

HE MAKES ALL THINGS NEW

Volume 24

December, 2023

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As Christmas Day is fast approaching and we are nearing the end of 2023, Mary and I want you to know that we are praying for you, dear reader. We pray that you and your family will have a good Holiday Season.

I want to share a message with you that I shared recently in our Sunday School Class. It was on Psalm 65. While I was studying and preparing for the lesson, I came across a talk on AI- Artificial Intelligence. The talk was given by a well-known atheist. He was presenting his case and asked the question, “Can we build AI without losing control over it?” He then added, “We have to admit that, if we keep going, we will develop some sort of super intelligence. We are in the process of building some sort of god. Now would be the time, a good time, to make sure it’s a god we can live with.”

That little phrase “a god we can live with” really got into my spirit. Man, in his fallen and rebellious state, can’t accept and doesn’t want to accept or believe in the true God, the Creator God. He wants to make his own god or even be his own god. We want a god of our own understanding or imagination. We want a god that we can live with, one that doesn’t demand or require so much from us.

In Psalm 65, the psalmist presents to us the true God of creation, the living God. He gives us a good picture, a good description of God, a God that is very active in the earth, one whom we can’t live without. Look with me at how the NKJV lays out this Psalm.

1) Praise is waiting You, O God, in Zion; and to You the vow shall be performed. 2) O You who hear prayer, to You all flesh will come. 3) Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, You will provide atonement for them. 4) Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts. We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, of Your holy temple. 5) By awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us, O God of our salvation, You who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and the far off seas; 6) who established the mountains by His strength, being clothed with power; 7) You who still the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples. 8) They also who dwell in the farthest parts are afraid of Your signs; You make the outgoings of the morning and evening rejoice, 9) You

visit the Earth and water it, You greatly enrich it. The river of God is full of water. You provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. 10) You water its ridges abundantly, You settle it’s furrows, You make it soft with showers, You bless it’s growth. 11) You crown the year with Your goodness, and Your paths drip with abundance. 12) They drop on the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. 13) The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys are covered with grain. They shout for joy, they also sing.

Did you notice how many times YOU or YOUR was mentioned in these 13 verses? I believe it’s 26 times. The psalmist referenced God 26 times in relation to His activity in our world and in our lives. YOU visit the earth. YOU water it. YOU greatly enrich it. YOU provide the grain. The atheist wants a god that he can live with. It would do us good to acknowledge this God that, honestly, we cannot live without. This really stirs my heart into Praise. If God was not actively visiting, watering, and providing, we could not exist. One puritan writer noted how easy it would be for God to starve us all. How true!

There are so many wonderful truths in this psalm, and I won’t be able to exposit on all of them, but I want to highlight a couple things that really spoke to me. First, according to most scholars and teachers, this psalm was composed to be sung. As a matter of fact, the heading to Psalm 65 in the KJV reads – To the chief Musician, a Psalm and Song of David. The CSB version reads – For the choir director. A psalm of David. A song.

The nature of Psalm 65 points to one of the annual Jewish festivals when the community would come together for worship. Most likely this would have been the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths, also called the Festival of Shelters or the Festival of the Harvest. As they looked back over the past year and reflected on God’s care of and provision for them, they would sing this Psalm, this Song. It has three stanzas. The first would be praising and worshipping God for His Grace (1-4). The second would include worshipping and praising God for His Greatness (5-8). The third would be thanking and praising God for His Goodness (9-13).

Notice the description the psalmist gives of God who rightfully deserves our praise; You, the *one who hears prayer*. O, aren’t you glad that He hears our

prayers? That He bows His ear to our faintest cry, to our feeble attempts to communicate and call out and just talk to Him about everything that's on our hearts and that burdens us down so much. Thinking about the Creator of the world hearing and listening to my prayers really excites me.

Notice also in this first stanza that verse three speaks about "iniquities prevailing against him". Some translations use the phrase "being overwhelmed with our sins". Have you ever been overwhelmed by your sins? I know what it looks like and feels like to be overwhelmed by my sins. I know what it's like to be overwhelmed by the power of sin. I know what it's like to be overwhelmed by the shame and disgrace of my sin. I know what it's like to be overwhelmed with the consequences of my sin.

The psalmist then talks about how God will provide atonement for our sins. He certainly understood the sacrificial system of his day. An animal would have to die as his substitute, for his sins to be covered and forgiven. This is the season that we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. It was announced from the Angel that Mary would have a son and they would call his name Jesus and that He would save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). He would become our atonement, our substitute, as He gave His life on the cross for our sins. Have you ever been overwhelmed by the forgiveness we are offered and given?

