

*"The Lord looks from heaven;  
He sees all the sons of men.  
From the place of His  
habitation He looks  
On all the inhabitants of  
the earth;  
He fashions their hearts  
individually;  
He considers all their works"*

~ PSALM 33:13-15

# THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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## God Knows My Heart

By NOAH DIESTELKAMP

I ADMIT THAT AT SOME POINT, I became fed up with hearing the phrase "God knows my heart." Typically, I hear this used as an excuse for some sinful behavior — "I know that [whatever I just said/did] is wrong, but God knows my heart." The idea being that, even though I know what I just did was wrong, God knows that deep down I'm a pretty good person — so I think he'll overlook my sinful behavior. We may hear this said about profanity and inappropriate conversation, lewd clothing or behavior, angry outbursts at spouses and children, gossip about our brothers and sisters in Christ, and the list could continue. While this way of using the phrase "God knows my heart" is tiring, we cannot let it distract us from the *truth* of the statement. It is a deeply biblical concept that God knows my heart!

God must know the heart to say "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). While arguing that Gentile Christians do not need to be circumcised, Peter states that "God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us" and based on this knowledge, God "cleansed their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8-9). Certainly, God knows my heart, a fact which brings incredible comfort to someone who has set his heart to follow Jesus!

However, it is equally true that "God knows my heart" can be a sobering warning. God sent a world-wide flood

because "every intention of the thoughts of [mankind's] heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). The book of Ecclesiastes ends with a reminder that God will "bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing" (Eccl. 12:14). Jesus reminded religious leaders of his day that "you are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts" (Luke 16:15). "God knows my heart" is always a true statement; but whether it brings comfort or warning depends on what God finds in my heart!

In Psalm 139, I believe King David provides a good example of what it looks like to joyfully yet seriously consider God's intimate knowledge of our hearts. The majority of this psalm is spent on God's knowledge—he knows us inside and out, he knows both our thoughts and our words, he goes before us and behind us (Psalm 139:1-6). God knows our hearts even better than we do! We are never without his guidance, nor could we flee his presence if we wanted to (v.7,10). He has known us from the beginning of our existence and knows the "ins and outs" of who we are (v.13,15).

Reflecting on this, David clearly expresses he wants to be on God's side: "Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?...I count them my enemies" (v.21-22). David did not want to be counted among God's enemies; he wanted to be on God's side! This leads us to the final two verses of Psalm 139: "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my

thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" Because of his desire to align himself with God, David asks God to *search* him, *try* him, and *lead* him.

**Search Me:** It is intimidating to consider God searching us and understanding our deepest thoughts and feelings; but we who are in Christ do not need to be frightened by this. We need to embrace the exposing light of Christ in our lives.

**Try Me:** The word for "try" here can also refer to the "testing" of precious metals. If we claim to serve God and follow Jesus, then we should *want* God to refine us. The process will likely not be pleasant but will be worth every discomfort. If there is "any grievous way" in us, only God through the power of his Word and the power of his Spirit can cleanse us and sanctify us.

**Lead Me:** If we understand our need for God's refining hand, then we should also understand our need for his guidance. Jesus is the Lord we must obey (Luke 6:46). Jesus alone is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). If we are going to follow anyone, it must be Jesus. No preacher, theologian, or social media influencer can lead us in the way everlasting; no self-help book or philosopher will guide us on the narrow way; and our own desires will surely lead us astray to worship a Jesus made in our own image.

Too often, we find ourselves trying to get God "on our side;" we rationalize by any means possible why God is okay with the way we live and the decisions we make. This is futile. God knows our hearts; he knows that what we need more than anything else is Jesus. We must come to know the one, true Jesus through the Word he revealed, and we must say to him, "Search my heart, try my thoughts, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

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*"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but  
all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to  
whom we must give account."*

~ HEBREWS 4:13

# How Would You Like To Be Remembered?

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

IT OCCURRED TO ME how the guy must feel being known for the rest of human history as the “thief on the cross”—hanging naked on a cross; dying for your crimes as a robber; initially blaspheming and mocking Jesus; confessing Jesus as Lord; asking to be remembered by Jesus in His kingdom; given assurance by Jesus; praising God throughout eternity for His saving grace that is magnified in saving a “thief on the cross.” (Lk 23:39-43). God’s grace is amazing.

