



RELIGION

Scripture of the Week:
Ezekiel Chapters 31-32



A Lesson From Lithuania Is A Lesson In Self-Respect



A. Lee Henderson

When the major events in newspaper headlines promise to be recorded as major "history" for mankind's future, we can seize the opportunity to take careful scrutiny of what is involved for us to learn beneath the surface.

Current events occur so rapidly with the television images scurrying across our screens in theatrical images. They defy us from taking too seriously the sight of men and women in protest.

Haven't we been exposed to China's recent demonstrations, the carnage in the streets, the loss of life in protest against freedom? And isn't Lithuania another potential Tiananmen Square... a future scene from a movie whose script has already been written?

We are in danger of "watching the movie" of history as it is being written instead of *involving* ourselves, realistically, in the events as they affect our own lives!

Things are never just what they appear to be.

Christ wisely knew that it was difficult for us to learn our "lessons," lessons in life that could help us through our difficulties and our abilities to deal with situations from the simplest to the most complex.

Therefore, Christ made his own messages come clear to us through parables. The power of the parable is its illustrative ability to communicate meaning beyond mere words. The visual messages recorded in Christ's parables enable us to grasp the essence of his teachings. He paints a masterpiece for us in the people, their relationships to each other, and the landscape they move upon so that, from our own rich perspectives we

Russians trying to impose their will upon other nations to join them in pursuing a repressive totalitarian one-way course to Power-over-People.

The message to me and to any individual who reveres the dignity of living beyond oppressive loss of freedom, is to sharpen our own tools for independent action and resolve.

As individuals, we have another lap to run, another jogging session to take, another marathon to race towards asserting ourselves, here and now, in our local community, our local government, our state, and our federal areas, and our national concerns.

This is the time to learn a lesson from Lithuania.

The only way we can affect what ultimately happens to Lithuania, is by starting in our own backyard. For as Lithuania goes...so goes the course of freedom for all of us, from South Africa to the United States!

No longer are we able to hide behind the covers and deny the improbability that "It can't happen here!"

Our nation values its freedoms, but beneath the Capitol dome of Washington D.C. the Lithuanian crackdown has set up some significant reverberations.

Gorbachev in Russia has rejected Lithuania's attempt to explain its declaration of independence. To Russia, Lithuania is a rebel republic, and like a disobedient child must be seen and not heard! The word has come to us through Tass, the official press agency in Russia.

Their word is not *our* Word! "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear them which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." *St. Matthew 10:28.*

Tass described the Lithuanian president's plea (President Vytautas Landsbergis) a "dead end."

The tension was burdensome, for even at this writing, Soviets had occupied the Chief Prosecutor's Office, Communist Party headquarters, and presided over the printing presses since March 11 declaration of independence.

The issues that have captivated my imagination bear further discussion and

thought: President Landsbergis said in simple words that Lithuania's future rests upon publicity as self-defense.

In the world arena the Soviet Union realizes that its relationships with foreign countries hinges upon some measure of world opinion.

Stalin's own birthplace in Georgia with about 60,000 people has demonstrated for secession from Russia.

There will be no easy solutions to the Baltic unrest.

Yet, isn't it more than a chess board for powerplaying with human beings as pawns?

Anyone can say, "Don't involve me...It's too far away for me to care what happens to them."

Which is a way of casting out some of the greatest treasure available to us...the learning experience of applying what is happening in the world to our own lives.

For every incident that comes our way which requires us to take a stand and stand tall, let us do it with resolve.

For every incident that comes our way which requires us to take a stand are able to zoom in from the panoramic to the particular, to appreciate the content of his stories and their application to our personal lives.

What if we were able to do this with present happenings in the world around us? Could we perhaps then trap the meanings of events before they elude us and slip off to become world history? I believe we can.

I fear that we are in danger of not perceiving the world stage clearly in its relationship to our present actions, our immediate purposes, and our day-to-day lives.

We cannot afford the luxury of waiting for future generations to give us the perspective we need to see things more clearly! Had the African slaves landing on our shores been shown the future impact of their slavery upon the turmoil of the sixties, the Freedom Riders, and the subsequent rise of a ruling class of black legislators taking leadership across the United States of America...they may very well have demanded *Freedom Now* in an insurrection that would have advanced "emancipation" for the entire human race!

