

## **Multi-Faceted Patriots**

### **Read Philippians 3:17-20**

Did you know you are a citizen of more than one country? Surprise! On this wonderful national holiday, we celebrate our independence from those bad guys the Britains some 200 years ago. They're not so bad now, but we couldn't stand them then. Things change. This devotion centers on the idea of nationalism, which can be good and bad at the same time.

Nationalism is the feeling of extreme loyalty to a certain group while maintaining a complete and utter neglect of all other groups. There is great pride to be taken in your group for whatever reason, such as its superiority, its familiarity, or maybe you like the color of the flag or something. This extreme loyalty is permanent and questioned at times for dramatic effect, especially among politicians.

Please do not question my loyalty here. I love America for the wonderful things this country has done for the world. I also love and pray for all of our troops preserving our freedom with their very lives on the front lines. Praise God for men of character and courage! But today, on this day of rejoicing in our nation's blessing, I do want to point us to Christ for a brief devotional moment, then we can go eat those burgers and hot dogs.

Paul writes to the Philippians (not the Philippines) about a disturbance in their churches. Paul pointed to the Christians living out their doctrine and says "Look at those guys! They're such patriots!" You see, Paul was not saying that these Christians paid a little over their taxes for the year, or that they have fought in all of Rome's wars. He was pointing out that they were on the front lines of a different war, the war between Heaven and Hell.

Paul says we're citizens of heaven. Do you see know? You're an American; but you are also a Christian with an inheritance in Heaven! Just like being a citizen in the US has its benefits and responsibilities, so does citizenship in Heaven. Our mind is not to be on earthly things. We wait for Jesus to come back. Things are comfortable in the US right now. Nobody's trying to kill you for talking about Jesus. Life is good. We tend to get apathetic in this environment though.

God's getting ready to give us our green cards (our new bodies). He hasn't forgotten about us and when the field trip across the border comes, I'm going on the first truck. I love America, but I love Jesus more. And I want to be in Heaven more. America is a fairly good place to spend this life, but think of where you'll be spending your life for eternity. Today, enjoy the wonderful things America has to offer. Thank God for them because they are so rare in our world. But don't forget where your other citizenship is. And don't stop looking for Jesus, the Commander in Christ to step down and bring us home!

## **On the Sea Without a Paddle**

### **Matthew 14:28-32**

28 – Peter is showing his love to Jesus by being obedient. He decides the means or action to show his love. We also have accepted Jesus commands. Just like Peter, we want with all of our being to do anything we can for Him.

29 – Jesus told Peter to do an impossible and dangerous thing. Peter obeyed without question and found himself standing on a sea of water. We have all jumped out on the sea because God asked it of us. We have all accepted God's call to minister yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

30-31 – Oftentimes, we feel the wind and the waves of inadequacy sweeping over us in ministry. "I can't do what God wants of me!" But our feelings of inadequacy are from us alone. We feel we aren't good enough or that someone is better than us. But God doesn't feel that way at all. The striking thing is that God didn't ask them to do it, He asked us. He made us just the way He wants each of us for this time and this ministry. We show His strength in our weakness.

We don't want to do it in our weakness but we know at the same time that it is exactly what God wants of us. He wants to use it to make us better servants for Him and better worshipers of Him.

If we do not go through the valley and change, our worship and our heart – who we are in Him – will always be the same on the mountain of praise when we could have gone deeper. God doesn't ask the impossible of us for our loss, but for our gain.

32 – The storm was over for Peter and he learned a great deal from it. It changed him just as the impossible in ministry changes us. God wants to use each and every one of us to change the world. I can do it because Christ has asked me, enabled me, and is with me through it to the end.

## **The John 3:30 Principle**

### **John 3:30-36**

30 – John the Baptist has the correct view of how effective ministry works. This profound statement shows great understanding of how successful ministry must be arranged. God uses us but doesn't need us. It puts God first, where He must be because it is God who does the work that matters. It also puts us in our proper place, leaving us – the sum total of our study, preparation, prayer, and experience – as simple tools, temples to fill with the presence that changes lives. The earthen vessel is only worth the volume or amount of contents it can hold. How much of you is God filling? Is there room for more of Him in you?

