



HIGH-CALLING REALITIES

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"And he said to the king of Israel, Put your hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it, and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. Then Elisha said, shoot. And he shot. And he said, The Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Syria. For you shall smite the Syrians till you have destroyed them. Then he said, take the arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, strike them on the ground. And he struck three times and stopped. And the man of God was angry with him and said, you should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Syria until you had destroyed it. But now you shall strike Syria down only three times."
2 Kings 13:16-19 AMP

Jesus similarly spoke stern words when he said: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father. Many will say to Me, 'Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons and done many wonders in Your name?' I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"* Matthew 7:21

We stumble when we fail to face the realities of our callings. Jesus summed up the failure to grasp and follow through in addressing God's will in our spheres as the practice of lawlessness. The fact is that we each are in need of adjusting our mind-sets, facing the realities outside our comfort zones and addressing the "follow-through" of our callings.

King Saul's downfall took root when he failed to heed the Lord's command in destroying the Amalekites and was sidetracked into keeping the best of their herds when the Lord had instructed otherwise. As God's chosen, the book of Romans describes a blindness among the Jewish people regarding their grasp and response to the full significance of their callings. Similarly, as we read the Spirit's admonition to the seven segments of the Church in Revelations, we find the Church with its own issues in responding to high-calling realities.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus used the phrase *"he who has ears to hear"* to describe our grasp of the spiritual, in order to operate in oneness with Him. With the admonitions given to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, again and again we read *"He who is able to hear, let him listen to and heed what the Spirit is saying"*.

The significance from doing the will of God hinges on listening to and heeding what the Spirit is saying. It pivots on the difference between what we might try to do for God and what we allow the Lord to do through us. This bears on maintaining the mode of having ears that hear what the Spirit is saying. Otherwise, we precariously tread a fine line that Jesus warned about when he said: *"I will declare, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"* Matthew 7:21

A Hard Example

There's a very revealing story in 1 Kings 13 that speaks to this issue. The Lord spoke to a certain prophet to go to the King and speak a specific word of judgment on the reprobate condition of not only his leadership and the declining spiritual condition of Israel, but to note a future leader who would restore Israel to the Lord. It was a word that had both tactical and

strategic implications.

With the word the prophet was instructed to speak was the direction that the prophet do nothing apart from what the Lord instructed him, including not going back by the same way, nor stopping to eat or to drink. Just go and impart the word of the Lord and return. Yet something happened that resulted in the young prophet paying an extremely high cost. He was killed by a lion before his return home. Here's the sequence from 1 Kings 13: 4-22:

"When King Jeroboam heard the man of God, he stretched out his hand, saying, 'Seize him!' Then his hand withered and the altar was split apart. Then the king cried, 'Please entreat the Lord's favor and pray for me, that my hand may be restored.' So his hand was restored. Then the king said, 'Come home with me and I will give you a reward.' But the man of God said to the king, 'the Lord commanded me not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way.' So he left by another route from the way he came to Bethel. On the way, an old prophet came to him and said, 'Come home with me and eat bread, for I too am a prophet and an angel spoke to me to bring you back to my house.' So, as they sat at the table, the word of the Lord came to the old prophet and he cried out, saying, 'Thus says the Lord : Because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord , ate bread, and drank water, your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.'"

While some conclude that the older prophet simply tricked the younger prophet by getting him to stop and imbibe on the way back; it seems apparent that the younger prophet first erred by praying for the King to have his hand restored. With that misuse of his authority and anointing, the younger prophet undermined the short-term part of his mission and as a result, reaped the consequence. His mission fell short because he failed to grasp the full significance of what the Lord wanted him to do. Whether it was due to bowing to the authority of the King or just unconsciously wanting the King's approval, he fell short when he reversed the judgment that God had rendered to King Jeroboam when his hand withered.

Holding Fast To God's Instruction

This story forewarns those called with high callings to avoid presumption and to spend the necessary time in His presence to fully --- tactically and strategically --- comprehend the dimensions of what the Lord may be entrusting us to accomplish. God forbid that we should miss the will of God on diversions or waste our efforts and the anointing on superficialities.

Whether it is the example of King Saul, or the young prophet, or the seven churches in Revelations, among those called and anointed with high callings, there exists an enticement to interpret reality through our natural predispositions and worldviews that result in us "*being like everyone else*". It incorporates the temptation to be seduced by fear, short-sided cultural biases or trapped by a self-absorbed blindness. The dynamics of this spiritual myopia may come from our own successes and the need to be recognized; but in reality are blinders to the will of God, serving as pathways of destruction.

Our assignments, as with the recognition of the phases to our callings, need to be adequately bathed and then birthed in our prayer closets.

Models of Facing Reality

The realities and response to operating in Egypt and Babylon, with Chaldea, the wellspring of sorcery in the wings, are incorporated in the lives of Joseph the Patriarch and Daniel. Joseph and Daniel are both models of people of God who had every temptation to "be like everyone else" thrown at them. Likewise, after their promotions, they easily could have been enticed to resign themselves to the "comforts" and conclude the blessings were designed as a "reward" for them.

