

“Conversations with Harry Reeder and Bruce Stallings”

Part Twelve

June 7, 2020 • Sunday Evening

We are so glad to hear that this Q & A time has been helpful to a number of people. Feel free to send in any of your questions and we'll try and get to them as soon as we can. The meditation thought I'd like to start this time with is from Psalm 1 which is what Spurgeon called the beatitude from the Old Testament.

Psalm 1:1–6 says [1] *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; [2] but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

[3] He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. [4] The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

[5] Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; [6] for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Blessed means truly happy. I don't know anyone who doesn't want to be truly happy, and not the happenstance of the world but the joy of the Lord. The Psalmist says three negatives. When you're saved by grace, number one, you don't walk/stand in the path of sinners, two sit in the seat of the scorner and three listen to ungodly counsel. Do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly and pick your teachers well. Make sure there are people teaching you the Word of God faithfully. Don't stand in the path of sinners, so flee temptation. Don't sit in the seat of the scorner – you want to reach out in friendship to everyone but your fellowship is with balcony people as Evelyn Christianson put it. These are people who pick you up, encourage you. You don't want to be a basement person that pulls down and you don't need basement people in your intimate fellowship.

So where do you get good counsel, good fellowship and walking in the paths of righteousness instead of the path of the sinner? Here's how you do it. Your delight is in the law of the Lord and in that law you meditate. So your hunger and passion is for God's Word and in that Word you meditate, read, reflect, study and pray. The result is you become like a tree planted which is a transplanted tree where you're transplanted from the cesspool of this world into the Kingdom of God and streams of living water. That means you're an evergreen tree whose leaf does not wither and whatever you do, you prosper. So get into God's Word, get with God's people, make sure you get good teachers and then bear fruit to the glory of God as you enjoy Him forever.

Bruce: This has been a difficult week in our country. I know there is sin in the world but to see the fruit of sin so evident and vivid that comes from so many different arenas and just the senselessness of racism that man would judge another man based upon what God has made. God has created man so I'm going to judge someone that God didn't create to be exactly like me which shows the worship of self coming out and then just to see the violence in some of these protests that has swept across our nation. I know we serve a victorious risen Savior and have a defeated enemy but it's at times like this that it seems the defeated enemy has sure taken root as you see all the evidence of it. I have benefited from your program this week of Today in

Perspective concerning these topics so I wanted to begin by allowing you to give us some pastoral thoughts on this.

Harry: We will have some more Today in Perspective programs coming up this week that will deal with more of these dynamics where we find ourselves today after the homicidal death of George Floyd.

This is so complex. There is the dynamics of racism. Here we are kind of stuck in a rock and a hard place in that part of the issue of racism is rooted in the Darwinian imposition of the social structure of three, five or seven races. A Biblical life view is shown from Acts 17:26 which says [26] *And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.* God made man from one race, the human race, with multiple ethnicities. So we have ethnicities as a result of the judgment of God at Babel where the nations were born and the multiple cultural/national ethnicities.

Christians need to realize where they are. We are in a system where the race system has been imposed so we can't act like it hasn't been and where it has been we have to confront it. Part of the remedy is for people to start seeing others as made in the image of God and that piece of DNA that gives you your skin color does not make you a different race. All of this DNA that shows up in this microevolution of skin color goes right back to Adam and Eve to begin with and then later in Noah, his wife and their family. Our desire is that those born of Adam would come to Christ and in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, Scythian or slave, etc.

Secondly we need to recognize the roots of what is happening. I don't like to call racism our original sin for our original sin is pride from which racism comes. By God's grace we have to get free of that pride and then countermand that. I think as the church of Christ we need to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. Then together with that segment of the population that together we are made in the image of God, we part of God's race and where that social construct has been used in oppression we repent of that and then deal with that.

In terms of the violence issue, I think we need to get back to the police force not militarized but I know you have to have a military type unit for moments of SWAT teams but otherwise back to the community peace officer concept. We need to get free so that when people begin to betray trust they are not overly protected with unions. We need better training and a better relationship. We need to mentor with teaching a Christian world and life view in these matters. We need to recognize the social construct of race that has been detrimental. We need to lead in repentance. We need to humble ourselves, listen to one another, relate to one another and love one another well. We need to develop relationships as much as possible as we move forward to show the love of Christ.

