

# Pastors Thoughts of the Week

## My Father's House

*Psalms 45:15: With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought:  
they shall enter into the king's palace.*

A long while back as I was transporting two little boys to our church for a night of Christian fun and fellowship we passed by what could only be described as a stately mansion. It could easily have been mistaken for a medieval castle with its slate-clad turrets, cathedral spire, and etched glass windows. It stood majestically amidst a perfectly manicured lawn bordered by an endless array of varied shrubbery which formed a boundary to remind the uninvited that trespassing was not to be considered.

Those two looked at that edifice with wide-eyed awe and asked me what it was, to which I replied that it was a house where only two very wealthy people resided. It took a moment for those inquisitive minds to process that. They lived in one of the poorest sections of our city and their notion of a house was a two-bedroom apartment where their family penuriously struggled just to pay for the bare necessities of life. At that point, I decided to illustrate an eternal truth by asserting, "Oh that is just a shack compared to where my father lives!". With a mingled sense of incredulity and curiosity, they demanded that I take them to my father's house to prove my assertion.

And so I had my opportunity to tell them of my Heavenly Father's mansion that He is preparing for His sons and daughters. It is a king's palace that we shall enter one day, not built with the temporal stuff of wood, brick, and mortar. This architectural marvel is made of durable components not subject to the decay and rot associated with our cursed planet - "knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance". In this palace is a bevy of servants whose sole purpose is to provide supernal delights to the heirs of the kingdom who have upon their foreheads the name of our God. The palace has its angelic tailor who will from the celestial closets provide the garments of the salvation of fine linen, clean and white, so as to provide sartorial splendor to all the saints of God. Thus finely suited we shall be escorted to the banqueting house where "his banner over us was love" and we shall dine on the sumptuous viands of "the marriage supper of the Lamb". All this and more than has ever "entered into the heart of man" awaits us in My Father's House.

May His blessings and grace abound toward you,

*Pastor*

*Faith cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of God Romans 10:17*

## His Example in Submission

*Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*

*Luke 22:42*

Most infants enter this world crying as if resisting their entrance into a new environment and leaving the protective comforts of their mother's womb. As they grow, they will continue to defy submitting in many of the situations that life will present. Nourishing food is refused, scheduled bedtimes are avoided, and stubbornness often wrestles with obedience. Prayerfully, a child will learn the blessing of submission and one day surrender to the Savior.

Hopefully as we matured ourselves, we each learned for our own good to submit to authority figures in our life. However, even after our conversion submission to God's will is not always easy. Life in general is filled with situations in which we must submit, and this is also true in the Christian life. The life of our Lord Jesus has set the example of submission for us to follow. Throughout His life, our Lord willingly submitted to humbling circumstances that were necessary to completing the eternal plan of salvation for all mankind. Though He was the eternal Lord, He entered this world through the birth process. He created the worlds by the power of His word, yet He patiently learned the carpenter's trade. He submitted to poverty, hunger, and thirst. Jesus even submitted to the evil plans of the lowest of men, so that He might accomplish the plan of His Heavenly Father. Psalm forty tells us He delights to do God's will, and today's verse reveals His absolute submission to that will.

Jesus' example of choosing submission to the Father's will has been set for us to follow. There may be some situations when submission may not seem as difficult; but the real test will be those times when we know what God wants while our own will is asserting itself in a different direction. God's word sets the governing guidelines that surround the events of our life. His will is often revealed through His word, which the Holy Spirit will use to influence us to order our steps in accordance to God's will. Sometimes an opportunity may arise that can take us in an unplanned direction. Knowing we may be taken out of our comfort zone; we might be hesitant or even disobedient to God's will. By God's grace, learning to be intentional about submitting to God's will can help us gain the experience necessary to be willing to surrender more and more to Him. When we are presented with the choice to do our own will or God's will, may we be inspired by Jesus' words: *nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.*

J.

