

Sunday, November 8, 2020

Scripture exhorts us to put on a garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness. When we lift our voice to heaven with a pure heart, and pure hands, He delights in the worship of His saints. This has been quite the week. I don't know about you, but I can think of a few times this week when my heart felt a bit heavy. I was reading this morning in the Book of Daniel. Daniel was a person who was a stranger in a foreign land, captured in his home and brought prisoner. He lived in a land that did not share his beliefs, in fact they were hostile to his beliefs. They eventually tried to famously kill him for his faithfulness to God. But he lived as a missionary in his world, he set himself apart. He knew that His God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was the one true God. At the beginning of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar had suffered a dreadful dream, and none of his wise men could bring the interpretation. Daniel prayed, and the Lord granted to Daniel the interpretation. Daniel praises the Lord saying:

Chapter 2:20-22

“May the name of God be blessed forever and ever,
For wisdom and power belong to Him.

²¹It is He who changes the times and the periods;
He removes kings and appoints kings;
He gives wisdom to wise men,
And knowledge to people of understanding.

²²It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things;
He knows what is in the darkness,
And the light dwells with Him.

This was a seemingly dire situation, King Nebuchadnezzar would surely kill all the wise men AND Daniel if he could not bring an interpretation (no pressure). Daniel shows us His understanding of the sovereignty of God. It was thorough, complete, and perfect. Daniel's understanding of the ways of God were not altered by his surroundings or by his circumstance. When he was captured in Israel he had a good life. He had a favorable theocracy and government to serve, and he was captured by violence and brought to Babylon...to a foreign place that neither knew nor cared about his God. Daniel says that wisdom and power belong to Him. He is wise and good in all that He does. Though Daniel did not have Romans 8:28 back then, He knew that God was working out and ensuring the eternal good of those who loved and served Him, and that truth had nothing to do with what he saw around him, nothing to do with the government that was over him. Daniel was a man who had set his face toward heaven. He told King Nebuchadnezzar...you serve at the pleasure

of my God. He placed you there, and there you will stay until he is done with you.

Jesus told Pontius Pilot you would have no authority over me had it not been given to you from above. You serve at the pleasure of God the Father. For a reason, and for a purpose. Knowing that God is on the throne, knowing that He removes kings and appoints kings. The question that faces believers this morning is not who won an election, but what is the state of your election? Have you made your calling and election sure?

In Peter's second epistle he was sitting in prison, put there AGAIN by a corrupt governmental system, and was writing to those who were of the dispersion. These were Jews who had been violently dispersed from their homeland because the persecution was so horrendous. In the midst of this, when so many other surface needs or circumstances could be addressed, Peter, from a jail cell, to those who had been scattered from their homeland for their faith, were told, therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. In light of the most horrendous of circumstances, Peter tells them... *Watch your life.* Watch your personal holiness. Be upright in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. The reminder for us when the world puts on epic displays of wickedness and corruption is not to look outward, lament and moan. Peter tells us, look inward to reflect on ourselves and our walk...and to look upward to the author and perfecter of our faith. When God shakes the foundations, we look inward and upward. Make your calling and election sure. Pursue holiness at all costs. That is what matters. If you do this YOU WILL NEVER FALL.

Be of good cheer, Jesus has overcome the world. The nations will rage, the peoples will plot in vain. He who sits in the heavens laughs. (Psalm 2) The news headline is that Jesus Christ, the risen Son of God is seated at the right hand of God ruling and reigning until He returns for His Bride. That's our headline. Until He does return, make ready your hearts, prepare a place for Him. Make your calling and election sure. Be a people marked by holiness and joy.