

Monday, January 30, 2006

Restore me, O God

Psalm 80, adapted for any Believer feeling depressed or deserted-Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, my Shepherd; my Father who art in Heavenshine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim; come to help me. Restore me, O God of hosts; show the light of your countenance [upon me] and [I] shall be saved. O Lord how long will you be angered [with me] despite [my] prayers You have fed [me] with the bread of tears; you have given [me] bowls of tears to drink. Restore [me], O God of hosts; show the light of your countenance and [I] shall be [healed]. Turn now, O God of hosts, look down from heaven; behold and tend this vine; preserve what your right hand has planted. Let your hand be upon [me. I am] the man of your right hand, [a] man you have made so strong for yourself [in days past] And so will [I] never turn away from you; give [me] life, that [I] may call upon your name. Restore [me], O Lord God of hosts; show [me] the light of your countenance [again]

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 11:31

Friday, January 27, 2006

Sacrificing our Children

Today's OT lesson [in Oremus] warns Christians to beware of the dangers of multiculturalism. Deuteronomy 12:28-32 What is "doing the right thing?" This text makes it clear: Want to do the right thing? Obey the Law of God. Want life to go well for your children? Obey the Commands of God. Be careful to obey all these words that I command you today, so that it may go well with you and with your children after you for ever, because you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God. When the Lord your God has cut off before you the nations whom you are about to enter to dispossess them, after they have been destroyed before you: Moses is talking about the tribes of Israel displacing (maybe 3600 years ago) the people we now call the Palestinians, the original settlers of the "Promised Land." Here's the warning: do not inquire concerning their gods, saying, 'How did these nations worship their gods?' This is simply the study of other Religions. What is wrong with that? Nothing unless it leads you, God's People, to also say, "I also want to do the same." That is the "ism" part of being multicultural. The dangerous part. You must not do the same! take care that you are not ensnared into imitating them, ...because every abhorrent thing that the Lord hates they have done... They would even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. Oh, we would never do that, we insist. Not literally, of course. But, if our study of other Religions leads us to adopt some of their beliefs and ways, which the Lord hates (Multiculturalism and diversity and relativism are not for Him), and this leads our children into those Religions and away from the Lord, we have sacrificed our children to false gods. Final word on the matter: You must diligently observe everything that I [Moses] command you; do not add to it or take anything from it.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:56

40 Years Ago

Yesterday, our older daughter turned 40. Amazing how a year from now can seem like a long time. Forty years ago was just yesterday. I was Pastoring an inner city church in Lowell, MA. God had blessed and we were in the process of relocating to a nearby suburb. That Summer, it was my great privilege to conduct the wedding of a dear friend and his fiancée in Jamaica WI. That was a wonderful 2 week experience, during which I also preached in several churches. It was very hot and my wife was carrying our yet to be born daughter. Our hosts were more than very gracious and we met wonderful people all over the island. Our two sons were staying with my in-laws. Come January 26, we drove to the hospital. Delivery was not supposed to be imminent. I went to the weekly women's Bible study at a church member's home. A friend we had met in Jamaica was flying in that day to visit us, coming from Ireland. Melissa arrived early, I arrived late at the hospital. Our boys stayed with the hostess of the Bible study and our friend had to wait hours at Logan Airport. My wife, ever the good trooper, was fine and so was our daughter. I am thankful.

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 09:24

"God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears"

The greatest blessing, from my Devotions this morning, came from this hymn composed more than 350 years ago. Let its words sink in—Put thou thy trust in God, in duty's path go on; walk in his strength with faith and hope, so shall thy work be done. Commit thy ways to him, thy works into his hands, and rest on his unchanging word, who heaven and earth commands. Though years on years roll on, his covenant shall endure; though clouds and darkness hide his path, the promised grace is sure. Give to the winds thy fears; hope, and be undismayed: God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears; God shall lift up thy head. Through waves and clouds and storm his power will clear thy way: wait thou his time; the darkest night shall end in brightest day. Leave to his sovereign sway to choose and to command; so shalt thou, wondering, own his way, how wise, how strong his hand. (based on John Wesley's 1739 paraphrase of a text by Paul Gerhardt, 1653)

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 08:38

Wednesday, January 25, 2006

Remembering Alan: Faithful Servant

Next week, February 2, will be the second anniversary of the Homegoing of a faithful servant of God. His wife and children seem to be moving on and doing well. Alan is still very much a part of who they are and what they are about and always will be. Child of career missionaries, growing up in what was the Congo until coming to the States for college, Alan had a sure call and passion for evangelism and church planting. He was also sure that this ministry was to take place in a small town in Vermont. Doing such work there can be, was, and still is, very daunting. He was determined. Sometimes, I thought, just plain stubborn. It was very slow going. He had an excellent college and seminary education. He was very gifted, in many ways. The church plant turned out to be very frustrating and did not yield the intended results. Alan and his wife did not quit or leave the area. They both found non-church related jobs and were busy raising 3 very active children (and a nephew, for a while). Alan became a good medical insurance claims examiner for the State. His wife, also educated and gifted, became a fast food restaurant manager.

They continued to pray for everyone in the town, using the phone book. They had neighborhood "socials" and found creative ways to share the Gospel in town. He and his wife were still convinced God had called them to that town. They were not giving up. His family is still there. Still praying. Still hoping. Alan was very active in our denomination, being supportive of other Pastors, such as myself. He did occasional pulpit supply and was just finishing a part-time interim position in another small town church, when he was killed in an auto accident. The God who called Alan to Vermont had called him to Heaven. The effects of his witness continue and the impact of his life on his family and friends, such as myself, goes on. He once sent me a card, It is pinned on the bulletin board behind where I am sitting. On the front is a cartoon of a boxer in a ring. The caption reads: **FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH - 1Tim 6:12** Thanks, Alan, for the encouragement you still are to me. You were faithful.

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 08:39

Tuesday, January 24. 2006

Artists and Angelfish glorifying God

We greatly enjoyed a documentary last night entitled "Rivers and Tides" about environmental sculptor Andy Goldsworthy. His creativity and patience is amazing. One thing I enjoy about artists of all kinds is their effort to be in the moment, and visual artists, particularly, in their effort to see the world around them- shades and tones, shapes and forms, textures and lines, movement and energy. How much richer would we all be if we made more of such an effort. These artists learn to see and enjoy things that have always been there, but that the rest of us miss out on. There is a spiritual lesson here. Sunday afternoon, on the program "Nature" we were mesmerized by what was captured on film in a documentary about the Monterey CA Aquarium. I especially was taken with the "Jellies". See for yourself on their website. From migrating birds in the sky to animals swimming beneath the ocean, we delight in the creating glory of God. God made all these animals and materials and said "They are good". Just by being their good selves, being as God intended, these creatures and natural resources bring their Maker glory. The same can apply to human beings. I have appreciated Special Grace for years. It is wonderful to be learning to see the Hand of God everywhere and appreciate His Common Grace.

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 19:01

Monday, January 23, 2006

The Spear still sticks

Cal Thomas gives a glowing review, in his column today, of the film, "End of the Spear". He sees it as a well-acted, well directed and beautifully filmed movie of a classic story of forgiveness and reconciliation. A must see. Non-Christian reviewers are not so sanguine about the movie. They pan the acting and direction, while agreeing that the cinematography is beautiful. And they definitely do not agree with the merits of the story. To them "Spear" is about a clash between two cultures. What right, they say, did those self-righteous "missionaries" have to seek to impose their religion on those tribal people. (Never mind that those tribal people were led to stop killing each other when they adopted the outsiders Faith) Such critics just miss the whole point of the movie and the wonderful outcome of this true story. Maybe viewers must first be Believers to "get it" I am somewhat amazed and dismayed that this story is coming as new to most everyone we know. We personally learned of these men and their mission and its outcome 50 years ago, when it happened. It had a great impact on my life. way back then. "Through Gates of Splendor" and "Under the Shadow of the Almighty" are missionary classics. The world is very different now. Young Christians are not brought up in homes, churches or on campuses, where there is great missionary fervor for reaching the millions of unsaved people around the world with the (now) old fashioned Gospel. The movie may also perpetuate, I am afraid, the idea that the primary work of missions and missionaries is to evangelize primitive tribal people. Today, the call is primarily to reach urban non-Christians, living in cities, with a Gospel that is much more holistic and with methods that are far more sophisticated, than those depicted in the film from 10 decades ago. Nevertheless, I urge you to go and see the film.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:31

