

Farewell to the Foundations

Songs of David: Volume 2, Part 1

Psalm 11:1-3

In 1934, the Veterans of Foreign Wars put up a cross far out in the Mojave Desert. It was a memorial to the soldiers who were killed in World War I.

The cross stood only 7 feet high, atop a stony outcropping called Sunset Rock. It was literally in the middle of nowhere.

To see it, you would have to leave Los Angeles and drive nearly 4 hours northeast on U.S. Highway 15, then turn south onto Cima Road – a two lane black-top and drive for 9 miles until you entered the Mojave National Preserve.

More than likely you wouldn't see any other travelers along that road. Once you arrived at Sunset Rock, you would be able to see the cross on top of that rocky hilltop. You wouldn't see any signs, inscriptions, or markers; just a simple white cross is standing where it has stood for 80 years.

In 2001, a former Park Service employee sued the government, demanding that the cross be removed. For ten years the legal battle ensued. At one point, a judge ordered that the cross be covered with a plywood box so that it looked like some billboard instead of across. But that wasn't good enough.

For some reason, a lonely cross out in the remote Mojave Desert was so threatening to our national conscience that the American Humanist Association, Atheist Alliance International, the Freedom from Religion Foundation, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, People for the American Way and the American Civil Liberties joined in the campaign to have it taken down.

The case would be battled all the way to the Supreme Court where, on April 28, 2010, the court narrowly ruled by one vote that this little white cross was not endorsing religion and could remain on top of that hill.

Less than two weeks later, thieves went to Sunset Rock, cut the mounting bolts and got rid of the cross.

Even in the Mojave Desert, where almost no one ever saw it, the cross was a foundation marker that simply had to go.ⁱ

In more recent days, the interfaith group called the American Clergy Leadership Conference is calling for churches everywhere to remove their crosses. Their spokesman said that the cross was a symbol of oppression, and it represented an attitude of superiority – so spoke George Stallings, archbishop of the Imani Temple African American Catholic Church in Washington, DC.ⁱⁱ

The Apostle Paul had the same problem with his culture, didn't he? He wrote to the Corinthians that the preaching of the cross was offensive to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles (**I Corinthians 1:23**).

Frankly, the desire of our unbelieving world is to remove the foundation from of our culture and the Founder Himself.

Revisionist history is erasing from our culture the relationship of God to the fabric of our history.

A few years ago, the new Capitol Visitor Center opened in Washington, D.C. The \$621 million dollar Center was designed as a gathering place, rest stop, and information center for the thousands of visitors who come to the United States Capitol complex every year.

Before it opened, one senator took an early tour and immediately noticed some omissions. A panel on one wall announced that America's national motto was "Out of many, one"; when in fact, our national motto, established by Congress in 1956, is "In God we Trust".ⁱⁱⁱ

Another display featured a replica of the speakers rostrum but omitted the words, "In God we Trust" that are inscribed in gold letters above the chair in the actual House Chamber.

Then, another exhibit displayed the table where Abraham Lincoln had placed his Bible during his second inauguration. The table was there, but no Bible. They couldn't just say oops we forgot to put the Bible on the table.

Another odd omission, which showed how deeply the designers of the Visitor's Center felt about erasing God from our history; there was a display of a copy of the Constitution; however, the clause just before the signatures which read "Done in Convention by the Unanimous Consent of the States present, the seventeenth day of September in the Year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven." But the new version had willfully omitted the words, "in the year of our Lord."^{iv}

I mean you just can't mention God.

The trouble is – and the real danger to any culture and in any country – and Paul and the early church lived in it – is that when you remove the absolute proposition of the existence of a Creator God, you invite to your own harm, all sorts of danger and error.

It was famously stated by Dostoevsky – "If there is no God, anything is permissible." Dostoevsky was a Russian author forbidden to be read by Joseph Stalin when Stalin came to power – and interestingly enough, Stalin's own daughter, Svetlana, who's biography I tried to read this summer – massive biography – but after nearly 300 pages I finally gave up and skipped to the last chapter to find out how she died.

Anyway, Svetlana would sneak into her room and read her novels by Dostoevsky – she would later defect to the United States, dying just a couple of years ago; but what a powerful statement by this forbidden author within an atheistic state – "If there is no God, then anything is permissible."

And what has become permissible?

Today, it isn't even headline news for very long for abortionists to talk of crunching bones and baby parts for sale.