Ekis

## Seek Thy servant

*Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.*

*Psalm 119:175-176*

This final plea of the psalmist, after his long treatise extolling God's word and asserting his intentions to obey it, is a realistic commentary on the human condition with regard to faith. He has recognized throughout the psalm the power of the word in its numerous facets. There has been no doubt that his faith is fixed on that knowledge and its empowerment for holy thinking and living. He reiterates that here, as he expresses his intention to praise the Lord as long as his soul lives and his understanding that God's judgments can help him to stay the course. On the heels of this statement and request comes his confession that he has had his times of going astray, using the metaphor of the lost sheep. He therefore requests the Lord to come to his rescue, with the seeking arrow of conviction to the target of his memory of God's word.

This well-known lost sheep metaphor is applied later by Isaiah with respect to all people, and then it is expanded in multiple teachings by the Lord Jesus. It is comforting for all of us that the one who penned such intriguing images of the word of God and attested repeatedly to his love for its precepts and desire to follow them recognized his own tendency to stray. These sentiments are echoed in the apostle Paul's description of that human contradiction in the seventh chapter of Romans. Therefore, when we recognize our own similar tendencies, we can be comforted, not by just the common conundrum, which would provide no remedy, but by the attached acknowledgement that there is help in the Lord for our predicament. Paul thanks God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is important to see that the desire of both writers was for holiness of heart and walk. The scriptures offer no encouragement to those whose only desire is to satisfy the flesh. Paul follows his thanks at the end of Romans seven with his continued treatise at the start of chapter eight, that the uncondemned in Christ Jesus set their minds on the things of the Spirit of God. John's first epistle also provides numerous echoes of this principle in true believers, as opposed to false professors. So for those whose hearts' desires resonate with these writers, we can with the psalmist request the Lord to "seek thy servant," knowing that we cannot forget His commandments, when we feel the tug of His spiritual staff or the sting of His spiritual rod.

## Sufficiency and Abundance

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*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

*– 2 Peter 1:3-4 –*

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Psychology is an ill that has been plaguing the church of Jesus Christ for the last eight decades. Its adoption by many pulpits and pew occupants, whether witting or subliminal, descends from its tentacled messaging now ensconced in all areas of academia, business, media, and culture. It purports to provide explanations for one's actions, yet offers no permanent remedies for one's issues. What it actually does is create excuses for one's behavior, rather than holding one accountable for his sins. The Greek word *psychi* literally means soul or breath. Thus, "psychology" is really nothing more than godless men trying to find chemical explanations for spiritual phenomena.

The fact that the church has fallen prey to this twenty-first century pseudo-science is as stupid as it is unconscionable. The Bible was completed long before Jung, Freud, Rogers, Skinner, et. al. were even born. Did Jesus forget to leave His bride certain instructions until the 1900's? Obviously, no. His divine power, as our text reminds us, has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. We call this doctrine the sufficiency of Scripture. Between the pages of Genesis and Revelation, God has given us everything we need to live our lives in the moral sphere. Yes, God's Word is, always has been, and always will be enough. It has all of our answers, is the sole and immovable source of all proper counsel, and is the sure mechanism whereby all men will be held accountable for their thoughts, words, and deeds.

But the Bible goes beyond just being a sufficient resource for living life in this present world. It also provides us exceeding great and precious promises relating to the next. And since eternal life is a present gift, that abundance spills over in the earth-side living of obedient believers as well. When we walk closely with our Lord in accordance with His Word, life here, while at times difficult, is nonetheless continuously full because we are partakers of the divine nature and have escaped the corruption that is in the world. If we turn our focus from ourselves to our Savior via the pages of His Word, we find not only a sweet peace that passes understanding, but also a driving impulse to live for the glory of Him Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

The world is wallowing in victimization paradigms resulting from Satan's psychological indoctrination. Let us loudly live out the fact that we have a Book that is not only sufficient for explaining and dealing with all of life's problems, but also provides for a life more abundant and free because it is exactly what it claims to be – the very Word of the living God! -- D. Murcek



