

REFLECTIONS

WE'RE GOING UP

In my quiet time this morning (May 16, 2007) I saw some things in the Word that I would like to share to encourage those who may be going through some tough and painful times – especially those who feel betrayed; who are experiencing discouragement from unexpected, yet intentional and unmerited harsh treatment from people who may be close to them; people whom they may have even trusted.

My reading today was on Mark 10: 32 – 40. In it Jesus was with His disciples on their way up to Jerusalem. As they were going up, Jesus told His disciples what He was going to go through. He said that He will be betrayed, will be condemned and be handed over to the Gentiles who will then spit on Him, flog Him and then kill Him. Then He said that three days later He will rise.

As I read this I was reminded of a good friend who after serving faithfully in a church was unfairly treated and was betrayed by the very leader he served under. It was a very painful moment in his life – and for his family as well.

But as I looked at what Jesus was talking about in the passage, I realized that if we are ever going to “go up” to our “Jerusalem” – to a higher place and position in life in order to take possession of a particular “territory” that God wants us “occupy” or to the next level of blessing or a higher position of authority in the Kingdom, we need to understand that we will have to be “turned over” to major opposition, persecution, oppression, frustration and maybe temptation (to rebel, retaliate or quit). The principle I learned from this is: **Opposition before Occupation.**

There are several things in the passage that serves as insights as to how we may be able to go up to the next level of glory in our lives and in our service for Christ. Remember that 2 Corinthians 3: 18 says that we should be transformed from glory to glory in ever increasing glory – that is reflecting the Lord’s glory in our lives. There should be a continuing transformation of that glory in our lives. And as we commit ourselves to reflect that glory, there are some things that Jesus said in the passage that we can learn from.

Jesus was betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. This could mean that those people you serve in the ministry – even those that are in positions of power- would be the ones who will conspire to put you down. They may become insecure and envious of how God is prospering the work of your hands. They may undermine your ministry, “flog” you by saying all kinds of lies behind your back and make you look real bad. And since they have positions of power and influence, others will be swayed by their lies in order to “kill” your effectivity and impact in the Kingdom.

One interesting thing about the passage is that James and John asked that positions of Kingdom authority – the right to sit at Jesus right and left – be granted to them. In a parallel passage in Matthew 20 it says that it was their mother that asked for these positions. Jesus then said that these positions are not just favours to be granted to anyone – one needs to go through something in order to attain it. He then asked them point blank if they are able to “drink” the “cup” He is going to drink and be “baptized” with its “baptism”.

In effect what He is saying is for them to not even assume pursuing the high position of sitting at His right and left in His glory – which by the way Jesus was not even in a position to give – if they don’t even have a clue as to how He is going to get there...and that is to drink His cup – a very bitter cup to drink indeed.

Cup denotes fate and destiny. This is something that is assigned for you to partake if you are ever going to attain your destiny. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane – a place of pressing – was pressed to accept His fate to redeem the world. He pleaded before the Father to take the cup away – that of taking upon Himself the wrath of God for the sins of the world. In a tense moment of agony and vulnerability He thought of backing out. It was just too much to drink. It was just too deep to be immersed into...He might not be able to **get up out of it. But Heaven was silent. It was His cup and He needed to drink it all the way. Bottoms up!**

What Jesus is saying is that we must be willing to go through what He went through if we are to be credible enough to have Kingdom authority. Drinking of His cup authorizes us to speak for and operate in the Kingdom. Any one less will have no credibility whatsoever. There are so many today in the ministry who want to represent the Kingdom but have not been to the place of pressing.

As Jesus told the disciples of what He was going to go through – the pain, agony and misery; the torture, rejection, betrayal and abandonment even of those close to Him – note that He concluded by saying that “three days later” He will rise.

When you begin to see life from God’s perspective; when you understand and discern God’s purpose; when you get a vision of your occupation – that is a higher level of glory, territory and authority - and therefore are willing to accept any opposition; when you get a revelation of your outcome then you will be prepared to go through anything that is to come. This is why Scripture says that no matter what Jesus went through He did not retaliate; He made no threats; did not speak or defend Himself; did not argue, grumble or complain but entrusted Himself to the One who judges righteously (1 Peter 2: 23). This is why Scripture also says that He endured everything. Why, because He already knew the outcome! Three days later, He will rise! This was the joy that was set before Him (Heb. 12: 2).

What this means is if we are ever hoping to go up to the next level of glory, when we go through some very unpleasant things; things that we don’t seem to understand – when it all seems unfair - it would be wise for us not to grumble, complain, retaliate

or become bitter. It would be wise for us to keep entrusting ourselves to God who judges righteously. Because instead of “rising” to the next level in “three days” the time clock of our destiny might be pushed back. Instead of “three days later” we might get there “very much later”. It took Israel 39 years, 11 months and 2 weeks too long. I don’t think anyone has the time or energy to wait that long.

Another interesting thing I noticed is that before they could “go up to Jerusalem” they had to “leave Jericho”. Jericho is a low place compared to Jerusalem. What this means is that we need to be willing to leave where we are in order to move up to where God wants us to be. We need to move from lowered expectations and press on to the high calling of Christ in our lives.

Jericho also was a walled place. This could mean that we need to let the walls we have erected to keep us from being vulnerable come down. These could also be walls that keep us in a perpetual defensive mode; or walls of insecurity or pride; or walls that keep us in a comfort zone. These need to come down in order for us to come out of it in order to move up. We can’t move up if we are not willing to move out.

We need to aim high and move up to our destiny. If we are to soar like the eagle we need to stop hanging out with the vultures. Vultures feed on dead stuff. Eagles feed on live stuff. We need to stop feeding ourselves with the dead stuff and feed on the Living Word of God in order that we may get a vision of our God ordained destiny. Jesus did. The Word of God dwelled in Him richly this is why He didn’t have time to get distracted with the non-essentials of life. He looked forward to the glory that was His before the world began.

This is the glory that believers can reflect here on earth even as the world right now is groping, stumbling and reeling from all the darkness around. In Isaiah 60 the prophet declared that in the midst of the thick darkness that covers the earth and is over the peoples, the glory of God can rise upon His people; His glory can appear over us. That glory enables His people to “drink the milk of nations” (to partake and receive the resources God has allowed the wicked to store up in behalf of the righteous). But before we can “drink the milk of the nations” we need to be willing to “drink” of His cup in order for that glory to appear over us and rise upon us. Only those who are willing can rise up to their God given destiny. Only those who are willing can have the credibility to have that position of authority. It doesn’t matter how dark the world gets, when the glory of God rises upon you, you will begin to witness how God can raise you to greater heights of glory.

And even if people around you betray you, praise God anyway! You may be on your way up!

Ray Am