
Words of Truth

Hard Lessons

By: Brian A. Yeager

There is a Psalm that starts off by stating this: *“O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again. Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh. Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment”* (Psalms 60:1-3). After captivity in Babylon, we read this: *“Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day”* (Nehemiah 9:32).

When you read through the history of the children of Israel, there were many times God afflicted them. There is a reason for that. Israel had a long history of being rebellious against the Lord (Deuteronomy 9:6-7, Deuteronomy 9:24, Deuteronomy 31:27, Psalms 78:1-68, Isaiah 48:1-8, and Ezekiel 2:1-7). Even though God punished them often and very hard, Israel just did not turn completely back to God. Even as you read through the work of John, Jesus, the Apostles, and those that followed; the pattern of rebellion continued among many of the physical decedents of Israel (Matthew 21:23-46, John 8:12-59, Acts 13:13-51, and Acts 18:1-6).

Since Israel’s disobedience didn’t change in the first century, the Lord once again promised a physical punishment upon them. Jesus said: *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord”* (Matthew 23:37-39). After that, He went on to tell them that Jerusalem was going to be judged in that present generation (Matthew 24:1-34).

Israel faced many hard lessons. The thing about lessons is, they are not beneficial to the student if the student isn’t looking to learn anything. From days of old even into the first century, the children of Israel refused to learn (Isaiah 6:9-10 and Acts 28:17-29). Many times they should have been ashamed and confounded because of their own ways (Ezekiel 36:32). However, even the hardest lessons did not get through. Let’s learn from that!

Learn From The Hard Lessons Others Faced

With Israel we can summarize much of their past in these words: *“But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways”* (Psalms 81:11-13)! This was not “poetic language”. We need to understand that when people have refused and rebelled in times past, God gave up on them (Romans 1:16-32).

Today, rather than God sending physical judgments upon people as He did in the past; He instructs us to learn from the past (Romans 15:4 and I Corinthians 10:1-13). God is not going to send us hard lessons through physical judgments. He had sent famine, pestilence, enemies, etc. in the past (Jeremiah 14:1-12). Those things were often intended to bring about repentance (Ezekiel 18:30). As of now, our only means of learning is through His written word. His word gives us everything we need to know (II Timothy 3:15-17 and II Peter 1:1-11). The hard lessons didn't work on those whose hearts were not right. Is your heart right enough to learn from their hard lessons?

Are You More Receptive Than They?

We are awaiting the Day of Judgment at an unknown, future time (Matthew 24:35-25:46 and II Peter 3:1-14). When judgment is delayed, people often become emboldened to do evil (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Since God is not correcting us with hard lessons, we are left to learn from His word. Are you capable of learning from the past that when God says He is going to judge the wicked He is certainly going to do so (Numbers 23:19)? Are you capable of learning from the past that when God warns of severe judgment He doesn't soften it up (Nahum 1:3)? If you or I [faithful saints] were to err, we are expected to repent or we will perish (Luke 13:1-5). Back in March we had a lesson about having “Ears to Hear” (Matthew 11:15, Matthew 13:9, Matthew 13:43, Mark 4:9, Mark 4:23, Mark 7:16, Luke 8:8, and Luke 14:35). Are you one that listens and learns? There will be no hard lessons, just eternal damnation with no escape.

Conclusion

Let the history of the children of Israel be your hard lesson. God expects more from us. Consider this in conclusion: *“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will”* (Hebrews 2:1-4)?