

LIVING AND LEADING DURING TURBULENT TIMES

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Commission – NECF**

Purpose of the Church

Key Text: - Eph. 3:10

*“Then God would use the church to show the powers and authorities in the spiritual world that
He has many different kinds of wisdom”.*

The church must reveal God’s purposes to the powers of the world. The church must reveal God’s wisdom for every situation. We are now facing a global turbulent situation. How are we going to respond to these turbulent times? In the manner we respond the world must learn from the church, not vice versa, on how to face turbulent times. Difficult times should not slow down the work of the church. The work must go on at all costs. Ministries started should not be cut back. The church should stand strong and vibrant at all times. God can even expand the influence of the church at this difficult time.

Why has God allowed the present turbulent times? What must we do? How do we cope with the situation?

Hebrews 12:26 -28

“Whose voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once" "I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens."

There are many different “shakings” or upheavals today - political, military terrorism, environmental (climate changes), and also upheavals in the financial sectors of the world. Why are these taking place? A study of the Minor Prophets shows how God in his sovereign will and wisdom shakes things that have always remained unshakeable. He shakes the pride of man. The prophets themselves painfully grappled with the issues we are facing now. During their own times they saw God permitting extremely difficult times to come upon the people. The prophets wrote explicitly about God’s wrath in dealing with sin. But they also told of God’s tender heart in bringing restoration. Their prophetic insights and revelation can help us to have a better understanding in facing our own present adversities. The problem is real but there is also hope.

1. HOSEA

God’s provision and blessing are to be used for God’s purposes

We need to turn to the following texts:

Hosea 2:8 “For she did not know that I gave her grain and wine and oil, and I multiplied her silver and the gold they prepared for Baal.”

Hosea 2:9 “So I will return and take my grain in its time, and My wine in its season. And I will take back my wool and my flax she uses to cover her nakedness.”

- Hos 2:11 “I will also cause all her joy to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.”
- Hos 2:12 “And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she has said, They are my rewards that my lovers have given me. And I will set them for a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.”

God was extremely annoyed that the silver and gold He gave his people were wrongfully used. They used it for Baal. Observe how God comes hard on His people.

“ I will...take my grain in its time...”
 “ and my wine in its season
 “ I will take back my wool and my flax...”
 “ I will...cause all her joy to cease...”
 “ And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees...”

Take note of the words , “ I will take” , “ I will take back” , and “ I will destroy. ” God was taking back His favour. And that will leave the fields dry and barren.

There was going to be a great loss in their agricultural harvests. God was going to take back what He had given them in the fields. Grains, wool, flax , vines and figs were going to be ravaged. A great famine was about to come on the land. There will be great economic loss and inflation.

Why? They misused God’s provisions. God was not honoured. Honour was given to the Baals. There was a great spiritual decline in the land. There was spiritual fornication. Sin multiplied. And God had to pour his wrath on their fields and crops. Their barns will go empty. Their fields will be sucked out of their fertility. Barrenness will cover the land. The fruit will be gone.

When God’s favour is withdrawn our blessings too are taken away.

Are you using what God has given you for God’s glory or for something else. Have you understood the purpose for which good things were given to you? Are God’s holy things treated with reverence? Or are they despised? The gold and silver given to us have a divine purpose.

The Problem With Samson

The purpose for Samson’s life was given made clear - to set Israel free from the Philistines . But Samson’s story indicates that the provision given to him was misused. Samson seems to have poorly understood the mission upon his life. Thus in Samson’s story we see a very powerful man but also a man who never fully fulfilled the purpose for which he was born. The vision got blurred. The provision for Israel was the strength and anointing in Samson but it was not channeled properly by Samson himself. The provision was misused.

When God’s provisions are misused the mission loses its sense of direction. It happens to all of us. When the mission becomes man centered then it is an indication that God given resources and provisions have been misused along the way. Abuse of divine graces robs the consecration upon our mission and purpose.

2. HABAKKUK

Return to the original vision God gave you

The prophet Habakkuk was one who was in touch with God.

He heard of the turbulence that was coming against his people. And he was greatly disturbed in his spirit. He poured out his heart to God , “I heard and my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice.

Rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself that I might rest in the day of trouble; to come up against the people; he cuts him off.” (Hab 3: 16)

He was also upset that God was not listening to his prayer (Hab 1:2) - “O Jehovah, until when shall I cry for help, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, Violence! But you do not listen.”

In the midst of the coming turbulence Habakkuk felt that God was silent.

