

#96 THE DREAM.....

I appear to be reading or quoting the Lord's Prayer, but I find that I have left out this portion: "Give us this day our daily bread."

The instant I awakened its meaning was clear to me. The Lord had been dealing with me for several days to begin a season of prayer and fasting. I had been procrastinating in my fasting and was still in a feasting mood. Oh, the flesh dies hard when it comes to food, does it not? Our daily bread can really mean whatever we have need of, yet to me it meant food---not as a need but as a desire. Since the Lord's Prayer is often called a perfect prayer, I assumed the Lord was saying to me that if I omitted the food petition it would be a perfect prayer for me, fitting my state during that period.

As we read the Bible we find symbols and symbolic meanings. At other times, however, the Bible is to be taken literally. For example, dreams, prophecies and visions may be either type---we need wisdom and God's interpretation to know the difference. Therefore we must not assume because something appears plain that it is not symbolic instead.

People often spiritualize Scripture when it is to be taken literally, especially if it is not to their liking. Fasting is frequently placed in this category. As a means of self-denial many will say, "Well, we should fast this or that or give up certain foods occasionally." When the Bible mentions fasting it means to go without food or to restrict food intake. Many take Scripture out of context to make it say what they please. We must rightly divide the word of truth. Most of professing Christianity is living in false teaching and doctrine as to Christ and His Word, for they have done just what Satan is master at---adding to or subtracting from the Word of God. We will get into trouble if we attempt to read into God's Word what we desire, or take from it what displeases us.

I marvel that many professing Christians claim that heaven will have streets of gold and be a place of happiness forever. I like that also! These same ones, however, will say hell is only symbolic and is not really a place of suffering. Fools are they who tamper with God's Word because it does not fit into their sentimental and earthly thinking. Because souls do not want the truth (regardless of their personal opinions on the subject) they will be open to further deception from the devil. Why, our churches are filled with preachers proclaiming their interpretations to be the Word of God.

The Word of God will divide not only the false from the true but the motives of the speakers and hearers as well. When we grow and mature in the Lord we will become very accurate at spotting false teachers (even those who teach good sound doctrine with wrong motives). For every teaching, vision or revelation there are several counterfeits standing nearby.

Jeremiah dealt much with false shepherds and prophets and false dreams and visions. Yes, sad to say, many are false shepherds and prophets today. Let us not be afraid of them but learn to discern them. Let us not be afraid of visions, dreams and teachings; let us instead divide them by God's Word and Spirit. Read these verses from Jeremiah 23:28, 32:

"The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully..."

"Behold, I (the Lord) am against them that prophesy lying dreams, saith Jehovah, and do tell them, and cause my people to error by their lies, and by their vain boasting: yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; neither do they profit this people at all, saith Jehovah."

Even those who teach the truths of God's Word can do so with a wrong motive. We proclaim God's Word because His love for the lost is in us, and we desire to please our Lord and fulfill His will and give Him glory. We are called and gifted by Him to do so. Any other motive is false---even if people are helped and blessed by those words or gifts; it will not profit the preacher or gifted one.

For example, a person needs money to pay a bill. At a prayer meeting he expresses his need, and one man comes forth and gives him the needed money. The person thanks God for it. That man may have been prompted by the Lord to help. This would be good and profitable for him in the long run. He may, however, have given it so those present would be impressed with his generosity. This would have been out of pride and a desire to be praised. The money still blesses the person, yet the giver will receive no reward from God. You see, God judges the motive and intent of our actions. If we do not deal with the desire to be seen and praised by men, one day when our works are judged we will not find the rewards we expected to be laid up for us.

I will give another example. Many television evangelists stand week after week proclaiming the Word of God, or should I correct myself and say some do? Even the ones who do proclaim the true gospel may not be counted for higher rewards in heaven. Many live for the popular opinions of men---to be praised and held in high esteem. So what if thousands come to the Lord by their preaching---God will honor His Word. That evangelist may have so much pride that he refuses to warn, reprove or rebuke for it will not be well received by his hearers.

You, however, may be a nobody as far as public recognition yet faithful to God's call on your life. You may never have led one soul to the Lord, but perhaps He has called you to prayer or giving to the needy. Maybe you are discipling individuals whom others ignore. My dear friends, it is not the numbers or the outward show but the obedience to God's call that is of utmost importance.

One day as you stand before the Lord you will find that saying of His fulfilled, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matthew 19:30). Yes, that great evangelist may find what he thought was gold, silver and jewels will be found of God to be wood, hay and stubble. Sad to say, many who proclaim truth for gain and greed will not find themselves in the kingdom!

Let me leave this section with this thought. The more popular a man is with world opinion or with worldly so-called Christians, the more likely he or she has compromised God and God's Word. The way is still narrow and few will find it. Let us buy the truth and sell it not.