

Wednesday, May 27, 2020

**Turn off the outside “noise” for a couple of minutes and consider this message from God’s Word.
I am praying that it calms your spirit and encourages your heart.**

PSALM 36 (NIV)

FOR THE DIRECTOR OF MUSIC. OF DAVID THE SERVANT OF THE LORD.

- ¹ I have a message from God in my heart
concerning the sinfulness of the wicked:
There is no fear of God
before their eyes.
- ² In their own eyes they flatter themselves
too much to detect or hate their sin.
- ³ The words of their mouths are wicked and deceitful;
they fail to act wisely or do good.
- ⁴ Even on their beds they plot evil;
they commit themselves to a sinful course
and do not reject what is wrong.
- ⁵ **Your love, Lord**, reaches to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the skies.
- ⁶ **Your righteousness** is like the highest mountains,
your justice like the great deep.
You, Lord, preserve both people and animals.

— PART 2 —

*I found that when a passage of Scripture has been very familiar to me for a long time — such as this passage! — if I will simply **slow down** . . . take my time . . . and read thoughtfully and reflectively, it can become alive to me in new and fresh ways.*

“The marvelous surprise at the heart of Psalm 36 is that the character of the wicked is contrasted with the character of the Lord. It is normal in instructional psalms to contrast the ways and character of the wicked with the ways and character of the righteous (see Psalms 1, 37, 73, etc.). Psalm 36, however, contrasts the character of the wicked with the character of the Lord!”

NANCY L. DECLAISSE-WALFORD, ROLF A. JACOBSON AND BETH LANEEL TANNER, *The Book of Psalms* (NICOT)

We — okay, I! — tend to focus on the negative. Why is that?

Psychologist Catherine Moore talks about a concept called “Negativity Bias” — it “refers to our proclivity to ‘attend to, learn from, and use negative information far **more** than positive information’.” The way we process “negative events **elicits more rapid and more prominent responses** than non-negative events”...

Among other things, it can explain why we often:

- Recall and think about insults more than compliments;
- Respond more – emotionally and physically – to aversive stimuli;
- Dwell on unpleasant or traumatic events more than pleasant ones; and
- Focus our attention more quickly on negative rather than positive information.

Even when we experience numerous good events in one day, negativity bias can cause us to focus on the sole 'bad thing' that occurred. It can lead us to ruminate on small things, worry over having 'made a bad impression,' and linger on negative comments and the like..."

CATHERINE MOORE, "What Is The Negativity Bias and How Can it be Overcome?"
www.positivepsychology.com/3-steps-negativity-bias/

Um, yes, that sounds a bit too familiar! So how does this relate to Psalm 36? In this life we do have to **deal** with wicked people. But, as King David models for us, we also get to **delight** in God! We get to choose what we focus on!

Verses 5-6 begin and end with God! R. Jacobson says that "Poetically, this stanza of praise is a masterpiece. In Hebrew, the stanza both begins and ends with a vocative use of the name Yahweh. **The Lord literally — and figuratively — surrounds the psalmist's praise....** Throughout these five lines, the poet interweaves references to **God's character** with references to **God's creation, in which God meets us and through which God's character is made known."**

NANCY L. DECLAISSE-WALFORD, ROLF A. JACOBSON AND BETH LANEEL TANNER, *The Book of Psalms* (NICOT)

The **LOVE** of God is bigger — way bigger! — than the *sinfulness* of humanity. **"Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens"!**

The steadfast **FAITHFULNESS** of God is more reliable than the *"sketchy behavior"* of sinful men and women. **"Your faithfulness, Lord, reaches to the skies."**

The **RIGHTEOUSNESS** of God soars far above the way that evil people **"advantage themselves by disadvantaging others"** (my Old Testament mentor Bruce Waltke's classic definition of "unrighteousness"). **"Your righteousness, Lord, is like the highest mountains."**

The **JUSTICE** of God is **"as inexhaustible and mysterious as the ocean depths"** (Wiersbe). **"Your justice, Lord, is like the great deep."**

The late Warren Wiersbe was a widely admired pastor and writer who passed away a year ago. He wisely notes that **"David did a wise thing when he STOPPED contemplating the sinners and STARTED focusing on the glories of the Lord. Knowing the character of God is essential to a balanced Christian life..."**

WARREN W. WIERSBE, *Be Worshipful (Psalms 1-89): Glorifying God for Who He Is.*

Maybe you and I would do well to follow David's example? I'm pretty sure *I* would!

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Father, today we ask you: help us STOP being preoccupied with what's wrong... and START focusing on the glories of the Lord"! **You** deserve our focus and praise!

Pastor Doug

