

A St. Crispin Day's Meditation on Psalm 144

25 October Anno DOMINI 2005

for my brethren

in the public ministry of the Word, in law enforcement and in the military



Dear Brother,

May God's grace, mercy and peace ever be yours in the Name of the LORD our God - in the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Hearken to *A Psalm of David* . . .

. . . hearken to the hymn of a warrior whose battles were fierce and whose foes are legion,
. . . hearken to an ode of one who fell in one way, or other, or another,
. . . hearken to a song of one who has been raised up in the one way or the other,
. . . hearken to the canticle of a man redeemed by the Son of Man Whom he calls Lord,
. . . hearken to the refrain of one combatant fighting the good fight of the faith,

Hearken, brother,

. . . whether warrior or watchman,
. . . whether standing guard at the perimeter or standing high on Zion's wall,
. . . whether Law enforcement officer or Gospel proclamation pastor,
. . . whether God's minister of the State or Christ's minister in the Church,
. . . Hearken to *A Psalm of David*.

Blessed be the LORD my strength,

Who teaches my hands to war, and my fingers to fight:

My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer;

my shield, and He in Whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.

LORD, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him!

or the Son of Man, that Thou makest account of Him!

Man is like to vanity:

his days are as a shadow that passeth away.

Bow Thy heavens, O LORD, and come down:

touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

*Cast forth lightning, and scatter them:
 shoot out Thine arrows, and destroy them.
 Send Thine hand from above;
 rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;
 Whose mouth speaketh vanity,
 and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.
 I will sing a new song unto Thee, O God:
 upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto Thee.
 It is He that giveth salvation unto kings:
 Who delivereth David His servant from the hurtful sword.
 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children,
 whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood:
 That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth;
 that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace:
 That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store:
 that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:
 That our oxen may be strong to labour;
 that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets.
 Happy is that people, that is in such a case:
 yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.*

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

Blessed be the LORD

- ... Who is surely blessed apart from me,
- ... Who is certainly blessed without my blessing,
- ... Who is nevertheless eulogized by the faithful soul,
 - ... for apart from the Divine Spirit Who works through the Word,
 - ... no one can say,
 - ... "Yahweh is God,"
 - ... "Jesus is Jehovah,"
 - ... "*Blessed be the LORD,*"
- ... Who then psalms these words, "*Blessed be Yahweh*" ?
 - ... a pitied soul recalling one's twisted life in this world yawning unto death, that is,
 - ... a commander-in-chief guilty of ordering the murder of one of his soldiers,
 - ... a sorry centurion supervising the spear thrust into God's side,
 - ... a repentant pastor who heard the rooster's preaching of the denial of Christ,
- ... Who then psalms these words, "*Blessed be the LORD*" ?
 - ... a lost infant, child, youth and man often found, and delivered, and kept, that is,
 - ... a soul called by the Good News of God Who gives and sustains life and Life, that is,
 - ... a graced soul beholding all her sins and finding their due on the cross of Jesus, that is,
 - ... a faithful man abiding in the peaceful wounds of Christ, crucified and risen, that is,
 - ... a son of God entrusted to the care of the Son of God's Bride, the Church,
 - ... a king, a cop, a grunt, a preacher-man, a marine, a chaplain, a sailor, an airman, a guard
 - ... we all, individually and corporately, psalm these words, "*Blessed be the LORD*"

Blessed be the LORD, my strength,

. . . for there is no strength that avails in the field, except it be from Thee, O Lord,
. . . the strength of my body from Thy creation, O Father,
. . . the strength of my soul from Thy redemption, O Son,
. . . the strength of my spirit from Thy workings, O Spirit
. . . *Blessed be the LORD, my Rock,*

Who teaches my hands to war, and my fingers to fight:

. . . Thou hast called me to Thy noble task and I have accepted this Vocation, and
. . . Thou hast disciplined me in Thy doctrine and trained me for Thy mission, and for that,
. . . the mind must be steeled in the truth that brings forth wisdom from Wisdom,
. . . the heart must be enlarged in the battle that courage may arise
. . . the spirit must be focused in the way that temperance may guide and direct
. . . Then are the hands and fingers ready to carry out the duties of justice
. . . of protecting and defending the Divine doctrine and Godly practice at home,
. . . of dealing with lawless men both in local enforcement and in faraway lands,
. . . of confronting terrorists in the world and errorists in the congregation,
. . . of the proper distinction and application of Law and Mercy in the State,
. . . of the proper distinction and application of Law and Gospel in the Church
. . . All this Thou hast done, O Lord, and therefore I confess that Thou art . . .

