

Moving on to fruitfulness

With the pollution in our oceans and seas sea creatures often get tangled up in fishing nets, plastic, and all sorts of things that have been dumped in the ocean. It is heart wrenching to see pelicans that can't open their beaks because they are bound shut with nylon cord and so starve to death, or a whale that gets tangled in an old net and dies from a lack of air. The list can go on. The fortunate ones get found by animal lovers who cut them free from their bonds of death, setting them free to live the life that they were made to live. A life of freedom in the ocean. We too have our bondages and it is God's purpose that we too live lives free to be fruitful in the way that He intended us to live.

Isaiah 43: 16 – 21

1) Recognise the works of God

- Israel was in bondage in Egypt for 400 years and in Babylon for 70 years. Both times their release to freedom came only because of the work of God and not of themselves.
- When there's oppression and bondage there is always a fight to be free from that oppression. That's normal and natural. However freedom fighters don't free people from oppression – God does.
 - God freed them from Egypt
 - God freed them from Babylon
 - God freed Israel from Roman oppression.
- Most people are stuck in habits and circumstances that they desperately want to get out of but can't no matter how much they fight against them. The struggle is as real as was the struggle of the Israelites living under oppression.
- The Israelites never freed themselves, even when they had the zealots – freedom fighters. They cried out to God who heard their cries.
- It is He who heard their cry and sent Moses to deliver them and it is He who brought them back from Babylon.
 - However all in His time as He had prophesied that the Israelites would be in bondage in Egypt for 400 years and in Babylon for 70 years.
 - When it's God's time to set you free nothing will stop Him doing so. No king, army, desert or sea can stop God's purposes from being fulfilled.
 - No problem is insurmountable for God
- We need to look and see the works of God in our lives
 - He delivered the Israelites from the hand of Pharaoh.
 - He saved them from Pharaoh's army
 - He opened up a sea and led them through it destroying the entire Egyptian army behind them
- What are you facing today that seems to be insurmountable?
- When we look at them in our own strength we are daunted and stressed not seeing any way out. However nothing is impossible with God.
 - He can open up the red sea out of your situation and destroy your bondages behind you.
 - Will you trust Him to do that?
 - It takes faith on our part to see God do the impossible.

2) Don't dwell on the past

- We are to forget the former things and not dwell on the past.
 - What this is saying is that we should not bring up what has happened before and that we be wise in the way we handle the past.
- Billy Graham said: Don't be bound by the past and its failures. But don't forget its lessons either.
- It is unfortunate that many people in our country are bound by the past and refuse to move on.
- We should never deny the past or try and change or distort it. We should be honest about what our past was, acknowledge it, learn from it but not to be kept in bondage to it.
- When it came time for the Israelites to enter the promised land ten of the spies trembled with fear at the size of the inhabitants. It's possible that they were recalling the oppression under the Egyptians when they couldn't free themselves and doubted that they would be able to overcome them.
 - Once again they dwelt on their own inabilities that kept them in bondage and it came back at a time when they needed to focus on the works of God.
 - Our past will come back to haunt us at a time when God wants us to advance His Kingdom.
- We might have had failures in the past that prevent us from being fruitful in the present and the future.

3) Move on to fruitfulness

- God wants us to bear fruit in our lives
 - John 15: 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit —fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.
- God wants to move us from the old to do new things in our lives.
- He is the one who will bring it about. Not us
- It springs up – sprouts – and we will wonder how it even happened.
- It's God's work to free us from our past and it's His work to move us into fruitfulness.
- He makes ways in the wilderness and streams in the desert.
 - Have we seen deserts that are arid and dry with nothing but sand? After the rains the most amazing flowers blossom where it seemed impossible to happen.
 - Your life might feel like that but underneath it all God is at work where don't perceive that He is.
 - He is making us fruitful and when we look back on our lives we can see all that He's done in and for us.
- Philippians 2: 13 For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.
- His purposes are twofold:
 - To nourish us His people
 - Isaiah 43: 20 – 21 I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself.
 - To glorify God
 - Isaiah 43: 21 ...that they may proclaim my praise.
 - John 15: 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.