

## Breathing Problems

Yesterday, Sunday 3rd November 2013, Monica and I joined the folk at In:Courage in Bath.

During the worship session, the words "breathing problems" started going round in my mind. My initial (smug) thought was that this meant that there was someone with a physical breathing problem such as asthma that needed prayer and prepared to pass this on to Andrew Leahey.

Then I felt that God was saying it's not a physical problem but a spiritual one and that I needed to explore this. I'm still doing so but this is what I've come up with so far. Sorry if it is muddled and confusing - it's still spinning in my mind.

- The problem lies in individuals and the church in general. I'm pointing no fingers here, except maybe at myself.
- At creation, He breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils (Acts 2). As I read this again it occurred to me that He didn't just breathe life into Adam but something more important. This was an intimate act of sharing of His very essence which completed the act of making man in his own image. Man sharing breath with God ... WOW! How intimate can it get?
- Then, starting at the fall and then down through the ages, mankind began to breathe in other stuff, a sort of spiritual pollution which did not originate from the Father. This pollution saps our spiritual energy, damages our spiritual health, and hinders our focusing on Him. And as the spiritual aspect of our being is harmed it will in turn affect our physical and emotional makeup.
- Where does this pollution come from?
  - The secular world. Some things here are self-evident. We know instinctively that they are wrong. But other things are more subtle. They may not of themselves be harmful but if they start coming between us and the Father, then they need to be dealt with.
  - This is the most controversial one. I believe that a lot of spiritual pollution has come via the church. And here I don't mean any particular church or denomination. Also, I don't mean that there has been any deliberate attempt to corrupt the Gospel. As man has sought to understand what God is saying to us and wanting for us, there is a human tendency to grasp a part of the truth and then our imaginations take over and expand it, with the risk of seizing hold of ideas that were not part of His plan. The emphasis can be on forms of religious legalism right through to a vision of freedom which borders on anarchy.

Having potentially offended all my readers at this point, let me state that I don't claim to have all the answers - I'm trying to identify and sift out the pollution in my relationship with the Father and share where I am with you. There is freedom in the Gospel - it's a major element. At the same time, He does have requirements of us. not to condemn us but to enrich our lives as we walk with Him.

Our God is much bigger than we can comprehend. If we try to fit Him into our understanding, we are cutting Him down to our size, which is an impossibility.

- Ultimately, all spiritual pollution comes from Satan, but to simply lay the blame at his feet is to ignore our responsibility. He is the tempter, but with Christ we can overcome temptation. (Resist the devil and he will flee from you).
  - So, what can we do to get rid of the pollution in our lives? If we try in our own strength, we will fail. The thought that we can go it alone is one aspect of the pollution. We need to start breathing the pure breath of God again. When we breathe it in, it fills our spiritual lungs. As we breathe out it will expel the pollutants, but only if we draw close enough so that we only receive the intimacy of the God-breath. That's what I'm seeking to do. If I discover new ways to do so, I'll let you know. And if you have any insights to help me and others, please don't keep them to yourself.
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Pete Bennett  
4<sup>th</sup> November 2013