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West Suffolk Epistle West Suffolk Baptist Church



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Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant

Calvin's Geneva: A Godly Commonwealth

The place to begin is Geneva, which prior to the Reformation was infamous for its immorality. Among the wealthy city's common vices were drunkenness, disorderly conduct, gambling, prostitution, and adultery. On occasion, Genevans had been known to run naked through the streets singing vulgar and even blasphemous songs. Unfair business practices, such as usury, were common. The city was also troubled by dissension in the form of what one observer described as "ungodly and dangerous factions."

It was hoped that all of the violence and debauchery would cease in the 1530s, when Geneva's governing body voted to make a permanent break with Roman Catholicism and to align the city-state with the churches of the Protestant Reformation. What needed reforming was not simply the city's worship and theology but its entire moral atmosphere. To that end, the Council of Two Hundred passed civic ordinances designed to promote the Protestant religion and restrain public indecency. However, they quickly discovered how difficult it is to legislate morality. In the absence of strong enforcement, the laws themselves made little difference, and Geneva's moral decadence generally went unchecked.

To their credit, the Council recognized that moral transformation would not occur without biblical proclamation, and they decided to hire a better minister. In August of 1536, a brilliant young scholar named John Calvin passed through Geneva on his way to Strasbourg. He was collared by William Farel, a Reformer in his own right, who recognized that Calvin had both the pastoral gifts and the personal resolve to further the Reformation in Geneva. Calvin got off to a slow start, however, finding on his arrival that the city was in even greater chaos and disorder than he expected. Moreover, his preaching proved to be unpopular, especially when he insisted that in order to exercise its own God-given authority, the church needed to be free of secular control. Within two years Calvin was relieved of his pastoral duties and banished to Strasbourg. Yet the citizens of Geneva found that they could ill afford to do without him, and in 1541 they clamored for his restoration.

Understandably, Calvin was reluctant to resume pastoral ministry in a place where he had experienced both ridicule and rejection, yet he sensed that God was calling him back to Geneva. This time he insisted that the church be governed by a proper constitution, accepted on oath by the citizens. The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, as they were called, granted the city's pastors and elders full authority to regulate the worship and discipline of the Genevan church. Armed with this new authority, Calvin resumed his rigorous schedule of preaching and teaching. In addition to preaching twice on Sunday, he preached on average several mornings a week and also gave biblical and theological lectures to students preparing for pastoral ministry.

What Calvin preached, of course, was the Bible—verse by verse, chapter by chapter, and book by book. As he followed this method of consecutive Bible exposition, he eventually produced commentaries on nearly the entire Bible. His doctrinal framework was the theology of the Reformation, as summarized in his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.



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To put this another way, Calvin was a Calvinist. He taught each of the doctrines later defended at the Synod of Dort, from the totality of depravity to the certainty of persevering grace. Absolute predestination—the doctrine that “God, by his eternal and unchanging will, determined once and for all those whom he would one day admit to salvation”—held an especially important place in Calvin’s theology. Some scholars question whether he believed in definite atonement, a doctrine that was not fully clarified until the seventeenth century, when it came under Arminian attack. However, there is no doubt that Calvin believed that Christ’s death on the Cross actually achieved what it was designed to accomplish: the redemption of the elect. Nor is there any doubt that he maintained the efficacy of God’s grace in the effectual calling of God’s Spirit. At every point in his theology, Calvin insisted that salvation is a gift of divine grace rather than an achievement of human effort. The whole aim of his theology, especially his soteriology, was to glorify God for his sovereign grace. His own dependence on God’s sovereignty is perhaps best expressed in his famous prayer: “When I remember that I am not my own, I offer up my heart, presented as a sacrifice to the Lord.”

Calvin and his Calvinism came to exercise a profound influence on the city of Geneva. This influence did not come through coercion, as is sometimes thought, but primarily through persuasion.