Yet, both Joseph and Daniel never diverted from the purposes of God. Why? It was because they had conditioned themselves to listen and heed His voice. They each operated at very high levels of prophetic wisdom in their assignments; a level that was recognized as being from God

by the people of Egypt and Babylon; while simultaneously reflecting the personal standard in Proverbs 16 that says that *"he who rules his own spirit is mightier than he who takes a city"*.

For those called to make a difference, rather than being like everyone else with a Christian sugar-coating, it will take both the prophetic wisdom that comes from God and the mastery of fully ruling your own spirit. The Psalmist described this dynamic of follow-through as it operated in Joseph: *"Until the time that His word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him"*. Psalm 105:19

Agents of Change

God gave both Joseph and Daniel wisdom and promotion to be agents of change in pivotal, perilous times. Neither shirked nor fell short of fully embracing both their identity and task as His ambassadors. Regardless of the consequence, they trusted God and didn't vacillate or water down God's will for them in the midst of a world steeped in sorcery and antagonistic to what they stood for. Again and again, they demonstrated the reality of God operating to all those around them.

There is no question that the dominion required for the change the Lord was establishing through them involved strong confrontations with the forces of darkness. Yet, each prevailed and saw God's authority manifest in the midst of Egypt and Babylon's highest centers of power.

There's been a fresh word the Spirit has been imparting to the Body recently, about a shift. God's purposes always involve the restoration of His rule and authority. The shift underway, from a big-picture perspective, gives focus to a transition from the Gospel of Salvation to the Gospel of the Kingdom. It's a shift from the tactical to the strategic. It involves the integration of spiritual, economic and community dimensions of the truths of His Word as the strategy for restoration needed to reverse the curse and break the mold of the darkness trying to cover the earth.

God's will is progressive and uniquely based on what I like to label as the Issachar context: understanding the times and knowing what to do. Joseph and Daniel understood the times and were exceptionally used as instruments of God's purpose, because they knew what to do. They were agents of change, who operated outside the box of the prevailing standards of the worldviews of which they were a part. They understood their authority as lifters of the gates, those facilitating the Lord's entrance into the dominions entrusted to them.

"Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in! Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in! Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, You are the King of glory." Psalm 24:6-10.

The lives of Joseph and Daniel are distinctively apart from those enticed by diversions; those Jesus indicated He would tell to depart from Him, because He never **"knew"** them.

The Pivot Point of High Callings

The distinction is based on the progressive will of God that cannot be discerned apart from the Issachar context and hearing the voice of the Lord for the place and time in which we live. Anything short of that, hazards on the mold Jesus targeted so often: man-driven religion.

Man-driven religion and the consequence of those lured by it, is what Jesus portrayed as the practice of lawlessness. Jesus described those who would fall into this trap as those who would come to Him, calling Him Lord, demonstrating outward manifestations of the Spirit; yet would miss the significance and purpose of their calling. It is the pivot point of high callings.

Jesus spoke about the importance of understanding the times and the seasons. The parable of the talents yields the context. Those God entrusts with His riches and authority are expected to bring increase and the establishment of His Kingdom rule, based on the level of the gifts imparted. When dealing with high callings, this dynamic is progressive.

The subtle seduction for those with high callings is discerning between the zeal of human effort of what may be "done" for God; and what God is allowed to do through those strategically called, but yielded vessels. That distinction incorporates an ongoing relational connection. Jesus' words "I never KNEW you" is the mark of those whose practice fails to listen and heed what the Spirit is saying. The consequence of entering the "practice" of doing your own thing can be deadly, as evidenced by Saul, the young prophet and Judas. James 3:1 warns that there are those who will be judged with a higher standard. In short, high-callings driven by achieving, or anything other than hearing and heeding what the Spirit is saying, is a seductive trap.

Scripture says of Hezekiah, that he did not respond to the Lord according to the benefit done to him, for his heart became proud because of such a spectacular response to his prayer. Therefore there was wrath upon him, as well as upon his people. Yet, Hezekiah knew what it meant to humble himself and repent for the pride of his heart; and in so doing 2 Chronicles 32:26 tells us that he averted the judgment he had triggered.

Facing the realities of God's will and a high calling will require: time in His presence to avoid operating outside our spheres; time in His presence to avert the misuse of our anointing, gifts and authority; time in His presence to prevent missing the shifts by mistaking stepping stones and strategies for goals; time in His presence to make sure our efforts reflect a sufficient understanding of the times to enable us to facilitate, rather than impede the will of God.

"Lord, You have given me wisdom and might, and made known to me what I asked of You; for there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets and has made known these things."
Daniel 2:23,28

"For I have not spoken of my own accord, but the Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it." John 12:49-50

"Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:3-14

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