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BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS

The Centipede

Just a Thought · John 1:14

By John L. Wheeler

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14

A centipede was crawling across the floor of a woodworking shop.

There was nothing remarkable about him. He was small, harmless, and apparently had no particular destination. He traveled in one direction, turned, went another way, doubled back, and started off again.

It was easy to sit and watch him.

The distance between a man and a centipede seems enormous. The man could see the centipede, but the centipede knew nothing about the man watching him. He did not understand the shop, know who owned it, or realize that the creature towering above him could scoop him up and carry him outside, leave him alone, or simply step on him.

And then comes a strange question.

What could possibly cause that man to love the centipede so much that he would become a centipede?

Not merely to point him in the right direction or carry him somewhere safer. Suppose the centipede faced a problem from which he could not rescue himself. What kind of love would cause the man to become what the centipede was and give his own life to save him?

The comparison seems almost absurd.

But the distance between a man and a centipede is nothing compared with the distance between God and man.

Man and the centipede are both creatures. However great their differences, both belong to creation. God is altogether different. God is the Creator. Man is the creature. God is eternal. Man had a beginning. God is self-existent. Man depends upon God for every breath. God is holy. Fallen man is sinful.

And yet:

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

God the Son became man.

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Humanity was not merely wandering around creation confused about which direction to take. Fallen man was in rebellion against the God who created him. He was guilty before God, alienated from God, and unable to reconcile himself to God.

Still, the Son came.

He did not cease to be God. He took to Himself a true human nature. The eternal Son entered His own creation and lived among those He had created.

Then He did something even more astonishing.

He died for them.

“but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

Why?

Why would the Creator do that for the creature? Why would the holy God come among sinful men? Why would the Son bear the judgment deserved by those who had rebelled against Him?

Scripture gives the answer:

“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:10

Love.

Not because the creature deserved it. Not because man first reached upward toward God. Not because sinners made themselves worthy of rescue.

He loved us.

The little centipede continued across the shop floor, completely unaware that anyone had been watching him.

But the man watching was left with something worth considering.

The distance between a man and a centipede seems enormous.

The distance between God and man is infinitely greater.

And the wonder of the gospel is that the One on the other side of that distance came to us.

He became flesh.

He dwelt among us.

And He died for us.

Just a thought.

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