

## Crucified Unto Me

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*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

*– Galatians 6:14 –*

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None of us is immune to the effects of popularity. Man was created for fellowship, and fallen man enjoys both approbation and adulation. It is this desire that permits many of us to instantly recall if we were (or were not) “popular” during our high school experience. In those days of metamorphosis into adulthood, the pull to be accepted is strong, governing sensibilities and in some cases, creating a foolish disregard for inhibitions and safeguards in order to “fit in”. It is sad that for many this pull continues into adulthood, with people searching for admission into the “in crowd” in a wide variety of locales and venues and ranging wildly – from the fraternity house to the city hall to the shop floor to the board room to the bar stool.

This quest for social acceptance is something of which we must all beware. Peer pressure is not just something that affects children and adolescents but can influence even the most steadfast of believers. As we sojourn in this world, the days of our pilgrimage can easily become lonely and it is an ever-present danger to wax weary of being strangers in a strange land. Here in America particularly, we can find Babylon a comfortable enough home that there need be no hurry to return to the city of God.

Paul understood this threat. Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he penned for us a word-picture that will decimate the power of this temptation for every believer if we permit ourselves to grasp its import. Crucifixion was a magnificently total form of execution. It did more than just merely claim its victim’s life. It consumed and tormented his mind and body to the point that he lost his identity as an individual, becoming just another member of its roster of death. It bore its victim before a gazing world, stripped him of his dignity, and humiliated him by shamefully exposing the reality of his weakness and fragility. If you witnessed a crucifixion, certain realities made themselves fully apparent. The victim’s life was over, and his legacy, no matter its luster, was forever destroyed. This was his true and final state – nakedly consumed and destroyed by a brutal world that cared nothing for his aspirations, his affections, or his accomplishments.

The only soul to ever mock and reverse the immediate power of crucifixion was our Lord. Jesus’ resurrection forever set Him apart as a willing participant to its methods and the only temporary member of its bloody roll call. But to the unbelieving heart that knows nothing of the power of that resurrection, Christ and His followers are still perceived as losing the battle with the cross. Indeed, the preaching of that cross is foolishness to them that perish.

But herein, brothers and sisters, lies the reciprocal and revolutionary truth. The world system that encompasses us and pulls so incessantly upon our affections is *crucified to us*. Like any other of the cross’s victims (excluding Christ), it has been exposed to us for what it is – a weak and pathetic fraud. Satan, the very god of this world, was made of shew of openly upon it, and his systemic power over us via the world has been brutally defeated with no possibility of resuscitation. There was no resurrection morning for these foes. We need not fear the world’s threats, nor compromise with its pleadings. It is forever ignominiously defeated with its hellish headmaster and has no rightful claim to the slightest influence upon those of us who belong to Christ.

Therefore, let us glory in the cross of Christ, dear friends. The world despised Him, and it will never accept us. Let us wisely return its scorn upon its head, for there can be no compromise in this war.

Biblical Meditation  
O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day.  
Psalms 119:97

For the past few decades there has been a growing interest in various forms of meditation. It has permeated many areas of our culture in hopes of finding inner peace, better focus, and self-improvement. Most of these forms of meditation have their root in Hinduism and not the Bible. Biblical meditation directs us to focus the attention of our “inner man” on God’s word and His works.

Meditation is a topic you will find woven throughout both the Old and New testaments. In Romans chapter 8 we are told that to be spiritually minded is life and peace, and through proper biblical meditation a deeper sense of spirituality is developed. Joshua 1:8 tells us the benefits available to us as we dwell on God’s word throughout the day. His word convicts, guides, instructs, and inspires us to follow the path the Lord has set for our spiritual prosperity. In Psalm 119, a tribute to the many attributes of God’s word, we find seven verses that directly instruct us to meditate on His word. As we meditate and dwell on the Word, our spiritual focus becomes more acute helping us to see things from our Heavenly Father’s perspective. If we allow His word to impact our hearts, problems will not seem as difficult, fears will not be so binding, hope and faith will increase, trials can take on a sense of purpose, and we can learn to look beyond a person’s exterior to have a greater level of compassion for their soul.

In Psalm 145:5 we are told to meditate on all of God’s works as well. It is important for us not only to muse on the recorded works found in the scriptures, but also to reflect and dwell on the mighty things He has done in our own lives. Simple and common things that occur daily in our lives should not be overlooked, for these also testify to the goodness and faithfulness of our Lord.

So today is another day to develop our spirituality by meditating on His Word and His works. May His purpose be fulfilled in us to His glory.

JDE

## Just Like Us

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are and he prayed...

James 5:17

It is amazing that in a world with over 7 billion people there are no two people exactly alike. God has stamped individuality on all of mankind. Because we were all created in the image of God, in spite of all our differences, we are still very much alike. Men and women who have gained high levels of recognition through their own accomplishments, or sometimes just by being born into a prestigious family, can frequently be viewed as exceptional or larger than life.