31-33 – Clarification of who God is and who we are. He is the potter, I am the clay. He is the Lord of all, I am a slave of God. He is, I am because He is. He is the source, I am the conduit. His thoughts are higher, I rely on him for everything from my breath to my being.

34-35 – Without limit? Ah, the key to the John 3:30 principle. Which is more valuable – the can or the contents? There's an important idea – how much more of God can fit in me if I give Him the space, getting rid of the rubbish – replacing my coal with His glorious and illuminating presence? The answer is limitless. Man can never contain all of God. But His Spirit can move within each man as much as that man will allow. The amount of God's Spirit in you can be limitless – the power He exerts through you can be immeasurable. And you decide how much of God's Spirit and how much electricity everyone discovers when you minister.

36 – Remember the Gospel coin – it has two sides. It brings God's final decision on man. The object of that verdict for every soul is found in how each one deals with His Son. Acceptance equals eternal life. Rejection equals death and God's wrath for an eternity. People hear about the Son through us (Rom. 10:14-15).

## **The Core**

### **Gal. 6:2-5**

2 – Law of Christ? What is the Law of Christ? To love God with everything that is in you – your whole being. Secondly to love one another. But what is love? Love is an inner emotion – with only an outer action seen by all to gauge its inner level. Love is a verb. It is an emotion that requires an outer action. How can I show my love to my God and my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? You bear a burden and that is the way to show your love. Carry the burden. What burden? What was Jesus' burden? Our sins. How show love to God? Buy dying as Christ died to myself and taking up my cross (Matt. 16:24). How show to man? Bear brother's burdens until the end. Wash their feet (John 13), pray with them, mourn when they mourn, rejoice when they rejoice.

3-5 – Who am I? I am nobody. Who is my God? He is the Lord of all – Almighty God and my best friend. I must remember that everything I am and have comes from God and God alone. The way to avoid thinking of myself too highly – and therefore disqualifying me from the prize in the end, is to remember who my God is and remember who I am.

At the end of the day, what have I done? Was it for God or not? That is on my head and on my conscience. It has nothing to do with anyone else. Put yourself in a room alone with God and you. What do you have to say to an all-knowing God who knows how many hairs on your head and everything you've ever done. What will the contents of the conversation be? All of that is up to me. I tested my actions before this. Did I run the race and stand the test of time? If not, I must blame myself for what I do each day, whether I minister to everyone I can or give up on God's interests – the people I am voluntarily slave to in order to win some to Christ.

## **One Focus**

### **Eph. 4:1-6**

1 – What kind of life is this? One worthy of the calling you received. The calling from darkness to light – from my sin and shame to God’s ultimate glory and grace. I am not worthy. But I am asked to live as though I was worthy – to live a life pleasing to God. This goes beyond holiness or righteous Christian living – which are both still important and necessary.

2 – This does not reach only my actions but it goes deeper to who I am inside – my character and the stuff I’m made of. I am to be completely and fully humble and gentle and patient. I am someone who bears with others in love – not just putting up with them – but really actually loving them no matter what.

3-6 – Peaceful relations among people who look for the good in others, encourage that good, and love them for the good they do. Peace through love equals unity. Peace through ignoring someone in anger and hate – even if kept inside – brings chaos and uneasiness. One body refers to everyone getting along and working together in unity. We are one body, ministering under and in one Spirit – the Holy Spirit – with one hope resting in our dear Savior. We serve one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. We share one faith – that faith that moves mountains and requires us to know that we know that we know what we believe – that faith that pleases God. We have one baptism, the baptism of repentance bringing us from the darkness of a life far from God into the glorious light of the Truth.

One God and Father – who sent His Son for every single one of us. Who is overall – His kindly kingship – and through all – His permeating presence – and in all – His perfect plan. Who wouldn’t want to serve a God like Him in the manner He wants us to serve?

## **Fasting**

### **Matt. 6:16-18**

16 – Whenever – suggests a regular discipline. Not just once in a while. Hypocrites let people know they're fasting. We are not to be like that. Why? Because this might become a sign of super-spirituality and cause disunity and hatred among other things. Those people receive a reward in full, but this doesn't sound like the kind of reward we are looking for. The reason Jesus calls these people hypocrites is because they were allowing an outward sign for a discipline that is not an outward discipline. Why would we put on a gloomy face? Fasting is a secret and quiet part of the Christian life that is full of joy because of the additional time we get to spend with God. It is a joy to go deeper and deeper in our commitment to God and our relationship and understanding with Him. Fasting is never a burden but an opportunity to sit at the Master's feet no matter what we are outwardly doing.