In fact, just this month, California's Assembly voted, not to restrict abortion or try and encourage women to realize their tiny unborn babies have fingernails and heartbeats; they voted to force Pro-Life Pregnancy Help Centers to post announcements that the women

could obtain a free abortion covered by Medi-Cal.

They are even required to print the announcement in 24 font type so it can't be missed. Free abortion!

That's like posting an announcement at an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting that free beer is available to anyone who wants it.

By the way with the exclusion of God, the value of life not only for the unborn but the elderly will also make its way into oblivion.

At a recent bioethics conference, a professor of theology, no less gave a lecture that said personhood is not automatically given to human beings but is assigned by culture. She said, "An Alzheimer's patient without any memory and without people who care for them ceases to be a person; someone who still has friends or family who love and remember them maintains their personhood." I wonder what she will think if she ends up with Alzheimer's.

And what about personhood anyway – remove the creator and that's up for grabs, too.

One author described as a genderless wasteland, where people are no longer born male or female but have to determine his or her own gender – and should they choose to change their gender, they are applauded as courageous heroes.

Marriage as we knew it no longer has definition according to scripture.

A few month ago, Rob Bell, an apostate former pastor who twisted the gospel into universalism, was interviewed a few months ago by Oprah Winfrey in which this former protestant, best-selling, pastor of thousands of people quoted from his newest book on marriage, no less; and I quote, "Marriage, gay and straight, is a gift to the world because the world needs more, not less love."

Oprah then asked him, "When is the church going to get that?"

He responded, "We're close . . . we're moments away from the church accepting it."^v

Just weeks ago, First Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina – a member of the South Carolina Baptist Convention – voted to allow the marriages of homosexual couples and open the way for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals to not only join the

church, but be ordained and appointed to leadership positions.

The church at large has picked up their own eraser and with seeming abandon and delight, they are proudly erasing away as much of the foundations of truth as they can.

Shouldn't we have expected this?

After all, our media, public schools, and universities have, for decades, been willing instruments of propaganda to indoctrinate a generation in the normalization of evolution, atheism and immorality.

Erwin Lutzer wrote recently about the daughter of one of his volunteers at Moody Church. The teacher of that public middle school class told the students to choose one side of the classroom and walk over to it. The teacher then said, "This side over here is for the students who claim to be gay or support their gay friends lifestyle; the teacher said, the other wall on the other side of the room were for the bullies, and then made all the students decided."^{vi}

You either agree, or you became a bully by disagreeing.

They really ought to read the biography of Svetlana Stalin where anyone who even verbalized a disagreement with any position held by the state simply disappeared.

But let me remind you, beloved, what we're facing isn't new. It might be new to us, but it isn't new to the scope of history, and it hasn't caught God off guard.

Keep in mind that none of our current challenges are original; in fact, when Spurgeon preached in London in the 1800's the homosexual community had their own red light district; prostitution was rampant, and Parliament was unable to meet at times because too many of its members were too drunk to attend.

Don't get me wrong – it is deeply grievous to see values and virtues turned upside down; it is deeply troubling to see God erased from our cultural landscape; it's discouraging to have seen the White House bathed in rainbow colors in honor of the Supreme Court's majority decision to knowingly, willfully defy the biblical definition of marriage (Matthew 19) which has been held for centuries.

So don't misunderstand my reference to historical analogy – it's tragic to see any culture

given over to drugs and alcohol and pornography and abortion and greed and promiscuity – all of it justified and magnified and promoted and applauded.

I agree with one of our country's forefathers who was already concerned 200 years ago when he said, "Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just and that His justice cannot sleep forever."^{vii}

So what do we do? How do we respond?

In every generation – in every nation – to one degree or another – the church must answer this same basic question.

Dr. Amo Gaebelien, a Bible Scholar, and author called it "the burning question of our day" – and he said that back in 1939.^{viii}

This happens to be the question of King David the Song writer . . . in fact David handed this question to his choir leader because he wanted it arranged musically so that everyone in his kingdom would one day learn to ask it in song.

David's question is as critical today as when it was composed 3,000 years ago.

His question appears in *Psalm 11*. So turn there . . . and everything else you've heard was just an introduction.

We're just going to get this thing started.

His question burns into your mind and heart as it appears in *verse 3*. ***If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?***

What do you notice, not when the roof falls in, or when the door won't open or if the windows break . . . no . . . what do you do when the very foundational structure upon which life around you is supported is destroyed?

That is, the burning question of our day.