God’s silence shook him. Often we wander where God is in the midst of suffering and pain. Habakkuk himself was grappling with this issue.

But we see something in Habakkuk that encourages us. He maintained his sense of calmness and quietness – and that was his confidence in the Lord.

He did two things. Firstly he said that he will wait upon the Lord. He said , “I will stand on my watch and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what He will say to me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved” (2:1). This is the quiet waiting that trusts in God’s faithfulness. In quietness we need to watch. Just watch.

And secondly he said that he will quietly rejoice in the Lord - 3:18 - “ I will rejoice in the Lord. ” For he knew that the Lord was his strength (3: 19).

Pastors – you need to do two things – stand your watch and quietly rejoice in his faithfulness.

3. HAGGAI

Check your priorities

In Haggai’s time the people were going through bad financial times. The harvest was minimal.

Inflation was high. The revenues for economic growth had dropped.

But Haggai’s perception of the times was clear. He knew what was happening and why it was happening. He read the times well. This is what he said to the people

Haggai 1:6 “ You have sown much and bring in little; *you* eat, but you do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you dress, but no one is warm; and he who hires out himself hires himself for a bag full of holes. “

1:9 “You looked for much, and behold, little! And when you brought it home, then I blew on it. Why, says Jehovah of Hosts? Because of My House that is waste, and you, each man runs to his own house.”

2:16 -17 “from then onward, one came to a heap of twenty measures, and there were but ten; one came to the wine vat to draw off fifty from the winepress, and there were but twenty. I struck you with blight and with mildew, and with hail, in all the labors of your hands; yet you did not turn to Me, says Jehovah.”

Why did it happen?

Haggai summed it all up in one phrase , “ Because of My house that is lying in ruin...”

God’s house was neglected. The people simply fell back on what they were required to do for God. The work of God simply stopped and the people had their own reasons for it. God grieved deeply. His name was mocked. The people despised the holy things of God. They missed on their priorities. But God was not going to buy that stuff. All that is connected to God’s work must be rebuilt for His glory.

God wants his purposes to be carried out anyway and not to be stopped.

It was in God’s heart and will that the temple work should be revived again. The work had stopped for sixteen years. The purpose for which the people were brought back to their homeland through the edict of King Cyrus remained unfulfilled. But God revived His people. The command was stated simply and clearly – “ ...go up to build the house of Jehovah...”

Ezra 1:5 - “And the chiefs of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, and all whose spirit God had raised, rose up to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem.”

Note the purpose - “to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem.”

A great celebration followed after that. We see that in Ezra 3: 10-11.

But then came the turbulence . And it discouraged them.

The Turbulence Sets In

Ezra 4:23-24 tells it all well - “And when the copy of King Artaxerxes’ letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they hurried to Jerusalem to the Jews, and made them stop by force and power. Then the work of the house of God at Jerusalem ceased.”

When the opposition came the people feared. External pressure made them stop the work. In spite of the fact that they had been given all the necessary provisions, the years of hard work was halted because their attention was diverted! They were distracted by the immediate turbulence. They lost their focus. They were too disturbed in spirit.

Soon they became complacent and quiet and withdrew from doing the work of God.

Any form of turbulence has its own capacity and power to disrupt what we want to do for

God. Usually it halts the work. The vision then dies a natural death. Hasn’t the vision died in some of us due to the discouragement that came after some opposition? That is the devil’s plan anyway.

The tendency is to always cut back the work load. So the prophet spoke out ,

Hag 1:4

“Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your finished houses, and shall this House lie waste?”

Priorities changed. Priorities can change when difficulties come upon us. We cut back on the things that must be done for God and look after own self interests. Likewise the things of God, and His purposes are no longer of prime importance to many of us. Why? Survival - this has become our priority. Our own need to survive pushes back what has to be done in faith for God. We just want to survive. The vision loses its grip on us.

We must always do what He has told us. At this moment I am reminded of a prophecy I gave in 2000 for Malaysia when I came in 2000. I said ,“Malaysia is the key for Asian evangelism.”

But God now says **“I gave you the grace and the opportunities but you have failed because you are so divided.”** We have missed God’s time. We missed something somewhere. Our priorities have changed. We have turned elsewhere. We have lost our focus. The sense of urgency is gone. Work has slowed down. Excuses have increased. The passion for the holy things have died. The house of God stands without its glory!

We say that “ the time has not come.” (Hag 1:2)

Some of us have to check on our time tables! We need to set our priorities.