Unfortunately, this can also happen when we look at some of the great men and women of faith in the Bible. For example, when we read about Abraham, Moses, Daniel, and many others, we may see them as having unwavering faith to conquer all. This can be discouraging as we face the battles and difficulties in our own lives if we have misled ourselves to think that their level of faith eliminated doubts and fears from their lives, or that they had no weakness of the flesh. But today's verse reminds us that Biblical characters were very much like you and me. Elijah stands out as one of the great prophets in the Old Testament. There is more information about his life than most of the other prophets. His boldness to confront the false prophets of Baal, the accounts of God using him to display divine miracles, and even his extraordinary departure from this world make him stand out as a great man of God. But James clearly states that Elijah was subject to like passions as we are. He had times of great faith, yet there were also times of fear and depression. The stark phrase - "And he prayed"- highlights his internal dependency on the Lord to offset his human deficiencies so that he could be a useful instrument in God's hand.

As we continue our journey of faith to fulfill God's purpose today, may we like Elijah be reminded that if we can see beyond the frailties of our flesh there is a vast reservoir of strength when we pray to our great God.

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## **Be ye also patient**

*Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.  
Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge  
standeth before the door.  
James 5:8-9*

After exhorting his readers to patient endurance under trials at the beginning of this epistle, James now exhorts them to patient waiting, using two different but related words in the original Greek language. How much our Lord knows our need for both kinds of patience. In our text, the immediate application is the patient waiting for the coming of the Lord, that He might bring justice to those that have selfishly oppressed his readers. At the same time, he reminds them against exhibiting selfish attitudes toward other disciples, since the same Judge for whom they wait is also about to come to judge their own attitudes, motives, and behaviors. Be careful how soon we wish for things to come to pass!

We have been conditioned by our culture to expect to have what we need or want immediately, whether it be relief from oppression, vindication, or satisfaction of our desires. Yet the example of the Lord and His word teach us just the opposite. Often there is much time required for goodness or justice to come to fruition in the case of this fallen world. Throughout the scriptures we are reminded of the longsuffering, or patient waiting, of God for men to come to repentance. Through the book of Acts we see the apostles faithfully obeying the commission of the Lord to preach the gospel, even as they wait for oppression to cease or for people to come to faith. Yet in spite of all we learn, how often do we find ourselves impatiently responding to people and circumstances. Somehow we think that we deserve better, with no defensible basis. This is nothing more than selfish pride, left over in the old man that still clamors within. Let us instead, like the farmer, faithfully plow life's ground that God brings to us each day, and then be also patient for Him to bring the right to pass, in His will, and in His time.

# Pastors Thoughts of the Week

¶ The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children.

*Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth.*

*Psalms 115:14-15*

The Maker of heaven and earth has an inexhaustible repository of blessings from which to endow his people. The redeemed are the beneficiaries of this endless supply. It is not enough to say that the Lord gives us "abundantly" but "exceeding abundantly above"-not just more but "more and more". Who among us has not found the case to be true, that the Lord has given to us "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over".

Some many years ago I recall reading a fanciful account of Joseph's granaries during the seven years of plenty in Egypt. The silos burgeoning with substance provided a paradisaal lodging for a field mouse and his family who luxuriated in the wholesome and endless food supply. Never would he again have to forage to provide for his family, scurrying hither and yon to gather a crumb here or a crust there, ever leery of traps and poisons laid for his demise. Now he nestled securely in unlimited allowance.

And such is the felicitous case for those whose names are recorded in heaven. The promise is for the immediate and for the future. Proverbs 4:18: But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. For when can it ever be seen "the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread".

Note as well that the promise is for us and for our children! What a gracious addendum is this-a generational promise. Happy should be the child born to faithful Christian parents. There is in our promise the perpetuation of God's goodness. And lest we limit the increase to the mere temporal, please consider that the Lord has every intention to shower our heritage with spiritual gifts. Philippians 1:9: And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

How truly marvelous are His ways toward His own:

Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth.

Have a blessed day .

*Pastor*



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

## As Little Children

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*And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

*– Matthew 18:3 –*

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Life in a fallen world is filled with complexity. Sin, the curse, and death create an environment hostile to man's fulfillment and ultimate purpose. We are born unto trouble. As problems, disappointments, and fears compound, we tend to wander confusedly through life and, without the re-birth, fear accomplishing little more than merely meeting out our days under the sun. The best we know how to do in our fallen state is to vie for some form of available freedom and authority in a vain attempt to establish a legacy – whether that be progeny, wealth, influence, or namesake. This then becomes the fuel of our pride as we jockey for position in this race to the grave.

This tendency so consumes fallen man that even believers can assume it to be normative. Such was the mistake of the disciples themselves when they inquired of Jesus who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Instead of a harsh rebuke, our Master gently illustrated to his followers how wrong they were in their thinking by placing a little child in the midst of them and challenging them to become as such. The concept is radical, and the paradigm shift requires frequent meditation thereon.

