize that we will be held accountable for those decisions. Then consider the impact upon our decisions when we recognize that the lives of those we serve are eternal beings. We recognize that we are stewards for the well-being of these eternal beings, all of whom, we are reminded are created in the image of God and have eternal significance.

According to Burke, the Statesman acts with the future in mind, including with immortality in mind. Hence, we must conclude that our own preparation for eternity, and our keeping our focus upon it, as we go about our daily lives can impact the Statesman's decision-making. As a part of that stewardship, we must ensure that our decisions facilitate the journey of each person under our care toward the eternal life that awaits them. Applying this reality to the life of the governing official is what, Burke is convinced, contributes to the making of the Statesman.

With this in mind, what must we do, and everyone we are responsible for, to ensure that we each have this future to look forward to? Returning to Jesus' words:

*I am going away to prepare a place for you ... I will come back and receive you to Myself, so that where I am you may be also (John 14:2-3).*

We have the promise by Jesus, supported by the integrity of His character, which is clear to every thoughtful person. Then, Jesus assures us that He has clearly given us everything we need to know to receive this eternal life with Him:

*You know the way to where I am going (John 14:4).*

As Jesus continued this conversation with His followers, He reminded us of what that way is:

*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me (John 10:10).*

Jesus referred to the one and only provision for our sin nature through His death and resurrection, which soon followed. As a result of embracing Jesus' provision for what would otherwise lead to an eternity apart from Him in hell, we have assurance of an eternity with Him, with His Father, and with all those who have embraced this same provision.

#### **APPLICATION FOR THE STATESMAN**

As a private citizen, am I prepared for eternity, in the presence of God as opposed to away from Him in hell?

As a government decision-maker, do my decisions reflect recognition that those I am called to serve are eternal beings headed for heaven or hell and need to be treated as created in the image of God and with immense dignity?