

Thought for Today: February 28, 2008

Psalm 101 (NASB)

**I will sing of lovingkindness and justice,
To You, O LORD, I will sing praises.
I will give heed to the blameless way.
When will You come to me?**

**I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.
I will set no worthless thing before my eyes;
I hate the work of those who fall away;
It shall not fasten its grip on me.
A perverse heart shall depart from me;
I will know no evil.**

**Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy;
No one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure.
My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me;
He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me.
He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house;
He who speaks falsehood shall not maintain his position before me.
Every morning I will destroy all the wicked of the land,
So as to cut off from the city of the LORD all those who do iniquity.**

This psalm, at first glance, looks like the pledge of a psalmist who has it all together. He sounds strong, righteous, steadfast, and sure of his ability to walk the blameless path. It is an understatement to say that the psalmist sounds self-confident. Confidence can be a part of our lives if we have ordered them correctly. Notice the psalmist's approach.

He begins by looking upward rather than inward. The steadfast love and justice of God forms his reservoir of hope and assurance. Aware of God's greatness, he says, I will praise You. The psalmist then, having reflected on God, determines to scrub his own hands before performing surgery on others. He says that he will purify his heart by removing evil influences from his house. Only then can the psalmist turn his attention to the disease outside his door. The psalmist feels responsible for himself and for his influence over others. But he is also aware of his own weakness.

He cannot maintain his righteousness and integrity all by himself. He needs help. And this is where his apparent self-confidence is balanced with wisdom and humility. He says that he will wipe out wickedness and surround himself with those who pursue righteousness. But, in order to do this, he needs friends and counselors whose influence will be godly. This is good, but it isn't enough; one more need remains.

He needs God's presence. In the fourth line of this psalm, the psalmist pleads for God to draw near. He knows that to whatever extent he has his life centered on the narrow path, it is only there if God is near. He may be self-confident, but he is not arrogant. He knows full well that the only way he can maintain an upright existence is if God comes and leads him by the hand. If we begin where the psalmist does, where will God lead us?

By His grace,
Patrick Barber