My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and

. . . and I must stop before going on
. . . and confess who I am,
. . . without my cassock and collar and stole
. . . without my battle-rattle and steel pot and protective gear
. . . without my bullet-proof vest and police helmet and riot shield
. . . and confess who I am
. . . a defenseless David having shed Saul's useless armor
. . . a feeble shepherd in need of the Lord's grace, mercy and peace,
. . . an immobilized warrior in need of the Lord's grace, mercy and peace,
. . . a paltry policeman in need of the same
. . . and thus together, in solidarity, we confess who we are
. . . lost men in this fallen world's brotherhood of poor, miserable sinners
. . . condemned souls justly deserving temporal and eternal condemnation
. . . most certainly dead and truly dying
. . . and I must stop before going on
. . . and confess who I AM is, for truly the LORD God is . . .

My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield,

. . . and I admit that I have no goodness to present either to You or to man,
. . . yet wait! Behold my Jesus taking my badness upon Himself
. . . and dragging the load to the cross and I am able to say about this Good News,
. . . "My goodness!"
. . . This is my confession, whether I live or whether I die: I am the Lord's.
. . . and I admit that I am not a fortress of myself,
. . . yet wait! Behold my Jesus allowing Himself to be overrun by the onslaught of evil,
. . . and He suffers this in order to be my Rock, and I am able to say,
. . . "A mighty Fortress is my God!"
. . . This is my confession, whether I live or whether I die: I am the Lord's.

. . . and I admit that I occupy no high tower, save the godless Babel,
 . . . yet wait! Jesus journeys through the valley of the shadow of death
 . . . and doing so He ascends a leafless tree, and I am able to say of that cross,
 . . . "The LORD is my High Tower!"
 . . . This is my confession, whether I live or whether I die: I am the Lord's.
 . . . and I admit, for I did not at birth, nor will I at death, be able to deliver myself
 . . . yet wait! The Christ delivered me from sin, death and hell's Goliath
 . . . and He did so by suffering and dying in my place, and I am able to say of Him,
 . . . "The LORD is my Deliverer!"
 . . . This is my confession, whether I live or whether I die: I am the Lord's.
 . . . and I admit that, of myself and in myself and by myself, that I have no enduring protection,
 . . . yet wait! He Who died rose again and in Baptism has taken me through His tomb,
 . . . and He Who has begun a good work in me is able to keep me until the Day, and I say,
 . . . "The LORD is my Shield!"
 . . . This is my confession. Whether I live or whether I die: I am the Lord's.
 . . . The LORD God is . . .

*My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer;
 my shield, and He in whom I trust;*

. . . for by grace am I saved - through faith - and this is not my own doing, it is the Gift of God,
 not because of works, lest I should boast; for I am God's workmanship, created in
 Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that I should walk in them.

*My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer;
 my shield, and He in whom I trust; Who subdueth my people under me.*

. . . This is the Christian's life - faith and love
 . . . thus there is faith in the LORD God and fervent love toward the neighbor
 . . . for God needs not our love and does not benefit from our good works
 . . . and we are forbidden to fear and trust our neighbor above anything or anyone else
 . . . for faith hears and receives forgiveness
 . . . in the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Ghost
 . . . and love responds as a fruit of faith to care for our neighbors as we are sundry called
 . . . bearing witness to various vocations in which we have promised and been ordained
 . . . and we are awed at the authority of our offices,
 . . . with an officer of the Law called to patrol and protect and serve others under him
 . . . with a warrior of the State called to fight for and defend and serve others under him
 . . . with a pastor of the Church called to preach and teach and serve others under him
 . . . and each of us, individually and personally, confesses that the LORD God is . . .

