

"The Mystery of Spiritual Health & Life"

Vital Signs (Pt. 4)

February 5, 2017

INTRO ... Traveling Through Life with a companion named "Mystery"

We still don't know how it begins, but suddenly, it moves.

At some point, around the 22nd day of an embryo's life, there will be a flicker, and then another, and another. Though the events leading up to that initial spark are still a mystery, we know that these ripples will mature into strong, organized, dependable strokes—the first of 2 billion that will sustain you over a lifetime. ...You now have a heartbeat.

It is the alpha and omega of a human, the beginning and end of love, life, and goodness. A heartbeat: could there be a more meaningful unit?

...Despite its omnipresence, this mechanism is so extensively complex and elusively mysterious that generations of scientists have not been able to answer its most basic questions: How does it start? Why doesn't it stop? ...While we don't know how that first beat starts, we do know that from the initial ripple of a heart tube your entire survival is contingent upon it never stopping. "Mysteries of a Beating Heart", Christianity Today, June 9, 2016 **Dr. Lindsay Stokes** is an emergency physician living in Albany, New York. She wrote about heart rest (diastole) for The Behemoth's issue 23.

...like it or not. Life comes with mystery—things we see partially; pieces we can't fully figure out; knowledge beyond our capacity to discover, to know, or understand.

Spiritual Health Contains Mystery ...When you come in for your Spiritual Check-up, you should walk away with 2 things that are not contradictory in God's Kingdom: (1) Place Your Hope Completely in the Covenant Grace of God ... (2) DO this and this and this to improve your spiritual health!

"What causes this odd state of affairs? The root cause is the same as in most cases of error in the church—the intruding of rationalistic speculations, the passion for systematic consistency, a reluctance to recognize the existence of mystery and to let God be wiser than men, and a consequent subjecting of Scripture to the supposed demands of human logic. People see that the Bible teaches man's responsibility for his actions; they do not see (man, indeed, cannot see) how this is consistent with the sovereign Lordship of God over those actions. They are not content to let the two truths live side by side, as they do in the

Scriptures, but jump to the conclusion that, in order to uphold the biblical truth of human responsibility, they are bound to reject the equally biblical and equally true doctrine of divine sovereignty, and to explain away the great number of texts that teach it. The desire to over-simplify the Bible by cutting out the mysteries is natural to our perverse minds, and it is not surprising that even good men should fall victim to it." J.I. Packer, "Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God", p. 16

"An antimony exists when a pair of principles stand side by side, seemingly irreconcilable, yet both undeniable. There are cogent reasons for believing each of them; each rests on clear and solid evidence; but it is a mystery to you how they can be squared with each other. You see that each one must be true on its own, but you do not see how they can both be true together. ...What should one do then, with an antimony? Accept it for what it is, and learn to live with it. Be careful not to set them at loggerheads, nor to make deductions from either that would cut across the other. Use each within the limits of its own sphere of reference. Note what connections exist between the two truths and their two frames of reference, and teach yourself to think of reality in a way that provides for their peaceful coexistence, remembering that reality itself has proved actually to contain them both." J.I. Packer, "Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God", p. 19

Mystery MUST be a healthy category that exists in a CREATURE! We are limited creatures, therefore we live with incomplete knowledge and understanding! ...When "mystery" is diminished or not allowed to speak (usually due to natural/scientific arrogance) we end up shoving things to one extreme or another (which eliminates mystery).

2Cor 3:12-4:7

- This passage is "shrouded in mystery"—the mystery of the 1st Heartbeat is in this passage... the mystery of veils that for some are lifted and for others they aren't; there is a spiritual being out there who is blinding minds.

-- v. 12, 4:1 ...YET, there is HOPE and PERSEVERANCE in this passage.

- **The Mystery of the 1st Heartbeat—New Birth**

2Cor 4:3-6

"let there be light!" = "let there be a spiritual heartbeat!"

1 Cor 3:6-7 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

Being converted to Christ - being saved - is a supernatural work of God. It is being born again by the Spirit of God - being given a new nature, a new spiritual taste, and new way of seeing, and by that, an awakening of joy in Christ that you never knew before.

In Edwards' understanding, this is what regeneration is. This is what God does in shining into the heart of a darkened sinner: "The first effect of the power of God in the heart in REGENERATION, is to give the heart a Divine taste or sense; to cause it to have a relish [for] the loveliness and sweetness of the supreme excellency of the Divine nature." ... Before regeneration - before God creates a new taste for Christ - money and comfort and ease and security and sexual stimulation and food and success and family and productivity and the praise of men tasted better to us than Christ.

