

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

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Famine of the Word

November 24, 2009

While writing article #26 (November 2009) titled *The Kingdom Tax—The Tenth (Tithe)*, I was caught by the story of Joseph while in Egypt during a great famine.

As the record shows, Joseph was sold into bondage by his brothers, but what they meant for evil, God meant for good. God had a purpose for Joseph's captivity that would lead to the salvation of a whole nation as well as his whole family, including his brothers who had sold him to the Ishmaelites, which, in turn, brought much grief upon their father Jacob (Genesis 37:28, 35).

After going through some trials, Joseph found favor with Pharaoh when Pharaoh had a dream that only Joseph could interpret. The dream revealed seven years of abundance would come, followed by seven years of severe famine that would ravage the land. Through Joseph, Pharaoh was told to appoint a man over the land and to collect a fifth of the produce of the land for seven years. Joseph got the job.

(33) “Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. (34) Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance.”
(Genesis 41:33-34 NASB)

Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 41:41 NASB)

As the famine took its toll on the land and the people, Joseph bought all the land of Egypt from the people and distributed seed to them to save their lives. In return, they owed Pharaoh a fifth of their harvest (Genesis 47:23-24), which they not only gave but also pledged their lives to serve Pharaoh.

And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. (Genesis 47:25 KJV)

Upon learning of his true identity, Joseph's brothers feared what their brother might do to them. After Jacob-Israel died, they feared that Joseph would hold a grudge against them and pay them back. However, Joseph would do no such thing.

God sent me before you to preserve life. (Genesis 45:5 NASB)

(20) But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? (20) As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. (21) So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. (Genesis 50:19-21 NASB)

Joseph, as a fruitful son (Genesis 49:22), was a type of Christ, the fruitful Son of God who is coming a second time to establish His kingdom among the nations and to bring forth His conquerors, the sons of God and firstfruits who will reign with Him and sit upon His throne for 1,000 years. Fruitfulness is about bringing forth sons. Joseph was a conqueror, for he knew that he was in God's place, and he overcame in that place in spite of adversary. Consequently, Joseph is a type of those, in our day, that **overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loves us** (Romans 8:37; see Revelation 2-3). They are content in God's place of trial, discipline, and even suffering, and they graciously (kindly) forgive all their enemies, seeing them as future citizens of the kingdom of God.

Now, what is on my heart is that Joseph faced a famine in his day, and we face a similar but more dangerous famine in our day, a famine of the word of God.

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “When I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the LORD.” (Amos 8:11 NASB)

I believe that this type of famine is upon the church of God today. If the words of the Lord were based on quantity, we would have to conclude, based on how much is spoken in our day, that there could never be a famine of the words of the Lord. However, **quantity is not the issue; quality is.**

Oh, the Lord’s people are hearing a lot of words, even words that they are told are from God’s word; but they are words taken by men from God’s word and taught through the prism of the traditions of their denomination, sect, organization, institution, or particular emphasis or ministry.

Over 2,000 years ago, the commandments of God (the words of the Lord) were drowned out by the tradition of men. The Jews had added many things to the commandments that did not come from God; something of which Jesus took note. By their tradition, they were making the word of God ineffective.

(8) For forsaking the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men: immersings of utensils and cups, and many other such like things you do. (9) And He said to them, Well do you to set aside the commandment of God so that you may keep your tradition? (10) For Moses said, “Honor your father and your mother;” Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16 and, “The one speaking evil of father or mother, let him expire by death.” Ex. 21:17 (11) But you say, If a man says to his father or mother, Corban, (which is, A gift!) whatever you may profit by me. (12) And you no longer allow him to do anything for his father or mother, (13) making the Word of God of no effect by your tradition which you delivered. And many such like things you do. (Mark 7:8-13 LITV)

It appears that the church of our day has fallen into the same trap as men have added many things to the words of the Lord. The traditions of men have drowned out the truth of the word of God.

Consequently, many Christians are taught and believe in the immortality of the soul; when they die, they immediately go to heaven to walk on streets of gold; when the lost die, they are cast into a place of literal fire to be tortured for ever and ever without any chance of restoration; if you don’t tithe 10% of your gross income to “pastor” and his church, God will curse you and never listen to you; the cross is an abject failure because it cannot and will not save all mankind; God is unable and unwilling to woo all mankind and overwhelm their will with His love; consequently, billions will end up in man’s version of hell; and every knee will bow, but many will not do so willingly; they will be forced to do so by God and then cast into hell. These are some of the examples of the many traditions of men that are held today and so few seem to question. No wonder there is a famine of the words of the Lord.

But there is good news. Just as the Lord had 7,000 in Elijah’s day, so does He have a company of saints in this day that are not starving by the famine of the word. The spirit of God is training up conquerors much like Joseph. The conquerors are not overcome by the famine, for they are hearing the words of the Lord and are living by faith, knowing that they are in God’s place. **So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ** (Romans 10:17 NASB).

Dear brethren, if the spirit of God has touched you on this matter of conquering (overcoming), and you are on the path of a conqueror or, what I also like to call, a pioneer, then it is time to cast aside the tradition of men and search the word of God for His truth. Let us be seekers of the truth of God and encourage others with it by sharing it with them so that they too will rise up and conquer before Mystery Babylon is fully and finally crushed by the Stone Kingdom. May we be like Joseph who preserved life and heard: **You have saved our lives!**