*My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer;
 my shield, and He in whom I trust; Who subdueth my people under me.*

. . . What authority has been conferred unto me!
 . . . the take and give of life and death according to the rules of engagement
 . . . on the crowded street and along the lonely patrolled beat
 . . . in the theater of operations and on the blood-soaked battleground
 . . . among the children begging candy and the smiling men bearing IEDs

. . . the binding and loosing of sins and sinners according to the office of the keys
. . . in the sealed confessional and at the baptismal fount
. . . in the perfect absolution and from the watch tower
. . . in the heard Word and with the Body and Blood of God
. . . What stewardship has been entrusted unto me!
. . . Who am I that I should hold such an office and be about such business as this?

*LORD, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him!
or the Son of Man, that Thou makest account of Him!*

LORD God, Creator of space and time, Who dwells outside of and beyond both,
. . . You peer down through
. . . the universe and the millennia,
. . . the galaxy and the years,
. . . the solar system and the weeks,
. . . the earth and the days,
. . . this speck of a place and this second of time,
. . . and You behold and know me,
. . . and I am in I AM's Presence,
. . . and the place whereupon I stand is holy ground.

*LORD, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him!
or the Son of Man, that Thou makest account of Him!*

LORD God, Redeemer of man, Who is enthroned far above and beyond all space and time,
. . . You were apostled unto us and became Emmanuel; that is, "God with us" . . .
. . . in the womb of a poor maiden and in the tomb of a rich man
. . . when held in the hands of Joseph of Nazareth and the arms of Joseph of Arimathea,
. . . when exalted by wise men and lifted up by men of violence,
. . . when in the temple at twelve and years later when hearing the children's hosannas,
. . . when ruining funerals and forgiving sins,
. . . so ordinary looking amidst such extraordinary events,
. . . thirsting at the Samaritan well while being the Water of Life,
. . . hungering in the wilderness while being the Manna from Heaven,
. . . wearying about in the world while granting the Lord's Rest,
. . . dying on a dead tree while petitioning for all sinners, "Father, forgive them . . ."

*LORD, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him!
or the Son of Man, that Thou makest account of Him!*

Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away.

This is most certainly true, and . . .
. . . if we walk by sight and apart from Christ's Word,
. . . if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, and
. . . *if for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.*
. . . *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead*
the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:19-20).

Christ is Risen!

... *in fact Christ has been raised from the dead,*
... *the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.*
... *For as by a man came death,*
... *by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.*
... *For as in Adam all die,*
... *so also in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).*
... *If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord;*
... *so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's (Romans 14:8).*
... *For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus,*
... *God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep (1 Thessalonians 4:14)*
... *we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).*

Therefore, the life of the Christian is one of faith and love, of confession and vocation,
... of faith towards the LORD our God, and,
... of love towards our neighbor.
... of confession that the LORD is our God - Father and † Son and Holy Spirit, and,
... of vocation as police or warrior or pastor in the service of our neighbor.

Lord Jesus, when asked about the Great Commandment in the Law,
... You summarized the 1st Tablet of the Ten Commandments, declaring ...
... *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,*
... *and with all your soul, and with all your mind.*
... *This is the great and first commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38).*
... And thus, O LORD our God, hear our prayer
... that we may fear, love and trust in You above all things, especially foreign gods:

Bow Thy heavens, O LORD, and come down:
... *touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.*
Cast forth lightning, and scatter them:
... *shoot out Thine arrows, and destroy them.*
Send Thine hand from above; rid me,
... *and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;*
Whose mouth speaketh vanity,
... *and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.*
I will sing a new song unto Thee, O God:
... *upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto Thee.*
It is He that giveth salvation unto kings:
... *Who delivereth David His servant from the hurtful sword.*
Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children,
... *whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood. Amen.*

Lord Jesus, when asked about the Great Commandment in the Law,
... You answered, and then said a second was like it, and then
... summarized the 2nd Tablet of the Ten Commandments, declaring ...
... *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).*
... And thus, O LORD our God, hear our prayer on behalf of our nation and land and children,
... that we may fear, love and trust in You above all things, especially foreign gods:

