

Christ in Prophecy

Interview 27: “Marshall on His Personal Christian Heritage”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: One of the most remarkable American Christian families in modern history was that of Dr. Peter Marshall, an immigrant from Scotland who became one of the most famous preachers in our nation during the first half of the 20th Century. For some fascinating insights into the spiritual legacy of this family, stay tuned for an interview with his son, the Reverend Peter Marshall.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus our blessed hope and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. Once again this week for the third week in a row I am delighted to have as my special guest the Reverend Peter Marshall, one of Christendom’s greatest authorities on the religious heritage of our nation. Peter welcome back for the third week.

Rev. Marshall: Thank you, glad to be here David.

Dr. Reagan: You know folks during the past two weeks we have discussed in detail the Christian Heritage of the Founding Fathers of this nation. And we have taken a look at the challenge of that Heritage that we are facing today through the advancing tide of secularism and paganism. In this program I want to shift gears and take a look at something entirely different. I want to consider the spiritual legacy of our guest’s remarkable family. Our guest, Reverend Peter

Marshall grew up in the shadow of two very famous people. His Dad, Dr. Peter Marshall was the most famous preacher or one of them anyway in America during the first half of the 20th Century. After his Dad's death from a heart attack in 1949 at the age of only 46, his Mom, Catherine Marshall became an even more famous person as a biographer of her husband, a compiler of his sermons and prayers and as a novelist. Then in 1977 our guest stepped out of the shadows of his famous parents when he published his seminal study of the Christian Heritage of America a book entitled, "The Light and the Glory." Peter lets begin our discussion with your remarkable father. Tell us how he came to this country and how he became a preacher.

Rev. Marshall: Well he stepped ashore at Ellis Island in New York City, David, like so many other millions of immigrants, 1927. He had 5 dollars in his pocket when he landed here, and no real definite plan of what he was going to do.

Dr. Reagan: But why in the world did he come in the first place?

Rev. Marshall: He felt led by the Lord to come.

Dr. Reagan: He had a sort of Damascus experience with the Lord, didn't he?

Rev. Marshall: Yeah, he did, he had in the early chapters of, "A Man Called Peter," Mother's biography of Dad, she talks about his time in Scotland. But he had a dramatic encounter with the Lord when the Lord was really trying to get his attention and trying to answer prayers that he and his mother were praying about whether he should immigrate to America, and he felt sure that he was supposed to do that.

Dr. Reagan: So he arrives with 5 bucks in his pocket.

Rev. Marshall: Yeah. Dad ditches across the state of New Jersey, blistering hot summer, got enough money together to go down to Birmingham, Alabama, where two of his buddies from Scotland already were, and joined them down there in Birmingham, worked as a cub reporter on the *Birmingham News Newspaper*. He went to First Presbyterian Church in Birmingham. And the men's Bible class saw the call of God on his life and helped get together some spending money so that he could answer that call and go to seminary Columbia Theological Seminary, outside of Atlanta.

Dr. Reagan: Actually wasn't the men of his Sunday school class, who raised money for him and said, "Man you've got to go to Seminary."

Rev. Marshall: Yeah, that was, I mean how the Lord worked that out for him. So it was really, it is an amazing...

Dr. Reagan: I got tickled, I think I may have read this in your Mother's biography of him that while he was at seminary the teacher, the preaching teacher told him that his style was completely unorthodox and violated all of the rules, but it was effective, so stick with it.

Rev. Marshall: Well they didn't, thank God they didn't mess with it. You know the faculty decided not to try to change that, because Dad wrote his sermons out and as you are well aware in the book, his war time sermons, I have retained that. He wrote those out in poetic style with sentences descending and you know that kind of thing. He would, Dad had the soul of a poet so his sermons were very descriptive. As one of the women at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, where I was raised when Dad was Pastor there, Lincoln's church, she said, "He made Jesus so real to us, that we felt like we could hear the rustling of His robes as He passed." I mean he had a gift.

