



SAFE HARBOR
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New Beginnings come from Within

With the coming of the New Year I am reminded of the wonderful promise given,

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place^[a] of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,^[b] and God himself will be with them as their God.^[c]”⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”⁶ And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. Rev. 21:3-7 (ESV)

The initiation of this promise we have just celebrated in the Christmas Season. God choose to come in the form of humanity to dwell with us. In doing so he called his people to himself. Those which have heard his voice by faith have become his people throughout the world. They are bound together in faith so that it matters not if rich or poor, slave or free, powerful or downtrodden and even the color of one’s skin. We who believe are bound in a family whose love and mercy extends to all.

God, himself, will be with them. This is accomplished by the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit who bring comfort as he purifies the heart and fits us for the Kingdom of God. It is remembered that in the Garden of Eden, God came and walked and talked with His unique Creation. Sin changed that and separated each one from the presence of God. Through the miracle of the Incarnation, the Death and Resurrection we have the chance to become alive to God once again.

It is not in rite or ritual but in faith that we can welcome this new birth and the regeneration of our souls.

It is the presence of God that brings a peace that is beyond comprehension. Jesus never promised material wealth, unending bliss, or even the fulfillment of our every wish. He did promise his peace and presence as long as we walk with him in this life. It is his kind, gentle hands that come to wipe away our tears, give comfort in times of trouble and courage to face the challenges of each new day. Even the fear of death is removed and we see the passing of a saint as the triumphant entry into the Heavenly Kingdom.

The Gospel of Christ is very simple. *“Come unto me you that are weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest”*. God has promised to make all things new. He will do it to your soul. He also promises to provide from the spring of the water of life a boundless supply to nourish and refresh the soul. The only cost is to surrender to the One whose birth we have just celebrated.

Calvary and the empty tomb sealed the defeat of the evil one. Our charge is to go forward and conquer the temptations, the hatred, the self-seeking superego of a world which says you can have it all but never truly delivers that peace that can only come from God.

The prophet Isaiah gives the message from God, that I Am God there is nothing else. To conquer is to come to God so that nothing else matters. The promise is the He will be our God and we shall be His children.

Reflections

Many of you have watched the film spectacle of “The Ten Commandments”. The story itself is loosely based on a novel titled, “Moses, A Prince in Israel.” This epic has been staged numerous times including, I believe, a silent movie. This is not about movie history. Rather it is a look at the Exodus as a model for salvation history that is applicable today as well.

The story begins with the Hebrews who had migrate into Egypt under Joseph being assimilated into the Egyptian culture and eventually losing their status as a favored people to become slaves. They suffer the ill fortunes of the slave and are reduced to hard labor. At some point the people remember the Lord and call out in their misery for a deliverance.

This is the person enslaved to sin who is mired in deep misery and despair. The chains worn are invisible just as Ebenezer Scrooge could not see the chains that fettered him. The chains of sin are the most egalitarian of all encumbrances. They bind persons of all ethnicities, rich and poor, slave or free to life that moves them further and further away from their Creator.

The miseries of the people come before the Living God who had seen their trials and perhaps their wondering away from Him. In mercy, for mercy always must evoke action, He plans for the salvation of His people and their being brought into a kingdom of their own. He calls Moses and the path to deliverance begins. The Evil One, personified in the pharaoh, is confronted and the power of God prevails.

The people start their journey and the Egyptians start after them. This often happens to the new born Christian. As the fear moves among the people some would like to Mt. Sinai. We know that Moses had promised a “land of milk and honey”. This certainly was not it. This place marks the

first falling away. While Moses is on the mountain the people revert to the ways they had learned in Egypt, even wanting a return there. As Moses descends he is angered and revolted by the people who lost their faith so easily. The judgement of God on them is swift and certain. Death is the punishment for apostasy and the sentence is meted out upon the people.

The people left alive come to the banks of the Jordan and sight the Promised Land. They turn back in fear and lack of faith. They refuse to enter in because they fear their own frailty and forget that in weakness God's strength is shown to be perfect. So instead of entering that good land they are cursed to wander in the wilderness for forty years until all of the fearful left their bones in the desert. Hence the removal of sin from the people. Even today new creatures in Christ also face a wandering in their spiritual life. This is a culling process that must take place in the life of a Christian. It is the purifying process that enables the building of strength and faith.

When the time comes God allows them to go forth and enter into the land. They are to be mindful that they are there to conquer, not assimilate. The specific instructions are that the inhabitants of the land are to be destroyed lest the people be lured away from God. So it is that the Christian must strive daily to overcome the temptations that are faced as well as the disappointments and obstacles which Satan gladly sets in the way. The one who conquers will be the one rewarded by God.

Words of Promise

Romans 6:12-14 English Standard Version (ESV)

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

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