

Trends

Do black lives really matter? Black women make up 14 percent of the childbearing population in the U.S. Yet, 36% of all abortions are obtained by black women. Black women have the highest abortion rate of any group (474 abortions per 1,000 live births). That translates into over 19 million black babies aborted since Roe v. Wade became law. White women are five times less likely to have an abortion. A 2012 study found that 79% of Planned Parenthood's abortion clinics are located within walking distance of minority communities.

—via Arizona Capitol Times

Proverbs 6:16-17: "These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood,"

Sentence Sermons

""You mass slaughter your own children and call it 'reproductive freedom'." —Steve Deace

News & Notes

Please pray for the Wallace family. They continue to miss our services (Heb. 10:24-25). "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (Jas. 5:16)

Please keep sister Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. She's an encouragement to all!

Pray for all our members who do not attend regularly. Try to encourage them!

Pray for the African appeal for funds to buy Bibles, songbooks and support faithful preachers' travel expense. Donate if you're able! 1 Jn. 3:17

Please pray for Marcia Wilson, Wilma's daughter. She recently had gall bladder surgery. Also, please pray for Lana May. She is struggling with kidney stones.

Pray that Westside might be an influence for good in this community.

Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people face many trials and temptations at school.

There are many needy saints, including preachers! Can you help?!

Anyone need prayers? Let us know so we can announce it and post it.

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Words of Life

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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68



Gratitude

Craig Thomas

One could make a lot of arguments concerning which are mankind's greatest faults. Murder, adultery, theft, child abuse, lying, etc. all come to mind. However, this psalm brings to our minds an even greater evil. I say it is a greater evil because a heart that harbors this evil opens the door to all the other evils I mentioned. The evil to which I speak is the evil of *ingratitude*.

This psalm (103) calls on all men and women to praise, worship, honor, and serve the LORD because of the fantastic physical and spiritual blessings He pours upon us continually. In the physical realm He "satisfies [our] mouth with good things" (v. 5). As Paul told the Lyconians, God gives "us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). Jesus promises we have no need of worrying over material needs. We will not have to wonder "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" (Matt. 6:31). No, our "heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Matt. 6:32). Thus, if we will "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, . . . all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). Let us show our gratitude for these wondrous blessings on a daily basis. As one wiseman said, "Ingratitude is a crime more despicable than revenge, which is only returning evil for evil, while ingratitude returns evil for good." (William George Jordan)

Even more importantly, this psalm calls on us to show our gratitude for the LORD's abundant spiritual blessings (vv. 2-4):

² Bless the LORD, O my soul,

And forget not all His benefits:

³ Who forgives all your iniquities,

Who heals all your diseases,

⁴ Who redeems your life from destruction,

Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,"

We easily forget that we are all guilty of sin and deserve eternal death, eternal separation from God (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9). Despite our dreadful and despicable spiritual bankruptcy "The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy." (v. 8) Furthermore, He does not give us what we deserve.

As the psalmist says, *"He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities."* (v. 10) When we reverence, fear, and serve Him; He is like a loving Father who takes pity on His helpless children (v. 13). He understands our weaknesses *"For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust."* (v. 14) He understands because He has "been there and done that" so to speak. For example, the Hebrew writer describes our Lord and Savior with these words: *"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."* (Heb. 4:15; cf. Heb. 2:14-18) Because of this we have the richest blessing imaginable: *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* (Heb. 4:16)

We need to express our gratitude every day as we faithfully serve the one true and living God. The God we serve is full of mercy and love! The psalmist puts it this way in verses 17 and 18:

*"¹⁷ But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children's children,
¹⁸ To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His commandments to do them."*

Make no mistake, if we fail to show our gratitude in the proper way (i.e., obedience, fear, respect, love, service, etc.) one day we will be filled with eternal regret. Because *"He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever."* (v. 9) We must contemplate that as we enjoy the blessings of today.

SWORD TIPS #2043

Joe R. Price

²² And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. ²⁴ But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:22-24, NKJV)

What drives you to withstand trials, adversities, and obstacles of resistance to achieve your goal? Too often, we are driven from our spiritual goal to seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness by fear, by doubt, by uncertainty, and many other hindrances. Paul's example helps us stay the course (cf. Heb. 12:1-2). (1) He was "bound in the spirit" (to go to Jerusalem, v. 22). His mind was set on things above (Col. 3:1-3). His obligation to Christ was fixed deep within his soul. (2) He was undeterred by personal hardship (v. 23-24). Fear of persecution did not pull him off course. He cared more about serving the will of God than his own life. (3) His goal was to finish his race with joy (v. 24). Paul would not just finish his race; he would do so with joy (2 Tim. 4:6-8). (4) The ministry the Lord gave him was more important than his life (v. 24). Paul's priority to faithfully preach the gospel is evident from a review of what he endured for

Jesus (2 Cor. 11:23-33; 4:7-11). Our faith will be tested. Will we be moved when our adversary puts the allurements of sin before us? Will we be moved when enemies of the truth put trials and persecutions in our path? Will fear of death move us away from finishing our race with joy (Matt. 10:28)? Or will we say with Paul, "None of these things move me?"

Psalm 16

Craig Thomas

This short Psalm is highly messianic. Much of it is quoted in the New Testament and applied to Jesus. However, it holds many lessons applicable to all of us. One especially important lesson was that the Messiah put His full and complete trust in the LORD (vv. 1, 2):

*"Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust.
O my soul, you have said to the LORD,
'You are my LORD,
My goodness is nothing apart from You.'"*

We, like Him, must put our full, complete, total, and absolute trust in God and realize our "goodness is nothing" apart from Him. It is folly to seek to establish our "own righteousness" (Rom. 10:3). That is self-righteousness and is condemned (Matt. 23). On the contrary, we must submit "to the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3) which is the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16-17). We must have the attitude of the "publican" who, when he prayed, "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner'" (Lk. 18:13).

Another parallel lesson was that the Messiah's mission was not to do His own will but God's will (v. 8). Jesus confirmed this in John 6:38 when He said, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." As a result of His total focus on God He could say (v. 8) that God was at His "right hand" and He "shall not be moved." If we expect that result, we too must have the same total dedication to doing God's will and not our own.

Finally, because of the Messiah's compliant nature insofar as doing God's will was concerned, He had total confidence beyond death. In vv. 9-11 He says:

*"Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.
For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."*

This was fulfilled when death and the grave could not hold Jesus and He was resurrected and ascended to heaven where God glorified Him forever (Acts 2:27-31; 13:35-38; Heb. 1:3; 2:9). We too can share in His eternal glory (Rom. 8:17; 2 Thess. 2:14) but only if, like Him, our "food is to do [God's] will" (Jn. 4:34). What's on your menu today?!