We are chained to present time unless we project far enough into the future to

help ourselves advance beyond our perceived limitations.

Again...things are not always what they seem!

"And he spake a parable unto them; Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?" *St. Luke 6:39.*

We are asked to remove our "blindness" and think with our own heads, rather than accepting the dictates of the and stand tall, let us do it with resolve.

For every time we allow ourselves to buckle under a repressive authority that puts our own bodies, our own health, and our own welfare at risk: let us speak out and communicate, and broadcast that situation to community and friends so that they can be alert to the job, the person, the employer, the organization, the legislator, or the administrator responsible. Gather any grievance, no matter how trivial, to discuss with the abusing party and first make every effort to ameliorate the difficulty.

Afterwards, broadcast through all the means at your disposal so that the offending behavior is nipped in the bud. Totalitarianism in the home or work place may be difficult to deal with, but it can be faced and removed once we decide to treat it like a cancer, heal it or remove it!

The irony of Russia's dominance over Lithuania occurred without legal precedence. After World War II no treaty exists by which Russia can legally claim the right to what was an independent country, and which later became a pawn in the aggressive hands of the Soviet Union!

No matter what the might of Mother Russia portends to be, we learn from our own Master that "Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth." *St. Luke 11:17.*

The same is true when we are torn apart, internally and warring against ourselves...better to resolve our conflicts and make peace with our own minds, our own hearts, our own souls.

A lesson from Lithuania is a lesson in self-respect.

Whatever the price that must be paid for its achievement, it is worth paying for...Christ paid the supreme price for us, and where we must, we can do no less on behalf of our own immortal souls.

*Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskiene called for "compromise...not retreat. She viewed the threatened economic sanctions as crucial but echoed the Lithuanian cry for independence in spite of Russia's insistence that Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia...the Baltic nations submit to the legal provisions established by the Soviet parliament.

REVEREND EDDIE BUTLER SR. 2/15/09 - 5/28/90

Reverend Eddie Butler Sr. was born in Lovelady (Vistula), Texas, February 15, 1909 to George and Paralee Butler. He was the fourth of eleven children.

In 1932 he married Rosa Wright and began a union that lasted 52 years and bore six children.

In 1942 the family moved to Portland, Oregon where Eddie continued his employment with the Pullman Company for the next 33 years. He became a leader in the A. Phillip Randolph movement to form a union in support of Black Pullman Porters with the objective of standardizing wages and working conditions.

Upon retiring from the Pullman Company in 1973, he was employed by a community Senior Citizen Program. During the next few years his community activist involvement turned to Senior Citizen issues and the NAACP Credit Union where he served as loan officer for 12 years.

During these years Eddie renewed his affiliation with The Good Samaritan Church of God in Christ and began to seriously study and direct his faith in God to the ministry. He served as Sunday School superintendent at Good Samaritan Church for many years where he was able to touch and influence many lives. He was ordained as a minister with the Church of God in Christ in 1988.

He leaves to mourn two sisters: Mable Canada of Portland, Oregon and Ruby Deiz of Columbus, Ohio; two sons: Eddie Butler Jr., of Vancouver, Washington and Robert Butler of Portland, Oregon; one daughter: Rose Anne Butler of Portland, Oregon; daughter-in-laws Sandra, Larnzella, and Mary Butler; grandsons: Michael Butler, Walter Butler Jr., Derrick Butler; granddaughters: Michelle Butler, Danielle Butler, Portland, Oregon, Suzette Butler and Michi Butler Vancouver, Washington; great grandchildren: Dante Fogerty of Vancouver Washington, Shaelia Branch and Dominique Hill of Portland, Oregon, Ashley Butler of Ohio, and Tashiona Butler of Texas.

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"Give me this mountain" (con't)

As long as life shall last, I never shall forget my first semester in seminary. Three months earlier, I had graduated from Bishop College in the Department of Religion and Philosophy. I had received Honors for outstanding achievements in my field. I had the distinction of graduating from an institution that had been well known for almost 100 years for graduating more preachers of color than any other institution in the country.

