

Weekly Devotional by Pastor Ken Nabi

March 4, 2010

The Darkness of Heart

“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature....The acts of the sinful nature are obvious....” Galatians 5:16, 19

Paul says here that the remedy from bondage to a selfish heart is the power of God’s Spirit having His way in our lives. This only happens when people surrender life control to Jesus and the Spirit of God comes to take control and gives freedom. Then, we have the power to die to self and live for Christ’s honor.

There are two events in the news right now which have bothered me and reminded me of this verse. They both demonstrate the same issue which is the self absorbed darkness of the human heart which is depraved and sinful and apart from God will only spiral out of control.

First, the Chilean earthquake has gotten a fair amount of media coverage after the utter devastation in Haiti. What has also gripped me has been the video of looters in Chile who have taken this opportunity to break into stores and steal a variety of items—many of which have nothing to do with their survival. At first, it really bothered me to see Chileans become opportunistic to their own tragedy while the rest of the world was asking how to “help” them out of this ravaging earthquake. Yet, it was a reminder of what happens when the human heart is not restrained by morality and the power of God’s Spirit. It becomes overtly aggressive and turns in on itself toward self destruction.

The second event is the disappearance of a young, bright 17 year old teenage girl who was apparently abducted while jogging and only a few days later found dead. With the interrogation of a convicted sex offender, the story looks to be one of utter tragic sadness. I have prayed for the parents and tried not to imagine what emotions must be throbbing in their minds and hearts. As a parent of young children, it provokes in me a cry for justice from God through the ordained systems of our government which wields the authority to punish such actions (Romans 13:4). Again, what causes such reprehensible behavior and decisions by someone? I am a therapist by training and understand the complexities of psyche and dysfunction, and yet these cases always come back to the depravity of the human heart unrestrained and turned in on itself. Aggression toward self destruction is always what happens.

You and I will most likely never commit such heinous crimes. And we can pray that the government (which can punish) will take stands for morality and justice so that decency and safety can prevail. That is certainly my prayer. However, if we look deeply both at the scriptures and our own hearts, we must confess that we are equally capable of self destruction and self absorption—maybe not to the same degree, but the problem is still the same.

I can be selfish in a way that leads to self destruction. When I return home and want to be served by my wife and kids and then become irritated that my kids crave my attention and my wife needs my help, there is an urge that can rise in my heart that is the seed form of what leads looters in Chile. It is an urge that given traction will erode my marriage and slowly destroy my relationship with my kids. I am capable of angry selfishness and only the Spirit of God released

in my thinking and heart helps me to see that my role as husband and father is to serve--not to be served. I am not alone. Every husband and father knows what urge I am identifying. Every mother and wife knows the same feelings too. In fact, to be alive is to be capable of selfishness. Only in the grace and power of God, we can slay that angry self absorbed urge and become more like Christ so that we function out of His strength rather than a depraved mindset.

This is what Jesus means when he says that we are to take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23). We are to kill the selfish urge that rises up with alarming ease and find our greatest joy not in being served but in serving others. That is the life of a disciple who follows Jesus' example. Jesus rightly should have been served but he chose to give us an example that was humble and gentle in spirit (Matthew 11:29). That is our model.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see when my selfishness springs to life and to then quickly deny it any foothold in my heart and actions. May I become a person who serves others rather than seeking to be served. Fill our country with men and women who would live such Christ honoring lives and restore to our culture a respect for human life.

Your Partner in the Gospel – *Ken Nabi*