"Glory Road" misleading

A movie currently near the top of the charts is Glory Road. Some reviewers see it as just another Disney feel-good, inspirational, family sports movie wherein the underdogs take on the current champs and, of course, in the last scene, triumphs. Most of the reviewers, however, seem to see this film as about Racism and the end of segregation in college basketball http://filmcritic1963.typepad.com/reviews/2006/01/glory_road.html In that regard, today's column by George Will is enlightening. The Big Game in the movie was for the NCAA championship in 1966, in which Texas Western beat Univ of Kentucky. According to the movie, the Texas coach recruited and played 5 Black starters, against strong, life threatening bigotry and the all-white Kentucky team. First, Texas was ranked third in the nation, having lost only one game for the season. Second, 10 years before the Big Game, the University of San Francisco had won the NCAA championship, using four black starters (none other than Bill Russell, KC Jones, Hal Berry and Gene Brown) Third, 8 years before the Big Game, the Coaches choice for the All-American college team was all black (including Wilt Chamberlain, Oscar Robertson, Bill Russell, Bob Boozer, and Guy Roberts) Fourth, 4 years before the Big Game, the University of Cincinnati won the NCAA championship, starting with 4 black players. Fifth, 3 years before the Big Game, Loyola won the NCAA championship, starting 4 black players. By then, Chamberlain, Russell, Baylor and Robertson were considered the best players in the NBA sports figures who personally knew the Texas coach say that he recruited and played the men that he did because they were the best he could find, in order to win the game. Not in order to make a social statement. Thus, the idea that this movie is about the team that broke the color barrier and ended segregation in college ball is false. Apparently, it is true that there was bigotry and racism in Kentucky and with the Kentucky coach. The President of the University wanted him to play black players- to win. But he refused. The Texas coach and his players did face great local opposition. When the UK Coach retired in 1972, his team was still all white. Today, the Kentucky Coach is black and the team is integrated. Movies that purport to tell a true story must be truthful. More important, accounts of racism and the struggle against it must also be true.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 14:50

Big Brother-Big Government

We started to watch Enemy of the State with Will Smith on cable last night. Another creepy, disturbing movie about a good and innocent man being targeted by "the Feds" (in this case- NSA). The latter are evil and corrupt, let alone immoral and unethical in the name of national security. Ugh. Turned it off after maybe 15 minutes. I must confess though, to having a growing unease with the increasing controversies with the Federal government (one agency or

another) over matters of privacy rights of citizens, as well as habeas corpus and due process. The Scripture clearly warns us about the evils of a totalitarian State (the Beast arising from the Sea in Rev 13) and we must be ever vigilant about abuse of power by the Powers that be. A cardinal doctrine among conservatives is the evil of Big Government. Interestingly, Social Conservatives apply this doctrine to social and religious practices, while Political Conservatives apply this Doctrine to fiscal and economic matters. Scripture applies the warning about Government playing "god" to everything.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 13:33

QT Thots

1 Corinthians 13:4-13 for ParentsLove does not insist on its own way. Over the years, especially when the children were young, I made the hurtful mistake of insisting on my own way over theirs, just because it was my way. Sometimes I was simply being selfish and stubborn. Other times, I believed my way was right, the only way, even God's way. Sometimes I was correct, many times I was not. It is not angry... I look back now with great regret for times when I was angry with ones I dearly love. A parent driven by anger is being very ugly- and counter productive. Sometimes anger can be justified- but not the kind that comes from a parent because he is not getting his way. Love bears ...things and believes ... Oh, yes, like Mother Mary, a parent bears many wounds and hurts, exactly because he or she loves. She does this because she believes in the Lord and in her children. She bears even a broken heart, because she believes God will honor her faith and what she has invested in her children. Through the trying, testing times, a parent always hopes...and endures. He knows he can not give up as a parent, can not stop praying for his children, can not stop being there for them. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. But when I became mature, I put an end to childish ways. A parent is always a parent, but parenting changes as the children and the parent change with age and circumstances. Once, all of life seemed to revolve around the children. Everything was for them or about them; if not for Dad, always for Mom. But then comes the time, suddenly or gradually, when that way of living ends. Some parents welcome this. Others are dismayed. A new life, a new purpose, must be found beyond being a parent. Exciting and daunting, too. For now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see face to face. Now we know only in part...But ...the partial shall pass away. ...then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. What does it all amount to? Has it been worth it? Have I done the best I could? Did I do well as a parent? Could I have done better? We see only parts of the whole. A lot does not seem to make sense. It is not as we thought it would be, The children are not sometimes as we dreamed they would be. It's ok. God sees it all. He knows. Someday, we too shall see what He does. It will all come together. Our children are in His Hands. That is good. He is, after all, a Father, a Parent, who is heavenly. There are three things that last for ever, faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 11:42

"...though all the fields should wither"

...we cheerfully can say,
let the unknown tomorrow
bring with it what it may,

It can bring with it nothing
but he will bear us through:
who gives the lilies clothing
will clothe his people, too:
beneath the spreading heavens
no creature but is fed;
and he who feeds the ravens
will give his children bread.

Though vine nor fig tree neither
their wonted fruit should bear,
though all the fields should wither,
nor flocks nor herds be there;
yet, God the same abiding,
his praise shall tune my voice;
for, while in him confiding,

Blog Export: DUTCH TREAT- Cal Fox's Blog, <http://www.calvinfox.com/blog/>

I cannot but rejoice. Words: William Cowper, 1779

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:02

Sunday, January 22, 2006

Birds and Humans together Perform Great Feat

For an absolutely awesome documentary, I recommend Winged Migration. The cinematography is gorgeous and the epic flights of these large, beautiful migratory birds is a wonder to behold. I found it a paean to the Creator, a worshipful experience. The music is very appropriate (very few words are used through out the film.) It is interesting that the dark moments come when the birds fly over cities in contrast to pristine wilderness. And one has to sympathize with them when, having flown for maybe a thousand miles, the flight of some is abruptly ended when they are shot down by "sportsmen". For a mind-boggling story, watch the extra material on the DVD about what 500 people over 4 years had to do to make the film. The human feat is more awesome than the avian one. It also brings God glory.

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 13:17

Saturday, January 21, 2006

Illegal Aliens

The Massachusetts Legislature voted this week to deny illegal aliens, who are high school graduates, in-state college tuition rates. I was mulling this over, as I was doing my Heart Therapy (walk) today. I passed a number of Asians, which prompted my thoughts. I wasn't sure- I have heard and can see both sides of the situation. There have been letters and editorials in our paper. I have read little about in in Christian magazines. The common politically correct term is "undocumented workers or "guest workers". If someone breaks into my house, he is there illegally. Using this analogy, if someone breaks into my country, he is there illegally. I wondered how legal immigrants, many who have waited years for the documents giving them the legal right to enter, feel about illegal immigrants. I suspect they would not approve of them being here, let alone being given perks reserved for naturalized citizens. I agree with the Legislature. Some might say, "What about the Biblical mandate to Israel to treat aliens in Israel with justice and fairness?" Of course. We must not exploit or oppress workers, human beings, of any kind in any way. I understand that there may be millions of illegal workers in America and that they perform necessary work. They are still illegal. Let them become citizens. And if the immigration policies and laws need changing, let's change them. But we should not allow public policy to be determined by the pressure of special interest groups. That is the way "Gay Marriage" and "Gay Rights" activists (among others) are bringing about changes in policy and law.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:56

The Truly Depraved Mind

We image God, but we are not God. The temptation that led to the original (first) sin was the sin of Secular Humanism: believing the measure of man is Man; Christian Humanism teaches the measure of Man is God. Compare what God says about the king of Tyre- Ezekiel 28:2 'this is what the sovereign Lord says: "in the pride of your heart you say, "I am a god; ...but you are a man and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god. There is more: The temptation was to be like "god-with-the-knowledge-of-good-and-evil", ie- to be as wise as God- to seek and possess the wisdom that belongs to God alone. Job 28:12 "But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? 23 God understands the way to it ... 28 And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord-that is wisdom..." Proverbs 9:10 the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom Adam & Eve were deceived into believing that they could have the wisdom of God without God,---simply by eating the "apple"; specifically, without obedience of His Law Psalm 19:7 the law of the Lord is perfect,... the statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 the precepts of the Lord are right, ... the commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. cf that verse with what Eve thought about the "apple" in Gen 3:6 -When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was ...desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

THE TEMPTATION WAS TO BE AUTONOMOUS Seeking autonomy (seeking to think, to have knowledge & wisdom, apart from God and the Law of God, like Adam and Eve) has been "Man's" deceit and sin ever since. This led to substituting Error for Truth. Not only are Error and Truth opposites, they oppose each other: the Fall of "Man" is the rise of what is called The Antithesis ["enmity"]. Human beings not only seek autonomy from God is their Knowledge, they do this with animus against God. There is not only rebellion against God in the heart of human beings, there is hostility. Many (most?) contemporary Evangelicals miss or deny this important point. ROMANS 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth...19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator 28 since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind. The rest of this chapter in Romans makes clear that the sexual immorality of our culture is a result and symptom of this depraved mind. While sinners are accountable for their immorality, this Scripture states, in no uncertain terms, that the anger and judgment of God are not primarily against that immorality but its origin: 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against ... men who suppress the truth...19 ... about God (this is what is meant by a "depraved mind") Many Christians rant about overt homosexuality; but, the later is a symptom, not the disease. The disease, the really serious core problem, is the human heart (mind) and its insistence on playing "god" and creating a culture that is not only autonomous, but hostile toward

God. This post is based on my study guide for Genesis, chap 3. I'll add more later.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:33

Marriage is Good

My wife had a root canal done yesterday. I went with her to the periodontist. We have been going to dentists and doctors together for many years. While waiting, I was ruminating again about our long life together and all that we have shared "side by side". Every morning, in my prayers I remember a number of other couples who have also been together many years- some more than 60. In this day of people in and out of "relationships", I simply want here to put in a good word for marriage: a committed for life, till death do us part, covenant between a husband and wife who perservere through sickness and health, riches and poverty, sorrow and joy. It takes a lot of work and patience, much grace and forgiveness and always a lot of prayer (together and for each other). When two thus become one, it is very precious and beautiful and all eminently worthwhile. As time goes by, it is ever better. I am very thankful.

