



PSALM 33:10-12 | You Have a Heritage to be Proud Of!

Sunday, May 3, 2015 — The Fifth Sunday of Easter

¹⁰ The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. ¹¹ The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations. ¹² Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

Recently, the television company PBS has aired a show called *Finding Your Roots*. The premise of the show is this: famous celebrities and actors appear on the show and allow historians and DNA scientists to dig through their family history and genetics to find the “roots” of where they came from, what their ancestors had done, and what, if any, famous family members they might have. Celebrities like Jessica Alba, Sting, Sally Field, Stephen King, Derek Jeter, and many others have appeared on the show. One of the most recent guests has been Ben Affleck.

It’s an interesting show and concept. Companies like *FamilyTree.com* and *ancestry.com* have made millions because of the curiosity of people like you and me in their roots. And rightly so. We enjoy seeing some of the famous people or families to which we are related. It’s interesting seeing where we’re from and what our family was like. Finding pictures that are decades, perhaps a century, old sheds light on why your family may or may not have the customs they do. And Ben Affleck was no different. Digging back hundreds of years, researchers found that Mr. Affleck’s great-great-great grandfather fought in the Revolutionary War. Ben called him a “patriot,” and beamed with pride as he considered his family’s role in the war against England for our national freedom. It was a moment that he enjoyed—and rightly so!—because his family had been a part of a cause that directly affected him in a positive way.

Much the same is true of us. A few moments ago you saw pictures of my grandfathers—both veterans of World War II. It’s a piece of pride in my family to know that they fought as a part of the *Greatest Generation*, contributing in the war effort against the Axis Powers. I take pride in the heritage of my family with called workers—pastors and teachers that have served their Lord faithfully for generations. And I’m sure that you have many of the same people in your own families that bring you pride and joy as you think about them and their impact on your own family’s or our nation’s history.

But scandal arose from the Affleck episode. Mr. Affleck requested of the show’s producers and host to keep a portion of his familial history a secret. You see, the historians and researchers had found a fact about the Affleck family that was embarrassing and tainted any glorious idea that one might have of that family. And Ben wanted to hide it. Researchers had found that while his

great-great-great grandfather was a patriot in the Revolutionary War, his great-great grandfather was a slave owner. Gasp! The horror! But for someone who wants their life to look pristine and clean, such an ancestor is an inconvenient truth. It's a black spot on a patriotic, freedom-loving family. And he wanted it gone because it was embarrassing and shameful.

But before we cast the first stone, we aren't much different. We don't willingly bring up the "black sheep" of the family in a conversation. We avoid talking about those embarrassing relatives or that shameful time in our lives, too. Why? Because—gasp!—it might make us look like our life isn't perfect, pristine, and peaceful. Shock! Horror! We are sinful!

But it's no laughing matter. Truthfully our ancestry is full of embarrassing stories. For generations—since Adam and Eve—our ancestors have continued to take God and his Word and trample on it. They have taken our Lord and his promises and scorned him. They've slapped the providing and protecting hand of our God and claimed self-sufficiency. They've neglected to recognize their sinfulness and wretched state. And so have you. You're no different than your ancestors. And your children are no different than you. And your grandchildren will be no different and their children and their children after that.

The shameful truth is this: There is no one perfect, not even one. (Romans 3:10) ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) And the soul who sins will die. (Ezekiel 18:4) This is the inconvenient truth we try to bury. This is the shame and scorn that we try to hide from others. We put up facades and use labels like "I'm a primary giver to the congregation," or "My family was one of the founding families of the congregation," or "We read our devotion every day." By trying to hide who we are we try to put a pretty dress on a decayed body. We attempt to slap paint on a wall that is covered in mold and disease. We try to spray perfume on a rotting corpse. And at that point, we're no better than those whom Jesus called out when he accused those sinners as being "white-washed tombs." (Matthew 23:27) We may look good on the outside, but inside we're still filled with rotting and the stench of death.

What a genealogy! I'm not sure there's a single one of us here today that takes pride in those facts. And who could possibly want such a person in their family as me. But that's where we missed the point of the Psalmist. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom *he has chosen* as his heritage!" You see, we aren't a part of the family that God would like to forget. We aren't considered the "black sheep" of his family. No, God chose us. He came to us and took us into his family. He saw us in our wretched state and said, "I want you..."

And he did this through Christ. Christ became one of us. He is *Immanuel*, "God with us." He is our Savior. He walked this earth and took on flesh to save you and me. And he had nothing to cover up. His heart and soul were perfect. He never wavered. He never sinned. Even under the most severe temptations, he stayed faithful to his word. He took your filth and your sinful heritage on himself, making himself look like a sinner, and endured the cross. In essence, he became the opposite of the white-washed tomb he spoke of earlier. On the outside, God saw the

filth and the grime and the shame of sin that he took on himself on our behalf, and all the while he was in his heart still the sinless, holy, perfect Son of God. And because of this selfless act, he won life for you.

And that life is yours through faith—faith that was created as water washed the filth and grime away. Faith that was created as he laid the robe of righteousness over your shoulders. Faith that was created as he marked you with the sign of the cross as a redeemed *child* of God—part of his family—his heritage! He comes to you today in bread and wine. “This is my body...given for you. This is my blood...shed for you.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-25) He beckons you to the table. He pleads with you to come and lay your anxieties on him. (1 Peter 5:7) He yearns for you to find rest in him. (Matthew 11:28)

Dear Christian, I’m sure there are things in your family that you are ashamed of. I know there are things in your life that make you turn red with embarrassment as you think of them. But those sins are gone—removed as far as the east is from the west. (Psalm 103:12) Christ, your brother, has removed them from you. You are now a part of the family of God, with a permanent home in heaven. And that’s a heritage you can be proud of! Amen.



Soli Deo Gloria!

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