



SHIELD OF FAITH

"Take Up the Shield of Faith" - Paul

Monday, November 18, 2019

Fury grips me when I see the wicked who abandon your Law. — Psalms 119:53

Gripping Fury — Kanye and Joel

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We've been brainwashed to think that only government is aloud to express fury ... anger. The right and power that is aligned with material punishment is all on the side of government. Religion is certainly *NOT* aloud to punish wrongdoing in any sort of furious way. We can't even spank our children anymore.

No, Christianity especially, can only persuade. And we are fast losing that facility. The culture is catching an allergy to preaching. I don't think of the "best life now" version of public speaking as preaching. Preaching has a sting.

The most brutal and bloody wars in all of human history were waged in the twentieth century by governments. They were decidedly *NOT* religious wars. They were ideological. And the fury of ideology has metastasized throughout the Western world ever since.

That's the bad news. The good news is that fear of nuclear annihilation combined with the unprecedented internet-fueled opportunity to pursue facts and truth offers a fresh moment. What will humanity do with this fresh new moment, this opportunity? I don't know.

One thing I do know is that this moment in human history is shaping up to include religion in a way that nobody expected. And Christianity is not a bit player in this emerging drama. It is not possible to ignore the contribution to goodness, truth and beauty that Christianity made in the Western world. This is not to say that two millennia of Christian morality and ethics wasn't punctuated by conflict, war and horror. One thing can always be counted on — humans won't stop being human.

Christianity teaches that we overcome our fallenness by admitting it, taking responsibility for it and seeking divine help as we die through it. Every human dies. The only question is how will we die? Will we die well? Will we love our death, or will we fear it.

The first book Peter Kreeft penned was titled "Love is Stronger than Death." I read it to my wife as her sister was dying from cancer. On the day she died I finished the last chapter in the car as we drove to the hospital. The Christian idea of God's love expressed through the Gospel transformed our sense of that experience. It was the first one close to us. My wife's dad went through it not long after.

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Kreeft went on to write over eighty books on Christianity, love and God's law. I learned from him and others that love for God's law was the lodestone of Western Culture. Intellectual arrogance birthed the age of ideology that grips us today. This hyper-mindfulness led us to reject the laws of Christianity that formed Christendom in the West. I don't want to go back to the period before the enlightenment and reformation. I am, however, more interested than ever in gaining a deeper understanding of the lives and culture of my ancestors.

I'm with the Psalmist who wrote, "Though caught in the snares of the wicked, I do not forget your Law." He continues, "Rescue me from human oppression, and I will observe your precepts." He then observes in the one hundred and fiftieth verse of Psalm one hundred nineteen, "My pursuers are coming closer to their wicked designs, and further from your law." In verse one hundred fifty five he writes, "Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your will." And lastly verse one hundred fifty eight, "The sight of these renegades appalls me; they do not observe your promise."

The sermon that was delivered in the church I attend yesterday detailed the curses and blessings in Deuteronomy. Maybe that is the promise the Psalmist is referencing. Blessings are not only promised in the Bible for those who fear God ... blessings are obvious on people who serve Him, and love His law.

The blessings of Christianity are practical and obvious. It makes sense that people who know how simple it is to receive His blessing are gripped by fury when they see the wicked who abandon God's law. I see this fury rising as people discover the truth about love, beauty, sexuality and family.

It does appear that the pursuers are coming closer to their wicked designs. But our civilization is far from dead. And the future has a way of surprising us.

The grip of ideologies is loosening as the gloriously monstrous gospel narrative of the West captures imaginations, heals hearts and fills minds.

Kanye and Joel in Church together. Who'd a thunk.

Amen.