This is what is said in Haggai 2:18-19 , “Now set your heart from this day and forward...Set your heart , ...” “ Set your heart” is repeated twice.

It was time to start again with a new refreshing.

They needed to set their bearings. .

And when we obey , God promises hope and He uses every hopeless situation to bring hope.

We need to take note of what is said in Haggai 3:23

“In that day, says Jehovah of Hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel, says Jehovah, and will make you like a signet; for I have chosen you, says Jehovah of Hosts.”

That was God’s Word for His Servant. It is also a promise to all His servants.

We need to get back to God for a sense of direction , to set our heart on what needs to be done now.

We need to get back to our prayer closets to hear from God again. Are you running around a lot, being very active and busy? And as a result there is no time to wait in the presence of God? Not hearing from God? This is what God says with a crying heart , “You have lost communion with Me. You are so busy meeting people but you have no time to meet with Me.” God is calling us back to Him. It is time to enter our prayer closets.

HAS GOD SPOKEN TO YOU LATELY?

So check yourself. Has God spoken to you today, in the past week , or in the past month about the condition of your work.? Have you heard God speak to you recently? How can you speak to the nations if you do not hear from God?

God wants the church and the leadership to be prophets to the nation. Others should tell that you are a man of God, they should come to you, they should see the anointing in you and they should see God in you. In this you must find favour with God. They must see that God is speaking to you and that you are hearing from Him.

How much time do you spend before the presence of God to receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit? Get your priorities right. Be the signet ring for this nation. We are called to be a signet ring to our land.

4. MICAH

Are you impartial, fair and just in your dealings with people?

Micah 6:10- 15

“ Are the treasures of wickedness still in the house of the wicked, and the short measure that is hateful? Shall I count those with the wicked scales pure, and those with the bag of deceitful weights?

For its rich men are full of violence, and its people have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. Therefore I also have made you sick by striking you, laying you waste because of your sins.

You shall eat, but not be satisfied; and your casting down shall be in your midst. And you shall take hold, but shall not deliver; and that which you deliver I will give up to the sword.”

Micah was touching on human relationships which have been exploited.

Some things have gone wrong. The weighing scales had been adjusted because of excessive greed. There was impartiality. The poor were humiliated.

God hates partiality. God condemns injustice. How do we deal with our own people in our churches? If there is partiality, God’s favour leaves. We need to love all people.

5. JOEL

Holiness unto the Lord

Read these verses:

1:4 “That which the creeping locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten. And that which the swarming locust has left, the locust larvae has eaten. And that which the locust larvae has left, the stripping locust has eaten.”

1:10-12 “The field is wasted; the land mourns, for the grain is wasted. The new wine is dried up; the oil tree droops. Be ashamed, husbandmen; howl, vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field has perished. The vine is dried up, and the fig tree droops, the pomegranate and the palm tree, and the apple tree; all the trees of the field are dried up, because joy has dried up from the sons of men.”

What an economic disaster! A colossal agricultural loss!

These nations of this world will come under judgement.. And America will be one. It is my belief that America is today’s economic Babylon. It is already going through a massive economic meltdown.

Governments are already going through economic upheavals. Governments will be shaken. Nations will lose their hard earned profits. Inflation will be high.

An example – Thirupathoor in India.

Thirupathoor

It is a Hindu deity stronghold and a textile town. In India it was the first city to be affected by the current economic downturn. Thirupathoor’s exports to US fell by 60%.

We need to turn to Revelations 18. What a stunning rebuke!

Rev 18:20 “Rejoice over her, Heaven, and the holy apostles, and the prophets, since God judged your judgment on her.”

God wants Asia to wake up.

Agriculture and the oil industry control the economy and therefore are more important than the manufacturing industry which is man-made. Since the Asian economy is based on agriculture and the oil industry, Asia holds the key. God wants Asia to wake up, to be the voice to the whole world.

God’s promises in times of turbulence

However the turbulence may be, the Lord never fails his people. He gives hope even in the midst of distressing times. In the second chapter Joel brings out a tremendous sense of hope to God’s people.

- Joel 2:18 “Then Jehovah will be jealous for His land and pity His people.”
- Joel 2:21 “Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice. For Jehovah will do great things.”
- Joel 2:23-25 “Be glad then, sons of Zion, and rejoice in Jehovah your God. For He has given you the former rain according to righteousness, and He will cause the rain to come down for you, the former rain and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. And will restore to you the years which the swarming locust has eaten, the locust larvae, and the stripping locust, and the cutting locust, My great army which I sent among you.”
- Joel 2:26 “ And you shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of Jehovah your God, who has dealt with you wonderfully; and My people shall never be ashamed.”