# *Pastors Thoughts of the Week*

## **Planted and Flourishing**

*Psalms 92:13: Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.*

The attribute of God known as immensity precludes the notion of a building being able to house the omnipresent Creator of heaven and earth. Upon completion of the temple Solomon wisely concluded that “the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?”. So it is an evidently tacit truth that God does not live in a tabernacle, a temple, or a church. That acknowledged, we can see that there is a sacredness attached to that place where worship is wont to be made, where praise is freely offered, where the joyful sounds of the song are voiced, and the living Word of God proclaimed. We may be pleased to call that place (be it a catacomb, a humble wood-framed hovel, or a grand stone and marble edifice) “the house of God”.

For so many, that house of the Lord was where they were first introduced to their Savior. The glorious light of salvation dawned upon the benighted soul and quickened the dead spirit and once regenerated by a new spirit, life would be filled with meaning, purpose and expectation. This house would be a place of shelter where the assaulted would find protection from an unrelenting adversary. The pleasant environs of this house would gender a familial relationship with like-minded friends that share a common salvation. Planted in this house we are thus rooted and grounded in the eternal verities of the immutable truths of God’s Holy Word lest we be “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine”. Here the saints flourish “more and more unto the perfect day” as they are comforted by the invisible presence of the Lord who promised, “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”.

As the highly circulated aphorism states, “Grow where you are planted”, it is of inestimable value for the believer to be more than a casual attendee to the services of God. The current desultory habits of the common parishioner have spawned a superficial understanding of things eternal and have made them vulnerable to repeated assaults from the enemy of our souls. Let us find our first love and return with a renewed consecration to the attendance of His Word in the “house of the Lord”.

May His blessings and grace abound toward you,

*Pastor*

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## Overcoming Barriers

*And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.*

*~ Mark 2:4*

History is filled with inspirational accounts of individuals who had to overcome obstacles to obtain great success. Andrew Carnegie overcame childhood poverty to become the richest man in the world. Helen Keller rose above her blindness and deafness to become an author and lecturer. Jackie Robinson overcame mountainous obstacles of bigotry to break the racial barrier in Major League Baseball. The Bible is also replete with accounts of men and women who would not surrender to their circumstance but persevered and prevailed by faith in God.

Today's account tells of four men who were determined to seize an opportunity to place a palsied man before Jesus. Unable to maneuver through the crowd that had gathered in the house, these men uncovered the roof tiling and lowered the debilitated man directly at the feet of the Lord. This display of faith was rewarded not only with physical healing, but also with a far deeper healing when Jesus proclaimed forgiveness of the man's sin. Undeterred by the crowded circumstance, the successful endeavor of these men amazed the spectators and brought much glory to God.

As believers, we also are to strive in bringing people before Jesus, whether that means bringing the good news of Christ's salvation to someone, or lifting that individual's name before the Lord in prayer. Sometimes we must overcome barriers in order to do this. Our personal schedule often stands in the way of opportunities for witnessing as well as praying. After seeing someone's desperate spiritual need, asking and allowing the Holy Spirit to create a burden in our heart can motivate us to carve out a place for these spiritual exercises in our schedule. A wall of discouragement can also stand in our way. Satan may remind us of the prayers that seemingly have gone unanswered or try to convince us that an individual is set in their ways and will never change. We must remember all of God's promises and continue to lift the roof tiles of doubt and bring a palsied one before Jesus. Our own personal excuses often present a barrier for prayer and witnessing. Excuses come in many forms, and our adversary designs them to fit our individual personality. The One who overcame and defeated sin, death, and the grave, can help us overcome the things that so easily beset us from placing others at the feet of Jesus.

Today, let us remove the roof tiles for someone we love and lower them at the feet of Jesus, and what rejoicing there will be when we hear Him saying "Child, thy sins be forgiven thee, rise up and walk".

