

RUMINATIONS OF A FORMER HEATHEN

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Willfulness

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When the vultures begin circling above . . . , we become “spiritual.” All this talk about “spirituality,” particularly coming from the heathen, some of the most famous and creative of the heathen, this “spirituality” thing, is nothing less than an awareness, an awareness, faint but there, of death circling nearby. They want to know what’s going to happen, they want everything to be all right after they die. They seek some connection to the invisible world, a contact with the dead, with something or with someone that would tell them how it is on that side. The heathen continue to rage, and the people continue to imagine vain things. They want to know, they want to be sure. So, they invent things, make up things in their minds. They figure that by strength of numbers they can change their situation. What is it they want to know? Well, they want to be sure, they want to know, or they want to convince themselves, that the God of the Bible does not exist. The God of the Bible? Baah! All religions are the same, didn’t I hear the Dalai Lama say so on Larry King? Why, any imbecile would know there is nothing particularly special about the God of the Bible. Just another religion, that’s what they say, that’s what they hope for. In absence of that, that is, in the absence of the total assurance that things will be all right on the other side, they want long life here on this Earth. They don’t talk much about death except to coax and support one another in their vain hopes. Well, that’s the way it is. They shut their eyes and cover their ears, pull away the shoulder.

Why, then, doesn’t God open their eyes and uncover their ears? They would not pull away their shoulder if they could see and hear. One thing that shows we are made in the image of God is the fact we have free will. God has free will. He has given us free will. What we don’t have, is eternal life. God has eternal life. But he cannot allow any to have eternal life unless he was completely sure that we are going to be totally under his command. Our free will has to be surrendered to him. Easy to say, hard to do. We are willful, and the depth of our corruption is not known. I think that God keeps calling and calling until the last minute. Have you ever encountered a person who is so against God that, even in their death bed, they don’t want you to pray for them? It happens, that’s willfulness, free will in action. What are you going to do about it? I tell you, I don’t think there is a whole lot you can do about it. Other than to pray, of course. You can always pray, there is absolutely nothing wrong with praying for the unsaved, even if they don’t want to be prayed for. The orders given to us by God are more compelling than the desire

of humans, and you don't have to tell them. The prayer of a man who has been made righteous by the blood of the lamb is a prayer that God has agreed to hear, and we are made righteous by the blood of the lamb, so, God has agreed to hear us. Inside the Holy of Holies he meets with us. He is on his mercy seat and our cover of the blood of Christ allows us to be in his presence, and when there, make our petition known. This is a given right. God has given us this authorization, this permission, this privilege.

Going back to willfulness, much of it has to do with the fact that we don't know who we are dealing with. We are basically ignorant of the consequences of being stiffnecked toward God. You always have to take the worst possibility into account. And, of course, the worst possibility would be to be thrown into hell at the end. When God refers to us as a backsliding heifer, he is not talking about a heifer that slips on something and stumbles or falls backwards. A backsliding heifer is one that sits on its haunches and digs its front legs into the ground and actually pushes back, they will not be moved. Free will in action, at its clearest. Backsliding heifers, we are. God is merciful, no doubt about it. Longsuffering, he is. The end of Psalm 32:8, says: "I will guide thee with mine eye." The beginning of verse 9 says: "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held with bit and bridle," etc. I like those words, I'm all for that. But guide me with his eye? Maybe once in a while, but most of the time I am still "as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held with bit and bridle." Even an occasional hook in my jaw has been necessary. But I don't mind, he never let me go, and that is the important part for me.

Jesus once spoke about lifted up as the serpent in the wilderness and he would draw all men unto himself. The reference is to the order God gave to Moses in the wilderness when serpents bit the people. Numbers 21:9 says, "And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." All they had to do was to look, and they would live. The venom of the serpent (which we could certainly call Satan), would not kill them. And yet the overall context where that verse occurs seems to indicate that many people died. All they had to do was to look, but many refused. I am not going to look, I am not going to look, and I am not going to look. How many people that know about Jesus are saved? Not many, I bet. I know I didn't want to hear about Jesus. Jesus died for my sins? Who asked him? I didn't ask him, he did that on his own. Why should I care? I am an expert in willfulness and contrariness. A backsliding heifer has a way to go to compete with me. The favour of God cannot be understood.

Jesus was lifted up as the serpent in the wilderness. But where the serpent in

the wilderness was a token, a physical token of the promise of God, Jesus was flesh and blood when he went to the cross. He allowed himself to be killed in a terribly suffering death. He was not a token, he was the real thing. He was the promise of God. Would Jesus really draw all men unto himself? Yes, he would, if only they would look at him. But just as it happened in the wilderness, many will perish, and have perished, because they will not look.