Sometimes, I am so overwhelmed when I think about, recognize, and experience forgiveness. Recently, I was confronted with some people who had forgiven me for sins I had committed against them. They were wishing me well. One man, who I sit down to have dinner with one evening, showered me with love. Only through Jesus Christ. Yes, at times, I am so overwhelmed by forgiveness. Such mercy from God causes my heart to burst with gratitude to the God who forgives us so thoroughly. God's forgiveness is so great that He does more than just remove the bad. He invites and ushers us into His glorious presence as we can see in verse four.

In stanza number two, I'm just going to touch on verse seven, *You who still the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves...* According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an average hurricane releases energy that is equivalent to 6 X 10 to the 14th power of that many watts of electricity. I'm not a math expert, but that sounds like a lot to me! They say an average hurricane produces more energy than all the electrical power plants on the planet are capable of producing. The National

Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) states, "In its lifetime, an average hurricane can release as much energy as ten thousand nuclear bombs." That's a lot of energy. And yet, this scripture says that God can and does still the noise of the seas and the raging of the waves. Do you remember the story in the New Testament when the disciples were in a boat out on the sea when a storm arose that was so strong these seasoned fishermen thought they were going to die? They didn't think they would make it through the storm. Do you remember what Jesus, who was on the boat with them did? He stood up and said to the wind and the waves, "Be still." Hallelujah!!

I don't know what kind of hurricane force waves or winds you may be experiencing in your life today, but our God, our Savior is Great and, in His Greatness, He has the power to calm the storms in your life. There's an old song that says, "Sometimes He calms the storm and sometimes He just calms me. Sometimes the storm still rages on, but I feel the sweetest peace." I pray He speaks that peace to each one of you today.

The third and final stanza of this Song speaks of God's Goodness to the people. As they reflected over the past year, they could see how God had provided for them throughout the year; how He had shown up and been actively at work in their behalf; how He had crowned the year with His goodness. Verse nine has a phrase that really blessed me. It states that the river of God is full of water. This speaks of an abundant supply of resources. There are several scriptures that mention the river of God. One of them is in Ezekiel 47. It talks about a river that flows out from under the throne of God. Everywhere it flows and everything it touches lives. Life springs up from this water. I know this chapter has some prophetic implications to it, but for spiritual application, it mentions ankle deep water, knee deep water, waist deep water, and waters to swim in. If this river of God has life in it and everything it touches lives, I don't want to just be sticking my foot in it. I want to jump in over my head and swim in it. Swim in the blessings of God. Swim in the life of God. Be thoroughly saturated with His life.

I mentioned earlier that Psalm 65 would be sung at the Feast of Tabernacles. I discovered something very interesting about the last day of this feast. The High Priest would take some water and pour it out on the altar as he prayed for next year's rain. It was at that very moment, in John 7:37-39, we find Jesus saying, *If any man is thirsty, let him come unto me*

and drink. He that believes on me out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Are you thirsty? Are you missing something in your life? Jesus was speaking about the Holy Spirit. He has all the resources of God that we need. This is the season we celebrate the birth of Jesus. He came to give us life. Ask Him today to give you this living water. He's a God, a Savior, you can't live without.

Thank God for His Grace, His Greatness and His Goodness.

Howard Isom

EXERCISE

Drop and give me five. Heard that phrase before? If not, it does not mean five George Washington's or an Abraham Lincoln. For me, it would be easier to do that than do the five pushups that are being demanded. Exercise to me is working my biceps by raising my spoon and fork to my mouth! For years I was able to maintain my weight and stay in good physical condition. Then something changed. I started noticing my pants size gradually went from a 30, 32, 34, 36, 38. As this condition continued to change, I really continued to work my biceps. Then along came the doctor. No. No. Not an MD but Dr. Honey, Sugar Bear, Dr. WIFE. She would gently encourage me not to overwork my biceps and start working some more on my "bellyceps." Due to the fact I have a challenging time of hearing, (huh?) I was slow to start exercising other parts of my body. Well eventually I saw the light. We began going to a gym near where we live. At first it was difficult for me, then exercise became a friend. I saw the benefits that it was giving to me.

That brings me to the point of what this little tale makes me think of. Spiritual exercise! In our Christian walk, what is the condition of our mind, body, and soul? Are we still babes in Christ or are we seeking and abiding in Him daily? Do we just go to Him when something is going wrong in our life? When it's time to go to the Chapel or Church? When someone tells you about difficulties and asks you to pray for them? John 15:4 tells us, *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.* To me this is a command, not something you do if you want to or when you have the time, but always.

The gym my wife and I go to is open 24/7. So, if I wanted to, I could work out at 3:00 a.m., but I choose not to. Jesus is present 24/7 and I can call on Him anytime, anyplace to exercise my walk with Him.

