



Seventh-day
Adventist® Church
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Would You Tarnish Your Name For God's Sake?

By: Jerrod Songy

As I was reading my devotionals this past week a single word, within a simple verse, within a larger chapter of the Psalms really hit me hard. It was the word "tarnish," appearing in Psalms 78:61. Now, you probably won't find this specific word in your reading of the same verse unless you are reading The Clear Word paraphrase of the Bible (no, I'm not advocating a version of the Bible!). I'm a firm believer that the BEST version of the Bible is the one you will read. Truly, if you don't read God's word, the version doesn't even come into play. etc.).



I readily admit that some versions are meant for devotional reading and others are meant for in-depth study or actual Bible teaching/preaching. Personally, I do not recommend putting a lot of weight on the individual word(s), or in some cases entire sentences, within a paraphrase Bible. Why not? Because the reading has already been processed by someone else who looked at a

more literal translation and has done their "work" on the original word/sentence/thought by replacing it with what they believe to be a "modern" or "synonymous" equivalent. Still, as a devotional and thought-provoking springboard, paraphrase translations can be very helpful.

Psalms 78 describes how God had worked with the Children of Israel to redeem them and bring them out of captivity, out of the land of Egypt, recalling the mighty signs and wonders that He performed in Egypt and in bringing Israel to the promised land. Unfortunately, the chapter also speaks to the rebellion of Israel as well. It's during this description of Israel's rebellion that verse 61 comes into play. In most versions of the Bible, it describes how "[God] gave up His strength...

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and His glory/splendor into the hand of the adversary/His enemies." To think how destructive sin and rebellion are, that they would even cause God to give up strength and splendor?! That isn't easy to understand...

Disclaimer (last one I promise) I do not share this as a "thus saith the Lord" but as spiritual food-for-thought, I leave it up to you to hold on to what is good and throw out what is bad. The Clear Word reads this way from verses 56-61:

"Yet they [Israel] tested Him and hurt the Most High God by not listening to Him or obeying His commands. They did the same thing their fathers had done. They were unthankful and disloyal. They were as unreliable as a faulty weapon taken to war. They made idols and set them up in their mountain retreats. They hurt Him by worshiping graven images and practicing the same filthy rites as their pagan neighbors. When God saw this, He was pained in heart and turned from Israel. When He could not stop them by persuasion, He forsook them. His presence was no longer seen in the Sanctuary. The cloud no longer rested over the Most Holy Place. He withdrew His protection and permitted His Ark to be captured and His own reputation to be tarnished."

Again it's hard for my human brain to comprehend the ways of God, for His ways are higher than my ways and His thoughts than my thoughts. But I felt like a lightbulb came on as I was reading this. For my own understanding, I know that God always has our best interest at heart, He doesn't want anyone to be lost but all to come to a saving knowledge of Him. However, when an individual or group "claim" to have a saving relationship with God while simultaneously rebelling against Him (especially publicly) do we cause God to (or does He choose to) give up HIS SPLENDOR? For our sakes? For His sake? For both? It seems like from this passage it is a result of a believer's rebellion...

Does it always look like this? No, I think it varies from situation to situation, but in the context of the Children of Israel, God's glory was known to rest upon the Ark of the Covenant, and we can read about a time in Samuel 4 when for a period of time the Philistines actually captured the Ark! The Ark of the Covenant was a very special piece of furniture to the nation of Israel. It's where God's Shekinah glory rested, it was the manifestation of His presence in a protected way with a sinful-natured people.

So if the Ark was tied to His glory, would its capture have represented God's capture? It would seem as such for the Philistines. In fact, until they noticed the curse that was upon them, the Philistines bragged about their god Dagon having overcome Israel's God and being therefore more powerful! And it is entirely true that God's glory was given into the hands of the adversary and His reputation took a beating. But why? On one hand yes, God looked bad or weak, because He allowed the Ark to be captured, but on the other hand, if He had continued to protect and bless Israel in their rebellion, He would have looked WORSE and disproved His own character as a righteous God who hates sin!

In what seems like a backwards turn of events God begins to restore His own reputation in the

eyes of the Philistines, in spite of Israel's rebellion, and the Philistines ultimately return the Ark of the Covenant to Israel of their own free will. Now here is the real lesson. See I declare myself a Christian. I let it be known that I am a follower of Christ and a servant of man. I also have a sinful nature and there are certain moments in my lifetime (if not even today!) when I have "rebelled" against God. Knowing the outcome of Adam and Eve's decisions, knowing the history of Israel, and knowing myself, we all put God in a real bind! He loves us too much to let us continue in sin, but He also won't force submission, surrender, or love. In such a terrible catch-22 situation God is willing to let His own reputation be "tarnished" for my sake, for our sakes. You can apply this to your own life, but the greatest example of this is at the cross, when Christ carried the weight of the sin of the world and entered into the 2nd death (though He was sinless) without seeing through the grave...

Oh! What great love! That God loved us, that Jesus reconciled us to the Father through His own blood on the cross. That was a pretty severe "tarnishing" for the moment! God's glory was in the hands of the adversary. And it was indeed for our sakes as well. God is willing, are we also willing? The Scriptures declare also in Luke 12:8-9 "Whoever confesses/acknowledges me before men, I will also confess/acknowledge them before the angels/God, but whoever does not confess/denies me... will be denied." We indeed have opportunities every day to confess God to stand tall for Him and for His sake. It may be hard, but it has been harder in the past (the Holocaust, "witch trials," the Inquisition, etc.) and we know it will be harder in the future (perhaps very near future). Now is the time to strengthen our walk with God. To believe in His goodness, justice, and mercy. To walk with Him and talk with Him so that if/when the time comes that we need to "tarnish" our own reputation for God's sake (think the 3 Hebrew worthies, Peter, Paul, missionaries in faraway countries) we will be ready and willing.