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 09:41

Friday, January 20, 2006

QT Thots

Words: William Cowper, 1768 Hark, my soul, it is the Lord! 'Tis thy Savior, hear his Word; Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee, "Say, poor, sinner, lovest thou me?" Lord, it is my chief complaint that my love is weak and faint; yet I love thee, and adore: O for grace to love thee more! Jeremiah 20:7-13 O Lord, you have enticed me, and I was enticed; you have overpowered me, and you have prevailed. The word "entice" means "attract", "tempt", "lure". It is sometimes translated as "deceive". All words with negative connotations. There is another meaning. There is a sense in which God, the Lover of our souls, seduces us. He woos us inexorably and draws us irresistibly. This happens in conversion. It happens when He has a "wild plan" for us. As with His call to Jeremiah to be a fearless prophet. The Spirit overpowers and prevails. There is no shaking Him off, no escape from His control. His will, will be done. This is, really, a good thing; but it leads to trouble. The unshakable call on my life is to apply the Word of God to all aspects of our culture. It is a very specific positive Word, with a painful downside. Much of what I see in our world, as well as in the typical church of our day, must be confronted and torn down. I speak up. The result? I have become a laughing-stock all day long; everyone mocks me. For whenever I speak, I must cry out, I must shout, 'Violence and destruction!' [to the status quo] This means that the Word that means so much to me, and on which I meditate day and night, has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. People prefer, by far, words of comfort, ie- comfortable words. I am tempted to give them what they want. But-If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name', then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. Lord, You have enticed me. May your Word always prevail.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 16:09

Thursday, January 19, 2006

More Ominous Trends

George Will is a columnist I respect and enjoy (usually). This article by him about schools of education is a must read. If what he says is true (and it is- I checked out all his references) we should be indignant and alarmed.

[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10753446/site/newsweek/Read Ms MacDonald's article for yourself](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10753446/site/newsweek/Read%20Ms%20MacDonald's%20article%20for%20yourself). http://www.city-journal.org/html/8_2_a1.html Here's some of the latest evidence that something is seriously wrong

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/24/AR2005122400701.html?nav=hcmodule>

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 13:46

"...like a horse and carriage"

"There are millions of poor Americans, living not just in down-on-your-luck hardship but in entrenched, multigenerational poverty. There is growing inequality between the haves and the have-nots. And there are reasons to worry whether the American dream is within the reach of all....these ominous

trends are entangled with the collapse of the nuclear family.' This is a quote from an important article about marriage and poverty- http://www.city-journal.org/html/16_1_marriage_gap.html City Journal, by the way, has excellent articles

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 13:34

The Greatest Sin in the Bible? Idolatry

The New Testament specifies three Idols. It warns that the unbridled appetites and lusts of the body can become an Idol- we believe we need to satisfy them for a "good life". In fact, they, collectively, control us. They enslave us and eventually destroy us. Likewise, the New Testament warns that Money can do the same thing. Jesus names this Idol, Mammon. The third Idol that the New Testament warns about is the State. We come to believe we need it for our security and well-being. It, too, ends up enslaving us. Bob Goudzwaard, in his book *Idols of our Time*, says: "an ideology arises when idolatry takes root in the pursuit of a legitimate end." (his emphasis). Science, technology and the economy are legitimate and necessary to the life of a nation. Each has a valid, important role to play in national life. Each can become an idol. Each can be, and has been, absolutized and become an object of faith -

When we believe making money is the measure of all things, economics becomes Economism. When science is believed to be the only valid way of knowing, science becomes Scientism. When we believe technology is the only way to accomplish results, then technology becomes Technicism. Goudzwaard is convinced that Scientism, Technicism and Economism are the three major idols of our times. It has been said that these 3 idols are inseparable and thus really form a trinity: one god in three "persons"- "Scientism offers omniscience, Technicism provides omnipotence, Economism... extends to all...material prosperity- nothing short of secular salvation" p.138 These gods are not equal, however. "Profit maximization and economic growth before all else- at all costs reign supreme" p.139 *Transforming Vision*, Walsh & Middleton [italics added] Certainly, many Americans, many Christian Americans, look to these Ideologies for the security, power, control, meaning and purpose of the nation, as well of their personal lives. God alone can give security, protection, strength, life, purpose and meaning. When we look to anything else- the economy, the stock market, government, a political party or leader, our country, nationality or ethnicity, science, technology, a "cause" of any kind, formal education- to give us security, protection, strength, life, purpose and meaning instead of God, we have an idol.. Americans, American Christians, have many idols and ideologies in their hearts. That makes such Christians practicing Pagans. Once our idols (Idolatry) are identified, we must repent and rip them from our hearts.

Blog Export: DUTCH TREAT- Cal Fox's Blog, <http://www.calvinfox.com/blog/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:25

Wednesday, January 18, 2006

More Muslims Coming

The Muslim population 20 years from now is estimated to be 30% of the world's population, while the Christian population is estimated to be 25% according to this Muslim website. Its main point is that the population in the West is declining and getting older, while the Muslim birth rate is high and many children committed to Islam are on the way and this is a good thing. What do you think? <http://muslim-canada.org/muslimstats.html>

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 17:01

Holistic Ministry

It is time again for the annual United Way Fund Drive. The paper here is featuring the various agencies seeking help. I must say that many good people are doing good work in this community. This is Common Grace. In a "secular" way these people and organizations are doing God's work: they are providing human services and making life better for multitudes. Christians and Churches have always done works of mercy and charity. The Hospital we have used most often, and where my wife worked for years, is "Mercy" Hospital run by the RC Sisters of Charity. We have known many Christians who serve the Lord as teachers and doctors, dentists and nurses and who operate orphanages, clinics and shelters. There is nothing new about Christians being heavily involved in what today is called holistic ministry and activism for social justice. In some periods, this emphasis has waned, while in others it has thrived. Today is a time when it is thriving. Outreach is being done with two hands: evangelism and social action. An exciting demonstration of this can be seen in Mission America <http://www.missionamerica.org/Brix?pageID=12737>

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 16:43

More Youth Violence

The first homicide of the year happened Monday. A 20 year old was shot many times and left for dead in the stairwell of a tenement building here. Same day, another meeting, which had been already planned, was convened to come up with yet another plan to do something about drugs, gangs and violence here in Springfield. Again the call went out to get the city, police and clergy involved and cooperating to solve the mounting problem, primarily among inner city disadvantaged young people. Actually, all people have been working hard on the problem for years. Of course, they should continue; but, it seems clear that something is missing. Twice in the lead article about the meeting and the problem, people are quoted as saying, "Where are the parents?" All kinds of community leaders and agencies are involved, but not many parents. Probably, the majority of parents are involved and most kids are being raised well. This is not true of the kids who are in danger. More activities to "keep the kids off the streets" is not going to solve their problem. Offering more counseling and workshops is not going to cut it either. Big Brother and Big Sister mentoring is helpful, but is not the solution for these young adults. Such offerings are too little, too late.

The major problem that must be addressed is not the drugs, gangs and violence- it is the disadvantaged, single parent and dysfunctional family. Churches need to reach very young children and win their hearts, minds and bodies for Christ, teaching them effectively to adopt and internalize what the Bible teaches about relationships, marriage and family. That includes teaching them Biblical values about the care of their bodies, sexuality and parenting. They should also be learning what the Bible says about money and work, as well as about amusements and material things. They should be learning who they are in Christ and about living life for Him. I'm talking about doing this for all children from infancy through pre-teens. Concentrating on them, rather than the older youth. Prevention now instead of intervention later. We need to raise up a whole new generation to replace the current one. Eventually, This will lead to a new generation of parents, too. Hopefully, none of them will become disadvantaged or dysfunctional. Of course, to do this effectively will require much prayer and support and cooperation of many in the church (even more so for those children whose parents are not involved) especially when these young children become teens and young adults and try to live out, and be faithful to, what they have learned. Those teens who are currently seeking to do this, of course, need all the support we can give them, as well.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 16:25

Minimum Wage?

