



Glenn Brown

441 1/2 Lark Drive
Grand Junction, Colorado 81504

Telephone 970-434-1377

Email casabrn441@gmail.com

Website www.glennbrownministries.com

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WHAT THE PSALMS TELL US

Quite a few years ago I read the introduction to the Psalms in the NIV Study Bible and found a statement that captivated me. I love this statement and have returned to it again and again. It is a statement that describes the theology and purpose of that group of men who, under divine inspiration, penned the book of Psalms, which is the song and prayer book of the ancient nation of Israel. I hope the following quote also speaks to you.

“Unquestionably the supreme kingship of Yahweh, in which he displays His transcendent greatness and goodness, is the most basic theological concept in the Psalter - as in the Old Testament generally. It provides the fundamental perspective in which man is to view himself, the whole creation, events in nature, history and the future. The whole creation is His one kingdom. To be a creature in the world is to be dependent on and responsible to Him. To proudly deny that fact is the root of all wickedness - the wickedness that now pervades the world.”

Let me quote briefly from a few Psalms that illustrate the above statement:

Psalms 24:1-2 - *The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters.*

Psalms 10:16 - *The Lord is King forever and ever. The nations have perished out of His land.*

Psalms 11:4 - *The Lord is in His holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven. His eyes behold and test the sons of men. The Lord tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.*

Psalms 19:1 - *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.*

Psalms 46:1-3 - *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear even though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.*

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DEPRESSION & DISCOURAGEMENT

It is not surprising that in these days of pandemic, lockdown and isolation that a lot of folks have fallen into anxiety, depression and discouragement. The news reports an uptick in substance abuse, PTSD, and suicide across our nation.

I believe our Lord is challenging us very strongly to resist any of these tendencies in ourselves so that we can represent Him to the people around us who have given up. If we believe the Psalms quoted above, and

especially the last one, Psalm 46, we have every reason to be encouraged.

I'm certainly not suggesting that we believers live in such a bubble of faith and confidence that we never fall into discouragement. If that were true I would be in trouble, because I remember many times when I was so discouraged that I despaired of life.

The Bible and especially the Psalms is very honest about our weakness as humans, and time after time men and women of God cried out to God in their distress. For instance, in Psalm 13, King David cries out to God:

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will You hide your face from me? How long will I have sorrow in my heart and my enemy be exalted over me?

But David ends that Psalm by declaring, *But I have trusted in Your mercy. My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.*

And you may remember that the Prophet Jeremiah became so discouraged that he wished he would die. And that Job complained to God for some 72 times and wished he had never been born.

And did you realize that even Paul got terribly discouraged and wrote about it? Note the following verses from the book of 2 Corinthians:

2 Cor. 1:8-9 - *For we don't want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered when we came to Asia: We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death.*

2 Cor. 7:5-7 - *For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn - conflicts on the outside, fears within.*

What! The great Apostle Paul said that he was so full of fear and discouragement that he felt he would die.

And Jesus Himself, our Lord, cried out on the cross: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?*

Dear friends, all these expressions of distress and abandonment by God are written in the Bible! They were inspired by the Author of the eternal Book showing that our Creator understands and empathizes with our humanness. So if you have times of deep depression and discouragement, don't you let the enemy accuse you of failing the test.

Have Courage

You realize, of course, that discouragement means to dis or lose courage. God has so designed our brief sojourn on this planet that it takes courage to believe in Him and to follow His path.

I recently read a very old book, Manifest Destiny, which is about the life of Teddy Roosevelt. When Teddy

was in his 20's he lost an election in New York State and repaired to the Bad Lands of Dakota where he legally claimed vacant land to start a ranch. He immediately came into conflict with a wealthy French aristocrat - the Marquis de Mor'es. (Think wealthy, arrogant, bully land baron.) The Marquis was fraudulently claiming all the land in the valley where Teddy established his ranch. (A typical plot for a western novel, but it is apparently factual.)