It's the mind-blowing thought that God has already chosen a death that was meant for me, which inspires me to desire to be ready and willing to accept whatever may come in this life when choosing to follow Lamb wherever He goes. May God bless your walk, and hope in Him, and the sharing of this Word for thought."

Counsels on Stewardship Clips

"Some Wills are made in so loose a manner that they will not stand the test of the law, and thus thousands of dollars have been lost to the cause. Our brethren should feel that a responsibility rests upon them, as faithful servants in the cause of God, to exercise their intellect in regard to this matter, and secure to the Lord His own." 323.3



This selection was taken from the book *Counsels on Stewardship* by E.G. White

Gift Options

Every month we include a different estate planning option to advance the Lord's work. This month we are considering a power of attorney for finance, power of attorney for healthcare and an advance directive.

POWERS OF ATTORNEY AND ADVANCE DIRECTIVES – A GIFT TO YOUR FAMILY

by Lynette Ecord

If 2020 taught us anything, it was how quickly things can change. Someone who seems very healthy can become very ill and unable to take care of anything for themselves within a matter of hours. Many spouses, or other family members, found themselves



needing to make health care decisions for their loved ones, but HIPPA and other restrictions left them powerless to do so. There were also financial accounts to be managed, insurance issues to deal with, and bills to be paid. Unfortunately, these financial institutions and businesses are not able to give out any information or be of any help if you aren't the account owner.

If the account owner isn't able to talk to them and give them permission to talk to someone else about their accounts, then the family may have to hire an attorney and go through a lot of time, expense, and paperwork before they can take care of business. All of this during what is already an emotionally difficult time.

Wouldn't you do whatever you could to make things as easy as possible for your loved during an emotionally stressful time? It's so simple to do, and such a wonderful gift! All that's needed are two simple legal documents – a *Statutory Durable Power of Attorney*, in which you give someone the authority to handle any and all financial/business matters for you while you are unable to do so, and a *Health Care Power of Attorney*, that gives someone the authority to make health care decisions for you if you are either temporarily or permanently unable to make them for yourself. Both of these documents are a very important part of every estate plan, and every adult should have these documents.

A third document that will save your family much emotional distress is an *Advance Directive* (often referred to as a Living Will). In this document, you give specific instructions for your care if you should be diagnosed with a terminal illness.

All of these documents, together with a Will, are a part of a complete estate planning package and are offered as a free service to our church members who acknowledge that all things come from God and that, as good stewards of what He has given us, choose to leave a portion of their estates to the gospel ministry in Texas. Contact our Planned Giving & Trust Services Department, or your own private attorney, about taking care of this important gift to your loved ones and to God.

Dad Jokes for May

Q: What do you call a bee born in May?

A: A May-bee.

Q: Who's the most important person in a Spring wedding?

A: The MAYtron of honor.

Q: Which month can't make a decision?

A: MAYbe.

Q: What starts growing in the spring and then goes POP?

A: May-ze

Q: Who conducts the spring orchestra?

A: The May-stro.

Q: Why are oak trees so forgiving?

A: Every May they "turn over a new leaf".



Q: If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring?

A: Pilgrims.

Q: What goes up when May rain comes down?

A: An umbrella.

Website Updates

We advance the Lord's work by providing:

1. estate planning INFORMATION
2. estate planning DOCUMENT PREPARATION and
3. estate planning FIDUCIARY REPRESENTATION

It is our mission to empower members, pastors, churches, and schools in our territory to share the gospel message with their friends and communities. This month you will find a few Stewardship honors that are found in [Pathfinder](#) and [Adventurer](#) Ministries. Use them as a way to encourage collaboration between Stewardship and these church ministries.

We strive to provide the **latest, relevant** information regarding estate planning on our website. This **free** resource is for all who visit! So spread the word and experience the joy of giving estate planning information! #ExperienceTheJoyOfGiving

Stewardship Heroes

"Stewardship is a total lifestyle." It involves our temple, time, talents, testimony, and treasure. Below you will find a story from within the Texas Conference of a person doing her best to be a faithful steward at her church school and community.



East Texas Stewardship Heroes: Sharon Harris

We look forward to the day when there will be no more tears or pain. In the meantime, we are called to be the body of Jesus, meet needs, and provide a message of hope and grace. That is why we want to express gratitude toward our tireless members like Sharon Harris who provides physical

and spiritual support to children at her local Adventist church school and in her community.

After a meth house is discovered, the operators are placed in custody and the building is often condemned because of the mix of toxic chemicals used to "cook" the drug. This is true even if the meth house operators have children. So what happens to the children? Often times they are placed in foster care until things are sorted out further. However, all of their clothes, toys, toiletries, etc are deemed hazardous and unsafe for further use. Thus the children that undergo this experience seem to lose it all. But Sharon, the director of **It's My Very Own Bags of Love Ministry**, does her best to rally up volunteers and donors to match a child with a bag full of toys, toiletries, bedding and other goodies to help them in that transition. The volunteers, (mostly women) make a masterful quilt and matching bag that is both beautiful and functional.

Though the ministry started in the homes of Conroe Seventh-day Adventist Church members in 2005, it soon found a more permanent establishment at the Montgomery County Courthouse in Conroe, Texas. The rental fee for the year is one (1) dollar in appreciation to their service for humanity. When you walk inside, you will find lots of fabric, sewing machines, toys and toiletries and joy-filled volunteers working. Once a year, the First Presbyterian Church organizes a Sew-A-Thon to further assist Bags of Love. Thank you Sharon for being a great steward and inspiration.

Meet Our Team



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