Dr. Reagan: Well that's quite true and he was called the poet preacher, and he really was a poet.

Rev. Marshall: Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: I mean he wrote in blank verse but it was incredible the power of his sermons. People came from all over to hear him.

Rev. Marshall: Yeah they sure did, lines would go around the church for blocks.

Dr. Reagan: Young people, he had a real appeal to young people.

Rev. Marshall: Oh, yeah. Young people loved him because Dad would go on a preaching mission somewhere in New Orleans or somewhere at one of his seminary roommates loved to have him, invite him down there to do preaching missions in New Orleans. And you know he would preach, preach his heart out for an hour or so, and then he would stay around and with the young people and play the piano and sing and play games and stuff until the wee hours of the morning. He loved to do that.

Dr. Reagan: I was impressed too by the fact that when he graduated from Seminary he already had a reputation as a great preacher and he was offered a pulpit at a large church in Atlanta, and he said, "No he wasn't ready for that." So he went to Covington, Georgia instead and took a small church. And then went to the church in Atlanta and then was called at age 34, I believe it was to go to this very prestigious church, the Church of the President's in Washington, D.C., New York Avenue Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Marshall: Three blocks from the White House.

Dr. Reagan: And your Mom was only 22 years old.

Rev. Marshall: Yeah, Mom...

Dr. Reagan: It must have been quite an experience for her.

Rev. Marshall: Oh, boy she was, she was, you know she was thrown into this, this church, high bound at that point by tradition and where the Gospel had not really been broken loose for a number of years. And people can watch the movie or read the book, but Dad went through a couple of years of real tough sledding until the Lord finally broke through all of that and that church experienced just an explosion of new people coming in. US Senators, Representatives, the choir became absolutely stupendous; I can still hear that choir from when I was a little boy, fabulous choir.

Dr. Reagan: I have seen photographs of people standing in line to get into church.

Rev. Marshall: Oh, no question about that. That would happen almost every Sunday, lines that would go around the church for several blocks. Even in snow, driving rain, people, pictures of people under their umbrellas waiting to get in there because they would have two services and they would be waiting to get into the 11 o'clock service, you know after the first, waiting for the first service to dismiss. And the sanctuary was large, I mean there were a lot of people coming, and they were coming again for Jesus, because Dad made Jesus so real, and his preaching was very relevant. I mean he talked about people's issues. And that is the way I have already preached too, I have no patience for concept driven services that go over people's heads, I mean that is not preaching to me, you've got to touch people's hearts with the issues that govern their daily lives. You know the money the marriage...

Dr. Reagan: Reminds me of a church I went to in Oklahoma one time to preach at and it would seat about 800 and there were probably 40 people there that morning, look like they had been shoot out of a shot gun. And I was wondered what was going on here. And when it was over, I went out to the lobby and there was the last week's bulletin and I picked it up and the sermon was the Ontological Perspective of Karl Barth.

Rev. Marshall: Well, yeah.

Dr. Reagan: Who cares?

Rev. Marshall: Yeah, good luck. I met Karl Barth, he was an absolutely magnificent theologian, but to try to preach his theology from the pulpit, it is no, no. Read him in your study and then preach something from him, you know that will touch your people.

Dr. Reagan: Now another aspect that I would like you tell us about, concerning your Father is that he in the last two years of his life served as the Chaplain of the United States Senate.

Rev. Marshall: Right.

Dr. Reagan: Selected once by Republicans, and another by Democrats, I believe.

Rev. Marshall: Both, Dad ministered to both of them. Prior to Dad's coming, as Senate Chaplain, prior to his taking that office, the Senators usually didn't show up for the Morning Prayer. They would, you know they would just drift in, you know when they felt like it kind of thing. I can remember several years back, David, I had an old man come up to me and he said, when I was preaching somewhere in the country, he said, "I was the..." not UPS, he said, "I was the

UPS guy that covered the beat of Capital Hill when your Dad was Senate Chaplain." He said, "I remember him, very, very well." He said, prior to what I just said, prior to his coming, you know they wouldn't show up for the prayer, he said, "He started praying, when he took office, he started praying," and he said, "soon they started showing up." And he said, "I can hear it still in my mind." He said, "The Senates starts at noon," and he said, "You know the clock that minute hand would move up toward noon," and he said "the cry would go through the corridors of the Capital Building saying, "Marshall's up, Marshall's up."

