GOD WANTS TO MAKE THE DESERT BLOOM AGAIN

“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.” Is. 51:1,2

It is doubtful that there are very many people who have the right to boast of where they have come from. Most of us are what some call “common people.” I realize that such a term is derived from a French word (Bourgeoisie) which roughly translated mean: “the people of the city,” and refers to the middle class rather than the common folk per se, but the sense of the word is conservative.

We do not like the word because of its negative implications. This word is used as an epithet of contempt for the poor based on their hygienic habits and are consider inferior to those of the upper classes, an expression which got started in the 18th century. Sometimes the rich and famous used the phrase “the little people” for the term common people. The sense is of an inconsequential mass populace. I think we do have a problem when a politician tries to use the word to describe themselves when they are on the public pay roll and living in mansions and being chauffeured around by ordinary servants…we consider that a stretch of our imaginations.

So when we use this word to describe ourselves what we are saying is this that we do not have too much to brag about as far as distinguished relatives that have made some historical impact on the nations of the world. And even if we did, what difference would it really make except make someone jealous who could not make such a claim?

TRANSITION IN THINKING

However, these remarks were addressed to a people who had probably grown up in poverty and bondage. They had lost track of their heritage and pedigree. They needed a new sense of identification if they were going to be the kind of people our Lord wanted them to become. Therefore Isaiah, chapter 51, was written to encourage God’s people after they had been taken into exile to Babylon and held captive for some seventy years. Isaiah’s remarks are designed to comfort the Jews in their exile and especially as they came near the close of their captivity when they were in earnest about being delivered and rescued from such a long period of bondage.

Isaiah encourages them by reminding them of the founder of their nation. They needed to take a look at their roots. He does this by pointing out that they were like a quarry, so to speak, from which the nation had been hewed. Showing that their fathers and mothers came from humble beginnings, yet God was able to take them and make a great nation of them, thus it was important that Israel understand God was equally able to do the same for them.

I love one of the first which says it well when he said, “The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.” Is. 51:3 Did you see that? “He will make her deserts like Eden.”

We see so many negative things happening in our world. It makes one reluctant to even want to turn on the news, because there is not much out there to encourage us as Americans, as Christians, as parents, in regard to the future. We need to once again hear the Word of the Lord to enable us to look beyond what we see is happening all around us and see something positive which God has in store for us to behold.
We have come to a place where, as Dr. Franklin Graham asked, “Is the world no longer shocked by Christians having their heads cut off?” He was responding to the recent execution of 30 Ethiopian Christians. The reason Dr. Graham is asking this is partly due to the fact that there seems to be a lack of concern on the part of our government to put a stop to it.

It seems they are more concerned about not offending anybody in the Islam world, in spite of their hatred for us as a known Christian nation and for the safety of godly people. Equally, I am sure he is concerned that there has not been more public outcry from our own citizens. It seems like we have become accustomed to such brutal violence from people as ISIS who not only do these awful things, but proudly promote this on video.

HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD

To hear words God wanted to make her “deserts like the Eden, and her wastelands like the Garden of the Lord,” was more than their faith at the time was embracing. Sometimes when people have been enduring trial for a long period they assume this is the way life is, and things will never change them. They accept it as something ordinary. Now, if we are not serving the Lord, attending God’s house, and seldom pray, probably that is so. But it need not be.

Trees, herbs, and plants do not grow by themselves in such a place as a desert. Only God is able to make such a thing possible. God Himself would need to plant them there in such a dry and impossible place. It requires His supernatural power to plant, water, and to cultivate them if they would come to fruition. But, that is what God does. That is why it is called the “Garden of the Lord.” I believe God wants to do that for His children, especially after He has disciplined us for our sins, and corrected, in some measure, our disobedience.

God does want His people to learn from their mistakes and sins. But He does not enjoy making His people always suffer. He is patient, kind, and wants to be a good Father to us and gather us to Himself. As a parent, if I continually had found fault with my children I would never have inspired them to grow and develop in their life. Yes, I had my times when I needed to discipline them. But there was always a limit to that discipline. God is the same way. I learned that principle from Him.

The Church needs to hear a fresh voice, just as Israel needed it when it seemed there was little hope of any change in their circumstances and environment. They needed to hear it was time for their desert to bloom. So what did God do to show that? He took them back to their beginnings. He reminded them about how He called Abraham in the first place, as well as Sarah. Just as He did it for them He was saying to Israel, that they too could have a new beginning. Did Israel heed? Yes, they did for a period of time. They came out of Babylon and rebuilt their nation, the Temple, and their homes. God bless them.

WE NEED NEW BEGINNINGS

I believe God wants to provide today’s Church with a new beginning. We need to allow Him to begin something afresh in our hearts, homes, nation, and Church. This does not mean He will work the same way as He has in the past. I am not talking about mass crowds in auditoriums or stadiums. I believe God really would like to start with the local assembly, in the home, at the work place, in the community. I do not think God is looking to make preacher and singer stars. I think He wants to touch people on a personal basis.

He wants individuals to experience God in a new and living way. In doing so, they in turn will be able to touch another member of their family. Where entire families start coming back to God’s house; where the church is more like a family than a place where you are lost in the crowd; where grandparents worship with grandchildren; where singing is not so much about musical performance of a few but about true worship of all that love the Lord. Yes, I believe in our vast wasteland of church life, God would like to turn our desert into a Garden of Eden.