

## PASTOR DOUG'S FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES

### Isaiah 66:2b

Two weeks ago I began by telling you how I came to choose Romans 8:1 as my "life verse." As a 17 or 18 year old the very idea that I, a guilty sinner, could and would someday stand before Almighty God and find, at that time, that though I was **guilty as charged** yet there would be NO CONDEMNATION of me because of what Jesus had done for me – oh, it was just such a wonderful and liberating idea.

But then, some 20 or so years later, I heard that missionary fellow with HIS favorite verse of Matthew 5:6 (Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied). And at that point in my life **that** seemed to really describe where I was. So while still holding on to the promise of Romans 8:1 I adopted Matthew 5:6 as my new life verse.

And then about 15 years ago I ran across Isaiah 66:2b. Let's turn to that...

### Isaiah 66:2b

"This is the one to whom I will look" can be translated a variety of ways. One version has "This is the one whom I highly esteem." Well if there was ever ANYTHING that I had been desiring it was God's blessing, His "esteeming" of me, His "looking to me" so as to bless me. And so as I thought on that verse I thought, "That sounds a lot like me. I may not be completely there...but I'm really close."

There is a scene in the film Groundhog Day that fits this really well...

(Show clip)

"He who is humble, and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word." If that is the kind of man that God is looking for, I may not be EXACTLY there, but like Bill Murray in Groundhog Day I think of myself as "really close."

So just as I had adopted Romans 8:1 and then Matthew 5:6 as my life verses I adopted Isaiah 66:2b as "my NEW life verse" for a number of years. Let's talk about that verse this morning...

**1. God does not regard all people the same.** The opening line here in Isaiah 66:2b underscores this point. There are some people in whom God takes pleasure or delight and some in whom he finds no delight at all. Or as the scriptures put it there are those in whom God is "well pleased" and those in whom He is not well pleased.

At the time of Christ's baptism you may recall that a voice was heard from heaven. It was God the Father speaking and he said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Well, just as God was **well pleased with Jesus**, back in the book of Job we find God was pleased with Job. Indeed he bragged about Job to Satan. Or how about God's attitude towards Noah? We can read of this way back in Genesis chapter 6

### Genesis 6:6

But then look at verse 8...

### Genesis 6:8

So the scriptures are quite clear that God's attitude towards humanity is **not the same** for each person. There are those whom God opposes; there are even those whom God has promised to destroy. And then there are those in whom God is "well pleased." And as it was (and has been) my desire to have God be "well pleased" with me, these three statements as to the kind of man (or woman) that God is looking for piqued my interest when I first began to really think on this verse in Isaiah 66:2b. Well, the verse states THREE things that God is looking for in a man or woman. Here they are...

## 2. God is looking to or looking for those who are humble.

Now humility is a difficult thing to accurately gauge. Take our current president, for example. Most news analysts are hardly fond of him. They don't like him and, it seems, they are doing much to try and see him be politically injured. If President Trump should end up becoming a one-term president it seems as though many of those in the news media will congratulate themselves. As I have often said, "I hate politics," so what I am saying is not coming from someone with a political axe to grind.

But is Trump really as arrogant as he is presented to be? He's brash and he can even be quite rude. But is he arrogant?

Since the president has been unwilling to make his recent tax returns public there is no way to accurately assess his wealth. Before elected president the general view seemed to be that he was worth somewhere between 4 and 6 billion dollars. Forbes has since downgraded his estimated wealth to be around 3.1 billion dollars and Bloomberg estimates his wealth at 2.8 billion. But, for argument's sake let bring it even further down. Let's say his wealth is 2 billion.

Now my guess is that most of those in the news media are not millionaires. Some are. Hosts of shows like NBC news, or Good Morning America earn into the tens of millions of dollars a year. Jim Acosta of CNN news has made a name for himself by opposing President Trump. Acosta is earning (according to Wikipedia) \$700,000 a year and has a net worth of around \$4,000,000. That doesn't make him EXTREMELY wealthy, but he has **far more financial wealth than most if not all of us**. Right?

But let's compare the millionaire Jim Acosta with the billionaire Donald Trump. Given those two figures of 4 million for Acosta and 2 billion for Trump, that means that Trump is worth roughly **500 times** what Acosta is worth.

500 times!

Comparatively, if you are worth \$250,000...that would be like comparing you to someone whose TOTAL WORTH is \$500. Or if you have \$3,000 in the bank, that would be like comparing you to someone who has only \$6 to their name.

Now what am I getting to? (Someone says, "Yeah, Doug, what's the point?"). The point is that compared to the people that President Trump is coming in contact with – pretty much on a daily basis – these others are **financial peons in comparison**. They want to attack the president, but financially they are like mosquitoes trying to attack an elephant. And the fact that he won't capitulate to them they interpret as arrogance when, in fact, he may be simply trying to put them in their place.

Okay, maybe this illustration didn't work. But my only point is that humility – true humility, it seems to me, is something which God will much better judge than any person.

A quote that I use often is taken from George Whitefield, the great 18<sup>th</sup> century evangelist. Back in those days, the well-known preachers of the day were the rock-stars of that era. And so when George Whitefield would come to town the word would go out, businesses would close down, operations would cease, and everyone – believers and unbelievers alike – would make their way to hear George Whitefield, "the Divine Dramatist" (as he was called), preach.

Accompanying this kind of notoriety were those whom we might best think of as 18<sup>th</sup> century "groupies": women (in particular) who would follow these preacher rock stars around.

On one occasion, as some of these fans of Whitefield were doting over him, Whitefield turned to them and said, "What kind of man George Whitefield is the great day will tell." Meaning, you can **think well of me** or **think ill of me**, but either way it really doesn't matter. For all that matters is what **God thinks of me** come the day of my judgment before him.

