

Heaven and Earth  
19 July 2020  
by Glen A. Busby

Let us pray to our Loving God:

The source of our faith comes from Your Heavens. It comes with the sunshine and it comes with the rain. It brings us the hope of Your rainbow coming tomorrow even in the midst of today's cloudy pandemic. Through Your steadfast love, we have discovered that the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ rides on sacred winds bringing us Your love heaven sent.

We are thankful that You are the source of our strength and our faith. You have created us to be citizens of Heaven and Earth. The world You created for us was good and we pray that through the healing touch of our Savior, Immanuel, You will continue to make it better, through Your loving grace and mercy. We trust in Your promised "Rainbow of Hope." In these days of the corona virus pandemic we need your blessed assurance that You are watching over us with the protection of Your heaven's eternity.

O God, may You surround us day and night with the love that comes from the wisdom of being our parent throughout our history on Planet Earth. We struggle to be a nurturing home to all Your children. We admit that all too often make the wrong choices and the results force us to cry out for your forgiveness. Remind us that the good news of the Gospels is that we are forgiven through Jesus Christ. Amen

Hear the Good News in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

Psalm 139:1-12 (NRSV) – <sup>1</sup> O Lord, you have searched me and known me. <sup>2</sup> You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. <sup>3</sup> You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. <sup>4</sup> Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. <sup>5</sup> You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. <sup>7</sup> Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. <sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, <sup>10</sup> even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. <sup>11</sup> If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," <sup>12</sup> even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

The world we live in – we call it Earth. From the beginning of our recorded history and before we knew how to write that history down, we call what surrounds Planet Earth – the heavens. As our humanity discovered God, the early theology of our ancestors looked up to the heavens and made it God's home – It became the Kingdom of Heaven. King David's 139<sup>th</sup> Psalm understood that and sang out for the heavens to hear. For David, God was everywhere – in the heavens, in Sheol and at the farthest edge of the sea. David was proclaiming that it was impossible to escape God's presence – God's home was with us, wherever we are. I believe it was God's way for David to be one of the great communicators of this truth before Christ. A century later, the Prophet Isaiah would remind the people of God's desire to be with us Immanuel, "14 Well then, the Lord himself will give you a sign: a young woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him 'Immanuel' (Isaiah 7:14, GNT)." It is more than an irony that David's distant ancestor was to be anointed "The King of the Jews." As God's Israelite people developed parameters for their beliefs, one of the most important ones was that God had come down from the heavens to live in the Temple of Mount Zion. Then the leaders and the elite of Jerusalem's society were taken off to Babylon. It was devastating to their sociological norms and religious beliefs to believe that they were separated from God. God's address was Mount Zion, Jerusalem (I don't know the Zip code) and the peoples' address was Babylon, Babylonia in the Kingdom of Mesopotamia. They believed their God would never travel to Babylon. As I said earlier, it is ironic that "The King of the Jews" would be anointed by God to be not only God's Son, but also "The King of Heaven and Earth." To my knowledge no one has ever escaped the Universe, not even Star Trek.

It is commonly accepted that we have built within us a survival instinct to fight or flight. It is almost impossible to successfully fight or even to find the courage to fight, until we know what or who is the enemy we are fighting:

*"Since you cannot run away from life and keep on living,  
then it is foolish to run away from yourself or your God." gab*

Back when I was a young man preparing to go to sea, gigantic obstacles stood in the way of my hopes and aspirations. At 20 years old, in 1967, I was facing one of those obstacles. This was the time of Vietnam, when you were either in school

or deferred from the Draft for medical reasons. There were other ways not quite so patriotic, like having influence with the local county draft board or denouncing your citizenship and running away to Canada (or some other faraway place). If you did not choose to take those “Runaway Choices” from your obligation to serve your country, you were most likely on your way to Vietnam. After receiving my Associate in Science degree from ABAC in Tifton, Georgia, I decided I did not want the gigantic obstacle of the Draft hanging over my head. So, I tried to sign up for the Submarine Service. It had been a life-long fantasy of mine, after my parents refused to let me see the Disney movie, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, with my older brothers. I was told after I took the Navy Exam, “There would be a nine month wait, which translated to me, that I was on my way to Vietnam, because the draft board would select me before the nine months was up ... so, I left for Alaska. While working on the Dew Line on Barter Island overlooking the shoreline of the Arctic Ocean, I received a phone call (after 3 months instead of 9 months) from my Dad telling me to make it home by the 9<sup>th</sup> of September and the Naval Reserve would swear me into the Submarine Service. I made it home from Alaska and was sworn in on the 9<sup>th</sup> and my draft notice came on September 11<sup>th</sup>. In my earlier years, I had developed a self-destructive habit of running away from other gigantic obstacles - of running away from life. My 10% brain’s useful capacity was obsessed with a sick subconscious plan to leave town and leave behind the recurring nightmares circling in my daytime and my nighttime. I hoped and prayed that I could get ahead of the next nightmare, before it appeared in my path. Those gigantic obstacles included my morbid response to the gift of healing grief caused by the “one moment you’re alive, and the next second your dead” death my older brother and grandparents, and the separation from my girlfriend, Linda, the love of my life. I was running away as fast as I could. I became “The Runaway” I wrote about in a 2015 poem (see the attachment) and the last verse is titled “The Runaway Remedy.” It speaks to King David’s Psalm and the Apostle Paul’s Epistle:

