

Faithfully Alert When Society Is Falling Apart

Songs of David: Volume 2, Part 2

Psalm 11:4-7

Associated Press ran an article in the editorial section this past week from Boston office.

During the registration process at Harvard University, students are now allowed to indicate which pronouns they use, with suggested gender-neutral options; options now include: he, she, ze, and they.

Harvard isn't the first college to embrace gender-neutral pronouns; it's now a wave of major institutions that are widening their policies and pronouns to acknowledge students who do not identify as male or female.

Cornell University and MIT offer similar options on their websites. Ohio University started letting students register their gender pronouns this year, and officials at Boston University said they're discussing the topic.

Last week, the State University of New York, one of the nation's largest public college systems, announced that it's working on a data-collection tool to let students choose among seven gender identities, including "genderqueer," "trans-man" and "questioning."

Advocates for transgender students applaud the changes; junior class college student, Laila Smith, filled in 'they' and 'their' on the form and said to the reporter, "We've figured out that sexuality is fluid and gender is fluid . . . I think that we're at the beginning of it all."

Not really . . . this is old stuff wrapped in new deceptive packages. Satan has always wanted mankind to question God's design; God's word and God's moral absolutes.

Someone sent me a link to the New York Times this past week which ran an article entitled, "Why Our Children Don't Think There Are Moral Facts."

The article exposed one of Common Core's standards for K-12 programs; the students are taught that claims are either facts or opinions. However, this journalist discovered that consistently and without fail, every value claim was labeled as an opinion.

One worksheet asked the question: are the following statements facts or opinions?

- Copying homework assignments is wrong (fact or opinion)
- Cursing in school is inappropriate (fact or opinion)
- All men are created equal (note that one)
- It is wrong for people under 21 to drink alcohol
- Drug dealers belong in prison

In each case, the worksheets categorized all of these statements as "opinions" because they were value statements . . . and values are not facts. So even something common sense as drug dealers and the created equality of mankind is no longer a fact.

What's obvious is being denied or simply retitled and rewritten.

And that means the gospel has to be categorized as an opinion because it includes the statement, "***For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God***" (***Romans 3:23***) So that's value statement because it refers to someone as wrong – a sinner – and thus it can only be someone's opinion and not fact.

Frankly, without moral facts there is no right and wrong; no sinner or savior . . . beloved, there is no gospel.

It reminds me of Abraham Lincoln who once posed the question: How many legs does a dog have if you call the tail a leg? Four. Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg.

Listen, the Bible simply calls it like it is: a tail is a tail, and a leg is a leg.

And here's the chilling digression of all this confusion; if there are no moral facts, then there can be no moral truths, and there will be no moral standards.ⁱ

- Which opens the door to inconceivable immoral behavior;
- which is why there weren't arrests made and a public outcry when abortionists were discovered discussing the harvesting of the brain of a newborn baby who'd survived an abortion.
- Which is why alcohol abuse, sexual abuse and drug abuse and physical abuse are epidemic.

Which is why we are no longer a society that allows pornography, or simply markets pornography – our society *is* pornographic.ⁱⁱ

And on and on.

What do you do when you're living in a culture that is coming apart at the seams? When it calls a tail a leg? What do you do when the foundations – the settled order of things - crumble?

I read one article this week of one teacher who skipped the chapter on Christianity in world history and focused instead of Islam. The children were never given the historical impact of Christianity on our western civilization; instead they were required to memorize the five pillars of Islam.

So what do you do when the foundations of your own nation are skipped over – when the gospel is rewritten – when obvious moral facts are retitled as opinions? Isn't this the time to get your passport ready and fly away to some more accommodating surrounding?

In *Psalm 11*, that was the advice to King David by some of his friends – look, David, the best thing you can do is fly away like a bird to some safe mountain!

Run . . . run!

Now if you look back at the advice of David's friends, in *Psalm 11*, you'll notice again how they paint a dreadful picture. The enemy has already

pulled back the bowstring; the arrow is ready; the culture has crumbled; the righteous are in the open – so you'd better run.

Don't miss the assumption behind this advice – it assumes that safety is all-important; that self-preservation is the priority.ⁱⁱⁱ

God never promised us personal safety in the world . . . He promised us personal security in His sovereign will.

He never called us to experience a comfortable life – He called us to experience a cross . . . and to follow Him.

