

## Thus Saith God's Word

by Rev. Ted Brooks

"As the hart panteth after the water brook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night. While they continually say unto me, where is thy God?"

"When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me."  
David compared his life to a deer. A deer is one who is fond of feeding near water. When hunted he will take to the river, stay submerged as long as his breath permits, then swim down stream in the middle so as not to touch branches or trees on either side. It was here that David was safe from the hounds that were unable to pick up his scent. (Psalms 42:1-4)

David knew where to abide "Unto deep at the noise of thy water spout." (Psalms 42:7) It was a desire of John the Revelator who declared and as the voice of many waters. (Revelation 19:5)

"Unto them living fountain of waters." (Revelation 7:17)  
David had a desire to serve God. Some of you have pastors who have this desire, to be as such as one should be. It is that one thing above all others. He is a man with a strong conscious that always beside him is a living fountain. It is an impulse to have or to be God's man. He is a man who has a feel and respect to the ordinance of God's word. This kind of person is one who has been stimulated, one who has been aroused by the sound of thy waterspouts. He feels the surge of mass waters refreshing his soul.

Brother Paul recognized this great desire for a Bishop. "This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." (1 Timothy 3:1)

The very sound of the word desire ought to stir us all up. To feel the inspiration to be up at work, doing things, succeeding, creating and accomplishing. Oh, my friend, do you have this inspiration? This desire which is more than eagerness for things, but its prayer to be deep seated, to materialize, to develop a picture of your mind?

David cried out "As the hart panteth after the water..." Oh, my friend, the rich man in hell desired to have the tip of Lazarus' finger in water. (Luke 16:24) But David said, "My soul thirsts for the living God." Peter cried out, "Bid me to come unto thee on the water." (Matthew 14:28) John the Revelator said, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." (Revelation 21:6)

Many church members have never been able to recognize a pastor who has this desire. He is a man who desired the "office of a bishop." With a strong will, one who has been aroused by a strong desire to do God's will. Many of you want a thing, or something from God. Oh, my friend, you may want a thing very much but if it does not arouse your will strongly enough to actively cooperate with your desire, your ambition will die.

There are many churches today who change preaches like birds. They want a new nest every year. The reason is they don't understand a bishop who has a desire, one who has ambition, a man with an impulse, a preacher with a feel to live holy before God.

Paul preached "he that hath a desire..." Brother Paul, knew there are great things to be had in God's kingdom, but Paul knew it consisted of a strong desire of a pastor who will demand of them to live holy, to be consecrated to the cause of Christ, to reach out. Brother Paul knew a

demand will cause a supply in or under the law.

A Bishop is an overseer and will not be afraid. He knows that in the times of trouble that the same God who gave him his desire is the same God who will become his hiding place. A Bishop with a desire is like the deer, he walks and lives beside the water of life, knowing that a bishop is always being hunted. "They shall put you out of the Synagogues; yea, time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God's service." (John 16:1-2) In the Book of Matthew Jesus declared a person who has a strong desire to build his kingdom that "They will deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations." (Matthew 24:9)

Brother Paul went on to say "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle. I speak the truth and lie not." (1 Timothy 2:7)

David declared to such a man to "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." (1 Timothy 4:2)

You can tell a preacher with a strong desire. You can also recognize leaders who have this desire. "A Bishop who desires the office must be blameless, the husband of one wife, sober, of good behavior, one that ruleth well is own house, having all his children in subjection with all gravity."

A preacher with this desire will know how to rule his own house. If not, then he has no business making an attempt to rule God's house. (1 Timothy 3:1-5)

Paul went on to say that desire that is in a person that his or their wives will be grave, not slanderous, they are to be sober."

A pastor will preach to a deacon board and tell them that their wives are to be grave, also that deacons must have a good report of them which are without. (1 Timothy 3:7-8)

So, you see, my friend, some folks can't keep a preacher who has a desire, one that has been ordained of God and not of man.

Behind the pulpit now are those who are not to be found with this desire. The wife is gone and they attempt to carry on, even though the family is split and the children are no where to be seen on the Sabbath. No more do we have many who have grave wives. No more of those with good report. No more a man with a desire who can rule his own house. Oh, we go by the name preacher, bishop, deacon, but where is that desire, that stimulation? Where is that demand that we are to follow God and not man? Where is that ambition? Could it be that we have become a shamed to urge it on, to feel it, to stimulate our growth?

