Contemporary Comments on the Adult Sabbath School Lesson

[Title] Garments of Splendor  
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“Judge me for what I can do for America now, rather than only by my mistakes from the past.” This is what former Speaker of the House and presidential candidate, Newt Gingrich, is asking of America.¹

One person who isn’t interested in forgetting Gingrich’s past is Oklahoma Senator Tom Coburn. “He’s the last person I’d vote for for president of the United States,” Coburn said during a town hall event last Sunday.² “He doesn’t know anything about commitment to marriage,” blasted Coburn. “His life indicates he does not have a commitment to the character traits necessary to be a great president.”

Coburn is referring to the fact that Gingrich has not only been divorced twice, but also had an extra marital affair. When President Bill Clinton faced impeachment for allegedly lying to a grand jury about his own affair with a White House intern, Gingrich pushed hard for the impeachment. But he was soon labeled a hypocrite when news broke that Gingrich himself had had an adulterous affair that broke up a previous marriage. He now says that he has made things right with God, and that voters should have the right to question him as they assess him as a candidate.

“I have made mistakes in my life,” he admits. “I had to go to God to seek forgiveness and reconciliation.” He then called for people to “decide whether or not I am today a person who can lead the country and save us from enormous problems.”

Gingrich is confident that he is a changed man. A man ready to lead our country. “I think that if people watch me, talk with me, get to know me, my hope is that a majority of Americans will decide that I can help this country get back on track in a way that no one else can,” he declared. “And if they decide that that’s true, then I think we will have a very successful campaign. But people have every right to ask the tough questions and to measure somebody personally.”

In an interview with NBC’s Meet the Press on Sunday, he encouraged Americans to look at the “strong marriage” he now has with his wife, Callista. And to consider the “forgiveness” he believes he has received from God for his personal transgressions.

Speaking of the American people, one sentence in this interview stands out: “And I ask them to look at who I am today.”

Regardless of which political party you belong to—or if you belong to one at all—isn’t this what we all want for ourselves? We have sinned. Maybe our sin has been made public, too. We ask and receive God’s forgiveness, and then we hope that people will see the new person we have become—the “who I am today.”

Isaiah knew what it was like to experience such forgiveness. And it caused him to be full of joy! He declared, “I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a
bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels” (Isaiah 61:10).

God doesn’t ask us to work in order to be forgiven. We don’t need to bring sacrifices or offerings to try to please God enough, or to twist God’s arm to save us. In Isaiah 52 God calls us to repentance, obedience and salvation. There are “garments of splendor” for each one of us. We repent by admitting we have sinned and by asking for forgiveness. We obey by learning though the Bible and prayer the way we should live as Christians. And we accept salvation as a gift, because that’s what it is. Yet so many of us choose to cower beneath our old, dirty garment of sin because we somehow can’t fathom that there is a new and brilliantly white garment of grace. We feel so undeserving. And we are. But then, that’s the splendor of the gift.

~nc

1. CNN
2. Politico

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