

**JULY 4 2010**

**FOR THE GOOD OF SOME?  
GALATIANS 6:1-10; LUKE 10:1-11, 16-20**

**IT WOULD NOT SOUND RIGHT AND IT WOULD NOT BE RIGHT IF WHEN WE SAID THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE WE STATED: "...WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR SOME." LIKEWISE THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WOULD HAVE HARDLY BEEN GREAT HAD IT READ, "SOME MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL." WE WOULD NOT HAVE HAD AN IDEAL TOWARD WHICH TO STRIVE. WE WOULD NOT HAVE HAD THE TRUE POTENTIAL FOR FREEDOM FOR ALL OR DEMOCRACY HAD THIS BEEN THE AMERICAN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.**

**BUILT INTO THE VERY FABRIC OF OUR NATION ARE IDEAS DERIVED FROM OUR JUDEO-CHRISTIAN HERITAGE. WE WILL FIND SOME TODAY IN THE PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS AS PAUL ESTABLISHES THE CHRISTIAN WAY TO LIVE IN COMMUNITY. WE SHALL SEE THAT IT IS BASIC TO CHRISTIANITY, THAT WE RESPECT EACH OTHER'S INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS WHILE, AT THE SAME TIME, WE CARE FOR EACH, SO THAT THE COMMUNITIES WE ARE A PART OF CAN BE PEACEFUL AND STRONG. THE CHURCH WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE EXEMPLARY COMMUNITY UPON WHICH FAIR AND JUST COMMUNITY AND GOVERNANCE COULD BE BASED. TODAY WE SAY IT THIS WAY: OUR CHRISTIAN VALUES SHOULD INFORM OUR POLITICAL DISCOURSE.**

**MORE OFTEN, HOWEVER, WE SEE NOTHING BUT ENMITY AMONG LEADERS WHO CLAIM TO BELIEVE. THE POLITICAL EXTREMES IN OUR COUNTRY HAVE BEEN TEARING AT THE FABRIC OF CIVILITY AND COMMON CONCERNS. HOSTILITY RULES THE DAY. JOHN AVLAN, A FORMER CONSERVATIVE SPEECH WRITER FOR RUDY GUILIANI, TAKES AMERICA TO TASK IN HIS BOOK, *WINGNUTS:HOW THE LUNATIC FRINGE IS HIJACKING AMERICA*. IN IT HE STUDIES WHAT HE CALLS THE "PROFESSIONAL POLARIZERS", MEDIA EXTREMISTS ON THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT WHOSE TASK IT SEEMS TO BE, IS TO MAKE US FEAR AND HATE.**

**IN RECENT YEARS A WORD HAS BEEN COINED: "HATETRIOT". IT IS A PERSON WHO CANNOT LOVE HIS COUNTRY WITHOUT HATING THE PEOPLE THAT DISAGREE WITH HIM. WHEN THE LAST PRESIDENT BUSH WAS IN THE PRESIDENT'S DEATH BECAUSE OF THE IRAQ WAR AND HIS STANCE ON THE**

**ENVIRONMENT. NOW THE SAME THING IS HAPPENING TO PRESIDENT OBAMA OVER HEALTH CARE AND GOVERNMENT BAILOUTS. THERE IS A GROWING MOVEMENT OF MODERATES IN AMERICA SAYING: TO BE MODERATE IS NOT TO HAVE NO OPINION, BUT TO HAVE A BALANCED INFORMED OPINION. DOES AMERICA TRULY NEED MOR OF THIS?**

**REGARDLESS, IF WE ARE TO READ OUR CHRISTIAN TESTAMENT AND FOLLOW IT. WE ARE NOT PERMITTED TO BE HATETRIOTS IN THE POLITICAL REALM AND CERTAINLY NOT WITHIN THE CHURCH. LAST WEEK WE STATED WHAT SAINT PAUL MEANT BY FREEDOM. IT IS THE REMOVEAL OF EVERY OBSTACLE IN OUR LIVES THAT KEEPS US FROM LOVING GOD AS GOD APPERS WITHIN THE NEIGHBOR. PAUL SHOCKED US BY SAYING: WE MUST CARFE FOR EACH OTHER SO MUCH THAT WE MUST BECOME “SLEVES TO ONE ANOTHER”. THIS IS TRULY THE DEMANDING FAITH TOO FEW OF US FOLLOW.**

**TODAY HE GIVES US THE WAY TO LIVE BY THE SPIRIT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY. IN THIS ERA OF POLARIZATION, IT IS GOOD TO REVISIT HIS THOUGHTS ON THIS INDEPENDENCE DAY. OF COURSE, PAUL IS SPEAKING TO THE CHURCH. BUT I SENNSE THAT WHO WE ARE TO BE IN THE CHURCH IS ALSO WHO WE OUGHT TO BE IN THE PUBLIC, OR ELSE WE WOULD BE COURTING HYPOSCRISY.**

**FIRST, TO LIVE IN HEALTHY COMMUNITY, PAUL INSTRUCTS US TO WELCOME MUTUAL CORRECTION, BUT TO ALWAYS DISCUSS AND DEBATE WITH GENTLENESS: “MY FRIENDS, IF ANYONE IS DETECTED IN A TRANSGRESSION, YOU WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE SPIRIT SHOULD RESTORE SUCH A ONE IN A SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS.” THEN HE ADDS, “TAKE CARE YOU YOURSELEVS ARE NOT TEMEPTED.” WHY? PAUL HAS SUCH A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF PEOPLE. HE IS PSYCHOLOGICALLY ASTUTE REALIZING THAT MANY OF US HARSHLY CONDEMN THOPSE FAILINGS TO WHICH WE OURSELVES ARE THE MOST SUSCEPTIBLE.**