Daily exposure to Calvin’s sound exposition of the Bible transformed the mind and heart of Geneva. The citizens embraced their election as the people of God and their calling to build a holy city. Their motto became *post tenebras lux*—“after darkness, light.” As they learned to worship the God of grace, especially through the singing of psalms, Geneva became a happier city. It also became a more wholesome city. In an effort to eliminate drunkenness and adultery, the taverns were closed and the public bathhouse was divided so that men and women could bathe separately. Geneva became a cleaner and safer city. Examples of this include Calvin’s own design for a civic sewer system and his insistence that parents protect their children by installing railings around their balconies.

As Calvin’s reputation grew, Geneva became a refuge for Protestants fleeing religious persecution elsewhere in Europe. In order to care for these refugees, Calvin established a fund for Christian hospitality. He also organized a diaconate to care for the needs of the poor, who were given opportunities to perform useful labor in the manufacture of clothing. Geneva also became a smarter city, as Calvin established a school—the famous Geneva Academy—to serve as a center for academic excellence. This was in keeping with his goal of universal Christian education (including a school for girls). The Academy helped Geneva become a center for missions: many of the pastors trained there were sent to evangelize France by planting new churches.

In addition to undertaking all of these social measures, Calvin set up a system for the spiritual care of church members. The pastors and elders who formed the Consistory met weekly to resolve disputes and to discipline parishioners who were caught in sin. Depending on the situation, these meetings could serve as a form of conflict-resolution or family counseling. When formal discipline was required, its goal was to encourage genuine repentance. In time, the effect of the Consistory’s disciplinary work was a drastic reduction in public immorality. As a result of these reforms, Geneva became a city for God’s glory.



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Calvin's Geneva was a remarkable example of spiritual, moral, and social transformation. It is little wonder that the Scottish Reformer John Knox described the city as "the most perfect school of Christ that there was in earth since the days of the apostles." To another visitor Geneva seemed like "the wonderful miracle of the whole world." This urban transformation was not accomplished by the doctrines of grace alone, of course, but by the plain teaching of Scripture, as understood from the perspective of the Calvinist system of doctrine with its undying passion to see God glorified in all of life. ~ *The Doctrines of Grace - Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel - James Montgomery Boice*

The Puritans: To Glorify and Enjoy God

If ever a group of Christians sought to glorify God in everything they did, it was the Puritans. Although the term "Puritan" has often been used as an insult, the Puritans themselves were simply Christians who wanted to honor God in their worship and doctrine. Richard Baxter, himself a leading Puritan pastor, defined them as "religious persons that used to talk of God, and heaven, and Scripture, and holiness." Their world view is perhaps best encapsulated in the first answer in the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."

The Puritans learned this God-centered lifestyle from John Calvin, for among the many foreigners who crowded into Geneva during Calvin's tenure were Protestant refugees from England. These men and women had been forced to flee the bloody reign of Mary Tudor. In the providence of God, their exile afforded them the opportunity to live in the holy commonwealth of Geneva, where they attended the English-speaking church pastored by John Knox. There the exiles developed a profound appreciation for Reformed worship, and by the time Elizabeth ascended the throne, they had become part of the burgeoning movement of international Calvinism. They returned to their homeland with the zealous intent of completing the Reformation in England by teaching "the true knowledge of God's Word which we have learned in this our banishment." Various forms of Puritanism flourished in England (and America) for the next one hundred years, culminating in the 1640s with their rise to parliamentary power and Oliver Cromwell's victory over Charles I in the English Civil War. With few exceptions, the Puritans were committed Calvinists. The mature statement of their theological convictions is contained in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly (1643–1648). Written several decades after the Synod of Dort, these documents include a clear exposition of the doctrines of grace. At the heart of all Puritan theology was a concern for the glory of God's sovereignty: "God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy" (Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. 5, Sec. 1). Included in the "all things" that God disposes to his glory are all things pertaining to the salvation of sinners—everything from election to redemption.

