

Washed by the Word vs Defiled by the News

This past Sunday night, having just returned home from a beautiful day of ministry in Fort Worth, Texas, I decided to spend a few minutes catching up on the latest news. This is part of my regular routine, either in preparation for my daily radio show, while working on my next op-ed or simply to be aware of what is happening in the world.

But this time, I couldn't stomach the latest news. I felt defiled.

Immediately I sensed the contrast between the beautiful worship I had experienced earlier in the day—the holy presence of God, the purity of the Word, the glory of the Spirit—and the filthiness of this carnal world.

The headlines were not only filled with bad news. They were also filled with venom and malice. They were meant to provoke and enflame and divide. They were earthy, carnal, “of this world.” They were defiling.

In fact, there was a large picture of one of our elected officials at the top of one of the webpages, and the moment I saw him, I felt animosity towards him. “What an evil man,” I thought to myself for a split second.

But then I caught myself.

I know virtually nothing about this man other than the negative stuff I've read about him. I have never read one sympathetic article about him or listened at length to anyone speak well of him.

And had I been on the other side of the political and ideological divide, he would likely be viewed as a hero, a

champion of important causes who is unwilling to compromise. His picture would evoke warm feelings, not hostility.

The truth be told, and more than we would like to admit, we are manipulated and defiled by the news—by which I do not simply mean the latest reporting of the facts. I mean the biased, partisan news that bombards us every day.

It does not build our faith. It does not bring us closer to God. It does not purify our thoughts. It does not produce love.

Contrast the negative effects of the news with this beautiful description about Jesus the Messiah and His bride, the Messianic congregation (known as the Church): “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of His body” (Ephesians 5:25–30).

Notice again that phrase: “the washing of water with the word,” meaning, the Word of God. This is how the Lord cleanses us. This is how we renew our minds. This is how we grow in faith. This is how our inner being becomes beautiful. This is how we become more and more like Jesus. What a glorious, holy process of metamorphosis!

That’s why Paul exhorted in Colossians, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16).

With the Word dwelling richly in our hearts, we can do what Paul called us to do in the rest of the verse, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom and expressing our joyful worship with thankfulness in our hearts to God.

With our hearts and minds filled with partisan headlines and sensationalistic news (or for that matter, filled with any kind of earthly garbage), we will do little spiritual good. With our hearts and minds filled with the Word of God, we can make an eternal difference in many lives.

It is one thing, then, to stay informed and to be alert. It is another thing to be defiled.

It is one thing to be aware of what is happening in our world. It is another thing to feed on the news.

Let us, instead, be nourished by the life-giving, life-sustaining, life-transforming living Word of the living God.

Let us drink from healthy, pure, beautiful and glorious streams. Not only will we ourselves thrive and bear much fruit, but we will be able to give nourishing drink to others as well.

Be washed afresh with the Word of God, and then go and wash others.

(If you want a refresher from the Word about the importance of the Word, I suggest reading through Psalm 119 slowly and prayerfully, asking yourself if you love the Word as the psalmist did.)

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