

The Second Time Around

The Bible is replete with instances and events when God does His finest work the second time around. God chose the second son of Abraham to bear the legacy of faith and be in the lineage of Messiah *“And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad (Ishmael, the first son born to Haggar and him), and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called”* (Genesis 21:12). The same state of affairs came in the lives of Esau and Jacob. The second-born Jacob became Israel, progenitor of the great nation. *“But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend”* (Isaiah 41:8). *“I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob”* (Malachi 1:2). I would remind all of us that God's choices are never arbitrary in nature. If you examine the lives of the first-borns such as Ishmael, Esau and Reuben (Jacob's first-born) you will see these men were motivated in wickedness to the point where they forfeited their birthright.

We see the principle of God using the second touch to heal in the life of a blind man whom Jesus healed. *“After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly”* (Mark 8:25). He saw clearly after the second touch.

In the Old Testament, God warned again and again judgment would ensue upon Israel if they did not repent. They did not and were carried into captivity and dispersed. Yet in spite of this departure, it is beautiful to see today how the trickle became a flood and Israel has headed back home, and is still coming, for the promised return. *“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth”* (Isaiah 11:11,12). This is a great piece of prophetic Scripture, but today allow me to make some practical points with the thought of God's blessings the second time around. God is the God of the second chance. How thankful we all should be for that truth! God is good:

1) The second time around in Creation.

A few days ago, Barbara and I enjoyed taking a driving trip down to Big Bend in Texas. Had it not been for a few strategically placed power lines, we would have thought we were back in the West one hundred years ago. We saw a great gray wolf that had been hit by a car, now lying in stillness by the side of the road. A little further we saw a giant rattlesnake coiled and ready to strike at anything passing by. On the way back, it was discovered he had been struck. Then I remember going down a trail that had been restricted by yellow tape with a sign that read, “Do not go beyond this point due to bear activity.” We had no problem heeding this sign!

As my wife and I stood in the place called “Window View” while at Big Bend, we were awestruck with the “magnificent desolation” (borrowing the phrase used by Buzz Aldrin after taking his first step onto the surface of the moon). We could see where the ancient waters of the flood had cut through the earth, pushed mountains up, brought valleys into existence and we could see places that looked as though God had taken His hand and dragged it through the earth. Although He did this in the cataclysmic destruction of the flood, we are reminded of God's second touch. As we drove back to Fort Stockton, I recalled the carnivorous wolf I had seen, so beautiful, but although a predator, he too gets hunted. I thought about the venomous rattlesnake and his swift destruction. He who has enough venom to take down a large animal or man could not even survive crossing a lonely road in a near deserted canyon drive. Yet as I reflect upon the beauty of these animals and the lovely foliage

and flowers in the canyons, I was reminded that God can make things beautiful from the start and also re-make them beautiful after they have fallen. There remains the residual beauty of God's creative touch, yes even when He does it again. The promise of God touching His creation in the kingdom to come on earth is going to be a second touch that shall make all things not only beautiful but will make everything blessed: *"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp (cobra), and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's (adder's) den"* (Isaiah 11:6-8).

2) The second time around for God's will.

In Acts 15: 37-40 it says, *"And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God."* From this passage we see there was a division over John Mark between Paul and Barnabas. The problem began by Mark not "staying with the stuff." He deserted the cause of Christ. But Barnabas, who lived up to his name, "Son of Consolation" believed there was hope for the youngster. So he took him after being rejected by the great Apostle Paul. John Mark became so useful that God used him to be the first to pen the earliest biography of the Lord Jesus, The Gospel of Mark. Why, even Paul had to admit, God had plans for John Mark the second time around, for he said at the close of his life, *"... Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry"* (II Timothy 4:11). The word "profitable" means one who is beneficial, useful or who yields a profit.

Let us also be determined to see people as God sees them. Don't throw them on the garbage heap of humanity because they messed up once! Let's be like God; pray for them and give them the second chance.

3) The second time around for eternity.

In the matter of eternal salvation we were done for! Through Adam we fell and inherited eternal damnation. But God sent Christ, the Second Adam to win where Adam lost: *"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven"* (I Corinthians 15:47). Thanks be to God! Christ, our Second Chance makes heaven and the Kingdom of God available for us: *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"* (I Corinthians 15:22).

I love the Old Testament parable that reads: *"Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it"* (Jeremiah 18: 4,5). Notice God did not cruelly strike and flatten the clay because He "felt like it." The Bible carefully records that the *"...clay was marred in the hand of the potter..."* The clay was not marred "by", but "in" the hand of the Potter. In other words, the problem was in the clay. As was often the case, the potter would be working with the clay and a foreign substance like a rock or some sharp shard would show up in the clay. Then the potter would stop the wheel from spinning, take the substance out of the clay, flatten the clay and build it back up to a vessel fit to be used. God's application: This is what He does with us! *"...So he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it!"* God locates our problem of sin and through Christ's death, burial and resurrection forgives us, saves us and makes and us fit for eternity!

- Pastor Pope -

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