

God's Will and Lincoln Logs

This has been a wonderful time together with my wife's folks! We have gone to the places where Lincoln lived in his youth and manhood. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum was amazing. One of the most interesting pieces of information came to us from my father-in-law, who said it has now been documented: when people go to Hodginsville, Kentucky to see the boyhood home of Lincoln and see the actual logs that make up his cabin, they are all authentic, but not entirely of his cabin. The Lincoln family knew the Davis family. Each had a boy - one grew up to be the President of the United States, the other became the one and only president of the Confederacy. When the state of Kentucky dissembled their cabins for heritage to be moved and re-assembled, both the logs from Davis' and Lincoln's cabin were placed together and the loose logs mixed together and it is believed now upon separation, some of Jeff Davis' logs were in the mix. It definitely happened; they just don't know how many logs came from the cabin of Jefferson Davis and how many came from Abraham Lincoln's. So when you go to view the cabin of Abraham Lincoln, you are also seeing (to some degree) the cabin of Jefferson Davis. Amazing story - two boys in their earliest formative years reared very near each other with intertwining futures from very different worldviews but, much like their cabin logs, became mixed after a heartbreaking war and then were re-assembled to become part of the American story.

As we have walked through American history in the past few days I have, as always, looked for the hand of Divine Providence. I am interested to see what God is up to, in other words, how He was "mixing up the logs" to be re-assembled according to His pattern. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way" (Psalms 37:23). "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). By the same token, I realize that as Christians, our paths are under God's watch care and Providence. The very word we translate "providence" comes from the combination of the Latin roots, "pro" = before and "video" = to see. It means, "to see before." So, God, who sees before we do, has a Divine arrangement and blueprint. And when we follow, we shall not only be guided, but also blessed.

As we relived our personal history in the past few days, again I was on the lookout for God's guiding hand. One late morning we stopped at the Willard Library in Evansville, Indiana as my mother-in-law searched for her long lost great, great grandfather Belcher. On the second floor of this 122-year-old building she was approached by another great, great granddaughter of the same man who "happened" to be working in this library. So it was fascinating to see these cousins hugging each other who had "per chanced" bumped into each other. It was too coincidental to have been coincidence.

By the time afternoon came on this already providential day, I was prepared to see what plan God had in store for us yet. As we finished up lunch, I went to the place where we needed to get the oil changed on our car. As the young man was finishing up our paper work, I asked him if he was a Christian. He dropped his head and seriously replied, "no." I looked at his nametag, which read, "Josh." I remarked, "Well, I see somebody named you Joshua, which is the Hebrew name for Jesus." He replied, "My middle name is Caleb." I said, "Someone had a familiarity with Christianity when naming you." He said, "Well, Jehovah Witness anyway." I said, "Josh, I know you have a business to attend to, but as your partner waits on the garage for right now, would you mind if I showed you in the Bible how to become a Christian? He said, "No, go ahead." As I showed him how to be saved, I sensed God directing me to address the issue of the Deity of Christ because of his religious background, which blatantly denies Christ's Deity. I gave him some verses on who Christ is but he still had a problem accepting Christ as God. Then I came to John, chapter one where the Bible reads, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). I said, "Here, Josh, we have God's Word on it. Can you take God at his word?" He smiled and affirmed that he could. At the very moment he was to pray and invite Christ to save him, his partner came storming in with some information. We paused and went back to praying and without hesitation, Josh prayed out loud for the Lord to forgive

him and save him. It was such a blessing; he showed immediate evidence that he knew what he was doing and truly meant business with the Lord.

We had a disagreement about the power steering fluid. One of the workers at the garage said no power steering was needed. My father-in-law said we definitely needed some. Being the mechanically minded guy that I am not, I decided I could not cast the deciding vote. So I said, "Let's go to that auto parts place down the street and ask one of those guys who works there for a third opinion. So we pulled up to the busy O'Reilly's Auto Parts and I went inside. There was a young man whose hands were full, yet he walked right up to me and asked if he could help me. I explained our dilemma and asked if he could help us decide. He laughed, put his things down, came outside and made his judgment. I shook his hand and said "Thanks." At that moment, I felt a strong, providential pull to say something about Christ to this young man. I said, "Are you a Christian? Do you know for sure that if you died today Heaven would be your home?" He looked me squarely in the eye and said, "No, but I have really been wondering because in a few days I am going to Iraq. I'd like to know." I said, "Look, I know you are busy, but do you mind if I show you in the Bible how you can know for sure?" With enthusiasm, he said, "Yes, please, go ahead." In just a little while, this young man was praying the sinner's prayer, inviting Christ into his heart and life to be Lord and Savior.

This morning, the day after these two wonderful events, I stand amazed at the providence of our Lord in arranging the ordinary course of what appears to be just another day. God is arranging the "logs of our lives" so that at the intersection of destiny, searching souls can find their peace with God. So my encouragement to you today is not to lament the change of events or what are, often times, interpreted as delays or detours. See today how God is arranging the logs of our mixed up lives with the logs of others to form a beautiful structure that says something more than that our history is complete, but, better still, God's history and dealings with people with whom we intersect is complete. I love the words of Jesus who said, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39). Jesus also said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

- Pastor Pope -

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