Where the Puritans excelled was at bringing this high view of God down to the level of ordinary life. One Puritan woman—the wife of a soldier in Cromwell's army—defined Christianity as "that universal habit of grace which is wrought in a soul by the regenerating Spirit of God, whereby the whole creature is designed up into the Divine will and love, and all its actions designed to the obedience and glory of its Maker."



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The Puritans: To Glorify and Enjoy God *Continued from Page 3*

By defining the Christian faith in this way, she was making a connection between the doctrines of grace and daily experience. God's sovereignty in salvation entails his sovereignty over everything else. Thus Puritanism was a theological interpretation of religious, social, economic, and political life, the conscious application of Calvinism to the total structure of human existence.

For the Puritans, Christianity began at home, where God's grace served to "spiritualize every action," so that even the simplest activities of domestic life, such as "a man's loving his wife or child," became "gracious acts." In the words of Benjamin Wadsworth, "Every Christian should do all he can to promote the glory of God, and the welfare of those about him; and the well ordering of matters in particular families tends to promote these things."

Marriage was a gift from God that established two Christians as partners in grace. One of its purposes was edification; husbands and wives were to encourage each other in spiritual things. At the same time, the Puritans viewed marriage as a romance. This was virtually an innovation, for the Renaissance ideal was courtly love, in which romance transgressed the boundaries of marital fidelity. But the Puritans combined love and matrimony to promote the biblical ideal of romantic marriage—a passionate partnership in which even the sexual act of love (or "due benevolence," as they called it) was a means of glorifying God in the body. To summarize, the Puritans viewed marriage as a "high, holy and blessed order of life, ordained not of man, but of God, . . . wherein one man and one woman are coupled and knit together in one flesh and body in the fear and love of God, by the free, loving, hearty, and good consent of them both, to the intent that they two may dwell together as one flesh and body, of one will and mind, in all honesty, virtue and godliness, and spend their lives in equal partaking of all such things as God shall send them with thanksgiving."

Another purpose of marriage was procreation. Like marriage itself, children were a gift from God. The Puritans believed that they were called to train their children in the love, knowledge, and service of God. Since this ultimately included their taking a place in public society, the Puritans placed a high value on Christian education. According to the poet John Milton, writing in his treatise *Of Education*, a complete education is one that "fits a man to perform justly, skillfully, and magnanimously, all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war." In other words, it equips a Christian to be a good husband, father, churchman, workman, and citizen. The education required to achieve this lofty goal was not vocational but liberal (that is, universal); and in addition to theology, the Puritans advocated thorough training in mathematics, astronomy, physics, botany, chemistry, philosophy, poetry, history, and medicine. In keeping with this comprehensive curriculum, when Thomas Shepard sent his son off to college, he urged him to remember "that not only heavenly and spiritual and supernatural knowledge descends from God, but also all natural and human learning and abilities."

The Puritans were leaders in childhood education, and the number of grammar schools in England doubled during the brief period of their governance. But their concern for education also extended to the highest levels of learning. The leading Puritans were educated at Oxford and Cambridge. When some of them later founded Harvard College, its charter eloquently expressed their commitment to Christ-centered education: "Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life, and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning." Love of learning was always tempered by the need for grace.



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The Puritans: To Glorify and Enjoy God *Continued from Page 4*

