

THE PLANS OF HIS HEART

The motorcycle diaries was a film chronicling the early life of Che Gueverra and the inner transformation of purpose that happened as he swam across the amazon. The student doctor from middle class Buenos Aires felt impotent as he struggled to heal severe cases in a leper colony. He was celebrating his birthday with nuns and medical people in their camp on the opposite bank from the leper colony. Suddenly he went out into the black night, took off his shirt and swam to the other side. The lepers gradually made out his bobbing head and began to cheer his bravery and identification with them on his special night. The change from doctor to revolutionary was taking place deep in his heart.

As believers, have we been transformed from our own agendas, opinions, desires to the plans of His wise and loving heart? Psalm 33 verse 10 tells us:

“The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing. He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.”

and verse 11:

“The counsel of the Lord stands forever; the plans of His heart to all generations.”

Whatever our race or status or intelligence, we are only products of our environment, without the new birth and baptism of the Holy Spirit. To enter Kingdom culture is to be profoundly changed, maturing in our ministries and destiny. Jeremiah 29:11-14 is like an inspiring mantra loved by charismatics but also a reality for the obedient. The Scriptures of destiny are desperately needed today and prophecy is one way only they may come to us. Deep down we know we need His plan and purpose to penetrate us - nothing else will satisfy. What is our relationship to the word of God that guides us into His plans?

(1) The Scriptures of destiny can mock us

Sad but true for many, because we've given up our journey of desire, doubt the future and discover diminishing hope. Some even feel Jeremiah's lament "harvest is past, summer is ended and we are not saved" closer to their real condition than the promise of abundant life. The summer of opportunity in your life can remain til you die if you have the Caleb spirit (Numbers 14:24). Some drug addicts go through all the seasons of life before they are twenty five. As believers we may be experiencing mid-life crises or post-charismatic depression, or illness or failing strength or the gnawing sense we have frustrated the will of God. We can rescue ourselves with 2 Corinthians 1:3-6 and know that our sovereign God has placed negatives alongside positives as He spins the potter's wheel of circumstances to fashion our hearts individually. He will open a door no man can shut because despite little strength we have kept His word, and have not denied His name. Rebuke the disbelief of mockery when the promises of God seem to condemn or conspire against His Plans. Rebuke all self-pity and live in Christ Jesus.

(2) The Scriptures of destiny can mould us

We are to be conformed to the image of the Son. Sin is the disposition of degeneration, but the redemption brings the regeneration of the character of Jesus. The Christian worker is tested for character again and again that Jesus may shine through unhindered:

- a) are you prepared for the end of earthly security?
- b) how much do you love money?
- c) will you criticize other ministries?
- d) will you be faithful in what belongs to another?
- e) will you split a church for any reason?
- f) will you examine the state of your flock and spend time listening, counselling, healing, being with them?
- g) will you defend yourself when being attacked?
- h) will discouragement lead you to a sense of failure and premature quitting the work?
- i) will you beat God's people with legalism?
- j) can you live in emotional pain and never let it break your spirit?
- k) will you make Christ and Him crucified and Jesus is Lord your central emphasis?
- l) will you spend time mentoring disciples and rejoice when they can go beyond your level of spirituality?

Here are a dozen questions that test our maturity and remain the road toward the plans of His heart.

(3) The Scriptures of destiny can motivate us

We mature through being servants committed to the motivational gifts of Romans 12. Every believer can find a place of usefulness there when humility and the measure of faith combine. Make much of the Pauline epistles (14 letters that comprise a temple of truth) when you seek destiny for your life. There you will see more glory than anywhere else in the Bible. Why? Because they are EXPERIENCE. All the men and women of the Bible had a hunger for glory, because its essence is to motivate you toward God's purpose and inheritance for your life.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 says:

"to which He called you by OUR gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Flesh cannot receive glory, but your spirit where the Holy Spirit dwells needs this divine fuel. Moses had the hunger in Exodus 33:18,19 and it was experienced as the goodness, grace and compassion of God being revealed to him. Why does the Spirit flow strongly in Africa? Pastors and leaders go up the mountain to pray and fast (Isaiah 58:8)

Is the gospel working for you? The gospel of grace collects the glory - other

gospels fail because of self or law additions or deception. From 1975 to 1982 I was seeing men as trees walking even though I spoke in tongues and fasted regularly. After two experiences of the Lord Jesus, God gave me a second chance, a deeper revelation, where the gospel became deeply personal. The Master's second touch releases us into His seconds (the new covenant) so we can walk the second mile. The Falklands war was nothing to do with Britain recapturing a bit of imperial glory but God's method of breaking a cruel dictator and the Roman Catholic system so that Argentina had a second chance to embrace revival fires. The counsel of nations come to nothing, and the plans of His heart come to each new generation. Hallelujah!