*“There is an answer to a nomadic lifestyle.  
Listen to the winds from east and west,  
as they bring new life to the lifeless.  
For quietly in the western breeze,  
is the phantom whisper of patience,  
while the northeaster yells guidance.*

*Meaning in life is not in its destruction,  
but by fostering enthusiasm in its creation.” gab*

The King James version of verse 9b of Psalms 139 says, “<sup>9</sup> ... and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ...” Most current translations have a similar translation to the NRSV, “settle at the farthest limits of the sea,” which people visualize as the end of the seas. Look at a globe and you will see there is no end to the seas – unless you are short-sighted and only see to your limited horizon. However, having ridden a diesel submarine, I understand the “uttermost parts of the sea” or the “farthest limits of the sea” can only describe one thing, the ocean’s floor. If you have hit the bottom of the Earth’s seas and if you have gone so far in life to hit that bottom, then there is only one needed prayer, “Help!” Since God is with you always – God will hear your prayer. Thank goodness, God heard my cry for help and showed me the way to Galilee. Sometimes the runaway path we take, becomes the first step toward a new path guided by the Spirit – for me it’s the “Galilee Path.”

Psalm 19:14 (adapted from NRSV) – <sup>14</sup> Let the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer.

Romans 8:12-25 (NCV) – <sup>12</sup> So, my brothers and sisters, we must not be ruled by our sinful selves or live the way our sinful selves want. <sup>13</sup> If you use your lives to do the wrong things your sinful selves want; you will die spiritually. But if you use the Spirit’s help to stop doing the wrong things you do with your body; you will have true life. <sup>14</sup> The true children of God are those who let God’s Spirit lead them. <sup>15</sup> The Spirit we received does not make us slaves again to fear; it makes us children of God. With that Spirit we cry out, “Father.” <sup>16</sup> And the Spirit himself joins with our spirits to say we are God’s children. <sup>17</sup> If we are God’s children, we will receive blessings from God together with Christ. But we must suffer as Christ suffered so that we will have glory as Christ has glory. <sup>18</sup> The sufferings we have now are nothing compared to the great glory that will be shown to us. <sup>19</sup> Everything God made is waiting with excitement for God to show his children’s glory completely. <sup>20</sup> Everything God made was changed to become useless, not by its own wish but because God wanted it and because all along there was this hope: <sup>21</sup> that everything God made would be set free from ruin to have the freedom and

glory that belong to God's children. <sup>22</sup> We know that everything God made has been waiting until now in pain, like a woman ready to give birth. <sup>23</sup> Not only the world, but we also have been waiting with pain inside us. We have the Spirit as the first part of God's promise. So, we are waiting for God to finish making us his own children, which means our bodies will be made free. <sup>24</sup> We were saved, and we have this hope. If we see what we are waiting for, that is not really hope. People do not hope for something they already have. <sup>25</sup> But we are hoping for something we do not have yet, and we are waiting for it patiently.

"Our sinful selves" tend to separate ourselves from God and each other. That sinfulness destroys relationships. Study the "red letter" words of Jesus of Nazareth as he walked along Galilee's paths and you will discover that true relationships are built with love, not power and control. You will understand what the Gospel writer, John, meant when he wrote, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son ... (NKJV)." From the manger in Bethlehem to the Cross on Calvary, Jesus learned what love was and then shared it to His last breath. But for us, more often than not, relationships even in marriage, are focused on the power and control of the head of the household. So, "our sinful selves," even today, try to build meaningful relationships with power and control, which creates a quid pro quo mentality even in marriages. The reality is that all relationships should be built in a loving manner of sharing and caring. Paul, even in the first century, understood that we let power and control influence us to move in sinful ways even in humanities' society, today. Sadly, power and control are as rampant today, as they were in the first century. Power and control destroy the hope we pray for when we pray for "true life," living in love with ourselves and others. We have "our sinful selves," but to love God and love one another is the "red letter" prayer from Jesus.

In 1992, I received Navy orders to ASU Bahrain as a chaplain to stand in for the Command Chaplain, who was called home on emergency leave. At that time in history, the Navy was struggling with the fallout from a Las Vegas catastrophe dubbed "Tailhook." While in Bahrain, Admiral Frank Kelso, CNO (Chief of Naval Operations) ordered Prevention of Sexual Misconduct be taught at every command, no matter how small, before October first, the beginning of the new fiscal year. Every sailor and marine had to attend. Our Commanding Officer at ASU requested that I teach the course to his ASU Command. The Commanding Officer set an example by attending the first group. The main emphasis of my course was to go beyond inappropriate sexual behavior as an act and focus on the difference between loving one another and the use of power and control to abuse another individual through sex or other human acts and behaviors:

Love is God's gift to us

Love is not secret

Love is not power

Love is not abuse

Sexual misconduct is not love!

