

F R E E D O M *In Christ*

¹¹ As for you also, because of and for the sake of the [covenant of the Lord with His people, which was sealed with sprinkled] covenant blood, I have released and sent forth your imprisoned people out of the waterless pit.

¹² Return to the stronghold [of security and prosperity], you prisoners of hope; even today do I declare that I will restore double your former prosperity to you.

¹³ For I have bent Judah for Myself as My bow, filled the bow with Ephraim as My arrow, and will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and will make you [Israel] as the sword of a mighty man.

Zechariah 9: 11-13

Holidays and the winter stillness often bring about heavy emotions for some of us who have experienced or are experiencing loss in one way or another. Scripture tells us that hope deferred makes the heart sick (Proverbs 13:12). The demonic realm looks for and lives in dry places or waterless pits (Luke 11:24). It is not a sin to experience doubt or fear, but sin can and does enter when we form a partnership (attitudes, thoughts, etc) and therefore a belief system with either. This partnership causes us to lose sight of the tools and testimonies that the Lord has given us. The offspring of that partnership is a dry place called hopelessness. Water = Holy Spirit = non-dry place and freedom (v. 11).

HOPE: The joyful anticipation and expectation that God's goodness and promises are chasing after His children (us!). We have to join ourselves together and become prisoners to this kind of hope, before faith can manifest (vs. 12 & Hebrews 11:1). Anyone can have "hope" once breakthroughs come, but what is your heart posture when you are in the middle of circumstances that deny the very promise(s) God has given to you about your life? When we entertain hopelessness in areas of our lives, we are coming under the influence and therefore partnership of a lie. The concept of divine restoration in scripture is so profound that we should honestly be encouraged anytime we face loss. God always has an answer – a counter move and victory over the plans of the enemy that His word describes as producing back twice what we have lost! Biblical thinking doesn't cower when there is a challenge or a problem, but instead realizes that "here is another opportunity for the Lord to return to me double what the enemy thought he stole" (v. 12)!

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It was easy for God to get the Israelites out of Egypt (the “world”, bondage, slavery, old ways, etc), but it was hard to get Egypt out of the Israelites. God gave them the tools, but their hearts were weak and as a result – they wandered for 40 years. This tells us that the Lord is a good steward and sometimes He creates detours for battles that we are not yet equipped to win.** Even in our rebellion God shepherds us to truth, provision, and redemption. In certain circumstances – the answer to our prayer is an acorn instead of an oak tree to see if we have the character, stamina, and/or focus to steward an answer that comes in a small form. We have to be encouraged that anytime the Lord engages us in a redemptive process it is because He is trying to grow us into people that can handle the fullness of the answer. If the oak tree is given to us in our present condition, it could destroy us. All of God’s biblical disciplines are so that His blessings do not kill us.**

Judah = Praise

Ephraim = Strength or Fruitfulness

God says that he has put fruitfulness and strength as partners with praise in verse 13. Bounty and victory are in our praise and the secret is we praise before we get the answer/result. Bad reports, relationship turmoil, business gone bad, etc – we must turn to the Lord first and give honor and glory to God and His redeeming power. We must search our hearts for areas we need to repent and turn back to Him and His ways. Our hearts must not be focused on our problems and flesh, but focused on Him! This heart posture takes what the enemy has intended for isolation, destruction and loss -> joins it with strength and fruitfulness by way of the declaration of our words of prophecy and partnership with the Lord -> in order to turn the situation around for our good. I.E. = “You will prosper!” “You will turn around!” “You will become whole!” “You will live and not die!” “You will have strength!”. When we partner with and exalt the Lord and celebrate His kindness – He can release heavenly envoys to deal with the issues we are facing (Matthew 6:10). Delighting in the Lord allows the acorn to become the oak tree we’ve been praying for. It is our responsibility to join our prayer life, words, and actions with His activities (Psalm 37:4).

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So as the acorn grows into its potential of the oak tree, will you choose to be encouraged and full of true biblical hope (not wishful thinking) in the process? We need to stop when we are in the middle of circumstances that seem hopeless and say – “Wait! I am a child of the Lord! This works differently than what the world is used to or has taught me. What the enemy meant for evil, God will reverse it together for my good.” God has made it accessible – whenever we suffer loss, we can choose to be positioned to receive double that which was lost. Hope reinterprets our circumstances from becoming places of dry wells to places of prosperity and joy when we partner with truth.

** Now do not distort this into God giving or allowing anything that has come to steal, kill or destroy a person’s life (John 10:10). God allows every human to have free will which can lead to paths of destruction for themselves and others as well as we live in a fallen world where disease is not eradicated, but God is NOT the author of disease or sin. He does not cause or allow wickedness or death – He prepares a way to REDEEM it! No one has ever been punished or harmed into purity or godliness (John 15:3).

YOUR SISTER IN CHRIST

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