SOUND THE TRUMPET IN PRAYER

**And if you go to war in your land against the enemy that opresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies (Numbers 10:9).**

Moving Forward

If there is something lacking in our society today, it is a fear of God. This is evident in the things we hear about on the news, unbelievable, and shockingly sad things that are done by certain individuals to their fellowman. We regretfully hear of atrocities perpetrated on innocent children, who should be protected, sometimes at the hands of their own parents. All the law breaking, lack of respect, and heinous acts are evidence of one thing. A lack of love for God; didn’t Jesus say, as you have done to the least of these, you have done to me? In history we read of the crimes against humanity committed by those who have claimed to do their evil deeds in the name of God. Church history tells us how, during the Spanish Inquisition, Jews had their brains beaten out for refusing to worship any other than the one true God. While we definitely need a reverence for God, as one would hopefully revere their parents, the term “fear of God” has been misunderstood. What we really need in order to have a reverence for God is a love for God. When someone has a love for God in their hearts, they will not want to do things that are wrong because they will want to please the one they love. They will be able to fulfill the greatest commandment because loving God, others, and self will be in their nature. Hence, it will exude from their human spirit, as a portrayal of the nature of the Spirit who gives us life.

It is impossible to have a love for anyone you do not communicate with or know anything about. It is a fact that lack of communication will destroy any relationship, as will fear. Now if that makes saying we need a “fear of God” sound like a contradiction, maybe it is, if we allow our “fear” of God to separate us from Him. It will take more than a “fear” of God to love God or live for God. Fear is a spirit according to scripture (see I Timothy 1:7). It is a spirit that God hasn’t given us, and causes torment. Some fear God in the wrong way, and for the wrong reason. This is not beneficial. I daresay those who persecuted the Jews and Christians were motivated by the wrong type of fear. This same spirit motivates some today. We can make the same mistake. This wrong type of “fear of God” started in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. This is the result of a love problem, a faith problem, and it is not the way that we should fear God. God knows we are going to mess up, and that is why He made a way of salvation through repentance, the infilling of His Spirit, and also baptism in His name, which washes away sin. He did not leave us without a way of escape, but in some cases a “fear of God” keeps people stuck in religious tradition due to their own feelings of unworthiness. This makes the salvation God provided of no value to these individuals.

If all anyone relates to God only through His judgment, they will not be able to maintain a walk with their Savior and Creator. Of course we need the understanding that God will judge. This is made clear to us in His word. However, an understanding that His love is as powerful as His judgment is necessary. To only understand judgment, rules, and regulations would leave us only with religion, and without relationship. It is written, the letter kills and the Spirit gives life (see II Corinthians 3:6). What this is letting us know is that it is necessary to be connected with God’s Spirit, as well as His word, to maintain a relationship with Him. If we are motivated by love, living according to God’s word will not be a chore or burden; it will be something we want to do. It is called “hungering and thirsting after righteousness”, and knowing the difference between the holy and profane. This hunger and revelation is only accomplished through a love of God.

A love for God must come from a willing heart; a heart that wants to change. Throughout history there have been those who loved God enough to follow him despite persecution. The Bible tells us of how the early church was under great persecution by Saul, and other religious leaders. When the apostle Paul was first converted, they feared him because of his prior persecution of the church. However after this, the Bible tells us the church had rest, and continued to multiply. While they had a fear of God, they also had the comfort of the Holy Ghost. The comfort of the Holy Ghost is a necessary ingredient to maintain a strong relationship with God through life’s adversities. Acts 9:31 says, **“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied”.**

While they walked in the fear of God, they also walked in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. It is the comfort of the Holy Ghost that gives consolation and solace to those who are tormented. The fact that the church had rest, and was a safe place to those who observed it resulted in the revival of that day. Today things have not changed. Jesus promised His followers that after His departure there would be another comforter. Jesus said to them, **“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (John 14:15-20).** We have a promise from the Prince of Peace that He will not leave us, but will be one with us if we walk in His ways. Not because of fear, but because of love. This is because His ways are the way to eternal life. Because He lives, we also have life through Him through the Spirit of God. Every day is a new day to walk forward seeking God through prayer, and His word. Through the power of His Spirit we can know Him, and this is the greatest gift of all. BMR