*That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth;
... that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace:
That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store:
... that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:
That our oxen may be strong to labour;
... that there be no breaking in, nor going out;
... that there be no complaining in our streets.
Happy is that people, that is in such a case:
... yea, happy is that people,
... whose God is the LORD. Amen.*

Beloved brothers, that this may be so, the LORD God has called us to our posts. Some have an easier call; others a more difficult one. As this epistle is being written, soldiers in Kirkuk are fighting for the freedom of a foreign people whose god is Allah and are enduring a week of 120-degree plus temperatures as they do so. In Connecticut, after a dump truck slammed into a commuter bus, police rescued dazed passengers from their burning cars. Despite the danger of being bombed, London police have swarmed into places where Muslim terrorists were holed-up in Notting Hill and have taken them captive. While Seabees are training for a mission, Airmen have delivered supplies for a village near Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. Then there are those who specially serve in both kingdoms, the chaplains. Whether civilian or military, the chaplain is ready to serve the spiritual needs of many at home and abroad.

... yea blessed is that nation whose God is the LORD.
... and thus, cursed is that country whose God is not the LORD.

And of the other men who are called to serve as pastors? I must confess that I am ashamed of two of them and thank God for a third. Of the former is an ecclesiastical supervisor who approves syncretism and wields authority flowing from and in service to power. Not many days ago he issued an executive order that meddled in the service of faithful brothers, this being done to prevent the truth from being published. This one will collect his due. The other one represents the many men who bring disgrace to the office of pastor by departing from Law-Gospel preaching and teaching, abandoning the public ministry of Word and Sacrament, setting aside the historic liturgy of the Church, and compromising the confession of the faith. Such men are not merely cowards, but wretched traitors, adding their silent and/or vocal “*amen*”s to the syncretistic prayers and pray-ers of these latter days; that is, these times when religious compromise, selective tolerance and political correctness are cardinal virtues foisted upon the church by false teachers and errorists. They look at the sword of the Spirit and the scimitar of another spirit, neither perceiving nor teaching that there is a difference between the One True God and another god, or between the Gospel and another gospel – not that there is another God or another Gospel, but there are some who trouble us and want to pervert the Gospel of Christ. Those exhibiting such quisling characteristics would not be permitted to remain in the armed forces or on the police force. Yet they plague the Church. Such ones will have their reward.

... yea, blessed is that Church whose God is the LORD ...
... and thus, cursed is that congregation whose God is not the LORD.

I thank the LORD my God for the third pastor. He is one of the few who has not bowed the knee to Baal. There are a handful of such faithful pastors in Sweden. The number of such men is decreasing in the United States; while the ranks are increasing in countries like Sudan and Kenya. These are brothers who will neither compromise the Truth of the Trinity nor tolerate false doctrine. Instead, they proclaim that Jesus is the Christ and as such, is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and that no one

comes to the Father save by Him. Thanks be to Jesus for pastors who will preach the Word in its truth and purity, and administer the Sacraments as Christ has instituted them. They do this whether those hearing are a handful or more than a hundred. They do this whether in an open field in Africa or in a country church in the Midwest. Such brothers stand together in the truth and in opposition to the lie. The day will come when we will have to do so with the courage, determination, conviction and loyalty displayed in both the doctrine and the practice of our brothers in the military and in law enforcement. Please pray that the band of brother pastors may stand together in the truth regardless of what may happen as a result of doing so.

At the English Camp at Agincourt, King Henry speaks to us all and for us all in our days, times, places, offices and stations:

Gloucester, 'tis true that we are in great danger;
The greater therefore should our courage be.
Good morrow, brother Bedford. God Almighty!
There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out;
For our bad neighbour makes us early stirrers,
Which is both healthful, and good husbandry:
Besides, they are our outward consciences,
And preachers to us all; admonishing
That we should dress us fairly for our end.
Thus may we gather honey from the weed,
And make a moral of the devil himself.

William Shakespeare
The Life of King Henry the Fifth (Act IV. Scene I.)