But let's just admit – since we're the ones living in this unique period of American history where moral and legal and spiritual issues are now colliding, and Christianity is no longer being given the right of way – and tails are being called legs – it is unsettling.

And David's first stanza leaves you hanging in the air with an unsettled, seemingly unanswerable question – *verse 3. If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"*

What do you do?

What David reveals next – which is nothing less than the secret to our steadfastness – is so simple and yet at the same time simply profound.

In fact, it is so profound that David hands this poem to his choral conductor so that it can be arranged and sung throughout the nation.

I've whittled his poetic response down to 5 different stanzas.

1. The first stanza basically says this: God is totally undisturbed in His sovereignty

Verse 4 – just the first part – The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven.

At first this doesn't really sound all that encouraging – great, God is in heaven which is light years away.^{iv}

David isn't telling us to sing about the fact that God is far removed; David is telling us to sing about the fact that God forever rules.

The Lord's throne is not a reference to inactivity, but supremacy.^v

And when you're living in a society or even in some circumstances where it seems like everything is falling apart – steadfastness has everything to do with the object of your concentration – do you concentrate on the crumbling foundations – is that all you see? Or do you concentrate on the granite foundation underneath all that is – the undisturbed

sovereign rule of God who is never unsettled and will never be unseated?

You can look around . . . and say, “I give up.”
You can look up . . . and say, “I’ll stay at it.”

God is totally undisturbed in His sovereignty.

2. Secondly, God is totally aware of His creation.

David writes further in *verse 4b. His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. 5a. The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked.*

In other words, when the foundations are crumbling, God sees – He knows; God saw David; God saw David’s attackers gathering in the moonless night to shoot arrows at him; God sees.

God can see in the dark.

This reference here to His eyelids is a reference to squinting. It’s what I do when I want to look closely at something – in fact, I typically angle my head so that I can look through the lower half of my glasses. And now – I’ve done it long enough – even if I’m not wearing my glasses, I’ll hold my head up as if that’ll help anything.

The idea of eyelids in the Hebrew text is the idea of scrutinizing – looking really closely at something – like you do when you squint your eyes and narrow your focus.

David is effectively saying that God is not only seeing, He’s squinting; He’s taking a close, sharp look at them.^{vi}

He misses nothing . . . and get the implication of this – He is an eyewitness to everything.

David writes here that God examines everyone, both righteous and unrighteous – that is, those rightly related to Him by faith and those who defy Him.

That is both terrifying to the unbeliever who will one day stand before God at the Great White Throne judgment and come to the horrifying discovery that every sin was not only worthy of judgment – but that God also was an eyewitness to every deed, thought, and motive.

He will discover too late that God didn’t take Common Core curriculum – there were moral facts.

And God saw everything.

But to the believer, who’s every sinful deed, thought and motive has already met with the wrath of God in the death of Christ, everything you go through in life – every difficulty, every injustice, every suffering, every deed worth rewarding – all of

it is even now God sees it all and He has provided for everything (*Hebrews 6:10; Matthew 6:6*).

**God is totally undisturbed in His sovereignty;
God is totally aware of His creation;**

3. Thirdly, God is totally just in His hatred

Notice the last part of *verse 5 – and the one who loves violence His soul hates.*

Bound up in that word is the idea of rejection: simply put, God has rejected the unrepentant sinner. But it’s a strong word too, and frankly most people to quickly run to cover it over with the well-worn cliché, “God hates the sin but loves the sinner.”

That’s both true and false at the same time.

And that’s not what David just said.

David said that God hates the sinner – the worker of violence – and He hates the sin.

But the Bible also tells us that God loves the sinner and came to die for the sinner too.

So which is it?

Both the love of God for sinners and the just hatred of God for sinners are attributes of God – attributes that we don’t hear much of. And whatever text you happen to be studying will simply emphasize one or the other.

In a similar way, we find the scriptures treating the issue of election and free will in a similar manner. Some passages emphasize God’s initiating word of grace and His electing decree to redeem those who will be saved. Then other passages reveal that we must call on the name of the Lord in order to be saved; and, whosoever will may come.

So which is true? Both.

God loves and hates at the same time – perfectly, justly and fully.

- ***For God so loved the world (John 3:16)***
- ***But God commended His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)***

These texts emphasize the fact that God loves sinners.

- ***The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity (Psalm 5:5).***
- ***Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated (Romans 9:13).***
- ***Whoever is a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4).***

These texts emphasize the hatred and anger of God toward sinners.