Thirdly, the church needs to model something entirely different so that we see a new humanity in Christ. We need to be patient. This past week my wife and I were on vacation and we purposely just for the sake of wanting to personally engage we went out at least three or four times and God answered prayers as there were some African Americans nearby that we had some wonderful conversations with. It has to start one on one, person to person and manifest something totally different to the world. I also signed a letter this week so I could engage with some African American pastors to talk through this. There is so much more that needs to be said but that is a beginning point.

Bruce: That is so true. We see our culture not just on these issues but on everything with such efficiency. We are in such a hurry and these are conversations where you need to take the time to say what you are saying and what you're not saying. To make sure someone hears the truth, but making sure I'm not saying this and also to listen to hear what they are saying then ask questions to find out what they are not saying. These are relational conversations to help navigate us through this.

Harry: The weapon that goes with the Word and Spirit based world and life view is to saturate this with intercessory prayer. My dear friend Alton Hardy and Allen Baker had a good prayer meeting on Saturday and we're going to do follow up prayer meetings. I am hoping to sit in the same room to generate some times of prayer together and I think that is going to be absolutely crucial. Prayer is not a therapy act for it is calling upon the God of glory to rend the heavens to come down and correct us of our sin and give us a redeeming relationship in Christ.

This is not non-personal for me for I have family that is multi-ethnic. We have found the way to be one family is to recognize your ethnicities, the challenges and situations you face, where it comes from. My African American grandson is driving and we recognize there are some dynamics we need to think through, like when he is stopped or something like that and I appreciate so much his maturity. On the other hand, we are one. We are made in the image of God and we are one family. We are of the human race, one family and now of the redeemed race in Jesus Christ. We come from one Adam and now we're in the Second Adam because of His redeeming work. So it comes down to not only an individual, but your family, your church family and then spill over into the community.

Bruce: This question has to do with the murder of George Floyd and it is do you think we could possibly be on the brink of losing our republic at the hands of those who paint the Judeo Christian principles this nation was founded on and our leaders who God sovereignly placed over us?

Harry: There is no doubt that the American experiment has been blessed in God's providence and it has at moments hung by just threads. The 1960s were horrendous and that's the closest thing to what we're seeing now, in my lifetime which goes back to the 1930s, the 1910s with two world wars. Those are some significant moments. The only way I think this nation can be established, maintained and mature through issues like this is by the grace of God – either by redeeming grace or common grace. So yes, I always see it on the verge.

In a sense, historically, we are on borrowed time. The great empires are 200 to 250 years and here we are moving toward a third century celebration. These are always to be considered as tenuous times but the Christian must never live by fear in these matters. We need to trust the Lord and be a faithful member of the Kingdom of God to bless the nation, to think Biblically, live spiritually, empowered by the Spirit of God, do the deeds of the Spirit, speak to public for blessing others that is righteous and right. If you're in a position of leadership lead with character, competence and pray that we have good statesmen that lead us forward and churches that produce Christians that are salt and light.

Bruce: A person said this week about protests saying we shouldn't have protests because it leads to this and that and I thought but this is how we have gotten this far, which is how we came into

existence. So really it's about how we protest so speak about how as Christians we should do this.

Harry: Protests have gotten us the 13th and 14th amendments, which also got rid of the Dread Scott Decision and its implications. Brown vs Education is another example of protests. So protests are good. Go look up the Biblical annotated analysis of the letters of Martin Luther King from the Birmingham jail. What he was saying about protests was good. Sometimes law needs to be changed. Sometimes the enforcement of the law needs to be changed.

There are two ways we are government of the people, by the people and for the people. One is by the electoral ballot and the other is by orderly protests, lawful protests so that we are law and order – trust with order and process. Protests are not evil and can be good if done rightly. Part of the process is protest but here's the problem. An anarchist is not looking for reformation or maturation of the law or law enforcement for they are looking to revolution. Here is my warning to an anarchist – you live by the sword, you die by the sword.