The Puritans were hard workers, largely due to their Calvinist conviction that Jesus Christ is sovereign over all. The Roman Catholic Church had drawn an absolute distinction between the sacred and the secular: whatever religious leaders did was sacred; everything else was secular. Although this distinction was rejected by Calvin (and before him, by Luther), its overthrow was completed by the Puritans, who made secular work part of a person's sacred calling. Every job, no matter how mundane, was intrinsically important because it afforded the opportunity to glorify God and to love one's neighbor. Cotton Mather wrote, "Every Christian ordinarily should have a calling. That is to say, there should be some special business . . . wherein a Christian should for the most part spend the most of his time; and this, that so he may glorify God." This faith in God's sovereign blessing on human labor produced the vaunted Puritan work ethic, which in turn made many Puritans prosperous. Since they believed that God was also sovereign over their wealth, they sought to exercise good stewardship, and in particular to use their money to care for the poor. The Puritans were well known for their charity. One study of English philanthropy from the Middle Ages through the Reformation shows that it was the Puritans who made the most generous contributions to public charity. This was because they were convinced that wealth was a social good rather than a private possession, and therefore that its purpose was not personal pleasure but general welfare.

This concern for the poor is one indication that the Puritans were interested in much more than personal piety. Puritanism was a social vision. In the words of one historian, the "summons to a reformation was a call to action, first to transform the individual into an instrument fit to serve the divine will, and then to employ that instrument to transform all of society." Many Puritans pursued this vision by entering public life. They were scholars, scientists, and politicians. C. S. Lewis went so far as to define them as "young, fierce, progressive intellectuals, very fashionable and up-to-date." Some taught at leading universities, especially in the disciplines of systematic theology and biblical interpretation. Others were members of Parliament. There were many Puritan-trained men among the first members of the Royal Society, then the most prestigious scientific organization in the world. In each of these areas—theology, politics, and science—the Puritans sought to acknowledge God's sovereignty by bringing all of life and thought under the authority of his Word.

The Puritan mind was a God-centered mind, and the result was a God-glorifying life. In the words of John Cotton, "Not only my spiritual life, but even my civil life in this world, all the life I live, is by the faith of the Son of God: he exempts no life from the agency of his faith." ~ *The Doctrines of Grace - Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel - James Montgomery Boice*

The Source and Supply of all Discernment

If you could ask God for anything, what would that be?

We may sometimes fantasize about that question, but for Solomon it was reality. When he became king after the death of David, the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Ask what you wish Me to give you" (1 Kings 3:5). Solomon could have requested anything. He could have asked for material riches, power, victory over his enemies, or whatever he liked. But Solomon asked for discernment: "Give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:9). Scripture says "it was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing" (1 Kings 3:10).



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The Source and Supply of all Discernment

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Moreover, the Lord told Solomon,

Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been none like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days. (1 Kings 3:11-14)

Notice that God commended Solomon because his request was completely unselfish: “because you have asked this thing, and have not asked for yourself.” Selfishness is incompatible with true discernment. People who desire to be discerning must be willing to step outside themselves.

Modern evangelicalism, enamored with psychology and self-esteem, has produced a generation of believers so self-absorbed that they cannot be discerning. People aren’t even interested in discernment. Their spiritual focus is on self and getting their own “felt needs” met.

Solomon did not do that. Although he had an opportunity to ask for long life, personal prosperity, health and wealth, he bypassed all of that and asked for discernment instead. Therefore God also gave him riches, honor, and long life for as long as he walked in the ways of the Lord.

In the same way, James 1:5 promises us—as New Testament believers—that God is still eager to provide us with the discernment we so desperately need: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5). We can ask Him for discernment, and He will gladly supply it. ~ *Dr. John MacArthur*

The Deadly Dangers of Passive Discernment

King Solomon was the epitome of discernment. Scripture declares that his wisdom “surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt” (1 Kings 4:30). Moreover, God granted him unsurpassed discernment: “Behold I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you” (1 Kings 3:12). Yet those of us who know the rest of the story are usually quick to point out that it didn’t finish well for Solomon, even with his abundance of wisdom.

Solomon was a dismal failure at the end of his life. Scripture records this sad assessment of the wisest man who ever lived:



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The Deadly Dangers of Passive Discernment *Continued from Page 6*

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love. He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not follow the Lord fully, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. Now the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the Lord. (1 Kings 11:1-9)

But Solomon did not suddenly fail at the end of his life. The seeds of his demise were sown at the very beginning. First Kings 3, the same chapter that records young Solomon’s request for discernment, also reveals that he “formed a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt” (1 Kings 3:1). Verse 3 tells us, “Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, except he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.”