The famous Winchester Arms factory in New Haven Connecticut is going to close. At their peak production the firm employed 19,000 people. Less than 200 now. One of the reasons this city of Springfield is in dire financial straits is the loss of its manufacturing sector. Nothing is bringing back these lost jobs. Times have changed. There is a major interest here in raising the minimum wage. Whatever the merits of doing that, the real solution to securing higher paying jobs in the long term is providing and securing the education and training required by today's market and the many business sectors that are booming. Like it or not, fair or not, the reality is that to get a good paying job (however that is defined) requires having the skills and the credentials that today's economy and society will reward. Pretty simple. If some choose not to go along with this, and I have been one of them at times through the years, they must accept the consequences. I have.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 12:21

The Sins of Sodom

We had a discussion recently about the connection between social injustice and profligacy. Is there a cause and effect? The specific topic was the city of Sodom. It was said to be full of wickedness and unrighteousness in general terms. (See Gen 13:13, 18:20-33) We are told that many of the citizens did "abominable things" (Ezek 16:50) They were a proud and arrogant people and lived in great luxury. Two particular evils are singled out for condemnation: 1. The practice of homosexual acts (sodomy). See Genesis 19. Neglect of the poor among them. See Ezekiel 16:49. Conservative Christians emphasize the first. More liberal Christians emphasize the second. Both are evils were prevalent- it is not one or the other. The question is about the connection between the two. The Bible itself puts far more emphasis on the evil of social injustice than it does with sodomy and connects the former often with the life style of the "rich and famous" as in Amos 3:13-4:3. Elsewhere, on the Blog, I have discussed the connection between idolatry and oppression in the Bible. Those who oppress the poor tend to be idolaters. The so-called worship services connected with idolatry are also frequently associated with debauchery and sexual immorality e.g.- 1 Cor 10:7-8 and many prophets condemn the practice e.g.- Hosea 4:10b-19. The conclusion seems to be that there is a causal connection between social injustice and profligacy, luxury and idolatry.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:57

Tuesday, January 17, 2006

Snafu Snagged- don't snicker

Having consulted with a professional techie, it seems that the problem here, with the directive to "continue reading..." had to do with my "extended body" (no reference to my girth) It goes into text mode and I have to toggle the HTML source to switch back to WYSIWYG. Piece of cake. So FINIS is fini and if you see the imperative to continue reading, please do so. Thank you.

Posted by Cal at 18:59

The Measure of Good Work

What yardstick can we use to determine if "Work" is as it should be? Work (the noun) itself has inherent value. The essence of it, its "structure" if you will, is good. But Work can be abused and misused and taken in a "direction". If you will, that is evil. God Himself is a worker. That is the first thing we learn about Him in the Bible: "In the beginning, God created", ie- God worked". Working is intrinsic to who God is. We are created in His Image, to be like Him. It follows that working is intrinsic to what it means to be a human being. God has 5 characteristics which are manifest in us, in our DNA, as it were. We image God in these 5 ways. It follows from this that the external standard we have by which we can measure work, any work, is this 5-fold Image. If our work is in harmony with this Image it is good. If it violates any of these 5 characteristics, the work is not good.

5 Standards for Work as God intends it to be:

1. The Personal- the "person" All that we do must value and respect "persons" above all. not simply "people", but all that is meant by "person" as defined by the ways in which God is a "person", particularly as someone who is knowable, someone who communicates meaningfully and can share in "personal" relationships; a change agent who has a will and makes considered judgments. Work of any kind which demeans, exploits, neglects, injures or destroys persons, human beings, is evil.
2. The Rational- rationality All that we do must be reasonable, logical, orderly- the way God thinks and makes decisions. All of creation reflects these qualities of its creator. Work of any kind which is essentially unreasonable, illogical or chaotic is not acceptable.
3. The Creative- creativity All work should seek, in appropriate ways, to be creative, artistic and beautiful, as is the natural world God has made. Work which is uncreative, boring, repulsive or ugly should be rejected.
4. The Moral- morality All work must be moral, righteous and just, as God defines those terms in his word. Work which is immoral, sinful or corrupt, according to God's word-law, must be rejected.
5. The Communal- community The work of cultivating and of culture must be done in, of and by the community ("community" could simply be one's co-workers, the team or unit. It could be the company. Community could be neighborhood or town. etc.) Work must seek to promote the welfare and good of all members of the (appropriate) community. We are our brothers & sisters keepers, accountable for the welfare of all. Work which is done for selfish purposes or for self aggrandizement is not good. Work that harms the community or violates personal relationships in the community is sinful.

SUMMARY Allowing the image of God concept to guide us, requires these 5 principles. All employment, every project, should be evaluated on these terms. Work that respects and protects persons and it is reasonable, beautiful, moral and good for the community is good work [obviously all terms need definition] Work that is dehumanizing, unreasonable, ugly, immoral and selfish is bad work. I realize these are general principles. Details remain to be determined. BUT, we must have a Norm to go by, to begin with lest we sink into relativism or pragmatism.

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 18:17

The Golden Globe Awards Go to the Homosexual Community (revised)

The crux of the debate over homosexuality is its origins. Is a person born gay or does a person become gay? Is homosexuality natural and innate and not a choice at all or is it a chosen behavior? The gay community and those who are pro-gay insist that a person is born gay and should be accepted for who they are by birth. They can not change. To try to change them is oppression, even cruel. They are a minority group such as African Americans are. Discrimination against them is just as evil as discrimination against any other minority group. Civil Rights include Gay Rights. Is this a valid argument? The answer requires scientific evidence, not moralizing sermons and slogans. I am sure the gay

movement toward full acceptance in our society will not stop. I am not sure marshalling any scientific evidence against their position will make any difference at all. However, it would be very helpful with certain individuals. One group that is a good resource on this topic is <http://www.narth.com/index.htm> Ultimately, the Norms of Scripture determine what behavior is approved

by God, not science. However, if a person uses science to support the "born gay" argument and that prevents him from listening to God's Word, having scientific evidence to question his position would be helpful and take away his(or her) argument (using science) for not considering what the Bible says. Of course, there is no assurance that they would do that, let alone change their orientation or lifestyle. They may very well want to remain gay for other reasons, whatever Science or the Bible may say. But, then they must accept full responsibility for their chosen behavior.

Personally, as a "straight" person, it would be very helpful to me to be persuaded by scientific evidence that there is no "gay gene", because I have been impressed by some homosexuals, whom I love and respect, that they could not be otherwise and have paid a great personal price to support that contention. The most I have been convinced of, so far, is that a person may indeed be born with a tendency toward homosexuality but whether it becomes overt and dominant depends primarily on a combination of emotional and social (especially early childhood) experiences.

Saying this does not mean acceptance or condoning of a behavior which is not Scriptural; nor does it mean "change" or, at least, control through the Holy Spirit is not possible. In fact, it is. What I am going for here is understanding. I find the simplistic disgust and denunciation that comes from some "Christians" toward homosexuals to be very distressing. A very highly rated and exhaustive Biblical study on the subject is by Dr Robert Gagnon and his website has helpful material <http://www.robgagnon.net/>

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 16:31

What is Main Stream?

What do women want? Here's a good article answering that question about abortion-"Ayotte, a 2005 high court case in which Planned Parenthood is trying to crush New Hampshire's parental notification law, underscores the divide between the feminist-led abortion lobby and mainstream Americans: In a November 2005 Gallup/CNN/USA Today poll, 69 percent of respondents said girls under 18 should have to tell their parents before getting an abortion. Meanwhile, between two-thirds and three-quarters of Americans favor limitations on the procedure, or support banning it altogether (according to 2005 polls by CBS News, CNN/USA Today, and The Polling Company/Woman Trend)."<http://www.worldmag.com/subscriber/displayArticle.cfm?ID=11447>

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 13:24

FINIS

When I finish a post, I will write FINIS to indicate the end of it. No need to click "Continue reading...", unless the word (finis) is not there. Thus, I will circumvent the glitch until I can correct it. Thanks for your patience.

Posted by Cal at 12:32

Church as Industry

"Welcome to The Church Report.com, the online resource for Christian leaders, pastors and parachurch executives. On this site, you can view a complete issue of the magazine; communicate with other people in the industry on our Church Chat forum; subscribe to the magazine; log on for a monthly live chat with a noted industry expert; and much more. Founded by Jason T. Christy, himself a sought-after industry expert and speaker, as well as the former publisher

of several other industry publications, The Church Report is a nationally heralded publication that features the monthly columns of such award-winning authors as Dr. Robert H. Schuller, Bishop Harry Jackson, Charles Colson, Dr. Jack Hayford, Tommy Barnett and Jay Sekulow, just to name a few. This collection of experts, along with our editorial commitment to publish the most thought-provoking business news magazine in the market, makes The Church Report the most-read publication by Christian leaders across the country. Having received acclaim in Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, The New York Times as well as on CBS News and Trinity Broadcasting Network, The Church Report is recognized as the industry leader and leading information source for the religious community. "Do you notice anything odd and disturbing (at least to me) in the above quotation? What does the writer call the church community? The "Industry" ! At least 5 times. And the articles are by industry "experts" with "business" advice for those who work in this "market". It claims to be the "most-read publication by Christian leaders across the country". God have mercy.

FINIS

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 10:08

Looking for Guidance?

Looking for guidance? Here is a good prayer from Psalm 25. It also has important conditions for receiving guidance. I personally needed this Psalm today To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; my God, I put my trust in you; This reaffirmation of faith is the place to begin Show me your ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths. Thy will comes before my will All the paths of the Lord are love and faithfulness His paths are the best. I need not fear where they might lead me. Lead me in your truth and teach me I want to be open to whatever "truth" He wants to show me Remember not ... my transgressions; remember me according to your love and for the sake of your goodness I'm counting on this. The Lord will not treat me as I deserve, but with mercy and grace He guides the humble in doing right and teaches his way to the lowly. he will teach them the way that they should choose. So the key is brokenness and teachability. Willing to follow through on whatever He shows me- to choose whatever He chooses for me to do. My eyes are ever looking to the Lord, for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. Focused on Him, I will not stumble or fall.