~ J. Ekis

## Teachability

*Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.  
Psalm 141:5*

This prayer suggests a number of questions that we should often ask ourselves. Am I teachable? When reproved, do I listen – not just hear – but really listen? Are there some among the righteous to whose reproofs I deafen my ears, mind, and heart? Do I really think I've heard it all? Do I think I have earned some right to ignore those who care enough to smite me with reproof? Do I really know how to discern all varieties of kindness? Can I discern a right intention behind an awkward or ill-mannered delivery? Am I quick to defend myself? Do I ascribe evil intentions to any whose words or actions seem offensive? Can I learn from those whom I consider to be less experienced than I? Do I really want to learn when it is an expense to my ego? Are there other ways to accomplish a task that may be as effective or more effective than mine? These are only some of the kinds of questions that this verse may provoke. We ought to be regularly developing many more similar ones.

Then, lest we think such contemplations applicable only to students, we need to recognize that the author of this psalm is David the king. In the culture of his time, the king was supreme over all in his kingdom. Yet David understood the need of his own humanity. He could bear the cut of the criticism as he waited for the healing oil of its effect to follow. He understood that the wound of clarity would not ultimately hurt him, but would help him, especially as a leader. As he then allowed the needed wound of reproof and healing oil of the Spirit, who would edify his soul with the lesson learned, he was ready to bear no retaliatory grudge, but to endeavor to pray for his reprover in the time of calamity. He could not have learned this in his own nature, but through the Spirit of the living God as he sought His way. In our humanity, most of us ignore such exhortations to humble ourselves and seek right relationships, because it's the easy path for the flesh. In that path, there is no growth. But as we seek the humility of a teachable spirit, we will find the healing oil of excellence and appreciation for helpful reproof.

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## Defending Jesus

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*Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear.  
The servant's name was Malchus.*

*– John 18:10 –*

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It is remarkable to consider the polarized actions of Peter on the eve of Christ's passion. Here in the garden, as the enemies of our Lord come to bind Him and take Him away, Peter takes up arms and mutilates the servant of the high priest, signaling a bold willingness to defend and fight for his Master. Yet just hours later we find him shrinking in the depths of fear, publicly denying the Lord three times and emphatically refusing to even identify himself with Jesus. Simon's spirit was indeed willing, but his flesh was weak. We can surely relate.

It has been over two millennia since the death, burial, and resurrection of the Son of God, but Satan has continued to assault Him through the ages. In the swift-moving current of today's popular culture, Jesus remains on trial – His character incessantly maligned, His Name continuously mocked, and His Word relentlessly scorned. Like Peter, anger rises within our being. We feel it is incumbent upon us to defend the Savior. Yet curiously, when direct conflict arises, how often do we find ourselves retreating in an awkward cowardice and an unbecoming silence, treading dangerously close to denying Him before men?

The fact is, what we feel we need to do is so far removed from what Jesus seeks from us. Christ does not need our defense. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and even today, He remains docile before His shearers. Until He arises from the right hand of God to mount His white stallion and return to reclaim this earth as its King of Kings and Lord of Lords, His mercy will continue to be extended toward His enemies. But our Lord does, in fact, desire and expect public allegiance from those in His following. We, His blood-bought, Spirit-indwelt disciples must never shrink from public identification with our Lord. He is not ashamed of us, and we dare not be ashamed of Him.

