

May 2022

Thank you so much for your faithful support this month. We truly appreciate you, and the Lord will use your giving for the kingdom as we place it in His hands with faith. Here's where we are in...

Fundraising:

As of April, we have \$77,960.00 with pledges and one-time gifts. This is 74.2% of the target goal. We want to thank you for responding to God's call to give your His mission and kingdom! Gifts have come in very generously from the Lord for his people. Thank you. Continue to join us in prayer that the Lord may open more doors and hearts for His provision in this calling and mission to Peru.

Circumstances:

Some circumstances are rough, but the comforting thing is that God is with us in all of them and that we are not alone. That He never forsakes us or abandons us. Even in stressful moments, He sees how much effort you put in or how much pain or suffering you are in. And after a whole lot of strife and trials, we can see how such a long testing period has helped us grow. And I want to thank the Lord for being with us in all of these. By God's grace, we were able to take a beach trip to Florida. It was such a blessing for the whole family. The vacation was much needed, and after months of hard work, we were so grateful to the Lord.

If we are under the fire being tested (as in the desert for Israel), we place our trust in the Lord and thank him for working in us, and if we are in a season of peace and plenty (as in the promised land for Israel), always give thanks and remember where it comes from. Deuteronomy places a lot of emphasis on the importance of our heart and its condition. May God test what is in our hearts and cleanse it, and may we be careful to protect our hearts from pride.

The Desert:

Dt. 8:2-6, "Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, **to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart**, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you...Observe the commands of the Lord your God, walking in obedience and revering him."

Maybe your heart fills dry. We can get tired of the same old songs, tired of reading the Word, and perhaps not getting much out of it. We can feel as dry as the desert. Isaiah 41:17-18, "The poor and needy search for water, but there is none. Their tongues are parched with thirst. But I, the Lord, will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the deserts into pools of water and the parched ground into springs,"

The promised land:

Dt. 8:10-14 "When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to obey his commands, his laws and decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herd and flocks grow large, and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, **then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.**" (When the Lord your God brings you into the land... - a land with large flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant-then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." Dt. 6:10-12)

One more example: "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord, to walk in obedience to Him, **and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul**, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?" Dt. 10:12-13

So many times, however, there are things competing for our love and worship. 1 Jn. 2:15-17, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in them. For everything in the world-the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life comes not from the Father, but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever."

The verse above would be the New Testament way of saying what was said to the Israelites in the Old Testament: "My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices."

The Lord set Israel apart as has set you and me apart (made holy or wholly) for Himself! "I am the Lord your God, who has set you apart from the nations... You are to be holy to me, because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own." Lev. 20:24,26

And as his people, we are to: "See, that I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commands, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." **What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him?** And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? "

God wants to be nearer and nearer, closer and closer to us! Sometimes this takes challenging circumstances; It wants to get closer and closer to the depths of our hearts! So you don't have to feel alone in any circumstance. So God commands us to be strong and courageous, not to fear or be discouraged because the Lord your God is and will be with you wherever you go."

Spiritually: One Lord

Freedom comes from having only One Lord. Thinking about freedom in Christ, let's start with looking at Caleb. Dt. 1:35-36, "No one from this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your ancestors, except Caleb, son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed the Lord wholeheartedly."

May we be like Caleb, who though seeing giants in the promised land, followed the Lord wholeheartedly (Dt. 1:36) - and because of this, Caleb went into the promised land, and the Lord gave him the land he set his feet on. Not as the Israelites who couldn't enter into the promised land and didn't trust God, though he had freed them from slavery, parted the sea before their eyes, went ahead of them on their journey by a cloud by day and fire by night, to search out places to camp. Dt. 1:31 says, There they saw how the Lord their God carried them, as a father carries his son, all the way they went until they reach this place. In spite of this, they did not trust the Lord to enter the promised land.

By contrast, is Solomon; if you can recall what the Lord warned Solomon- 1 Kings 11:2-6, "They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods...As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after their gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father has done." If our hearts are fully devoted to God, they won't turn after other gods.

What does this have to do with freedom in Christ? We are going to look at two verses to explain this. One is Numbers 25:1-3, and the other is Mt. 6:24. (This entire text below is mainly an analysis of Numbers 25).

"While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices of their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. So Israel yoked themselves to Baal of Peor. And the Lord's anger burned against them (Num. 25:1-3)." Right after this, there was a plague sent by God that killed 24,000 people. Phineas, son of Eleazar, responded to this by taking a spear and driving it into both the Israelite man and the Moabite woman's stomachs and the plague stopped. Because of this action, "the Lord says to Phineas, "Since he was zealous for my honor among them as I am, I did not put an end to them in my zeal. Therefore I tell him I am making a covenant of peace with him. He and his descendants will have a covenant of priesthood, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites."

Right off the bat, glancing at Numbers 25:1-3 above, we notice Israel was invited by women, then they bowed down to their gods, then they were yoked to Baal of Peor. This tragic event makes you think of the phrase in Mt. 6:24, "You cannot serve two masters. Either you will hate one and love the other, or you will be devoted to one and despise

the other. You cannot serve both God and money (other gods of the world: sex, power, fame, etc.)."

The other verse that comes to mind is 1 Cor. 10:21, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord's table and the table of demons. Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" Paul mentions to the Corinthians at the beginning of this passage the positive side of the "cup and table of the Lord." "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf."

The other interesting verse that I would like you to think of is Colossians 3:5: "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." If all of these former sins are idolatry, as it says, when we receive an invitation to drink the cup of demons (to sin/temptation), and we drink of it - we are doing the same these Israelites did- bowing down to the gods of this world- sex, money, power, etc. And well, yoking ourselves to them. As it says in Rom. 6:16, "Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are the slaves of the one you obey-whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?... You have been set free from sin and become slaves to righteousness."

The practical question for us is: What needs to be put to death in our life so we can wholeheartedly follow the Lord? For some, their master could be pride, sexual immorality, anger, lust, selfishness, fits of rage, debauchery, hatred, money, power, fame, etc. There can only be one master, and the Lord encourages us to: "Destroy completely all the high places on the high mountains, on the hills, and under every spreading tree, where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe their names from those places."

It's pretty simple- if we follow Christ, we leave sin. If we follow sin, we walk further away from Christ. Yes, there is grace, and we aren't perfect, but there is not much way around these verses, and accepting that can bring us freedom. God is patient with us, but we shouldn't show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? And repentance is turning away from sin toward Christ.

As it says in 2 Corinthians 1:18-20, "But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us- by me and Silas and Timothy- was not "Yes" and "No," but in him, it has always been "Yes." For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so, through him, the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ.

This idea of only having one master gives this verse even more strength and meaning: Eph. 4:5, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Dt. 6:4 also connects very well with the verse from Ephesians above: Hear O Israel: "The Lord your God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commands I give you today are to be on your hearts."

As you hear or feel the idols break, we find freedom in knowing that we serve only one Lord! In Christ, we are free and have the Holy Spirit to help us put sin to death! "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live." Rom. 8:13



