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The Believer's Passion

In Luke 10:38-42 we read of the account of Mary, Martha and the Lord.

Luke 10:38-42, "Now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him, and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'"

Martha, Martha... distracted Martha! And yet, before we find ourselves being too hard on Martha, notice that there is good cause for her distraction. From our text, it is obvious that Jesus' disciples accompanied Him on this trip, which means that counting Lazarus, Mary, and Martha that evening dinner would have included at least 16 people! Secondly we know that Jesus Christ was a very highly respected guest, which meant that the meal would have had to have been all that much better.

Now if you couple this with the fact that Martha had much work and many details to attend to and yes,

this was before the days of "chip and dip" and other such modern conveniences. Martha also had undependable help. Mary's session at Christ's feet which from Martha's perspective would have been interpreted as abandonment and you have all the makings for a struggle on the part of Martha! Truly, Martha was worried and bothered about so many things; much like we are today!

Life in this world brings with it much potential for distraction and worry, doesn't it? There's the material concerns:

- Is our home adequate enough?
- Do I have the latest fashions?
- Will we have enough money to put Jimmy through college?
- What about our retirement?
- Those savings are getting low.

Add to these our emotional worries:

- Are our children well-behaved and are they succeeding in school?
- Does my spouse love me like he/she used to?
- Is my job better than Frank's?
- Am I getting the respect I need to perform the tasks I have?
- Am I being a faithful...
 - Father?
 - Worker?
 - Mother?
 - Child?

Mix in the Physical concerns...

- If I don't start exercising...
- How much cholesterol is in my diet?
- I'm getting so fat!

And what you have are the makings for an emotional blow-up no different than Martha's!

See, though 2000 years separate us from Martha; yet the circumstances that led to her struggle have survived her and in many cases, her circumstances have become ours! And so we ask this morning how are we to maintain a Biblical focus? If we are not to be consumed "by so many things," what ought our passions to be as children of God?

What Our Passion Must Not Be

Let us look at the believer's passion beginning with what it must not be.

Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God."

In order to understand this phrase as Moses intended, it is imperative that we be familiar with the

context. The book of Deuteronomy is a collection of Moses' last sermons which he preached right before he died and right before God's people were led into the Promised Land.

The Israelites had wandered in the wilderness for forty years on account of the people's unwillingness to trust the Lord. Moses brought Israel just east of the Promised Land and there prepared them for entrance through the sermons recorded in this book.¹ Our text lies in a section in which Moses is exhorting God's people with regard to Covenant Faithfulness.

Notice the immediate context of Deuteronomy 29:1-13 is that it contains a call for God's people to be faithful to their God.

Deuteronomy 29:10-13, "You stand today, all of you, before the Lord your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, even all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the alien who is within your camps, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, that you may enter into the covenant with the Lord your God, and into His oath which the Lord your God is making with you today, in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God, just as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

What comforting and encouraging words. And yet here, Moses' sermon takes a dreadful turn. In Deuteronomy 29:14-28, Moses gives a detailed description of the curses involved in covenant unfaithfulness, in fact they are so detailed, it is as if that is what is going to take place. Moses is speaking of the apostate:

Deuteronomy 29:22-25, "Now the generation to come, your sons who rise up after you and the foreigner who comes from a distant land, when they see the plagues of the land and the diseases with which the Lord has afflicted it, will say, 'All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and in His wrath.' And all the nations shall say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?' Then *men* shall say, 'Because they forsook the covenant of the Lord, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.'"

Now brothers and sisters, don't miss it the people to whom Moses is speaking are the next generation of Israelites that lived after the rebellion that occurred with the sending of the twelve spies in Numbers 13-14. Up to this point are excited about what God is about to do. Are ones who are willing to

- Live by faith.
- Bear the sign of circumcision proclaiming their allegiance to God.
- Follow God as He leads them into war.

And yet here Moses gives such a detailed and apparently certain prophecy of doom that it could very easily have lead to discouragement:

- "You mean to tell me that after all these years of wandering in the desert, we are going to enter

¹ Compare Deuteronomy 29:1

the promised land only to be cursed?"

- "You mean to tell me that we are NOT going to live happily ever after?"
- "Thank you preacher! Your encouragement and confidence is overwhelming!"

No doubt that Moses' last words in this text would have raised all manner of

- Worry.
- Concern.
- Questions.
- Fears.
- Regarding the future. What will tomorrow hold? What are we going to do?

Now all of this brings us to our text in which Moses writes to *encourage* God's people, "[Yes, God will certainly punish the man who renounces the covenant, but let us never forget] ...the secret things [regarding the future] belong to the Lord our God..." In other words, when it comes to the future and its details, the mode in which God will carry out His counsel and will, it is not our place to know God's plans. To seek to know the manner by which God will carry out His will is to seek that which God has chosen NOT to reveal.

- Will we live happily ever after?
- Will we reap the blessings of God tomorrow?
- Will our future bring joy and happiness?

In essence Moses says, "The answer to these questions must not be our concern. Take courage; the future belongs to God!"

And so, what must NOT be the concern of the child of God? THE FUTURE! Well then, what must be our concern/passion?

The Believer's Passion

Deuteronomy 29:29b, "But the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."

Literally, this says, "But the uncovered things belong to us." In this context, Moses is directly addressing the revelatory acts of God whereby God communicated His law to His people.² And the focus of this verse is the revelation of God, THE WORD OF GOD, given to us in a written form. It is this which God has given to us to be our Passion.

Now having said this, look again at this verse and notice the emphasis that Moses is giving. This text doesn't say that the word of God was given simply to God's people. Rather it says that the word of God "...belongs to US and to OUR SONS forever." In other words, through the inspiration of the Spirit, the Word of God has become OUR and OUR CHILDREN'S own *personal* possession!

