

#85 THE DREAM OR VISION?.....

The following dream or vision came in the middle of the night. As with much in the spiritual life it may be difficult to determine when one fruit or grace or gift or ministry stops and another takes over. Sometimes it is difficult to determine when one is having a dream, vision or trance. Even when it comes to the ministry of the Word this may happen. For instance, when preaching or teaching one may also be exhorting, admonishing or comforting. When one is preaching under the anointing of the Spirit there also may be portions of prophecy included. When one has a ministry of helps, it may include the gift of mercy and giving. Even the apostles often were prophets and teachers. At times one gift or ministry is more recognizable than another, and we must look at the effect and edification of that ministry or gift. The knowledge of the details of what ministry or gift is operating is secondary.

In II Corinthians 12:2 the apostle Paul tells us that he had been caught up into heaven. He also tells us he did not know if the experience was in the body or out of it. He could not tell if he was in heaven in the spirit or if he was just having a vision. He states only that "God knoweth." So, too, we may have experiences of which we can not clearly distinguish the details. If that be the case, and God does not see fit to explain to us, then it is not considered important enough to do so.

Even Moses, who turned aside to see why the burning bush was not consumed, received a gentle rebuke from the Lord. God was not interested in satisfying Moses' natural curiosity---He wanted Moses more aware of the Holy Presence in which he was standing. This thirst for information to satisfy our intellect often can and does hinder many Christians from going deeper with the Lord. Remember this point: to read, to study, or even to rightly divide the Word of truth for mere knowledge's sake profits little if we do not experientially apply to our life the truth obtained. We must not be hearers only but doers of the Word.

I lay in bed one dark night pondering and questioning many things. The Lord had given me a new charge or mission to begin. It seemed to me to be very unreasonable and difficult. Many natural fears, puzzlings and apprehensions filled my mind. I tossed and turned in the night in a state of aloneness and discouragement over beginning this mission.

After awhile I turn on my chest and, reaching up to the cold bars of the bed's head frame, I begin to weep and groan in deep sorrow. Still assuming that I am awake, but not really knowing, I sense a person come into my room and take a blanket and place it gently over my body. Then that person, after carefully tucking the blanket over and around my shoulders and the bed, begins to gently pat and rub my back and shoulders. I sense a presence of peace and assurance and of very deep tranquility that lets me know "all will be well." Then I remember going off to sleep.

When I awakened in the morning I found myself still lying on top of the bedding which had not been ruffled. It mattered little to me whether it was a vision or a dream, or whether my visitor was the Lord or one of His angels. What mattered most was waking up with a sense of great peace and renewed faith and hope in my spirit and soul. Zeal and encouragement had taken the place of sorrow and discouragement. God comforts us when we really need it.

No matter how hard at times it may seem, when we are determined to obey His will He will grace and help us. He comforts and confirms us when the battles come and we are hard-pressed. He does not comfort us in our self-pity or unbelief. No, indeed, yet He knows we are mere flesh and dust and have need of grace and aid to follow His will and plans. Thus when we are weak, He gives us strength. Often our spirit is willing to do the Lord's will but our flesh or natural man is unable, so He gives us of the life and power of the Spirit of Christ.

Remember, the apostle Peter was sincere when he said to our Lord that he would never forsake Him, even unto death. Peter really meant it at the time and valiantly drew out his sword and fought to defend Christ. His intentions were good but it was mere natural strength desiring to help Christ, and was actually opposed to God's plans. This same Peter who was ready to die at that moment was the same one to deny Christ before a young woman hours later. Why? Because of these facts---Peter did not watch and pray as the Lord forewarned him so he would not enter into temptation.

When the prince of darkness came during Christ's own darkest hour, Peter was no match for him. Peter's natural strength was overcome by a demonic spirit of fear that caused him to deny and fall at that dark hour. This same Peter after being filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was empowered with boldness. He was beaten, abused and forbidden to preach about Jesus, yet he continued to proclaim the gospel. It is the Spirit's help and grace that gives us supernatural strength to do God's will today.

Many Christians debate the signs of being filled with the Spirit. My friends, show me Christians who have real boldness to follow the Lord at any cost, and who are partaking of practical holiness---I will believe them to be filled with the Spirit. We too must draw on God's Spirit to live and walk in the Spirit. Good intentions and natural strength are of no value in spiritual matters.

Though your flesh seems strong, your heart so brave
Your enemy will attack with an awesome rage.
You, too, like Peter will soon sink beneath the waves
If you have not trusted in His Spirit that He gave.
Yet by faith and reliance in Christ's gracious power
You will emerge victorious in your darkest hour.

R.F.H.P.