No wonder we have become bored, disillusioned and it seems nothing satisfies the church any longer. The taste buds of the church have had it stuffed, nauseated, so full of life or self, full of self pleasure, ready to

throw up, for years the church has a buffet life. So long have we seen the dirt of the Bakers, Swaggarts, Lyons, the Jacksons, the singing, selling and one person said it so well "All this has lead us to a worldly heart burn." What we need is a preacher with a strong desire. We need a change in our dirt, habit, man now is no longer satisfied on bread alone. What has gone wrong? Brother Paul was saying this. A preacher without a desire is a bed that is too short that a man can stretch himself on it. And the covering is narrower than he can wrap himself in. (Isaiah 28:20)

have you ever wondered why anyone wants to be a bishop, elder, or overseer when we know that Jesus has said "Neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." In fact, Jesus said they wouldn't believe us either. The cry of those who did not want a preacher with a desire are those who said "Save thyself if you are God."

Oh, my friend, I have seen men wit this desire that so often they neglected their own families. I have seen them so busy they lose their own while in hot pursuit to help save your own. I have seen them who have

this desire to work for the church without decent salaries, seen them at the close of their years without funds to purchase much needed medi-

cine. Seen and met them in far away places trying to comfort a dying soul who was near the gate of eternity.

A true bishop will not neglect his calling and will not lose the opportunity to witness to a dying soul who is without God as their savior. He is a bishop who knows what opportunities are lost today cannot return in the future. He is a bishop who knows you cannot escape reaping a harvest of lost opportunities of the laws of God which will not return.

He is a bishop who knows that an opportunity lost or turned down is gone forever. He is a bishop who knows others may come and they may not. He knows there is no guarantee, one thing's for sure, the one you turn down today and yesterday will never return. Do you have this kind of pastor who has these desires? One who will tell you that your opportunities are like spilled water upon the ground which cannot be gathered up?

A bishop is one who must tell you that neglect means no escape from a mis spent life. If you neglect this harvest, you cannot escape reaping a harvest of that. You can't go back to last week. Today is the day of salvation. You cannot come when you decide. It is always been now, not tomorrow.

Let me say this to you who think that music will re invent God back to the church. Some of that which is called contemporary, sounding brass, tinkling cymbals, a result of modern times.

No, my sweet friend, what we need today in this society who feels like integrity has been swept under the rugs is not to curse God but to be noble in death. And we are not afraid to check our prayer life. We are those who refuse to select sin and will permit integrity to rule the path of the church. We need church folks with a desire to honor God, not to count the things of this world. David's desire was to have communion with God. It was always an urgent need for his soul. David viewed his communion with God not as a luxury but his communion was absolute, like water was to a dry creek of dying fish. David cried "As an hart panteth after the water brook, so panteth my soul after thee..." Like a parched traveler in a wilderness whose bottle of water is empty and who finds the well empty. He must drink or die. He must have God or faint.

So you see, my friend, a preacher must depend upon God. It is his deepest desire as a hart that has been wounded, he seeketh that river of God. There he will submerge himself beneath the word of God. He is one who loved the place where God has called us all to assemble where his name is adored.

A bishop is up front with urim and thurmin, one who has you on his heart. A bishop knows there is going to be a roll call in the future. He is as Jeremiah prophecy "To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear?" (Jeremiah 6:11) A bishop sees the corruption and violence. A bishop or preacher will offer himself a living sacrifice to the deity, to sail the bloody seas. A bishop has a longing of God.

Yet there are those among us with a "bed shorter than a man can stretch himself in and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in." (Isaiah 28:20) this man has an exposure of sin. His wife is gone. Chil-

dren are unwed mothers. There is a feeling of sorrow, but no matter how you feel, his or her bed is shorter than they are and you cannot justify a man to stand and preach whose wife is not grave nor will he find space to stretch when he or she is unable to rule his own house.

No, my friend, it is not a modern era we need, it is a bishop who has fellowship with God.