I wondered how it would feel to be known for the rest of human history as the “Ethiopian eunuch”—enduring the snickers of kids and adults who discover that a eunuch is a castrated man; unable to have sex; being marginalized by Jewish Law by being banned from the priesthood and assemblies (Le 21:20; De 23:1); given the promise of acceptance and an “everlasting name that will endure forever” by the prophets (Is 56:3-5 NIV); reading that same prophet Isaiah when the Spirit sends a preacher to guide, baptize, and give him the joy of salvation in the kingdom that eunuchs dreamed of and no eunuch had ever experienced before. God’s grace is amazing.

How would it be to have it recorded in Scripture for the rest of human history that you were the woman “caught in adultery”—religious leaders accusing you; public humiliation with the announcement you were caught in the very act; the Law’s death penalty being pronounced on you; Jesus telling your accusers, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first”; watching the accusers leave and Jesus saying, “Has no one condemned you... Neither do I ... go and sin no more (Jn 8:1-11). God’s grace is amazing.

Imagine being known for the rest of human history for your disability, as is the “man who was paralyzed”—only able to lay on your bed; having to be carried around by others; you can’t get in to see Jesus, so others tear open someone’s roof to lower you into His presence; instead of healing you, Jesus says, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you”; the religious leaders are outraged and accuse Jesus of blaspheming; Jesus heals you to show He has “power on earth to forgive sins”; at His direction you stand up, pick up what you were lying on, and go to your house, “glorifying God” (Mt 9:1-9; Mk 2:1-11; Lk 5:17-26). God’s grace is amazing!

What would it be like to be known for the rest of human history as the “woman in the city who was a sinner”—religious leaders disdaining you and not even willing to

touch you; you’re a crier; you anoint the feet of Jesus and wipe them with your tears and hair, but the hateful words of those who are religious keep saying you’re a sinner and are the kind of woman who shouldn’t be allowed to even touch a prophet; Jesus sees the washing of His feet, the kisses, and anointing as expressions of love for Him; Jesus says, “Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.” Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” “Then He said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you. Go in peace’” (Lk 7:36-50). God’s grace is amazing.

Criminals, eunuchs, adulterers, people with disabilities, and known sinners are

remembered as criminals, eunuchs, adulterers, people with disabilities, and known sinners who were welcomed by Jesus and saved by grace. Until we are ready to be known as criminals, eunuchs, adulterers, people with disabilities, and sinners, we aren’t ready for God’s grace. When we are in Christ and someone remembers us as criminals, eunuchs, adulterers, people with disabilities, and sinners, we don’t have to be ashamed, instead we have an amazing grace story to tell. “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Co 6:11). That is how we want to be remembered. God’s grace is amazing!

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## Doing Good in God’s Way

By AL DIESTELKAMP

SAUL, KING OF ISRAEL, was preparing to go to war with the Philistines (1 Sam. 13). He had previously been instructed to go to Gilgal and wait for Samuel to come to offer a burnt offering and a peace offering and to tell the king what to do (1 Sam. 10:8). When Samuel did not show up within the expected time, Saul decided to make the offering himself (13:9).

Saul had hardly finished the offering when Samuel showed up and asked, “What have you done?” (v.11). Saul explained that he feared the Philistines would come against him before he had made supplication to the LORD, so he felt “compelled” to act (v.12).

I don’t know about you, but that sounds like a reasonable explanation to me. After all, offering a burnt offering and making supplication to God were good things to do. But God was not pleased! Samuel said, “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you” (v.13).

This story teaches me that just because I don’t see the harm in doing what seems good to me does not necessarily make it good in God’s eyes. I confess that I don’t always see the harm in some things that God has declared to be sinful. Nor do I always understand the reason for *how* God expects some things He requires to be done.

Whether I am seeking authority in my personal life or authority pertaining to the work and worship of the Lord’s churches, my opinions, feelings, or understanding of reasons behind God’s approval or disapproval cannot be a factor.

I’m fairly confident that most everyone

among our readers will be in agreement with the application I am making regarding God’s sovereign right to define what is sinful regardless of what our society thinks or whether or not we understand the reason behind His decisions. This puts us in direct opposition to how the world views what God has revealed, especially regarding moral issues such as the many forms of fornication, divorce, and the taking of innocent life.

