

01 Breaking Free

(Acts 14:22).confirming the souls of the disciples, calling on them to continue in the faith and that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God.

Do you remember the “Repent” lesson in the Walk series? If not, now is a good time to go back and review it. It talks about turning to the Word of God, the Kingdom of God for our needs, and to take our lives out of the hands of Satan and put it into the hands of God.

Now look at Acts 14:22. It says that when we do just that, that there will be much tribulation! I can tell you from my experience, that this is always the case.

I would guess that most Christians never make it out of the cage of mediocrity and truly burst into the freedom that Jesus provided for us. It is because, most people do not wish to give up the comfort of the moment, of the status quo, the mediocrity, for the “tribulation” that is required to truly be free.

I once read a book that was an allegory (kind of like a parable) of the life of one Christian who broke free. In this book there were hundreds of horses in a coral, just running around in circles all day long. One day :”dark horse” saw a beautiful white stallion outside the fence. He was free to run wherever he wanted. He looked so happy and beautiful. Every day he would come near the fence and look at the horses who were running in circles. Most of the horses just made fun of white stallion, jeering and mocking him as some sort of freak who was outside the fence.

But “dark horse” felt something in his heart that leapt with joy every time he saw white stallion. White stallion began to beckon dark horse to join him. One day dark horse jumped the fence and ran for freedom, joining white stallion.

The journey just begun. They, together, ran through danger after danger, much tribulation, evading lions, canyons, rocks, cliffs, etc. After the journey ended, dark horse became a shining horse, with a coat that glistened in the sun the same as the white stallion’s did.

There was much more to the story, but I am reminded, that it is with great tribulation that we must enter the Kingdom of God. I am not talking about going to Heaven; I am talking about living in Heaven now while we are on this earth! I am talking about “risky living” with God. Sometimes I wish that God would take us down paths of comfort, but He rarely does. However there is something that takes place in this journey to freedom, that changes us. No Bible teaching can do it, no self discipline can do it, only much tribulation can change us.

What are some of the traps that can keep us prisoners of mediocrity?

1. Not loving the truth is the biggest one. Trying to always play it safe and cover up the truth because you don’t want to cause trouble.
2. Loving the World.
3. Putting too much emphasis on one’s reputation, and not willing to go through shame and/or failure for the sake of Christ.
4. Trying to always play it safe, and not trust God’s Word.

Remember Jesus said in John 3* that we could not even see the Kingdom of Heaven until we are born again. Once we are born again, we are Heaven bound, I am not talking about that. Again, I am talking about bringing the Kingdom of God to this earth, in your life now! Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. *

I can still remember when I truly began the transformation of leaving this world and entering the Kingdom. It was about 2.5 years after my new birth. I had been in the Word for hours each day. I had really gone all out for God, left nothing behind, forsook all and went for Him with all my might. God had engineered my circumstances so that I moved out of a very expensive house, and was living in a 8 X 12 foot room 50 miles from my business in a farm community with no neighbor in sight for miles. I had a old beat up car, with all my belongings in the back seat, 80% of which were my Bibles, books and Gospel tapes.

I was spending 4 to 8 hours per day in the Word. I always had a tape going, or a book on my lap. One night I slept, but did not sleep at the same time. I turned all night sensing the presence of God. I felt like he was taking a skin off of me. I also felt like a caterpillar turning out of the cocoon soon to become a butterfly. The next morning was one of the freest times of my life. I felt like I had just experienced the new birth all over again, except this time it was going through a door, from the kingdom of this world into the Kingdom of God. That is all I knew. Romans 12:1-2 came to me “being transformed by the renewing of your mind”.

What is the Scriptural foundation for such an experience? Matthew chapters 19 and 20 gives us some insight about entering into the Kingdom of God while we are still on this earth. (Read the Matthew 19 and 20 Scriptures on the last page of this lesson now.)

Notice in these stories and events that the subject was the Kingdom of God (or Heaven, same thing). Peter asked a question in 19:27 about what he would receive since he had left all to follow Jesus. Jesus gave him the answer, but he included a warning in verse 30, “but many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first”.

Then Jesus went on in chapter 20 to tell us one of the attributes of the Kingdom of God. He said it was like something.

Notice in the story, that the reward is the Kingdom of God, which is shown by the pay that each worker received. (Again, we are not talking about being saved and going to Heaven, that is totally by grace without works.) Some of the workers received their pay sooner than the others, even though it was the same exact pay.

So the issue is not IF believers receive the Kingdom of God, but WHEN!

The question then is WHO received the Kingdom of God sooner? It appears by the story that the WEAK ones who got hired last got the Kingdom FIRST. Think about it, if you were hiring people from the employment agency, wouldn't you hire the strong and able first? When you went back the second time (the 3rd hour), then you would pick the next strongest workers. When the employer went to the marketplace to hire more workers at the 6th and 9th hours, he would pick the next able men to do the job. But what do you think he found when he went back at the 11th hour? He most likely found people who were cripple, lame, old, perhaps mentally not right, in general he found the weak. What did the weak receive? GRACE & THE REALITY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THEIR LIVES, RIGHT NOW ON THIS EARTH.

Perhaps the others, the stronger did not receive the Kingdom of God until they died and went to Heaven, I am not sure. It appears that way.

What am I saying? I am proposing that the more difficulties, trials, failures and breakings we have in life, actually turn out to our advantage. People like us know for sure that we can do nothing, without Christ in us doing it. People like us know that the Kingdom of the World offers absolutely nothing for us. Not only is it unattractive, but we have found that we are not even good at operating in it. So we only have one place to turn (to repent to), and that is the Kingdom of God.

As a reminder, in the Repent lesson, we talked about how the Kingdom of God is at hand (Matt 4:17). At hand means within our reach. We connected that with Mark 4:11 which says that THE mystery of the Kingdom was in the parable of the sower, the Word sown in your heart bearing fruit.

This principle is not embraced by many, because the human nature does not want to be a failure. Our flesh wants to succeed. We are ashamed when we can't do it. But here is the good news. If you are weak, if you are a prisoner, if you are incapable, then you are a candidate for Jesus' power to work through you.

Scripture

(Matthew 19:23-20:16). Then Jesus said to His disciples, Truly I say to you that a rich man will with great difficulty enter into the kingdom of Heaven. And again I say to you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When His disciples heard, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus looked on them and said to them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Then answering Peter said to Him, Behold, we have forsaken all and have followed You. Therefore what shall we have? And Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, you also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many who are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

Matthew 20:1-16 For the kingdom of Heaven is like a man, a housemaster, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace. And he said to them, You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you. And they went. And he went out about the sixth and ninth hour and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, Why do you stand here all day idle? They said to him, Because no one has hired us. He said to them, You also go into the vineyard, and you shall receive whatever is right.

So when evening had come, the lord of the vineyard said to his steward, Call the laborers and pay them their wage, beginning from the last to the first. And when they who were hired about the eleventh hour came, they each one received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would received more; and they also each one received a denarius. And receiving it they murmured against the master of the

house, saying, These last have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them and said, Friend, I do you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take yours, and go; I will give to this last one the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I want with my own? Is your eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last, for many are called, but few are chosen.