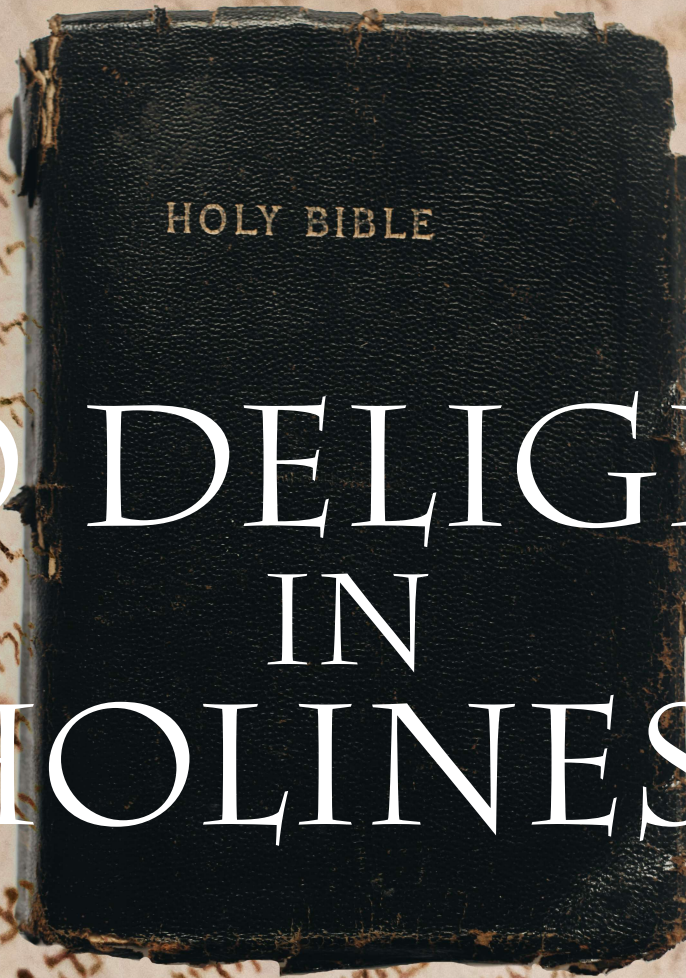


Reflections by the Pond

THE WRITINGS OF DAVID S LAMPEL



TO DELIGHT IN HOLINESS

The perennial question from time immemorial has been, “Why are we here? What is man’s purpose?” The correct answer has been staring man in the face for the same period of time: To glorify God and edify man—in that order.

There is too much in this world set on tearing us down, to, day by unmerciful day, drag us down into an ever lower level of depravity. Those who excuse their base writing as simply mirroring society are lying. They know better. They are purposefully dragging us further down to their own level of hatred for God and His economy.

The two-fold purpose of Reflections by the Pond is to, first of all, bring glory and honor to God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and then to build up believers into a higher—and deeper—level of sanctification.

And by His grace, we will.



Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, For I delight in it.

Psalm 119:35

Our personal catalog of memories often confuses our understanding of God's word.

There were activities in my childhood in which I delighted, many with a direct connection to my present occupation, and most a source of vexation to the adults who had charge over me.

When in grade school the teacher prattled on about this or that which we were there to learn, while most heads of my fellow students were aimed in the teacher's direction, mine was turned toward the open window. My delight was to be lost in my own thoughts and imaginings as I followed the clouds traipsing by through that mystical portal. At the time this was not afforded

the gentle praise of "inspiration," but was ridiculed as "daydreaming." And, depending on the personality of the teacher for each class, I would periodically be jolted back to the front of the classroom by a commanding retort or a swift slap upside the head. Thus at the dreaded Parent-Teacher Conferences, my mom and dad would be repeatedly informed, regardless the grade, regardless the teacher, that "David does not apply himself." It is no doubt still recorded in the dusty archives of Franklin School that "David does not apply himself."

In the more comfortable environs of our home my delight was to be lost down in a corner of the basement, inventing something from the tubes and wires and mysterious mechanical parts of an old television chassis, or out in my tree house leafing through old *National Geographic* magazines, being transported to far away exotic lands. To Mom's piercing call for me to burn papers or shake the rugs I would answer, "OK," then go back to what I was doing. On her fourth or fifth attempt to pry me away from my delight, I would finally, reluctantly obey.

In practice, no one ever had to make me do that which was truly my delight. To the contrary, someone in authority was always trying to make me do something that was most decidedly *not* my delight.

In a perfect world no one, least of all Yahweh, should be required to make us do anything in which we delight. We would run to it on our own, luxuriate in its warmth, be inexorably drawn to it as metal is to a magnet. But this is *not* a perfect world, and not one of us has a perfect devotion to either God's word or its Author.

