

Monday, September 21, 2009

This summer, as I pondered the beauty of Walworth County, I concluded one of the words which best reflects our area is "REFRESH". For generations people have come from the busy cities to the quiet communities, the farms and open fields, the lakes and golf courses of our county to find refreshment and renewal. Many of you are descendants of working men from Chicago who would bring their families up for the summer and commute back to work for the week. What is "Spiritual Refreshment" and do people find it here?

Last week I led you through what I believe to be Calvary's mandate from God for this our 89th year... "Help people Engage with God." It means helping people move spiritually from lostness to awareness of God, then from awareness to encounters with God, then from encounters to engagement with God and finally to such a wonderful relationship with God that they are helping others engage with God! That my friends, will bring the most significant and important change to any family, business or county! It will rescue people from alcoholism, drug use, adultery or pornography. It will heal broken relationships and mend broken hearts. But how, you might ask... that is our focus this week: "God REFRESHES those who ENGAGE with Him"!

The Bible contains the accounts of many people just like you and me who, when they encounter God, begin to change, and when they 'engage with God' (step into an authentic relationship with God), God does a significant work in their minds and hearts. First is His rescue of us from evil bondage (Col. 1:13,14) and forgiveness of our sin (Eph. 1:7,8) by His grace. Second is full cleansing of our sin guilt (1 John 1:9) and freedom from any sin condemnation (Romans 8:1). Third, God places His Holy Spirit within those who are "engaged" in a genuine trust relationship with Jesus Christ (John 3:3-7; Romans 8:5-9) and fourth, drawn by our love for God in response to His love for us, we begin thinking and living "refreshed"...consider Colossians 3:1-17; Ephesians 4:17 through chapter 6. Are these descriptions of YOU as a Spiritually Refreshed person my friend? Ask God right now for a fresh "spiritual refreshment" and worship Him. Consider praying through Psalm 71 and 86 as an expression of "Refreshment".

Tuesday, September 22, 2009

I love long, warm summer days...the smell of fresh cut grass, smoke from BBQ grills, the laughter of families children enjoying vacation, the lake filled with boaters and swimmers. I love summer sweet corn and visitors from all over coming to enjoy our part of America as they "refresh". But I love even more, watching people gather for Spiritual Refreshment as we worship and "engage" our hearts with God! I love our summer baptism in the lake, sending out our summer missions teams, the Patriotic Concert and Summer Summit. What about you?

HOPE is one of the most significant things "spiritual refreshment" awakens in a person who is engaging with God. It was our summer theme verse, Hebrews 6:19, remember? "*We have this HOPE as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.*" It's our 2009 theme verse "*The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary and His understanding no one can fathom. Those who HOPE in the LORD will renew their strength.*" (Is. 40:28,31)

How do you describe HOPE? Is it an intellectual experience or emotional change? Is it the affect of new information which changes perception in circumstances? Is it new possibilities or options?

Moses brought HOPE to 2 million Hebrew slaves when he told them he had met with God on the mountain and God promised He would deliver them from Egypt! But their hopes were dashed when Pharaoh refused and insisted they find their own straw for brick making with no reduction in their daily quota! (Exodus 4:29-5:23) Gideon had great HOPE when 32,000 warriors turned out to help him fight Midianite invaders (Judges 6,7) but hopes were dashed when 31,700 left him before the fight! Do you see the common problem? HOPE built on any human person, human promise, human organization...will surely fail at some point. But HOPE in God is steadfast, because God is unchanging (Mal. 3:6; Hebrews 13:8). His character, His attributes, His promises, His power are all firm and secure. His love for you is unconditional and unwavering. "*The LORD delights in those who put their HOPE in His unfailing love.*" (Ps. 147:11) Where is your HOPE rooted today? Is it real?

Wednesday, September 23, 2009

REFRESHMENT...what is this miraculous thing? It happens when you spend time with dear friends you haven't seen in a long time, or have your favorite meal, or visit your favorite childhood memory place. It happens listening to your favorite music or resting after a long, hard day. It also happens when help comes as you face very difficult life situations. Spiritual Refreshment happens as God intervenes and brings HELP to you. Have you experienced that many times in your life?

