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GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

The God of grace has given us an interesting passage in the book of Ezekiel (14:1-5) so that we have a clearer understanding of the nature of our daily battle with sin.

Some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat down in front of me. Then the word of the Lord came to me: “Son of man, these men have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces. Should I let them inquire of me at all? Therefore speak to them and tell them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: When any of the Israelites set up idols in their hearts and put a wicked stumbling block before their faces and then go to a prophet, I the Lord will answer them myself in keeping with their great idolatry. I will do this to recapture the hearts of the people of Israel, who have all deserted me for their idols.’”

At first look, this passage is about the right people doing the right thing. The elders of Israel, who are the nation’s spiritual leaders, are coming to God’s prophet to hear a word from the Lord. But the message that came back was not at all what they expected to hear. God essentially says, “These men have idols in their hearts that will put a wicked stumbling block before their faces, and because this is true, it is the only thing that I am interested in talking about.” God is saying that whatever rules our hearts will exercise inescapable control over you behavior. Whatever captures you thoughts and desires will then direct the things that we say and do. God knew that if he did not deal with the deeper issue of the elders of Israel’s idolatry, whatever he told them would be twisted by, or used in service of, their idols. Notice that God is not talking about statues of false gods, but something that had taken residence in, and control over, the hearts of these men.

The heart is where spiritual warfare rages. Spiritual warfare is deeper than behavior. It is fought at the point of the thing that controls our behavior, that is, the thoughts and motives of our hearts. This war rages in the most mundane moments of our everyday lives. It is not just the desire for what God says is evil. Desire for even a good thing becomes a bad thing when that desire comes a ruling thing.

And so what about us? Do we tend to think that spiritual warfare doesn’t include us? Have we given into the temptation of thinking that because we identify as a Christian that there can’t be any idols in our lives?

During this season of Lent, let us confess that our hearts do wander. During this Lenten season, let us ask the Lord to show us where our hearts may be under the control of something other than God. Let us examine what we really crave and what we really want for our lives. Let's look for that person, place, or thing that has become too important to us. Let us ask God to assure us of the forgiveness that Jesus died to give us.

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me” (Psalm 51:10-12).

“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die” (John 11:25-26).

We carry out this Lenten service in the name of the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE READING OF *THE PASSION HISTORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST*

Please give your attention to the reading of the fifth of six readings from *The Passion History of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. These readings are drawn from the four Gospels.

Hymn

Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain, *on page 4 of this worship guide*

MESSAGE

The Hands of the Passion: Hands of Hypocrisy

Based on Mark 14:55-65

PRAYERS

Pastor Kevin: Grant, Lord, that the lips which here have sung your praise may continue to glorify you in the world;

All: that the ears which have heard you speak may be open always to your Word and closed to hatred and discord;

Pastor Kevin: that the tongues which have confessed your name may always speak the truth without fear;

All: that all of us who have worshiped together tonight may be united in love for each other as you have loved us in Jesus.

All: I thank you, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day. Forgive me all my sins, and graciously keep me this night. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Hymn

Jesus, My Great High Priest, *on page 5 of this worship guide*

BLESSING

May God grant you good health and hope in Jesus.

LENT

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Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain

1 Come to Cal - v'ry's ho - ly moun - tain, Sin - ners, ru - ined
2 Come in pov - er - ty and mean - ness, Come de - filed, with -
3 Come in sor - row and con - tri - tion, Wound - ed, par - a -
4 He that drinks shall live for - ev - er; 'Tis a soul - re -

by the fall; Here a pure and heal - ing foun - tain
out, with - in; From in - fec - tion and un - clean - ness,
lyzed, and blind; Here the guilt - y, free re - mis - sion,
new - ing flood. God is faith - ful; God will nev - er

Flows to you, to me, to all, In a full, per -
From the lep - ro - sy of sin, Wash your robes and
Here the trou - bled, peace may find. Health this foun - tain
Break his cov - e - nant of blood, Signed when our Re -

pet - ual tide, O - pened when our Sav - ior died.
make them white; You shall walk with God in light.
will re - store; He that drinks shall thirst no more.
deem - er died, Sealed when he was glo - ri - fied.

Text: James Montgomery, 1771-1854, alt.
Tune: Ludvig M. Lindeman, 1812-87

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359 *Allegro* Jesus, My Great High Priest

1 Je - sus, my great High Priest, Of - fered his blood and
 2 To Christ, my sub - sti - tute, Will I com - mit my
 3 My ad - vo - cate ap - pears For my de - fense on
 4 Should all the hosts of death And pow'rs of hell un -

died; My guilt - y con - science seeks No sac - ri -
 cause; He an - swers and ful - fills His Fa - ther's
 high; A gra - cious Fa - ther hears And lays his
 known Put their most dread - ful forms Of rage and

fice be - side. His pow'r - ful blood did once a -
 bro - ken laws. Be - hold my soul at free - dom
 thun - der by. Not all that hell or sin can
 mis - chief on, I shall be safe, for Christ dis -

tone, And now it pleads be - fore the throne.
 set — My Je - sus paid the dread - ful debt!
 say Shall turn his heart, his love, a - way.
 plays Su - pe - rior pow'r and guard - ian grace.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748, abr., alt.
 Tune: John Goss, 1800-80

BEVAN
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