From the very beginning his obedience was deficient. Surely with all his wisdom he knew better, but he tolerated compromise and idolatry among the people of God (1 Kings 3:2)—and even participated in some of the idolatry himself!

Discernment without obedience is a recipe for apostasy. What good is it to know the truth if we fail to act accordingly? That is why James wrote, “Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (James 1:22). Failure to obey is self-delusion; it is not true discernment, no matter how much intellectual knowledge we may possess. Solomon is biblical proof that even true discernment can give way to a destructive self-delusion. Disobedience inevitably undermines discernment. The only way to guard against that is to be doers of the Word and not hearers only. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**

God Is Always at Work for Us and for Our Good

Psalm 18 is a psalm of David, a song celebrating “the day when the LORD rescued him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.” This psalm, the longest of Book One, praises God for His deliverance. It is also recorded, with slight differences, in 2 Samuel 22. At the center of this psalm is a strong confession of faith: “With the merciful you show yourself merciful” (v. 25).

This psalm begins (vv. 1–6) and ends (vv. 46–50) with praise offered to God. It is praise filled with love and thanksgiving for God’s protection from enemies and from death. The praise rejoices in the victories God has given His king and His people—victories displayed before the world.



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God Is Always at Work for Us and for Our Good *Continued from Page 7*

The central section of the psalm (vv. 20–29) celebrates the faithfulness of David and of God. David served the Lord with integrity (we will look at the difficulties that seem to surround this kind of claim below). The Lord on His part had always been reliable and blessed His king. On each side of this central meditation on faithfulness we have the record of God’s powerful help for David (vv. 7–19; 30–45). Each of these two sections has its own character. Verses 7–19 emphasize the work of God to save David. Verses 30–45 highlight David’s success as God worked through him.

In light of this overview of the psalm’s structure, we want to look more closely at several points. **First**, how can David claim to be blameless (vv. 20–24)? The claim of blamelessness is a recurring theme in the Psalms. It is stated with special force in Psalm 26: *“Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and my mind. For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness. I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites”* (vv. 1–4). But David is a murderer and an adulterer, to name only some of his sins. How can he claim to be blameless?

We need to recognize that David was a devoted and persevering follower of the Lord even though he did fall into very serious sin. When Nathan confronted him with his sins, he repented and grieved deeply for them. He expressed his repentance in beautiful psalms of penitence such as Psalms 32 and 51. His life as a whole was characterized by his faithful keeping of God’s covenant in obedience and repentance.

What David pleads, then, is not absolute moral perfection. He recognized that by such a standard he would never stand: *“Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you”* (Psalm 143:2). Rather, he pleads his faithfulness in comparison to the wickedness of those who hate God and His king. He makes this comparison not to claim that he deserves or has earned God’s favor, but to show that God’s saving grace has really made him different from the wicked in the ways in which he thinks, believes, and lives. David loves the Lord and His law, so his sin is grievous to him and he willingly repents and seeks to lead a godly life. In contrast, the wicked despise God and His holy law. They ignore God and seek in every way to harm their neighbor.

Again, David is not claiming that his perfect righteousness earns him God’s favor. Rather, he says God has brought him into His covenant and given him the integrity that he has. It is *“God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless”* (v. 32). He belongs to God and follows God and therefore knows that God will be kind to him. It is not the self-righteous whom the Lord saves, but the humble: *“For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down”* (v. 27). All his strength comes from the Lord (v. 1) and the faith or trust of the psalmist always turns to the Lord for help (v. 2; cf. Ps. 26:1: *“I have trusted in the LORD without wavering”*). The foundation of God’s care for David is not David’s deserving, but the Lord’s election: *“He rescued me, because he delighted in me”* (v. 19).

