

THOUGHTS

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SPEAKER ON THE WORD TODAY



O

GOD GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE

The word grace has been turned into an acronym by Christians, God's Riches At Christ's Expense. It is a good definition and is handy for an impromptu witness. Though it is not Scripture, it captures the essence of the Gospel. There is a passage which highlights God's justice and mercy, "He mocks proud mockers, but gives grace to the humble (Proverbs 3:34)."

C

To the humble person who recognizes their sin and asks the Lord for clemency, He is gracious for the sake of Christ. The humble person is forgiven and reassured of the Lord's love! Conversely, the arrogant and unrepentant are opposed by God. In this segment of Psalm 3, God's reaction to violent and proud people is negative. They are detested by God and described as under a curse, ultimately being condemned.

T

James, the brother of Jesus and an Apostle, wrote, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up (James 4:10)." There should be little room in the life of the Christian for arrogance. God will keep humans humble one way or the other; we either repent and live with sober awareness of how deeply we have disappointed God with our sins, or He must crush our pride. Perhaps you can guess which method I recommend in keeping our pride in check!

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B

To that end, when was the last time you prayed for humility? Have you ever prayed for it? I do not recall many Christian leaders encouraging the saints to pray for humility. Success Theology engenders a form of spiritual pride that can inflate the ego. Maybe at a moment of recognition of the danger of pride you uttered, "Lord, keep me humble." It's a good practice. The thrust of James' comments, the context of the exhortation to humble ourselves, is the teaching that the Holy Spirit envies our devotion. Our God is a jealous God, not meaning sinful jealousy, but the deserved right to our worship and devotion (see Exodus 5:1-8). It pleases God when we habitually humble ourselves, honor and praise Him, confess our sins to Him, and appreciate his grace!

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R

LIQUID DEATH

That is the name of the can of the sparkling (carbonated) water that my son, Michael, showed me. This drink is perhaps the epitome of sucker marketing, that is, a product which is essentially free, but has been packaged with a flourish to entice the weak consumer to part with their money to obtain it. This beverage comes right from some Alpine stream in Austria. An audacious blurb on the side of the can discusses the "infinitely recyclable" can, and how the water "after initially dismembering its thirst victims...used the severed body

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parts of dead thirsts to build itself a flesh suit." Am I supposed to be impressed enough to spend my money on this? Evidently a corporation thinks so. There are a staggering number of products that sell essentially because of their logos, often emblazoned with dark images of skulls. The specter of death is marketable, but not suitable for broad consumption by Christians.

Water quality studies show that often local tap water is superior to canned or bottled water. I constantly find opened, partially drunk bottles of water at church. People can't be bothered to finish them, but rather leave them wherever they please. Hardly a week goes by that I do not find one or two unfinished bottles of water with half the contents unused. Sometimes we Christians do not look much like concerned stewards of the Earth.

Liquid Death symbolizes the excess of our culture. When a corporation puts out a product that has no advantage over tap water, and people buy it, we have a consumption problem! I wonder at times where our culture stands historically in terms of excess if we were able to back out the technological advancements and compare habits of the hoi polloi. Would we rank as better or worse than the Romans or Greeks? I'm sure they would look at us as if we were insane for glamorizing water in an un-reusable container.

That brings me to my last point about Liquid Death; on the can it makes appeal to the purchaser that 10% of profits will "help kill plastic pollution." Perhaps I am not the only one to sense an irony in a frivolous canned product that is going to "help" reduce plastic waste. Never mind the waste associated with the material and manufacturing costs of the can! Yes, the world may end in Plastic Armageddon – it's a material that is suffocating the planet and slowly killing animal life. Witness the floating islands of plastic in the ocean, debris in the Mariana Trench, and the marine life engorged from consuming plastic bits. Somehow, I suspect the motives of the makers of Liquid Death are less than noble. The global solution, which should be led by Christians, is not to despise a natural resource that does not need to be bottled or canned!

YOU SEE IT COMING

I am noticing the first of the leaves turning red. Winter cometh! Jesus talked about the signs of the times. If humans can discern the approach of Winter, shouldn't they be able to discern the approach of the Judgment? People are masterful at denying reality. They live near volcanoes, along coasts that are pummeled by hurricanes, on mountainsides that are swept by fire. We see it also in our bodies; strength ebbs, skin wrinkles, memory gaps appear. We see IT coming – the Judgment. We have time to prepare our hearts, ready our spirit, admonish a sinner, exhort the lazy. It's coming. You can be ready through reliance upon God's mercy in forgiving your sins and through continued discipling. Today it seems distant, but it won't be long. You know it.

Blessings,
Douglas W. Schroeder