When I wake up at 3:00 in the morning I can pray, talk, remember scripture and listen to His Holy Spirit speak to me. I can exercise my walk with Him while I do my physical workout at the gym, when stopped in traffic, before eating a meal, before starting my day, during the day, before going to bed, after lying down for the night, when a friend asks me to pray with them/for them, for a special prayer request, when you see someone having a difficult time, when you see the news and the ways of our society, our government, our teachers, our country, our world, our protectors through the armed forces, our Christian leaders, our children and families, for the lost who are without Jesus Christ and do not know His love, compassion, mercy, grace, and His forgiveness that is afforded us because of His going to the Cross. He went to that Cross to redeem us, give salvation, wash us clean of our sins. Hallelujah!!!! We are not and will never be restricted in exercising with Jesus. Praise Him, Praise God the Father, Praise the Holy Spirit. Always be in spiritual exercise mode. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 tells us to *Pray without ceasing.* Submit to God. James 4: 7-8a: *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.* ⁸ *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*

Never let Satan tell you all this spiritual exercise is not needed. Spiritual exercise is a necessity, a joy, a blessing, peace, and assurance knowing Jesus has our back (LIFE). May He bless you and your family and loved ones.

In Christ's Love, Mike Campbell

THE COMING OF CHRISTMAS

There is a time of year that most of us come together to share. It's a glorious occasion which we all cherish so dear. This is the time of year that brings to a child in knowing such joy. Upon that day they will receive their most favorite little toy.

It brings joy to the old as well as to the young. The joy is knowing that their most favorite day has come. It brings families together when sometimes they are so far apart, to lift their spirits and kindle flame deeply within their heart.

For this day has something for each one and all, for the happiness it brings is worthy of its cause. It's at this time of the year the bells begin to ring. The choirs will be singing carols all through the night, while tiny tots lay all snuggled up in their beds anxiously waiting the morning light.

While the fragrance of frankincense and myrrh fill the air, oh, what joy it is in knowing that Christmas is

almost near. Sleigh bells ringing, white horses all draped in red, pulling their sleighs through the beautiful white December falling snow.

As the carolers continue singing their Christmas Carols from door to door, a wonderful aroma fills the house of freshly baked cakes and pies, with fruits, nuts and candies of all kinds.

Surely, Christmas is a time of year when most people come together to share their love with their gifts. Some of them have been purchased at such a great price.

But my question to everyone and all, have any of them shared our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. He is the reason for such a GREAT SEASON.

J. Manning, Currently Incarcerated

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT...

God always keeps the revelation of Himself in Christ bound up with practical situations. We can never get revelation other than in connection to some necessity. This may sound sacrilegious, but we can't get it by studying. When the Lord gave the manna in the wilderness (a type of Christ as the Bread from heaven), He commanded not to gather more than what can be used in one day. The principle, the law, of manna is that God keeps revelation of Himself in Christ bound up with practical situations of necessity, and we are not going to have a revelation as mere teaching, doctrine, interpretation, theory, etc. The Holy Spirit's way with us is to bring us into living actual conditions, situations, and needs, in which only some fresh knowledge of the Lord Jesus can be our deliverance, our salvation, our life, and then to give us, not a revelation of truth, but a revelation of the Person, new knowledge of the Person, that we come to see Christ in some way that just meets our need. We are not drawing upon an "it", but upon a "Him." I like this verse. "Justified freely by [God's] grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24) Join with me in praise for God's grace and free gift of forgiveness and redemption.

Father, by Your grace I've received mercy. I stand in awe because there's nothing beyond Your reach of mercy You freely offer me. Not only have You forgiven my sins, but You have also broken the power of sin and death. I can never earn or merit such kindness. Your mercy pursues me each day.

By Your grace, I have been justified. I rejoice, that, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, I can live as Your child, freed from sin and restored in right relationship with You. I share in Your own

divine life forever -- all because of Your grace ONLY.

By Your grace, everyone can join in the celebration of heaven. No matter who we are, where we are from, or what we have done, You have invited us to come to You through the redemption accomplished on the cross, by Jesus Christ. O glorious God, Your love knows no bounds!

Your gift of faith empowers me to take hold of Your amazing grace. All the blessings of justification and righteousness, forgiveness and adoption, are available to me because You alone are faithful to save, deliver, and heal. AND, You are true to Your promise that You will finish the good work that You started in me until You return.

You are worthy to receive the glory, each and every one of my days, every minute of the day, and every breath I breathe. Amen

Aaron, Currently Incarcerated

It is hard to believe we are ending the second year of sending out our Newsletter. Time fly's! We sincerely thank each one of you for your prayers, your encouragement and your financial gifts. You are the means by which we are able to share these messages. Our prayer is that God will continue to work in each of your lives to bless, to encourage, to strengthen, to make Himself known to you in a very real way. To God be the glory for the things He has done and is going to do!

Howard and Mary Isom

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He Makes All Things New Ministry
PO Box 748
Granite Falls, NC 28630
828-493-2728

