

A Still, Small Voice

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Consider the story of Elijah in the famed event often titled the “Mt. Carmel Victory.” By way of setup, in 1 Kings 17:1, Elijah made the proclamation (through the power of God) to King Ahab that it wouldn’t rain “accept at my word.” We find in 18:1 that this drought lasted at least three years to the degree that after some time, brooks, rivers and other sources of water were drying up (17:7). When Elijah arranges to meet the king, Ahab wryly greets him as the “*troubler of Israel*” in 18:17. Elijah proceeds to inform Ahab that the true source of the problem is the nation’s infidelity with God and the pursuit of other gods, namely Baal. He issues the burnt-sacrifice challenge to conclusively prove, in front of all the people, that “*the God who answers by fire, He is God.*” In the end, Jehovah God answers the call by burning up Elijah’s sacrifice. The 450 prophets of Baal are slaughtered by the Brook Kishon (18:40). As Jezebel catches wind of the execution, she issued her vow to make Elijah’s life “*as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time*” (19:2).

While fleeing for his life, Elijah begins to despair that he is the only God-fearing, faithful individual left: “*I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts...I alone am left; and they seek to take my life*” (19:10). There are certain points we reach in life where we feel that we are the last man standing, so to speak, and that all else is lost around us. With many of us, simply the lack of support from like-minded friends at school is enough to generate such feelings. We somehow get into the mindset that once we walk out the church house’s doors, we must go at it alone. If this particular story of Elijah teaches us anything, it would be that this is, in fact, never the case. As the story continues, along with Elijah’s despondency, God decides to open his eyes. While standing outside his cave on top of the mountain, a number of divinely inspired events transpire which include “*a great and strong wind [that] tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces...an earthquake...and a fire*” (19:11, 12) As we normally do, we look for the large-scale signs, consistent with the character of God, to catch our attention. But God is as grand as He is subtle (think of David’s advice to Solomon in 1 Chron. 28:9 where he says “*the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, he will be found by you...*” [Emphasis GH]). Repeatedly, “*the Lord was not in*” (19:11, 12) the great wind, the earthquake, or even the fire. Instead God was present in the “*still small voice*” (19:12). Imagine that picture: these awe-inspiring events displayed by a God with power unmatched by anything familiar to us and yet, He was in the small voice. God spoke the loudest message to Elijah through the quietest of voices. As was mentioned earlier, we many times pass up looking for God in the small places because we don’t seem to find Him in the place **we think He should be**. What a wonderful thought, though, that God can be found anywhere! Chances are good that in the process of finding God where He is to be found, we will dis-

cover all of the support that is really around us. Elijah would have done well to spend a few minutes reflecting on the many ways in which he really wasn't alone. The ravens brought him food everyday in 17:4-7, the widow housed and fed him "*for many days*" in 17:10-16, Obadiah (the man in charge of Ahab's house and one, who at the very least, cared for Elijah) is noted as having "*feared the Lord greatly*" in 18:3, an angel attended to him in 19:4-8, and God points out in 19:18 that there are 7,000 others "*whose knees have not bowed to Baal.*" At the root of all these events is God. It was God who performed the miracle with the widow, it was God who rained down fire on the sacrifices on Mt. Carmel, and it was God who reminded Elijah who was really in control.

The point of all this is that we very well may find ourselves in a situation like Elijah's where we feel that we are backed up against a wall, with no one around to help and no apparent way to escape. However, most times it only *seems* that way. Yet, even in the situations where all others have forsaken us, we still *ALWAYS* have God. The popular citation for this concept is in 1 Cor. 10:13 where we have assurance that God will only let us be tempted in proportion to our abilities. Consider some other passages as well. Meditate on the poetic descriptions of God's strength and protection in Psalm 3 (particularly vv. 3, 4) and Psalm 18:1-6 and 31-50. Think on Rom. 8:35 which states, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*" Contemplate the significance of Christ's proclamation that "*...I have overcome the world*" (Jn. 16:32, 33). When all around us turn to sin, we can stand fast on God's remembrance of those who are His (2 Tim. 2:15-19). Simply, God is here for us. After all, "*God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved*" (Jn. 3:16, 17). Our God is a god that wants to help us, and as the scriptures adequately attest to, His power is completely sufficient to help us no matter what (Heb. 4:14-16, 13:5b-6, Ps. 27). We must turn to Him first for strength remembering that He may not be in the place where we expect Him to be, rather, He will be in the place where He will be most helpful, even if it is a still small voice.