WORDS FROM BEHIND THE WALL

SPEAK UP

A few years ago I had a dream. In the dream I was home hanging with my brother, playing video games, and talking. Then he questioned my faith. As I was about to explain all of my spiritual experience to him, I noticed something in the window. When I looked, I saw a man looking in, and I knew right away it was Jesus because of the deep, loving look He gave me; so I cried. In my dream it felt so real that I found myself waking up full of great emotion. I knew it was the Spirit showing me He wants me to tell others of my transformation. A few months later my brother wrote me and indirectly questioned me why I had faith in Christ. I remembered the dream and wrote back giving my testimony. No matter how awkward it may make us feel, the Lord wants us to relay our personal messages so others may get to know Him better; by doing so He will be glorified, and have reason to speak to you about His Father (Matthew 10:22-23).  **William Moctezuma**

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MIRACLE

I know the odds looked stacked against you, and it seems as though there is no way out. I know the issue seems unchangeable, but the impossible is God’s chance to work a miracle, I said a miracle; so just know it isn’t over until God says it is over. It isn’t over until God says it’s done. Keep fighting until your victory is won. He never said it would be easy, but you’re a winner in the end. Jesus defeated all your enemies way before the fight began. So the impossible is God’s chance to work a miracle, I said a miracle. Amen.

 **Patrick Douglas**

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During my incarceration I’ve learned that we as inmates are powerless over everything out in the real world. There is nothing we can do about anything. Whatever a civilian tells you, you’re obligated to believe, or not believe, it’s your choice. Whether that individual is lying or not, what can you do? So if it doesn’t go our way, all we can do is simply suck it up and drive on; and perhaps deal with it in a respectful way if possible. There’s no reason to take your problems out on the next man. I’ve learned a lot on this bid. On my last one I was a spoiled brat because my mother was living, and I wasn’t wanting for anything. Whatever she said it was 100% guaranteed. That spoiled me for real it did, and I hate that still to this day. Kind of odd, but it’s 100% true. Now I really don’t care about what most people tell me. I can’t stress myself out thinking about whether this person is going to put money on the phone or not. So, to all who are in jail/prison, please know that whatever happens regardless. Do your time, and don’t let the time do you---never ever.

 **Danny L Ross**

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ACCEPTING THE SPREAD BETWEEN WISHES AND REALITIES

Real life is, to most of us inmates, a perpetual compromise between the ideal and the possible. We get caught up between what we got, and what we have been led to expect. That puts us in a situation where we cannot do what we want, so we must make do with what we can. We must like what we have, when we don’t have what we like. Our greatest sign of maturity is a healthy respect for reality, a respect that manifests itself in a level of our aspiration to put God first in our lives. There is no good in arguing with the inevitable. Only God can conquer our fate. “*Dear God, as I begin this day, let me turn my thoughts to you in everything I do and say. Give me the patience I need to keep my peace of mind. Let me keep this thought in mind, It’s your will and not mine, be done. And if some wish I do not get through, I pray to you, help me believe and understand you know what’s best for me. I’ve failed you many times I know, but when tonight I rest; I hope that I can kneel on my knees and say, dear God, I’ve tried my best”.* **David Turner**

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FIND ENJOYMENT IN ALL THE DAYS WHICH GOD GIVES

(Ecclesiastes 5:18)

The words “it came to pass” show up hundreds of times in scripture---why? Because most things, good or bad, are not permanent; life is a continuum of change. Accepting that will not only help you handle the bad times, but to stop clinging so tightly to the good ones. Here are three principles that will help you enjoy the trip. 1) Don’t buy it: there are two lies you should never buy into. One is the “forever lie”, which says your situation will never improve. The other is the “never lie”, which says that if things get worse, you’ll never be able to handle them. Both are distortions. God’s word says that everything “comes to pass”. Listen, “for everything there is a season” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Endings bring new beginnings! 2) Appreciate the little things: they’re all around you. A few examples are: the look of delight on a child’s face, the love of a friend, a good night’s sleep, a kind deed, and a fresh insight. When you appreciate what you have, it multiplies. So be grateful for the little things and God will give you even more to appreciate (see Matthew 25:23). 3) Remember, everyday is a gift: “find enjoyment in all” (not just some of the days, which God gives). Even though you’ll always be moving towards another goal or objective, learn to squeeze every ounce of joy out of the present. Don’t let life slip away while you’re waiting for the next big event. So keep trusting God and the cloud your under right now will give way to sunshine.  **Brandy Holmes**

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**Inmates, please submit your inspirational thoughts for Words from Behind the Wall to Beth Marie Rexford, C/O International Christian Fellowship, 9146 Lincoln Ave, Brookfield IL 60513. Office Phone: 708-387-9009. Thank you.**