Christ here taught us that entrance into (and, by implication, advancement within) His kingdom can best be secured by observing and imitating the ways of little ones. Nothing could be further from fallen man's concepts of advancement than this. It would seem to the natural man a regression. But for the believer, Jesus here chartered an entirely new university which would, throughout successive generations, be staffed with a vast and never-ending faculty of tiny instructors.

Children do not wear masks. Though sinners themselves, they remain innocent for a time and thereby tend to be completely genuine. They speak with little to no inhibition what they understand to be the truth. They eschew what they know to be dangerous. They own no conscious vices. They seek to be joyful, and their joy is infectious. When raised in loving homes, their cares and concerns are completely cast upon their parents as opposed to themselves, fully trusting and secure in the fact that their parents have their good as their chief obligation. Family unity is essential to them, and if they hate anything, it is when the peace of the household is disrupted. Children are naturally affectionate, desiring little more than to be loved and enjoying the opportunity to reciprocate. They rejoice in the triumphs of others, especially their own family members. They absorb information and learn rapidly. Their questions are sincere, never belligerent or rhetorical. They accept most truth, even difficult truth, rather fluidly. They are better at doing than planning, more apt to anticipate than to fret, and extend forgiveness more readily than harboring a grudge. Little ones to a certain age do not boast, strut, or lord. Wealth does not impress them. Power is to them a foreign concept. They are oblivious to the notion of popularity. They are rarely jaded and tend to see the redeemable in everyone. Their mere presence in a room alters the conduct of its adults. As one author once succinctly codified it, "The sacrament of childhood is thus a continuing revelation."

Lord Jesus, please help us to become as little children!



## We Have Heard Him Ourselves

For we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world. John 4:42

There is much power in the testimony of a life that has been dramatically changed by the love and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Though some testimonies may seem more dynamic, each and every one causes the angels to rejoice that a repentant child has come home to the Heavenly Father. In John 4, it was the account of the woman at the well encountering the Christ that caused others to believe. God uses different means to convey the gospel of salvation. Whether it be through a sensational testimony, a gospel tract, a compelling sermon, or simply reading the Bible; as powerful as each of these can be, it is still necessary to hear God's voice through the messenger. Many of the Samaritan woman's fellow citizens reminded her that it was after hearing Him for themselves that they believed.

The new birth begins when the Lord speaks to our heart, though not with an audible voice, and shows us our need for forgiveness; and we then respond by calling on His name for salvation. Conversely, it is quite possible to go through all the motions of the Christian faith and still not hear the voice of the Lord. We each know all too well, that it is possible to complete our daily reading of the scripture and not have paid any attention, or listen to a stirring sermon and not hear what the Lord has said. It is necessary as an individual that we hear the Lord Himself with our own spirit. Jesus warned us "he that hath ears, let him hear." To emphasize the importance of His message, He also said "Let these sayings sink down into your ears." It is possible to block out the voice of the Lord and hinder it from penetrating our soul and conscience; or we can respond and allow Him to accomplish His intended purpose. Revelation states "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to Him..." It is when we hear His voice and allow it to sink down in our hearts that we can truly open the door to allow the King of Kings into our lives. May we rejoice if we have heard His voice, but may we also continue to "hear Him ourselves" today.

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## **They overcame him**

*And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*

*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

*Revelation 12:10-11*

In this chapter we find John's vision of the archangel Michael and his angels defeating the dragon and his angels, and the announcement of them being cast out of heaven to the earth. Though much symbolism is employed here, the characters are clearly identified. In particular, the dragon is described with multiple names, including that old serpent, the Devil, and Satan. But perhaps the most implicating is his description as the accuser of our brethren, when we consider the potential impact on all of us as brethren through faith in Christ. As if having an enemy and tempter is not enough, he also stands to accuse believers before God continually, every time we fail in our faithfulness. And unfortunately, we can provide plenty to accuse.

Yet John provides the remedy for this in the very next line, as he pronounces the brethren as overcomers of this fierce accuser. They overcame him first by the blood of the Lamb. The glory of God's redemption through Christ's precious sacrifice cancels the accusation, to declare the believer positionally not guilty, because the price has been paid. Coupled with this provision made by Christ alone, they also overcame him by the word of their testimony. This is the word of every believer, who can testify that His blood availed, personally, for me when I believed. Such faith loves not this life, but reckons that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

Although our daily struggles in this body of death can often give reason for accusation by our adversary, we can look to overcome by our faith in His precious blood to sanctify our position and our daily walk in His word, and to cast down the accuser. As one has said, "the next time the devil reminds you of your past, just remind him of his future." We can, with the apostle Paul, thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord to deliver us from this body of death to walk in the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.



