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Donald B. Crawford, President

THE STAND FREEDOM

We Americans, most of us anyway, are passionate freedom lovers. Most of us can not comprehend living other than totally free, and we would echo with all of our hearts the words of Patrick Henry who said:

“Give me liberty or give me death.”

You might say that freedom with us is genetic. It is something we expect, even assume every day of our lives like breathing or blinking. We are outraged when our freedom is encroached or curtailed. We will always demand and defend our rights. Rights are in the blood.

Some two hundred and sixteen years ago, the Constitutional Convention concluded its business in Philadelphia and there was born THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. The birth date of this absolutely incredible and fantastic document was September, 1787. It was a collaboration, the thinking of some of the best minds of the time, which resulted in the finest philosophical expressions of freedom ever written.

One of the authors was the well-known Benjamin Franklin. As Ben Franklin was leaving the convention, he was asked what sort of government he and his fellow statesmen had conceived. Franklin replied with words that are so well remembered even today:

“A Republic, if you can keep it.”

We assume, we Americans, that the Constitution created Democracy, a democratic form of government. But in fact, our Founding Fathers fashioned a document, which created a Republic, which can be quite different from a Democracy. Many of the Founding Fathers, including Franklin, were concerned about a Democracy and all that it implied. They were concerned for the potential for chaos, the tyranny of extremism, the potential arbitrary wield of power by the majority over the minority among others. John Adams said:

“There was never a Democracy yet that did not commit suicide.”

The Republic in their view was a step up from a Democracy, for it was based on the rule of law, and not on the rule of men or women. The premise of a Republic as opposed to a Democracy was that free citizens would voluntarily delegate power to elected representatives who in turn would govern those electors according to laws and principles which would supercede those of any individual. Such a form of government was totally dependent upon the consent of the governed. The governed would have to be willing at all times to abide by the rule of law and subordinate their own points of view and thinking when in conflict with that rule. The Founding Fathers were concerned that the citizens of this new country might not be up to the task. That same concern exists today.

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Citizenship in many forms is in steep decline. Citizen-voters are apathetic. Voter turn out is abysmal. So many do not value their vote and have little concern for the outcome.

Civic knowledge is embarrassing. Young people and adults, both, can hardly answer basic, simple and fundamental questions regarding our government, its origins and structure.

Political parties are often corrupt, self-serving and power hungry. Politicians misrepresent, and will generally do or say anything to get elected without regard to campaign promises or the wishes and will of their very own electorate.

Trust in government is a rare commodity. Politicos are viewed as one step below used car salesmen. Government is run by parties, tenured politicians, and machines, which are almost entirely indifferent to the citizens who elected them. Trust in parties and politicians is so low that wrestlers can be elected Governor, movie actors become President and many others without legal, political or economic capability can run for and get elected to office. It is a strange and sad state of affairs.

We have become a nation of consumers and not citizens. We care for the well being of our lives and lifestyle far more than we do America. We are concerned with access to what meets our wants and needs individually than any constitutional principles, which may govern us collectively. Most citizens have never read the Constitution or the Bill of Rights and if so, don't begin to understand them. In a sense, most Americans really care very little about citizenship. In olden days, the ideal citizen was a person rational and informed. It was expected, even demanded that government be run by experts, the highest and best statesmen, and not party hacks. Politics was a process by which the public will could be divined and implemented consistent with the rule of law and constitutional principles. If America is to survive in anything close to its present form, all such must return with demanding priority. THE AMERICAN CITIZEN MUST BE POLITICALLY BORN AGAIN! America has a serious problem when only 26.7% of 18 year old citizens reported voting in the last presidential election and only 5% of those aged 18 to 25 say they regularly follow public affairs. Citizenship has a serious problem!

Time then it is to get back to basics. Even as a Christian studies scripture, so should every citizen and every Christian citizen study on a regular basis the following:

- 1) The Constitution
- 2) The Bill of Rights
- 3) The Declaration of Independence

Those political documents represent our POLITICAL BIBLE. They are the law of the land. They gave birth to protect and process and perpetuate our rights and freedoms. We should know what they say and what they mean. You could say we have no real right to be American citizens unless we do. If we don't really care, or don't know, or won't participate intelligently in the political process, we contribute to the demise of our great society and the greatest experiment in freedom in the history of mankind.

Citizen or consumer, the choice is yours. If we are not active, aggressive, actualized citizens, goodbye Constitution.

And, goodbye America.

DBC/msl