The Marquis was also a famous duelist and had killed several men in duels. Teddy was near-sighted and had no experience with duels. When Teddy would not yield to the Baron's threats, de Mor'es challenged him to a duel. A friend and admirer of Roosevelt's named Huidekoper later reported their conversation. He said to Teddy, "No man in his right mind would dignify this rot with a reply of any kind. Clearly, the man is on the verge of lunacy. No one will think any less of you for ignoring the fool."

But Teddy accepted the challenge and as the challenged person had the right to choose weapons and circumstances. He formally informed Mr. de Mor'es that he had chosen Winchester rifles at a distance of twelve paces, a short distance that would likely result in the death of both parties. Mr. Huidekoper again tried to dissuade his idealistic young friend.

Roosevelt's response to his friend is what caught my attention and is the reason for my sharing this incident from history with you. Roosevelt said, "Sensible men since ancient times have realized that courage is not the only virtue, but that it is the virtue without which the others are meaningless. For my own sake, I cannot play the coward."

Eventually the Marquis de Mor'es backed down and left the area.

Phil Stroud, the National Director of the Vineyard denomination, spoke at our local church over a year ago and shared a word that many of us continue to recall. He said that God had spoken to him and had said that all of us must have three things as we enter the desperate times ahead. We must have "Wisdom, Courage, and Kindness."

Phil asked the Lord why we need those three qualities. He heard God say to him, "You need wisdom because you don't know what you are doing. You need courage because if you obey me it will cause a lot of conflict with people. And you need kindness because wisdom and courage without kindness will cause you to hurt people."

Psalms 16:8 says: *I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*

We need to make that same decision.

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EVIDENCE OF GOD'S DESIGN

While yard-saling a couple of weeks ago I found a book, Number in Scripture, by E. W. Bullinger, published in 1967. Mr. Bullinger was a genius without any

question. God has apparently used numbers in nature and in His Word as a sort of code to reveal His hidden design to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. I plan to quote brief excerpts from his book over the next several months, God willing:

"The various periods of gestation are commonly a multiple of *seven*, either of days or weeks. With Insects the ova are hatched from *seven* half-days (as the wasp, bee, etc.); while with others it is *seven* whole days. The majority of insects require from 14 (2x7) to 42 (6x7) days; the same applies to the larva state.

With Animals the period of gestation of

The mouse is 21 (3x7) days.

The hare and rat, 28 (4x7) days.

The cat, 56 (8x7) days.

The dog, 63 (9x7) days.

The lion, 98 (14x7) days.

The sheep, 147 (21x7) days.

The hen, 21 (3x7) days.

The duck, 42 (6x7) days.

The human, 280 (40x7) days.

In the case of the Bee, it is the number *three* which pervades its phenomena -

In three days the egg of the queen is hatched.

It is fed for nine days (3x3).

It reaches maturity in 15 days (5x3).

The drone matures in 24 days (8x3).

The bee is composed of three sections, head and two stomachs.

The two eyes are made up of about 3,000 small eyes, each (like the cells of the comb) having six sides (2x3).

It has six legs (2x3). Each leg is composed of three sections.

The foot is formed of three triangular sections.

The antennae consist of nine (3x3) sections.

The sting has nine (3x3) barbs on each side.

Is this design or is it chance? Why should it be the number three instead of some other number? No one can tell.

The very elements of matter are all arranged according to number and law. (Mr. Bullinger shows a graph of "Reynold's Curve of the Elements according to the Newlands-Mendelejeff Periodic Law" which I can't explain to you because it's way over my head. He concludes this section as follows: "There is an element whose atomic weight is a multiple of 7 for every multiple up to 147, while most others are either square numbers, multiples of 11, or cube numbers....Note that all parts of the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream are all on the left or diamagnetic side; that is, they are at cross purposes with the line of divine government."

Sound and Music

Sound is the impression produced on the ear by the vibrations of air. The pitch of the musical note is higher or lower according as these vibrations are faster or slower. When they are too slow or irregular we call it noise. The number of vibrations for each musical note

was settled at Stuttgart in 1834. (The vibrations for Do, Re, Mi, etc. were illustrated.)

You will note that the number eleven is stamped upon music. The number of vibrations in a second, for each note, is always a multiple of eleven. (And so forth for several pages.)