Christian, stand up! That is all He wants from us. And having done all, to stand. The One Who willingly vacated Heaven's throne to be numbered among the transgressors should find us eager to be publicly numbered as one of His own. So then, let us not look to defend, but rather to proclaim our Savior. "Jesus? Yes, yes – I know Him. He is my Lord and my God." -- D. Murcek



# Pastors Thoughts of the Week

## ***O Precious is the Flow***

*Luke 22:44: And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

Let us adduce from the above quotation that here is the entry point of the dolorous sufferings that would culminate in the death of the Son of God. As surely as the blood of Abel cried out in protest from the ground on the day of that first murder, so now the blood that knew no tincture of sin seemingly cried out in agonizing petition "unto him that was able to save him from death". Angels surely wept when that first drop of holy blood stained the ground at Gethsemane. A copious stream was to ensue as they led Him to Pilate's judgment seat where the soldiers were given liberty to mock and abuse our Man of Sorrows. The demented artisans form the thorny crown and press it firmly onto that "sacred head now wounded" producing bloody rivulets coursing down the divine countenance. Having their sadistic amusement satisfied they proceeded to the whipping post where Jesus would endure the unrelenting lashes of the Roman flagellum. After the 39 strokes were applied there would remain only shredded fragments of skin left with blood oozing from every open vein.

A trail of blood marked the path that led through the streets and up to the hill called Golgotha. Here those benevolent hands and feet, that wrought healing, mercy, and love wherever they journeyed, were fixed with cruel nails to the cross. At each blow of the hammer, the blood spurted out staining the hands of the cruel and indifferent executioner. After Jesus cried "It is finished!" and gave up the ghost, the Word made flesh would endure one final indignity; the soldier thrust a spear through his rib into His magnificent heart and forthwith a fountain of blood and water gushed out covering the sinful soldier and by type covered every sinner that seeks forgiveness and pardon from all transgressions.

We may try to innumerate the multiplied agonies of the cross by soliciting the aid of both Old and New Testament biblical references, but most assuredly we would fail to encompass the entirety of the suffering that the Son of God endured in our behalf.

*There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood; lose all their guilty stains  
Lose all their guilty stains; lose all their guilty stains  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood; lose all their guilty stains.  
E'er since by faith I saw the stream, Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die;  
And shall be till I die, And shall be till I die;  
Redeeming love shall be my theme, And shall be till I die.*

May His blessings and grace abound toward you,

*Pastor*

*Faith cometh by hearing: and hearing by the word of God Romans 10:17*

## **A Blessed Destruction**

*He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. ~*

*1 John 3:8*

There is often a negative connotation to the word *destroy*, especially when something cherished is destroyed. A devastating house fire can destroy material possessions and damage hopes and dreams. Tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes certainly do not improve things, but rather leave a path of misery and hardships in their wake. However, there are times and situations when destruction is a blessing. Today's verse reminds us of the ultimate blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ destroying the works of the devil.

The devil's destructive impact can be traced throughout all of human history. His deceptive temptations and man's free will continue to ruin lives and can ultimately cause consequential banishment from paradise. History records the great accomplishments of mankind, but it also records the selfish and evil deeds of man. Because of the devil's influence, the distressing news of wars, surging crime, and corruption in leadership, seem to be the norm for the day. While surrounded by all the madness of this world, believers can be refreshed and revived when they are reminded of the One who came to destroy the works of the devil.

When our Lord walked in this world, He ordered His steps so He could destroy the works of Satan. His hands and decrees chased away disease, ailments, and even death. His teachings replaced hatred with love, fear with hope, traditions with truth, death with life, and ultimately hell with heaven. By the efficacy of the crucifixion and the power of the resurrection, Jesus crushed the serpent's head and destroyed the chains of sin that were intended to enslave mankind. Even after one is converted the devil continues his efforts to steer believers into sin attempting to destroy their testimony. But equipped with the whole amour of God, believers can take up the shield of faith to quench all the devil's fiery darts.

Today, Jesus continues to destroy the works of the devil. Though we will always have our conflict with the devil, we can take hope in knowing that he is a defeated foe by the blood of the cross and the power of the resurrection. For now, we must continue to fight the good fight of faith, for Christ must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death itself.