# Pastor's Thoughts of the Week

*Job 38:2-4: Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.*

The sin of presumption can adopt many forms. Man's finite mind sometimes mistakenly thinks it has a right to question the Almighty. God has equipped us all with the capacity of reason which, at least at times, demands explanations from the Creator. Inquisition after all is what brings a man to belief. But there are boundaries which must never be violated. "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further" says the Lord to the proud waves and likewise to the proud insinuations of man. In our sedulous pursuit of truth we must never lose sight of the infinite chasm that separates the Divine from the profane-the Creator from the created. As sanctified as one may be we are always reminded that man in his best state is altogether vanity. And that vanity is always seeking opportunity to ventilate.

God's permission of suffering has always been a source of consternation for the skeptic. Men surmise that God owes them an explanation. To this point in the drama of Job, God has been silent. Job laments "Oh that I knew where I might find him!". In our reference above after Job's faith has been sorely tried, the Lord finds him. In Sir Robert Anderson's seminal work *The Silence of God*, we read these salient thoughts:

"No one may limit what God will do in response to individual faith. But we may confidently assert that, in view of His supreme revelation in Christ, God will yield nothing to the petulant demands of unbelief. And that revelation supplies the key to the dual mystery of a silent heaven and the trials of the life of faith on earth."

Life in a cursed world is a tenuous journey filled with dangers, toils and strife. One must not expect to "be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease". We dare not accuse our gracious Maker of caprice in His permission of our afflictions but rather rejoice that the day of redemption is soon at hand. God forbid that His children darkeneth counsel with words without knowledge. Let us be content to trust the infinite mind of God and find our place at His feet declaring "He doeth all things well!".

Enjoy your day in the power of Christ,

*Pastor*

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

The Furtherance of the Gospel  
...that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the  
furtherance of the gospel...  
Philippians 1:12

It is apparent that God often uses human instrumentality in working out His divine plan. The patriarchs were used to plant His people in the world, prophets were used to instruct and warn His people, the apostles were used to pen the scriptures, and even God's only begotten son became flesh. The promulgation of the message of salvation "spoken" through words and good deeds has also been entrusted to man.

When a person commits their life to Christ, it is the beginning of a relationship with God that is to grow daily, while simultaneously testifying of the life changing power of the gospel to others. The impact of the apostle Paul's life in every place he journeyed is an example of this. In foreign lands, in synagogues, in market places, and even when his own plan seems to be interrupted, he continues to shine the light of the gospel.

Just prior to His ascension Jesus' last words were for us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Our words and actions when supported by prayer can make a difference in another person's life. Letting our light shine should be woven into every plan and activity of our life. And remember, as today's text shows, sometimes our plans get disrupted in order for the Gospel to continue in a location designed by God. Because of persecution, the early disciples were scattered abroad but went everywhere preaching the word. Philip found himself in a barren desert crossing paths with an Ethiopian who was desirous to hear the gospel. Peter goes to the house of an unclean Gentile to share the good news. And Paul who previously sent Christians to prison, finds the opportunity to advance the gospel as a prisoner himself. Interruptions are, as one person said, the fortune of misfortune. Could it be at a grocery store, or a gas station, or walking in a park, or in a waiting room, or even when our plans get sidetracked... there is an opportunity to share the greatest news a person could hear?

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## Flocks and Herds

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*Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.  
– Proverbs 27:23 –*

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The Bible is an amazing book. It is a clearly unified and thematic tome that speaks with exclusive Voice via the channel of multiple inspired human authors. The most casual reader of the sacred Scriptures (assuming intellectual honesty) will easily identify that its pages present a marvelously cohesive, singular story of paradise lost in Adam and regained in Christ. Within that monolithic account, however, the careful student will constantly discover alongside its cornucopia of spiritual truth a corresponding trove of practical advice and pragmatic instruction. Such is the nature of our meditation here – “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks and look well to thy herds.”

There are certain realities of human life that the Bible both assumes and approbates. One of those is the identification and sanctioning of private property. The Mosaic Law intrinsically recognizes this in the eighth and tenth commandments, forbidding theft and covetousness. Jesus assumed ownership of goods in many places, such as in Luke 6:30 when He instructed His followers to be ready to give those goods away when asked of “every man”. And Paul seems to have himself possessed at least a few items of great importance, including a cloke, books, and parchments, which he requested Timothy to bring with him when he came to him (2 Timothy 4:13).

Here in America, private property rights are a fundamental bedrock to our republic. Time and space forbid us to establish this fact here. Suffice it to say that the Founders, whether Christian or Deist, recognized the God-given sanctity of property ownership within a society. It is in this sense, while considering the growing contemporary clamor and chorus of Socialist and Marxist agitators, that we should re-double our efforts to familiarize ourselves with the Scriptural basis of property rights, lest our posterity (if the Lord tarry) be unduly stripped of this basic tenet of individual liberty and American citizenry.

