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Walter E. Keller's Letter to his Children

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13 March 1996

Dear Children:

As I write these devotional studies, I find myself also thinking in an informal sort of rotation of all five of your families and family situations. I keep on wondering what each of you might be thinking or saying in response to them. I try to imagine what sort of questions run through your minds -- and hearts -- as you read them.

So I repeat an earlier invitation to respond in writing or by phone so that I can clarify, expand, or deepen these comments. Please do not think that I am pressing you to do so; after all this is not professor on students. But the invitation to begin a conversation on things that matter is most affectionately made.

Of course, you will understand that I do these perhaps as much for myself as for you. The Psalms are often referred to as the Prayer Book of the Old Testament; they are often lauded as exemplary prayers, and many of the saints have undertaken to interpret them. I have read them, many of them often; but I have never undertaken a more or less systematic study of them as I am doing now. That's what retirement is good for. And the "system" is nothing more subtle than following the L(B)W Lectionary and their choice of the Psalm of the week. I have no idea how it will all come out in the end. But of one thing I am certain: the Psalms come into their own as they are prayed; and while they are for the most part personal prayers, they are also always prayed in the context of the People of God.

You will understand, I am sure, that the frequency with which I refer to the People of God reflects my own settled conviction that the primary horizon for Biblical Christianity is not the individual, although that is where each of us must begin. The primary horizon for Biblical Christianity is the community. And when I refer to that community as the People of God, I mean it in its further, though not always articulated, sense of the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Thus the People of God, in keeping with a Christian understanding of God, has in its deepest dimension always a Trinitarian shape. When praying the Psalms, therefore, (old) Israel is always a type of the New Israel, the Church. And when we think of the Church, we need always to see it as previewed in Israel. Similarly, God revealed in the Old Testament as Yahweh is the gracious God who in the New Testament is further revealed as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus as the Messiah is often foreshadowed in the Psalms as David or the son of David.

Blessings upon all of you as you reflect on the Word of God.

With affection,