

Seven Reasons To Be Thankful In 2011

Exodus 23:27-33

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 11-20-2011

Introduction – Murphy’s Laws and Faith

There is a person up in Canada whom I very much respect and very much love. But her weak point in life is that she doesn’t tend to walk by faith. She walks by Murphy’s laws. If something could go wrong, she knows it is going to happen. If she has a pain in her side, the first thought that comes to her mind is, “I have cancer.” If someone comes home late, she just knows that they have been killed in a car accident (“Otherwise, why wouldn’t they have called me?”).

Not to pick on ladies, but I know another lady in Omaha who drives me crazy because every tornado is a sign of the times and one more proof that this is the end of the world. Every single time we talk she brings up some war, some school massacre, the bad economy, politics, etc., all as evidence that it is the end of time.

Well, enough of pointing fingers at women. *I* find it easy to fall into a Murphy’s Law approach to life. How many times have I said, “When it rains, it pours”? It’s assuming the worst. Erma Bombeck has her own version of Murphy’s Laws. One of them is, “Anything dropped in the bathroom will fall in the toilet.” And actually, I do think that Murphy’s laws work for those who refuse to live by faith.

What’s happening when we expect the worst out of our family, our job, our finances, etc., is that we are looking at life through manure speckled glasses, and life not only stinks, it looks cloudy. Right? Joel has been a big help to keep me accountable on not making negative affirmations. The words that come out of our mouths can either express faith (which God delights to answer) or they can kill faith (and they thus become self-fulfilling prophecies). So if you go around mumbling Murphy’s Laws, they will happen. If you go around confidently affirming the promises of God by faith, and in God’s good timing they will happen. As Jesus said, “**According to your faith let it be to you**” (Matt 9:29). And thankfulness to God is one of the best ways that we can daily express our faith in God’s plans for the future. Gary asked me if I would preach on thankfulness, and today we are going to be looking at seven reasons to be thankful – seven boosters to our faith. Sure there is a lot of bad that is happening.

© Copyright 2011 by Phillip G. Kayser. Permission is granted to all readers to download, print, and distribute on paper or electronically any Sermons, provided that each reprint bear this copyright notice, current address, and telephone number, and provided that all such reproductions are distributed to the public without charge. They may not be sold or issued in book form, CD-ROM form, or microfiche without prior permission.

Phillip G. Kayser • Dominion Covenant Church • 307.N 41st Ave. Omaha, NE 68131 • 402.934.3300

I. Thankful That Humanism Is Always Self-Defeating (v. 27)

But verse 27 gives us the first reason that we can be thankful. It assumes that humanism will always be self-defeating. It says, **“I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.”** This verse outlines three ways in which humanism is self-defeating. The first one is psychological. God says, **“I will send My fear before you.”** Now its true that humanism can be very cocky and self-confident when there is no real confrontation, but when a Cain sees the full-orbed faith of an Abel, he feels threatened. When the leaders of Persia saw the wisdom of Daniel, they felt threatened and tried to get him thrown to the lions. When Saul saw the integrity and consistent Christianity of David, he felt threatened. And that, despite the fact that in each case the consistent believers were minorities! Why would the humanists be afraid of them?!

You know, it really didn't matter how much early Christians protested to Rome that they were loyal citizens, Rome felt threatened by Christianity and did everything it could to destroy Christianity. Why? Because Rome recognized that Christianity was in bold competition with them; they recognized that Christ called for total conquest; He claimed all authority in heaven and on earth; He demanded total submission from citizens and kings alike. And they felt threatened. They did not have the confidence that they could compete in a free market of ideas. This is why China does not allow a Free Press, why Universities won't allow six-day creationism or other politically incorrect ideas to have a hearing, and why our current administration has implemented Net Neutrality, which really means that they will squash opposition on the web. And by the way, that was scheduled to go into effect today. So if you start seeing odd things on the internet, don't be surprised.

And you might say, “Why is that something to be thankful for? They are opposing us!” Well, yes they are opposing us, but why? It is because they feel threatened. They fear. They intuitively know that they are no match for the Lord. So many liberal organizations see us as a threat. And we are, if God is with us. When God says, **“I will send My fear before you,”** it ought to give us faith. When the American Humanist Association has targeted Reformed Reconstructionists as the most self-conscious Christians, the most consistent Christians, and the most dangerous Christians, we ought to take heart. Take it as a compliment.