However, there may be less unanimity with my application to what God authorizes (or doesn’t authorize) in the collective work and worship among local churches belonging to Christ. In every generation, there are some who challenge what has been taught as being “unauthorized” as being merely part of “our long-standing traditions.” They seek a loosening of what they call “traditions” that restrict what they personally feel we are at liberty or even “compelled” to do.

For example, local churches are being challenged by those who don’t agree with what many of us believe are biblical limitations on the use of church funds, including unlimited benevolence and use of church-owned buildings for social events. There are also those who advocate for the use of musical instruments in worship as well as an expanded role of women in leadership.

Questioning what is taught or practiced is not a problem as long as it is to initiate an honest study of the Scriptures to see how to “do good in God’s way” rather than to merely voice what we *think* or *feel* God would approve.

Remember King Saul!

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# AN ABOMINATION TO THE LORD

By AL DIESTELKAMP

EVERY SIN IS DESTRUCTIVE to the soul and must be avoided, but there are some sins that are so disgusting and repugnant to God that He has a special designation for each of them: “an abomination to the LORD.” I don’t know about you, but the word abomination gets my attention! The mere sight or sound of this word is ominous.

If something is an abomination to the LORD, it ought to be an abomination to mankind. The trouble is that some of the sins that are so described are acceptable in our current culture and are increasingly accepted among some who claim faith in God. How can this be?

Some of the sins designated as being “an abomination to the LORD” include various sexual relations such as homosexuality (Lev. 18:22), incest, bestiality (Lev. 18:26), cross-dressing (Deut. 22:5), and adultery (Ezk. 33:26). Many sins involving

idolatry, (Deut. 13:14), various forms of deceit and injustice (Prov. 3:32; 20:23), and the taking of innocent human life (Prov. 6:16) are also so designated. The list is actually quite long.

In an effort to justify current practices, someone might point out that all the references to specific things being an abomination to the LORD are in the Old Testament and that we are only answerable to the teachings of the New Testament. I believe this is an over-simplification. The Old Testament reveals many principles and statements of unchangeable truth. It’s hard to imagine that God would now consider acceptable what He had previously revealed was morally repugnant to Him. Of course, several of the identified abominable practices are specifically condemned in the New Testament as well.

It is obvious that the world’s concept of what should be considered disgusting is radically different from God’s stated view. Society is exerting increasing pressure on

believers to accept some abominations as acceptable. The so-called “social justice influencers” in our current culture have managed to intimidate government leaders and business executives into being accepting of and even supportive of many of the evils God has declared to be abominations.

God’s people must be willing to stand up against the pressures to accept as “normal” what God has condemned. The prophet Isaiah pronounces, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil...” (Isa. 5:20) and teaches us, “He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 17:15). We must face the possibility that in the future we may be persecuted for standing for truth against evil. If this happens, Jesus promises a blessing on those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness and gives us reason to “rejoice and be exceedingly glad” (Matt. 5:10-12).

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## DO YOU REMEMBER?

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

MEMORIALS ARE ERECTED in stone. Towers are built. Admonishing cries of “Remember!” and “Never forget!” are shouted so that the next generation will appreciate, learn, and be motivated. It is easy to forget and not appreciate what came before us and brought us to where we are, but we are foolish if we forget what God tells us to remember.

After nearly forty years of wandering and complaining in the wilderness, the faithless generation of Israel which God had rescued from bondage in Egypt was virtually gone. Those who were teens and younger at the time of the Exodus were now in their forties and fifties. The only aged men among them were Moses, Joshua, and Caleb (cf. Num. 14:27-34; 26:64,65), and not even Moses would get to enter the Promised Land (Dt. 1:35-38). Indeed, from this time forward, subsequent generations of Israelites were admonished to remember the period of the wilderness wandering.

Even before the children of Israel crossed into the Promised Land, Moses charged, “And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not” (8:2). God humbled them,

tested them, taught them, loved them, and provided for them so that they would know “that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you. Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him” (vv.5,6). Remembering this was crucial because God was going to bless them richly. “When you have eaten and are full,” there are two possible responses: praising God for His blessings (v. 10) or forgetting that God is the source of blessings (vv.11-16) and thinking, “My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth” (v.17).

