



SELAH: Stop, Look, Listen – January 24, 2022

The Lord be with you.

I remember as a boy watching a parade and seeing horses wearing with what looked to me like blind folds, and I asked my dad why they were wearing pieces of cloth around their eye. And my dad who had been raised on a farm, who had worked with horses my dad explained that sometimes horses needed to wear what was called blinders to keep their eyes focused on what was straight ahead rather than being distracted by what was going on around them or behind them. My dad said that without the blinders, horses that were working or racing could easily startle in fear and run off, and so you know, with all that's going on in our country today, the pandemic, the political division, the anger that discord, the ugliness... I am thinking that Christians need blinders of sort to stay focused rather than being distracted by everything that's going on around us. Philosopher Theologian Dallas Willard said that the ultimate freedom we have as human beings is the power to select what we allow our minds to dwell on. The important word here is, dwell. What do we allow our minds to dwell on these days, what do we allow our minds to focus on to meditate on?

Now, I want to share with you a scripture verse that's helping me in these difficult crazy days. It's from The Little Book of Philippians chapter 4, verse 8, I read, "finally beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence. And if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." The Apostle Paul is sitting in a Roman prison as he writes these words. He is literally chained to a Roman soldier, 24/7, and Paul is writing to Christians in Philippi who themselves were facing hard times and persecution, and Paul is wanting to help Christians to build a set of practices that are stronger than the practices of a pagan culture and oppressive government. And so he calls on Christians to exercise the ultimate freedom by selecting, by selecting what we allow our minds to dwell on. He wants it to be, whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable of any excellence worthy of praise. He says, think about, focus on these things. Obviously, Paul is not advocating that we hide our heads in the sand to what's going on today, but Paul is talking about what we choose to dwell on, to focus our minds on. Might I say that like horses that we need blinders to keep us focused straight ahead, to keep us from being startled and distracted by what's going on around us. You see, the human mind is such that it has to always focus on something, and Paul here is urging us why I might say he is pleading that we focus our minds on the good things that he lists here, whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable of excellence, worthy of praise. Paul says, dwell in



water from rock

these things. And you know this verse is shaping my TV viewing choices today, it's shaping my reading choices, my conversation, my use of spare time. When the computer revolution began some years ago, computer people coined a new word gigo, that is garbage in, garbage out. They were wanting to tell us if what you program into a computer determines what will come out of the computer, if you input garbage, well of course, garbage is going to come out. And the reverse is also true. And what is true of the computer is true of the human mind, the greatest computer ever, ever made, that what we put into our minds does determine what comes out in our lives. And that's why the Apostle Paul urges in Romans 12:2, to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. It starts in our minds what we allow our minds to focus on.

Dallas Willard was right, yours and mine, ultimate freedom, a freedom that no one can take from us, our freedom is to select what we allow our minds to dwell on these days. I have found help in the words of Martin Luther, who said that you cannot keep birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair. Well we may not be able to stop the coarseness, the godless-ness of our culture, but we can keep it from dwelling in us. We can focus, focus, focus our minds on the true, the good, the beautiful... So with the Psalmist, I pray for you today, I pray for me. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening until next time.