The next phrase gives the second reason why all humanism is self-defeating. It says, “**I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come.**” Notice that He brings this confusion among all the people. There are various ways that God brings this confusion. At the tower of Babel God used language to undo their conspiracy. And God continues to use language and nationality differences to destroy the efforts of the United Nations to impose a one-world government. Praise God! If the UN can’t handle little countries like Iran or Sudan, do you think they are a threat to the Great Commission? No.

But there are many ways in which God can send confusion. It can be a confusion of God’s enemies fighting against each other or at least getting in each other’s way like happened to several coalitions that came against Israel. And it gratifies my heart when a bill aimed at destroying pro-life causes is scuttled by homosexuals because they are afraid it will be used against them. It gratifies my heart when the infighting in the Obama administration slows down their progress. God sending confusion.

It can be a confusion of not knowing how to proceed. And sure, we may suffer some in the process, but that is actually part of God’s waking the church up. When the humanists can’t figure out how to solve the global financial crisis, don’t see God wringing His hands. No. God is sending confusion. How many times have politicians been frustrated, because they didn’t know the way out of a fix that they got themselves into? Or it can simply be the confusion of their world and life view. Studying for my doctorate in philosophy gave me tremendous confidence in the strength of a consistent Christian philosophy. We have nothing to worry about intellectually. Every ethical system the world has ever developed can be shot full of holes. You cannot wander from the God of truth and still have a consistent system. You will have confusion. Praise God for that confusion!

So if you are writing down the subpoints under Roman numeral I, God sends His fear into their hearts, secondly God sends confusion to those who resist Him. The next phrase gives the third subpoint. It says, “**and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.**” Humanism is self-defeating in terms of its inability to stand up to a vibrant Christianity. Now of course, that assumes that the church is in a better state than it is presently. We are more like the first generation of Israelites who refused to go into the land of Canaan because they lacked faith in the bigness of God, and they substituted faith in Murphy’s Laws – that everyone was going to go wrong for them if they entered the land. But that is why I am more concerned about the Reformation of the Church than I am getting a new president – though I

think we should strive for that as well. But when the church becomes a church of faith (embracing His grace faith and embracing His blueprints by faith), God can make the enemies of the church turn their backs. For example, Rome, the greatest empire in the world, was no match for Christianity. And one by one the various regions of the known world gave up the fight and announced that they were Christian nations. It is only when the church lacks faith, has a grasshopper theology and refuses the discomfort of fighting, that humanism can stand strong. So there is much to be thankful for in verse 27.

II. Thankful That Providence Is Arrayed Against Humanism (v. 28)

Let's move on to verse 28. God said, "**And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you.**" I call this God's providence against humanism because it focuses upon the way that God's natural order and His natural laws are really not natural at all. They are divine laws that always serve His purposes. Meditate on Deuteronomy 28 sometime and you will see that diseases, earthquakes, weather patterns, plagues, economic laws and many other things that follow so-called "natural laws" are actually used by God to keep humanism in check. Now we need to keep this point in balance with point IV - God's perfect timing. It doesn't happen all at once or necessarily right when we would expect it. But there can be no question about the fact that Providence fights against humanism.

I don't have to explain how God's laws of nature guarantee that homosexuals won't live very long. They are killing each other off disease. I don't need to explain why abortionists will be out-populated by proliferers. They are killing of their next generation of humanists with abortion! And if it hadn't been for the fact that Christians willingly let their kids get recruited by humanists by sending them to government schools, there would be no future for humanism in America. I don't need to explain why our promiscuous culture has such a high rate of infertility. I don't need to explain why economic policies of self-absorbed cultures eventual benefit only those who follow Biblical economic law. Larry Burkett, Gary North, and so many others have spoken of the coming economic earthquake. Now, point IV shows that God allows even economic catastrophes to happen at the most opportune time for the church. So be glad when He sometimes postpones them. It may not always come when you expect it, because these laws are not natural laws, but divine laws that perfectly serve God's purposes.