No matter how much we love the commandments of God—and everyone has experienced that bright and shining moment when a passage has lifted off the page to drill its way into our heart—no matter how devoted we are to what He has written to us,

This is the cry of a child that longs to walk, but is too feeble; of a pilgrim who is exhausted, yet pants to be on the march; of a lame man who pines to be able to run. It is a blessed thing to delight in holiness, and surely he who gave us this delight will work in us the yet higher joy of possessing and practising it. Here is our only hope; for we shall not go in the narrow path till we are made to do so by the Maker's own power. O thou who didst once make me, I pray thee make me again: thou hast made me to know; now make me to go. Certainly I shall never be happy till I do, for my sole delight lies in walking according to thy bidding.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

The problem is, we—the flesh, the Old Man, the old nature of previous being—have *other* delights, and they all have a habit of pushing, of elbowing their way to the front of the line. Our spirit and portions of our mind can state in all sincerity that they delight in the Lord's commandments, His law, His will for our lives. But from other portions of our being come roadblocks, excuses, cravings for other delights.

And the battle is engaged once again.

This is why the psalmist cries out in his stunted devotion,

Make me walk in the path of Your
commandments...
Incline my heart to Your testimonies...
Turn away my eyes from looking
at vanity,
And revive me in Your ways.
Establish Your word to Your servant...
Revive me through Your righteousness.

from Psalm 119:35-40

Flesh, in this instance, cannot win against flesh. Only the Lord God Himself can win this battle. So our song must daily be,

You, O God, make me walk in the path of Your commandments...

You, O God of truth, incline my heart to Your testimonies...

You, O God of holiness, turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, and revive me in Your ways.

You, O God of truth, establish Your word to Your servant...

You, O God of righteousness, revive me through Your righteousness. //



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If Your law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction.

Psalm 119:92

Misery is debilitating. Whether the affliction resides in the physical, the mental, the emotions, or the spirit, it can and often will affect our entire being. Physical pain can dull our senses, shut down our reasoning powers, depress our spirit. Emotional pain can remove our appetite for nourishment, as well as inflict physical discomfort. There are few better reminders of the unified, interconnected nature of the many parts that comprise the human being.

Everything we know of God is in His word. It is true that living with His indwelling Spirit teaches the alert believer of God's ways. Thus, similar to living for many years with a husband or wife, we learn more *of* Him by living *with* Him. But it is from God's written word that we have the fine-grain details of who He is, how He does things and why, and what He expects from those who call upon His name.

Beyond that, and most precious of all, in His word we learn of God's love for us, and His love is the root and vine of our hope.

This is my comfort in my affliction,
That Your word has revived me.

Psalm 119:50

That we have the very word of God to hold in our hands is no accident of history; it is divine genius. From its fullness—its history, prophecies, poetry, biographies, and teachings God's word speaks of man's need for Him in all moments of earthly life. From its pages we regain our footing in a world that steadily works to throw us *off* our feet, in a culture that hates what is written on the Bible's every page.

On those same pages, however, *we* are revived. ☞

Let my cry come before You, O LORD; Give me understanding according to Your word.

Psalms 119:169

*I hesitate before the heavy, golden doors. Dare I enter?
It is true, I have been granted permission, but still... On the other side is He.
The One.*

The One who granted me the right to enter is there as well. He, the Lamb, the Lion. Both attend to the prayers, the praise, the worship from myriad myriads. ■ The immense doors have the density of immovable granite beneath my hands, like the base of an ancient mountain. Who could ever hope to move them? Yet at my slightest effort they swing wide, and I find myself in the throne room of Almighty He. ■ My senses tell me there are others present, that within these crystalline precincts worship individuals just like me, numbered beyond any earthly measure, a sea of prostrate millions upon millions. I feel them, but I do not notice them. Nor do I notice the swirling seraphim, the encircling elders, and endless waves of angels ministering and worshipping. My waking eyes see only the Objects of their devotion and mine. ■ They sit upon thrones carved from Eternity itself. I see the thrones, and the staggering luminescent beauty in which they are placed. I see the face of the Lamb, and my heart breaks with unbounded joy as my feet begin moving toward Him on their own. Just by gazing upon His face—so different, yet so familiar—all the qualities that personify Him flood into my mind, audibly, as if the chorus that surrounds me is singing them out in their praise: Grace, Kind, Forgiving, Gentle, Strong, King. All these are shouted between my ears until my unrestrained lips join in the chorus. All these and more are embodied in His visage. And every particle of my being shouts forth, “Worthy is the Lamb!”

