

NEWS AND VIEWS  
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“Southern Baptists with the Full  
Gospel for the Whole World”

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*Same difference!* I heard someone say this recently. Someone was having a conversation with someone else when both were describing to a third person what had happened in a video that both had seen...but in two different ways. The two accounts were in fact similar, but with some variant and subtle differences. The one who said *same difference* was trying to say that she was saying the same thing as the other person...only differently. I think that is what she was saying. But it wasn't too clear. In reality, we often communicate the same message, but say it differently. Now when someone uses the words *same* and *difference* and they are connected together, I need a little clarification! Is what they say truly the same...or is there a difference?

Sometimes when reading the Bible I see phrases repeated. When someone thinks that a thought is worthy of communicating, the thought is usually vocalized and often repeated. Now some folks think that some of their thoughts more worthy than they really are...in other words, some folks sound like a “broken record”. It really makes me feel old when I write that, knowing that in this digital age, the youngest generations really don't have knowledge of what it was like for a record disc to be repeating a phrase over and over because of its brokenness. Seeing the repetition of phrases in the Bible, could it be that the Author thought that this thought needed to be repeated? Can the Lord be communicating a message about brokenness to the broken?

Humans and other trainable creatures become trained by repetition. Training dogs in the military, I saw the animals begin to respond to the sound of repeated commands. So when I see a cluster of words repeated, I begin to detect a message. Humans are created to make meaning of messages. I began to receive a meaningful message recently from Psalm 80. After reading it aloud, I heard myself say a phrase several times. The same phrase...only different. It's a message about restoration...and salvation...how they go together...and are entirely dependent upon one another. We are saved to be restored. And when we are restored, we will be saved. Take a look and see...and hear the sound for yourself.

*O God, restore us and cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved. (80:3)*

*O God of hosts, restore us and cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved. (80:7)*

*O Lord God of hosts, restore us; Cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved. (80:19)*

Sounds like the same message...only different. The biggest difference I see is a progressive revelation of the name of God. *God...God of hosts...Lord God of hosts*. Can you get the meaning that the Holy Spirit is conveying through His messenger, the human psalmist? When a human being is crying out for restoration and salvation and they become aware that there is a God who *can* restore and save it is when we usually recognize that we *can't*...we don't have that power. When God begins to reveal Himself as God, the psalmist declares that He is sovereign over the hosts of heaven. We have begun to consider the foundational fountain this year in Genesis beginning with Genesis 1:1: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*. A deep understanding of this first verse puts the rest of the Bible and all of our lives in perspective and reveals God's ultimate authority. When we begin to worship God as the creature is designed to worship the Creator, He reveals His personal nature and eternal attributes to us...He is Lord...of all.

When you pray...do you consider Who it is you are talking to? God...God of hosts...or Lord God of hosts? *Same difference?* I'm only beginning to learn the difference in knowing the God who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. My knowledge of Him is the only thing changing...praise the Lord...that I can know Him at all!

Blessings to you,  
Pastor Sam