Sexual misconduct is an abuse of power  
that is most often done in secret. gab

Another point in my lecture that was an eye-opener was the awareness that abusive power and control usually operates in secret. My course that day was for the military where operating behind closed doors is generally done for one of two reasons. It's either for safety and security, which for illustration purposes I will refer to as "confidential" or it's to hide something in the dark, which for illustration purposes I will refer to as "keeping a secret." I realize this may sound like an oversimplification, but trust me, most people who ask for something to be kept secret are asking because they really know what they want. They want their desire for abusive power and control to be hidden. They know exactly what they are doing. In chapter 13 of Romans, Paul uses the term "In the dark" to describe the favorite way that people choose to conduct the acts of their "sinful selves." For Paul "in the dark" is referring to conducting their behaviors in secret – in other words, misconduct! He writes, "<sup>12</sup> The night is nearly over, day is almost here. Let us stop doing the things that belong to the dark, and let us take up weapons for fighting in the light. <sup>13</sup> Let us conduct ourselves properly, as people who live in the light of day—no orgies or drunkenness, no immorality or indecency, no fighting or jealousy. <sup>14</sup> But take up the weapons of the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop paying attention to your sinful nature and satisfying its desires (Romans 13:12-14, GNT)."

What exactly are these weapons of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul is referring to in verse 14? He wrote an epistle to Corinth that has become an important part of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians and a significant understanding of Paul's Christian theology. The 13<sup>th</sup> verse of the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians ends with, "<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and

the greatest of these is love (GNT).” What we need to combat “our sinful selves” and a society disconnected from God are to use the weapons of our Lord Jesus Christ – faith, hope and love. That is why, as a chaplain, I chose to use love as the greatest instrument of God to prevent sexual misconduct. The same instrument, love, is the best prevention against all the other evils festering in the shadows of our world gone wrong. What do we want the heavens to see when they look down on Planet Earth? Do we want the heavens to see a reflection of sunshine shining for the glory of God or the darkness of evil shadows festering in a cesspool of humanity gone wrong? The 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians should be a revelation of Paul we reflect on every day. I have written a poem based on 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13 to emphasize the power of God’s love reflected through us:

### **1 Corinthians 13**

We have forgotten  
Christ’s love  
from the Cross is not:  
jealous or boastful,  
arrogant or rude  
irritable or resentful.  
From our transgressions,  
we cannot understand  
Christ’s love  
from the Cross is:  
patient and kind,  
bears all things,  
believes all things,  
hopes all things,  
endures all things,  
and will never end.  
May we see mirrored  
Christ’s love  
and understand:  
You gave us  
Your ultimate sacrifice  
of love -- Your Son gab

After the session was over, the Executive Officer (second in command) came to my office to inform me that I was being tasked to go to the other countries under his command. My task was to do the course at each command. My focus was on loving one another like Christ called us to love one another. At the time, the traffic light was the major teaching tool for sexual relations. Basically, when the traffic light is green, you could advance your behavior. When the traffic light was yellow, you should only proceed with caution. When the traffic light was red you stopped. I pointed out in the lecture, that the traffic light illustration only works when you understand that all relationships should be based on love and that is far more sacred than the letter of the law or who cherishes the most power and control. Abusive power leads to a hunger for more power and more control leads to a hunger for more control and both lead to greed – there is never enough for those who crave power and control. What Paul says in this portion of his letter to the Romans is that we need to let God’s Spirit lead us. Any time we let “our sinful selves” believe that the power and control we have is for the glory of God, it is best to stop and look for the red flags surrounding us. Believe me the power of love is stronger than the power of a traffic light. Traffic lights are the product of a busy world too busy to stop and love. It will take the power of love to keep the world alive for a smiling God who loves us.

So, what is the horizon we are promised by King David and Isaiah? “Immanuel,” God with us, goes far beyond the limits of where Planet Earth’s sea meets the sky. We are promised the gift of God’s love through Christ’s Spirit, so we should live our lives knowing God is always with us. When we look to the Spirit, we find patience while our tomorrows bring us hope that our horizon stretches beyond Planet Earth’s limits to the Heavens of God’s Kingdom. All along the way, we will find peace and comfort in guidance that doesn’t rely on maps or a satellite’s GPS. If you want to learn how to navigate the crooks and turns of a twisted world, it is better to rely on the power of God’s Living Word in Scriptures, than the guidance of a GPS satellite instrument.

Go into the world on Planet Earth guided by the power of God’s love. Amen