

The Value of Still Silence

“Be still, and know that I am God, be still, My child, be still. For I created all of life, Be still, My child, be still” (sic). This is the first verse of a beloved hymn written by Glenda B. Schales. It stems from Psalm 46:10, “*Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*” (KJV) There is a paramount need for us to heed this admonition to *be still*...

Snap-Face, Insta-Book, Chat-Book, Net-Lu, Hu-Flix and Twits have consumed us. We cannot enjoy a walk, hike, or run through, let alone just sitting and soaking in, the majestic beauty of God’s creation without man’s technology to occupy our minds, or capture and post it on social media. We must have a play-list to mow the lawn or do yard-work. We can’t drive the car without a media-player of some sort spewing entertainment. We leave the television on even when we’re not watching it. We can’t have a conversation or meal together without the continual downward glance at our ever-present phones. I even saw an advertisement for a transparent shower curtain with “pockets” on the outside so we can watch our tablets or check our phones while we shower. The Wi-Fi “being out” is presumed purgatory. We, seemingly, must have our minds occupied at all times with multiple sources of attention grabbing “noise.” And yet, the Word of God says, “*make it your ambition to lead a quiet life....*” 1Thessalonians 4:11. *Hesuchadzo* (the Greek word translated as “*quiet*” in this passage) is defined as *to keep quiet; to rest, to cease from labor; to be silent* (Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon). I know- I get it. Let the jokes begin about the preacher who: uses technology daily; who has never been “still” behind the pulpit in 30+ years of preaching; and is so long-winded that he was surely “vaccinated with a phonograph needle as a child and never got over it.” (If you have no idea what a “phonograph needle” is, ask your paren.... grandparents!) Who am I to tout the values of *stillness* and *silence*? “Nobody, except one who has learned to appreciate and benefit from stillness and silence at the times such can be achieved” is the answer.

I love the passage in Exodus 14:13-14. God had delivered His people from Egyptian bondage through ten awe-inspiring plagues. With a mighty hand, He led them out as conquering possessors of the wealth of Egypt and inheritors of the Promised Land of Canaan. But when they saw the dust rising from Pharaoh’s ensuing army of chariots behind them, and the Red Sea before them, they panicked. They forgot His previous deliverances, His past protections, His continuing provisions, and His precious promises. They cried out against His appointed leader Moses with shameful blame, faithless pessimism, and cruel cowardice, Exodus 14:11-12. But notice carefully his words of both rebuke and deliverance in vv.13-14, “*Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see again forever. The Lord will fight for you while you **keep silent.***” Though it might not be the best translation of the Hebrew *yatsab*, the KJV renders it as “*stand **still***” in v.13. We’re sometimes reminded that we don’t *hear* well while we’re talking, but Moses intimates that it also helps our *seeing* if we “*stand still*”! Putting both of these thoughts together, we get be “*still and silent*” to better see and *hear*. Wonderful advice!

Could it be that we so occupy our eyes and ears with the constant “noise” and “flicker” of our gadgets and technology that we prevent ourselves from truly *seeing* and *hearing* God? Read again Psalm 19. How can we see and *hear* the *glorious story* the heavens are telling us if we are never *still* and *silent* enough to behold and marvel at them, v.1? How can we comprehend the *speech* that *the day pours forth* or discern *the knowledge the night reveals* if we’re not *still* and *silent* enough to listen, vv.2-6? How can we marvel at the *perfection, restorative power, surety, and wisdom* of the *Law of the Lord* if

we're never really *still* and *silent* enough to give it our undivided attention, v.7? How can we receive the intended *rejoicing* of our *hearts* and *enlightening of our eyes* that the *righteous precepts* and *pure commandments* provide if we're never *still* and *silent* enough to truly *look* at and *listen* to them, v.8? Could it be that we fail to esteem the true *value* and *taste* the *sweetness* of God's *law, testimony, precepts, commandments, fear, and judgments* of the Lord because of a simple failure to be *still* and *silent* long enough to truly *see* and *hear* them? Probably.

Make time to be *still* and *silent* in both the beauties of God's "natural revelation" of nature, and the "specific revelation" of His inspired Word. Allow your *eyes* and your *ears* time to *see* and *hear* God's glory by "unplugging" and "disconnecting" whenever and wherever possible.

Sometimes we overlook or ignore the final verse of Psalm 19. This is unfortunate because the real point of *seeing* and *hearing* what both "nature" and "Law" tell us is summarized there. Note, "*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer,*" Psalm 19:14. The *revelations* of "nature" and "Law" are not there just to awe or please us. Their purpose is to *change* us into what is "*acceptable*" to God. And they will do just that, if we will be *still* and *silent* long enough to truly *see* and *hear* them! (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)