FINIS

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:50

Monday, January 16, 2006

"Continue reading" and other aphorisms

Lately, every post has been followed by the imperative: "Continue reading" That is only supposed to be there, if there is, indeed, more to read. Now the phrase is there every time, which is annoying when you discover nothing is there to read. Sorry about that. I have no idea why this is happening. I'm working on it and I hope it will not curtail the reading of this Blog. PS- most people my generation do not use a personal computer and we certainly are not adept at fixing something that goes wrong with one. In contrast, the vast majority of the next generations use a PC frequently. Another one of those age gap things. To me, a blackberry is a fruit used to make tasty desserts. An ipod is a little green thing that peas come in. Digital has to do with fingers. And high density is what this high tech stuff is full of. On the other hand, I am very glad to have the opportunity this PC, my Blog and the WWW give me to share my thoughts with you. I'll keep working at doing it better You can ignore the admonition below this post. There is nothing more here to read.

Posted by Cal at 18:21

QTThots

Last week, I was meditating on the 23rd Psalm-Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. On Friday, USA Today carried another story about the coal mine disaster in West Virginia. This one featured the story of one man and his 12 year old daughter. The article concluded with this prayer written by her "DEAR GOD, "My daddy was very special to me. I know everything happens for a reason. You just needed my daddy to fill up an empty space in your beautiful garden. My dad was so young, and had a young daughter that loved him very much. God, all I'm trying to say is please take good care of my dad. Tell him every day and night I love him so much. I will too, but you will too, right? He means everything to me. I love you God and I have never forgot that you are still in charge. I do understand why you did what you did. I love you daddy and God. Amen." "I love you God and I have never forgot that you are still in charge." Amen, indeed. Today, I was more moved by a 12 year old knowing and believing that solid truth, than anything else I read in my Devotions. I pray she will continue to love the Lord and know and believe in His Sovereignty throughout her life.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 10:42

Sunday, January 15, 2006

Changing Jobs

My first real job, when I turned 16, was threading pipe in the back of a hardware store. For three Summers, I was a camp counselor. I put myself through college working outdoor construction (and small jobs here and there on campus) After college, I worked in the Connecticut State Labor Department, processing unemployment checks. I worked in a steel mill and later was a Case Worker for the State Child Welfare Department. I spent time as a kiln operator, Insurance Underwriter, AFDC case worker and substitute teacher in the public schools. My wife and I owned and managed 3 Christian Bookstores (in college towns) and I finally spent 19 years working with with developmentally delayed (handicapped adults) in a variety of positions with the State Department of Retardation, including 6 years as a printer.

Through all of this time (starting in college) I also was a Youth Pastor, became married and started a family with my wife. We have four children. I went to Seminary, pastored 4 churches full-time, 4 other churches part time and did a lot of work as an Evangelist (using chalk art) and as a supply Preacher. More than 45 years in ordained Ministry. Lots of stories here. Lots of joy and lots of pain. Not too many easy times, lots of hard times. One thing has remained constant through all these changes: God's love for me and my commitment to serve Him (since I became a Disciple at 17). My circumstances and jobs have changed a lot through the years, my Work never has.

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 14:04

Learning from Losing

Two lessons we learn about life early on: life is not always fair and losing happens. Just as dying is part of living, so is losing. People who say, "I hate losing. I refuse to lose. I'm in it to win it. If I can't win, no sense in playing. Win at all costs" set themselves up for major disappointment. And they miss out on some valuable lessons that make living more worthwhile and meaningful. The wise person is the one who knows that he will lose occasionally, but plays anyway. Better to play and lose occasionally, than to never play at all [for fear of losing]. Actually, the agony of defeat makes winning all the more sweet. The advice to the Patriots [and their fans]: Mope and move on. Analyze the game tapes, learn from what happened and look forward to being better next time because of it. These are lessons for a lot of us.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:28

Saturday, January 14, 2006

Stevie: a film to see

We have started to enjoy DVDs from Netflix. Last night we experienced a powerful, heart-wrenching documentary about Stevie- one of the most sad and lost souls you'll ever meet. But the film abounds in grace, if you look for it. Read Jeffery Overstreet's full review (even if you do not see the DVD) In itself, the review will touch your heart. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/135/43.0.html#stevie>

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 18:47

Is Christianity a Culture?

In the CT article by Dr Horton mentioned below, his answer is "no". Actually, the answer depends on how we define the word "culture". I will repeat here, what I said about this in posts last August (in case you missed them)In defining Christian culture [I am greatly simplifying here], it is essential to distinguish it from "Civilization". The latter involves government and economics and such subjects as the arts, literature, philosophy, the sciences and history. It is also very important to distinguish between Core Culture and Peripheral Culture. The former has to do with those core beliefs, morals and values that bind a group together. The latter has to do with preferences and tastes in manners, food, clothing, decorative arts, customs and traditions such as Rites of Passage (coming of age rituals, weddings, anniversaries, birthdays). There is, and should be, a lot of diversity in all of these peripheral cultural matters. When I say that there a Christian Culture, I refer to core beliefs, morals and values which Christians believe are Biblical and essential. Core Christian Culture (CCC) ideally includes the following: Life- CCC highly values and honors creation and life. It is very pro-life in every senseMarriage- CCC honors marriage, defined as a life-long committed relationship between a man and a woman. Divorce is generally considered a sin. Virginity and Chastity are greatly valued. Sexual intercourse outside of marriage is a sin. Unwed mothers are unheard of and single parents are those who have lost their lawful spouse to death.Family- In CCC, children are desired and valued; extended, cross generational families are the norm; honor (respect) of parents by their children, and of the elderly by everyone, is expected. Work- CCC places a very high value on work: everyone who is able works throughout life, for the welfare of the family and community. Freedom to do this is highly valued.Welfare- People who become poor (particularly widows and orphans) in the CCC are the responsibility- first, of the extended family and then, of the churchIndividual Responsibility- CCC holds individual persons accountable and responsible for their decisions and actionsReligion- CCC, above all, is religious. it is centered on the worship and service of the God who has revealed Himself in Creation, Scripture and, particularly, in Jesus Christ. CCC is Christian. People who share CCC see themselves as the Covenant People of God. This is their primary identity, no matter what their ethnic origin may be. It will be readily seen that core Christian Culture is not identical with Eurocentric Western Civilization. It is certainly not the Dominant White Culture in America. In fact, it is not what most Christians believe it to be. And it is far from the Culture that many Christians actually have. To promote and practice this Core Christian Culture would be counter-cultural.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 17:12

How the Kingdom Comes- Part 2

I mentioned an Chritianity Today article by Dr Horton in a post below. It is now on line <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/001/2.43.html>It is a solid article from a Reformed perspective, but there is another variety of Reformed: the "Dutch Reformed", also known as neo-calvinism. It is called the Reformational World View. [This is where some of you scratch your heads in dismay or confusion] I write from the latter perspective. Here are a few issues with the article-Dr Horton does not discuss the place of the Cultural Mandate and of the Law in the Christian Life. And while he does mention Common Grace, he omits entirely the concept of the Antithesis. Furthermore, in an article about the "Kingdom", a definition of that word is essential. The dynamic and the static definitons need to be distinguished. The definiton of "Culture" also needs clarification. In many ways, there is a Christian Culture (as I understand that word. I have written about it in this Blog)Particularly, I am strongly convinced that all academic subjects are based on presuppositions- antithetical presuppositions. [nothing is neutral or value free] These need to be exposed and challenged on Biblical grounds and the Discipline rebuilt. Ideally, this would result in a re-formation of the Field (eg all the Sciences based on philosophical Naturalism. What would Biology be without it?) But the idea is not to change the world per se, but for Christians to discover and be faithful to Truth in the World. Hopefully, this would lead to changes for the better here and there; but, the main point is to be faithful in seeking to uncover and live by the Norms of God- to be faithful witnesses to Truth, particularly in Academia and in the Public Square as well as in the Arts) and suffer the

consequences from an obdurate and hostile world.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:36

Friday, January 13, 2006

QT Thots

In light of the controversy about Judge Alito, today's OT lesson from Oremus is especially interesting-Judges 2:16-23 Then the Lord raised up judges, who delivered them out of the power of those who plundered them. Yet they did not listen even to their judges; for they lusted after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their ancestors had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord; they did not follow their example. Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord would be moved to pity by their groaning because of those who persecuted and oppressed them. But whenever the judge died, they would relapse and behave worse than their ancestors, following other gods, worshipping them and bowing down to them. They would not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. A lot of importance is given to Supreme Court Justices in our Country. From the current debates [and overblown rhetoric from certain interest groups and showboating by certain Senators] over selection of a new one, it would seem that the very future of our country, especially the future of human rights and democracy itself, is at stake. Supposedly, that will depend on whomever is selected for the Court. Well, as critical as the selection is, today's OT reading is sobering. The long range future of our country does not depend on whoever is the next Supreme Court Judge. We can have the very best person possible. All the Justices can be the best; but, our future depends on "we, the people". God has blessed America and would continue to show us His mercy and grace. BUT, there is a limit. If we, as a People, persist in idolatry and sin in our daily lives and popular culture, we are doomed as a Nation. No matter who the Justices are and what they may do. The Barbarians are coming. They are at the Gates and, unless we repent and change the way we the people live, God will no longer keep them out.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 10:00