As I saw protesters and policemen talking, kneeling and praying together that is the way it is supposed to happen. I saw the professional anarchist get in the back, throw the Molotov, come through crowd and I have no time for that. I think rightly the state needs to stop that with law enforcement but one of the things you do in law enforcement is stop the anarchist to protect the community in general but to protect the protester too so they can make their protest, their voice known. I believe anarchists have to come under the proper enforcement of law but the constitution both protects and promotes protests because by that it's part of our maturation process as a nation.

Bruce: You referenced seeing the law enforcement officers kneeling and one of the questions we received was about that type of thing but they may be referring to a different scenario, but when it comes to asking for forgiveness from others is it appropriate to kneel at times?

Harry: Sure, what Christians don't do is kneel to any object or person in adoration. There are 2,000 of my forbearers who lost their lives because they would not kneel at the sacrament table declaring the actual presence of Christ as King. They said 'We'll kneel before the King but we're not going to kneel where you say He is that He is not.' So we don't kneel in adoration. Kneeling is an act of humiliation and of humbling yourself. There's appropriate times as the Lord leads you. Here at the church we have an ordination service where these men come and kneel before God and submit to Him in their ordination to serve the church, God's people. They are not kneeling me as the pastor or to each other. They are kneeling before God in adoration of worship but there are times that you kneel in just humiliation.

When Jesus washed the feet of the Disciples, He would kneel to do that. Jesus displayed His humiliation and servanthood as He did this. If the Master does this then how much more should we do it? I have been a part of foot washing services where I have knelt to wash someone's feet. I was not worshipping them. It was not adoration but kneeling as an act of humiliation is appropriate as the Lord leads you. Kneeling as an act of adoration is only reserved for the Lord which is why the angel tells John twice in the book of Revelation not to worship him but the Lord alone. This is why Peter said to the man who knelt before him in Acts 10 to stand up because he was a man too.

One of the best things we have to do is to pray and one of the best ways to pray is to kneel before each other together in adoration of the Lord but in humiliation with one another.

Bruce: Dealing with the fruit of pride, if we don't humble ourselves before one another then we're not going to reconcile these issues.

Harry: In humiliation the Lord gives us a couple of ways – sack cloth, ashes, weeping, lament – but we don't lament in despair for we lament with hope because of the victory of Christ. Bowing your head is an act of humiliation. With my Asian friends it seems never ending when we end a conversation for they bow and then I bow and keeps going but the same is with kneeling. There is nothing inappropriate with that as an act of humiliation to show your respect and humbling of yourself before someone.

In humiliation and adoration, the number one posture in the Bible is kneeling. We can kneel humbling ourselves before one another but we can only kneel in humiliation to do adoration before God alone.

Bruce: A follow up question, is are we held accountable to God and others for sins that our ancestors committed in the context of this racial situation?

Harry: I'm not accountable for the sin they did but I am accountable to acknowledge the sins that were done. That's a point of distinction. If it's a sin I've done then my accountability increases but I am accountable to recognize sin my ancestors have done, but not as if I did it then. So as I recognize sin my ancestors have done I want to make sure we are restored with those who still have the consequences of that sin that was done by my ancestors.

We see this in Daniel 9, Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 9 where all of them, led in their prayers, acknowledged and confessed the sins of their forefathers, but they didn't confess it as if they had done it but they then went to their own personal sins that they had done. In my sins, I'm not only called to acknowledge them and confess them but I am called to address them just like Zacchaeus addressed his sins in restitution and restoration. If it's my forbearers sin, I need to acknowledge it was a sin and re-establish reconciliation but I'm not culpable for the sin they did so that the consequences of them can be addressed through reconciling relationships.

Bruce: I remember having a conversation with someone who fully expected me defensive about something as it relates to the church and then they said 'tell me what you think about...' then they name an event that happened 50 years ago. I said 'that's easy for that is absolutely a contradiction to God's Word and that is sin.' There was a long pause and the conversation was over. Once we can acknowledge that something was a sin, it needs to be dealt with. Now we need to figure out what we need to be doing today in terms of how we're interacting.