But this passage talked about bugs. Bugs! Surely bugs can't work together for our good, can they? Yes they can. God was going to send hornets to drive out the Canaanites. Here's the question – if those hornets were so bad that they drove out the Canaanites, why wouldn't they also drive out the Israelites? Because God was in control of even things like bugs. While he was alive, Rushdoony did a fascinating study of numerous plagues (like the Black plague) and showed how the patterns in the Scriptures were the same as the patterns in history and how these plagues kept humanism in check. He cited historical studies of when earthquakes, famines and other catastrophes happened and found a correlation to the righteousness or the evil of the era and of the region. In fact, there is a book being written that I am looking forward to reading that is documenting this concept of a providence working against humanism. We cannot be Deists. God is in control of the judgments that fall. They are not random.

Does that mean that we abandon people when they are afflicted by AIDS? No. Does it mean that we do not have compassion upon those hit by earthquakes? No. In fact, the historian Henry Chadwick said that Christian charity during disasters was probably the greatest cause of the church's growth. The Black Plague was a judgment by God, but Christians were at the forefront of ministering to those thus afflicted, and 100's of thousands came to Christ through such ministry. We can be thankful that God's providence conspires together with God's grace to promote the Great Commission.

III. Thankful That The Wrath Of Man Can Praise God (v. 29)

Verse 29 gives another reason we can be thankful. God's says, **"I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you."** Those pagans served a purpose. They kept the land tilled. They kept the beasts in check. They planted vineyards and olive groves that Israel inherited. The wealth of the wicked was being laid up for the righteous. And this has been true all through history. Why did Christianity have such vast amounts of wealth pouring into it during the first 1000 years. It was because the wealth of the wicked was being stored up for the righteous. They got converted, and they switched how they used their vast finances.

But point III is true in other ways as well. Roman roads were used by humanists to try to hold a humanistic empire together. So it is not as if *their* intentions were good. But those same roads served missionary purposes admirably. So did Rome's feared sea power. While it promoted Rome's

humanistic goals, it kept missionaries much safer in travel. A universal language, universal coinage, universal court system, and many other features of Rome's humanism turned out to be used by God against Rome.

The same is true today. Certainly the Internet is being used by pornographers and other criminal elements. But it has also become the most effective, and in some cases, the only way of getting into some countries with the Gospel. God may be averting judgment on America simply because of the technological needs that missions has as we gear up for the largest outreach in world history. Humanists have tremendous resources at their fingertips to oppose the Gospel. But we are taking advantage of some of those same resources, and who knows? God may convert some of these people in positions of media or financial power. God is able to make the wrath of man to praise Him, and for that we can be thankful. God is using Obama right now to wake up the church. That's not something to get discouraged over. It is something to thank God for.

IV. Thankful That God Has A Timetable (v. 30)

Which brings us to God's timetable of conquest. Verse 30 says, **“Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.”** Christians are always looking for an easy solution. We want instant sanctification; instant knowledge; instant conquest; instant kingdom. And when we don't get it, ohhh, we get discouraged and we begin to believe Murphy's Laws. But you know what? God has never worked that way. God has chosen to use the gradual progress method. We're sort of like the Cornhuskers – we wear them down and win in the fourth quarter. Well, I guess that's kind of a painful illustration this year. But I think you get my point.

And really, it's a good thing that God works slowly. It gives us time to be prepared. Can you imagine the embarrassing position the church would be in today if God handed over the government to Christians? I mean, we would have Huckabees in there making a mess. Recently he was defending Mrs. Obama's push to have the government help citizens with obesity. He's got a good heart, but he doesn't have a clue when it comes to Biblical Worldview. The church is not ready to take dominion. We couldn't hold things together. When you consider the wretched voting pattern that some of our Christians in Congress and Senate have had, you realize that the church needs to increase in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom before sending people into positions of authority. We need Daniel's in government; people who understand Scriptural law and can have a godly influence. God has His

perfect timing for when Christians come into positions of influence and power. And if humanism is not displaced next year in Congress it is because God is waiting for the perfect timing. And by faith we need to thank the Lord for that. Israel would have been the poorer for it if the first generation had been allowed to take the conquest of every portion of Canaan. And they would have been the poorer for it if it had been easy to mop everything up in a few years.

