

The Other Thing Patrick Henry Said

by Mike Tucker *

Patrick Henry, whose primary contribution to the history books is the phrase "Give me liberty or give me death," made another statement that appears in a number of quotation collections. He said, *"I know of no way of judging the future, but by the past."*

Repeat this before an audience, and you'll see many heads nod in agreement. It has the ring of good common sense; however, there may be wisdom in considering just how we apply this axiom.

It fits perfectly when applied to the faithfulness of God. We can look to our past history and find that God has been by our side in every situation. He has guided our steps and provided comfort and care all along the way. Knowing that He has blessed in the past, we can "judge" that He will continue to be faithful, and thus we gain faith and courage for the future.

But, while the axiom is true of God's faithfulness to us, and it may apply to politics or history or investment strategies, it also has its limitations, especially when applied to "judging" people. I wouldn't recommend it as a foundation for developing positive relationships with others. Every person is a work in progress, and past mistakes are not absolute predictors of a negative future. And it certainly doesn't reflect the way God relates to us.

God gives us an opportunity to let go of the past and start over -- each and every day. Jeremiah wrote, *"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."* (Lamentations 3:22-23)

God doesn't judge our future by our past. He didn't do it with David or Moses or Peter or Paul or countless other Bible characters. Neither does He do it with you and me. He does not treat us as our sins deserve. [Psalm 103:10] With him, every day is a new day.

A good way to begin each day with God is to remember that you've just been given brand new mercies -- the chance to start the day with a clean slate. It's also a good way to start the day with others. God doesn't allow your past to prevent you from having a great future, so let's give the same gift to others.

With Love,
Mike

* Mike Tucker is the speaker/director of Faith for Today.
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