

TAKE UP THY SWORD †

A newsletter with hope and encouragement from the Holy Bible

For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword... (Hebrews 4:16)

Issue 2

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Out with the Old, In with the New

Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert (Isaiah 43:18-19).

When a beautiful butterfly breaks forth from its chrysalis (cocoon), does it desire to become a regular caterpillar again? Of course not! Why would it go through this unique life cycle to become an adult and then revert back to its original form? In Hebrews 13:8, we learned that “Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.” But I don't recall anywhere in the bible that we are to remain the same. It states specifically in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that we “are changed into the same image [of the Lord] from glory to glory.” That means we, too, have to go through a maturation process to shed our old ways and mindsets and step into our new positions in the Kingdom.

I'm comforted by this verse: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jer 29:11). If we spend a lot of time mourning the past (who or what we've lost), how can we begin to rejoice over the future? The finality of one thing usually leads to the beginning of something greater. Jesus explained it this way:

...Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit (John 12:24).

At some point, we have to make a conscious effort to embrace the new gifts and plans that our Father has for us; we cannot be afraid of change! Let's examine the journey of Paul and Abraham for a better understanding:

Leaving the old self – *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor 5:17).*

In the ninth chapter of Acts, we're invited to the total conversion of Saul of Tarsus (aka Paul after chapter 13) from a man “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” in verse 1, to an apostle in verse 20 who “preached Christ in the synagogues, that [Jesus] is the Son of God.” It was very hard for people to believe that Paul was not the same evil man they had known him to be, but that did not deter him from this new course in life. Why was his metamorphosis so quick and easy? Because God had already determined in verse 15, “he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.” So how can we be assured of our transformation into 'godly' men and women? Because it is written:

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee...for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee... (Jer 1:5,7).

Going to a new place – *The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place I will give peace... (Hag 2:9).*

In Hebrews 11 (written by Paul), we find the description of how Abraham had enough faith to set out for a land he had never been to before, simply because the Lord told him to go. This story actually begins in Genesis 12:1 when God said, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.” Abraham did not look back at his past like the wife of Lot, his nephew, in Genesis 19. She turned into a pillar of salt just because she wanted to see what she was leaving behind! Sometimes we have to sacrifice certain relationships or possessions in order to advance toward our destiny - but don't count out the possibility of restoration. The Holy Spirit has supplied instructions to guide us all the way to our promise:

...Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee... (1 Chron 28:20).

The key to a smooth transition from old to new is to focus on what we're gaining as opposed to what we're losing. The door to our future cannot be opened until we close the door to our past. God knows what is best for us, so we should trust Him to “make all things new” (Rev 21:5)!

THUS SAITH THE LORD, “And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved” (Luke 5:37-38).

PRAYER: *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow... Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me (Ps 51:7,10).*

“...Be encouraged in the law of the Lord” (2 Chron 31:4):

Genesis 13:14-15; Joshua 1:1-3; Proverbs 3:9-10; Isaiah 42:9, 65:17-18; Jeremiah 18:4; Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26-28; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8; Ephesians 4:22-24.

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