By the Ladies

Making God's Word an Important Part of our Lives

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Why do Christians need continual study? Are three church services sufficient? God intended His word to be an important part in the lives of His people. His love for us is demonstrated in the fulfillment and satisfaction derived as a result of obeying His commandments. He knew the value of His precepts and the benefits we would receive from meditating on and applying His laws in our lives.

Young people need to keep God's word first. Work, school, family, and friends are important and beneficial, however; they must never take precedence over our personal re-

relationship with God. We make time to do the things that are important to us, but often we are “too busy” or “too tired” to study God’s word. We find time to do our homework, associate with our friends, participate in our extracurricular activities; but, when it comes to studying God’s word we allow things to distract us. Sadly, this is common among young Christians; they do not understand the value of constant reflection on God’s word. In truth, the reverse should happen: Bible study should be a priority over homework, friends -- everything.

In the Bible, God gives examples of those who longed for the Word and constantly considered His teachings. First, King David is the archetypal example of one who daily meditated on God’s laws. *“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You... I will meditate on Your precepts and regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word... My soul is crushed with longing after your ordinances at all times... Your servant meditates on Your statutes. Your testimonies also are my delight; They are my counselors”* (Psalms 119:9-24). This entire passage shows David’s view of studying and meditating. He knew it was necessary, and he understood the power given to the one who fervently searches for truth. Meditation involves more than just attending services; it implies focusing on the Word. When David says, *“at all times,”* he shows that study is more than something we do -- it is a part of who we are. A New Testament example is found in Acts 17:11, which states, *“Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”* The key word, *“daily,”* excludes only studying two days a week, and to be *“noble-minded,”* one must study often.

Second Timothy 2:15 states, *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”* Merriam Webster defines *“diligence”* as: *“characterized by steady, earnest, and energetic effort.”* We, as children of God, must zealously and energetically study God’s word! Clearly, obedience to this verse cannot be fully accomplished through three services every week; God is expecting us to examine the scriptures. Like David, can you say, *“Your servant meditates on Your statues?”*

“I Can’t Wait Till...”

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I expect many people have found themselves in the same boat I often find myself in. Throughout my life, I have often thought of how things will be once I move on to the next stage in my life. When I was in junior high, I couldn’t wait till I was in high school so I could stay up later and hang out with my friends more. When I was in high school, I couldn’t wait till I was in college so I wouldn’t have to do any homework. Now that I am in college, I can’t wait till I am through so I won’t have to study for tests or be so incredibly busy. I have come to realize that the “perfect stage” in life that I am looking forward to will not be found on this earth. There is such a place though, and that place

is what should keep us moving forward as Christians. It is the place that all Christians should aspire to be one day.

“They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 7:16-17). This place that John is talking about in Revelation is called heaven. It is and will be a place for faithful disciples of God for eternity. Paul talks about the need for being content while on this earth: *“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (Philippians. 4:11-13). We should be content and learn to be happy with whatever stage we are at in our lives. Though we should be content and be happy with whatever stage we find ourselves in, we should think of heaven and desire to get there each and every day. If it is rest we are looking for on earth, heaven is the very place we should want to go. *“...since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels...”* (II Thes. 1:6-7). For those Christians who absolutely love to sing, you are in luck. Those who make it to heaven will sing the *“new song”* and will glorify God for eternity (Rev. 14:3; 15:3). Heaven is going to be an amazing place.