*But now something has happened. "God . . . has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." We have been born again. We have a new taste for reality. The created things that we thought were the fountain of pleasure turn out to be empty, and the one we thought was a boring, bloody fool turns out to be a beautiful treasure chest of holy joy. **John Piper, "A Divine and Supernatural Light"***

Acts 16:13-15 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. 14 A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household had been baptized, **NASU**

...God spoke to Lydia's heart—"Let there be light"

YET ...the activity of man is not ignored—Planting and Watering are mentioned and they matter in some way. ...Lydia's Heart Mysteriously Opens by the Touch of God—but prayer and preaching are also present.

- Jesus Christ is the only veil remover—yet, Paul was told that he would be sent by God to "open eyes"

Acts 26:12-18 "In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13 At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. 14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15 And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, 17 delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

NOTE: the Mystery—Only God opens eyes, YET not in the absence of human activity.

- **The "Veil of Mystery" that Exists in This Realm of Life**

- The Veil of the Fallen Human Heart (v. 14)

Rom 8:7-9 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.

- The Blinding of Satan (v. 3-4)

- The things Hidden by God

Deut 29:29 "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

Isaiah 55:8-11 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

...THIS is Not Like Our Ways. God is a being who NEVER TRIES to do anything ...He Simply Successfully Accomplishes and Does ALL that He Decides to do....That's STRANGE to me! How could I ever counsel God in how to use that kind of power?

Is. 6:8-13 ...This passage is EXTREMELY VEILED, even confusing ...with a Massive Hope Inserted in it!! ...

John 12:36-41 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. 37 Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, 38 so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" 39 Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, 40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them." 41 Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

...What do I do with this revelation in Scripture? (Man Given the Command to Believe—while being aware that God SEEMS at work in a contrary way!) ...I acknowledge that God's Ways are Higher Than Mine, that I will Never Possess All Knowledge, that God is NOT obligated to answer my charges or submit to some 'freedom of information' request by a citizen of the kingdom, NOR do I think I could understand God's explanation if He gave it to me! ...

HOWEVER ... this absence of details and lack of access to the "Sovereign Programming Code" that is running the universe, NEVER leaves me in a place that I don't know what to do—Man is to obey what God has told him to do and to RESIST the temptation to make obedience contingent on my "understanding and agreeing with" God's ways!

- Job 42 ...The poster child for a human being who "deserved an explanation"

1 **Cor 2:6-8** Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.
7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Eph 3:4-6 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

o The Unveiled Believer (2Cor 3:14-18)

- **How That Happens** (v. 14 ...it is "taken away" ...4:6 ...its darkness is overcome by the light God gives)
- **What it Does and Does Not Accomplish**
 - The Unveiling Makes the Process of Transformation Possible and To Be Expected—but NOT instantaneous fix and arrival (v. 17-18)
 - "Having the mind of Christ" (1Cor 2) is spoken to Christians who are living life in a Natural Minded Way—very much below their privilege and the expectations of Paul, but nonetheless real!

So... what's this got to do with our "Vital Signs"? ...We need to be aware that there is MYSTERY present in our Spiritual Health—In Our Own & in Those Around Us. ...Consider our "Ultimate Hope" for Spiritual Health and our "Personal Responsibility" for Spiritual Health.

- ***Our Ultimate Hope for Spiritual Health***

- **2Cor 3:12, 16-4:1, 6-7**

- **1Cor 3:5-7, 16** ...Our Ultimate Hope is that GOD Germinates Seed, God Causes New Birth ...then, God Dwells in Us and Others and HE is the source and imparter of liberty and transformation!!

- ***Our Personal Responsibility for Spiritual Health***

- We are checking our Vital Signs in 4 areas: Inhaling (receiving Spiritual input), Cardiopulmonary (our relationship with the workings of the Spirit in us), Exhaling (expressing/giving away the life in us), Temperature (signs of the presence of infection ...the intrusion of temptation, idols, and sin)

NOTE: In all these things, WE have Activity and Responsibilities.

We Do Not Want You to Place Your HOPE in Your Areas of Responsibility —No, we have hope because *"we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us"* (2Co 4:7) ...But, we Do Want You to Take Responsibility for Your Life Choices and Patterns and Pursuits, because the Bible Commands us to do so!!

...and NOWHERE does the Bible ask us to PAUSE in our Obedience, Until we "understand, figure out, and agree" with the God who is infinitely higher than us and beyond us!!