J. Ekis



## **Praise of Excellence**

*Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.  
Psalm 148:13-14*

After an extended list of multiple parts and members of creation that should praise the Lord for His creative power, the psalmist adds these reasons for praise. First, because His name alone is excellent. The Hebrew word for excellent includes in its meaning: lofty, high, inaccessible, and thus also implies safety and strength. The same word is translated “exalted” in Isaiah 12:4, speaking again of the name of the Lord. Therefore, it follows that His “glory is above the earth and heaven.” As much as His glory is manifested in the exquisite characteristics of His creation both below and above, which can be witnessed, admired, and praised, there yet remains a glory that is above all this, which calls for even higher praise, yet by faith in what cannot be seen. When Isaiah saw the Lord in His glory, He was high and lifted up (Isaiah 6:1). There is also here an aspect of His holiness, wherein these characteristics belong to His name alone. There is no other glory as high as His. And yet, what follows from His excellence is that He exalts (different word) the praises of His people. In other words, the very praises of His people can attain a higher quality than mere mortals can reach, by the very excellent name of the One whom we praise. His unique and unmatched glory is the very amplifier of human praise into the unseen eternal realm to which it rises.

At the time this psalm was penned, the Lord’s people were the children of Israel, described here as “a people near unto Him.” That nearness was not of their own doing, but of His. Even so now, His people are expanded to include all who are His children by faith in Christ Jesus, those “which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God” (I Peter 2:10). In New Testament terms, we are not only near unto Him, but are described in many places as “in Christ Jesus” and “in Him.” How much more then should our praise today be lifted up unto Him, that He might exalt it by the excellence of His name alone? “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Hebrews 13:15).

## Contrasting Worldviews (Part I)

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*But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.  
– 1 Corinthians 2:15 –*

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Worldview is a term that refers to the frame of reference one uses to understand and interact with the world in which he or she lives. While there are all kinds of nuances and admixtures existing amongst the types of worldviews that exist, the forward march of time really distills worldviews into two isolated camps – secular and biblical. These two worldviews are wholly distinct and diametrically opposed to one another. A contrastive study between secular and biblical paradigms exposes the irreconcilable differences between the world's thinking, and what ought to be the Christian's.

The secular worldview touts a cosmology and cosmogony that are wholly at odds with Bible. The popularized notion of a Godless “big bang” that began the universe is the secularist's starting point, followed quickly by the belief that man is really nothing more than a high-functioning animal, the product of macro-biological evolution. The Bible, on the other hand, declares plainly that God created the universe and all things therein in seven literal 24 hour days, and that Man was the special and immediate creation of the Almighty, made in His very image (Genesis 1:1, 26-27; 2:7).

Similarly, secularism perceives the physical world as the product of uniform processes over vast amounts of time. I once stood on a ledge of the Grand Canyon alongside a self-avowed atheist. We were both overwhelmed with the breath-taking view. “Amazing,” he said, “Millions of years of erosion by that little winding Colorado river down there.” He was incensed when I countered, “Nah. More like an enormous re-design by the Creator of the Universe by means of Noah's flood.” The earth that exists today bears the evidence of a world-wide geologic catastrophe. In Genesis 6-9, the Bible makes clear what that was, and when (and why) it happened.

In the moral sphere, it is interesting that something as self-evident as evil cannot be adequately or fixedly defined by a secular worldview. The secular perspective with regard to morality is that “good” and “evil” are relative to cultures and generations. For the secularist, something that is regarded as “evil” today or in this country may not be an “evil” at all times or in other cultures. Yet the Bible clearly delineates not only what evil is, boldly denouncing it in its manifold forms, regardless of generation or location, but also gives its reader a categorical explanation for its origin within the universe (Genesis 3:1-10; Isaiah 14:9-20; Ezekiel 28:13-19).

There are more contrasts to consider. Let us resolve to unashamedly believe God's Word. When we do, we are able to judge and understand all things, though the secularist might not quite understand us!