Thursday, January 12, 2006

How the Kingdom Comes

The current issue of Christianity Today begins a series called "The Christian Vision Project" The first article is by a writer I greatly respect, Michael Horton. His topic is, "How the Kingdom Comes". It is not yet posted on the web. Dr Horton's basic thesis is that the Kingdom comes by the preaching of the Word and the ministration of the Sacraments and through the nurturing ministry of the Church. In the world, God works through Common Grace and Providence. This is a good and traditional approach to the subject. With all due respect, I believe it falls short and is inadequate. What is missing is the Cultural Mandate. When I mention this topic, the usual response is something about social action ministry. Increasingly, evangelicals are combining evangelism and ministries of mercy. This is excellent, of course. This is not the Cultural Mandate. That is far more than preaching the Gospel, planting churches and handing out nets to protect people from mosquitos that carry malaria. The Mandate is about developing and organizing the world to be as God created it to be. God is glorified when the world He created runs according to His intentions and norms. That means all education must be grounded in Christ and His Word. The Sciences and Technology must be made to serve God. The Fine Arts and Pop Culture must be pleasing to Him. Marriages and Families must function by God-given principles. Business and the entire economic endeavor must be organized around Biblical principles. This is how the Kingdom comes! I am determined to help it happen.

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 16:51

The Little Children Jesus Loves

Just came in from my Heart Therapy (walk around the neighborhood) I use the time as a "Prayer walk", seeking the Lord's blessing or mercy on various people, events and places that I come upon. At 2:30 the students pour out of the Middle School near here. I wonder what they learned today- or did not learn. I pray for the ones by whom I walk. We viewed a very unusual film last night, George Washington. It is almost a documentary, cinema verite style, about a summer going by, in the life of poor kids, all around 12, hanging around a small town. No real plot. No professional actors- but a story about relationships and dreams. The movie has received high reviews. I wondered if any of the kids I saw today were like those kids in the movie. Probably. At one point, I was surrounded by at least a dozen, jabbering students. A real cross-cultural, multi-racial, inter-generational, inner city experience. I claimed the kids for Christ and wondered who is ministering to them for Jesus. There is at least one Christian teacher in that school I know of. There must be others. There is a church across the street from it- wonder if they have an after school program?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:49

Punk or Poser?

I was looking for a definition of "Punk" recently and came across the Urban Dictionary. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/> Users beware: I do not endorse or recommend everything on this website. Most insist that the original and true definition of "punk" has to do with a style of music: Punk Rock. It had nothing to do with a style of clothes. You were punk if you liked the music no matter what kind of clothes you wore or what the color of your hair might be. Nevertheless, people into punk often have dressed differently to show an anti-establishment, in your face attitude. "Posers" are people who have adopted the look associated with punk rockers because they think it is "cool". They may not have the attitude or like the music- they just the look. They are imitators. Not the real thing. Which kind of Christian are you? Real Thing or Poser?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:59

Herman Who?

Hermen Eutics, ie- Hermeneutics: the study of methods and principles used to interpret a text such as the Bible. All kinds of Christians declare that the Bible is the authority for what they believe. What they believe is "according to the Bible". Then how do we explain why these Christians disagree? How does the one Book teach so many different and

contradictory things? It is not about the Bible. It is about hermeneutics. If someone insists they go by the Bible, ask them what methods and principles they use to interpret the Bible. Some earnest Believer will lament that other Believers do not agree with him or her. "It's in the Bible. It is so clear!" Well, it is not so clear if the Bible is read from a different point of view. Don't tell me you go by the Bible. Tell me what grid you use through which you read the Bible.

Case in point: I'm preparing today for the next Bible Course I am going to teach. I realize I read the Bible from a Reformed perspective, ie- as a Calvinist. More than that, I interpret it according to Covenant Theology. This shapes what I will teach in the class. Of course, I believe, conversely, that study of Scripture led me to both Calvinism and Covenant Theology. (There is a hermeneutics behind the hermeneutics.) These days, when Theology and Doctrine is disparaged, many seem to either go by some private, individualistic and subjective, "Well, I don't care what you say, this is what the Holy Spirit tells me the verse means" method to an increasing reliance on sociology, archaeology and comparative religion methodology, often in the service of some politically correct agenda or ideology. Such folks do not put a lot of value on Systematic Theology and centuries of Tradition. Be that as it may, we all read the Bible through eye glasses of some description. We need to acknowledge that, as well as be able to defend why we chose the kind of glasses we use.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:26

Tuesday, January 10, 2006

Holistic Christianity

Life is meant to be approached "holistically", in Christ. "Holistic" means "relating to or concerned with wholes or with complete systems rather than with the analysis of, treatment of, or dissection into parts" ----Dictionary Definition
Ephesians 1:9 [God] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 --to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. [God] 20 raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 20 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 and God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything. Christ is meant to be Lord of everything! - of all the stuff of daily life. However, Christians tend to divide the stuff of life into categories- they view life dualistically, rather than holistically. Furthermore, they separate and rank the categories- God eternal souls spiritual sacred evangelism church ----- world temporal bodies physical secular all other work Categories are valid and necessary. The problem comes in the way they are separated and life becomes compartmentalized: seldom, or only occasionally, interconnected. The categories above the line seldom, if ever, have anything to do with the categories below the line; but, Christ, as Lord, is meant to be involved in all the categories The Bible says, whatever we do, do it all for the glory of God. But, traditionally, Christians have held 3 assumptive principles that effect whatever they do- 1. eternal over temporal 2. sacred above secular 3. souls before bodies A fourth assumption is that whatever is temporal, secular and physical is not important to God, He has no will for them and they are beyond redemption. These assumptions ignore the doctrines of Creation, Incarnation and Resurrection. Scripture teaches the inter-connectedness of all these categories. Separating and prioritizing them is contrary to Scripture. The eternal, temporal, sacred, secular, souls and bodies are all parts of one whole- interconnected and inseparable. Therefore, work that involves the temporal, secular, and physical is just as much God's work as that which involves the eternal, sacred and spiritual. Life is holistic. Redemption is holistic. God and Satan (or demonic "powers") can each invade any or all of those compartments. In fact, both God and Satan want to be in control of each those compartments. Our concern is that Christians not abandon any of them, or separate their Christian mind and life from any of them. If they do, Satan will rule there. Christ's Kingdom is holistic. We are to seek to extend the reign of Christ into all areas. 2 Corinthians 10:5 ... we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:42

Picking a Fight

A wise person will pick his battles. A lot of things just are not worth fighting, let alone dying, for. Some things are. The wisdom, of course, is in knowing the difference. How about clothing? Today, the Church Calendar commemorates William Laud who decided to fight over a surplice. That is the loose white garment Catholic priests wore over their black cassocks when leading certain Services. Actually, it was members of the Church of England, in which Laud was an Archbishop, who picked the surplice to fight over. They wanted to purify the Church of all signs of popery (hence they were called Puritans) The argument wasn't really about clothing. The clothing was symbolic. The Puritans wanted nothing (not just the surplice) that smacked of the Roman Church in the Anglican Church. The logical progression for the Puritans ended with the very plain Meeting House we are familiar with here in New England and a Pastor who wore the black academic robe during the Services. The logical progression for AB Laud was execution. He would rather face death than surrender what he believed was a holy and proper form of Worship, including its rituals and symbols [what some of us today call "bells and smells"] And he insisted that he was not a Roman Catholic. The Puritans and the High Churchmen wanted the same thing: Worship that would glorify God, They disagreed in what that was and were determined to fight over it to the death. One Puritan insisted, in a famous pun, "We should give praise to God and Laud to the Devil."

Were the Puritans and AB Laud wise in deciding to fight to the death over the matter of what is proper in formal Worship? Is a surplice surplus? (Today, evangelical Pastors do not even wear the academic gown and increasingly, not even a business suit; while their churches increasingly look like theaters, complete with plush theater seating) Were they wise in fighting over "Popery", which was the deeper issue? None of us would fight to the death over a surplice or

over popery today. What are the deeper issues that we would be wise to fight about today and with whom?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:40

Monday, January 9, 2006

QT Thots

An old favorite shows up today in the Oremus Devotional I use. Some Bible passages are like the warm comforter that is on our bed. It feels real good to snuggle under them and be warmed by their truths and promises. Psalm 23 is surely one of these passages-The Lord is my shepherd I don't need to be a sheep to appreciate what this means. I have Someone who is responsible for taking care of me and it is the Lord. Because of this, I have the assurance today that I shall not be in want. I will not lack anything I need.He provides for all my physical and material needs.He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.He renews my strength and energy and keeps me goingHe revives my soul I have His guidance and direction. I won't get lost, even when I don't see the path clearly or it is full of pitfalls- but I realize He does that for His sake, not mineand guides me along right pathways for his name's sake. Even though He is providing and guiding, I know I will still have "death valley" days. Evil will confront me, but I trust that by His grace, I will not be afraid of itThough I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil;That confidence comes from realizing that my Shepherd is with me in the midst of the darkness. He will not abandon me in the face evil. My peace comes from knowingyou [Lord] are with me;I will be protected from enemies without and withinyour rod and your staff, they comfort me. -that gives me strength.I am not talking about the Lord now, in this Psalm. I am talking to HimYou spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me;There are those who would diminish my life, you, Lord, fulfill ityou have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is running over. I have absolute confidence that your grace shall pursue me without failSurely your goodness and mercy shall follow me not only occasionally, but all the days of my life,And then Lord, when we come to the end of life's journey together, through this world with its green pastures and dangerous trails, I will dwell in [Your] house... for ever.Ahh, a sweet comforter indeed. Thank you, Lord for covering me over with it this morning.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 09:58

Text too Large?