It is not contemporary music we need. We need a desire to serve God. We need integrity back in the church. A church who is not afraid to check one's prayer life. We need Christian persons who would rather die a noble death than to die as one who despises the ordinances of God. We need bishops who will rise up with integrity and begin to get their marching orders from God. We need deacons who will not attempt to lay hands on those who are select among sin. I say again we need a strong desire to arouse us up from a deadly sleep, to say as Paul "For this cause I, Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 3:1) "Wherefore I was made a minister according to the gift of the Grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me who am, least among then, the least of all saints. (Ephesians 3:1-8) Paul was saying, to paraphrase, I don't know why Jesus selected me, but I do know that I have been chosen and ordained of God to preacher. There are others who could do better, but he has chosen me and I am a prisoner of Christ.

Preacher, do you not feel this desire? Do you not feel this urgency to tell the news to a dying world? Could it be you have no integrity and now you live a life as a beggar? Are you afraid to check your prayer life? Are you afraid to check the length of your spiritual bed? Are you afraid to check the covering to see how narrow it is? What you see is an exposure of sin. Let me help you. Are you one that ruleth well his own house? Your wife, is she grave, not slanderous? Are you ruling your children? Better yet, is she still with you? When Paul finished these words, he added "For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchases to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is Christ Jesus."

"These things I write unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly. But if I tarry long that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:1-16) Let me close now with this thought. Jesus declared his Kingdom of heaven to be like unto a treasure. When a man found it he hideth and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all he hath for it. Like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearl of great price went and sold and bought it. (Matthew 13:44-48)

When I was a very young boy I heard such strange talk like come corn time I will give a wagon load of corn. Another would say come cotton picking time I will give a bale. You see, my friend, there was a time God's church of truth was bought and paid for, not in some back room of politics. Our forefathers knew the value of a church. They knew it was of great price. A pearl and those who desire it work and sweat for the pillar and grounds. They fill their pulpit with the L. W. Jacobs, Watler Smiths, Bro. D. F. Lowry, H.L. Moore, Martin L. Lowry and others that are too numerous to tell.

But if you fail to check your bed and covering and see they are not the ground of the truth, the church of the living God, the pillar of faith. But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord and be sure your sins will find you out." (Numbers 32:23)

Next week: How Did You Build the Church?

## Reflections

by Alta Nye Oxendine

### Many-Sided Issues

HOW MANY SIDES OF AN ISSUE DO EACH OF YOU READERS STUDY, OR LISTEN TO?

I am still trying to study at LEAST two sides (the way I was taught in courses I took in the forties like sociology, public opinion and propaganda). One TV program that attempts to present two sides is "The Newshour with Jim Lehrer" on UNC-TV (a PBS channel). I also try to catch news on the three major networks.

The reason I study and save newspaper and magazine articles is to compare, and file, as many facts and varying opinions as I can. Over the past several years I have not been able to find the time or money to spend studying as many BOOKS as I did during my initial research into what is really going on in our country and world.

I still want EVERYBODY in this country to get involved in studying as many sides of current political issues as you can, FOR YOURSELF, using your OWN MIND! Sometimes I've felt that others were counting on people like me (who at some point decided they must take time out for serious study) to do THEIR research for them. In fact, I used to do just THAT myself!

### THINKING FOR OURSELVES

But, just as we have long cherished the right to vote (which has apparently been compromised to some extent by outdated and/or confusing ballots in our recent election and likely in other elections as well) we still have the right to read, study, and/or THINK for ourselves on a regular basis between elections! In the past I've been involved in helping persons of all ages learn to read. But I have also known NON-readers who were able to THINK for themselves!

Who knows? Even though I expect to at least reach the age my mother did (over 98), I know (at 73) that my days could be numbered. The unexpected death of my cousin Gladys and all the 70-somethings listed in the obituary columns have reminded me of this.

I believe that EACH one of us has both the RIGHT and the RESPONSIBILITY to learn ALL we can before we make decisions that can affect the future of ourselves, our family members, our descendants, and others in our communities and the planet as a whole!

I have a LOT more to do before leaving this world. But I'd like to know that I can pass the torch of Truth-SEEKING, Truth-LEARNING, and Truth-SHARING on to others who will still be here when I can no longer carry on.



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