

#78 THE DREAM.....

I see printed before me: "39th day" and "out of the ashes."

As I pondered these phrases I sensed a good spiritual feeling of hope and faith. To me, thirty-nine symbolizes a period of waiting and of not giving up just before the promise is fulfilled. In a previous teaching we mentioned Daniel's twenty-one days of fasting and wondered what would have happened if he had given up on the twentieth day---perhaps the angel would have returned to heaven without having given him that great revelation. Thus thirty-nine and twenty are similar. Thirty-nine is a personal number to remind me that we can miss God's best by giving up prematurely, when the answer could be very close to us.

A biblical example of this is found in Exodus 32 concerning Moses and the children of Israel. Moses is called up to the mountain to meet with God and to receive the law. He is there forty days where he fasts without food or water. The people below get weary waiting for Moses and finally give up on him. They insist that Aaron fashion a golden calf for them to worship, and decide to have a feast and celebration the next day to honor their new god. Meanwhile God tells Moses what the people are doing and to return immediately.

Now this was either the thirty-eighth, thirty-ninth, or fortieth day. Because the Bible day begins at sundown it may be difficult to get a precise date, yet as I re-read that chapter many times I began to consider it to be the thirty-ninth day---we might say the eleventh hour. Whatever the exact day, the point is that they gave up very close to the time Moses would have come down with God's law and blessings. They rebelled and sinned, not only in making the golden idol but in not waiting for God's timing. To add further to their sin they began to enter into sexual impurities for which many were killed. So close, yet they failed and lost not only God's blessings but received His judgment as well.

Our enemies in the spirit realm surely see the answers to our prayers being sent by angels and by God's providential workings. If this is the case, they would be foolish not to launch a massive attack at the last hour. Truly this would explain the old saying, "It is darkest before the dawn." Many Israelites lost their lives from impatience and open sin. Moses, having broken the ten commandments, had to return to the mountain to begin another forty days of fasting before the Lord. He also interceded much for the people, and God heard his prayers. Several times God threatened to destroy those rebellious Hebrews for their sins, yet was moved by the great intercessor to relent.

Thirty-nine is one short of forty. Forty in Scripture often symbolizes a period of probation or testing. We must not give up on the promises by human impatience and willful sin. The Israelites failed in their testing; let us not do the same.

"Out of the ashes" has a two-fold meaning---one we will call negative and the other positive. The negative side is that promises and blessings can come to ashes. Sin can delay and abort the blessings of God in our lives! The positive side symbolizes God's ability to bring forth blessing and new life from sin and death. From the cross of Christ came life to us! The ashes of true spiritual sacrifice and our taking up the cross will bring forth God's blessings. The fire that alters the gift on the altar is the same fire that refines the gold. That true spiritual fire is the Holy Spirit.

Now when Moses came down and rebuked the people he had them do a strange thing:

"And he took the (golden) calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it" (Exodus 32:20).

This was done to make the people realize their sins of impatience, rebellion, idolatry and wild sexual immorality. To drink the impure mixture of gold from the crushed idol was a sign of their partaking of sin and of the bitterness of that sin. Moses ordered those guilty of sexual sins (fornication) to be destroyed. Thousands were put to death and, had not Moses interceded, all may have been destroyed. God's grace was extended and His full measure of judgment was averted.

God does forgive our sins as we confess and repent of them, yet many Christians wrongly assume that because He does so there are no consequences for their actions. God's discipline and chastening can be grievous and costly. Christians are not bastards and will be dealt with by their Father if sin is continued and there is no repentance. Many only confess their sins without the slightest intention of repenting and changing. God is very long-suffering with us in our sin, but if we will not judge ourselves in these matters He will take them into hand. The more mature believer will be dealt with more sternly by the Lord for falling into open gross sin. To whom much is given, much is required!