Psalms 120-135, as you know, are called "the Songs of Ascent", as they were sung by Jews traveling to Jerusalem for any of the great annual festivals. Can you see it...thousands of folks walking along the roads together, coming from all directions, and spontaneously singing these songs of their shared heritage. Psalm 122 says "*I lift up my eyes unto the hills, where does my HELP come from? My HELP comes from the LORD the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip...the LORD watches over your coming and going, both now and forever more!*" (Psalm 122:1,2,8) I've walked some of those rugged trails, especially down south between high cliffs on each side. Historically, people like to build their places of worship on hilltops...and as the Hebrew pilgrims looked up, they often saw the small temples of foreign peoples. Rather than finding hope and help from them, God's people found great confidence in declaring that Jehovah God built the mountain on which other peoples built their prayer places!

Today, I urge you to read Matthew 9. Look at the different people who took great effort to find Jesus in their desperate time of need, expecting He would HELP them. How many do you discover and what different needs propelled them?

Spiritual Refreshment in time of great need is, of course, dependant upon your confidence that God has the Ability and Desire to help you! Where do you find that confidence? Consider Matthew 11:28-30 as Jesus' direct invitation to you. "*Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.*" What attributes must Jesus have if He will be able to give you rest for ALL the heavy issues which burden and weary you... why not list them here and their Scripture assurance? I'll get you started: Isaiah 45:22,23!

Thursday, September 24, 2009

I'm sure you've noticed there is something almost miraculous that happens down deep in your emotional spirit when you have a long weekend at the lake, or long anticipated vacation at your favorite place with your favorite people. What is that? May I call it "Refreshment Healing"? How does "Spiritual Refreshment Healing" happen for you? You know what I mean. Healing of a broken heart, a discouraged spirit, a broken relationship...what's the miracle that makes it possible?

The Bible is filled with the stories of real people like you and me who found themselves in deeply painful situations. Joseph, sold as a slave by his own brothers then imprisoned by his boss because of the lies of his boss' wife (Gen. 37,39). Jacob worked 7 years to earn the hand of the woman he loved, then found her father cheated him and gave Jacob her older sister on their wedding night (Gen. 29)! Or the failed leadership of Eli as High Priest when he refused to discipline his sons (1 Samuel 2) or King David when he committed adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11,12). Life is filled with disappointment, frustration, broken promises and relationships...we live in a sin filled world.

Question: what problem is too big for God? What doesn't He understand or in what situation might God find His resources insufficient, His wisdom inadequate, His power not enough?

Yesterday I urged you to read Matthew 9. Today, let's add Matthew 14. The beheading of John the Baptist was horrible and it broke Jesus' heart when He heard. He longed for a quiet place of refreshment, but instead the relentless crowds followed...look closely. Spiritual Refreshment is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 14,15,16) as we live in close relationship with Jesus as our Savior and God the Father as our Heavenly Father. (Did you get that?) While not mentioned, the Holy Spirit refreshed Jesus in Matt. 14, so He could respond in compassion to the crowds, even though He was grieving the loss of John. It's the same work of the Holy Spirit in your heart when you seek God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9) and extend forgiveness to another (Eph. 4:32) or you offer your pain to God in prayer (Phil. 4:6,9). Ponder this, it's powerful!! Do you need His healing?

Friday, September 25, 2009

All this week we've been examining "Spiritual Refreshment". It is God's work in you, in response to your "Engagement" with Him. By "engagement" I mean the development of an authentic, vibrant, alive relationship with God as you see described in the lives of many people in the Bible. This is NOT religion...it's a vibrant relationship with God.

I've helped you see God brings HOPE to you as He Spiritually Refreshes you. He also offers HELP and HEALING at the point of your need. Finally, I have found few things help me gain a proper perspective in life more than a HEAVEN perspective. Humanity has been fascinated with "life after death" going all the way back in history. The great pyramids stand as evidence of that! So what do you believe will happen at the moment of your death? Where will you be 2 weeks later?