But while the God of the Word sanctions property ownership as part of human experience, He simultaneously and on multiplied occasions reminds us of the responsibility that accompanies the same. We are to “be diligent” and “look well to” our flocks and herds (i.e., our possessions). The underlying truth, established throughout the remainder of Scripture, is that what we own and accumulate in this life is ours only at the aegis of the Almighty. Stewardship is the balancing truth to ownership, as well as the remedy to the temptations of greed, avarice, covetousness, and materialism. What we possess has ultimately been entrusted to us to use for the advancement of the kingdom of heaven and the benefit of others. As stewards, slothfulness in the matters of our possessions should repulse us. If our Master has provided us with something, our inclination should be to keep, maintain, and even grow it until we hand it off or its usefulness is past. Our stewardship should compel us to a reasonable yet non-consuming attendance to all that we possess – be it our homes, our vehicles, our appliances, our bank accounts, our portfolios, *et. al.* In so doing, we not only ensure the fitness of our possessions for His service, but also secure a more believable witness to a skeptical world and better prepare the hearts of those we can influence to receive the true riches of our most prized possession – the gospel itself.

Andrew Murray once wrote, “The world asks, ‘What does a man own?’ Christ asks, ‘How does he use it?’” Let us look well to the possessions that God has entrusted to each of us, that they may be of optimal use not to our ends, but His.

## **With Him**

*These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

*Revelation 17:14*

The Lord of lords and King of kings by His very person and nature shall overcome all that might attempt to come against Him. But His glory is magnified also in that he does so not alone, but with them that are with Him. There is no better place to be than to be with Him. In His earthly ministry, Jesus chose twelve to be with Him (Mark 3:14). After his miraculous delivery, the maniac of Gadara requested of Jesus that he might be with Him (Mark 5:18). In the upper room, Jesus promised His disciples that He would come again to receive them to Himself so that they would be “where I am.” Shortly after that Jesus prayed to the Father that, as He would be restored to His glory with the Father, his disciples would also “be with me where I am.” Even in the epistles, Paul reminds the Colossians that they are buried with Him, risen with Him, and have been quickened (made alive) with Him through His forgiveness (Col. 2:12-13). He later tells them that, since He is our life, when He shall appear they shall also appear with Him in glory. And so we see in our text, as Jesus returns in that day to overcome His worldly enemies, who still dare to make war with Him, they that are with Him continue to enjoy the glory and victory of their Lord and King. All of this based on His power to cleanse from all unrighteousness and declare them to be called, chosen, and faithful. These describe the position and privilege of those who were made by Him and for Him, and have become the recipients of His grace by faith.

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# *Pastor's Thoughts of the Week*

*That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God,  
and that there is none else. I Kings 8:60*

Lucifer was enamored with his own beauty and wisdom and so he fell. Vainglorious self love was his damnation and will be ours unless we receive the humble Spirit of God who will transform us into the "image of His Son". When given the opportunity, Satan will vex us with his varied stratagems as he did our fallen parents in the garden. "Ye shall be as gods" is his favorite appeal and what a fatal attraction to a finite mind does this prove to be.

The Lord reminds us eight times through the mouth of Isaiah that "I am the LORD, and there is none else." What strange deceit could ever convince a man to usurp the place of "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity".

Jesus came as God in the flesh to show us man's proper relationship to our Father in heaven. He lived the life of perfect submission to God, leaving us an example as to how we should humbly approach the Almighty. Before He ascended into heaven He gave us the promise of His Spirit who would teach us all things pertaining to "life and godliness". The distinguishing hallmark of the Christian walk is the indwelling Spirit of the eternal God who now resides in the body of the believer. And that Spirit resets the previous self centeredness that once defined one's reason d'être. The true Christian is decidedly self effacing and altruistic in contrast to the natural man who is self promoting and egoistic from birth.

In a narcissistic world where self is exalted and God is defamed the words of our text provides an eternal witness that "the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods". Psalms 95:3

Enjoy your day in the power of Christ,

*Pastor*

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

## Turning the World Upside Down

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*And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying,  
These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.*

*– Acts 17:6 –*

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As children, it is likely that many of us were enthralled with snow globes. I recall a specific one that was part of my mom's annual cache of Christmas decorations. I can still see it in my mind's eye, a tiny snow globe, not more than three inches in diameter, the miniature home of a Lilliputian snowman with branch-like arms, coal-like buttons and face, and a bright red scarf. Every year when that snow globe found its seasonal home on our marble top table, I would pick it up and shake it so that the snowstorm would begin within. I would watch in wonder as the "snow" would swirl for multiplied minutes until it all found its way back down to the "ground" of the snowman's minute world. I would then shake it yet again, over and over, to create the fascinating and mesmerizing beauty that its manufacturer obviously intended to be enjoyed by all who would handle it.

A snow globe is comprised of all the necessary components to become a dynamic and beautiful decoration, but it must be acted upon by an outside force. Without the initiative of an interested observer, the globe will lay lifelessly in state, displaying but a paltry fraction of its intended value.