How do I position myself to enter His purpose?

(1) Simplify Lifestyle

You must allow the screaming assertions of self to die and allow Jesus to be Lord. PRIORITIES in Matthew 6:33 have to be grasped. Make the first things first and the second things second:

"Seek FIRST the Kingdom of God and His righteousness AND all these things shall be added to you."

The trouble is in western Christianity we have been taught wrongly, i.e. to make the benefits first and the intimate relationship with Jesus Christ second. Simplifying lifestyle is essential for this to become reality. The TV, the witch with the switch, has spiritually killed off millions of believers. The lust for entertainment has put people in a muse for amusement. Are you over-concerned with mortgages or will you rent and be flexible for mission, for motion and move into the plans of His heart? Will you eat simply and seek God for the regular fast that fast tracks you to a place of spiritual authority? Do you seek first God or Christian fellowship? The issue of loneliness must be dealt with in the secret place. Have you fasted from human contact for just 3 days and fallen in love with the Master, your Redeemer - Lord?

Read the desert fathers' * and rather than mock their poverty, have a sense of wonder at how they managed to be true successors of pentecostal power in the areas of miracle and deliverance. This fun, fortune, fame saturated world needs a new standard. Professor William James in "The Varieties of Religious Experience", says:

".... and when wealth-getting enters as an ideal into the very bone and marrow of our generation, one wonders whether a revival of the belief that poverty as a religious vocation may not be the transformation of military courage and spiritual reform of which our time stands most in need."

* Early Christian Lives - Penguin classics is an excellent primer.

(2) Hearing God's Voice

God's still and small voice is for those who will be still and be small in their own opinion and agendas. The Pharisees rejected the counsel of God through the deceit of pride. (Luke 7:30). If we are willing to enter His plans and available through a simplified lifestyle and dependant on His leading, the plans of His heart become reality.

The word of God must speak to our hearts and the witness of the Spirit within confirm the divine guidance, by echoing the divine life within us. The Spirit never witnesses to our rational thinking and reason or emotional whim or personal volitional choice. He witnesses to the life within our spirit.....to God's nature. Our job is to abandon ourselves willingly to hear God's voice on a matter. This involves being in the right place at the right time. It may be a coppice of trees in a lonely field, it may be you just have to get to that meeting or a conversation with a Spirit-filled friend where His counsel is manifest.

Establish your own Bible study on guidance: Habakkuk 2:1,2 offer four keys.

- a) be still by being in His presence (Psalm 46:10)
- b) focus your eyes on Jesus alone (Hebrews 12:2)
- c) tune into the flow of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39, 1 Corinthians 14:14, Jude 20).
- d) write down the rhema revelation....so you can test it later or share at the right time with friends for there is wisdom in many counsellors. The wisdom of a spiritual overseer can be crucial in the early stages of guidance.

(3) Die out to self agendas

Only the plans of His heart amaze us, keep us on the cutting edge and establish maturity. Our job is to die to the rebel fleshly carnal nature. A trustworthy servant has to go through:

- a) suffering - Romans 8:17,18
- b) separation - 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
- c) submission - Luke 22:39-46
- d) sorrow - 2 Cor. 6:10, 7:9,.10
- e) sacrifice - Romans 12:1, John 12:24

These treasures of darkness qualify us to give God's comfort for those going through crisis. When we DIE to ourselves and fling ourselves upon Jesus Christ as LORD in real abandonment, we can bless others by the truths God has INCARNATED within our lives. We are real warriors and leaders THROUGH WHOM GOD CAN MANIFEST HIMSELF. Most pastors and elders are still children and some still in their nappies because they have refused the Cross in their lives. The bond servant gives up his right to himself forever..... so he can explode for the glory of God. They never steal hearts to themselves but hand them over to God (see Acts 20:30) A true servant is never co-dependant, they seem to do without you, because there is a snare if the child of God gets taken up with you and not God.