Dr. Reagan: Time to pray.

Rev. Marshall: That meant to get in there, he said, "I can still hear it."

Dr. Reagan: Well I can understand it, because your mother published the prayers, many of his prayers that he prayed before the US Senate and my wife and I use that as a devotional book for about six months, and she could hardly wait, either one of us, could hardly wait to the next morning to read the next prayer, because they were so eloquent and they always focused on Jesus Christ.

Rev. Marshall: Yeah they were sharply relevant to what was going on. Dad would really, he was really their Chaplain, he would pray for them, that they would be delivered from, that God would deliver them from making the wrong decisions or falling into arguing about, you know things that weren't important.

Dr. Reagan: What do you see as your Father's greatest legacy to the Church?

Rev. Marshall: I think number one, he sensed that God has had His Hand on this nation from day one, Dad had a strong understanding of that, which I have inherited.

He did not have an aloof and distant God.

Dr. Reagan: No, not at all.

Rev. Marshall: But, as a Scot you know an immigrant not born here, Dad was given by the Lord, the gift of a deep understanding and discernment about the nature of this nation. About what America is really all about, and God's hand, God's plan, he understood that. And it's remarkable to me David as I look back through some of his sermons, exact same phraseology that I use, not having known that Dad had used that. I have discovered the same exact phraseology in some of his sermons I think gosh, that I mean that is genetics, that's the Lord. You know I didn't know.

Let's come back in a moment to talk about your remarkable Mother.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to my interview with the Reverend Peter Marshall about the spiritual legacy of his remarkable family. Peter after your Dad died at the age of 46, I believe it was, a very young man. Your mother became almost as famous as he did, if not more famous. How did that happen?

Rev. Marshall: Well it was really God's gift, David. Mom really didn't know how she was going to support herself and me after Dad died. Dad left no will, actually and Mother ended up writing a tract for the American Lawyers Association about leaving wills. But she went and taught English at a nearby prep-school there near where we lived in Washington D.C., for a while and brought out the first edition of Dad's sermons, "Mr. Jones Meet the Master." The entire first printing was sold out before publication day.

Dr. Reagan: Wow, isn't that something.

Rev. Marshall: And they just, God blessed that thing. People across the nation just vacuumed up that book.

Dr. Reagan: I have a copy of it myself, and I love it.

Rev. Marshall: There you go. I mean it is terrific, some of Dad's best sermons, and she followed that quickly with, I mean that began to help us get on our feet, but of course Dad's legacy just was going out across the country with that. She immediately started work on, "A Man Called Peter," the biography. That was published in 1951, two years later, made into a movie in 1955.

Dr. Reagan: What a powerful book.

Rev. Marshall: Very powerful, and here is the interesting thing, David, Edward Aswell who was the senior editor of McGraw Hill Publishing in New York that published the book, he was nearing retirement age when she turned in that manuscript, and this was the first thing she had written, alright. The first book she had written, she had written a couple of college you know papers and so forth. Ed Aswell said, "He had never in his entire career ever received a first book that needed less editing than that one."

Dr. Reagan: Well that was the anointing of God.

Rev. Marshall: Absolutely right, it is miraculous. I mean as a writer I look at that book today, when I recently brought out a new edition of it, an anniversary edition some years back.

Dr. Reagan: This one here.

Rev. Marshall: You know, and I went through it and I had not, I had not been in it since the time I first read the manuscript when I was a kid, you know, I hadn't

opened it. I was amazed, David, at how well written that book is, it is really beautifully done.

