

QUIET TIME GUIDE
FOR Tuesday 8/5/08
FROM JACK MILLWOOD

Greeting:

I guess today is the day I make you jealous but I will take that risk in order to make a point. I mentioned in our last quiet time that I just returned from two weeks of vacation. As I said, it was a wonderful time that allowed me to recharge my batteries and get fueled up for the rest of the year. I noticed something on vacation that came to my mind when I read Psalm 117 today. By the way, this is the psalm you want if you are called on to read a chapter publicly or to memorize a Psalm. It is only two verses long. That is the entire chapter. If you will go with me mentally on a day or two of my vacation it will allow me to make a point that will lead us into a truth from this Psalm. My wife and I spent two weeks on the Caribbean island of St Martin. You can drive around the entire island easily as the road around the island is only 32 miles long. If you have never been to the Caribbean the water is crystal clear. You can see for a hundred feet down in the water. There are fish of every imaginable kind swimming for the eye to see. The water temperature is 82 degrees and the sand is soft and white. There are 32 beaches on the island. My wife and I spend most of our time on a few of those isolated beaches. We do not go to the one big beach where all the tourists go. We go to a few beaches that may only have 8 people and on crowded days 20-30 people. They are bays where the cliffs come in on the coast line and form these tropical pieces of paradise. We pull up a beach chair, grab a book and read and enjoy the beauty around us. There is one little island about ½ miles off the main island called Pinel that we go to annually. You ride a little boat out to the “Gilligan like” piece of paradise and enjoy being surrounded by water on every side. The sun is shining and in front of you is the Caribbean Sea. Behind you is the Atlantic Ocean where it meets the Caribbean. This is a little slice of heaven. I will not even mention the fact that they have a barbecue stand that makes some of the best ribs you have ever eaten. Maybe you are getting the picture. For my wife and I, all this is a piece of paradise. It is a PEACE in paradise. It is the only two weeks of the year that I do not have a cell phone tied to my hip or a lap top computer in my lap. For us it is a time of quiet reflection and spiritual, physical and emotional recreation. YET, and here is my point, as I sit on this beautiful tropical slice of heaven I see off to my side a husband and wife who are “going at each other verbally.” They are on vacation too. I am not sure what has happened but she is giving him a piece of her mind not a piece of paradise. On another day I see this small family of four and the mom and dad are totally exhausted with the kids. They are screaming at them and they are having their own private civil war right in the middle of paradise. I noticed over the two week period people of all nationalities and all personalities. Many were honeymooners. Many were couples and many were families. I noticed happy people, sad people, excited people, depressed people, and worried people. As I lay there in my own little space just thinking about the Lord and being grateful to the Lord for this time it began to dawn on me that what was really important was not our LATTITUDE but our ATTITUDE. You can be in the tropics on a Caribbean island where life is meant to be a paradise and it can still be hell if there is no peace in your heart. I am not being critical of those I saw. God knows there have been plenty of times when I have given my wife a piece of my mind (I have to be

careful, I don't have much to give.) I have been on vacation with the kids and reached the point of exasperation with them also. That in fact is what I am saying. Wherever you are; at home, at work, at church, or on vacation life still happens. People, circumstances and events still surround you. The secret to enjoying life is not a matter of geography. Moving to a new location, getting a new job, changing spouses, swapping kids (you can't – you know that, don't you) will not change anything if our hearts and attitudes are not changed. When the Psalmist penned Psalm 117 he only needed two verses to say what was on his heart. He told us what kind of inner attitude and spirit we need to have regardless of where we are physically.

Scripture for today:

Psalm 117: 1 “Praise the LORD, all you nations. Praise him, all you people of the earth. 2 For he loves us with unfailing love; the LORD’s faithfulness endures forever. Praise the LORD!”

Life Application:

He says it does not matter what “*nation*” you are from, “*praise the Lord.*” The people, “*all the people of the earth,*” need to praise the Lord. He said we need to live with the constant recognition of the fact that God “*loves us.*” We need to live in the awareness of God’s “*unfailing love.*” We need to keep in our hearts the thought that “*the LORD’S faithfulness endures forever.*” We need to live a life of praise.

Spiritual exercise:

That is easier said than done. I have been back from vacation for two days. At the end of the first day I was ready to jump off a cliff. It was piled up from when I was gone. The issues I left were waiting on me when I returned. Within a matter of hours I felt myself losing that freshness of joy that I had felt while the tropical breeze swept across my face. I was reminded that I need to live in the climate of praise at all times. In the midst of the events of life, I need to learn to praise. So do you! Whether you are on an island, in an office, or in the den of the house we need to learn to live in a spirit of praise. Can you? Let's start where we are. Let's start with today. Let's start right now. Stop and praise the Lord. Think of what you have to be thankful for. Give God praise for what he is doing in your life. All day today ask God to help you live in that praise zone! Don't let your circumstances control your attitude. Know that God is in control of your life and can see you through whatever you face. Even what seems to be giving your grief is within the grasp of God. God can and does take everything that happens to you and uses it for good in your life. Some one said that circumstances were like a mattress. You can live on top of them in comfort but if they are on top of you they can smother you to death. The key to joy is learning to praise God regardless of what is happening around you or inside you. God is faithful. His “*faithfulness endures forever!*” I learned that you can be in paradise physically and be miserable. I have also learned that you can be in a difficult situation yet have paradise within your heart. Trust him today. Praise him today.

Thought for the day.

Joy is a matter of attitude not latitude!