

(For Monday, January 9, 2017) **Have you realized we're ALL orphans?**

*"In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will" (Eph.1:4b-5 – ESV)*

Ever since the Fall of Man, we have been separated from intimate relationship Adam and Eve had with God in Eden. With the Fall, we have all been orphaned. And since the only way to join God's family again is to be righteous in His sight, he had to offer the perfect sacrifice of His Son so that we could be acceptable candidates for adoption as His children. It's good news/bad news, really. We become part of an amazing and eternal family community, but first we have to go through the adoption process, which starts with admitting our helpless state as orphans. Sadly, some people are unwilling to make this initial admission of unworthiness. Entitlement, it seems, is an effective impediment to salvation. Is there some sense of entitlement that you need to give up in order to fully embrace your new paternity as a Child of God?

(For Tuesday, January 10, 2017) **Have you fully explored just how much God loves you?**

*"Turn, O LORD, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love." (Ps.6:4 – ESV)*

This is a truly fascinating plea from David. There are numerous times in the Bible when God's people beg him for salvation and deliverance. But the request is usually based on an entirely different logic. Moses asks God to spare the rebellious Israelites in order that they may continue to be a witness to God's supremacy. (See Ex.32:11) The Bible frequently describes God's mercy as His faithfulness to the Covenant with Abraham. (See Ex.2:24,6:5; Lev.26:42,45; Deut.4:31; Ps.105:8,106:45; Ez.16:60; Lk.1:72) And in other Psalms, God's mercy is implored based on the holiness of His name (See Ps.25:11,79:9; 109:21) But here, David is seeking his Lord's deliverance based solely on God's nature of ever-faithful love. There is a profound and powerful mystery in going to God in the full confidence of His mercy based exclusively on the knowledge of His limitless love.

What about you? In your own prayer life, are your pleas for God's grace and mercy founded on the certain and unshakable rock of knowing His steadfast love?

(For Wednesday, January 11, 2017) **Are you talking to God enough about your fears?**

*"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Is.41:10 – ESV)*

If a Bible verse is also found in famous hymnody, it usually warrants special attention. In 1787, John Rippon used Isaiah 41:10 to begin the third verse of "How Firm a Foundation." The Chapter describes various reactions of people to life's adversities. Those who depend on worldly deliverance find themselves trembling in fear (v.5), or consumed in a doomed attempt to avert God's judgement through vain schemes and denial. (vv.6-7) But God's people are to approach adversity with the calm assurance of His ultimate deliverance. Fear is surely not of God. (See 2Tim.1:7) But it's not useless either! In fact, it can be an excellent barometer for signaling to us those moments in life when we need to be seeking God's assurance through deeper study and earnest prayer.

Have there been moments of fear for you recently? Have you chatted with The Father about those fears?

(For Thursday, January 12, 2017) **Why do we try to bring God down to our level?**

*“He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind.” (Ps.18:9-10 - NIV)*

A Cherub invokes images like rosy-cheeked versions of the younger Vaughn Trapp family. But in Psalm 18, the Cherub is God’s fearsome steed as He brings His judgement on the wicked. This mistaken view of Cherubs in Western culture developed in the Renaissance by artists like Donatello, who added child-like figures with wings to give their paintings a note of whimsy. These images were called “Putti” in Italian, which later morphed into the English word “Cherub.” But Biblical Angels are neither sweet nor whimsical. When an Angel appears before a human in the Bible he has to say “Fear not” just so we don’t wet ourselves. We’re always trying to bring God down to our own level. But that kind of God could never redeem mankind. And God has already come down to our level, in the Divine yet incarnate person of Jesus!

Have you been trying to bring God down to your own level lately? If so, isn’t it time you stopped?

(For Friday, January 13, 2017) **Are you receiving your full inheritance?**

*“The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.” (Ps.16:6 – NIV)*

When my uncle died, I was included in his Will. This enabled me to go to Seminary, which at 48 was quite a leap of faith! I hadn’t talked with my uncle more than a half-dozen times. Yet, this unearned gift made it possible for me to follow my calling to ordained ministry. People are blessed by God, not because they deserve it, but because God has a plan for their lives, and they are being faithful to that plan. David’s words stand in stark contrast to Micah’s use of the same imagery when he declares of the wicked, “Therefore you will have none to cast the line by lot in the assembly of the LORD.” (Mic.2:5) The wicked of this world invariably reap calamity for themselves and others. Conversely, God’s children inherit a reward of joy and peace simply by being faithful to God’s will. It would seem that faith and blessing are inextricably forged together.

Are you taking full advantage of your inheritance as God’s child, or do you need to dwell for a moment on Jesus’ question “Where is your faith?” (See Lk.8:25)