Dr. Reagan: And this book had an incredible impact, not only as a book but as a movie which was made in what? 1955?

Rev. Marshall: Millions and millions have seen it.

Dr. Reagan: Staring Richard Todd.

Rev. Marshall: Right.

Dr. Reagan: And it was a blockbuster.

Rev. Marshall: Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: But the impact of those two, I have read many times that hundreds if not thousands of young men decided to go into the ministry as a result of this book and the movie.

Rev. Marshall: Well that is absolutely true, and I have had dozens and dozens, I am not exaggerating, dozens and dozens of ministers say to me that I saw that movie when I was 14, or 15, or 16, or 18 or something and when I came out of the theater I knew that God had called me into the Gospel ministry. You know that is the Lord, He has used the book and the movie beyond my Mother's wildest imagination.

Dr. Reagan: Now both the book and the movie are available through your ministry?

Rev. Marshall: Oh, yes absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: Ok, we will talk about that more in a moment. But I wanted; you know probably most of our viewers who are familiar with your Mom, Catherine Marshall, probably know her better from something we haven't even mentioned yet. And that is her first novel, *Christy*.

Rev. Marshall: Right, over 14 million copies of that book in print, David, I mean it's mind boggling.

Dr. Reagan: Tell us about it. What is the book about?

Rev. Marshall: Well it is based on two years of my Grandmother, Mother's Mother, her life in the Great Smoky Mountains as a young Presbyterian Missionary. She went... I have been back up where she was back to the mission, it is amazing. In a January snow storm at the age of 19, she followed the post master through the snow drifts, five or six miles back up in one of those hollers back in the Great Smokies in North Eastern Tennessee to minister to those people, many of whom, many of whom had never, never, never been out of those mountains and most of whom had never been out of them. And it is based, it is a novel, so I mean there is fiction, but the way of life, the way the people were the issues, what it was all about, absolutely true.

Dr. Reagan: And that was later made into a blockbuster television series.

Rev. Marshall: CBS TV series, right they did a good job with it. Kelly Martin a young actress played Grandma. But she it took incredible courage for Grandma to do what she did. I mean no woman ever went back up in, from outside the mountains, you didn't go back up in there because they shot first and asked questions later. They were afraid you were a revenuee see, the only cash crop they had was pouring whisky, you know.

Dr. Reagan: Right.

Rev. Marshall: So they did not take to strangers. And she went up there not only as a women, she went up there by herself.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, my.

Rev. Marshall: I mean, unbelievable.

Dr. Reagan: Well I've got to read that book that is one I haven't read. Let's come back in just a moment and talk about your Father's sermons.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to my interview of the Reverend Peter Marshall regarding the remarkable spiritual legacy of his family. Peter one of your most recent books is this one called, *The War Time Sermons*, of your Father, Dr. Peter Marshall. I tell you this is one of the best books that I have read in years. I started reading this, I couldn't put it down, I've got every page in it marked. This is the best collection of sermons I have ever read in my life and what amazed me is even though they were delivered during World War II they were just as relevant as if they were preached yesterday. Tell us about this book and give us some examples of these sermons.

Rev. Marshall: Well I picked 12 of Dad's best World War II sermons, wrote a good solid lengthy introduction to them.

Dr. Reagan: Right.

Rev. Marshall: Talking about Dad's preaching style that we talked about earlier. And about World War II, what that was about, because a lot of people today don't even know what that was all about. And in front of each sermon I have a page I have a screen shot of Dad's original sermon manuscript and a one page introduction about that sermon. Why did he preach that sermon on that Sunday, you know what was going on with the war that he felt led to preach that? But one of the most famous sermons Dad ever gave, David, was at the United States Naval Academy on Pearl Harbor Day, December 7th, '41.

Dr. Reagan: Talk about the hand of God.

Rev. Marshall: Well Dad had been invited to preach and so leaving New York Avenue Presbyterian the hands of his associate pastor Dad drove over to Annapolis. But while he was driving over there that morning he felt strongly led to change his sermon.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, that amazed me.