17 – These are ways of “hiding” the fact that we are fasting. Anointing the head with oil would keep from the “gloomy” or clammy face that would result from no food and water in a desert area for days. Washing the face would restore the skin and keep it from looking like you were a ghost or very sick, which would draw attention to you. Fasting is not about us and it is not about the lengths we are willing to go to get a hold of God in our devotional time. It is not about giving something up, although that is the method. It is about sacrifice for the cause of a more amplified and heavier presence and communion with God. The things we give up are distractions for us in our quest to know Him and make Him known. We shun them so we can focus more on God and His ways rather than our own. How can we minister in God's power to people if we are not fully immersed in His presence, plugging in to the one Source for all ministry and activity, for in Him we move and have our being. Not even demons can handle us if we are willing to give up things to omit a greater spiritual charge from God Himself.

18 – We do not fast for show or for men but to see and know God in His glory. Why would we care whether men know we are fasting or not? We should care more about what our heavenly Father sees in us as we fast for Him. He is the only one that can give us a true reward. Our reward received from men boosts our ego and makes us feel like the little gods we want to be, doesn't it? We want people to focus on us. But that is not what fasting is about. The reward we receive when we fast comes at the very moment we fast, when God comes down and walks in the cool of the day with us and talks with us. That is the reward we want and that is the reward God can't wait to give.

**A Deeper Knowledge, A Deeper Love**  
**Ps. 139:1-6, 13-16, 23-24**

1-4 – God knows everything about me. He knows all of my actions which people see, all of my thoughts which people do not see. He knows my plans and my decisions. He knows my routines and all of my procedures, my likes and dislikes, who I am and what I'm about. Everything that is secret to man and everything that man knows about me; even things I don't know about myself. He knows them.

5-6 – God has covered me in every direction with His protection and presence, with His power and His grace. His blessings are evident every day. He has laid His hand upon me and secured me for His services and plans. I am completely and totally surrendered to what He wants to do with me. This God who knows all of me, His knowledge is so great. He is sovereign and knows all things. He is better at using me than I am at using myself. I submit to Him because He is so much higher than I am.

13-14 – Think of the people we minister to. God has a plan for them and His hand is also on them whether they realize it or not. They are wonderful creatures of God just like us. They need Jesus just as much as we need Him. We are to show them the wonderful works of God in and through our lives. They will see God in and through us. We are not gods but God's Spirit lives in each of us and we are trying to imitate Him. We are the mirrors of God to this city. They will know the works of our God by what we do for Him.

15-16 – We are examples of life to the max: the immaterial Spirit of a holy omnipresent God living inside these material temporary bodies and changing each of us and freeing and saving our souls. Think of the people we witness to. God wants to live in them just as much as He lives in us. As of now, they have yet to be spiritually born. But God knows what He can do with them if they would accept Him. When they come alive in Christ after meeting us, their days begin. They need our help to understand how much they need God to make something great of their unformed and hidden lives in Him. They need a maker who knows them intimately, like He knows us, to give their spirits life everlasting and to fill their days with His wondrous works through them.

23-24 – What then should be my prayer? That God search this mirror of His image, this only example of His holiness to make me as much of an exact replica of His glory as I can be. That is where I find my purpose and my worth. Know me and my thoughts, my wicked ways and tell me so that I can get rid of my heavy baggage and be less like myself and more like You. Lead me into Your ways and use me for your name's sake and honor. I live to serve You and You alone.

## **Hatred Breeds Blessing**

### **Luke 6:22-23**

22 – I don't usually feel blessed when someone grabs me by the neck and screams, "I hate you," in my face. But Jesus tells us that we are blessed when people do that to us in ministry. The key is that they hate us because they hate Jesus. This requires us to emulate Him so that they hate us because we are like Him. This is a compliment when people hate us because we look and act and love like Jesus. It shows that we are accurately imitating our Lord, which is our goal. They make fun of us and persecute us for what we believe and they call us evil just as they claimed that Jesus was casting out demons by Beelzebub. The conviction of the Holy Spirit is running so rampant in them, they completely reject us because we are constant reminders of their depravity and need for a holy God to cover their sins, but they don't want to talk about their sins or stop doing them. We are the salt they don't like to taste. Jesus calls us blessed for doing this.