David is emphasizing the attribute of holy hatred for sinners and their violent sin in order to remind the believer that no matter how bad life can get when the foundations around him are destroyed, it will never be as bad as what it will be for those whom God hates.

One day, His hatred and holy justice will be poured out forever upon those who were His enemies – those who were unrepentant in their sin – those who refused to relinquish their violence, lust, and immorality.

Believers don't give an honest description of the grave danger sinners are in when they go around glibly telling people, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life; or; God hates your sin but loves you so much."

It's as if the church is trying so hard to keep God from becoming offensive to the world. Listen, God isn't troubled at all about being offensive. The gospel is offensive, and God happens to be *offended!*

The cross was His full expression of hatred for sin; the cross is also His answer to how offensive sin is and how offended He is by it.

You see, we lose too much of the gospel with our quick clichés – and one of the things we lose is the glory of the gospel.

We tend to think of sin as separate from us. As if we're respectable and good, but there're some bad things we do – but that's not who we are.

Nothing could be further from the truth. We do what we are! ***For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders (Matthew 15:19).***

Listen, one day God isn't going to send sins to Hell, He will send sinners to Hell. Embezzlement and lying and lust and adultery aren't going to be sent to Hell where they will suffer forever – unrepentant embezzlers and liars and adulterers will go to Hell.

God sends sinners to Hell.

Jonathan Edwards preached a powerful message that became part of the fabric of the Great Awakening, entitled, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.

Today that sermon would be retitled, "People who make some unfortunate choices are in the hand of a loving God."

God happens to be infinitely angry with sinners; because sin is ultimately hatred for Him and rebellion against His law written on all our hearts.

The problem with the way we're sharing the gospel is that we're sweeping the terrifying truths under the rug that people are going to be the eternal objects of God's holy hatred.

Unless they come by faith to Christ – who bore the wrath and anger and hatred and mercilessness of God the Father against sinners – they will be the objects of His hatred and wrath forever.

And here's the glorious, stunning truth about the grace of God. While He hates sinners and He hates sin – He sent His Son to bear it all for us . . . to die for us . . . to stand in our place and pay for all of it. And we are saved by faith in Him – not because God sees something in us that's attractive or nice or pleasing or special so that He just has to redeem us. No, He sees nothing in us but loathsome, reprehensible, vile sin; but He also sees in Christ His Son nothing but that which is pure and holy and lovely – and by faith in Christ's sacrifice for our wretchedness, we become a part of the pure, clean, forgiven, redeemed Body of Christ – and as a result we will now become the eternal objects and recipients of God's everlasting, lavish, gracious, faithful love.

He no longer has any reason to hate us forever . . . He now can, without any collusion with sin, love us for we have been forgiven by Christ.

Though our sins were stained like scarlet, they have been washed as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18).

What about those who reject this gospel?

4. In the fourth stanza, David informs us that God is totally terrifying in His judgment.

Verse 6. Upon the wicked He will rain snares – you could render that, coals of fire.

The Hebrew word carries the nuance of a trap – one Hebrew scholar wrote many years ago, it's as if God is throwing down a noose from above.^{vii}

Notice further; ***fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.***

Fire and brimstone and burning wind – in other words, it's as if the wind is on fire too.

One biblical archaeologist who studies the cities in the plains of Sodom and Gomorrah found, he wrote, evidences of an eruption of petroleum; the record of scripture informs us that God actually sent

burning showers of ignited gas and oil raining down on these unrepentant cities.^{viii}

It would have been horrific judgment – and it becomes a demonstration and a warning of nothing less than a description of eternal Hell.

The world would love to think that Jesus Christ never said a judgmental word – He never crossed anybody – He simply went around repeating the golden rule to love everybody.

No, the truth is, Jesus actually repeated often His warning of a coming judgement of fire – a coming eternal place called the lake of fire – or Hell (*Matthew 5, Mark 9 and in Revelation 20*).

And of course, our world today has become emboldened to cast off God’s word and His warning. That’s what happens when judgment doesn’t come – mankind assumes it never will.

The Apostle Peter writes, ***Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming?”***

In other words, all you Christians keep talking about the coming judgment of God . . . well it hasn’t happened yet has it . . . it never will!

Peter goes on to say, ***It escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But – note this – but by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men (2 Peter 3).***

In other words, the first global outpouring of the wrath of God against unrepentant sinners was the flood.

