



December 11, 2020

### **How Should We Be Thinking?**

Warm hellos to you dear brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from our offices here in Spanish Fort, AL.

My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed. As we begin the Sabbath may His peace be upon you as well.

Speaking of peace, there is a constant flow of events that continues to take place on this earth. Some of the events affect us directly, and some of them affect us indirectly.

There are horrific events (as I reflect back just a few years ago) such as the barbaric killing by the Taliban of 132 children in a school in Pakistan and the slaughter by ISIS of 150 females in Iraq when they refused to accept jihad marriage. We are naturally saddened and pained over what happened. We may ponder the vulnerability of our own country and the possibility of similar events taking place within our borders. Such evil actions can weigh on us and burden us and even create an extremely negative state of mind.

Currently here in the U.S. there are multiple events going on that have absolutely unsettled and unnerved many, and most feel helpless to do anything about the events that have transpired. The anger grows, even among God's children.

Speaking humanly, I wish evil doers could get their comeuppance and be severely punished for their cruel and horrific acts. Forcing them to undergo "water boarding" as we have heard a lot about in the past, might be too kind! But, if you and I are not careful, we can feel ourselves being tempted to hate these cruel and terrorizing individuals. We may even wish them harm.

How should we be thinking? The apostle Paul writes, "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6) We must look to God's word to guide us and to His Spirit to influence us and our thinking.

Who is responsible for evil such as that displayed in these events? Paul writes of actions and attitudes that will be present in the last days, "*But know this, that in the last days perilous times*

*will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good" (2 Timothy 3:1-3) What a list! Sounds like much of the nightly news on television does it not?*

Paul goes on to state "*But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (v.13)*

Who has deceived them? Who is the great deceiver? The Word of truth informs us that there is a powerful spirit being who has been allowed to blind the minds of mankind and emanate a spirit of deception that has influenced the whole of mankind. He has such power and such a response that he is called "*god of this world.*" (2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 12:9). Our own human nature left to itself is not good either, but when you add our adversaries influence it is multiplied many times over.

Just knowing what the Scriptures say, or where they are in the Bible, is not enough to shield us from the influence of the evil one. Jesus warned of the murderous attitudes of some religious leaders of His day. They could quote Scripture, but failed to understand the message contained in the Scripture. "*They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.*" (John 16:2)

We ask for God's protection, spiritually and physically. We must also live, follow and with Christ living in us, (Phil 2:5, Galatians 2:20) and do what the scripture says. This includes how we think and look at or view others.

There is also the human tendency to condemn and have ill will towards someone who has a different understanding of the Scriptures than we do, much more if someone has a different religion. Jesus set the bar high when He instructed His disciples "*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).*

Jesus goes on to state, "*that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*" (v.45)

I don't think it's wrong to hope that justice is served, truth comes out, and evil doers are dealt with so that they might consider their actions and perhaps even change. I would think that some of the early disciples had very negative feelings toward Saul after he participated in the

brutal killing of Stephen. But the great God was able to bring Saul to repentance and conversion.

King David made a number of statements about having God deal with his enemies. Here's one. "*Arise, O Lord, in Your anger; Lift Yourself up because of the rage of my enemies; Rise up for me to the judgment You have commanded!*" (Psalm 7:6) See also Psalm 3:7, Psalm 18:3 and Psalm 58:6.

David utters some words we could identify with in another Psalm. "*O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs-O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth! Rise up, O Judge of the earth; Render punishment to the proud. Lord, how long will the wicked, How long will the wicked triumph?*" (Psalm 94:1-3)

Again upon reflection and seeking the mind of Christ, we realize that we must leave vengeance and retribution to the great Judge and King. We are not to take it upon ourselves to justify all the wrong in this world. If we are not careful, we can become so wrapped up in all that is going on in the world, that we will lose our focus on our calling, and what it is God desires of and in us.

You and I can properly identify with those referred to in Ezekiel 8 and 9. Amidst widespread apostasy and idolatry, even among the religious leaders, there were those who lamented what was taking place. The Lord considered them and spared them from the destruction that He had decreed. As the Shekinah glory departed from the Temple, the Lord instructed angelic messengers to execute many idolaters in the city. He instructed one of His messengers to take other action, "*Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.*" (Ezekiel 9:4) Then the Lord commanded the other messengers, "*Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.*" So they began with the elders who were before the temple." (v.6)

Friends, this is a sobering reminder to all of us. We must resist letting the influence of Satan and this world he is influencing, from corrupting us and causing us to *adopt his thinking and attitude*. We must hold on to the positive vision of the coming rule of Christ and His kingdom. We continue to pray, "*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" (Matthew 6:10)

We are reminded of the coming of the Most High and our calling to fulfil our future destiny. "*Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,*

*Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."* (Daniel 7:27). God speed that day!

Remember, arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

**-Scott Hoefker**

*(Pastor, Church of God Ministries)*

Church of God Ministries

*(Ministerios de la Iglesia de Dios )*

tshoefker@cogministries.org

[www.cogministries.org](http://www.cogministries.org)

P.O. Box 7783

Spanish Fort, AL 36577

251-930-1797 Offices / 402-250-2389 Cell