

Psalm 138:6-8

Dear Friends in Christ,

I have a number of insights from others I want you to hear. I know little to nothing about all but one of the authors - specifically their theology - but the statements are worth the listen.

M. C. Richards was an American poet, potter and writer. She wrote: "Why is it if we are all so well-educated and brilliant and gifted and artistic and idealistic and distinguished in scholarship, that we are so selfish and scheming and dishonest and begrudging and impatient and arrogant and disrespectful of others?"

A fellow by the name of David R. Chamberlain wrote, "Humanism vainly attempts to help people lift themselves by their own bootstraps, but the gains are only illusory. Humanity repeats Lucifer's sin of pride and self-sufficiency with equally tragic results." And in the same vein, Francis Shaeffer wrote, "Humanism is not wrong in its cry for sociological healing, but humanism is not producing it." Well, has anyone here, with some years on them, noticed how "improved" everything has become?

I can't cite the author, but I like the thought: "Everybody looks for different things in the Ten Commandments. Some look for Divine guidance, some look for a code to live by, but most of us are looking for loopholes." And I would only add that we are now working to get rid of the Commandments!

Humanity. It's been in a state of confusion and death since the day our first parents were escorted out of the garden. And God's people? I think Jay Kesler stated the case quite succinctly in these words: "Things are to be used and God is to be loved. We get into trouble when we begin to use God and love things."

We're looking at....

WHAT GOD SEES AS HE LOOKS AT US

I. With Regards.

I want to start with the last part of the first verse of our text: "...but the haughty he knows from afar." (vs. 6b) Here are some synonyms for the word "haughty": proud, arrogant, vain, snobbish, superior. In the case of our text, it's the "I don't need God!" crowd. And though "the haughty one" thinks himself without the Presence of God, His Presence is there, nonetheless! Listen: "(God) knows (them) from afar." That is, in such a way that the haughty one cannot escape God's watch. Well, the Scriptures are clear; the writer of Hebrews says, "And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (Heb. 4:13)

And then there are the "lowly". The people torn by sin and guilt, fear of death, struggling with people and life. So, how does God see you and me on a day to day basis? The good moments? The bad moments? The moments we would prefer to think the One Who sees all is **not** looking? How does He see us? Well, with regards.

Our text says, "For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly...". Regards meaning "attention to or concern for something." The commentators Keil and Delitzsch note: "He has shown Himself to be the Exalted One who in His all-embracing rule does not leave the lowly...unnoticed, but on the contrary makes him the especial object of His regard."(i.e., His attention - concern). (Commentary on the Old Testament, Psalms, Vol. 5., William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989, p. 340)

II. In the Midst of Trouble.

So, what does He see? David says, "though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me." (vs. 7) David had enemies, those who wanted to destroy him; Saul, other kings, his own son, Satan, his sin. And God consistently delivered him, though David consistently found himself walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

And us? Who are our enemies? Those who oppose Christ and His church, Satan, our sin. It's all there for us in our walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. That's where we live!! Everyday!

In Psalm 131:1 David, in great humility says, "O Lord, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me." He understood who and what he was before a Holy God. We must do the same.

And, of course there's David's great confession that is always ours: "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned (all sin, no matter what, all sin is first and foremost against God!) and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment." (Ps. 51:3,4) It's my sin, my transgressions. It's my fault. This is where the lowly live. This is us - everyday. As John writes, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn. 1:8,9)

And so, in the midst of our troubles stands our Lord Jesus Christ. Stands there in the Means of Grace. Presents Himself with His regards; that is, His concern for us. And we, in turn, stand before Him with our sin and guilt, loads of fears and concerns, disappointments and moments of raging conflict. And, hopefully, with great thanksgiving and praise for His love and blessings!

But keep in mind: He does not take the upheavals and struggles away. He uses and directs them for our eternal well-being. His regards for us will never allow us ultimate comfort with this world. In the March/April edition of *Touchstone* magazine, contributing editor, Peter J. Leithart wrote the following:

The official ideology of late modernity (i.e., modern thinking) rules out divine judgment. Earthquakes are caused by more or less predictable breakages along a fault line. Tsunamis and cyclones are caused by atmospheric conditions. We can fine-tune the markets and the rates to avoid economic catastrophe. Skillful diplomacy will keep another world war at bay. We have become blind to the very possibility of divine judgment.

We are blind because we have been seduced by science. Science explains everything that primitives and medievals saw as divine interventions. Science gives us permission to rest easy, eat and drink and fornicate, and wait for the engineers to solve the problem.... (*Touchstone*, "Judgement Denied" by Peter J. Leithart, *Touchstone*, The Fellowship of St. James, March/April 2016, p.5)

I would only add that we either conveniently forget, or prefer not to consider Jesus' words: "...nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains." (Matt. 24:7,8) And, then, He said this: "And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold." (Matt. 24:12)

Time and again we are reminded of what this world is and our struggle; reminded of the sufferings, dying and death that have never, even remotely, been abated. But God, in Christ is always there for us.

Our text . . .

III. A Purpose.

"The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands."

And His purpose? To make us His. To cover our sin with His blood. To assure us of His love and pardon. Again, He stands there in the Word and Baptism and Supper - through these very earthy, ordinary means of words, water, bread and wine - and says, "For it is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." (Jn. 6:40)

And one other point. Jesus said, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (Matt. 24:14). **The end!** And it is so very, very close. The gospel proclamation has been left with us. Not the guarantee that all who hear it will believe. No...that's not the way it works. It's a **testimony**. Many will believe. Most will not. But proclaiming the kingdom is our purpose. It is as Jesus said: "...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 5:16)

What God sees as He looks at us is the special object of His concern; those He has purchased with the blood of Jesus. He sees our struggles and troubles; all of which He uses to keep us focused on the eternal Kingdom that is ours through faith in Christ. He sees our purpose for existence; to live in assurance of His love and forgiveness and to reflect that to others.

What Does God See As He Looks At Us? His children in Christ!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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Psalm 138:6-8: ***“What God Sees As He Looks at Us”***

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II. In the Midst of Trouble.

III. A Purpose.

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