The hearts of unredeemed men like the ones Paul and Silas encountered at Thessalonica are like snow globes. Within man's soul resides a vast amount of potential for beauty, awe, wonder, and purpose, but it lies deeply buried and lifelessly dormant due to sin, unwittingly and reluctantly awaiting an external party to affect its dark winter. The gospel that Paul and Silas brought to that Macedonian town was the same gospel the Holy Ghost was using throughout the Roman Empire to radically convert men to the Lord Jesus Christ. The world was being massively disrupted by an interested Party Whose desire is to watch men live their lives as they were intended to be lived, building a magnificent crescendo toward an eternal home and unencumbered fellowship with their Creator.

Men's hearts today do not differ from those of the inhabitants of Thessalonica, Philippi, Berea, Athens, Jerusalem, or Rome. They are as lifeless and hopeless as ever due to sin and the curse, and just as reluctant to change. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the great disrupter of that actively inactive hopelessness. We, like Paul and Silas, are ambassadors of that same gospel that turned the Roman world upside down. As ambassadors, we must embrace the fact that, due to its antithetical nature to a fallen world and its estranged humanity, this gospel that we carry with us, if not disruptive to men, is no gospel at all. Those that we encounter on life's journey should and must feel a certain amount of disruption when in our presence. We can be certain that some, as at Thessalonica, will believe not. But we can also rest assured that others, tired of the stagnancy and pointlessness of life under the sun will welcome the disruption, ushering in the gospel's miraculous power of redemption and conversion, birthing vibrant and dynamic life that will begin to meet out their new Master's unique purpose for them. After all, is that not what has happened to each of us?

Let us go forth today with the confidence that we, too, carry with us the power to turn someone's world upside down. And may the Lord help us to do just that.



## **Inward Parts**

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make to know wisdom. Psalms 51:6

When looking for a used car, the first thing that usually attracts the attention of a shopper is the outward appearance of the vehicle. If there is an absence of rust, scratches, and dents, the potential buyer will then inspect with greater scrutiny. A clean exterior means nothing if the interior is marred and the engine is requiring an overhaul. A serious buyer wants the vehicle to be complete. In like manner the same is true for us as believers. The Lord desires more than just our outward appearance to be clean.

Psalms 51 is the penitential Psalm of King David after his great sin of adultery, and the following deceit that led to the death of Uriah. After being confronted by Nathan the prophet, the weight of the King's actions presses him to conviction and repentance. In his plea for mercy and cleansing, there is a realization for the need to be whole within and without. God desires us to know the truth in the depth of our being. Outward actions and words often are manifestations of the inner depths of man. Jesus said that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and out of the heart proceeds a myriad of sins that defile a man. The Pharisees were condemned for outwardly appearing righteous unto men, but within they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity. It is God's desire for us to know His truth and wisdom in our hearts, and that we allow it to guide and control our actions. The more we consume and digest of the Word, the more we will be spiritually nourished and strengthen, and then we will have a heightened sense of awareness to combat temptation. When God's truth and wisdom fills our hearts it then can flow from within to produce more Godlike actions.

May God's desires *for* us become our own desires today!

JDE

## **All These Will I Give Thee**

...All these will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

Matthew 4:9

In the great temptation of our Lord, the devil's purpose and power are revealed in his offer to give Jesus the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would bow down to him. Though Satan's power is temporarily allowed by God, it is still power nonetheless. In this permitted position of power and influence he is referred to as the "god of this world" and the "prince of the power of the air". Through his power to tempt by offering temporary promises he hoped to cause the Lamb of God to sin and worship him; but *Praise God!* our Savior was victorious.

This scenario also plays out every day in the lives of all of mankind. The tempter and god of this world still roams about, and through temptation coupled with false promises he seeks for us to bow down to him. When we yield to his temptations, we start straying from God's will and falling into step with the devil's plan and soon the gratification we thought we would find quickly disappears, and conviction, disappointment, and disillusionment begin to settle in. To prevent this from happening in our own lives, we need look no further than some biblical accounts that warn us of the empty promises of the devil. Was David satisfied after his affair with Bathsheba? Did Amnon feel content after he completed his evil plan with his sister Tamar? Though he sought to satisfy his physical hunger, was Esau satisfied when he sold his birthright? Was King Saul the better for intruding into the realm reserved only for the priesthood to offer a sacrifice? Was it easier for Jonah when he chose to follow his own plan and not God's? Did Judas feel richer when he obtained thirty pieces of silver only to lose his own soul?

And so, when we are tempted and Satan says *all these will I give thee*, may we hear the Holy Spirit's voice reminding us that *the pleasures of sin are for a season*.

