January 27, 2019

A New Outlook

READ: Galatians 4:7 (Common English Bible)

“Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son or daughter, and if you are his child, then you are also an heir through God.”

REFLECT:

When Sara Roosevelt was asked if she ever imagined that her son, Franklin Roosevelt, might become president, she replied: “Never, no never! That was the last thing I should ever have imagined for him, or that he should be in public life of any sort.” Both she and her son, she insisted, shared a far simpler ambition – “The highest ideal – to grow to be like his father, straight and honorable, just and kind, an upstanding American.” An only child, and with few playmates his own age, Franklin viewed his attentive and protective father as a companion and friend. Presidential biographer, Doris Kearns Goodwin observes that Franklin’s optimistic spirit and general expectation that things would turn out happily is a testament to the self-confidence developed within the atmosphere of love and affection that enveloped him as a child.

The prevailing wisdom today – and imbedded in many approaches to psychological counseling – is that all of life consists of two elements: first, the facts, and second, our way of looking at them. Few of us escape some disappointment, some physical or mental limitation, or some distressing circumstance. It is a fact of life. We have very little control over these facts. Yet, what is largely within our power is how we look at these facts. We may permit these facts to debilitate us, to ruin our temper, spoil our work, and hurt our relationships with others, or we can become a master over their influence. Any cursory examination of Franklin Roosevelt’s life reveals a good measure of challenges, disappointments, and loss. But Roosevelt remained a master over everyone, convinced that there was a larger purpose for his life and nothing would stop his pursuit of that purpose. A positive home environment and the knowledge that he bore a strong and respected family name directed Roosevelt’s outlook.

The Christian faith is a call to a new outlook – a call to a changed point of view on the facts of life. In this teaching from Paul’s letter to the church in Galatia, Paul reminds us that we were once slaves and, consequently, of diminished value. And those who perceive to have a diminished value as a person have a dim view of life. But now, in the person of Jesus Christ, we are no longer slaves but children of God. If children of God, then an heir. Our name has been connected, as was Roosevelt’s, to a strong and respected name. For Paul, this makes a profound difference in how we are to live. We live as members of a royal household.

The deep divergence that commonly separates those who move positively through life from those who don’t lies in their outlook. Jesus’ word for “repent” meant to “change your mind” or “look at things differently”. When Jesus called those who would become his disciples he didn’t ask them to join a church or subscribe to some creed. He asked them to look at the facts differently. The laws concerning the Sabbath were reconsidered. The place of children was elevated. For those caught in the very act of sin, grace prevailed over punishment. Jesus called for a radical shift in how life would be lived – a shift that now recognized that with God on our side any handicap could be overcome and every challenge met positively. When we get a new way of seeing things it is then that we find a new life.
RESPOND:

1. How has this scripture or meditation spoken to you?

2. What insight can you apply to your life this week?

3. What one specific act do you intend to take, an attitude to change, a person to see, or prayer to pray?

PRAY:

Remind me of your love and concern for me that I may radically change how I see disappointments, failures and loss. I am a child of a living God. Amen.