

The older one gets, the more his thoughts tend to focus on events of the past. This morning around 4:00 A.M. was no different; they rotated around the three hopes and dreams I have had for some years now. One of the three might be considered selfish, but the other two were altruistic, involving others' welfare. Then I realized my wife of 43 years also had not realized her dreams, one to sing, the other to have a nice house, the third of a personal nature.

Though both of us have accepted His will to either deny or delay these dreams, their being unfulfilled leaves a rather deep hurt inside; -or is it a thinly-cloaked resentment? Then it was quite apparent many others, such as the ones in the local nursing home, also had had unfulfilled dreams. Additionally death is facing them in the face, usually with a fairly elevated degree of pain.

This morning's thought process was not negative in the true sense of the word, but actually a catalyst to the topic of this paper. Looking at all three perspectives, me, my wife and those in the nursing home, it was a natural connection that my heavenly Father felt much of the same disappointments, except to the 10<sup>th</sup> or even 100<sup>th</sup> power of ours.

So what *are* His dreams and hopes? For starters, one is to have true fellowship with those created in His image. Why else Adam and Eve? To that end He gave them about all anyone could ask; a veritable paradise garden, authority and creativeness, perfect health, and on and on. Only one restriction; don't eat of the tree in the middle of the Garden. That's all, no other restriction, no other Do Not.

Alas, all the blessings and perfection unto themselves and all around them proved insufficient. Or said another way, all the gifts weren't good enough; they had to have some of the forbidden tree.

God's dream of fellowship revived somewhat with Abel, but that was short-lived. So He tried again in earnest with Abraham. He even promised his seeds would be as the sand on the seashore. Ah, but the lure of Hagar proved too much to pass up. God's promise wasn't good enough.

We see this repeated throughout the O.T. Having the Almighty God as their sovereign wasn't good enough for Israel; they had to be like everyone else and have a king. They got Saul, tall, good looking, but a shell of a man. In the Exodus, God's unparalleled miracles weren't good enough for Israel; they wanted to go back to Egypt with its leeks and garlic.

With David and Bathsheba; the kingdom and all his wives weren't good enough. He had to have Bathsheba. Having untold riches and being the wisest man wasn't good enough for Solomon -he just had to have foreign wives. Hezekiah just had to have another 15 years. God's plans weren't good enough. Out of that 15 years came Manasseh, one of the most wicked kings ever to rule Israel.

Then there are all the oracles of God Himself speaking through men such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and all the other prophets. What was said through them was not what the people wanted to hear, much less the kings of the day. So it is today; what God is trying to say (but just for so long...) is not what we want to hear.

After 400 years or so God decided to give this race of men His altogether best in the sending of His Son, Deity personified.

Repeated healings? –not good enough for the Pharisees.

Deliverance from demons? – not good enough for the Gergasenes; they wanted hogs....

Teaching beyond belief? – not good enough for the Scribes and Sadducees.

A Savior? –not good enough for the Jews.

“Well”, you say; “that was then”. “Those were dumb, uneducated desert rats, having no bible to guide them, under bondage to Rome. We wouldn’t do what they did.”

Oh!?!

And how many times have you not been satisfied with your lot in life, or asked **God** for a different set of circumstances? –or asked Him to bless *your* plans? Does Isaiah 30:1 mean nothing to you? “**Woe** to those who carry out a plan that is not mine, or make an alliance with those I did not choose, or go to the world for help -(for a loan to build your ‘church’)?”

After a round of similar scenarios, my heart began to break. I began to grasp but only in part how the King of Glory must feel when His best is not good enough. I have my own collection of times that my best wasn’t good enough. Some of them defy any explanation or reason. It leaves me numb to have someone go back over what I have done my very best to do perfectly; -or even more degrading, to find a fault in what I did to the very, very best of my ability. It could have been perfect and it still would not have been good enough.

As an entrée to the second episode of penning this paper, I was reminded of an incident a few years back where a liaison granted me an audience with the president of a most venerable oil company in Dallas. The geologic prospect I was to present had taken over a year of hard work, tens of thousands of dollars of geophysical data, as well as untold hours of meditating on the concept. In short, it was and is one of the most impeccable presentations I had ever assembled in 40 years. Literally there was nothing left to do except shoot a modified seismic line down the gut.

The president had his technical adjutant there, also very tall, polished, suave and impeccably dressed. As I showed the deal, I could sense something wasn't right. Sure enough, this adjutant required twenty minutes to decide my year's work was not good enough, and began in a sophisticated manner to tear it apart to the president. "Nasty", "Expensive", were his opening volleys. Everything went downhill from there.

