

Devotion 29:

Our Father Wants To Be Known

Ezekiel 1—48

The purpose of this devotional book, as you might recall, is to get to know our Father better. We now come to Ezekiel, the 26th book of the Bible, and we read the most repetitive phrase we have seen yet. 65 times our Father speaks this phrase: “*Then they will know that I am the Lord.*” (6:10) I think it is safe to say that our Father desires to be known by us much more than we desire to know Him. Let me explain.

Our Father has endured much pain in His attempts to get all people of the earth, not just Israel, to know Him. It began when He delivered His children out of Egypt:

“But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in Egypt. But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations they lived among and in whose sight I had revealed myself to the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt.” 20:8-9

“Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me in the desert....But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out.” 20:13a, 14

Our Father suffered disrespect, disobedience, and dishonor from His children repeatedly over centuries. We might recall Genesis 6:5-6 when we saw for the first time that our Father had feelings:

“The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.”

I believe the closest we can come to knowing our Father’s heart is to be the parent of a rebellious and disrespectful child. Continuing to love and give out of grace and mercy to one who is ungrateful and spiteful ranks up there with one of the most Godly things a human can do. To have one’s name profaned—treated abusively and with contempt—has to be one of the greatest indignities imaginable, especially if you are holy and your name is above all names.

What is a parent to do? Our Father shows us that there is a line to be drawn in the sand. There is a point where the prodigal son needs to be let go. There is a time to say “No!” to any more help or support. But Ezekiel 33:11 reminds us that direction, too, is painful:

“As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.”

But such discipline is intended for the wayward to finally come to their senses. *“Then they will know that I am the Lord, when I have made the land a desolate waste because of all the detestable things they have done.”* (33:29)

As Israel was being disciplined, the surrounding countries, and especially the conquering ones, made sport of them, mocked and ridiculed not only the Israelites, but also their God. They must have concluded that our Father was really weak and powerless. Thus our Father brought about the destruction in time of the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and all the other countries that waged war against Israel. But He does even this for the same purpose:

“And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord.”
38:23

Finally, in a grand display of grace, our Father gives Ezekiel visions of the His restoration plans for His children, when He leads them back to the Promised Land:

“This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.

For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.” 36:22-28

C.S. Lewis said, “People need to be reminded more than they need to be taught.” Have you forgotten the Lord? Have your eyes, mind, and heart drifted after idols and lesser gods that you thought could bring you life? When in trouble, have you, like our O.T. relatives, sought help from the powerful Egyptians around you, rather than call upon the name of our Lord?

Take heart. Our Father desires to be known by us. He will go to incredible pains to make it so. He sent His only Son to have His name ridiculed and mocked, despised and rejected. He suffered death by crucifixion. He did this because He loves us and wants us to know Him.