

#89 THE DREAM.....

I am talking with someone and retelling a sermon I heard years before. Though I do not remember the sermon well I do remember it was about the ox and perseverance. I also describe a previous dream I had about a yoke of oxen on a mountain top (Dream #56). I say to the person that these dreams and sermons must be for me to remind myself. Lastly, I say out loud, "I guess I am supposed to persevere."

When awake I began to remember and to ponder the oxen---its symbolism and application to me. The ox, a strong animal used for labor, often symbolizes servitude in Scripture. It must be yoked and taught to obey its master---to live to please its owner. Before we are born again we are like the wild ox. Then, as we give our lives and the right to our lives to Christ, He takes it upon Himself to train and transform us. The apostle Paul knew this, and at his conversion Christ told Paul that it was hard for him to kick against the goads. We must learn that we have a new master and are no longer our own or able to do as we please. We are yoked with Him and must learn to follow Him as our lord and leader.

At first we may find it difficult to submit to this new master for we still desire to follow on our terms. This must be dealt with from the very beginning or we will not advance in our spiritual walk. Christ is gentle and shows great patience in His dealings with us, yet the time comes when, if required, He will use stronger measures to get our obedience and yieldingness. Very quickly we find to our displeasure that God's will and plans for us often do not correspond with our wills and plans. We start to complain or kick against His will for us. We will learn, however, that He will be Lord and will not conform to our plans. We begin to act as stubborn children refusing to do their chores---throwing tantrums and screaming and resisting (our resistance more in mind and attitude). We are soon taught our Master will not tolerate these actions and will deal with them swiftly.

Once while watching a friend's child I had this very thing to happen to me. In the middle of a supermarket that child began to scream and stamp his feet demanding some candy. Well, needless to say, this did not sit well with me nor did it move me to buy him that candy bar. Instead, it prompted me to deal with him in front of several watching people. Before that little darling had time to let out another high-pitched demand he found a hand quickly laid across his rear end. He jumped, turning red with embarrassment, and quickly became very quiet and accommodating.

Our Master also knows how to discipline and, because He has no bastards, will deal with us as needed. The ox that refuses to move under the yoke or wants to go in another direction will soon find a goad with a sharp point on the end pushed against its thigh. It will move to avoid that pain, if not out of willing obedience. With enough of this treatment that ox will soon learn to obey. It will also learn, as will we, that the sooner we learn to do what the Master wants the sooner we will cease to bring much needless suffering into our lives. The ox is taught that to obey is better than to disobey, and that there can be advantages to obedience. The ox finds in obeying that its master is kinder in his dealings, and even the work becomes easier when done to the master's liking.

As His workers Christ gives us His approval and pleasure, and that brings contentment and rest to our souls. God's Word expresses the fact that the Lord does not afflict the children of men willingly--He would rather have us obey His voice than to experience His goad. The sooner we are taught to obey the sooner we will move up higher in our spiritual walk. We, like the ox, will learn to obey for His approval. We move from the childlike attitude of doing enough to get by (for fear of punishment) to the maturer level of wanting to please Him for His love and approval.

Some will say He loves us no matter what we are like. True, but we will find as does that disobedient child that love can be hard on the rear end if the parent does not get the desired response!

We must learn perseverance, obedience and service. The double-minded and stubborn will find much needless suffering in the form of rebuke, reproof and discipline. We can not remain as children that romp and play doing what pleases them. We need to grow up and take on the duties of maturity. Spiritual life and spiritual duty go together. We must bear fruit in our character and in our labor for the Lord.

As we move up in our servant-attitude in ministry and obedience, we will find the goad being used less often. We will also find His ways and demands are not grievous and that our output is of better and fuller service. We thus learn not to labor against Him, but with the Lord, for which we will be rewarded.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58).

Now that is a good promise---not in vain. Our sowing for and in Him will be rewarded by Him. Christ pays good wages to His workers. Fruitfulness is profitable in this life and in our next life in heaven. Read I Timothy 4:8.