A would-be reader wrote yesterday that the text size for this Blog is way too large. Have others had this problem? If so, maybe the problem is the fact that my browser is Mozilla Firefox, not Microsoft Internet Explorer. The former is set properly (normal size).If that does not explain or help and the problem continues, take two aspirin and email me:cfoxinstitute@verizon.net

Posted by Cal at 09:22

Sunday, January 8, 2006

Only a Savior?

Among the many nice cards we received during Advent was one with a poem by Roy Lessin. The lesson of Mr Lessin is that God sent us a Savior, not a educator, scientist or economist. Indeed, more than anything, we need a Savior and how glad we are that in Jesus we have one- the only one. But Jesus is more than Savior. He is also Lord- He runs every thing. He is in charge. That requires Him to also be educator, scientist and economist. If we want to know Truth, He is our Teacher. If we want to know where the world comes from and what holds it together and makes it work, He is the Creator of it all and will reveal all that to us. If we want to know how to cultivate and distribute all the natural resources and to be good stewards of what God has made and wants us to enjoy, He is the one to show us how. For some people, having a Savior is enough. It means we are in control of everything in our every day life. We can run the world on our own terms, as we want. Come to think of it, that's not such a great idea.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:47

Putting the Kings in Their Places

Well, today was it- the day to take down and put away the Christmas decorations. We did it while paying a DVD documentary about Big Band Swing music and jitterbugging, called "The Joint is Jumpin' " (Our first from Netflix) Christmas, of course, came to an end on Friday, Epiphany (and the birthday of one of our sons-in-law). I always enjoyed preaching about the Visit of the Three Kings (which is what the Hispanic community celebrates). I see in Epiphany the revelation of the King of kings to the 3 kings as a prophetic event foretelling the day yet to come when all the Nations of the world will see Christ and fall down before Him. Epiphany makes a great Missions Sunday and, coming as it does at the beginning of a new year, it sets the direction for all that should come in the next 12 months. The plaster kings are now in a box down in the basement. The King of kings is alive and well, on the Throne up in the attic, I mean, in Heaven, where He belongs. I'm sure that joint is jumpin'.

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 18:32

More Black Eyes

There is a debate tonight at a local church here between an atheist and an evangelical. The headline over the newspaper article calls the occasion a debate about Evolution. The article itself states the debate is about Intelligent Design. I have no interest in hearing the debate- I think it is futile. The debate really should be about philosophical Naturalism versus anti-Naturalism. Anyway, they better get their definitions straight and be honest about it. The case for allowing Intelligent Design to be considered in public schools (and in the public mind) was dealt a serious blow last week- not by the Judge who ruled against that happening in the Dover PA school district, but by the lying by the supporters of the proposal. The latter swore under oath that they had never heard of a particular text book which presents the case for ID and that they were not really pushing for Creationism to be taught in the schools. Evidence made it clear that they lied on both counts. The Judges decision turned on the revelation of this perjury. Another black eye for Evangelicals. See the attached article. For the record, The Theory of Intelligent Design is neither Creationism nor Christian. As to the Judge saying he would not allow Religion to be taught in the Public Schools, he is. Philosophical Naturalism (the basis for Darwinism, which the Judges decision supports,) is a Religion, if we define religion as a World View that offers assumptions based on faith in answer to the Big Questions about the origin, purpose, meaning and destiny of Life. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/151/31.0.html> Another black eye comes in the current case of Ralph Reed, former leader of the Moral Majority, apparently acting in an immoral matter, ie- dishonestly. <http://www.worldmag.com/displayarticle.cfm?id=11276> Certainly Evangelicals know that we are under scrutiny by our enemies. Certainly we know dishonest means do not justify honest ends and, most of all, certainly we know that trying to deceive and mislead the Courts, the public and other Christians as Mr Reed is alledged to have done in the name of serving God is not only stupid, but sinful.

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 15:14

Friday, January 6, 2006

When is Faith not Faith?

If someone says they are a Christian and something "bad" happens in their life and they then curse God or insist they no longer can believe in Him, what does that say about their faith to begin with? Doesn't their recanting mean they only were "believing" because they thought that it would guarantee nothing "bad" would ever happen to them? "Faith" was some kind of insurance policy. I believed, I went to church, so that I would be protected. When I wasn't, I quit. Such folks were not really believers. They miss what faith is about. Faith is being convicted and having assurance that God is and that He rewards those who seek Him (Heb 11:1,6)- no matter what our circumstances, even if the coal mine of our life should collapse on us. Faith is certain God will get us through, not that He will always keep us from, terrible times. We must not let the troubles we have come between us and God, but rather drive us to Him. I know it is true from my personal experience (like Joseph's): people can mean us harm and treat us wrong, but God takes that and turns it into something good. The good, however, is according to His definition of "good"- something that serves His purpose. (Rom 8:28) Faith is ok with that. Faith says, come Hell or High Water, I trust You, Lord.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:23

QT Thots

Meditation on Psalm 84 Today, we were away attending the Funeral of the father of a friend. I look forward to the day when I shall pass away from this world and enter into the House of the Lord, which is Heaven. My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the Lord; How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts! Heaven is this breathtakingly beautiful Temple. There I shall dwell by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. I shall sing heartily with all the happy saints gathered there. Happy are they who dwell in your house! they will always be praising you. Heaven, as described here, is a wonderful place. More to be desired than any of the houses of the rich and famous here on earth. One day in your courts is better than a thousand in my own room, and to stand at the threshold of the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of the wicked. What makes heaven so desirable? God is there and My heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God. Meanwhile, between now and then, there is a pilgrimage. Yes, that is what life is: a pilgrimage [for me] from New York City, where I was born, to "Beulah Land" This can be an arduous journey; but, good news: not only is the Lord the destination, He is the help we need along the way! Happy are the people whose strength is in you! The pilgrimage to Heaven requires commitment. Our hearts [must be] set on the pilgrims' way. It can involve wandering through desolate, dry wilderness. I am so glad for the promise that Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs... [What God requires, He enables] By His grace, though my pilgrimage will go through despair now and again, I also will climb from height to height, and finally, tomorrow? next year? the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion and that will be glory for me. I will have arrived at the Place, already prepared for me.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 17:42

Thursday, January 5, 2006

Living by Grace

I preached a sermon last Sunday which was an exposition of Gal 4:4-7. There were very few people present to hear it, and almost no response from those who did. I feel badly about that. I used at least 20 hours to write it. One challenge was to compress the material into a mere 22 minutes. A lot was left on the "cutting room floor". I eliminated all illustrations and stories and went straight to the great doctrinal truths in the passage. It deserves a series of messages. The version delivered was the fourth written. I could have given the first version, written in maybe two hours. But there was one main point I wanted to focus on that was not in that first version. A very important and practical point that has been very helpful to me personally. I wanted to share that- it could change many lives, marriages and families. Because of this, since very few heard or responded to the message (even when I emailed it to dozens of friends), I will try again here. Not the entire sermon, but the main point that I wrestled with for hours. It is about living by grace.