Sometimes in our spiritual walk we come to the place where the Holy Spirit convicts us of some known sin with which we must deal. Usually like children we are convicted and spoken to by the Lord several times in warning and correction. However, like children, we say we are sorry yet often keep doing what we have been told not to do. When the word fails to get a proper response, then God like a parent may turn to the rod. Now if God gives this advice in Proverbs to human parents will He do less as our Father?

“Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell” (Proverbs 23:13-14 KJV).

This is not child abuse, and neither is using a paddle, switch or brush. The intent is to cause some temporal pain that will serve to show the consequences of disobedience. Some children respond to other types of punishments, but some do not and must be put under the rod. God not only allows us on occasion to reap from our sins as believers, but He also corrects us Himself with His rod. The punishment or correction for sin (even for the believer) is a means to teach the all-important practical lesson that sin is not worth the pain reaped from it. God does remove our sins when we really confess and repent of them. Here we are talking of repeated sin that we have not judged ourselves. God, having no bastards, must now take the correction into His hands.

I want to share an example from the eleventh and twelfth chapters of II Samuel concerning God's dealings with His children when gross sin had not been properly repented. We all know the familiar story of King David's sin with Bathsheba, but let us look at it more closely. King David in the night arises and looks out his balcony window and observes a pretty woman bathing. The simple sin was sexual lust---simple in that it is not hard to understand from the drawings of the lower nature. His lusting caused him to send for this married woman (wife of Uriah) and to commit adultery with her. Later she becomes pregnant, and now there is the problem of possible discovery by her husband. David's attempts to settle the matter do not work, so he orders the death of Uriah---murder by God's evaluation. This one night stand of adultery has led to lies and deceptions and to the cold-blooded murder of the husband along with innocent soldiers who were included to make it appear that Uriah had died in battle.

After Uriah's death the story continues on for a period of time and we see no true repentance from David. God then sends a prophet who cleverly causes David to pass judgment on the crime of which the king is guilty. The prophet confronts him, “You are the man.” David confesses his sins and

repents and the prophet tells him he will not die---the law's judgment for adultery and murder. Pay close attention to the important scriptural words of "now", "behold" and especially "nevertheless"---serious words of consequence for those who continue in unrepented gross sin. God did not exact the law's full penalty for the sins he committed, yet look at the punishment and the consequences of those sins. Yes, the Lord's anointed will not go unpunished or undisciplined. God's grace had been bestowed in not judging in full measure because of David's late repentance and God's merciful dealings.

Bathsheba's child by David died according to God's will. David's lust and desire were even more sinful because he already had several wives. The Lord tells David that because he murdered Bathsheba's husband the sword would never depart from his house---battles and strife would enter his own home. God further states that because he committed this sin in secret darkness that He, God, would have the same sin committed openly against him.

Yes, many years later his beloved adult son drives him out of Jerusalem and makes himself king. Then he sets up a tent in the sunlight before all the people and has intercourse with some of David's concubines who were left behind. In David's older age he wanted to build a temple for his God, yet the prophet was sent to tell him that he could not for he had spilt too much blood.

Now some preachers will say, "That was true but we are now under grace." The apostle Paul addresses believers with the following:

"Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (I Corinthians 10:5-6).

"Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition (warning, reproof), upon whom the ends of the ages are come"
(I Corinthians 10:11).

Sin, my fellow Christians, is deceitful and costly to us. You say one sin can not do that much harm. Then let me ask you this, how many sins caused the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden? Sin is a strong cord, each time indulged it binds stronger. Some think we may play with grosser sins without consequences---many have thought so to their own destruction!

Sin will master us if we by God's grace and true repentance do not overcome it. Sin deceives and lies to its users. It says, "You can stop whenever you want to. You can stop tomorrow---enjoy yourself tonight." Sin will even tell you are really not that bad. We are told to flee from certain strong sins, and flee we must. The sooner we escape from its cords the better, for the longer sin is indulged the harder it is to be set free, and the more sternly God will deal with us.