In fact, in *Genesis 9*, we’re told that God gave Noah and all of us since, a sign that He would never destroy mankind again by water – and that sign was a rainbow.

Peter informs us that the next judgment won’t be with water, but with fire.

Unbelieving mankind will be sent to the lake of fire, earth and the universe will explode in a vast fireball and God will then recreate new heavens and a new earth (Revelation 20 & 21).

All that’s yet to come.

And the world says, “Aw, c’mon . . . it’ll never happen . . . God isn’t against us . . . He’s not like that at all!”

In fact, what I find especially ironic is that the symbol of the movement promoting gay and lesbian and transgender and whatever else in between – the symbol of their movement is none other than a rainbow.

The very symbol that was to become a reminder that God completely wiped mankind off the planet because His holy hatred against sin and sinners was unleashed in a universal flood – the rainbow which promises God’s judgment will never happen again by water – that rainbow is now the symbol of a movement that rejects God’s authority and judgment and created order for marriage and sexual purity.

How ironic can that be?

Why does David spend so much time on the subject of judgment of the wicked in his answer to how we should respond when the foundations crumble?

A big part of the answer to what you do when the foundations fall apart is to look to God for your security and remember the wicked have none – their arrogance and defiance against God will be short-lived.

Because the answer isn’t doing as much as it is in looking.

Look around . . . just don’t forget to look up.

When the foundations crumble and mankind rejects God and perhaps persecutes the believer who dares to represent Him – this song becomes a reminder that *all* you will ever suffer is in this brief lifetime.

But for the unbeliever, all the glory they’ll ever experience is in this brief lifetime.

The only heaven the unbeliever will ever experience is the best of earth; and the only hell the believer will ever experience is the worst of earth.

**God is totally undisturbed in His sovereignty;
God is totally aware of His creation;
God is totally just in His hatred;
God is totally terrifying in His judgment.**

5. Fifthly, David ends by telling us, fifthly, that God is totally delighted in His beloved.

Verse 7. For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; the upright will behold His face.

Not the perfect – ***the upright*** – those rightly related to God through the redemption of His Son.

Present circumstances might be dark, but the future is magnificently bright.^{ix}

In the meantime, let's trust and hope and work and live in light of that coming day.

In fact, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church these amazing words – *Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ.*”

When the Apostle Paul wrote this text to the Roman citizens living in Corinth, they immediately picked up on his analogy.

Whenever a Roman General was victorious in a major conflict over a foreign enemy, he returned to Rome in quite a procession of victory.

The crowds would line the streets to celebrate. The defeated generals would be marched in front, along with captured soldiers.

Next the victorious General would ride in his chariot pulled by four stallions and behind him, his victorious army . . . and they would be shouting all along the way, and the crowd is chanting with them, “Victory . . . victory . . . victory.”

People would be walking along the streets with them waving censers filled with special incense – the streets of Rome would be filled with the aroma of victory.

And so Paul writes with that in mind – listen again – *Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him (2 Corinthians 2:14).*

What do we do when the foundations are destroyed?

Look to God for our place of security – He is totally in control – His hand is the granite foundation underneath the crumbling foundations of culture and state and kingdoms and world events. His throne is in heaven – over all. He inhabits eternity and reigns over even the chaos and rebellion of our world.

And one day – this song effectively closes – we will see Him face to face; and that will settle every doubt – that will answer every delay – that will heal every wound.

When the foundations crumble, it isn't so much what you do, but where you look.

And to Whom you look; and the One to whom you now look to by faith, will be the One you will see on that day – and forever thank Him for His grace.

So . . . look to Him . . . like never before.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 9/20/2015 by Stephen Davey.

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i Boston AP: Adapted from Justin P. McBrayer, *The Opinion Pages: Why Our Children Don't Think There are Moral Facts* (NYT, 3/2/2015)

ii Les Lofquist, *Godly Perspective in Days of Confusion* (IFCA VOICE, September/October, 2015), p. 77

iii Davis, p. 128

iv Davis, p. 129

v Ibid

vi Adapted from John Phillips, *Exploring the Psalms: Volume One* (Loizeaux Brothers, 1988), p. 90

vii C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Volume V* (Eerdmans, 1988) p. 190

viii Arthur G. Clarke, *Analytical Studies in the Psalms* (Kregel Publications, 1979), p. 54

ix Phillips, p. 90