A simple exposition of Gal 4:4-7 would repeat the truths familiar to most of us. Paul had preached the Gospel of salvation by faith only in Christ only by grace only. The Galatians had accepted that good news, but certain Teachers were persuading them they must add the Mosaic Law to this Gospel. Alarmed, Paul wrote to warn them about the folly of doing this. OK. Since most of us are in no danger of seeking salvation by obeying the Law, such a message could be considered ho-hum. But wait a minute-I know this Gospel and this danger as well as anyone, but, I have become aware in my own life of a very real tendency to do exactly what the Galatians were doing. And I see many Bible Christians everywhere doing it, too. We began our Christian life by grace and somewhere along the line we slipped into living the Christian life by Law. Not the Mosaic Law per se, but Rules nevertheless. It is very easy and common to make Christianity to be all about Rules- rules about Church, about marriage and family, rules about life "in the world". I meet many Believers who lament that their children have wandered from the Lord. More often than not, they have been turned off by a Religion of Rules. We failed to introduce them to the grace of God. Mostly, we failed to live our daily lives by grace. We all seem wired to need rules of one kind or another and we live and die by them. These rules usually are about power and control. They reveal that we approach relationships (with God, spouse, children and "others") according to how they are doing according to our rules. People must earn our respect. They must merit our approval. They must deserve our attention. We must do that ourselves, too. The big problem is- no one can succeed at this. Thus our lives are filled with frustration, guilt, fear and failure. Christ came to set us free from this condition. Like the Galatians, we have fallen away from living by grace, which is, after all, unmerited, undeserved, unearned favor. Unconditional love. Acceptance "just as I am". Those of us who are perfectionists and idealists have the biggest problem with this. So do the folks who have to live or work with us. I have been told that I can be very rigid and demanding. By God's grace, I have come to see this- I have learned and changed. More, accurately, I am learning to change. Blessed is the marriage when the partners learn to live with each other by grace. Blessed is the child whose parent(s) learn to relate to them by grace: by unmerited, unearned, undeserved acceptance and favor. Does all of this mean we toss out rules, boundaries and standards. Absolutely not. This is something else all of us Galatians need to learn. What has changed is our reason for seeking to obey them. We do not do it to win or deserve or merit the approval or acceptance of God's or our spouses or our parents. Rather we obey out of gratitude that they give us approval and acceptance- by grace. Being "saved" by grace, we obey. We no longer obey in order to get saved. Some of us would be spared a life time of emotional agony trying to please a parent [or a God] who can never be pleased, if we lived this grace-full way. Because we are secure in our relationship with God (and Parents and spouse) by grace and because we now trust that grace, we can trust the one who gives it to us and trust that His rules are really good and beneficial in themselves- they are not about His control, but about our well-being. Anyway, these are some of the concepts I have personally wrestled with and wanted to share in my sermon. I know others could benefit from them and that is why I want to share them with you here.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:40

Tuesday, January 3, 2006

In the State We Trust

Much was made in the speeches of the new mayors in this area during their inaugural ceremonies, some with great passion, that the local towns need more State financial aid. "It is our only hope." [even though they just claimed they need "the help of God"]. Other new leaders (mostly Councilmen) also repeated, during interviews, lists of local social woes and insisted that it is the moral duty of the State to rush financial aid to solve the problems. We are especially talking about money for schools and education, housing and health care. The State has the answer and that is more money. Never mind God, "In the State we trust." I was brought up believing that if I needed an education or a job or housing it was my responsible to stay in school to become qualified for employment, to find and hold a job and to secure housing I could afford. I did trust in God to help me do all that. The State could not do any of that for me.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 19:48

Hypocrisy on Display?

Locally, there were at least 6 new Mayors sworn in yesterday and today. They had sound byte coverage on the TV News. I heard each one of the Mayors asked if she or he would uphold the [duties of their Office] "so help you God? Each answered "Yes, so help me God." This was very out of place in an area where it is insisted frequently that God is to be kept out of government and the public square. I wonder what this ceremony meant. I wonder what God the officials had in mind. Were they confessing faith in the Judeo-Christian God? [Is He the same one mentioned on our money: in whom we trust?] Were they confessing that they need His help to do their job? Would they object to having His Laws posted on the walls of their offices? Are their Oaths of Office valid if this whole thing was an meaningless formality, hypocrisy?

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 19:34

Jesus as Comfort Food?

We know that many of us are driven to eating certain foods for their emotional comfort. One of the rules of dieting is to recognize this factor and to resist it. Eat only when you are truly physically hungry, not other wise. Easier said...The same seems to be good advice for those who are trying to get their checkbooks under control. Many of us go shopping for emotional comfort. There is nothing like buying something to make you feel good (for the moment at least). Again the rule is, beware this motive and resist it. If it is wrong to use food and shopping for emotional comfort, is it ok to use Jesus for the same reason. Are we to avoid Him too, when that is our need?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:18

Antiquing Saves

Tis the season for dieting. The ads on TV tout many success stories, not only about weight-loss. These stories are testimonies to changed lives. People say they have become new people (born again). They have found peace and joy and purpose in life- a second chance. These are the same claims that new Christians make. If diet products can do the same thing as Jesus does, what's the difference? Are we offering the world just another weight loss plan? I heard the most astounding conversion story last night on The Antiques Road Show. An older woman claimed joyfully that antiquing had healed her of cancer and saved her life. It is what she now lives for. It gives her life meaning. We usually say that about Jesus. Two thoughts here: 1. Subjective, experiential testimonies about what Jesus has done in a person's life should be taken with a great grain of salt (doubt). It could be nothing more than something a diet or an antique could do. Our testimonies need to be based first on propositional revelation (Scripture) and then on objective changes in daily living (righteousness) Both 2. Our evangelism is not about helping people find peace and purpose. Weight-loss and antiquing can do that. That is not what we are going for. Evangelism calls sinners to faith and repentance toward Jesus Christ with the objective being the making of His disciples. That, in turn, will lead to those

sinners finding the peace and purpose God intends for them to have.

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 19:11

Second String? No Way!

In the previous post, I quoted a statement made by a sportswriter after the last Patriot's game. The Pat's Coach decided to have most of his key, highly paid, players suit up but sit out most of the game for good reason. He was saving them for the next game, which begins the playoffs for the championship. I am very mindful that in school ball there are highly motivated and skillful student athletes who are ready, able and willing to play. If and when they play depends totally on the Coach, not on them. Be assured, the Lord puts each and every Christian who is ready, willing and able into the Game of Life. If it is up to Him, everyone plays. The only exceptions are those players who refuse. There is a big difference here. On the Lord's Team, everyone is first string and no one is supposed to sit on the bench. Now this is a Coach and a Team really worth playing for!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:50

A Description of Many Christians?

FOXBOROUGH -- The two-time defending Super Bowl Champions were there, but not there. In the stadium, but not in the game. In uniform, but not on the field. By Jerome Solomon, Globe Staff | January 2, 2006

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:15

Is Christianity a White, Western, Male Religion?

Christianity has its roots in the Middle East. Jesus and Paul looked and sounded more like Yassar Arafat than any of my English or Swedish ancestors. They were Jews from Israel. Increasingly, the typical Christian today is a poor woman living in an urban ghetto or rural village in the so-called "Third World" (the Global South, not the North). Here is another article with evidence for this statement, specifically as it regards evangelical Christians - <http://www.christianpost.com/article/missions/1937/section/new.lausanne.report.highlights.global.shift.of.christianity/1.htm>

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 08:08

When is a Violin a Violin?

Electric violins can make beautiful music when played well. The violin itself, ie- the body, does not contribute to that music. This piece of plastic simply serves to hold the strings and thus help the violinist to play music with them. The traditional wooden body, however, contributes significantly to the music. Stings, player and the wood instrument together make music and it is a different sound than that made with the electrified plastic. Which sound is truly violin music? The same question could be asked of the electronic piano. The latter, too, has a different sound than its wood counterpart. And then there is the different sound made by an organ that uses pipes than the one that does not because it is all electronic. By definition, the electric or electronic instruments and their music are not the same as the non-electronic/electronic. If our bodies were entirely replaced by artificial parts, would we still be human beings?

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 07:52

Monday, January 2, 2006

QT Thots

Psalm 66 Be joyful in God, ...sing the glory of his name; sing the glory of his praise. Say to God, 'How awesome are your deeds! He is the Almighty, omnipotent. Nothing is impossible for Him. He is involved in the moment by moment existence of all Creation. Functioning the way He made it, being all that He intends it to be, Nature bows before its Maker and brings Him glory because of your great strength... All the earth bows down before you, sings to you, sings out your name.' All nations are to join with all Nature in praising God. Our first and highest calling is the worship of God. When we enter the Temple, our churches, we should hear voices, music, that is exalting Him. We each should join in that music. Bless our God, you peoples; make the voice of his praise to be heard; Having all power means-[God] holds our souls in life---God keeps us safe and alive. Nothing can happen to us that He does not allow. and [He] will not allow our feet to slip. He will not allow us to fall down and be injured or killed BUT wait a minute. That is not my experience. I just read yesterday of a missionary who drowned. And there were the 3 Christian teenage girls who were beheaded for their faith recently in Indonesia. Did God allow this? Why did He not use His power to hold these believers and protect them from such suffering? God loves us. God could have intervened. He has the power to do anything he wants. The answer comes next-You, O God, have proved us; you have tried us just as silver is tried. You brought us into the snare; you laid heavy burdens upon our backs. You let enemies ride over our heads; we went through fire and water; Faith knows that "bad things happen". Faith knows that God allows this. His ways are not our ways. They are the best ways, but they are not always what we want. Sometime they bring us great pain and plunge us into darkness. We can argue with Him. We might want to curse Him. Nevertheless, faith finally submits to Him. That is why it is faith: faith trusts the character of God. And faith realizes our suffering, far more than our music and singing, can bring God glory. That is exactly what the suffering of Jesus did. Why not ours? Our acceptance of this truth can be the worship that truly praises Him the most. At any rate, God knows when enough is enough. There is a limit to our suffering. Eventually, the pain and the darkness ends and we can testify [He] brought us out ... The time will come again when I will enter your house with burnt-offerings and will pay you my vows, which I promised with my lips and spoke with my mouth when I was in trouble. Perhaps it will be barely audible and through tears, but faith will again sing, "Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer, nor withheld his love from me."

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 20:03