

A DETERMINED *Purity*

I will sing of lovingkindness and justice,
To You, O Lord, I will sing praises.
I will give heed to the blameless way.
When will You come to me?
I will walk within my house in the integrity
of my heart.
I will set no worthless thing before my
eyes;
I hate the work of those who fall away;
It shall not fasten its grip on me.
A perverse heart shall depart from me;
I will know no evil.
Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor,
him I will destroy;
No one who has a haughty look and an
arrogant heart will I endure.
My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the
land, that they may dwell with me;
He who walks in a blameless way is the
one who will minister to me.
He who practices deceit shall not dwell
within my house;
He who speaks falsehood shall not maintain
his position before me.
Every morning I will destroy all the
wicked of the land,
So as to cut off from the city of the Lord all
those who do iniquity.

Psalms 101:1-8



ONE DAY THE FARMER who owns the land south of our property—a hillside dense with old oak and hickory trees that descends for about a quarter mile to a creek—decided to open it up for bow and shotgun hunters. He cut wide swathes through the timber, winding a crude road up the hill, around by our back gate, then winding it back down toward the creek. He cut out small cul-de-sacs for hunters to park their pick-up trucks. He tore out stumps, and mowed the new pathways for easier access. All this took place within spitting distance of our south fence, just beyond the pond.

We are not hunters, nor do we enjoy hearing the percussive report of a shotgun taking a life. But since this happy hunting ground was being created on someone else's property, there was little we could do about it.

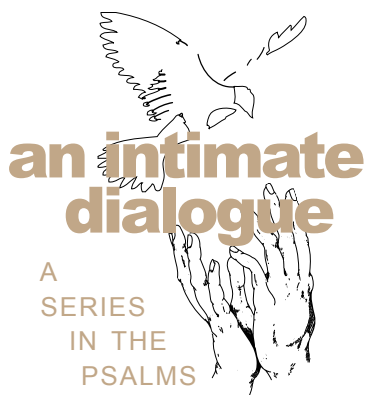
So I did the one thing I could. I set out with hammer and nails and a stack of shiny new metal signs to post around the perimeter of our land. And most I deployed at the south fence, affixing to the trees on our side glaring red and black declarations that this was "Private

Property: No Trespassing" and that we would permit "No Hunting." I did everything I could to make it crystal clear that the killing would stop at the fence. It would go no further.

no further

I have been known to be utterly fearless (read: foolhardy) when it comes to hunters encroaching on our land. Upon spying a shotgun-toting hunter daring to set foot where he shouldn't, I have been known to be unthinkingly fearless. It is not so much bravery as blind primal rage. My own safety doesn't even occur to me (much to the distress of my better half).

Years ago I was dressing in my upstairs bathroom when I noticed a car slowing on the road that borders our front field. To my alarm, the driver braked, pointed a shotgun or rifle through his window, and fired at something in our field—and in the direction of our house. This driver not only ignored the "No Hunting" sign posted right in front of him, but broke the law by firing from his car. Barely dressed, I ran from the house, crossed the front lawn, and screamed at the gun-toting



miscreant who had gotten out of his car to retrieve that at which he had just shot. I can happily report that he did not turn the gun on me, but quickly returned to his car and drove off.

I may be fearless against the seasonal hunter, but against what else do I demonstrate such uncompromising conviction? To what else do I stand at the border of my property and declare, "You will go no further!"

This is what King David was saying when he penned Psalm 101 just before he ascended the throne. In eight succinct verses he erects a bold "No Trespassing" sign against sin. Too wise to deny its existence, he nonetheless stands tall at the border of his home, his land, his administration and declares, "You will go no further!"

beginning with praise

David begins his litany of vows with praise to their recipient. So should we all.

Before anything else, O Lord, I will sing praise to You. When I ascribe to You mercy and wise judgment, my heart will make beautiful music in Your name.

Let us henceforth practice the habit of beginning our times with God in praise. No matter the reason for our prayer—be it contrition, intercession, confession, entreaty, or vow—let us begin by acknowledging His singular qualities, His preeminence over our lives.

Then let us examine *ourselves* before we address the evil that lies in wait beyond our border.

Piety must begin at home. Our first duties are those within our own abode. We must have a perfect heart at home, or we cannot keep a perfect way abroad. Notice that these words are a part of a song, and that there is no music like the harmony of a gracious life, no psalm so sweet as the daily practice of holiness. Reader, how fares it with your family? Do you sing in the choir and sin in the chamber? Are you a saint abroad and a devil at home? For shame! What we are at home, that we are indeed.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

I vow to know the morally sound path and to walk in it. When can I expect You to join me? Meanwhile, even inside my private home I will behave with moral integrity.

confronting evil

When the hunters came closer to our property, I determined to do everything in my power to keep them on the other side of the fence. But do I practice the same level of determination when it comes to the insidious infiltration of my *moral* enemy? Do I shut the gate and stand immovable against the evil that dwells all around my family?

But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

1 Timothy 6:11-12

At the beginning of his administration, King David resolved to stand firm against corrupting evil.

I vow, as well, that I will not place before my eyes anything that might harm my walk in Your righteousness. I despise the behavior of those who have swerved off Your path. I vow that I will not permit their ways to become a part of me.

I will not keep company with those who have a twisted heart. I will not learn evil.

I will cut off anyone who slanders a brother. I will not be a party to gossip. I will not put up with those who think they are better than everyone else.

renewal

David knew the way of all flesh. He knew that today's promise can become tomorrow's regret. He knew that it was not enough for the godly to defensively avoid sin; they must *offensively* seek out righteousness.

Instead, I will spend time with those who build up rather than tear down. I choose

the counsel of those who walk in the way of righteousness.

I will not invite the duplicitous into my house, around my family. Those who deal falsely, those who are liars, will forfeit their standing in my sight.

At the beginning of every day I will cut off the ungodly voice, so that those who would bring only trouble will have no influence on my life.

The wickedness of earth-bound flesh lies all around us. The believer dwells in enemy territory. Every morning we must renew our vow; every morning we must recommit ourselves to stand firm against the corrupting influence of evil.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.

2 Timothy 2:15,20-23

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