

**General Topics :: The Swans Are Not Silent****The Swans Are Not Silent - posted by moreofHim (), on: 2005/7/26 12:31**

Has anyone read any of the books in this series?

Thanks to a dear friend, I am reading this series of books called "The Swans Are Not Silent" by John Piper. She sent me two of the three books at Christmas. The one I am reading now is titled "The Hidden Smile of God"- The Fruit of Affliction in the Lives of John Bunyan, William Cowper, and David Brainerd.

Though I could not bear to read them while I was going through the worst of my trials this year, I am finding much comfort in reading it now that the worst has passed. I am finding answers and assurance and even purpose.

Piper calls these men "swans" because they are great voices for Christian truth that death has not silenced. When Augustine retired in 430 A.D., he handed over his duties to his humble successor, Eraclius. At the ceremony, Eraclius stood to preach as the aged Augustine sat behind him. Overwhelmed by his sense of inadequacy in Augustine's presence, Eraclius said, **"The cricket chirps, the swan is silent."**

The reference to swans appeared again a thousand years later. On July 6, 1415, John Hus (whose name in Czech means "goose") was burned at the stake. Just before his death, he is said to have written, **"Today, you are burning a goose; however, a hundred years from now, you will be able to hear a swan sing; you will not burn it, you will have to listen to him."**

And so the line of "swans" has continued down to our own day-- faithful witnesses to the gospel of the glory of Christ whose death does not silence their song.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,

But trust Him for his grace;

Behind a frowning providence

He hides a smiling face.

-William Cowper-

"God Moves In A Mysterious Way"

**Re: The Swans Are Not Silent - posted by moreofHim (), on: 2005/7/26 13:03**

I have been reading about the life of John Bunyan in this series of books; the author of, not only Pilgrim's Progress, but also of many, many other books as well. A few to mention are: The Holy War, Grace Abounding, The Strait Gate, and Seasonable Counsel (Advice to Sufferers).

Bunyan experienced quite a bit of suffering in his lifetime and this book looks at the fruit of it in his life and work. Bunyan's suffering left its mark on all his written work. George Whitefield said of Pilgrim's Progress, **"It smells of the prison. It was written when the author was confined in Bedford jail. And ministers never write or preach so well as when under the cross: the Spirit of Christ and of Glory then rests upon them."**

**"The smell of affliction was on most of what Bunyan wrote. In fact, I suspect that one of the reasons the Puritans are still being read today with so much profit is that their entire experience, unlike ours, was one of persecution and suffering. To our chipper culture this may seem somber at times, but the day you hear that you have cancer, or that your child is blind, or that a mob is coming, you turn away from the light books to the weighty ones that were written on the precipice of eternity where the fragrance of heaven and the stench of hell are both in the air."** -J. Piper

Bunyan's suffering caused him to see the truth that the Christian life is hard and that following Jesus means having the wind in your face; as you can see from this passage from his last published book "The Excellency of a Broken Heart":

**"Conversion is not the smooth, easy-going process some men seem to think...It is wounding work, of course, this is breaking of the hearts, but without wounding there is no saving...Where there is a grafting there is a cutting, the scion\* must be let in with a wound; to stick it on to the outside or to tie it on with a string would be of no use. Heart must be set to heart back to back, or there will be no sap from root to branch, and this I say, must be done by a wound."**

\*scion: A detached shoot or twig containing buds from a woody plant, used in grafting.

Bunyan's suffering also made him passionate and patient. You can hear his empathy with strugglers, other sufferers and the afflicted church of the time. It deepened his love for his flock and gave his labor for Christ the 'fragrance of eternity'.

His suffering also strengthened his assurance that God is sovereign over all the afflictions of His people and will bring them safely home. Bunyan writes in "Seasonable Counsel":

"It is not what enemies will, nor what they are resolved upon, but what God will, and what God appoints; that shall be done...No enemy can bring suffering upon a man when the will of God is otherwise, so no man can save himself out of their hands when God will deliver him up for His glory.... We shall or shall not suffer, even as it pleaseth Him."

Bunyan concludes, 'The times, then, and the seasons, even for the sufferings of the people of God, are not in the hands of their enemies, but in the hand of God; as David said. 'My times are in thy hand'" (Psalm 31:15)

**"It is said that in some countries trees will grow, but will bear no fruit, because there is no winter there." -J. Bunyan**

\*(Look for William Cowper next- author of Streams in the Desert :)

In Him, Chanin