Almost everyone who asked a question about the civil unrest, racism, the protesting, the seeking of forgiveness in these matters, asked about what Bible passage can we focus on during this? I get the sense they want to get to a truth they can focus on in these kinds of situations.

Harry: Philippians 2:5–11 says [5] *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,* [6] *though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,* [7] *but **emptied himself**, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* [8] *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* [9] *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,* [10] *so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in*

heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Christ *emptied Himself*, not of His deity but of His privileges. Notice God exalted Him. I love the passage that says don't exalt yourself for God will exalt you at the right time (I Peter 5:6). This is also found in the book of Proverbs. I Peter 5:6 says *[6] Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.* You have to develop the mind, the Christian world and life view, from the heart. You have to have a life love, with a life style that comes from a life view which is the mind of Christ. So you have to have the mind of Christ, a heart for Christ and then you can develop a life like Christ and die to yourself.

I am not perfect on the Philippians 2:5–11 passage but that's the passage that I go to for these kinds of situations. Whenever I see things falling apart around me I go to Philippians 4:4–9 which says *[4] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

[8] Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. [9] What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Bruce: Now I have a question that relates to trying to relate to this Corona Virus situation. The question is, if my days are numbered according to Scripture and I use sound judgments in trusting God's promises then I shouldn't I be able to attend worship without fear of my days being shortened?

Harry: Sure. Realize sound judgment may tell you not to attend. Sound judgment may tell you that you're in one of those categories that are vulnerable to this present virus. Before we were able to assemble back together and we wanted to maintain Lord's Day worship, we could only do that with ten people as we steam-lined our services using those ten people and people begin asking me where our piano player (Daniel) was. I love Daniel so much and I know some of the challenges he faces so we actually paid him not to come during those vulnerable times. We want to keep Daniel long term. I don't think I'm trusting God by tempting God that you're vulnerable to something like that saying 'oh just come on for the Lord will protect you.' I have said this before but you don't panic but you're prudent. You don't tempt God but you trust God. So if you're sound judgment says that you're children have been exposed to the virus and you may be carrying it then you either need to get tested to see if you have it or give yourself some quarantine time to see if the symptoms develop so that's using sound judgment. You're not telling God that you trust Him when a lion is coming at you by standing in front of him but you hide when the lion comes. Then you say 'God, I'm going to trust You to give me a good place to hide and please give that lion some bad eye sight.'

It's not irrationality that shows you're trusting God. I know the person asking the question is not saying that so I want to make that clear, for I'm just trying to get that point across. If you have sound judgment, you have good health and you're going to take precautions with hygiene, social distancing and the recommended actions, then come on and worship. Now when

you get here make sure you maintain that kind of thoughtfulness, etc. If you're in a place of vulnerability then with sound judgment don't come. So that's the way you work your way through it.

I like the way one general answered when asked 'Why are you so brave on the battlefield?' He said 'I'm in the war to stop what I think needs to be stopped. I believe it is a just war. I believe it is right for me to be here. I have taken all my training and therefore I believe I'm where I ought to be with having done all the sound training I'm supposed to do. Now I just put myself in the Lord's hands.' I think if everybody did that I think they would be equally brave. This is not fool-heartedness but brave is thoughtfully trusting God and doing the next right thing.

Bruce: I think it would serve a good word of caution, while it's certainly appropriate for these people in these high risk categories to be prudent in their decision making, but all of us need to do that. Since our governor, Kay Ivy, said we could start going back people have flocked to being back and the numbers have increased significantly in terms of COVID cases so all of us still need to be very careful and prudent as we process our way through that for ourselves and our families but also for other people.

Harry: I'm not young anymore but when I was young I thought I was behind a silver breastplate as though nothing could get to me thinking I was going to be fine so even our young people, please be thoughtful for we want to keep you a long time so be careful even though your less vulnerable in the trajectory of this virus, and the older people and various other categories.

Bruce: That's all we have time for in this Q & A but I want to encourage you to continue to send your questions to askthepastor@briarwood.org and we'll look forward to answering them.