



The President's Perspective



It's Time To Arise

"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan..." (Joshua 1:1-2)

In the last two weeks, Christianity has lost two of its most faithful preachers and dynamic leaders. Drs. Lee Roberson and Jerry Falwell were men of integrity who have cast long shadows. Their influence will be felt well into the next century, as well as into eternity.

It was my privilege to conduct a two week meeting with Dr. Roberson in 1994. Though 84 years of age at the time, I will never forget the physical and spiritual vitality that he possessed. A gracious and godly spirit permeated everything he did. I have nothing but the utmost respect for him, both personally and professionally. His greatest legacy will, without doubt, be the many faithful men who stand in pulpits weekly and proclaim the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, having received their training at Tennessee Temple University, the institution he founded.

Though I never met Dr. Falwell personally, my life has most definitely been touched by his life. His passion for God, the gospel, young people and his country are admirable and enviable qualities. In 1995, I was privileged to hear Dr. Falwell preach in Jacksonville, Florida. As he shared incidents from his decades of ministry, I leaned to my wife and commented, "This message is coming from the heart of a broken man." Though definitely not lacking in passion, it was obvious that his message, that evening, was reflective of the many hurts that he had sustained over the years, often times at the hands of his "friends." Yet, he encouraged us, as only he could do, "to keep looking up and keep aggressively serving our Savior."

Two years ago, Nathan (our middle child) met Dr. Falwell at Thomas Roads' annual Living Christmas Tree. Nathan was impressed by Dr. Falwell's obvious interest in his (Nathan's) musical pursuits. Of course, Dr. Falwell addressed Nathan with his classic identification, calling him a "young champion," and spoke with him as if he were the most important young person in the world. That brief encounter made a lasting impression on Nathan and was greatly appreciated by dad and mom.

One last reflection on Dr. Falwell. Eight years ago, as we were launching H.O.P.E. Ministries, our crusade director/public relations director told me a story that I will never forget. He had become acquainted with Dr. Falwell years earlier and had served as his

personal security guard during a visit Dr. Falwell made to the northwest United States. Our crusade director was with Dr. Falwell from 7:30 in the morning (when Dr. Falwell conducted a press conference), till 10:30 at night (when he concluded his day with a pastor's meeting in his hotel room). Though verbally challenged and criticized by a number of the pastors, with whom he met that evening, Dr. Falwell was his usual gracious and upbeat self. Our crusade director wisely commented, "After a long day of being beaten up by the secular press, and when he needed the most encouragement, he had to take even more criticism. Yet, he did it graciously and kindly." Evidently, that was who Jerry Falwell was, and how he always operated. I greatly appreciate his standing in the gap and fighting battles, religiously and politically, that have eternally benefited the cause of Christ.

As a result of these two men's passing, we, the living, need to respond in two ways. First, we need to respectfully and graciously ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR DEATHS ("Moses my servant is dead"-Joshua 1:2). It is fitting and right that we give honor to whom honor is due. It is appropriate that tributes be given to these who have lived above reproach, morally and monetarily. It is natural and right that we mourn the loss of these highly effective leaders, just as Israel mourned the loss of Moses ("And the children of Israel wept for Moses...thirty days."--Deuteronomy 34:8).

Second, we, the living, must ARISE TO DEFEND the causes they defended and held dear ("Moses my servant is dead; now therefore ARISE, go over this Jordan..."--Joshua 1:2). Just because these men have passed off the scene, the work to be done has not ceased with their passing. As Joshua was to complete the task Moses began, we must take up the mantle of leadership and complete our task-that of reaching a lost world with the same gospel that Drs. Roberson and Falwell loved dearly and preached passionately. Their deaths must serve to energize us, focus us and unite us in the greatest cause of all, the redemption of lost humanity. WILL YOU JOIN ME IN THIS NOBLE AND ETERNAL TASK?

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