

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Newsletter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 KJV)

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THE FOURTH OPTION

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Kenny Rogers had a popular song a number of years ago called "The Gambler". There was a recurring line which said, "You have to know when to hold'em, know when to fold'em, know when to walk away, know when to run." These song lines express what we normally think of as all of our options in any given situation. We either fight, fold (submit), or flee. In the natural world, we are faced with problems which, many times, require us to respond with one of these three options. Doctors even tell us that stress comes from a conflict between the "fight or flight" syndrome. However, if you walk in the spirit as the scriptures tell us to do, there is a fourth option presented to us by God.

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13 NASB)

In all of our difficult situations, God has made "the way of escape". This is a specific escape path that He designed. When we search for a way of escape we are really looking for a way to run. We have eliminated the first two options and are actively seeking the third option--a way to flee. God's escape plan (the fourth option) is always in the direction of the fulfillment of His promise and purpose. We have a clear picture of this with the Children of Israel leaving Egypt.

They were making good time out of Egypt and headed for the caravan route to Canaan when the Lord spoke to Moses and told him to move the camp into the edge of the wilderness by the Red Sea. The Lord had two purposes in having Moses move the people. The first was to cause the people to avoid the Philistines because there would be a fight and the Israelites weren't ready to see war. It would cause them to lose heart and turn back. The second reason the Lord had with the move was stir up Pharaoh to go after them to bring them back to Egypt. In other words, the Lord, on purpose, put them into a crises situation.

The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly. Then the Egyptians chased after

them *with* all the horses *and* chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon. As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD. (Exodus 14:8-10 NASB)

Now, with the Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh and his army coming behind them, they faced the issue according to the three options. The first option was to fight--that was no good because they wouldn't stand a chance. The second option was to submit--yield to Pharaoh and quietly return to Egypt; not a good thing considering how they had left. The third option was to flee--but there was nowhere to run; the only open way was wilderness. They saw the only solution as death. However, God had a fourth option.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. "As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land. (Exodus 14:15-16 NASB)

The direction of Canaan was forward. It didn't matter that the Red Sea was between them. There is almost a rebuke in God's answer to Moses. It was like He was saying, "didn't I tell you to go to Canaan? Get on with it! Move forward!" It didn't seem to matter that the Red Sea was in the way. God's option can only be achieved by the miraculous working of the Lord and our faith that He actually has a fourth option available to us.

There are several key points that we should learn from this: 1) we must focus on the goal (purpose) to which God has called us and not allow any circumstances to cause us to waiver in fulfilling that purpose; 2) we should only look for God's fourth option in the direction of the goal which He set for us; and 3) we can't do what God has not prepared us to do. This third point is more subtle than the other two and needs some elaboration.

One question that arises is why didn't the Lord have the Children of Israel fight? With His help surely they would have overcome Pharaoh's army and it would have been a great testimony and greatly cheered their heart. Later, God certainly fought for His people to the extent that they were a terror to the rulers of the lands through which they passed. The answer is that they were not yet prepared to fight. One of the reasons that God moved them from the caravan route as He did was so that they would not have to fight the Philistines because if they did they would lose heart. The Israelites had been slaves for a long time. They had a slave mentality or thinking process. God had to change their thinking process, that is, work into them a warrior mentality, before they reached Canaan because in Canaan they would have to fight to possess the land. So, with Pharaoh, fighting was not an option. God took care of Pharaoh in His own manner and began a systematic process to transform the Israelites from slaves to warriors who were under authority and command of their God. They didn't learn to fight as the world fights but, instead, they learned to be obedient to the directions given by God.

Now, we should remember that God set them up with an object lesson and that we should also pay heed to it.

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Corinthians 10:11 NASB)

If God purposely put the Israelites into a crises situation so that they could begin to change their thinking processes, would He not do the same thing with us if we needed it? Of course He would! However, some of the teaching and preaching today seems to give the impression that if you have faith you shouldn't have any real trouble. We seem to be taught that all trouble is an attack of the enemy and we should take authority over it and rebuke it. However, there are three kinds of trouble that comes upon us and our response should be different in each type of circumstance.

First, trouble comes as a consequence of sin. Even forgiven sins can still have consequences in our life (example: adultery that results in a pregnancy--forgiveness doesn't eliminate the baby). The solution for this type of trouble is repentance, forgiveness, and the grace and mercy to handle the consequences with integrity.

The second type of trouble comes as an attack of the enemy. Remember, the enemy's goal is to keep us ignorant, distracted, immature, and deceived. He will do anything that he can to hinder our walk with the Lord. The solution for this is to become grounded and unshakeable in God's Word and learn to utilize the gifts and authority that the Lord has given us.

The third type of trouble comes from the Lord for the purpose of producing change within us. Our minds have to be renewed; that means our thinking processes as well as our behavior have to change. The Lord puts us in circumstances that He has designed to help us with this process. Even though we have been redeemed from the world and the world systems, we still have the mentality (thinking processes) of the world residing within us. The Lord got the Israelites out of Egypt quickly, but it took 40 years to get Egypt out of the Israelites, that is, to move their thinking from slavery to Pharaoh to obedience to the Lord.

Acts 14:22 tells us that it is through much tribulation that we enter the Kingdom of God. His Kingdom is His Lordship, His government. To live according to the Spirit will result in trouble for the flesh. That is why we can count it joy--because something is being produced in us. Remember:

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. (Romans 8:28 NASB)

Even in the midst of crises, God is working for our good. We need move forward according to His purpose and look for the fourth option. It is the only real solution.

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