Indeed, all of us are about the activities of our vocations that the next generations may be able to read Psalm 144 and meditate on it as we have done on this Day of St. Crispian. Weeks have past since the events referenced several paragraphs above, took place. As I write this paragraph Katrina has come and wrought havoc on millions, devastated hundreds of thousands and killed many. The world has seen the bodies, the septic streets, the tears, those dying on the bridges, the anger of the frustrated, the submerged city and the inside of the Superdome. Then there are the children who do not yet know that they are orphans. The world has also seen you brethren confronting the looters and comforting the frightened — risking the diseased waters amidst the reports of snipers and rescuing the sick and the poor — and a thousand other assignments. They have not seen thousands of other duties such as standing guard by night on a dark New Orleans street corner, proclaiming the Good News of salvation by the grace of God through faith in Christ to a Mississippi congregation whose building is no more, intervening in a dispute when a man in Alabama is told that his family house is no longer habitable, coordinating relief efforts in Texas, and more.

How many times have you and I said that we work, hope, pray and do the things we do in order “to make things better for our children than we had it? – to keep our grandchildren from having to suffer the wretched things of our history?” And when did it suddenly happen that we realized that though we try, even with all our might, resources, resolve and sweat, we will neither necessarily make the world a better place, nor prevent the church from being assaulted by false prophets and old heresies? Our grandsons will have their wars, their disasters, old heresies, evil men and their plagues, as we have ours, and as our grandfathers had theirs.

So, if not to make a better world for our children or theirs, why do we do what we do? Several reasons. God's will. Our Call. The office. Our duty. The need. And one final handful of reasons:

5 — that the brave brothers of the next generations, who indeed include especially our sons and grandsons, may heed the Call and toe the line promising their pledges and declaring their vows in the various offices of state and church;

4 — that they, too, may stand side-by-side in their day, even as we do the same this day, in order to preserve and protect and proclaim both truth and justice, doing so with the heightened courage and wisdom that issues forth from God and is fortified by the brotherhood;

3 — that those sons and grandsons of ours may be our brothers;

2 — that those same sons and grandsons, may on that day, just as we do now; aye, that they may enjoy the mutual consolation and conversation of the brethren; and finally,

1 — that we may be one with our sons and grandsons, . . . and they with us.

Beloved brothers, October 25th is the Feast of St. Crispin, a fourth-century martyr and the patron saint of cobblers and shoemakers. The Battle of Agincourt was fought on 25 October Anno Domini 1415 when Henry V and his out-numbered longbowman defeated the French. Nearly 200 years later, William Shakespeare used the event in his play, "Henry V." The St. Crispin's Day Speech is moving and worthy of being committed to memory.

WESTMORELAND

O that we now had here
But one ten thousand of those men in England
That do no work to-day!

KING HENRY V

What's he that wishes so?
My cousin Westmoreland? No, my fair cousin:
If we are mark'd to die, we are enow
To do our country loss; and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
It yearns me not if men my garments wear;
Such outward things dwell not in my desires:
But if it be a sin to covet honour,
I am the most offending soul alive.
No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England:
God's peace! I would not lose so great an honour
As one man more, methinks, would share from me
For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!

Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,
 That he which hath no stomach to this fight,
 Let him depart; his passport shall be made
 And crowns for convoy put into his purse:
 We would not die in that man's company
 That fears his fellowship to die with us.
 This day is called the feast of Crispian:
 He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
 Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,
 And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
 He that shall live this day, and see old age,
 Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
 And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian:'
 Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.
 And say 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'
 Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
 But he'll remember with advantages
 What feats he did that day: then shall our names
 Familiar in his mouth as household words
 Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,
 Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
 Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.
 This story shall the good man teach his son;
 And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
 From this day to the ending of the world,
 But we in it shall be remember'd;
 We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
 For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
 Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
 This day shall gentle his condition:
 And gentlemen in England now a-bed
 Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
 And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
 That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

Dear brother, a blessed Saint Crispin's Day to you . . .

in the Name

of the Father and

of the † Son and

of the Holy Ghost.

Amen.

a brother