There are two key points that I want you to take away from this article. The first is that there are always going to be bumpy roads in every stage of our lives. That being said, enjoy the time you have right now with the people you are around right now. Use the little time you have free to the fullest. Go to the Bible studies that are offered, go to the singings, and do whatever it takes to grow in your faith right now. I say this because it is not going to get any easier once we are older. Hopefully we will all have jobs, a spouse, kids, and the list could go on and on. We need to learn at a young age to utilize the free time that we have, because things do not necessarily change once we are at the next stage in our lives. The second point would be that we should do everything we can to get to heaven. We need to constantly think of heaven, and always remember that God is watching everything we do. Heaven should be the light at the end of the tunnel, and the day faithful Christians reach the light will be a glorious day.

Jesters in the World’s Court

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It is both an asset and a curse to generations today that we are more stubborn than others, never wanting to back down from that which we believe. And when it comes to doctrinal issues, this stubbornness comes in handy, as the winds of “spiritualism” are as common as the Marlin’s losing record (Eph. 4:14). The only problem with this mindset occurs when you find yourself believing something wrong, and sticking to your guns no matter how many people tell you otherwise. Negligence to study for oneself and pride in that ignorance is only a formula for those content with mediocrity -- a formula for fools.

In Paul's defense before the Athenians on Mars Hill (Acts 17), he calls to mind their simple-minded attitude toward the worship of "*deities*," contrasting it with the existence and worship of the One True God. Then he ends with a call to action for them to repent and turn to Jehovah, adding with it the warning that there will come a time where He will call us all into judgment. But in verse 30, Paul says, "*Truly these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.*" Paul makes a bold stand for the importance of the present, stating that while God used to look past these things, He will not do so now, and it is in the best interest of those listening to heed his words. Given this new information, why would any of them balk at it?

Unfortunately, we can not always be guaranteed that those listening to us will heed the words that we speak either, even if they come straight from God's Word. For one reason or another, people turn away from the Truth, and time and time again they are warned. "Happiness" with their current situation, "contentment" with their spiritual status, or even "assurance" of good things to come keep souls away from God, and it is our goal to change their minds.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines a "fool" as "one who is deficient in judgment, sense or understanding." Going a step further, a fool is ultimately someone who denies reality. This reality can come in the form of a denial of facts or consequences, but it is nevertheless someone who lives for the day, without any regard for what will happen to them tomorrow. Psalm 53:1 reads, "*The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'*" If someone can be so bold as to deny the existence of the One who made them, what other things are they willing to deny?

The foolishness of the world is in plain sight, but it is the foolishness of our own lives that we sometimes neglect. Reading the Bible, it is easy to see how things apply to everyone else, *but our own selves*. When we study Galatians 5:17-20, we remember that time a while back that Jordan committed fornication, or how Justin once had an outburst of wrath, but do we think about the lewdness that is in our own lives? Are they not all in the same list? Does Paul not say that ALL who partake in such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God? A fool is someone who looks at lists such as these and denies the facts that are staring them in the face.

The deceiving thing about this great tragedy is twofold. First, it is very appealing to procrastinate and deal with those sins "when the time is right" (think Acts 24:22-27). We can put them off, but it does not mean that it will go away. Just as Jonah was not able to outrun his problems by boarding a ship to Tarshish, neither can we escape the judgment that faces us all (Romans 14:10-12). Secondly, it is encouraged by the world on an almost daily basis, and as such, many have believed lies. Left alone, one could understand the Bible in its simplicity and come to a knowledge about the Creation from reading the account in Genesis 1 and 2. Now, thousands of people who each log 60 hours a week in a tiny lab with 20 different types of frogs tell you such a thing is simply *illogical*. Is it logical to believe that we all climbed out of the primordial ooze? I tell you brethren, it takes more faith to believe their stance than ours.

