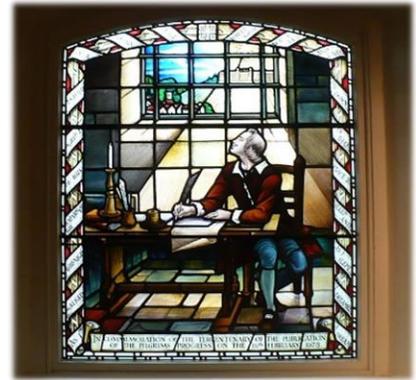


May 1, 2020

Good morning, Everybody.

Can you believe that it's May already? A full 1/3 of the new year is behind us. We've been fed, clothed, sheltered, and protected; so many benefits for which to be grateful. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits* (Psalm 103:1-2).



Perhaps you may need to do as I've had to do sometimes (well, truthfully, not just *sometimes* but *often* times) and give yourself a little "pep" talk about that. It's scriptural to do it. It's what David is having to do: he's finding the need to prompt himself to *bless the LORD* and to not *forget*. Why? Well . . . *you* figure it out (smile).

A Believer's Frames

Christian people used to talk about their *frames*. During my college years I worked on a carpentry crew in the summers. We were a *framing* crew. We roughed in houses, one every two weeks, in preparation for the roofing, siding, and finishing crews. So when I first came across the language, *a believer's frames*, I naturally thought about his physical body. That didn't make much sense to me, but it was all that came to mind.

Of course, reading just a little further clarified that by *frame* the writers were talking about their mood, their disposition of spirit.

It's so disturbing to find oneself in a *frame* of spirit devoid of a felt sense of the Lord's comforts. Sometimes almost a sense of desertion. Even occasionally what Puritan writers would refer to as the *dark night* of the soul. The most troubling aspect of it is the anxious question as to whether or not the Lord actually has left us?

There are physical factors that weigh down our spirits. But there's also the

factor to which we ought to give more earnest attention. John Newton wrote discerningly,

There is an inseparable connection between causes and effects. There can be no effect without a cause. . . . Now indwelling sin is an active cause; and therefore, while it remains in our nature, it will produce effects according to its strength. Why then should I be surprised, that, if the Lord suspends his influence for a moment, in that moment sin will discover itself? Why should I wonder that I can feel no lively exercise of grace, no power to raise my heart to God, any farther than He is pleased to work in me mightily; any more than wonder that I do not find fire in the bottom of a well, or that it should not be day when the sun is withdrawn from the earth?

The only answer to indwelling sin (the *flesh*) is the Spirit (Galatians 5). Love, joy, peace, etc. are His fruit, not ours. He takes the things of Christ and makes them *real* and *vivid* to our spirits in order that our *frames* might be altered (for instance, see I John 1:1-4).

And yet, at times it is God's good pleasure and inscrutable wisdom to withhold these gracious feelings for a time. Even our Lord was, in part, and sinlessly, a *man of sorrows*. How are we to think of our spiritual state during these times when prayer, scripture, or even Christian fellowship or counsel don't entirely dispel distress or gloom? Newton counseled,

*If we are conscious of the **desire** [for spiritual comforts]. If we seek it carefully in the use of all appointed means. If we willingly allow ourselves in nothing which has a known tendency to grieve the Spirit of God, and to damp our sense of divine things. Then, if the Lord is pleased to keep us short of those comforts which he has taught us to prize, and, instead of lively sensations of joy and praise, we feel a languor and deadness of spirit, provided we do indeed feel it, and are humbled for it, we have no need to give way to despondency or excessive sorrow . . . the foundation of our hope, and the ground of our abiding joys, is the same. And the heart may be as really alive to God, and grace as truly in exercise, when we walk in comparative darkness and see little light, as when the frame of our spirits is*

more comfortable. Neither the reality nor the measure of grace can be properly estimated by the degree of our sensible comforts.

Maybe that will help someone today (smile). Read it again; maybe several times, until you can explain it back to yourself. That's when you'll know that you've grasped it. When you can teach it back to yourself.

And how about being alert to the possibility that the Lord may give you an opportunity to share it with someone else?

. . . the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction **so that we will be able to comfort** [emphasis mine] those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (II Corinthians 1:3-4).

Have a really blessed day. *The Lord is on thy side!*

Praying for You Today,

Pastor Minnick