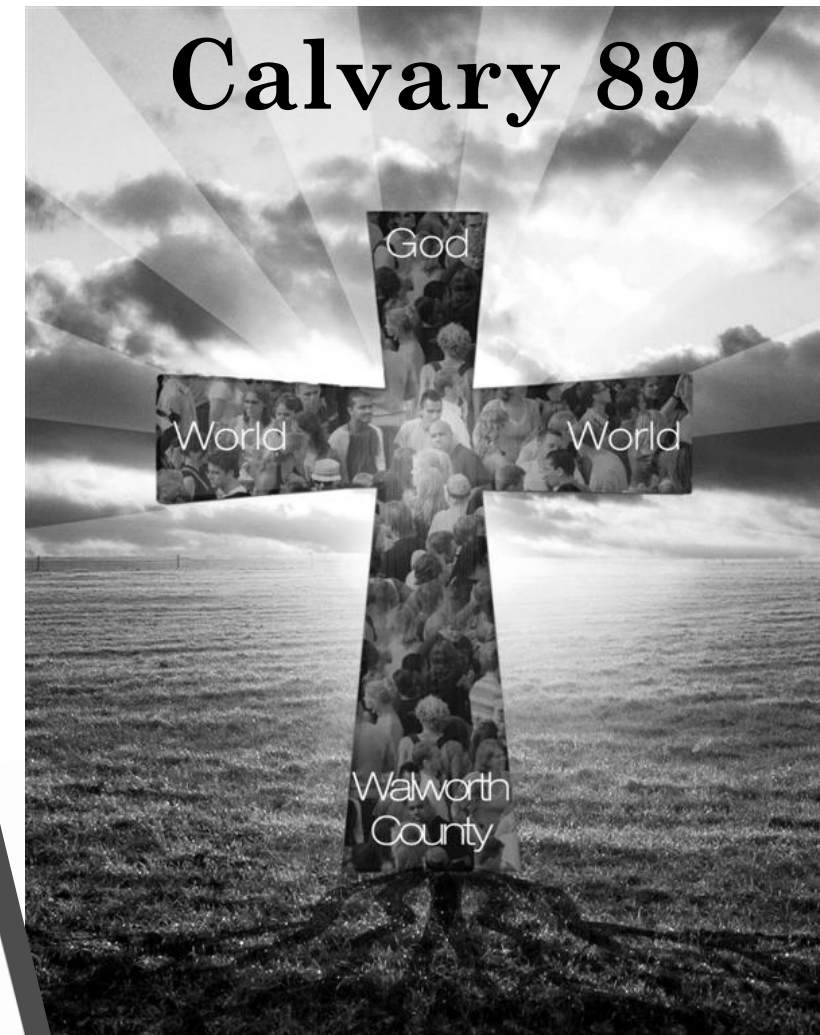
The Apostle Paul obviously thought much about it, for he mentions it in almost every letter he writes! To the Corinthians, he states his confidence that a new heavenly body will replace your earthly body (1 Corinthians 15) and that "as long as we are at home in this body we are away from the Lord." (2 Cor. 4:14-5:8). To the Philippian Christians Paul writes "I am torn between the two..I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is more necessary for you that I remain..." (Phil. 1:20-25). He was convinced that at the moment of his "departure" (death) he would be with Jesus Christ, and he was anxious to get going!

To his faithful friend Timothy, Paul writes "the time for my departure has come...now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me..." (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Clearly Paul was ready to go, expecting it would be a sweet reunion in God's presence. Finally, to the Thessalonian Christians, Paul writes about the return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Are you just as confident that you'll be immediately in God's presence when your body dies? God created your soul/spirit to never die, and if you have trusted Jesus Christ to be your Savior, you can stand 100% confident death will simply be a transition from earthly living to heavenly living. If you can learn to look at this life from the perspective of heaven, you will find great refreshment!!



Pastor Doug Anderson

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