V. Thankful That Our Dominion Is Bounded (v. 31)

Verse 31 gives yet another reason to be thankful, and that is that our dominion is bounded. It says, “**And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.**” What did boundaries mean for Israel? There are three subpoints here: boundaries meant limitation, protection and challenge.

First of all, limitation. Israel was supposed to go so far and no further. In Deuteronomy 2-3 God very specifically forbade Israel from conquering certain nations. For example, He said, “**when you come near the people of Ammon, do not harass them or meddle with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession.**” And He said the same for other nations. We all need boundaries. Even unfallen Adam and Eve needed a boundary that put him in his place as a creature and not a god. Remember? That was his temptation - to become like God. They could eat of every fruit tree except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That was a boundary. And the Creator/creature distinction mandates boundaries. When we break God’s laws, we are breaking boundaries. And God gives boundaries to individuals, families, churches and states. I think our government has clearly stepped beyond the boundary God has set for nations by meddling in other countries. You may disagree with me, but I think all of you would agree that there are limits. Some families step over the boundaries given to families and act like Uzziah by usurping the role of the church. And vice versa has often been a danger as well. So the first function of boundaries is limitation.

But boundaries also have a purpose of protection. God had only given Israel sufficient grace to conquer, maintain and defend a certain territory. When later kings got greedy and tried to go beyond that, it was disastrous. One of the expressions that some people use is “pushing the margins.” I think some of you know what I am referring to. Margins keep a page from

getting too crowded. Some of us take on so many tasks that our page is crowded. We have no margin, and the least little new pressure that comes is disastrous to us because we can't fit anything more in. We are trying to push our creaturely boundaries. We cut into our sleep, and find that when we throw off our creaturely limits we are miserable. We need to submit to such boundaries. They are for our good.

But thirdly, and I think primarily, boundaries are also a challenge. Remember what happened in Numbers 32? There was the temptation for Israel to conquer less than what God had called it to conquer. And God said, "No way. I will be displeased with you if you do not strive for these boundaries." You know, every time a new difficulty would come along from the Canaanites, Israel was tempted to settle for less territory than God had called them to take.

Well, I see the church doing the same thing, and we need that challenge as well. What are the boundaries that God has called the church to? Well, obviously there are boundaries of law, and boundaries of creaturehood. But I'm talking about the challenge that God gives for possession. Just like Israel, we have been given a Great Commission to possess the land. And the boundaries of that land have been specified. It's not just Canaan's humanists who are in trouble now. Christ challenges us to take on all nations. Of course, not every church can take on all nations, and so there is a gradual progress from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth. And just as no Canaanite within those boundaries was to be left in the Old Testament, we must not rest until every humanist is converted into a Christian. We are to preach the Gospel to every creature until the end of the age. And when will the age end? Several passages tell us, but 1 Corinthians 15 is particularly clear. It says, "**He must reign till he has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.**" According to Paul, death is the only enemy that will be left for Christ to deal with when He comes back in glory. Until that time he says that we are ambassadors reconciling the world to Christ. And so the boundaries God has given to us continue to be a challenge to faith. Don't respond with Murphy's Laws and say, "It can't be done." Boundaries are important, and we can be thankful that God is a God of boundaries. They give us a faith to try for everything He calls us to, but they also make us realistic about our creaturely limits. That's a perspective that faith can live with.

VI. Thankful That We Do Not Need The World's Help To Take Dominion (v. 32)

The sixth thing we can be thankful for is that we do not need the world's help to take dominion. Now this is not a contradiction of principle III. Principle III says that God uses *things* that pagans have done to promote His kingdom. But we are never to compromise with humanists. Part of plundering the Canaanites is not embracing their worldview, adopting their psychology, or sending our kids to their schools. Verse 32 says, "**You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.**" Compromise; alliances, covenants, negotiations with humanists are all kinds of things that we are tempted by when we have a Murphy's Law approach to life because we don't think God's promises are achievable otherwise. And God says, "No. Faith cannot compromise." George Grant said,

"But it is dominion we are after, not just a voice. It is dominion we are after, not just influence. It is dominion we are after, not just equal time. It is dominion we are after, world conquest. That's what Christ has commissioned us to accomplish. We must win the world with the power of the Gospel. And we must never settle for anything less."