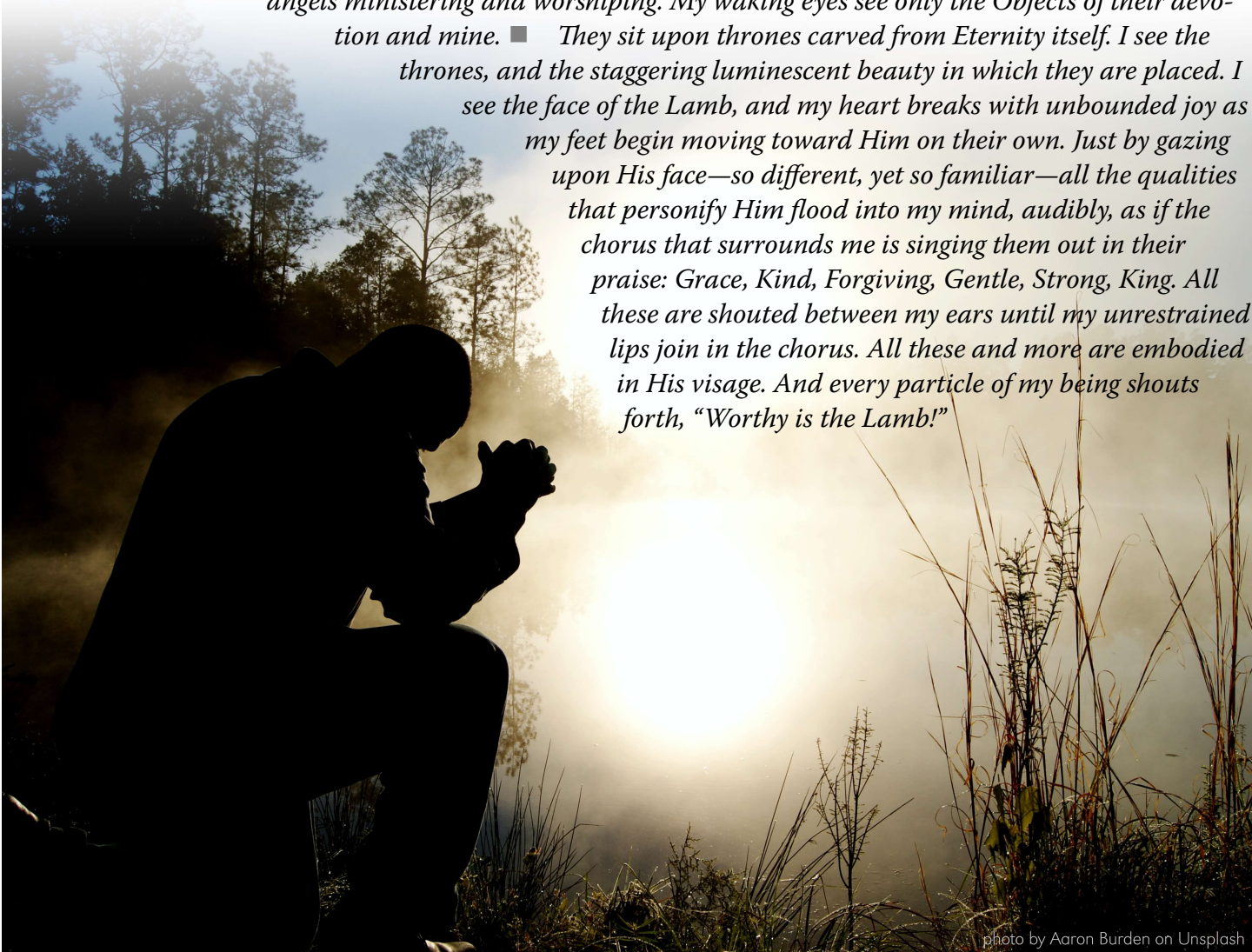


photo by Aaron Burden on Unsplash

My eyes resist leaving the face of the Lamb. but my eyes cannot bear the sight of He, Father God. Flesh—and I am still flesh—cannot survive His visage. It is fire; it is a holocaust. I know the face of my Lord, for He has inhabited flesh, but the face of my God is wreathed in fire and light, an unbearable Majesty. As I approach my gaze is downcast, submissively averted. He has told me in His word I can be here, in His very presence, but still...

The voice of the Spirit fills my mind, answering my unspoken prayer for permission to approach: “Take heart. Didn’t I say, ‘Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need’? Come boldly before the throne. Your cry will be heard.”

Obeying, I bow down before His footstool, His throne, and unburden my heart.

WHY DO WE PRAY, and why do we hesitate to pray? Why is it so hard for us to accept the truth of God’s word that Christ has, once and for all, spanned the gulf between flesh and holiness? The Lamb came to die an obscene, bloody death for our sins, to give His blood to atone for our depravity. But He also came to grant us entrance into the Holy of Holies, the Holiest

place, the throne room of Almighty God, where we are permitted to cry out to the Lord God *in person*. Because of the sacrifice of the Lamb, we can—in our mind, by the power of the Holy Spirit—push wide the golden doors and bow down at the feet of the one true God!

Oh, we say the words, we mouth the familiar church-words that indicate our understanding of all this. And, at times, we still do cry out to Him. Far too often, however, we hesitate, we convince ourselves that His Presence lies beyond our reach because of our repeated failings. “I am too filthy to be in His presence,” we tell ourselves.

God Himself, in His word, refutes this.

In my distress I called upon the LORD,
And cried to my God for help;
He heard my voice out of His temple,
And my cry for help before Him
came into His ears.

Psalm 18:6

Whatever the content of our cry—humiliated confession, supplication, worship, shouted praise, thanksgiving, loving devotion—we already have His permission to approach.

Come before His throne and be renewed by delighting in His presence, delighting in His holiness. ✎



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