JDE

## **Shield, glory, and lifter**

*But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.  
I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.  
Psalms 3:3-4*

While the impact of this passage is significant, it is even more meaningful when we consider the occasion of its writing. The heading of Psalm 3 tells us that David wrote this when he fled from Absalom his son. Among the various desperate circumstances that David faced in his life, this one had also the compounding sorrow of betrayal by his own son. The anguish of David's heart and soul at this point would seem to be insurmountable, as he would also, no doubt, remember his own contribution to the situation in which he now found himself. This certainly could be cause for David to throw in the towel on his spiritual life and any expectation of further blessing from the Lord, as seemed to be the case when he forbade the proposed retribution upon the cursing Shimei (II Sam. 16:10). And though he feels yet another blow of the Lord's chastening hand, he still remembers that his only hope remains in the Lord. There is no other place to turn. So, as he has in his past often cried out in anguish to God, David turns again in faith to his shield and buckler, whom he knows can lift his head up out of his position of shame and even bestow His glory in this time of dire need. While he contemplates in verse two the echoes, perhaps from his own mind, that there is no help for him in God, that Selah allows him to recall the mercy and lovingkindness of his gracious Lord and return the glorious answer that we behold in our text. So, my dear wounded fellow-soldier, let us also remember that the God of all comfort is also our only recourse, shield, and glory, and let us cry unto His holiness to lift up our heads, even in the midst of unbearable sorrow, and in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God.

- MAG

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*Isaiah 59:19: When the enemy shall come in like a flood,  
the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.*

What a sure defense the believer has on which to rely. The unrelenting mystery of iniquity is constantly reappearing in some delusive form to vanquish the work of the church. It must be that Satan knows "he has but a short time" and so he is about devising his diabolical machinations to thwart the power of the gospel. Our inspired text imbues us with the confidence that the gates of hell cannot and will not stand against us. Be assured that where "*sin abounded, grace did much more abound*".

But what is it that that is in the Spirit's hand that causes the enemy to make so hasty a retreat? The word *standard* refers to the unfurled banner that each of the 12 tribes had around which the various sons of Israel would rally in times of emergency. What courage the wearied fighter would take when in the midst of the grand conflict his eye should spy that standard. Of the myriad of names ascribed to our Lord, *Jehovah-Nissi* might most aptly embraces the prophet's imagery-*the Lord our Banner*. Emblazoned on this sacred cloth we might easily be find the words "*If God be for us, who can be against us*". With a renewed invigoration the warrior advances the cause of Christ with invincible fortitude to "win the well-fought day".

Anarchists have co-opted peaceful and justifiable protests in our country to advance their own evil agenda. These agents of the devil have rioted, burned, looted, and occupied sections of our cities in hopes of fueling an overthrow of constitutional government and the rule of law replacing it with Marxist socialism. True believers must earnestly resist this insurrection by petitioning the Holy Spirit to lift up the standard against them.

On September 13, 1814, Francis Scott Key, aboard a British vessel where he was negotiating for a captured American officer's release, anxiously watched the bombardment of the Fort McHenry through the daylight hours. According to Key, "It seemed as though mother earth had opened and was vomiting shot and shell in a sheet of fire and brimstone." But as darkness descended, Key could see little more of the battle than the "red glare" of the enemy's newly designed gunpowder-propelled Congreve rockets tracing fiery arcs across the sky. "The heavens aglow were a seething sea of flame," he later wrote to his friend John Randolph. In the "angry sea," as Key described conditions on that stormy night, the flag-of-truce sloop was "tossed as though in a tempest." Key was alarmed by the sound of "bombs bursting in air"—British shells detonating short of their target.

It seemed unlikely, Key would later recall, that American resistance at the fort could withstand such a pounding. Not until the mists dissipated at dawn September 14 did he learn the outcome of the battle. "At last," he later wrote, "a bright streak of gold mingled with crimson shot athwart the eastern sky, followed by another, and still another, as the morning sun rose." Gradually he was able to discern not the British Union Jack that he had feared, but still, defiantly, an American flag, enormous in its dimensions, fluttering in the breeze from the flagpole of an undefeated Fort McHenry. The fort had not fallen: Baltimore remained safe. It was, he later wrote, a "most merciful deliverance." And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air gave proof through the night that our flag was still there"

One likewise wonders if our nation can withstand the enemy's assault from within and preserve the freedom that has been purchased and preserved at so precious a price. God owes no nation that "forgets" him any promises of preservation. But to the Church that He has purchased with His own blood, He extends the promise that "*the gates of hell cannot prevail against it*". Let us not be found derelict in our duty as preserving salt. Let us plead to the Almighty to lift His holy standard against the existential evils of our day and preserve the liberties for the coming generations.

Have a blessed day,

# Pastor's Thoughts of the Week

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What a sure defense the believer has on which to rely. The unrelenting mystery of iniquity is constantly reappearing in some delusive form to vanquish the work of the church. It must be that Satan knows "he has but a short time" and so he is about devising his diabolical machinations to thwart the power of the gospel. Our inspired text imbues us with the confidence that the gates of hell cannot and will not stand against us. Be assured that where "*sin abounded, grace did much more abound*".

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Anarchists have co-opted peaceful and justifiable protests in our country to advance their own evil agenda. These agents of the devil have rioted, burned, looted, and occupied sections of our cities in hopes of fueling an overthrow of constitutional government and the rule of law replacing it with Marxist socialism. True believers must earnestly resist this insurrection by petitioning the Holy Spirit to lift up the standard against them.