Now let's go back to *verse 1* as David begins with this statement of total trust and dependence - notice the first phrase – ***In the Lord I take refuge***.

He doesn't write I take refuge in my kingdom . . . in my generation . . . in my house . . . in my little world I have taken refuge.

Now commentators are hard pressed to identify the exact trouble David is facing here – whether it's King Saul tracking him down in the mountains as he tries to kill him; or when his son Absalom hatches a plan to take David's

throne and some of David's closest companions turn against him and join his son.

We don't know for sure. Here's what we do know: someone who follows after God isn't guaranteed a smooth ride. We have not been promised the right of approval!

And even though David has begun with a song with a tremendous statement of faith, the advice here touches the nerve - it reaches his soul.

Notice – ***How can you say to my soul, "Flee as a bird to your mountain;***

Run David . . . run and hide . . . you're like a pitiful, helpless bird . . . you can't fight . . . you can't defend yourself . . . fly away to safety.

How many have listened . . . they have flown away to some monastery . . . some sideline . . . some cottage by the lake where they've escaped the rat race . . . the pressures of culture . . . the need of community and the pressing mission of the church . . . some safe place where I'll preserve my little life.

A woman came up to me after the service and told me her friends are going to buy land and build a commune. Our mission isn't to escape the world, but to engage the world with the gospel.

But let's not minimize the danger – ***notice verse 2. For, behold*** (David's advisors have informed him) ***the wicked bend the bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string; to shoot in the darkness at the upright in heart.***

Listen, the bow and arrow were the most feared weapon in David's day. It had redefined an enemy attack. You didn't have to worry about hand to hand combat if you could shoot a bow and arrow first.

The oldest complete bow discovered by archeologists was made a thousand years before David was born. In fact, I learned in my study that the design of that bow was so remarkable that some of the best wooden bows are still copying its design.

And did you notice that these enemies of David have him in their sights in the dark . . . it's nighttime.

The Greek translation of the Old Testament renders it, "in a moonless night."^{ix}

Which is another way of saying, David is a sitting duck . . . he doesn't have a chance.

These advisors are using verb tenses that ratchet up the tension. The sun has already set; the enemy is already in the act of bending his bow; he has already placed the arrow upon the string – he has already taken aim.^x

You can almost see the firing squad and hear the words, "Ready, aim..."

There's nothing you can do!

I saw a cartoon once where two men are pictured, standing up against the wall, facing a firing squad – they're tied up and blindfolded and the commandant shouts, Ready, Aim . . . and the one guy turns to the other and says, "I have a plan."

At that particular moment, you can't have a plan.

Which is why the first stanza of this song ends with the question ***If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?***

What in the world do you plan?! Respond?!

The word David uses for the foundation comes from a Hebrew word meaning, "the settled order of things." David is likening society to a building. The foundations of society – law, order, truth, justice, morality, decency, integrity, etc.^{xi}

When the unrighteous in the midst of sinful darkness have shot them full of arrows . . . what do you do?

When the foundational principles of right and wrong are destroyed, what do you do?

David will answer that question eight different ways in the final stanza of his composition.

We will expound on all of them in our next session.

Whatever you do, don't read ahead.

But in the meantime – I'll give you this to reassure your soul – there is a foundation underneath the foundation.

The crumbling sandstone foundations of man's opinions have underneath them an eternal, granite foundation of God's sovereign purpose and plan.^{xii}

And His foundation will never crumble.

© Copyright 2015 Stephen Davey
All rights reserved.

-
- i Adapted from Michael Youssef, *When the Crosses Are Gone* (Kobri, 2011) p. 1
ii Ibid p.10
iii Ibid p. 5
iv Ibid p. 5
v Leonardo Blair, *Christian Post Reporter*, February 17, 2015
vi Erwin W. Lutzer, *Where Do We Go From Here?* (Moody Publishers, 2013) p. 13
vii (Quotation by Thomas Jefferson posted in the Thomas Jefferson Memorial)
viii James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms: Volume 1* (Baker, 1994) p.91
ix W. Graham Scroggie, *The Psalms, Volume 1* (Pickering & Inglis, 1948) p. 87
x C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Volume V* (Eerdmans, 1988) p. 188
xi John Phillips, *Exploring the Psalms: Volume One* (Loizeaux Brothers, 1988), p. 88
xii Adapted from *The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary on the Book of Psalms: Volume 1* (Baker reprint, 1978) p. 46