

# Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: a Modern Jeremiah

## Alexander Solzhenitsyn: The Great 20th Century Prophet of Freedom is Dead at 89

Doug Phillips' remarks on Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the Great 20th Century Prophet  
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"The 20th century was defined by three trends: The battle for freedom in the face of statism, tyranny, and Marxist oppression; the cultural supplanting of Christianity in favor of secular humanism and evolutionary scientism; and the general withdrawal of Evangelical Christianity as a source of cultural transformation in favor of a more ecumenical and sentimental Gospel presentation.

"Just over eighty-nine years ago (and within twelve months of each other), three men were born who would help to define and shape each of these trends, respectively: Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Arthur C. Clarke and Billy Graham. Clarke died in March. Solzhenitsyn died yesterday. Only Graham yet lives.

"Today, Vision Forum Ministries and freedom-loving Christians all over the world mourn the death of the man most responsible for revealing the evil of the anti-Christian regime of Joseph Stalin and waging war against a machine of Marxist oppression that caused the death of tens of millions.

"Tortured and persecuted within Stalin's death camps, Solzhenitsyn nonetheless endured, secretly authoring his greatest work, The 'Gulag Archipelago,' on scrounged toilet paper. In the years that followed, Solzhenitsyn emerged as the single most important anti-communist voice of freedom in the world. But for Solzhenitsyn's relentless campaign to bring the truth of Marxist tyranny to the public forefront, untold millions more might have died. During the Cold War, his message was pivotal in strengthening the resolve of the West to stand firm against Soviet oppression. In all, he would publish twenty-five books, not including plays and numerous speeches.

"Though Solzhenitsyn was a devoted Russian nationalist, he was also a grateful resident of the United States during his years in exile from his homeland. That gratitude took the form of the message of a prophet committed to helping Americans stay the course by remembering their own Christian foundations and rejecting the destructive trends of humanism and secularism. There were times at the height of the Cold War in which Solzhenitsyn -- a Russian -- appeared the most outspoken conscience of the West, ever reminding us of our Christian foundations and warning us of the consequences of moral weakness and lack of resolve when engaging international Marxism. For this he was often despised by the press, by pundits, and politicians.

"In 1978, Solzhenitsyn made the following appeal during his address at Harvard:

'In early democracies, as in American democracy at the time of its birth, all individual human rights were granted because man is God's creature. That is, freedom was given to the individual conditionally, in the assumption of his constant religious responsibility. Such was the heritage of the preceding thousand years. Two hundred or even fifty years ago, it would have seemed quite impossible, in America, that an individual could be granted boundless freedom simply for the satisfaction of his instincts or whims. Subsequently, however, all such limitations were discarded everywhere in the West; a total liberation occurred from the moral heritage of Christian centuries with their great reserves of mercy and sacrifice. State systems were becoming increasingly and totally materialistic. The West ended up by truly enforcing human rights, sometimes even excessively, but man's sense of responsibility to God and society grew dimmer and dimmer. In the past decades, the legalistically selfish aspect of Western approach and thinking has reached its final dimension and the world wound up in a harsh spiritual crisis and a political impasse. All the glorified technological achievements of Progress, including the conquest of outer space, do not redeem the Twentieth century's moral poverty which no one could imagine even as late as in the Nineteenth Century.'

"The courage of Solzhenitsyn to boldly speak truth in the face of tremendous opposition touched the lives of many individuals, including myself. The name Alexander Solzhenitsyn was spoken almost daily in my home as a boy because my father, Howard Phillips, viewed Solzhenitsyn as 'the greatest man of the 20th century.' Dad required that we know Solzhenitsyn and his writings. Books like the 'Gulag Archipelago' and 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich' were an important part of my training as a boy. My own sister, Alexandra, was named after the Nobel Prize winning author.

"The message of Solzhenitsyn's life was opposition to statist tyranny and the imperative of Christian morality to freedom. This message should be remembered as America approaches the Beijing Olympics. Communism is not dead. Nor is the world free from the ravages of statism and tyranny. Nor have we yet to understand the implications of Solzhenitsyn's life message and 'Warning to the West.' We will be a moral and Christ-loving people, or we will cease to be a people."

## Activities

### Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: a Modern Jeremiah

1. Why is he famous?

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2. How did he help to end the oppression in Russia?

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3. Who was Joseph Stalin?

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4. What were the "Gulag camps" and why were they so horrible

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5. What evils does our society permit by silence and inaction?

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