

Relentless

by Thom Ernst

Miriam Webster defines *relentless* thus: “Showing or promising no abatement of severity, intensity, strength, or pace.”

Relentless is often used to portray steadfastness in pursuit, despite obstacles, setbacks or weariness. *Relentless* could be used to describe Jesus’ pursuit of Paul, despite his resistance of “kicking against the goad” (Acts 26:14). The final confrontation on the road to Damascus culminated with Paul’s physical blindness in order to gain spiritual sight. *Relentless* could also be used to define Paul’s pursuit of religious deeds in the guise of doing well for God. Again, *relentless* could well reveal the intensity of running away from God.

Francis Thompson (1859-1907), an English poet, described his own experience of being pursued by God and running from Him in his 182-line poem: *The Hound of Heaven*.

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.

...

Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
‘Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.’

Thompson’s work influenced J.R.R. Tolkien who in turn had a positive influence on C. S. Lewis’ conversion to Christianity.

I love the picture that “Hound of Heaven” conjures up – pursued by God Himself – *relentlessly!* That is the singular component in all conversions. “When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son...” ~Galatians 4:4. God took that first step in providing us the salvation necessary to change us from being slaves to sons ... “an heir through God” ~Galatians 4:7.

That mind-video of being relentlessly pursued by God does not portray pastoral scenes or calm seas. Rather, its scenes are darkly shadowed trails with roaring beasts or violent storms on the sea where death is imminent and fear is paramount.

Until and unless we see Jesus as the light dispelling those shadows and closing the ravenous mouths; until and unless we see Jesus walking calmly on the tops of the same waves that seek our death, the

scenes will continue to be violent and if not life-threatening at least tumultuous enough as to replace peace with fear and certainty with perpetual incertitude.

Whether that *relentless* pursuit by God is from the first step and all intervening ones to the point of repentance like it was for Paul, Francis or C.S. Lewis; or anywhere in-between where the sinner finally acknowledges his sin and bows in repentance and acceptance of God's Son, Jesus, it's all of God. As C.S. Spurgeon stated, "It's all of Grace" – meaning that it begins and ends with God; and, our acquiescence, meager as it is, is a simple affirmation and surrender to that power. In short, we no longer are relentless in our pursuit of life apart from God because God has been relentless in bringing us to Himself. Marvelous grace... .