

Yet, while Autocorrect is definitely a creation of our age, it could be that the apostle Paul had something like it in mind when he wrote to the Ephesians, *I pray that...God...may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe* (v. 17-18).

Although "spirit of wisdom" is used here without being preceded by "Holy," Paul is almost certainly talking about God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit. And notice what Paul says this divine Spirit can do: it helps us know what is the hope to which we are called, it helps us know the riches of our inheritance as believers, and it helps us know the immeasurable greatness of God's power for those who believe.

Simplified, these lofty phrases, tell us that the Holy Spirit will give us the ability to view things through eyes made clear by faith in God. But not always at first glance; sometimes the Spirit has to autocorrect our vision so that we understand additional meaning in what we are seeing.

Leaving Ephesians for a second, we'll turn to the Psalms where we see lots of evidence of the Holy Autocorrect at work, particularly in those psalms that are commonly identified as laments or complaints. Take Psalm 13 for example: The psalmist starts by asking God how long God's going to leave him hanging in his troubles:

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? (vv. 1-2)

The psalmist goes on for three more verses stating his complaints and pleading for help, but then, all of sudden in the last verse, the psalmist says: *I will sing to the LORD, because [God] has dealt bountifully with me.* (v. 6) Zing! That's the Holy Autocorrect at work!

Or how about Psalm 22, which begins: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?* (v. 1) and ends declaring: *Posterity will serve [God]; future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim [God's] deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that [God] has done it* (vv. 30-31). Another Holy Autocorrect.

We can even see The Holy Autocorrect happening within a single verse: *Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God* (Psalm 42:11).

A cynic might look at such psalms as say, "Well, the complaints are probably real enough, but the psalmist is just throwing in those affirmations of faith at the end as insurance against making God mad."

Maybe. But it's more likely that airing his complaints before God reminded the psalmist of the larger picture with which his faith intersected. The abrupt transition in Psalm 13 from complaint to praise doesn't mean that the gratitude eliminated the grievance. What has changed is the Psalmist's perspective, his attitude, his viewpoint: he can see God at work even in the midst of his troubles. To his cry of lament is added the peace of knowing God.

This is what makes the Spirit-driven Holy Autocorrect so much better than the Sprint-driven or Verizon-driven autocorrect function on our phones. The computer generated autocorrect on our phones gives us a complete word replacement – it substitutes one word for another – whereas the Holy Autocorrect of the apostle Paul and the psalmist, i.e. the Holy Spirit, doesn't wipe out the first rendition; instead, it adds another view, a greater God's eye view, which in the long run is capable of sustaining us.

We live with contradictions in the life of faith, and that's a reality we crash into on a daily basis. Sometimes it seems as though the world is running along with no one in charge. Yet, we also believe that: *The earth is the LORD'S and all that is in it* (Psalm 24:1). We affirm that God is

merciful, yet, at the same time, we complain that some people seem to get away with murder. And sometimes we even curse and praise God with equal sincerity in the same day! That's the "ambiguity and complexity of the life of faith" (McCann) at work in all of us.

So, what are we to take away from all of this? Simply that we need not be derailed by the clash between the pain of earth and the hope of God's kingdom. For many of us, it's unrealistic to expect our faith to be ever unsinkable and always overriding the evidence of life's chaos that's right before our eyes. But neither is it correct to assume that what we see with our eyes is the whole story.

Those are the times we need to look in our hearts, waiting for the Holy Autocorrect - the "spirit of wisdom and revelation" - to help us see beyond what's in front of us and to point us again to God's presence, which underlies our lives.

Prayer

God, open the eyes of my heart. I know now that for my heart to be open there must be the bending of my knee before your will, and the imploring of your Holy Spirit in prayer, so that your truth becomes vital and compelling in my walk of faith with Jesus Christ. Correct my heart to see beyond the troubles of today; bring my spirit into line with yours; guide my steps into your kingdom. In Jesus' name I ask this. Amen.

Sources:

- Buber, Martin. *The Prophetic Faith*. New York: Harper and Bros., 1949, 192.
- Kelly, Thomas. *A Testament of Devotion*. New York: Harper & Row, 1941, 90-91.
- Lewis-Kraus, Gideon. "The fascinating...frustrating history of autocorrect." *Wired Website*, 7/22/14, wired.com.
- McCann, J. Clinton Jr. "Psalm 13:1-6." *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. IV. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996, 727.
- Perkins, Pheme. "Ephesians 1:15-23." *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. XI. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000, 381.
- Purdum, Stan. *Adult Bible Studies*. Fall 2014. Cokesbury, September-November, 2014, 53.
- "The 50 Best Autocorrects of 2013!" *Damn You Autocorrect*. damnyouautocorrect.com.

The Holy Autocorrect

Sunday, May 17, 2015

The Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

Ephesians 1:15-23

Here's an actual phone text message:

Sender: This is Jesus this is my new number

Sender: Jessi

Recipient: I was shocked that Jesus felt I was a close enough friend to give me his number.

Another actual text message:

Sender: Love you babe! Goodnight!

Sender: My love for you is strong. I would buy you a casket if I could.

Sender: "Castle." I promise, I meant buy you a castle. Autocorrect, is trying to ruin me!

Sender: Emily? Hello?

One final text message gone wrong:

Sender: I'm fighting with Mike.

Recipient: Again?? OMG, I'm so sorry.

Sender: Yeah, it's bad... it's over this time. He just drove off with his mom's corpse.

Recipient: WITH HER CORPSE?

Sender: No! Her Camaro! Hahaha!

Recipient: You scare me.

Both of these messages went awry because of the autocorrect feature in the users' cell phones, which, as these examples show, can sometimes yield laughable results. But unintended funny and even outright embarrassing messages aside, the main story about Autocorrect is how well it works most of the time. Autocorrect can be a very good thing! We may rage at it from time to time, but by and large, autocorrect makes tapping out messages easy and readable.