As I panned this incident, I was reminded of many others across the years where the result was basically the same. I began to understand a common thread running through all of them; *their acceptance or rejection was controlled by their basis for decisions, not the worthiness of the idea, the validity of the wisdom, the soundness of the advice or the number of witnesses for the decision in front of them.*

As I began to examine what 'basis for decisions' might entail, four levels came to mind;

1. Self-interest. This comprises the great majority of people throughout history, who essentially make decisions based on the consequences, or worse, their emotions..
  - a. Do I like it; if not, I'll tell them to buzz off.
  - b. Does it make me look bad; if so, I'll destroy it, or smear the messenger.
  - c. Does it agree with how I reason?
  - d. Does it agree with how I feel?
  - e. Does it fit my schedule?
  - f. The messenger does not fit my idea of a truth-bearer. Too intense, too crude, too intellectual, too harsh, too \_\_\_\_\_. Besides, look at his faults and remember his mistakes over the years.
2. What is best for all concerned? Maybe 10% of God's people.
  - a. This is the definition of the word 'upright'.
3. What the Word says. Very few make decisions based on Godly principles, found only in the Word.
  - a. Only religious zealots need apply.
4. What the Holy Spirit says. Less than 1%.
  - a. Too much effort.

We see clearly here the hierarchy of the bases, namely that what God said or wants is dead last on our list, and that which **we** propose takes precedence in how we treat a decision.

Dealing with #1, the principle of our over-inflated value of self overshadows most events, whether advice, counsel, warning, or investment concepts. The inflation factor of self is largely a function of how one was reared. In short, *the greater the emphasis on self during the rearing process, the greater that influence will reflect arrogance, anger and rebellion when faced with a decision as an adult.*

This is a direct function of indulgence, in a host of expressions from doing everything physically for the child, to shielding/retarding the child from taking progressive responsibility for his/her actions. From either, the child becomes an adult child, expecting things to be done for him, or at least done in ways that please him/her. In 2013, that attitude prevails in every walk of life.

Conversely, *the less confidence instilled in a child during the rearing process, the greater that influence will reflect insecurity when making a decision as an adult. The consequences of a decision take precedence over all else, especially principle.*

This pattern of rearing, pampering or brutishness, but usually from role reversals of a matriarchal mother and/or abdicating father, yields insecurity, fear of looking bad, put on the spot, etc., and becomes the basis for rejecting most things presented to them, or not making decisions at all. This makes up a significant percentage of adults on the scene today. Put both together and we have what we have, a dysfunctional government, a dysfunctional society, dysfunctional families and dysfunctional children wreaking havoc on their peers. Ah! I forgot; dysfunctional oil executives that couldn't find oil at a refinery.

One of the most significant passages in all of scripture is Proverbs 1:24-32. (Solomon has relinquished his pen and God is speaking in the first person.)

“Because I have called and you refused to listen, stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, and you ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you, when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then *they* will call upon me but I will not answer....therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices.”

When I read this one evening, I was shaken to my roots, for I realized this was the Almighty God of the Universe speaking to us! He had approached us!

-and we reject his efforts all in the name of it not pleasing us?

-or that we don't like it!?

-or that is does not match the way we think !?!

-or that it makes me look bad?!?

Ah, LORD GOD, how we have missed your plans!! How we have taken your goodness for granted and your blessings for naught. How we have impugned your excellence, and spat on your sovereignty. How we have ignored even the simplest of your commands, and with contempt gone our own ways. How presumptuous we have been then to call on you for help, when we ourselves have been the perpetrators of our own fall.

Ah, LORD GOD, how stupid we are, and how self-assertive have been our mindsets!!

How pious we have appeared, all the while being as wicked as the Sodomites ever thought of being!

How you look at our arrogant backsides and not our bowed faces racked with shame.

How we have maligned your sovereignty with our puny, arrogant stances and haughty attitudes.

How we gripe and complain at the slightest of misfires or inconveniences. How we murmur at not having our every whim, waited upon at every turn, not having our every wish confirmed.

How we have accused you of every sort of malevolent intent, and maligned your ways and designs.

How we have been angered by your mouthpieces, those sent to forestall our ignorance, self-assertion and impending ruin.

How we have feared the toothless lion, and cringed at the growl of a cowardly bastard. All of this is a slap in your face and an insult to your power and sacrifice.

How pious we act, and how righteous we assert ourselves; after all, we *are* Americans....

What must we do to get back on track? What must we do to save ourselves? What must we do to right our wrongs? Is it too late? Art Thou exceedingly angry with us?

*Do I hear mocking in the background??.....*

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Ben-Issachar