Lack of death to self in leaders has produced a weak, fearful body of Christ oftentimes that finds it almost impossible to connect with God for themselves and simply exist from one conference to the next! Die out to your charismatic self!

THE PLANS OF HIS HEART - TO ALL GENERATIONS

The sovereign God has the same plan A. to all generations. The unchanging Father has no shadow of turning. Check out three generations in the history of Israel, all experiencing radical new beginnings.

(a) The generation that came out of Egypt under Moses but died in the wilderness. They saw amazing miracles but unbelief in the wilderness with criticism and rebellion brought the wrath of God. Only Caleb and Joshua survived and arrived on the other side of the Jordan, to take the promised land.

(b) Joshua 5:3-7 describes the new generation, their children, born in the wilderness and victors in Canaan under Joshua. They did not completely succeed, but fulfilled plan A to a far greater extent than their forefathers. They had faith to experience remarkable victories at Jericho, Ai, the five kings etc. Little by little they possessed their inheritance.

(c) Judges 2:7-10 speaks of another generation who did not know the Lord nor His works. They went after idols, and sin led them into enemy territory, and judges had to receive a special anointing to periodically deliver them from cruel enemies. These deliverers were full of mixture - Gideon was wise in abolishing the idols but foolish in later making the gold an ephod (Judges 8:27).

The plan of God's heart to each of these generations was the same: conquest of Canaan, followed by obedience to the Law, so that Israel could be a testimony to the surrounding nations. In the present church age of grace it's also plan A! Spiritual warfare preparing God's people for such a visitation of glory that the Lord's testimony becomes clear and radiant to the watching world. Joshua was the book on how to do things and echoes Ephesians. Judges is how not to do things and has many analogies with our present day church in the UK.

One similarity of our Lord's dealing is found in Judges 2:21 - 3:1. God is testing our loyalty by allowing the enemy to do outrageous things in the church. Even the Evangelical Alliance now is doubting the full inspiration of Scripture in terms of faith and church practice! God will test the church by ultimately dividing wise and foolish virgins. There will come a separation between the body of Christ and the remnant bride. There will be overcomers and compromisers. We should not be surprised because He has dealt with Israel in the same way. The anointed deliverers in Judges brought temporary rest and then the cycle of sin began again. Before the rest there is a test. Before the 1000 year rest of the Millennium, there is an increasing test upon the professing church, which will come to a head in the seven year tribulation.

God tests our hearts to refine us, and prepare us for heaven. Every generation has the opportunity to cleave to the Lord like Ruth clinging to Naomi. Or we fail the test of loyalty and become like Orpah (the one who turns the neck) and kisses Naomi but goes back to her own gods. In every generation God is willing to use a prophetic

remnant to restore the altar of the Lord. Elijah and Gideon did it, and countless others from Moses to Gene Edwards.

| <u>BROKEN ALTAR</u> | | | <u>RESTORED</u> | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|---|-----------------|---------------------------------|--|
| | | R | | | |
| 1. | Fear of man | | 1. | Fear of the Lord | |
| | | E | | | |
| 2. | Tolerating sin | | 2. | Repentance and personal victory | |
| | | P | | | |
| 3. | Casualness | | 3. | Holy Fire | |
| | | E | | | |
| 4. | Apathy | | 4. | Fellowship | |
| | | N | | | |
| 5. | Pride | | 5. | Humility | |
| | | T | | | |
| 6. | Entertainment | | 6. | True Worship | |
| | | A | | | |
| 7. | Self on the throne | | 7. | Death to self | |
| | | N | | | |
| 8. | Deception | | 8. | Discernment | |
| | | C | | | |
| | | E | | | |

Will you take your Bible and do your own study based on these eight opposites?
Will you examine yourself and pray for a deeper fellowship with your Lord?

The plans of His heart to all generations begin with restoring the altar, the place of communion with the Most High God. Only this guards against spiritual decline. Only this brings the true presence of God. Only this guarantees the success of His exploits. Derek Prince based his ministry on prayer and fasting and stood amazed at the end of a fruitful life that "God is faithful". At the altar we perceive His divine attributes and we become partakers of His divine nature. God tests UK believers in 2005 and 2006 - will be worship at the altar or the high places of denominational respectability and demonic doctrine?

Each of us must answer by our lifestyle now, and when we are judged by our Lord.