## Strengthened By His Word

... O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me. ~ Daniel 10:19

Most people associate the prophet Daniel with his experience of spending a night in a lion's den. But his life offers much more than his miraculous deliverance from a pit of lions. Coming from princely stock, Daniel found some level of favor with his Babylonian captors. His reputation was that he had no blemish, but was well-favored, skillful in all wisdom, cunning in knowledge, and understanding science. Along with the other Israelite captives, Daniel was groomed to assist in Babylonian affairs. In the tenth chapter, the prophet receives an overwhelming vision causing him to bow his head in utter silence. This experience drains Daniel of his strength and breath until the Lord's servant touches and speaks to him, whereupon he is revived and strengthened and shown things that are noted in the scripture of truth.

This account can inspire us to develop a more intimate walk with the Lord. Though Daniel's encounter was for a special time and a special place, believers have the opportunity to catch a glimpse of God's glory as well, and to gain strength from His word. A daily discipline of reading God's word is invaluable for believers. This food for our soul is sweeter than honey and should energize and equip us for our Christian journey. Unfortunately, we sometimes approach the Lord's presence too casually and read His word as if checking off an item on our to-do list. As powerful as God and His word are, we may choose to diminish the impact of His divine power and wisdom on our life if we lose our sense of awe. We will profit the most when we take time to meditate on God's omnipotent greatness so that we might be emptied of our self-centeredness. Unhindered by self-imposed distractions, we are better able to hear God's voice and receive His strength. Even a few reverential moments in the presence of the Lord and His word will have exceedingly more value than just dutifully practicing a routine reading. Experiencing this intimate closeness with our God can be infectious and motivate us to spend more time with Him.

Though we are not captive in a foreign land like Daniel, we still battle levels of oppression from the culture of this world. One of the best exercises for strengthening our spiritual muscle is to retreat to that private location where we can bow in the Lord's presence and hear Him speak through His word. May we find that time and place today!

J. Ekis

# *Pastors Thoughts of the Week*

## **The Eyes of the Lord**

*Proverbs 20:8: A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.*

Our great King of all kings sits firmly ensconced on His throne of incorruptible judgment. His eyes are so pure that they cannot "behold evil"; so perceptive that not a scintilla of sin can pass by undetected. All things are "opened and naked" before those perspicacious "eyes of Him with whom we have to do".

It is at once both a comfort and a terror to consider this attribute of absolute omniscience. Indeed what a comfort to know that our good shepherd promised "I will guide thee with mine eye". There is no place that we may chance to go where we might think He cannot see us. Adam found it a fool's errand to hope to hide from the "eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth". And so the believer is insulated with the promise of almighty security as he traverses from place to place in a hostile, devil-infested world. Those whom He has adopted are the "apple of His eye" and no evil can molest His redeemed children without divine detection.

And yet it is a terrifying thought to the unregenerate that the One who sees all things will have no need for witnesses at the great assize. In courtrooms, verdicts are often rendered based upon the fallible memories of eyewitness testimony. With the proliferation of video cameras on every street corner and in every building, we have evidence of the wide disparity between imperfect human eyewitness accounts and actual video data. God's eyewitness accounting of all matters is perfect and total and should give pause to all evil perpetrators, that there is a "day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ". On that day all evil and evildoers shall be scattered away. The evidence will be incontrovertibly corroborated by the only One that has seen every external misdeed and peered into the recesses of the heart and mind of every human transgressor. "His eyes like unto a flame of fire" will burn through the gossamer, cob-webbed excuses that men use to justify their ill deeds.

So let us be resolved to do all things as before those omniscient eyes. Let us be comforted with the knowledge that though The valley may be dark, the shadows deep,  
But, oh, the Shepherd guards His lonely sheep;  
And through the gloom, He'll lead me home,  
My heav'nly Father watches over me.