I like that! God is our judge

But God is for the humble man or woman and he opposed to the proud.

#### 1 Peter 5:5-6

I've made the point before that PRIDE is the only sin for which I know that God makes the point "I will **oppose you**." Not that God is in favor of any sin, or that he looks lightly upon any transgression. But it is pride – likely the WORST of all sins – that God is especially outspoken against.

To me, this area of pride is one that pastors...ministers...probably more than any others, should be especially careful about. For it is pastors who see, so often and so up close, how **a person's health** can be taken away. For we pastors, following the doctors, are among the first to often learn of a person's stroke, or heart attack, or of their being in an accident. And as it is these things – these physical attacks – which can so stop a person in their tracks, we pastors should be especially mindful that **God can bring us to nothing in a moment**, should he so desire. Financial setbacks are difficult, and does anyone ever truly recuperate from a broken marriage or children who are in rebellion? But it is when we lose our health that we are humbled in a particularly great way. We should all take this to mind. But a pastor should LIVE with this in mind. For God opposes the proud.

Now, marriage can help make any person humble. As I have often said,  
If you want to learn humility, get married. But  
if you want to learn patience, have children.

Well, God is looking for those who are humble.

### **3. God is also looking for those who are contrite in spirit.**

#### Psalm 51:17

The word contrite comes from the Latin *contritus*, a word that means "thoroughly bruised." Contritus is itself a compound word coming from two words:

con, or cum, meaning "together", and  
terere, meaning "to rub"

When I think of these two words I think of back when I was in elementary school and we were having an art day using clay...clay that needed to be squeezed, and rolled, and rubbed together, and warmed up so as to make it thoroughly pliable. Today I am more likely to think of window glaze, as it, like molding clay, needs that same kind of rubbing together.

Have you ever felt like God was doing that to you? Really SQUEZZING you hard? God is looking for those who live with that kind of feeling. So we are not to be proud (but humble instead) **and** live as those who have been squeezed very hard in God's hands. And we're not opposed to that kind of squeezing. For when we have those broken and contrite hearts that Psalm 51:17 mentioned we are assured that God will not despise us but will, in fact, accept us. He will "look to us," to quote Isaiah 66:2b.

#### 4. (Lastly) God is looking for those who tremble at His word.

Every once in awhile I will hear someone make a statement like:

No one preaches on hell anymore, or  
No one preaches against abortion anymore, or  
When is the last time you heard a sermon on adultery?

Whenever I hear these kind of comments I think, "Well, **I've preached** on hell" or "**I've preached** against abortion," or "**I've preached** on adultery."

I know what these people mean when they make these statements. They don't mean that **literally NO ONE** is preaching on these various issues...only that **not many** seem to be preaching on them. And in that sense, I would agree with them. For I am sure that one can likely hear a dozen, 20 or more sermons on the love of God for every sermon one might hear on the holiness of God. For preaching on the love of God sounds much more winsome than does preaching on the wrath of God.

But why should anyone "TREMBLE" at God's word if they have never heard the threats or warnings of God? If our message to the one who chooses to live as he pleases (with **no regard** for God, for God's holiness, or for God's standards for mankind)...if our message to that person is that God LOVES them anyway where is the IMPETUS for change?

Evangelist Ray Comfort has stressed this point again and again. He has compared it to trying to hand out parachutes to passengers on a plane who are all quite convinced that everything is fine. He says there won't be many takers for the parachutes for there is **no sense of danger**. And that is the problem with most preaching. For why should anyone be afraid, or distraught regarding their spiritual state when all they ever hear is "everything is fine. God loves you. You are special to him."

Instead of preaching "Christ died for sinners," we are busy assuring people that their sins are no big obstacle to them experiencing God's love.

In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer we have "cheapened grace"

Well God is looking for those who **tremble at His word**: people who while they may know all about repentance, confession of sin, acceptance of a Savior and reliance upon God's grace NONETHELESS are ever conscious of the fact that our God is a HOLY GOD.

And it is before that HOLY GOD that we will each give an account of everything we have done in the flesh: whether good or evil.

And so, like Bill Murray's character, while he may have not PERFECTLY matched what a woman was looking for in a man, he felt he was "really close." And that is how I thought about myself, correctly or incorrectly.

I know that...

God is not finished with me yet. And I know there are still plenty of rough edges that need to be knocked off. But that person that Isaiah 66:2b was describing was the man I wanted to be and still want to be. And so, with that, I picked up yet another "life verse."

I wonder, does this verse describe YOU?

Are you "really, really close"?

Or are you even on this pathway?

One last point before we close...

I know of no better way to become an Isaiah 66:2b man or woman than to simply hang around with that kind of person. This past week, Ruth and I were, for just a couple hours, in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. Neither of us had ever been there before. It is the little town that the abolitionist John Brown put on the map back in 1859 when he attempted to take over the armory located in that town and in so doing cause an uprising among the slaves being held throughout the South. He failed in his attempt and some weeks later was hung.

But while there we stopped at a bookstore. One of the civil war battles also took place near Harper's Ferry and so there were many books on the civil war. I picked up a book of quotes from Stonewall Jackson, the famous outspoken Christian general of the Confederate army. His very first noted quote was

*Each of us is likely to become like those with whom we spend our time.*

This is, of course, the same teaching as is found in the Bible, be it Psalm 1, 1 Corinthians 15:33 or Philippians 3:17.

So if you want to become an Isaiah 66:2b kind of person (and in so doing experience the BLESSING of God) then find others who have that same kind of passion and spend your time with them. Become their friend. Invite them into your life.