

Alan Zana: Things That Hold Us Back (24/11/18)

God has made a promise!! That promise WILL NOT fail!!

Introduction:

Right from the beginning God made the promise of Salvation. As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour.

God reiterated that promise time and time again. At every junction of failure and apparent failure it was reiterated.

From generation to generation the story seemed to be more and more diminished as 'God's people' were taken into captivity, slavery and were increasingly unfaithful.

But God had NOT given up on His promise to them! So He called a man (Moses) to reiterate that promise yet again.

The Question: When challenges strike - who do we turn to?

The history of humanity as played out through the example of the people of Israel says that we are likely to turn everywhere but God.

After their deliverance from Egyptian bondage the people of Israel were wandering in the wilderness toward Canaan (The Promised Land). Along the way they encountered some substantial challenges. The question is, when they met with these challenges where was their confidence? The two main places that they turned were the following:

- At first they turned to Moses
- Later they blamed Moses and turned toward Egypt

At first they had faith in their leader. They would come to Moses and draw strength from His confidence in God. This is a better choice than forsaking the mission altogether, but it is far from ideal. Ideally the people should have placed their own confidence in God (rather than relying on Moses' faith).

As the challenges persisted, the people's confidence in Moses faltered. They began to be concerned that all of this wandering was for naught, and were convinced that it was Moses' fault and that life in Egypt had actually been preferable to this. This was, of course, a delusional perspective that was born of discontentedness.

Both of these, however, were not what God was seeking. All the while God wanted them to turn to Him, place their confidence in His promises to them and let Him take care of their needs. Interestingly, it is true that in this we are much like them and God has the same ideal for us.

When God says to a man 'it is going to rain, so build a boat for the saving of your household' He means it!

When God says to a 90 year old man with a 75 year old wife 'your Son will be the future of the world' that is exactly what He means!

The First Generation:

There are some observations that we can make from the first generation that were led out of Egypt that will give us direction on how we can succeed where they failed.

1. Moses took them out of Egypt but did not lead them into the Promised Land
2. Everyone who fled Pharaoh died in the dessert except Joshua and Caleb
3. God had to fulfil His promise through a generation that was born in the wilderness

Just because you have been 'saved from sin' doesn't mean you have the faith to enter into the Promised Land. We need to place our confidence in God, not merely in 'Moses' (the Law). You may feel that your life is a wilderness of struggle, but do not loose heart, those were the very ones God used to inhabit the Promised Land. But remember; only those with faith in God's promises enter in!

The Second Generation:

The second generation of the freed Israelite's learned a powerful lesson as a way of preparation for their inhabiting the land of Canaan soon after they crossed the river Jordan.

Let's take note of some of the crucial junctures of the story in Joshua chapter 5:

- Joshua 5:1 - When you are walking with God people will notice!
- Joshua 5:2 - However, God's preparation for war is, well, counterproductive to human eyes (Genesis 34:25). But we still need to trust His plan!
- Joshua 5:3,4 - What was the plan? The Israelite's were to be circumcised again...
- Joshua 5:7 - Then, those who were adopted into the Israelite family were to be circumcised...
 - Exodus 4:23,26 - This was for the purpose of redemption - removing their reproach
- Joshua 5:9a - This was done, God seems to be saying, to remove their reproach before engaging in battle
- Joshua 5:8 - The Divine direction: Let them rest in their camps until they are ok (in spite of the fact that the enemies were coming)

Returning to their beginnings (Jacob):

The Story of Jacob is a good illustration for how this works. Jacob spent the better part of his adult life fleeing. He fled his home after deceiving his family. Then he fled the home of his wives. Finally, he prayed that God would bless him with what he needed more than anything else - heaven's peace and forgiveness. For this he had to wrestle with God himself.

And what did he get? The blessing that Jacob needed was a wound that would stop him running away and trust God's promise instead!

The Final Generation:

So what is the take home lesson for us? Well we could be the final generation. Are we any different than they were? Fundamentally we are made of the same stuff. We mess up in the same ways they did. We have the same need they did - trust! So, the question is: How often do we just wait for God to fulfil His promises? God says to us: "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength and they shall mount up with wings as eagles." Isaiah 40:31

To prepare the new generation for entering into the Promised Land we need to place our confidence in God's promises.

In Joshua 5:14a,15b the promise was reiterated to Joshua for his own context. It is the same basic promise, but extended to Joshua for His context - God Himself will deliver you, so trust in Him!

In our modern religious experiences and churches opinion seems to reign over principle. We spend too much time asking what do we think about something, rather than trusting in God's Word and His ability to come through with that which He has promised.

- Jeremiah 31:33 - Opinion isn't enough. We need God to put His law in us so that we are founded on that.
- Daniel 9:27b - Jesus came to take away our reproach.
- Revelation 21:1 - In Christ alone! Let's move on forward trusting in God's word!

Paul, in commenting on the experience of those who were unable to enter into the Promised Land, notes some of the key elements that made them unable:

- Hebrews 4:2 - They didn't trustfully obey the words that they knew. They had God's promises to steady them, but were unable to place their full confidence in Him...
- Hebrew 4:6 - Because they didn't believe they couldn't enter in...
- Hebrews 4:11 - Let us labour therefore to enter in by believing in God's promise!

Conclusion:

Joshua - the captain of the Lord's host is on our side!!

Trust in the Lord!!