May the Love of Jesus abound in your heart today,

*Pastor*

*Faith cometh by hearing: and hearing by the word of God Romans 10:17*

## **Influence**

*And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed be the LORD this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people.  
I Kings 5:7*

After being appointed by David as the next king of Israel, Solomon's transition still required a number of steps after the death of David to assure the success of his reign. Despite the negative measures that he took, in response to his father's dying admonitions, to remove those who had proven to be adversaries of David's plan for the kingdom, the most significant choice that Solomon made was to ask God for the wisdom to discern and govern His people well. That gift of wisdom from God was exhibited in many ways that are described in the accounts in both Kings and Chronicles as his reign was established. At the end of I Kings chapter four, Solomon's wisdom is described to exceed that of other men of the time who were evidently well known to be wise.

In our text, a unique aspect of that gift is revealed by the neighboring Phoenician king Hiram, who is described earlier as being "ever a lover of David." As Solomon had requested the help and input of Hiram and his people to build the temple for the worship of the LORD God of Israel, Hiram's reaction demonstrates that the most significant impact from David's faith and Solomon's wisdom was his view of the LORD. His word of blessing is for the LORD, Jehovah, above even his friend David or his wise son. Hiram was able from the influence of David and now from the priorities of Solomon to know that these were not just special men, but in fact that their God was the one and only LORD to be worshipped. The praise and honor from this Gentile observer went directly to the correct object of worship and praise. At the same time, his blessing of the LORD doesn't negate the wisdom of Solomon, but actually magnifies it by recognizing the One who gave it. May we as the people of the LORD be able to similarly influence the onlooking world about us, that they may bless the LORD our God as a result of His working in and through us, His servants.

## Contrasting Worldviews (Part II)

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*But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.  
– 1 Corinthians 2:15 –*

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Understanding the world in which we live is vital to living for our God. While we are strangers and pilgrims here, this is our battleground. The god of this world, the devil, has a fabricated explanation for everything, and millions are buying it. As Christ's ambassadors, we have the antidote, so we must engage men by understanding the chasm that exists between our worldview and theirs. That is often the first step to bridging the gap with the gospel of Christ.

The burgeoning child of a secular worldview with regard to national sovereignty and world harmony is globalism. There is a strong push on the world stage toward the dissolution of the nation-state. Popular culture increasingly bolsters this perspective. My first cognizant introduction to globalist thought was as a junior high student when the song "We are the World" was released. Ostensibly a project by celebrity musicians to feed starving kids in Africa, it really was little more than a means to begin to imbed within the modern psyche that we are all global citizens. But the Bible denounces globalism. God is the author of the nations. He judged the first globalization effort under Nimrod at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11), and has categorically announced that the nations exist by His aegis and for His purpose (Deuteronomy 32:8), until the day that He Himself inherits them (Revelation 11:15).

Speaking of the nations, secularists tend to have a disdain and even a hatred for Jewish people. The anti-Semitic sentiment that fomented in Europe in the 1930's, eventually giving rise to the Third Reich and Hitler's ovens, is simmering again today. Britain abandoned Israel decades ago, and the United States, Israel's sole "friend" amongst the nations, is increasingly aloof toward the welfare of the Jewish State. Secularism sees Israel as a global pariah. But the Bible reiterates over and over again that the biological descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, though recalcitrant and wandering, are nonetheless the inheritance of Jehovah and the apple of His eye.

It is interesting that while the globalists seek the dissolution of the nation-state and are undermining Israel, they yet promote the factionalisation of mankind by leveraging our differences. Gender differences, "racial" differences, ethnic differences, etc. are the means by which a secular worldview divides mankind into groups for governance. But the Bible clearly states mankind is all of one blood (Acts 17:26), is one race (Hebrews 2:16), and that each member is in desperate need of a common salvation (Eph. 2:11-22).

There is more to explore, but it should be becoming increasingly clear that there is no fellowship between these perspectives. Do you trust the Bible, dear friend? It has a counter to every worldly philosophy. Be confident in its content! -- D. Murcek