23 – We are in a way like prophets to those who know nothing of God. We are their physical picture of the hope of Christ, for He took each one of us out of our own dark sins as we wallowed in our own vomit, dressing us in his glorious robe of righteousness, clothing us with His Son, putting His Holy Spirit in us and taking all of our sins upon Himself. That alone is a reward for us but there is more reserved for us in heaven. We do His work not just to receive this reward though. We do it out of our love and thanks for His love shown us first in the cross. People did not like the messages of the prophets and sometimes they are offended with the Gospel we bring. But we keep doing this work no matter what happens to us because of the constant blessings we receive even in this wicked world and we know that there is a reward stored up for us in heaven. He first loved us and fully demonstrated it. I can't repay Him for what He did. All He asked for is all of me and it is in my ability to give all of me to Him.

## **Our Fearless Leader**

### **Col. 1:15-20**

15 – When we think about all of the things that could go wrong or the powers that could come against us as servants of Christ or the works we do to further God’s kingdom, we in ourselves stand shaking in fearful awe. How could we handle all of that opposition? We have the answer in our fearless leader: Jesus Christ. He is over all creation because He was before it was. He is the embodiment of God Himself.

16-17 – Jesus created all things. All things must submit to their creator. If we are afraid, we can call on the authority of Christ, for He is ruler over all of His own creation. He knows every bit of it intimately. Not only did He create it all but He keeps it all together, all of the things that happen occur because of Him. He commands all things. When we feel inadequate or like we are not getting through, we must remember who our Lord is. He is our strength and our power.

18 – Jesus is the leader of the church. He leads us into victory no matter who the enemy may be. Ultimately this enemy will loose all that he desires to gain and we will be on the winning side with our Lord and Leader, Jesus Christ. Jesus should be first in our thoughts, our actions, our hearts, our attitudes, our wills, our hopes, and in all things we are and do. He died before us and was risen so that He has the power to raise us with Him. This is our hope.

19-20 – God was pleased to give Jesus the power He needed to do His ministry for God. Now Jesus’ ministry continues through this body, His church – through us – to the people who have not yet come to know Him. There is peace through the blood Jesus shed on the cross. We are His peacemakers. His blood has already reconciled us to Him. He made all things right and He finished the work in heaven and on earth. When we face problems and difficulties for Him in ministry, we know that we have a fearless leader. We need to remember who our Lord is when we come against any kind of opposition, for if God is for us, who can stand against us.

## **The Purpose of His Presence**

### **1 Kings 19:4-15**

4-8 – Elijah had just done a great work for God in asking Him to show Himself true once again. Now, Jezebel wanted to kill him for what he did. Elijah was depressed because he thought this great work he had accomplished for the Lord would bring about revival but it instead seemed to get worse. In his depression, he demanded that his life be taken but God saw him in his helpless state when he was ready to give up. God gave him the strength to stay alive. If we get depressed or feel like we're not worth anything, God always provides for us because He can still use us no matter what we do wrong or don't give our best when we do it. Even though we might give up on ourselves, God never gives up on us.

9-12 – God knew exactly what Elijah needed to cure his depression. Not drugs or a good psychiatrist. God gave Elijah His presence. First an awesome display of power but God wasn't in it. Sometimes what seems like God must be in something because of how powerful it seems to be does not actually hold an power higher than that of a human strength, which is quite a weakness. Seeing through all of the distractions of life to get into God's presence takes not only knowing what that Presence is like but the sensitivity to detect it in our midst. What is keeping you from recognizing God's voice above that of the world's and even your own voice?

13-15 – God's presence isn't some mystical cool thing that is just a part of Him. There is power in His Presence and through that Presence, God imparts to each of us purpose, just like He did for Elijah. When you're feeling down, God not only will sustain you, but He will give you a purpose, a reason for continued existence. God is never done with you until you don't exist anymore. Service requires surrender. We must give up our feelings of inadequacy or second-guessing the great things God does through us. We do it and give God the credit for it. God uses us again. God is never done with me until I don't exist anymore.