Color

Color is caused by the vibrations of light, as sound is caused by the vibrations of air. There is a relation between the two, so that a particular color corresponds to a particular note in music. Sounds which harmonize correspond with colors that harmonize. The seven, both in music and color, are divided into three and four. Three primary colors and four secondary, from which all others proceed, answer to the three primary sounds called the Tri-chord, or common, chord, and four secondary.

The subject is too abstruse to enlarge further upon here, but you can see that in all the works of God there is perfect order, design and symmetry, both in number and design."

Mr. Bullinger then proceeds to illustrate how numbers are used in a consistent pattern not only in nature but in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, to reveal the hidden hand of a Master Designer.

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GIVE, AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU

Starting at Luke 6:37 Jesus shared as follows:

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

We usually connect this teaching with money: "If you give generously to God and needy people, it will return to you." It does apply to giving money as well as to many other things, but you will notice that Jesus used the teaching to apply to judging others and forgiving others.

So the principle is: "If you judge others, you will be judged by others (and by God). If you forgive others, you will be forgiven."

Robert Morris recently pointed out how it also applies to witnessing to others. There were three points to his message: You will reap what you sow. (If you plant corn, you will reap corn and not wheat.) You will reap after you sow. (There is a season to plant and a season to harvest. The farmer has to wait patiently for the season.) You will reap more than you sow. (You plant one kernel of corn and reap many ears of corn, each of which has hundreds of kernels.)

Robert said that it doesn't appear that the final principle - that we reap more than we sow - literally occurs, for we don't see much in the way of results from witnessing to people. But he said that we don't see the end results of our witnessing, we only see what happens immediately which is usually not very much. An example is the man who witnessed to a young man

named Billy Graham. He didn't see anything happen immediately, but just think of the fruit that came forth in succeeding years and generations.

So Robert said that for many years his goal has been to witness to everyone with whom he comes into contact if he does not know they are already Christians. I was seriously challenged by Robert's teaching. I have witnessed to many people over the years, but I haven't had the courage to witness to everyone I meet (and still don't). But I am making progress.

I have told you that Friday is yard-sale day for Jeannine (my daughter), Clarice (my baby sister, only 88), and I. But last Saturday there was a big yard-sale at Midlands Village, a mobile-home community, so we sallied forth on both days, and I witnessed to at least 25 people. It was so interesting and enjoyable. At some of the yards I was able to speak to 2 or 3 people at the same time, and at one location I went up on a porch and spoke for several minutes to 4 young adults in their 20's. They were very attentive, and I believe the Holy Spirit was speaking to them. In one case, a lady turned and walked away from me, and in a couple of cases the people got a sort of paralyzed look on their faces ("Help! Get this fanatic away from me!") But that is perfectly OK. I didn't shed any blood, and my hide is pretty thick. And just think what the results may be for some of those dear folks whose hearts were open to hear about the Good News! Oh, my! There will be wonderful consequences for them and their families and friends for time and eternity.

Let me tell you how I go about witnessing to strangers. I say, "How are you today? Could I speak to you for a minute? I used to be a pastor, and I like to ask people, "Are you sure you are going to heaven when you die?" Then I smile at them really big so they will know I'm harmless. The answers are really interesting. Hardly anyone says they don't believe in heaven. Almost everyone believes in heaven and believes they are going there when they die.

One lady on Friday was an exception. She said, "I'm the last person you want to ask that question. I'm an atheist." I started to quote John 3:16 to her and she interrupted, "I don't believe in the bible!" I said, "You know, there was a time I didn't believe in God or the Bible either, but I went into a terrible time in my life when I was an alcoholic and God rescued me. He literally saved my life. He showed that He loved me, and He loves you too."

I said, "Let me challenge you, when you are by yourself, just say, 'God, if you are there, will you please speak to me.' You are going to be surprised because God will speak to you." She didn't respond so I asked God to bless her.

