

SUNDAY ARTICLE

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Grand Slams, Greatness, Glory, and God

Bill Muehlenberg

Tennis fans would know all about the record-breaking events of the recent Australian Open, culminating in the amazing men's and women's singles' finals.

Roger Federer's final was his 100th match at the Australian Open and took him past the \$100 million mark in career prize money. His 18 Grand Slam victories are 7 Wimbledon titles, 5 US Open titles, 5 Australian Open titles, and 1 French Open title.

I must confess to having a soft spot for Roger – he seems to be a likeable and humble fellow, and he also reminds me a bit of one of my sons. So, I did shoot up a few prayers on his behalf during some of his games in Melbourne. But I realise we have a few problems here: what happens when other Christians shoot up prayers for his opponents? How does God deal with those conflicting prayers?

But on a more serious note, I of course also prayed for his salvation – and for the salvation of some of the other great players. Despite all the glory and greatness of being among the best tennis players in the world, all that really matters in the long run is if you are in right relationship with God.

So, while I think it is neat that Roger has won his latest Grand Slam after such a long time, and has done so at a ripe old age against perhaps his greatest rival, I know that what really counts is the state of his soul. That's why I will keep praying that if he has not yet bowed the knee to Christ that he will soon do so.

I mention all this because we do know of another champion who has done it all: achieved tennis greatness, but more importantly, become a child of

God through faith in Jesus Christ. I refer to the incredible Margaret Court, the greatest female tennis player ever, who is now involved in full time Christian ministry.

The winner of 24 Grand Slam women's singles events, she has towered above all others. But she would be the first to tell you that there are even greater things than being the best female tennis player.

Toward the end of her amazing career she became a born-again Christian and now labours tirelessly for the Lord. Because of her strong, biblical stances on things such as homosexual marriage, she is regularly vilified and hated by many.

But she refuses to compromise, and is now as fully committed to Christ and the Kingdom as she once was to tennis – even more so. I have known Margaret for a while now and shared speaking platforms with her on several occasions. She is indeed a champ.

I have heard her share her Christian testimony and it is inspiring stuff. Just over eight years ago a brief version of it appeared, so let me share just a bit of that to give you some more insight into the woman:



Court, now 66, says her faith in God helped her become one of the greatest female tennis players of all time. The International Tennis Hall of Fame states, 'For sheer strength of performance and accomplishment there has never been a tennis player to match her.'

But the humble Australian insists her success is down to God. She tells of how, during a tournament in Paris in 1973, she realised that something was missing in her life – a closer relationship with God. She added, 'I knew God was there and thought I must be able to know him in a deeper way. A short time later a friend gave me a book on becoming a Christian. I read it, and soon after I made the decision to become a Christian, accepting Jesus Christ as the Lord of my life.'

'I continued to be successful on the tennis circuit, but I wasn't happy. I needed to be closer to Jesus, and I believed that I couldn't do this by filling my life with tennis. At the end of 1976, I decided to

retire from tennis and devote myself to looking after my family and getting to know more of Jesus. The next few years were a real struggle for me dealing with a heart condition, depression, and insomnia, but what got me through was total devotion to God and his word the Bible.

‘It gave me inner strength and brought healing to my body and mind. A verse that really kept me going is Galatians 2 20 “I have died but Christ now lives in me. And now I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me.”

‘In 1982, I went to Bible College and since then my goal has been to go out and share God’s Word with as many people as possible. I love to tell them how they can renew their lives and how they can overcome fear by really focusing on the Word of God.’

Last year she released her autobiography, so for those who want to learn more about her and her amazing story, please check it out.

As I say, I am praying for other great players like Federer that they too would come to know something – and someone – even greater and more glorious than what any amount of sporting accomplishments can produce.



On the 45th President of the United States

Bill Muehlenberg

Because I am a conservative:

- I am grateful that Obama is now history
- I am grateful that Hillary is not taking his place
- I am grateful that a new face is in the White House

Because I am a Christian:

- I know that no one (not even Trump) will make America great again
- I know that only Jesus Christ can solve the problems that plague America and the world

- I know that until America repents and turns to God, it is living on borrowed time

Americans in general, and far too many Christians in particular, put ill-founded faith and hope in a new political regime, be it Democrat or Republican.

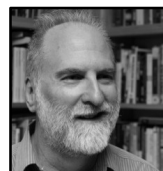
We have witnessed as much brainless gushing over the new Prez as we did with Obama. The same belief that this new POTUS will somehow come in like the messiah and make everything great again is a mark of delusion, not rationality.

Even in the last 24 hours I heard so many of his fans say that Trump is Trump and he will not change – as if that were a good thing. But unless he does change – primarily by humbling himself and repenting and getting right with God – this is a bad thing, not a good thing. A person who will not change when change is desperately needed is not someone we should celebrate, adore and promote.

A last point – a point I have made repeatedly now – is that character counts. The foolishness about “we are not electing a pastor” is the stuff a pagan or an unbiblical Christian would regurgitate. There is nothing more vital for any leader than the content of his character.

Note that I did not say a leader has to be a Christian. As I have said time and time again, I would rather have a principled non-believer as a leader than an unprincipled believer. Questions about Trump’s questionable character remain, despite what all his over-zealous fans say. Christians of all people should not minimise or downplay the importance of character.

At this point we have a new president and a chance for new beginnings. We will have to wait and see how it all pans out. We need to pray for the new POTUS and his team. We need to pray for America. And we need to pray for American Christians that they will rise up during these dark days and become all that they are meant to be for Christ and the Kingdom. While politics is important, politics cannot save anyone. Only Jesus Christ can do that, and we are called to make that good news known far and wide.



Dr Bill Muehlenberg is an American-born Christian apologist and ethicist in Melbourne, Australia.

Edited from: billmuehlenberg.com

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