Certain events are definite in the lives of many: death and taxes. But another thing that will come to us all is the final judgment of our lives, and anyone that reads the Bible understands this fact. The question remains then, what will you do about the warnings

given to you to prepare for such an event? Will we accept the reality of our condition that is right in front of us and change our lives, or do we pretend that such a thing will not exist? Only a fool would choose the latter.

The Voice of Experience

The End of The Law

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Romans 10:4 says, “*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.*” In this passage we should clearly understand that the end of the law is Christ! The Greek word for “end” (*telos*) can mean: (1) the final issue or result of a state or process, or (2) a fulfillment (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words).

Our text tells us that Christ is “*the end of the law*”. Christ is the fulfillment of the law (see Matthew 5:17) in the sense that he brought it to completion by obeying perfectly its demands and by fulfilling its types and prophecies. The “law” here is that law given by God through Moses at Mt. Sinai. It was a law given to the Jews only, “The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.” Deuteronomy 5:3. In Galatians 3:19, the “law was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” That “Seed” was Christ, as seen in Galatians 3:16, “And to thy seed, which is Christ.” Galatians 3:24 teaches that the “law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ”.

Christ came to “*fulfill*” that law as seen in Matthew 5:17. He did fulfill the law as clearly spoken in John 19:30. He “*finished*” the work of the Father had sent Him to do (John 4:34; 5:36). Subsequently, according to Colossians 2:14, “*and took it (the law, mine emphasis) out of the way, nailing it to his cross*”. Thus, that brought the law of Moses to an end, the Christian age is no longer “*under the law*” (Romans 6:15; Galatians 5:4).

However, this is not the “*end*” to which Paul refers in Romans 10:4. Those of whom Paul wrote in verses 1 – 3 had “*have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God*”, but had been “*going around to establish their own righteousness.*” In this the writer refers to “*Israel*” (read the context from Romans 9:27 – 10:3). These were the people who had been given the law. But, they had not been profited by their “*schoolmaster*”, and for that reason they had rejected the Christ, who “*came unto His own...*” (John 1:11).

The apostle Paul, in our text, spoke of the aim (end), or purpose of the law of Moses. That goal was “*righteousness*” which could not “*come by the law*” (Galatians 2:21) itself, but righteousness was reached in Christ. To those same Romans Paul wrote, “*Ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered, and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness.*” (Romans 6:17-18). Again, Romans 3:20 says, “*by the works of the law shall no flesh be*

justified in his sight.” Once more in Galatians 2:21, we read that *“for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”* Therefore, we see that those under the law did not reach that “righteousness” which Christ, through death, made possible. This “righteousness” which God desired man to attain was not reached *“in the Law”*, but in Him to whom the law brought those who followed its guidance.

Observe and you may find out without doubt that in Romans 10:4, our text, the inspired writer says that “righteousness” is to *“everyone that believeth.”* We read in Galatians 3:24 that the law, as a schoolmaster, was to bring the Jews to Christ, *“that they might be justified by faith.”* Also, we find in Romans 1:16 that *“the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”* Jesus declares in Mark 16:15ff that *“he that believeth (that gospel) and is baptized shall be saved,”* or reach that “righteousness”. This salvation was the “end” toward which the law of Moses had sought to lead Israel. That salvation is now available unto all, as revealed in the gospel of Christ - the covenant which He sealed with His precious blood when He, on the cross, “took away the first, that he might establish the second.” (Hebrew 10:9).

I implore you, cherished reader, to avail yourself of that gift of grace by obeying the commands of His gospel: Believe that He is the Christ (John 8:24), Repent of your sins (Acts 17:30), Confess your faith in Him before men, (Matthew 10:32) and be Baptized unto the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38). Walk then *“in newness of life”* (Romans 6:4) in close fellowship with Him (I John 1:7), that you might finally *“receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”* (I Peter 1:9). *“Be thou faithful unto death, and will give thee a crown of life.”* (Revelation 2:10).