

January 2007: Beginning Again

by Aaron Greenway

Just like every year at this time, we go to a special service at the church. This is a time when we can give testimony about the things that God did in our lives the year before as well as to celebrate the new year itself. After the service, my wife and I got on Beltline Road, a street that goes around the entire city of Dallas. As I drove, I told her that I wanted to reconsider our priorities. Being a teacher in the public schools demands a lot of time and energy, and I have used that as an excuse to not spend time in the Word as I should.

This takes me back to when I was young. At just 15 years of age, God was already working in my life in a very special way. I remember being on my knees for almost two hours every night while my parents slept. I had my headphones and my praise and worship music, and with that I would worship the Lord for a while. Then I would read the Word of God and write my thoughts down in a journal. Lastly, I would pray for my family, for my friends, and for anyone that God put on my heart. This became the fountain from which my call to the ministry came, and then to the mission field. My encounter with God was something so powerful that it changed me for life.

Then, I went on to college and then to seminary. I got involved with this and with that. For quite a while, I was able to maintain that connection with the Lord, but gradually, other things began to take the place of the more important things. This caused a lot of the

miracles that God did in my life to fade to the back of my mind. This is not to say that my relationship with God was nonexistent; it just wasn't to the level of intimacy that I once had. As a result, I have been seeking after that intimacy once again, that He would do something fresh in my heart, and that He would remind me of all of the miracles that He did in my life when I was young. This is what we all need, to be reminded of God's goodness, because if we aren't, we will soon forget. For this reason, the Israelites would build altars when God rescued them out of a major altercation or did a huge miracle. These altars were so they would not forget what He did for them.

In fact, in the book of Joshua chapter 4, the Jewish community had just crossed the Jordan River entering into the Promised Land. Finally, after they had wandered around in the wilderness for 40 years because of their unbelief, they were then able to go into the place where God had shown them. At the same time, God did want them to forget all of the good things He had done for them. So He told Joshua to have a man from each of the 12 tribes to gather one stone each and put it in the middle of the Jordan River to be a sign among them and when they ask, 'What do these stones mean?', tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the

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Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever (Joshua 4:1-7).

We are all prone to forget God's promises if we do not return to those places of miracles in our lives. Now, this does not mean we live in the past or that we shouldn't, as the Apostle Paul said, [forgetting] what is behind and [straining] toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12). But it does mean that the past should be a way of encouraging us and reminding us of God's intervention in our lives. The past was never meant to chain us down, but to free us. This is why when I see how God touched my life in the past, it gives me hope that He can and will do it again. This is not just turning over a new leaf, it is a deep change of heart that God does inside of someone. We all have the propensity to go astray and to do things our way, and without those markers in our life, without the memories of His goodness, and without His grace, we would certainly be wound up in the same things that brought us down before.

For this reason, if we allow it to happen, every day life could become our enemy. This is when we have to come back and examine our priorities. We can use any excuse we want. We can even say, I am serving the Lord. I am doing this and I am doing that. I am just fine because I serve in the church. I sing. I teach. I. I. I. Without a doubt, Christians are called to serve, but doing more things in the church does not necessarily reflect what kind of relationship they have with God. Sometimes I worry that we have mistaken the concept of service for the American rat-race.

For many God has shown them that this year 2007 is going to be a year of miracles, a lot of revival. As a result, I don't hide the fact that I need more of God. I long for the times when I sought after God every night with all of my heart and now I yearn to return to that. I have noted the altars that were built in my past, and not only do they help me remember God's goodness, but they also reaffirm that God can do those same miracles again (and even greater things!!). Having already spent more time with Him, I need His guidance. I want Him to direct my steps. I also want to be able to let it all out when I have burdens. And I want to be with Him not just for all of that, but also just to be with Him. I desire to know Him better and to experience that joy in my heart again. When I don't spend time with Him, I feel terrible, like I am missing something. There is no way that I can know God intimately and not do this.

Will you go with me? We cannot keep arguing with God about why we are not doing our part, of why we have not given Him our time. If the Lord is our Creator, the fountain from which everything has come to be, and if He has done it all for us, then we having nothing left other than to bask in His presence, to experience Him, and to serve Him. We want to get to the deepest part of His heart. That is the place from which our service flows pure and true, the place where it came from before. This is what I did as a young man, and that is where I am going back to. Will you pray with me and for me in this?

Something to ponder...

Your brother,
Aaron Greenway