

## President Trump's "new American moment": 3 biblical responses

Dr. Jim Denison | January 31, 2018

President Trump delivered his first State of the Union address last night. The president described this time in our history as a "new American moment" and added, "There has never been a better time to start living the American dream."

The purpose of my article today is to offer not political analysis but a biblical response. The president stated, "We know that faith and family, not government and bureaucracy, are the center of the American life. Our motto is 'in God we trust.'"

How can we make our motto our daily reality?

If I could offer a Spiritual State of the Union to our country, I would point to Psalm 30 and three principles that teach us how to maximize this moment in our history.

Live in the present for the eternal.

The president focused on achievements his administration has made in its first year. He pointed to car companies that are "now building and expanding plants in the United States," the approval of more new and generic drugs, and the liberation of nearly all the territory once held by the Islamic State.

Of course, it is a president's job to focus on temporal prosperity for the nation he leads. But Scripture consistently calls us to live in the present moment for the sake of eternity.

David testified that God's "anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning" (Psalm 30:5). Today is the time before time shall be no more.

One of the youth camps at my last pastorate took as its theme "The Dash," pointing to the hyphen on your gravestone between your birth and your death. The point was that we need to live every day in light of eternity. When you are in heaven, how will you wish you had lived this day on earth?

America will maximize the present moment to the degree that we seek eternal significance.

Know that your prosperity depends on God's provision.

The president noted that the economy has created 2.4 million new jobs this year, including two hundred thousand new jobs in manufacturing. Unemployment has hit a forty-five-year low. Again, working for economic progress is a president's responsibility.

But prosperity can be deceptive.

David boasted, "As for me, I said in my prosperity, 'I shall never be moved'" (v. 6). But then adversity taught him better: "By your favor, O Lord, you made my mountain stand strong; you hid your face; I was dismayed" (vv. 6-7).

When God "hid" his face through suffering, David realized that his "mountain" was made strong only by the Lord's providence and provision. Challenges expose the fallacy of our self-sufficiency. Pain is "God's megaphone," as C. S. Lewis noted, reminding us that we are creatures and not the Creator.

Similarly, prosperity promotes self-reliance. It is human nature to credit ourselves for the good in our lives and blame others (or God) for the bad. In such times, God deals with us as gently as he can or as harshly as he must.

America will achieve our greatest dreams to the degree that we depend on the provision of God.

Use every moment for God's glory.

Near the end of his speech, the president noted that "Americans fill the world with art and music. They push the bounds of science and discovery. And they forever remind us of what we should never forget: The people dreamed this country. The people built this country. And it is the people who are making America great again."

President Trump's message was appropriately intended to instill confidence in America and Americans. However, Scripture calls us to an even higher purpose.

David testified, "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness" (v. 11). For what purpose? "That my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!" (v. 12).

Carry this approach to life through your day: "Nothing touches our lives but it is God Himself speaking" (Oswald Chambers). Use every moment as an invitation to do or say something that will honor your Father.

We will fulfill this "new American moment" to the degree that we seek not our glory but that of God.

"You will do it—because you can."

To me, the most moving part of the president's speech came when he told the story of Ryan Holets, a twenty-seven-year-old officer with the Albuquerque police department. Ryan saw a pregnant woman about to inject heroin. She had nowhere to turn but wanted a safe home for her baby.

Ryan heard the Lord say to him, "You will do it—because you can." He and his wife, Rebecca, adopted the woman's daughter. They named her Hope.

If we live for the eternal, depend on God's provision, and use every moment for his glory, our faith and witness will offer true and lasting hope to a broken world. If we seek the power of God's Spirit, we can claim his promise: "You will do it—because you can."