

## Have You Lost The Wonder?

The famed English evangelist Gypsy Smith visited America for the last time in his eighties. He met a man around the same age, who said, "Gypsy, I was blessed by your preaching when you first came to America over fifty years ago." And he asked the secret of the evangelist's staying power. "Sir," Gypsy responded, "I have never lost the wonder of it all."

In the midst of Job's sufferings, he was caught up in the majesty of God. While referring to his Lord he said in Job 9:9, 10: "Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number." Although he was hurting, Job never lost the wonder.

Just before the psalmist praised God for His eternal mercy (*Hesed*), he prefaced it with a declaration that God does great wonders. Psalm 136:4: "To Him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever." The psalmist continued on to point out that through the Lord, he was surrounded by wonders. Psalm 139:5, 6: "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." The psalmist never lost the wonder.

Over 740 years before our Lord and Savior walked upon this earth it was prophesied in Isaiah 9:6b: "...and His name shall be called Wonderful...."

Have you lost the wonder? Jonathan Edwards, esteemed as the greatest theologian America has ever known said, "Immediately after my conversion, God's excellency began to appear to me in everything—in the sun, in the moon, in the stars, in the waters, and in all nature. The Son of God created this world for this very end, to communicate to us through it a certain image of His own excellency, so that when we are delighted with flowery meadows and gentle breezes of wind we may see in all that only the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ. When we behold the fragrant rose and the snow-white lily, we are to see His love and His purity. Even so the green trees, and the songs of birds, what are they but the emanations of His infinite joy and benignity? The crystal rivers and murmuring streams, what are they but the footsteps of His favour and grace and beauty? When we behold the brightness of the sun, the golden edges of the evening cloud, or the beauteous rainbow spanning the whole heaven, we but behold some adumbration of His glory and His goodness. And, without any doubt, this is the reason that Christ is called the Sun of Righteousness, the Morning Star, the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley, the Appletree among the trees of the wood, a Bundle of Myrrh, a Roe, and a Young Hart. But we see the most proper image of the beauty of Christ when we see the beauty of the soul of man." Jonathan Edwards never lost the wonder.

This has been a busy time and I have not really had time to think about the fact that I have just had a birthday. This morning was caught up in a contemplative moment. I was challenged by Edwards to join Him in praising our Wonder-filled Lord! And here's what I wrote: Coming to this age is a great experience as I reflect on where God has brought me, where I am today and what He shall do with what time I have remaining on this side of eternity. The

manifested presence of our Lord, the relationship with my wife and the illumination of God's revelation, i.e., the Bible is more real to me than the air that I breathe or the water that I drink. I am like a child who sees the colors of a butterfly's wings for the first time, the splendor of the sunrise after the darkest night or the song of a songbird after the rain. I am more aware than ever that Christ is indeed "Emanuel, God with us!" I am in awe of who God is and the wonders that emanate from the cross of our Lord and the meaning of His Gospel in His Word and illustrated in the world around me.

Samuel Davies, the author of my favorite hymn, *Great God of Wonders* wrote in his second stanza, "In wonder lost, with trembling joy, we take the pardon of our God; pardon for crimes of deepest dye, a pardon bought with Jesus' blood, a pardon bought with Jesus' blood." When our founding father, Patrick Henry was a little boy, his mother would take him to hear the young eloquent preacher, Samuel Davies. Later in life, Henry said he learned his oratorical skills from the great preacher. Davies was one of the most influential presidents of Princeton University. He lived the creed to which he exhorted the Princeton Class of 1760, in his baccalaureate address, which has been echoed by the presidents of Princeton throughout its history: "Whatever be your place, imbibe and cherish a public spirit. Serve your generation." Davies only lived to the age of 37, but in his 37 brief years on this earth he influenced many to trust Christ and follow in full discipleship. He spent much of his time evangelizing in the slave communities of Virginia. I love the words and melody of the song, *I Want to Be a Christian*:

"Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart,  
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart.  
In my heart, in my heart,  
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart."

The following stanzas go on to say,

"Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart, in my heart,"  
"Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart, in my heart,"  
"Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart, in my heart."

It is believed by research that this song was composed in the 1750s in Virginia by enslaved African-American persons exposed to the teaching of evangelist Samuel Davies. What kind of man could influence one of the greatest influencers in the American Revolution? What kind of man would help lay the foundation for devout Christianity in the embryonic stages just before the birth of our nation? What kind of man would minister so lovingly to the unjustly enslaved people of Virginia? I would submit to you a man who had never lost the wonder. Have you lost the wonder? If you have, consider:

#### THE SAVIOR WHO SAVED YOU.

I Corinthians 8:9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

I love the story of the king and queen who could not have children, and were finally persuaded to adopt. In frustration, they could not find a child. But

then when they were ready to give up, they saw on their way back to their palace a little boy dressed in rags playing by the roadside. They inquired where the boy lived and who were his parents. He replied that he had no home and his parents had both died. He was living on the streets. When proof made known that this was true, they asked the boy if they could adopt him and make him their son. This was not a difficult decision for the little boy. He most certainly agreed! Every morning the boy was seen wiping tears from his eyes. When the butler asked why he was crying, the newly adopted son replied, "Every day before I put on my new clothes, I open the drawer where I keep the rags I was wearing when the king found me. I place those rags up to my chest and waist, then I fold them back into the drawer, because you see, before I walk to the lovely table my father has had food prepared for me, before I walk these beautiful grounds my father has allowed me to walk upon, before I frolic freely in the hills that surround me, I never want to forget what my father, the king has done for me." I believe you have already made the application. Never lose the wonder of the Savior who saved you.

#### THE LIFE THE SAVIOR GAVE YOU.

John 10:10: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly." There is no life in this earth better than living the Christian life.

I love this passage of scripture that God used to call me into the ministry. Ephesians 3:7 and 8: "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." I have never lost the wonder of His calling.

I have never lost the wonder of the Christian family God has given us. Proverbs 18:22: "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD."

Psalms 127:3: "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward."

I have never lost the wonder of being a member of the local New Testament Church. Ephesians 3:21: "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." There's no place like this place, anywhere near this place. This must be the place!

I love you all. Mrs. Pope and I will miss you today.

-Pastor Pope-