

THOUGHTS

By Douglas W. Schroeder

SPEAKER ON THE WORD TODAY
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LET'S GO TO ISRAEL!

I will be leading a ten-day tour of the Holy Land in October of 2018! This will be a thorough ten-day excursion to the most important holy sites of our faith. We will take a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee, have worship atop the Mount of Beatitudes, visit such sites as Bethany where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived, the Jordan River where John the Baptizer preached, Masada, the fortress of King Herod the Great and the Dead Sea. We will spend time in the Garden of Gethsemane, walk the Via Dolorosa, the "Way of Sorrow" that Jesus walked on the way to his crucifixion, and see the site of the resurrection, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. I would love to have you join me on this pilgrimage!

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STAYING MOTIVATED IN THE FACE OF DISCOURAGEMENT

The locker room at the health club where I visit is not, shall we say, spotless. For \$10/month few expect it to be world-class. Even so, lately there has been much carping by members despite the young man working cleaning being in the vicinity. I could see on his face that he felt badly even though he was doing his job. I encouraged him by saying, "We're not displeased with your cleaning!" The others were quick to agree; the *situation* was intolerable, but that individual person's performance was not.

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I thought of the times when I felt unappreciated doing menial jobs as I worked my way through school. Simply because you feel unappreciated doesn't necessarily mean no one cares. But, it can be a sign that people are taking your work for granted. A bit of encouragement goes a long way to help lift someone else, especially when they meet a lot of criticism. As Christians we should be the ones to encourage others, not make them feel insignificant.

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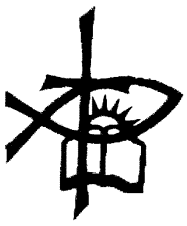
INDECISION AND INTEGRITY

Jesus said, "All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one (Matthew 5:37)." Jesus' intent was that we not be people who misuse God's name by taking oaths regarding what we will or won't do. For instance, we should not call upon God to back us up, "Swear to God it's true..." We are to be people of the Word, and people of our word, that is, straightforward integrity.

At times extreme indecision can make us appear less than honest. Sometimes it is really, really difficult to make up our mind! I had a situation like that recently, where I was not completely content with something I had agreed with, and over time felt more uneasy about it. The circumstances kept changing and instead of feeling more comfortable with it, I kept feeling less inclined to accept the original agreement, though to demonstrate integrity as a Christian I would have followed through if necessary. Finally, I stated my hesitancy, and the other party was gracious in saying it was my choice whether to accept the original agreement. In the end my feeling of indecision I took as a sign that it was best to not proceed.

2017

Thoughts
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*The Bible is God's Word . . . Jesus is God's "Word" made flesh . . .
His death and resurrection, the message needed Today.*

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None of us are prescient such that we can always see clearly an outcome. There will be times when we are truly torn between options, but in the process we need to be as transparent as possible with those we have planned. We do not want for situations to impress themselves upon us to the point that we look like we have misled people. We should be hesitant to consider someone dishonest if we see that they have been struggling with a decision.

CLEAR MINDED AND SELF-CONTROLLED

Clear mindedness and self-control are extolled by the Word of God as attributes of the prayerful Christian. I Peter 4:7 advises, "The end of all things is near. Therefore, be clear minded and self-controlled *so that you can pray.*" A clear mind means no mind altering substances, no shortchanging one's sleep, no pummeling the mind with worldly influences such as illicit television or music. Self-control speaks to not only willpower in diet or exercise, or good work habits, but also resistance to temptations.

Satan does not wish for you to live a victorious life in Christ, he would rather have you bound to a worldly enslavement. Lack of self-control comes not only from abandonment of principles and positive behaviors, but also from being over involved and overly busy. Things start sliding in our life when we begin to let worship, prayer and Scripture reading/listening be replaced by other activities. We are constantly pushed to expand maintenance of work and social connections. But, this is inherently adding to pressure to scramble to maintain those contacts, and that causes slight losses of control which accrue to our detriment.

Do you pray? Not just for meals, but at purposeful times? Do you go to prayer when in trouble, or do you grouse, fret, let your anger boil over or despair? Where is your self-control? Where is your clear mindedness? Perhaps it's time to repent of worldly ways.

I used to warn our boys bluntly about being drawn in by the allurements of sinful society which ultimately does not care what happens to us as Christians, "The Word does not give a damn about you." My vulgarity had a precise lesson; the World can lead Christians who are not wary into trouble, and ultimately damnation, but it cannot save us. I saw a great example of this today in a news article about Tim Tebow, the vocal Christian who won the Heisman Trophy and two national championships at Florida. He is trying baseball now. The LA Times reported that the Charleston RiverDogs had plenty of fun at Tim's expense, playing the Hallelujah Chorus when he would come to bat and having their mascot wear eye-black with "John 3:16". Tebow doesn't take his self-esteem from the World, and neither should you. We don't need Christians displaying feeble-mindedness, double-mindedness or who pander to the World. We need clear mindedness and self-control, one of the gifts of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:16-26).

Blessings!
Douglas W. Schroeder