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Have a blessed day,

*Pastor*

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

## Worldly Counsel

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*Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin.*

*– Isaiah 30:1 –*

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There is no possibility for man to meet out the days of his pilgrimage in this world unmolested by manifold difficulties. The combination of the enigmas of a fallen creation, our human limitations to ascertain all relevant information, and the nagging and problematic reality of “self” require us to carefully tread life’s pathway lest we make any disastrous turns. Obtaining counsel thus becomes an inevitable part of human experience. Some of it we actively seek and some of it we passively absorb. All of it we need to weigh. And only a blessed fraction of counsel available to man is actually sanctioned by God, these being the advice of experienced, godly men and women, and more primarily, the direct oracles of God found in the Scriptures.

The Old Testament history of Jehovah’s covenant nation is one of anomalous periodic revivals disrupting an otherwise predominantly steady spiritual decline. Our text is one of God’s stark rebukes to His people. Via Isaiah’s pen, the Lord here ties Judah’s declension directly and causally to their consumption of and adherence to worldly advice. “[They] take counsel, but not of me.” Israel was covenanted to be a unique nation state, designed by God to witness to a fallen world how to approach Him, how to revere Him, and most importantly, how to trust Him. But their peculiar place in the Lord’s plan and the simplicity of His purpose for them proved unsatisfying to their lusting hearts. Their desire to emulate their neighbors – be it Philistia, Edom, Moab, or Egypt – drove them as a nation to adopt pagan counsel in the form of culture and philosophy. Such counsel would ultimately lead to their destruction, captivity, and scattering.

But all of this should not surprise us, considering that Christendom has proven itself vulnerable to similar propensities. Here in America particularly, we find professed Christians immersing themselves (both actively and passively) in a sea of overly available books, classes, podcasts, television shows, radio programs, movies, *et. al.* Some of these are secular, some of them are labeled as “Christian”, but all of them in entertaining format invariably offer us, either directly or subliminally, a wide array of “counsel”. This worldly wisdom spans a broad spectrum – from finances to parenting to personal happiness and fulfillment. These venues, however, are nearly always steeped in atheistic psychological constructs and anti-Christian philosophies. Many choose to read or watch or listen to something that entertains or educates rather than assiduously applying themselves to seeking counsel directly from the canon of Scripture. Sadly, the sufficiency of God’s Word for everything pertaining to life and godliness is the most neglected doctrine of the day amongst professing Christians.

We can all easily succumb to this snare. Antichristian forces control almost all of media, most of academia, and large swaths of political office. The prince of the power of the air is subtly and continuously flooding the information outlets with seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. These hellish philosophies are redacted to bite-size and pithy phrases that have become the common vernacular of worldlings and believers alike. “Follow your heart”, “Chase your dream”, “Forgive yourself”, “Embrace your truth”, “Believe in yourself”, etc., are just a few examples of widely accepted worldly advice that smell of brimstone and flatly contradicts the counsel of the Almighty found in the Scriptures. *The only remedy for the believer is to consciously consume more of Scripture than he does of other forms of information.* This is not impossible, but it requires resolve, tenacity, and discipline. The Holy Spirit will provide all of that.

Dear friends, let us be satisfied in and with God’s Word, making it our daily delight and the overwhelming majority of our daily information consumption. As we do so, we will find rest in its sufficiency in all matters, and we will not be found guilty of adding sin to sin.

-- DCM



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-- DCM

## **As to the Lord**

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; For ye serve the Lord Christ. Colossians 3:23,24

The ministries of a church can provide opportunities for a person to participate in areas of Christian service. Teaching Sunday School, going on visitation, working in Vacation Bible School, helping in the nursery, being an usher, assisting on work projects, and countless other opportunities; all of which are very important and beneficial. To be a part of any of these ministries requires commitment and some level of sacrifice. There also are other areas of service outside of the church in which we can find ways to share the light and love of God.

Sometimes a well-meaning person can fall into the trap of participating in ministries for the wrong reasons. Whether it be for recognition, or to please others, or to just be cooperative and helpful, or maybe even to gain some attention from the Lord. If these are some of the things that motivate us, our service is for the wrong reason and will become just another activity.

Today's text brings to light the best purpose for all of our service. As redeemed men and women, we should never forget the great cost of our forgiveness, and that with grateful hearts we can give every area of our lives as service to the Lord. Remembering *Whom* we are serving helps mitigate any discouragement when our efforts in ministry are met with ingratitude. If we by faith envision the Lord beholding all that we do whether great or small as a thank offering to Him, it will be enough to satisfy any need for recognition or appreciation. When we realize that ultimately, we are serving the Lord, things that appear to be of less importance take on a greater significance. May we not fall into the same trap as the Pharisees in loving the praise of men more than the praise of God. The Scriptures demonstrate that the praise of men is usually immediate but short lived, while the praise of God is somewhat silent for the moment, yet it will last forever.