So while this is really a rebuke to Christians who synthesize Christianity with the world, it is also an encouragement. We don't need the wisdom of the world to take over the world. God has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness in the Scriptures. In Deuteronomy 32 Moses told the Israelites, "**Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe – all the words of this law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess.**" (vv. 46-47). We can be thankful that we don't need the wisdom of the world to succeed.

VII. Thankful That The Meek Shall Inherit The Earth (v. 33)

But there is one more reason that we have to be thankful. It is given in verse 33. In this verse God promised "**I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.**" Christ gave a similar promise when He said, "**The meek shall inherit the earth.**" It was a promise. But that promise was only given on condition of faithfulness to Him. So verse 33 says, "**They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.**" Christ didn't say Christians will automatically inherit the earth. Christ said, "**the meek shall inherit the earth.**" Meekness is strength in submission. It is used of a saddle-trained horse in the Greek. The horse

has strength, but it is all used for the master. A church that is out and out for Jesus will inherit the earth, but not a compromising church. And we may think that we have not succumbed to idolatry. But Os Guinness and many other writers have shown that we have idolatrized political parties. We have idolatrized rights, victimization, psychology, church professionalism and in many ways have whored after the spirit of the age. A book that has been even more convicting to me in terms of how we have substituted a trust in good things for a trust in God was written by Herb Schlossberg. It is called, *Idols for Destruction*. It is perhaps the best critique of twentieth century culture that has been produced to date. At least that is the evaluation of many.

But I think our subjective response to what happens in the news can many times pinpoint whether our trust was in something other than God. Many times we are sad, discouraged and ready to give up because our idols have failed us. We had hoped a Supreme Court Justice would have voted better and could have turned things around, but he disappointed us. After all the compromises we made you would think he would be grateful, but he disappointed us. We had hoped that Ronald Reagan could bring in the land of milk and honey. We had hoped that the contract with America would pan out. God may very well use things like new presidents and new justices to stem the tide of humanism. But I have no illusion that a conservative president will save America. He will not.

On the other hand, I in no way want to minimize the incredible impact that a Daniel, Shadrack, Meshech and Abednego can have on a nation. I don't in any way want to minimize the good that our Christian politicians can have in Washington. *But our trust must be in the Lord*. That's why Christ said, "The *meek* shall inherit the earth." Ultimately it is God and God alone who can make a difference in the hearts of Americans. And though we must use means, we must never put our trust in the means themselves. When we realize that all God calls for is faithfulness, then we will have every reason to thank *God* that the meek will indeed inherit the earth.

Conclusion

From beginning to end, this passage shows that the work of conquest is God's and can only succeed as God is pleased with His people. And the same is true of the increase of Christ's kingdom. Listen to the last phrase of Isaiah's wonderful prophecy, which begins at Christ's birth but progresses over time. It says, "**For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be**

called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Truly, the battle belongs to the Lord. When you are tempted to start affirming Murphy's laws, and to grumble, and to assume that everything is working together for your bad, then rebuke yourself and say, "Self, cut it out. I will not kill my faith with such language. God has given seven glorious promises that I can bank on. In fact, He has given hundreds more. I'm going to believe those promises, and that's the end of it." If you will live by faith like that, God will begin to show you the antithesis of Murphy's Laws. You will begin to see that everything is conspiring together for your good. Please brothers and sisters, live by faith and be a thankful people. Amen.

Seven Reasons To Be Thankful In 2011

Exodus 23:27-33

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 11-20-2011

Introduction - Murphy's Laws and Faith

- I. Thankful That Humanism Is Always Self-Defeating (v. 27)
- II. Thankful That Providence Is Arrayed Against Humanism (v. 28)
- III. Thankful That The Wrath Of Man Can Praise God (v. 29)
- IV. Thankful That God Has A Timetable (v. 30)
- V. Thankful That Our Dominion Is Bounded (v. 31)
- VI. Thankful That We Do Not Need The World's Help To Take Dominion (v. 32)
- VII. Thankful That The Meek Shall Inherit The Earth (v. 33)

Conclusion

