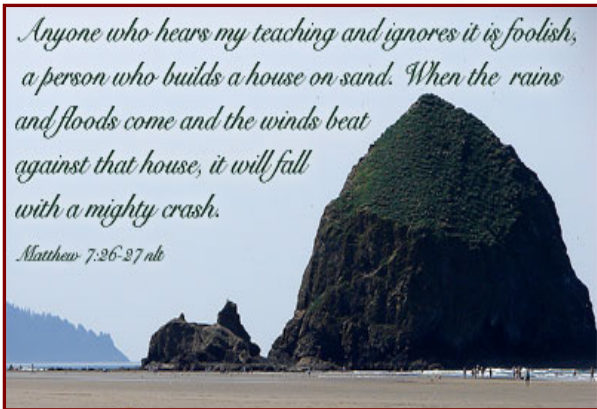


Melva's Corner

Anyone who hears my teaching and ignores it is foolish, a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will fall with a mighty crash.

Matthew 7:26-27 nk



Are You Tired Of God?

June 11, 2007

(Numbers 21:4b-5 NIV)

Central Truth: "Too often, we don't call on God in the smooth times."

Ever get tired of God? Oh, I know, you won't ever admit it. But do you ever get tired of the demands your faith makes upon your life? Ever long for those wild and free days?

Let's review. Those "wild, free" days were not free at all. Satan is lying to you. They were days of bondage marked by enslavement to sin. Satan uses the carnal desires of the sinner as a trick to control, to lead him or her about as he pleases. Have we forgotten the bondage? Are we like the children of Israel in Numbers 21?

But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food! (Numbers 21:4b-5 NIV)

Israel could only remember the tasty days of fine cuisine. Memories of hard labor had quickly faded. All that remained were memories of the "good ol'" days in Egypt. Of course, those days weren't good at all. They were slaves!

Satan does wonders in presenting selective memories—to create longings that if followed, will take one far from the Lord. Israel was actually longing for the days of slavery! How could days of slavery have been "good"?

Don't we commit the same error when we forget what God has done in setting us free from the bondage of sin. Longing for the days of sin is the first step downward . . . giving in to old desires. Groaning, grumbling, backbiting and faultfinding are signs of those who've grown tired of God and long for days of sin.

Israel was tired of God's provision. It wasn't what they desired. "Manna again?" They remembered the flavor-rich food of Egypt. Longing for the material things, they neglected the spiritual truth. Focusing on their desires, they remembered only what they perceived as good; their memories of hard labor and abuse were blunted. Their desires rode over their reason. They neglected their great deliverance given by the hand of the Lord, bringing deliverance out of Egypt. In their twisted reasoning they felt deprived, because their desires were not immediately met. They neglected the fact that with the provisions in Egypt came fierce slavery and with the hand of the Lord came incredible and powerful grace and freedom. In complaining about what they didn't have, they neglected what they did have: the ongoing care and provision of the Lord. Constant murmuring and complaining lowered God's hedge of protection and the venomous serpents came to call.

Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. (Numbers 21:6)

Apparently these venomous snakes had been there all along, but God's hedge of protection had kept them at bay. The complaints of the people allowed the enemy to enter and they had a taste of life without God. God's protection had kept the snakes away. Now they would suffer the fate of losing that protection. They didn't realize the many ways God's grace was sheltering and protecting them. Instead of seeing the blessing they had, they focused on the things they didn't have.

Complaining, backbiting, and faultfinding eat at the fabric of faith. Complaining is to dwell on the natural without considering the supernatural. Focused on the natural, the people spurned God's provision. The snakes soon had them ready to repent.

The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us." (Numbers 21:7)

'Israel called on the Lord in her distress,' like so many of us do today. Too often, we don't call on God in the smooth times. In fact, we may even feel He gets in the way when things are running smoothly. He does get in the way. He gets in the way of our selfish, self-centered, self-destructive ways. He calls us to a higher standard.

God used this incident of rebellion and chastisement of His people to provide a type, a truth, to point to the future reality of Christ being lifted up on the cross to pay the penalty of sin.

The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." (Numbers 21:8)

Healing from the poisonous bites required faith. Those who were healed acted in faith by looking up to the bronze snake high upon the pole. Only those who acted in faith were healed. So we, too, must exercise faith.

Maybe you've been listening to the rabble, the mixed-multitude. Perhaps you've let their negativity affect your faith. Maybe your heart has gotten focused on the material and lost sight of the spiritual. It's time to get our focus where it belongs: the grace Christ has given and the grace and provision of God.

Christianity simply won't work unless your faith has some "umph!" to it. People who claim to believe but who don't put their faith to work are those who not only miss the more obvious blessings, but they never know the deeply satisfying things of God, the comforting and encouraging presence of God, nor His truly life-changing rewards. Perhaps a little spiritual self-assessment is in order. Are you wrapped up in anything other than God? If so, it's slowly choking the life out of your faith.

Prayer:

Mold me and make me, Father, more perfectly conformed to your will and more perfectly consistent with your character. I do not pray this for my glory, but so that you can more effectively use me to share your blessings and grace with those around me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Scriptural References:

“But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” (James 2:18)