**IN THE PRESS LATELY THERE HAVE BEEN ANOTHER ROUND OF PRESONAL FAILURES IN POLITICS AND RELIGION. IN ONE CASE, A FEW CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN THE ANTI-GAY MOVEMENT HAVE TURNED OUT TO BE GAY. THERE ALSO HAVE BEEN A COUPLE OF “FAMILY VALUES’ POLITICIANS WHO WERE CHEATING ON THEIR SPOUSES. PAUL WARNS US TO PLACE OURSELVES IN CHECK WHEN WE ARE REACTING TO OUR PERCEIVED ENEMIES. TAKE HIS TEACHING SERIOUSLY AND WE MUST PLAIA NKLY SAY,**

**WE CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN ANY FORM OF VILIFYING PEOPLE WE DISAGREE WITH OR JUST DON'T LIKE. THE FAMOUS CHRISTIAN CONSERVATIVE, CHUCK COLSON, WHO KNEW POLITICAL ANIMOSITY FIRST HAND AS ONE OF THE WATERGATE CULPRITS, REPENTED AND GAVE HIS LIFE TO CHRIST. HE WRITES(NY TIMES MAGAZINE): "CHRISTIANITY HAS DEEP CONVICITIONS ABOUT WHAT IS TRUE, BUT I DON'T THINK CHROSTIANS SHOULD IMPOSE THEMSELVES ON PEOPLE. MY GRETEST CONCERN IS THEOCRACY." HISTORY SHOWS THAT WHEN RELIGIOUS EXTREMISTS TAKE OVER A COUNTRY IT ALWAYS ENDS BADLY. WITH ALL OUR FLAWS, OUR FREEDOMS STILL HAVE SUSTAINED US AND PUSHED US TO CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER IN ALL OUR DIVERSITY.**

**SECOND, TO LIVE IN HEALTHY COMMUNITY, PAUL INSTRUCTS US TO PRACTICE SELF-EXAMINATION. IT BEHOOVES THOSE OF US WHO ARE IN CHRIST, TO COMPREHEND OUR OWN OPINIONS AND BEHAVIORS. WE ARE THE ONES THAT ARE COMMANDED TO UNDERSTAND IF WHAT WE ARE DOING IS GOOD FOR OTHERS OR ONLY SELF-SERVING. "ALL MUST TEST THEIR OWN WORK.....ALL MUST CARRY THEIR OWN LOADS". THERE SEEMS TO BE A CONTRADICITON HERE. PAULS SAYS "BERA ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS" BUT "ALSO CARRY OUR OWN LOAD".**

**I THINK THEY COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER. WE BEST CARE FOR EACH OTHER WHEN WE ARE RESPONSIBLY FREE. FREEDOM IS A GIFT AND, THEREFORE, WE SHOULD WANT IT FOR EVERYBODY. IF HELPING ANOTHER PERSON IS KEEPING THEM STUCK IN NEGATIVE LIFESTYLES OR BEHAVIORS, WE ARE ENABLING THEM. WE MUST BE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR MOTIVATIONS. IT'S THE OPLD ADAGE; IT IS BEST TO TEACH SOMEONE TO FISH RATHER THAN JUST GIVE SOMEONE A FISH. FOR THEN THE PERSON CAN LEARN AND GROW AND BE STRONG ENOUGH TO BE BOTHE SELF-SUFFICIENT AND WILLING TO GIVE TO OTHERS. THIS IS THE RESULT OF PAUL'S SELF-EXAMINATION.**

**FINALLY, TO LIVE IN HEALTHY COMMUNITY, WE MUST NEVER TIRE OF DOING RIGHT. WHETHER IT IS SHARING OUR WEALTH, OUR TIME, OUR TALENTS—WE REAP WHAT WE SOW. PAUL SAYS, "SO, THEN, WHENEVER WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY, LET US WORK FOR THE GOOD OF ALL, AND ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE OF THE FAMILY OF FAITH" PAUL SAW THE WHOLE WORLD AS FAMILY. IMAGINE WITH ALL THE ENEMIES HE ENCOUNTERED WHO TRIED TO SILENCE HIS NEW FAITH, PAUL, UNDER THE POWER OF JESUS CHRIST, COULD SAY THIS.**

**I KNIOW WE SOMETIMES BELIEVE ITS EASIER TO BE AUTONOUS, TO DO WHAT WE WANT WHEN WE WANT TO, WITHOUT REGARD TO ANYONE ELSE. MAYBE IT ACTUALLY IS LESS CHALLENGING. HOWEVER, THAT WOULD NOT BE LIFE IN CHRIST. TRUE FREEDOM, TRUE PEACE, TRUE JUSTICE SELDOM ARISES OUT OF CONGRESS OR THE COURTS, OUT OF THE CELEBRITIES OR CORPORATIONS, IT ARISE WHERE RESPONSIBLE, LOVING, CARING PEOPLE THINK OF OTHERS MORE THAN THEY DO OF THEMSELVES. THAT IS HOW CHRIST IS SERVED. THAT IS HOW COMMUNITY IS NURTURED. AMEN.**