Usually when I ask if they are sure they are going to heaven, they will say yes. Then I will ask, "What is the basis of your belief that you will go to heaven? Why do you think that?" And they will say, "Because I have been a good person," or "I have tried to do my best," or

something like that. Then I will say, "So you think you have been good enough to earn your way to heaven, right? But do you know what the Bible says about that? It refutes that idea. It says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." And it says that heaven is a gift from God. That God sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins, and that through faith in Him we receive the gift of eternal life. This is called the 'Good News' because God really loves us and wants us to go to heaven." If they want to talk further, of course I will continue, but if not I end with a smile and a 'God bless you' since I don't want to make them uncomfortable (or more uncomfortable). Wow! These few words can be life changing!

Come on, dear friends, have courage.

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THE DOCTRINE OF HELL

C. S. Lewis said that he hated the doctrine of hell and if he had it in his power he would remove it from Christian theology. But he said it is undeniably a biblical doctrine and is taught by the Old Testament prophets, by New Testament apostles and teachers, and most importantly taught by Jesus himself repeatedly. He said the issue is this: God does not want anyone to go to hell and at incredible sacrifice sent His Son Jesus to die for our sins. But the issue is that He has given to man free will. All a man has to do is humble himself, repent of his sins, and accept the gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. All he has to do is surrender his pride and bow his knee to the God who created him and loves him. But what if he will not? This is the issue: What if he will not! What if he raises his clenched fist up to God and says, "No! I will not bow down to you! I value my independence and my 'freedom' more than anything. I will not give you rule over my life. I am the master of my fate and the captain of my soul! Get away from me!"

What is God supposed to do in such a situation? Should He force that guy, with all his rebellion and contempt, to go to a heaven where God is worshipped and loved? That would not be heaven for a person in rebellion against God, and it would no longer be heaven if some of the residents were full of rebellion and hatred.

So, my dear friends, God loves you and paid the ultimate price for you to be saved and to go to heaven for eternity. But God gave you free will when He created you, and the decision is up to you. Be assured that the decision is up to you. The first chapter of Romans says that at the final judgment everyone will be without excuse. You will know that God reached out to you time after time and that you said no time after time.

Come to Him today and be saved!

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INSIGHT ABOUT LOSS AND GRIEF

(The following is from "The Compassionate Friends," a nationwide ministry to those suffering grief and loss. It was shared with me by my friend, Alice Monroe, who is the Professional Advisor to the Mesa County Chapter

Directors of The Compassionate Friends. She is also a bereaved parent, a pilot, a Victim Advocate Educator, etc.

There is a chapter of The Compassionate Friends near enough to help you or one of your loved ones through their loss.)

The "Victim"/Survivor

You have to understand the dilemma of the survivor in order to help them.

Studies show that the impact of tragic news has a serious effect on the mind, body, spirit and emotions. The immediate chemical and hormonal changes occur not only within the brain but on the surface of every single cell in the body. These changes are involuntary and can be life threatening.

A permanent impression is stamped in the brain and can be the reason PTSD often follows.

A fog-like numbness begins to set in, which is designed to preserve life, even when the grieving person feels like giving up. The victim/survivor will be in shock.

The survivor has no time to prepare for this blow. They are crashing. Confusion and bewilderment make it difficult to think. A sense of loss of control is unavoidable.

("The very fact that God has placed a certain soul in our way is a sign that God wants us to do something for him or her. It is not chance. It has been planned by God. We are bound by conscience to help him or her.")

-Mother Teresa

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JUST AN OBSERVATION AND A CONCERN

- Although I am very humble about it, you have probably noticed that I have brilliant scientific instincts, and if someone has been to Yale or Harvard I automatically believe anything they say. For instance, a recent discovery as reported by National Geographic was that: "Giraffes evolved from spineless, immobile sea squirts." Well, duh! that is so obvious.
- My concern is related to this report. I have noticed some unmotivated people who seem to be evolving into spineless, immobile sea squirts.

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PATHWAY TO FREEDOM CLASS

Because Mesa County has been up-rated so that more folks may come together in meetings, we have been approved to restart the class on Pathway to Freedom on the first Wednesday in October - October 7th.

Since several months have passed since we were so rudely interrupted by a global pandemic, and since new people may wish to attend, we will start over afresh. Lynn Cumming will again participate in the teaching and discussion at tables.

Praise the Lord!

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I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.
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