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“From the Pastor’s Desk”

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LET GOD WORK OUT THE DETAILS OF YOUR LIFE

*“Man’s goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?”
Prov. 20:24*

Adam Clarke in his commentary on this verse said, *“He, by his providence, governs all the great concerns of the world. Man often traverses these operations; but he does it to his own damage.”* There is an old saying that says; *“They who will carve for themselves shall cut their fingers.”*

Recently, I have found myself in quite a dither or tizzy, if there is such a word, over a situation of which I had no control. Usually when this happens, I like to share my anxiousness with Ginny, my wife, or a close colleague in ministry whose wisdom I trust. But for one reason or another I didn’t feel the freedom to do this. So I turned to the Word and asked God to help me work through this situation. It was on this occasion that this newsletter article was birthed. I hope it will be of use to someone on our mailing list.

While I don’t care to share the details of my condition I do say that Proverbs 20:24 spoke to my soul. You see I was trying to understand why God allowed a particular situation to happen. The verse implies when God is involved we should not always expect to understand or be given an immediate explanation. Why? *Man’s goings are of the Lord.* He does govern the affairs of our life.

We may think we are doing the navigating; the truth is as Adam Clarke said, ***“the act of motion from place to place is not without the concourse of his providence.”*** For it is *“in Him, we live, move and have our being.”* Therefore, if God is involved in which I truly believe He is, then, we need to trust Him even when He is not providing the explanation. Man, often times operate in the dark. This is why we need the light of the Gospel. The story of the cross tells us that even when there is a crucifixion, there will be a resurrection. Let me illustrate what I mean. Please open your Bible to Genesis, chapter 27...and read the first four verses.

WHEN ISAAC THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO DIE.

One morning, Isaac, the son of Abraham, and father of Esau and Jacob, awakened to the thought that his days were numbered and he like all other men, was not going to live forever, that is in this life. Not that he was naive or ignorant, but maybe due to his infirmities he was brought face to face with his own mortality. None of us enjoy dwelling on such a subject because, first of all, it is depressing and what can you really do about it. It is appointed unto man once to die. Heb. 9:27

What may have prompted the reality on this day was probably the recent death of his father (Gen. 25). Abraham did have the blessing of living a long time; 175 years. However, when his father died Isaac was not young. He was about 140 years of age and he had some infirmities. The writer of Genesis said, *“Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim.”* (Gen. 27:1) When you are old and you see the changes quickly taking place you are forced, whether you like it or not, to face this reality.

So, with death on his mind, Isaac called his first born and favorite son to his room and shared with him the strong possibility of his death taking place rather soon. *“My son: and he said unto him, I am old, I know not the day of my death: Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.”* Gen. 27:1-4

What was he thinking? Well it is pretty evident that he was thinking about who would handle his estate, care for the mother of his children, as well as take care of the sheep, and his estate which he had inherited from his own father. Death may have become an obsession with him. William Cowper wrote: *“Far happier are the dead, methinks, than they who look for death, and fear it every day.”*

With death on Isaac’s mind, he decides to enjoy the best of what life had given him as if to drink it all in in a moment of time. He lived by the rule: *“eat drink and be merry”* for tomorrow you may die. So he sent his son out to bring him his favorite dish of venison...because he was convinced that would lift his spirits and being lifted he would bless his son, make out his will, and determine the destiny of future generations. What he did not realize however, was that there would some unexpected events that would take place, which would alter the course which he had determined to set in motion.

While Isaac was talking with Esau, in the next room, behind the veil stood his wife, *“Rebekah is listening”* (Gen. 27:5). What Rebekah heard made her determined, if possible, to frustrate the design of Isaac, and procure the blessing for her favorite son, Jacob, instead of Esau the first born. Some suggested that she received a Divine inspiration to challenge Isaac’s intentions; but if she had it would not have been necessary to resort to the recourse of deception to help hinder the intentions of Isaac. Rather she would have left it in the hands of God to work out the details. When you read the story – you see how the division in the home has spread from age to age. All because Isaac got the idea in his head that he was about to die.

If you study the record of Isaac’s life, the Scriptures reveal that Isaac did not die when he thought he was going to die. In fact, he outlived in years, Abraham, Jacob and Esau. He died after having lived 180 years. Both his sons, Jacob and Esau, died around the same time living fewer years than their father.

In fact, the story of Jacob and Esau’s death is rather interesting. There is a Jewish historical account that Esau died in battle trying to prevent the sons of Jacob from burying their father in their parent’s grave. Esau had heard that Jacob’s sons were coming to bury him in the cave of Machpelah, which their Fathers were buried in, Esau and his sons stood against them. One of Dan’s sons, a man who could not speak or hear, walked up to Esau and severed his head from his body.

If only Isaac had left the details to God in regards to his death and not worried about it maybe the outcome of the story would have been different. How we handle our worries, concerns, and anxiousness not only determines our peace, but it also has a way of affecting our joy. You cannot have joy even eating your favorite dishes if your mind and heart are consumed with your fears and tormenting thoughts.

I also wonder if Rebekah had been a little more patient and been willing to let God work out the details of their lives as well. *When you think about it think of all the lost years that Rebekah had to live with the son she loved so dearly. What could have been a peaceful home of love and harmony only turned out to be like a sore that festered and refused to heal.*

None of us knows our day of departure unless it is self-inflicted. God has his own plan and we would be wise to follow His counsel. I am not saying we should not make out our wills, or purchase our burial spots, etc. Sometimes we tend to jump ahead of God in our planning and fail to seek his counsel as to timing, manner of actions, and even in the distribution of our estate.

Jacob admitted he did not know the day of his death, neither do we. Until that time comes, some of these things we tend to get so anxious about may be better to leave alone until another time or when God does definitely direct us to do such and such a thing. Jacob’s talk with Esau that day put in to play what later would bring both he and Rebekah pain for the rest of their lives.

Man’s goings are of the Lord. Therefore, when God reverses a situation, changes an employment status, changes the mind of one who you thought would bring good news, don’t look at it as something bad; maybe God is in the middle of it in order to fulfill a better plan and accomplish a higher purpose. We may not know what holds tomorrow, but we do know who holds our hand....it is a secret known only to Him. Amen