

Bearing Testimony

The *Wall Street Journal* yesterday carried a column by one of their staff writers dealing with Supreme Court nominee Amy Barrett's religion. It was an article on how the traditional religion of America of over half a century ago provided a sense of community, morality, and self-discipline that actually worked. But, he says, secularists deliberately threw off that religion because it interfered with the sexual behavior they wanted to indulge. Then public school teachers abandoned teaching right and wrong. As a result, the writer pointed out, we now have riots and arson and looting in our cities' streets. His point is, Amy Barrett's religion is good because it's useful to society. Abandoning the religion she espouses has been, in his words, a social disaster; what secular people have replaced it with is "absurd, destructive chaos."

OK. That's very nice. What's sad about the article – actually, it's tragic – is that the writer can't bring himself to refer to Amy Barrett as a Christian. The article is about her "religiosity." He won't use the term Christianity. Christians, to him as well as to everyone else in the media and in Washington, are "religionists." He makes no reference to God. Who would know that our Creator ever came to earth to deal with sin and to rescue us from judgment. Does he even know what Christianity is? Has he ever in his life heard the Gospel? Is the only nice thing to say about Christianity this, that it's socially useful? In other words, what he's essentially saying is, We'll take the blessings that go with Christianity, thank you, but no way do we want Christ or the cross or salvation or even the awareness of God's existence.

Why does he need to write this article in the first place? It's inconceivable that fifty years ago anyone would write something like this. He writes it to call out the Establishment in Washington and in NYC and elsewhere that God exists. (The columnist won't actually say this, perhaps because the atheistic *WSJ* editors deleted it from his original draft). That's why the elite poobahs all hate her. Not because they're afraid she'll overthrow *Roe v. Wade*. It's because by her merely being there, a Christian, a *real* Christian, and being the incredibly intelligent person they all acknowledge that she is and *yet* she believes in the supernatural, she bears credible testimony to God's existence. It's *that* they can't accept. Why not? Because if He exists, that means there really are absolute standards by which we must live and for which we'll be held accountable. It means there really will be a judgment after death.

Of course, I don't know Amy Barrett personally. So I'm doing some speculation now, but what I offer here is reasonable and plausible. I suspect that this woman, when she was young, encountered Jesus Christ and dedicated her life to serving Him. She was gifted, and she decided to pursue what she identified as necessary and strategic for the Church: constitutional law. So she threw herself into that pursuit with all her considerable intellect and other gifts with the intent of being a testimony to the living Christ. It must have meant a lot of study and hours put into reading and learning law. And in the will of God, she's been able to achieve a lot, so much that she's been nominated for the Supreme Court. She now has the extraordinary privilege of bearing witness to all the super-powerful elites at the top of the nation that God exists. In my mind, she's exactly like what Daniel was to Nebuchadnezzar. By her presence there in Washington, she is warning all the vain bigwigs of America that their atheism, their ideologies, and their worldviews and values are all wrong, and they're in deep trouble with God. My question is, where are the *men* of the Church? Did God look around to see what capable servants are available to send America a necessary warning, and find no one but this woman?

What are the men doing with their lives? Why aren't there men bearing testimony to America? I suspect they're pursuing interests other than Christ's interests, so they're not able to serve Him in the way He wants. They're not ready for this unique time we're in. Pastor's choice of 1 Peter for the coming months is therefore exactly the right exposition to be doing. 1 Peter should be the topic of study in *all* American churches right now. Why? Because 1 Peter is key to understanding how we're to live in a world like America is right now or *may soon become*.

We have an election coming up in a couple of weeks that is probably the most consequential one in our lifetime. The outcome of this election may determine the subsequent course of the entire nation. If

Democrats sweep Washington, it's likely America will ineluctably become Marxist. There'll be disruption if not chaos in every domain of society. And this may all be in the will of God, who is right now preparing the world stage for the Return of Christ. And America doesn't figure in prophetic end-time events, as we've pointed out repeatedly here. That's why we need to know the message of 1 Peter.

I differ with most commentaries. 1 Peter is not primarily about persecution. Indeed, persecution of Christians is there. But that's not Peter's argument. The purpose of 1 Peter is to argue that *regardless of our circumstances*, regardless what is going on in the nations in which we dwell, regardless the pagan power-lust we foolishly call politics, or the social chaos or the filth we euphemistically call culture, we're to be intensely Christ-like. There doesn't need to be persecution for 1 Peter to be important to us. There doesn't need to be suffering due to our faith. There *does* need to be the godly character of Christ being expressed in our lives.

Whether President Trump is re-elected or somebody else is elected doesn't matter. We're to be like Christ. Then God can use us to fulfill His great purposes. And we'll glorify God by revealing what's really important to us, the Person of Christ and His perfections. Jesus should be so important to us, so beautiful, so gloriously perfect in every way, that we want more than anything to be just like Him. His submissive weakness is our submissive weakness. His holiness is our holiness. His love for others is our love for others. His priestly work is our priestly work. His humility, our humility. And His sufferings are our sufferings – if that is God's will for us. In this letter, Peter reflects 30 years later on the Person of Jesus and, with Apostolic authority, commands us to be everything that He was. And how does imitating Christ happen? Peter knows...it's the "poured out Spirit" that has been given to us who, if we're yielded to Him and obedient to the Word, makes it possible.

What about our circumstances? We're to ignore them. God is right now at work in the world. The coronavirus pandemic is clear evidence of that. Circumstances, including the outcome of our national election, are under God's sovereign will and control. I can promise you, the person of His choice will be elected President. And that the consequences of the election likewise are His determined will for America. God's purposes are transcendent; our desires are selfish and petty.

Our attitude, Peter says, is to be like aliens living in another country, indifferent to the politics, ideas and values of the indigenous people there, carrying out our God-given purpose and mission. Which is...?? To be like Amy Barrett to the people around us: revealing that God exists, that He hates sin but He rescues us from the power and guilt of sin and from the terrible judgment that sin requires. And that a better existence awaits, one that is blessed beyond anything we can imagine, available to any who turn to Christ in faith.

The great question facing the Church is this: Does God have authority over our lives? We claim to trust Christ, and we call Him "Lord." But we may actually be living as if we're our own authority, as if God isn't really there. We know that Amy Barrett lives under the authority of God, because her life shows it. She's not just another "Christian" in name only. We too need to be the real thing. So Peter wants us all to show that we're submitted to the authority of Christ by our being just like Christ, the obedient Servant of God. And Peter isn't subtle about this, by the way. Being Christ-like isn't just an option, because he writes, "For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (4:17).

This era is coming to an end. The Rapture of the Church and Christ's return is imminent. As we faithfully open our mouths and bear credible testimony to all that God has done in Christ Jesus, may we pray this with Peter: "[May our faith] be proved genuine and result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1:7).