² Compare also Deuteronomy 29:1, 9, 25

The Dedication of a Book

I hold in my hands one of my favorite books outside of the Bible, *Letters of Samuel Rutherford*. It contains the letters of a godly preacher who lived during a time when faithfulness to God meant persecution, torture, and death. Because the contents of this book are letters that Samuel Rutherford wrote, they reveal much of this man- his...

- Heart.
- Passion.
- Joys.
- Sorrows.

I love this book- it has...

- Inspired me.
- Encouraged me.
- Rebuked me.
- Directed me.
- Molded and shaped much of my thinking on suffering and pain.

And yet, as much as I love this book, as I read it I am constantly aware that what is written on its pages were not intended for me. I am as the dog eating the scraps that fall from the banqueting table of a feast ...

- While the morsels are grand.
- How much better would be the meal if I were invited!

In fact, imagine how I would cherish this book if IT WERE WRITTEN TO ME?! The dedication page read something like, "To Greg Thurston, my beloved co-worker in the cause of Christ. S.R. 1637 Aberdeen!"

Brothers and sisters, so many of us read the Bible as animals eating the scraps which fall from the banqueting table. Yet, do you realize that through the inspiration of the Spirit of God this book was written to us.³

The banquet at which this word has been served is a banquet to which we have been personally invited? Each and every one of our Bibles has a dedication page which reads thus: "To my beloved child for whom I died! Take! Eat!" Listen to God's word.

Romans 4:23-24a, "Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, but for our sake also..."

Romans 15:4, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

³ Compare Deuteronomy 29:29

Speaking of the struggles of the Old Testament saints Paul writes this:

1 Corinthians 10:11, "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

Truly, next to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the sending of the Spirit of God, there is no greater gift God could have given His children than His word. Though it was written for a specific purpose to a specific people, and therefore must be interpreted in its historical-redemptive context it nevertheless; by its inspiration is intended for us as well as it...

- Teaches us about our God.
- Leads us into a fuller relationship with our God.
- Instructs, rebuke, corrects, and trains us up as men and women of God.

And so, herein lies what God intends to be the Believer's Passion: The Word of God. Not only does it reveal to us the God whom we have come to know, but it also serves as the means whereby we can grow with regard to our salvation. And yet sadly, the passions that consume our minds on a daily basis are rarely so noble. If there was such a college degree as...

- Worrying about tomorrow.
- Fretting about that which we cannot control.

...the evangelical church would be filled with PhD students, wouldn't it? Indeed, so often we are "worried and bothered about so many things!"

- What about our children? Our marriages?
- What about that pay raise?
- Will my health last?
- Will I get the good grades?
- Will my friends still like me?
- Will I ever get married?
- Etc...

And yet listen to the word of God, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God." Do you understand the significance of this phrase? What will occur tomorrow- what is secret... is determined NOT by...

- Fate or chance.
- Satan.
- An impersonal god.

BUT by "the Lord our God"- take a moment with me and think about this phrase:

- The Lord: *yahweh*; the Sovereign One over all creation; self-existent, sovereign, holy, eternal, etc...
- God: *elohim*; the one actively ruling creation.
- OUR God: The one who

- Has taken us into His family in order to bless us with Himself (Jeremiah 29:11; compare also Deuteronomy 29:13).
- Has covenanted to protect, build up, and strengthen us unto the fullness of our salvation.
- Is OUR PERSONAL KING AND FATHER!
- Is in the hands of a Sovereign God who has set His love upon us!

Thus, we need never be consumed by tomorrow. We can by faith entrust the future to a faithful Creator in doing what is right! But what are we to be consumed with and by? THE THINGS REVEALED!

Don't miss the shocking contrast in this verse. On the one hand we have a sovereign and loving God who is in control of all things. On the other hand we have His word, His love letter written especially for us and given to us that we might love and know Him. And yet the tendency of our heart is to forsake the love letter and worry about that which God Himself has said belongs to Him.

In this regard we think of Peter. After receiving the assurance of forgiveness and the glorious calling to shepherd the flock of God, what was Peter's greatest concern? It was the secret things!

John 21:21, "Peter therefore seeing him said to Jesus, 'Lord, and what about this man?'"

Isn't that typical of each and every one of us. We love to worry about tomorrow, people, ourselves, the past, etc. If you should find yourself "worried and bothered about so many things" do not fear judgment. Confess your worry and bother. The Lord is compassionate and gracious. He will forgive you.

Then knowing the forgiveness of Christ, let us give ourselves to that which God has entrusted to us: the Word. Let us...

- Study it, 2 Timothy 2:15.
- Treasure it in our heart, Psalm 119:11.
- Be consumed with it, Psalm 119:97.

Take all the energy you extend on a daily basis in connection with worry and apply to mastering the word of God.

Submit to God's Word

Here never settle in your study of the word for a new truth or a deeper understanding of a doctrine. Rather, ask yourself, "Had I know about this yesterday/last week/last month, what different would that have made?"

Prayerfully examine your life with this question. And where you discover an answer, pray that God would give you the grace to implement the passage the next time you face a similar circumstance.

About Bethel Presbyterian Church

The Bethel Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word is published regularly. It is distributed via the internet.

VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10th Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

All our sermons can be accessed via the World Wide Web. The recording for this sermon (the last few minutes were not recorded because of a power outage during the sermon) and these notes can be found at [A Passion for Christ](#). The web address for all sermons at Bethel Presbyterian Church can be found out as follows: <http://bethelpresbyterian.sermonaudio.com>

About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on August 9, 2009. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church.