While David wrote this psalm and had every right to sing it in his faithfulness, once again we see the psalm drawing our minds beyond David to one greater and purer than David. This psalm belongs more to the Christ, who was fully blameless in every way, than to David. Paul demonstrates this in his use of this psalm in Romans 15:8–9.



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God Is Always at Work for Us and for Our Good *Continued from Page 8*

He writes: *“For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, ‘Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.’”* In citing Psalm 18:49, Paul shows that it speaks of Jesus at least as much as it does of David. Indeed, even David can claim covenantal integrity only as he is in Christ.

Another feature of this psalm is the vivid picture of God’s coming to David’s rescue (vv. 7–15). David cried out for help (v. 6) and the Lord answered. *“He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet. He rode on a cherub and flew; he came swiftly on the wings of the wind”* (vv. 9–10). *The fury of the Lord shook the earth* (vv. 7, 15) *and thunder and lightning preceded him* (vv. 12–14). Hot smoke poured forth from his nostrils and fire from his mouth (vv. 8, 15). Here is a marvelous picture of the power and determination of God to save. But when in David’s life did this happen? As we scan Old Testament history, we can find no such episode. Something like this happened when the Lord met with Israel at Mount Sinai, but nothing close to it happened in David’s experience.

The explanation is, of course, that David is speaking poetically here. He records not what he saw with his physical eyes, but what his eyes of faith saw happen. Although this awesome power of God usually remains hidden from view, it is absolutely real, and it is exercised for the well-being of His people. God is always working powerfully and passionately for His people even when we do not see it. David’s poetic imagery shows us more than eyes can see.

This truth is taught over and over again in the Bible. We need to have it taught repeatedly because we are so inclined to think that only the visible is real. Think of the experience of Elisha. He sat in Dothan apparently defenseless against the strength of the king of Aram. When his servant panicked, Elisha replied, *“Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them”* (2 Kings 6:16). And then to comfort his servant further, Elisha prayed and God did an amazing thing. *“Then Elisha prayed and said, ‘O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.’ So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha”* (v. 17). Elisha had never been in any danger, for the Lord was on his side.

We see something similar when the authorities came to arrest Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus appeared weak and defenseless. Peter, in a panic, tried to protect Him with a sword. *“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?’”* (Matthew 26:52–53). Jesus submitted to arrest not because He was helpless, but because He accepted the Father’s will for His death and our redemption.

This psalm reminds all of us that God is always at work for us and for our good. In the New Testament, the Apostle John makes the same point: *“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world”* (1 John 4:4). We do not need to fear, for God will save us in His good time. We should praise God for His mercy and help as this psalm does. ~ **Dr. W. Robert Godfrey**



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Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant

If you have a July birthday or anniversary that is not posted here or is listed in error, please e-mail Walt at gwlcf10415@gmail.com.

Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner July 2021

Birthdays

Luke W. (4)
Sadie H. (13)
Elijah D. (16)
Eliana H. (16)

Jubilee H. (18)
Teresa H. (21)
Cristina W. (23)
Emily L. (25)

Anniversaries

David and Jennifer A. (4)
Les and Jessica T. (17)

“When we understand the character of God, when we grasp something of His holiness, then we begin to understand the radical character of our sin and hopelessness. Helpless sinners can survive only by grace. Our strength is futile in itself; we are spiritually impotent without the assistance of a merciful God. We may dislike giving our attention to God's wrath and justice, but until we incline ourselves to these aspects of God's nature, we will never appreciate what has been wrought for us by grace. Even Edwards's sermon on sinners in God's hands was not designed to stress the flames of hell. The resounding accent falls not on the fiery pit but on the hands of the God who holds us and rescues us from it. The hands of God are gracious hands. They alone have the power to rescue us from certain destruction.” ~ *R.C. Sproul, The Holiness of God*



***West Suffolk Baptist Church
Leadership***

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