Success and prosperity will spoil the generation that has not known adversity and fails to remember God as the one from whom all blessings flow. Those who forget or deny God have a distorted view of their own self-worth which causes them to view wealth as an entitlement rather than a gracious blessing to be used to God’s glory. God—whose power is such that He can do and give all things and still have more to give—has demonstrated time and again that because He *can* give does not mean that He *will* give. He knows what is best, what we need, and what we don’t need. Thus, God may intentionally deprive us of our wants and perceived needs in order to form us into what we were created to be—something better than we are or otherwise would be.

Parents, do you practice intentional deprivation in order to build character in your children? If you provide your children with all that you are capable of giving them, they do not learn the godly characteristics of self-denial, sacrifice, and the kind of love that undergirds those virtues. When blessings are seen as rights *or* something earned or deserved, we become arrogant and forget God. The blessed of any generation *must* humbly recognize they are blessed by God’s grace or they will inevitably raise up children and grandchildren that know neither God nor His grace.

Israel did not inherit the Promised Land because of its righteousness. Israel received the land because of God’s gracious promises (9:3-6). Israel’s remembering of their forefathers’ complaining and rebellion in the wilderness was critical to appreciating God’s grace (vv. 7-24). Subsequent generations of Israelites were reminded as well (e.g. Psalms 95, 78, 106; Ezek. 20). Acknowledging God’s grace is essential to being humble, and being humble is essential to receiving more grace (Prov. 3:34/Js. 4:6). We must remember that the events in the wilderness ultimately point to Jesus as God’s grace to each of us in our sojourns. Therefore, let him who thinks he stands [on his own] take heed [remember] lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:1-12).

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*"Righteousness exalts a nation,  
But sin is a reproach  
to any people"*

PROVERBS 14:34

# THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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Articles  
From the  
Days Gone By

# A TIME TO WEEP

By **LESLIE DIESTELKAMP** 1911-1995

**M**Y LIFETIME PHILOSOPHY has been that Christianity is not a life of sadness but a life of gladness. In spite of all the sorrows and disappointments that come to every one of us, we have every reason to live a life of joy. Overcoming even deep grief, we "sorrow not as those who have no hope" (1 Thes. 4:13).

The joy of which I write is not necessarily demonstrated by laughter. In fact, constant laughter, especially when there is nothing funny, may indicate frustration and insecurity. The happiness of which I write is characterized by serenity, contentment, peace of mind, and hope which is "an anchor of the soul" (Heb. 6:19).

**Personal Remorse:** But let us turn our attention to real and valid reasons for sorrow. Each person will surely come to a time when he must let his "laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness" (Jas. 4:9). Actually James is demanding penitence. We must not rejoice in sin. It has always been disconcerting to me to hear someone tell how bad he used to be. I suspect such behavior should not be advertised. Indeed, when we see sin

in our own lives or in the lives of others, it should cause grief that would lead us to repent or to try to help others see the necessity of "godly sorrow" that "worketh repentance..." (2 For. 7:10).

Please do not misunderstand me. Sorrow is not repentance; and it is repentance—not sorrow—that is a condition of salvation (Ac. 17:30). However, this absolutely-necessary penitence is hardly possible in the absence of godly sorrow. And this kind of sorrow is a product of the piercing of our hearts by the word of God (Heb. 4:12). So let us be quick to identify and acknowledge to God our total unworthiness, doing so with humble and contrite hearts that are bowed down in godly sorrow. In real repentance David said, "Mine iniquities are gone over my head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me...I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long" (Psa. 38:4,6). No wonder David was called a man after God's own heart. And though we may not have sinned in the manner or extent as did David, we do need the same spirit he had.

**National Grief:** Our country—the land of the free and the home of the brave, the place of refuge for suffering humanity

for three or four centuries—has declined to such a low ebb of morality that there is reason to weep, not to laugh. Perhaps it would be well if our national leaders would wipe away the wide smiles and face the nation with sober, serious calls to repentance.

Solomon said, "righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). Of course I have no means of appealing to the nation, but I can appeal to my brother in the Lord. We need to become a dynamic, leading force for the righteousness which would certainly assure us of God's blessings on the nation. The nation can never be better than the influence real Christians have on it. I hope there is a sufficient percentage of righteous people, unlike Sodom of old (Gen. 19:32), so that God will spare the nation and that a reformation of the nation will come that would again provide the fertile soil for the seed of the kingdom such as prevailed in the fruitful years a few generations ago. There is need for national sorrow, for only thereby may we hope for national joy with God's blessings.

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