
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

September 28, 2014

Who Needs God?

*“But the centurion replied, ‘Lord, I don’t deserve to have you come under my roof.
Just say the word and my servant will be healed.’”*

Matthew 8:8 (Common English Bible)

Living without God is not a recent invention. From the beginning of history women and men have heard the whisper, “Who needs God?” It was there in the third chapter of Genesis when Satan – having taken the form of a snake – asked the question of the woman, Eve. The question has disturbed every person since that fateful day in the Garden of Eden. How many of us can honestly confess to a desperate need for God? How real a factor is the thought of God in the common moments of each day?

It is my experience that for many people, God resides in the peripheral rather than occupying a central place in their lives. If our felt need for God becomes only occasional we learn, moment by moment and day by day, to live without God. Eventually, it isn’t a big step to live entirely without any thought of God. Many who have moved to this place may reject having someone identifying them as an atheist but, in truth, God is no longer real. David H. C. Read once shared that some people in his New York City congregation have confessed that having missed worship and prayer for extended months, life went on much as usual. The question presses, “Who needs God?”

Perhaps the real question in play is, “What is important to us?” If we decide in our hearts that material success, the acquiring of wealth and comfort, is to be our supreme goal, then God may be irrelevant: we don’t need God. Make no mistake; there is nothing at all wrong with success – even financial success. It is a question of what is most important. Do we seek to be caught-up in something bigger than ourselves; to be fully engaged with the purposes of God or do we ultimately live for ourselves? If we are totally dedicated to material success, asserts David H. C. Read, then we don’t need God. We have one.

Here in Matthew’s Gospel a centurion realizes a need for God. One of his servants is desperately ill and there is nothing that the centurion’s wealth, position and power can do for the servant. The centurion realizes that he is without the resources that are required. The centurion approaches Jesus and asks for a word of grace, a word that would do for the servant what the centurion is incapable of doing. When the centurion declares to Jesus, “Lord, I don’t deserve to have you come under my roof,” it is a declaration that the centurion has been living with God. Now he has awakened to the need that has been there all the time. The centurion needs God. And at that very moment the servant was made well.

Prayer: *Increase my desire for You, O God, that I may treasure what truly brings joy. Amen.*

Doug Hood

Reprinted from Dr. Hood’s September 19, 2014 blog posting.