

We Have Not Passed This Way Before



We have just come through another year. The closing of one year and the beginning of another usually has a sobering effect on all of us because it's inventory time. It is a time of reflection and re-evaluation. Looking back over 2010 reminded me of the fifty-plus years that Joel and I have spent in ministry. I can't help but compare our journey to that of the children of Israel after their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. They spent forty long years wandering in the wilderness.

From our point of view, as we read the story, we can see how important those long, hard, years were because the people weren't ready for the promised land. They had come out of Egypt but it took that trip to get Egypt out of them, and for them to learn who God is, and that He means what He says. When He said for them to **do** something, He meant it. And when He said **do not**, He meant that as well. They were also forced to trust Him because there was no other way. When they were hemmed in at the Red Sea there was no way out. When there was no water at Meribah, there was no hope. However, God the Father came through for them and showed the *muscle of His mighty arm*, the same as He did initially when he brought them forth from Egyptian bondage.

Like the children of Israel in the wilderness, during our years of ministry there have been times that I felt that we were "going in circles". That we were passing by the same places again and again. We, like the children of Israel, couldn't understand "why" at the time. Why couldn't we just step into God's wonderful promises all at once? But today I can see that we were not ready. We

weren't ready to be entrusted with His glory. All along the way God has been there for us, flexing His mighty arm, delivering, providing, directing, and teaching us who He is and what He expects of us. Many times we have been called upon to blindly trust Him so that He could prove His faithfulness, and **He is faithful!**

Let me encourage you to enter 2011 with **hope**. **Hope** for tomorrow, "**hope that maketh not ashamed**" (Rom. 5:5). "**For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope...**" (Rom. 8:24). "**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen**" (Heb. 11:1). "**...he that ploweth should plow in hope**" (I Cor. 9:10).

Hope in the promises of God is well placed because He has our best interest at heart and "**Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it**" (I Thess. 5:24). God's promises are reality and they will materialize at the appointed time.

When the children of Israel were finally at the water's edge about to enter God's best, the leadership had been passed from Moses to Joshua. Then came explicit instructions from God:

*"...Joshua said unto the people, **sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you**" (Josh. 3:5).*

The people were instructed to *sanctify* (cleanse) themselves, and told how they would know that it was time to move forward across Jordan, and how they were to follow their leaders:

"...when ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priest the Levites

*bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it...that ye may know the way by which ye must go; **for ye have not passed this way heretofore**" (Josh. 3:3, 4).*

As we enter this new year it would be good if we followed those instructions. Let us cleanse our minds and sanctify our hearts because **we have not passed this way before**. And who knows, this could be the year that God will do greater wonders in our midst and bring more glory to His name.

The year 2010 is now history - we have written it. Our actions, our words, our deeds, cannot be recalled. But in the coming year, by His grace, we can blaze new trails, and do more for the glory of God and the up building of His kingdom!

My New Year Prayer -

*"Heavenly Father...As I cross the threshold of this approaching year fill me with a freshness of your spirit, and an acute awareness of your loving kindness to me. Renew my heart with a song of gladness and rejoicing. Bless me with peace. Sweeten my lips with uplifting conversation. Beautify my person with the joy of salvation. Grant me wisdom that it may be strength for my soul, grace unto my mind and restraint for my spirit. Now dear Lord give me the strength to endure the indignities of life with dignity, for You are my confidence and the knowledge of You is my **hope**. Amen."*

Happy New Year!!!