

THOUGHTS

By Douglas W. Schroeder

SPEAKER ON THE WORD TODAY

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LIVING LIFE TO THE GLORY OF GOD EACH DAY

There is a tendency to see new threats to the public as a cause for ongoing worry, or even low-level panic. Stress and anxiety can creep upward such that one is eventually unable to relax, sleep well, and have a positive outlook. Lately global disease is the topic of concern in regard to the spread of the Coronavirus.

Alternately, a new article from CBS states, "Officials warn of drug called 'gray death'," which is a super-potent heroin cut with fentanyl. It is said to be so lethal that persons should not even *touch it*. I wonder what the odds are of a deranged person attempting to make a form of gray death dirty bomb to wipe out masses of people. Worried?

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Can a Christian have joy in this kind of world? Yes, of course! Joy had better not be found in the pleasures of this life, or hope in sinful humanity. It must reside in our Lord, and in the promises of salvation, particularly the promise to us of resurrection from the dead and eternal life through Jesus Christ!

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Our enemies, Satan, the sinful culture, and our own sinful flesh conspire to rob us of joy. These seek to mute or ruin our winsome witness. If our joy in Christ is squelched, then what good is our witness? Who wants to become a grumpy, scared, self-absorbed person? When was the last time you considered your daily demeanor, and whether it is one that would draw others to the Lord?

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Fear and anger can stunt our joy. There is always a new, worse disaster, epidemic, social-political disturbance, etc. to challenge our joy. When we forget to keep our eyes heavenward, that is, on the prize/finish line, we lose our confidence in God and get disgusted, frustrated, bitter, and impatient. True, we all experience mood cycles throughout the days and weeks, but we must ask ourselves if our habits are contributing to it; are we eating irregularly so as to give us headaches? Are we filling our minds with filthy, violent entertainment? Do we indulge in the news featuring global horrors and political assaults to the point that we are bitter? Have we neglected sweet, quiet meditation on God's Word to stabilize our spirit? Have we spent some time outdoors to refresh our mind?

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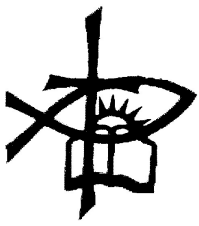
I do not always *feel* wonderful, but in Christ I am always excellent, and try to wish everyone, "Blessings!" You don't need a cheesy smile and fake enthrallment. A Christ-like spirit with good intent will show itself.

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DO DIFFICULT THINGS

A person can have so much fear of failure that they do not try new things, or things that might result in failure. Success is touted so much in North American society that failure to succeed at the highest level is tainted with an aura of failure. How sad! Popular culture, advertising, and our sinful, lazy flesh try to convince us that we should be able to achieve astounding success relatively easily. Not so.

Thoughts
Box 77
Greendale
WI
53129



*The Bible is God's Word . . . Jesus is God's "Word" made flesh . . .
His death and resurrection, the message needed Today.*

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The other day a young man about 20 years old was working with a trainer at my budget health club where I am a member. The trainer said, "We will do three sets of fifteen pushups." The guy started and he could do only 8. He was taking Christ's name in vain, strutting around in disbelief at his weakness, as though it never occurred to him he might be in poor condition. I smiled at him and said something to the effect, "There is some pain involved..." He told me later that morning he has enlisted and will begin basic training in a month. I wish him well; he has a great deal of suffering ahead of him – and that is in preparation for basic training!

So, why not do difficult things for the Lord? For instance, why not make a plan for a perfect worship attendance at church for a year? Why not work out a stiff offering in a budget to push hard on missions for proclamation of the Gospel? Why not get hard core on learning the Bible by adhering to a reading regimen, or as I do, playing the Bible daily in the car? *The easy things in life are not what develop us and make us more beautiful as people, but the difficult things.* If you fall a bit short, so what? You are doing so much more than before!

WAS THE DESERT REBELLION OF ISRAEL "FRONT END LOADED"?

As I listened to the wild wilderness wanderings of the Israelites as recounted in the Bible books of Leviticus and Numbers a couple of thoughts struck me. Perhaps it comes with age; I am more agreeable to these books of the bible now than when I was younger. I can relate more to God the Father's being pissed off, being "tried" by the foolishness of others, and His call for obedience.

Perhaps it is perception due to the abbreviated nature of the account, but several of the big rebellions of the Jews in the desert seem to be "front end loaded", that is, they seem to be at the start of the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. I wonder if the bulk of the resistance against the Lord's absolute authority occurred in the first several years of Moses' leadership of the 12 tribes in the desert. The structure of the community laid down in the law from Sinai would be tested. There was a nasty oppositional spirit evident immediately after the punishment is inflicted upon them to wander for 40 years due to their own lack of trust in the Lord. Perhaps the resistance did last, "For forty years I was angry with that generation... (Psalm 95:10)." Human willful pride can be horribly entrenched, especially in groups.

The "grumbling" (read insurrection) of the Israelites was met with decisive punishment including people being stoned, swallowed alive by the earth, burned alive, and killed by plagues. It is a stunning account of the wickedness of the human heart and how we must be *trained* to obey God. In contrast, those who trust and do not overtly oppose the Lord, are kept entirely, their clothing and sandals not wearing out for the entire 40-year duration! It is a stunning study of the contrast in how God interacts with disbelievers (disobedient, grumblers) and the faithful!

Blessings!
Douglas W. Schroeder