Rev. Marshall: Right, so he walks into the Chaplains office and says that. The Chaplain says, "Well by all means preach on whatever you want." Dad ended preaching a sermon on death, and how Christians die. And nobody knew of course that Pearl Harbor was being bombed at that point...

Dr. Reagan: Yeah as he was speaking.

Rev. Marshall: ...but the news came right after church was over. So he was preaching a sermon on death the entire mid ship and all the midshipmen were in the chapel and heard that sermon. Here is part of what he said, ""The meek shall inherit the earth," Christ said, "But He did not mean six feet of it, not a hole in the ground, the grave is not their final heritage. There are thousands insane things easier to believe than these. Human personality will survive, it must survive, else

God would be the capricious joker in the Universe who created toys in His own image so that He might break them, and sweep them into the garbage cans of his own caprice. Yet where can we find the reassurance the heart seeks? The only proof, the final convincing proof is to be found in Jesus Christ. Read the flaming words of those first preachers in the Acts of the Apostles and you will see that the Good News of Apostolic preaching was not Jesus life, but His death, not his ethic, but His resurrection. The first disciples knew that human personality would survive because one who went into the grave and beyond had come back to say, 'Whosoever believeth in Me shall not perish, but have eternal life.'

Dr. Reagan: And then driving home he hears about Pearl Harbor.

Rev. Marshall: Right.

Dr. Reagan: And we don't know for sure, but evidently a lot of those people died who were listening to that talk.

Rev. Marshall: Well I had an old man come up to me when I was preaching in Oregon, some years back now. And I had mentioned that sermon, David, and the movie and stuff in my message when I, you know was introducing it, he came up to me afterwards with tears in his eyes, he said, "I was in the chapel that morning." He said, "You have no idea what that sermon meant to the United States Navy." He said, "Whether we were on destroyers or battleships or aircraft carriers, or mine sweepers, or submarines, wherever we were stationed we had heard that message before we went to war." He said, "We had a chance to get right with God, and we took it."

Dr. Reagan: Praise the Lord.

Rev. Marshall: He said, "You have no idea what that meant to us."

Dr. Reagan: Give us another example of the sermons of your Dad during World War II.

Rev. Marshall: Well it is just amazing stuff in this book. Here is one that is very, very pertinent, you know for today. This is the last sermon in the book.

Dr. Reagan: What is the title of the sermon?

Rev. Marshall: “Our Covenant Nation.”

Dr. Reagan: Oh, okay.

Rev. Marshall: “Ours is a covenant nation, covenanted with God and the beginning that it had its origins in the determination of the Pilgrim Fathers to establish on this continent a settlement, quote, ‘to the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith.’ They believed in the equality of the individual before God and that every soul was equally precious in God’s sight. The nation was established to the glory of God in order that all should have an equal chance to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To provide a model for the world and to lead men into a better life, apart from faith in God the history of America has no meaning. A covenant nation is one which recognizes his dependence upon God and his responsibility towards God, and that the highest role a nation can play is to reflect God’s righteousness in national policy.” That was preached in 1947, David, and we need to hear it today.

Dr. Reagan: Boy, do we ever, and that leads me to this final question I wanted to ask you about your Dad and his sermons. If he was preaching today, what do you think he would be preaching?

Rev. Marshall: That, he would be preaching, Dad would be thundering strongly from the pulpit that this nation is blowing its call, you know that we are rejecting

God's plan for us, that we need to come to deep repentance. He would be preaching what I am preaching. Its, you know because this is what I believe God is saying to us today. Dad would be right up on that and would be preaching that very strongly.

Dr. Reagan: He would be a prophetic voice.

