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“From the Pastor’s Desk”

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DO WE SEE THE FUTURE AS GOD DOES?

To those of us who are consumers of the latest news reports at times find ourselves being overwhelmed by the fact that we feel that there is so little we can do to change the current conditions of this world in our time. This doesn't stop us from trying. We still pursue means which are at our disposal to change the way people both live and think.

This is one of the reasons that my readers hear from us on a monthly basis because this is what I as Pastor and our church staff are hoping to accomplish in our part of the world. We make no claim of changing a nation, state, city or even our community. Not that we have not tried. But I realize that there are better gifted men and women with talents, connections, media-expertise and audiences that when given the opportunity are able to challenge their following with a far greater result.

Now, I am not envious or complaining of those who are more accomplished. Because I realize “...to whom much is given much is required” (Luke 12:48). At my age, I know I lack not only the talents but the energy to do more that I am already doing as well as the taking on such a responsibility that such good works require. I am happy to be a supporter of those who are making a great headway such as my son and daughter, the missionaries that we support around the world, and the leaders of the Church organization that our church is associated with namely, Grace International.

Our son, who has been home for the Christmas holidays has been sharing with us what God is doing through his ministry along with his church staff and members. We are excited to be associated with them in their endeavors to reach their community for Christ. Our son, Paul, has even gain the attention of the President of Tahiti this past year who incidentally has pledged his support in their efforts especially in ‘Fa a’ which happens to be the city where the President is from. So, you can see that alone makes us proud of what the Lord is doing through our son.

But one thing I have observed, to those who are zealous for good works and are eager to accomplish much for the Kingdom of God, they all find themselves frustrated at times for what they are not able to accomplish. Our vision does not always match our accomplishments. If they did then our vision would be too small. None of us will ever see very much done if we don't at least aim high. One young man was quoted as saying, “*He still liked to aim at the moon even if all he did hit was a wood pile.*”

BOOK OF ISAIAH

Recently I have been in my devotions in the Book of Isaiah. When we read the first chapter of this great book you quickly capture the frustrations both of God and the prophet when it came to working with a people whom God had called His own.

*“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; **but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.** Ah sinful nation, a people **laden with iniquity**, a seed of evil-doers, **children that deal corruptly!** they have forsaken Jehovah, **they have despised the Holy One of Israel**, they are estranged and gone backward.”* Isaiah 1:2-3

*Please note all the adjectives that are used in this portion of Scripture that describes the spiritual condition of God's own people: a people that **doth not know** (implies spiritual ignorance); **doth not consider** (implies rebellion); **laden with iniquity** (oppressed and burdened down with the weight of sin); **a seed of evil doers** (they were not producing a generation after their own kind, degenerate children that deal corruptly); **despised the Holy One** (which the end result is that they have provoked the Lord so much that they have excited His indignation and His brought judgment on themselves).*

Now if I ended this article here it probably would leave you rather depressed and tempt you to throw this newsletter away. But stay with me...please. **God nevertheless did not give up on His people and neither should we.** He still appealed to this people. Note at the end of the first chapter he makes His appeal in verse sixteen to eighteen:

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Is. 1:16-18

You see, God saw down through the ages of time, not everyone would be of the nature of the average person in the nation of Israel. There will always be a certain amount of people who will not bow their knee to a god of this world. (1 Kings 19:18). The number may be bigger than we think. It certainly was in Elijah's time. God's work was being accomplished despite Elijah's lack of faith or confidence. Therefore, we who work in the harvest field must hear from our Master daily to be encouraged when everything around us keeps depressing us so.

WE HAVE A CHOICE FOR THE NEW YEAR

We have a choice: we can feed off what the media feeds us and be depressed or we can feed off God's Word in what He declares and be encouraged. We cannot feed off both because too often the negative will overcome the positive. Why? Because we are still earthly. We have earthly bodies, earthly minds, earthly eyes, and earthly ears. All these earthly things are of the flesh. But God has given us a soul and with it a spirit. And when we feed that soul with thoughts from God's Word the Holy Spirit can take it and ignite our human spirit to take courage and move on to better things. The Psalmist put it this way. "I had fainted, *unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.*" Ps. 27:13

Isaiah also found a reason to have hope for the future of his nation. When we look at the sixth chapter of this book and verse thirteen, we are told about a "**tenth**" of the people that survived the judgment poured out upon the nation. Though most of the people would be driven from the land God would allow a tenth of the population to remain in the land. Now while the tenth is a small amount of people when you compare with the whole nation, yet, with that tenth God would do a work and it would be preserved.

Albert Barnes in his commentary said: "*This was accomplished in the time of the captivity of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar. We are not to suppose that "literally" a tenth part of the nation would remain; but a part that should bear somewhat the same proportion to the entire nation, in strength and resources, that a tenth does to the whole.*"

The few remaining Jews were not destroyed but became like the life remaining in the root of the tree. No prophecy, perhaps, has been more remarkably fulfilled than that in this verse. No wonder the Book of Isaiah is such a great inspiration to us all. This book that foretold the birth of Christ, the hope not only of Israel but of the Gentiles as well and spoke more of Christ than any other prophet. This is the secret for the survival of any nation, family, or group of people. When our eyes are focused on Jesus Christ, we are giving people hope as well as maintaining that hope within our own souls.

This past month here at the church we have focused on the "**Wonderful works of God**" because I wanted our people to keep those thoughts in their minds to replace the negative that they may be hearing. It has been our desire to lift the spirits of the depressed. We are here to give hope, build faith, and encourage people to trust in God. We are not talking about positive confession. We are talking about something greater. We are talking about God who is wonderful. He is at work in this world. There is nothing He cannot do in spite of all our limitations. We may humanly fail at a lot of things...I know I do. But God never fails. What He does within us accomplishes His purpose not necessarily always ours.

So be encouraged. There is good news! It is the Gospel. It has endured throughout the ages. It still works even in the midst of a perverse generation. Evil is not the conqueror in the end. Paul said it well:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Rom 8:36-37 Amen.