

Going to Gilead

LIVING OUT IN THE COUNTRY, one has available only an abbreviated set of options for using the Internet. Far from the urban hub, and without a cable running past one's house, one is limited to a connection that is established through the ether—usually beaming to a far-flung satellite hovering overhead in geosynchronous orbit. (We forget that it has only been within the lifetime of some still living that we even got *electricity* out here.)

Last week that vaporous tether snapped after a two-hour downpour of monsoonal proportions, and this writer was forced into a purgatorial routine without his morning news, e-mail or Google. After all, how inhuman to expect a civilized bloke to eat his breakfast cereal without the day's political musings from the *Wall Street Journal*! And how am I to know the immediate proximity of the approaching thunderstorm when I can't get to the Doppler radar web site? How primitive!

Reduced to a solitary existence I would come dejectedly to my desk every morning feeling isolated, disengaged, alienated. My work habits suffered. I felt incomplete, suppressed—something like an Italian sports car restricted to 25 mph residential streets.

How shamefully odd that I do not always feel similarly stultified when I am cut off from my God things. Why is it that when my computer dies I bemoan the loss of e-mail before the loss of my Bible software? Why do I not see the loss of connectivity busyness as, instead, an opportunity to get back to basics with the Lord—to withdraw to my prayer closet for quality time with Him uninterrupted by the distracting din of the world outside?

Are we looking in the wrong place for our solace? Are we using the wrong connection? The prophet Jer-

emiah, bemoaning the spiritual (as well as physical) condition of his people, pointed out that they were looking for help in the wrong places.

For the brokenness of the daughter of my people
I am broken;
I mourn, dismay has taken hold of me.
Is there no balm in Gilead?
Is there no physician there?
Why then has not the health of the daughter of
my people been restored?

Jeremiah 8:21-22

The prophet said, *You have everything you need close at hand! Why are you looking elsewhere?*

God is not against technology any more than He is against a walk in the woods. Neither is He a doddering old man who cannot understand these newfangled things. Our God is as much the creator of the iPhone as the trees of the forest. He is as much the creator of the Internet (Al Gore notwithstanding) as He is the beasts of the field. These modern things are as much a gift from Him as anything else on this earth.

But how we use these gifts is up to us. Just as the young lass with her attention glued to the contraption cradled in her hand sees nothing of the passing beauty around her, those of us who get the bends whenever we lose our digital Internet connection miss the glory and grace and good health of spending superior analog time with our Lord.

There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin sick soul.

Negro Spiritual