Rev. Marshall: Oh, absolutely, because again as I said earlier, Dad had this strong sense of God's plan for this nation. He appreciated America as only an immigrant can, who, because see we've grown up with freedom, we take it for granted.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Rev. Marshall: And it is second nature to us. We don't realize the precious gift it is. But those who are born elsewhere, you know especially those coming out from under oppressive government regimes have a real appreciation of it. I tell every person I meet who has come out of that kind of background and come to America, I say, "Please, please, please speak up to us Americans because we tend to take this for granted. We are spoiled we don't know what we've got here." But the problem is because we don't appreciate God's plan for us and His call on this nation David, we are losing it. We are squandering this heritage. So if Dad were alive today, you bet he would be talking about that.

Part 4

Dr. Reagan: As we are bringing our program to a close I want to thank you once more for coming all the way from Massachusetts down here, that's a long journey to be with us. And I want to thank you for being with us for three weeks in a row. You have really, as we say in Texas, you blessed my socks off Brother.

And I want to conclude by giving you an opportunity to tell our viewers how to get in touch with you in case they want to invite you to come speak. And most important of all how they can get in touch with your materials so look right into that camera and tell them.

Rev. Marshall: Sure, be glad to. Well you can get on my website which is petermarshallministries.com and you will find a very extensive website there, with our store, you can get in there and explore that. We have our adult history books of course, *The Light and the Glory*, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, *Sounding Forth the Trumpet*, we have the book of Dad's war time sermons there. The TV show *Christy*, the series is there, the movie, *A Man Called Peter*. Children's versions of our adult books for 8-12 year olds, and activities books for the 5-8 year olds the little kids, we have the whole family covered. We have four of the Crimson Cross Adventure Series, 4 historical novels for young teenagers that the kids love and their parents and grandparents love them because these are based on accurate American History. We tweak it a little bit, add a little bit of drama, but we put the kids, the young readers right down in the middle of it, with these 15, 16, 17 year old heroes, and heroines that actually change American History, become a part of what God did in our nation. So the kids in it, it is about character formation, the kids learn about these young people that they are reading about who made the right choices for God's will in their lives. So there's all kinds of stuff, you can contact me either over the phone calling our 800 toll free number 800-879-3298, I will be happy to talk to you and I am easily reached, I would be happy to talk to you about coming for speaking engagements, conferences or Sunday preaching in your churches wherever it might be. You can order over the phone as well, we take Master Card and Visa, you can use charge cards, or send in checks if you rather. My secretary would be glad to field your phone calls and help you out; there are all kinds of materials and opportunities available for you all. So again that website address petermarshallministries.com.

Dr. Reagan: Well I really want to encourage people to get in touch with you Peter, your ministry is a vital one, it's certainly impacted my life. This book, *The War Time Sermons*, I just can't begin to tell how wonderful it is. I hope people will get a copy. You have what, 22 audio recordings of your Father's sermons?

Rev. Marshall: That's right, the only ones that have survived David, they are available on either cassette or CD.

Dr. Reagan: They are powerful.

Rev. Marshall: Yeah, they are. They are indeed.

Dr. Reagan: I highly, in fact so powerful, one time we sent out one of your Father's sermons, "Trial by Fire," to all 2,500 of our prophecy partners and that is a powerful sermon.

Rev. Marshall: It is a tremendous sermon, and very relevant to America today, I might add.

Dr. Reagan: I was telling you in the break here that the first time I heard that sermon I was driving down the highway, when he got to the end I nearly drove off into a ditch because it had such a powerful ending were talks about you choose Yahweh or you choice Baal.

Rev. Marshall: Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: And if you choose Baal, you can go to Hell.

Rev. Marshall: Right, that's right. Yeah his exact words are, "If God be God then follow Him. And if Baal be God then follow him and go to Hell."

Dr. Reagan: Yeah.

Rev. Marshall: Exactly how it...

Dr. Reagan: Wow, this is not mincing any words.

Rev. Marshall: That kind of spells it out pretty clearly.

Dr. Reagan: Well folks that is our program for this week. I hope you will be back with us this same time next week. Until then this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries' saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."

End of Program