In the Fall of 1979, I arrived at seminary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with a pocket overflowing with confidence. Instead of applying myself to those giant books, I was out preaching everywhere I could get an invitation. I was attending revivals every time one came to town. I knew I had it made. After Bishop College any other school was just a piece of cake. But, then--at the end of that first Tri-semester, when I got my grades, I discovered that I had flunked every course but one. I had lost the battle to the giant called over-confidence.

After that experience, every evening from pm to pm I was in the library conquering those Giant Books. After that experience, I think that only once or twice did I get a grade lower than a "B."

Along with the Giant I (Ego, Flesh, Self) and the giant of over confidence, we must also conquer the giant of a learned head and unconsecrated heart.

Scholarship and consecration must go hand in hand, especially in the study of the scriptures. Along with your learning, there must be some burning.

The story is told of the young pastor fresh from seminary. He had been called to his first church, in a rural and rustic environment. He had been there about three months, and his sermons were homiletically structured. They were filled with quotes from distinguished and celebrated Theologians, like: Barth, Kierkegaard, Neihbur, Tillich and all of the others. Every sermon was filled with quotes and not with fire. One day one of the mothers of the church came to him and told him, "Young man either you put some fire in those sermons or put those sermons in the fire."

There is a danger in having all learning and no burning. There is a song that the old saints use to sing. In that song, there is a line that says, "I wouldn't have a religion that I couldn't feel sometimes" yet, let me hasten to say that it is just as dangerous to have a religion that was all feeling. Just as it is detrimental to have all learning and no burning, so it is to have all burning and no learning.

Religion at its best is not the antithesis of learning, nor is it the thesis of burning, but religion at its best is a synthesis of both learning and burning. It is both the scholar-

ship of Athens and the religious fervor of Jerusalem.

There is yet another giant that you must conquer if you want to live victoriously on the mountain. This giant is not a vicious or violent giant. He might even go unnoticed at first. But don't let him fool you he is just as deadly as the others. He is the giant called complacency. He is the giant that will lull you into a false sense of security.

He is the giant that will cause you to be at ease in Zion. He is the giant that will rob you of your sobriety. He will trick you into thinking that now you are on the mountain. You have arrived. Sit back you got it made. There is no need to study and prepare anymore.

There is no need to sober, to be vigilant, to be watchful. You are on the mountain. He is that giant that will tell you that the gospel is for other folk. You don't need to be in Sunday Church School, nor Bible Study and Prayer Meeting; its for those other folk. After all you are on the mountain now.

When you make it to the mountain, don't let the giant of complacency put out your fire of enthusiasm. Don't let the giant of complacency damper your discipleship fervor.

You want the mountain, then be prepared to confront and conquer these giants. The giant of I (Ego, Flesh, Self), the giant of overconfidence, the giant of a learned head, and unconsecrated heart, and finally the giant of complacency.

Finally, let me encourage you to reach for your mountain. Some of the most significant events in the archives of human history have happened on mountains.

It was on a mountain that Noah land the Ark of God, Ararat.

It was on a mountain that Abraham offered up Isaac, Moriah.

It was on a mountain that Moses received the 10 commandments, Sinai.

It was on a mountain that Moses stood and looked over in the promised land, Nebo.

It was on a mountain that they buried the bones of Moses, Nebo.

It was on a mountain that Elijah defeated the 450 Prophets of Baal, Carmel.

It was on a mountain that the first King of Israel died, Gilboa.

It was on a mountain that the holy city of Jerusalem was built, Zion.

It was on a mountain that the prophet Zechariah prophesied that the feet of the Lord shall stand in the Day of Judgment, Olivet.

And finally it was on a mountain that the Lord of the Universe was crucified. It was on a mountain that he bowed his head. It was on a mountain that he gave up the ghost. But it didn't stop here, God raised him up, and now he is seated eternally in the Heav-

enlies. That tells me that even though the mountains are high and lifted up, they are not our final destination, God has another place higher than any mountain. But while I am down here give me this mountain!!!!!!
AMEN

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