The church must continue to speak about hope. We cannot lose it. That is going to be the anchor of our faith. But God expects something more than faith. He wants holiness.

In the Old Testament, the Priest’s robe had a border which had bells (symbolic of gifts & talents)

The words “Holiness unto the Lord” were to be engraved on a signet and placed on the turban, that is, it was to be on his forehead.

But today there is a lack of emphasis on holiness.

Today there are numerous talented and gifted ministers of God. Much emphasis has been given to talent and gifts are emphasised to the neglect of holiness. Power is emphasized at the emphasis of holiness.

The Church that remains separated for God will be exalted..

6. AMOS

Don’t be complacent. Put things right

Amos 4:6-9

“And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places, and you have not returned to Me, says Jehovah. And I have also withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest. And I caused rain to fall on one city and caused it not to rain on another city; one piece was rained on, and the piece on which it did not rain dried up. So two or three cities wandered to one city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me, says Jehovah. I have stricken you with blasting and mildew. When your gardens and your vineyards, and your fig trees, and your olive trees increased, the creeping locust devoured them; yet you have not returned to Me, says Jehovah.”

Here again, economic disaster is highlighted.

What was God’s issue with his people? They failed to return to Him. Even in the midst of famine and suffering the people did not return to God. They had hardened their hearts.

The prophet pronounces a woe upon the people.

Amos 6:1 “Woe to those at ease in Zion, and those trusting in the mountain of Samaria, who are noted as leader of the nations. And the house of Israel came to them.”

Amos 4:6 “And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places, and you have not returned to Me, says Jehovah.”

People were not worried about what was happening to others. They were only concerned about themselves. They just became complacent.

But God was still gracious and full of grace. Oh! The message of hope keeps coming out in the prophets!

Amos 9:12-14 - "So that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the nations on whom My name is called, says Jehovah who is doing this. Behold, the days come, says Jehovah, that the plowman and the reaper shall draw near, the treader of grapes, and he who draws along the seed. And the mountains will drip must, and all the hills will be dissolved. And I will turn back the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall build the cities which are desolate, and they shall live in them. And they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine. They shall also make gardens and eat their fruit."

God's desire was, "And I will plant them on their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, says Jehovah your God." (v 15).

"If my people set things right, I will lift them, and make their voice heard in high places."

Oh! Our voices must be heard in high places!

NECF Tamil Commission's voice will be heard in high places. But you must put holiness first and set your priorities right. Then Tamil Commission Churches will have a voice to lead the nation and be a key to Asia's evangelism.

If you do what is right then you'll be the key for Asia.

But there must also be a sense of determination in facing obstacles.

Paul Remained Determined In The Midst of Turbulence

Acts 20:22-24 "And now, behold, I am going bound by the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

But none of these things move me, neither do I count my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify fully the gospel of the grace of God."

What do we see in Paul's agenda and the decisions he made? He overcame difficult situations and was able to take others through turbulence. In him we see how God led a man during turbulent times and how He changed the situations for such a man.

Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem (to hand over the donations), then go to Rome to encourage the church there, and then to Spain, to the unreached areas. Those were Paul's plans.

Romans 15:23-24 "But now, having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I may go into Spain, I will come to you. For in traveling through I hope to see you, and to be set forward there by you, if first I may be filled of you in part."

Be led by the Spirit

God is looking for people who want to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Can you say you are led by the Holy Spirit? Are you "bound by the Spirit" or bound by your flesh?

Many pastors start off well, but along the way, they lose direction. They are bound by the covetous longings of their flesh. The work of the Spirit is absent. There is so much done that amounts to nothing but the works of the flesh. Ministry becomes man made and not God made.

Are you ready to be "bound" by the Holy Spirit and to die for Jesus? Then you will not be shaken by anything.

Paul went by the Spirit and he subjected himself to periods of suffering, rejection, lack and tribulations which were allowed by God's sovereign will. But he did not shrink back. God is looking for "militants" today who are strong and bold, to revive the church. Those who will not shrink back in the midst of adversities and storms. We must not pull back from doing bolder and bigger things for God. Keep the vision big.

When we do not pull back God does honour us.
See what God did for Paul in Acts 20: 22-24.

"The tribune dismissed the young man and ordered him not to tell anyone that he had notified him. Then he summoned two of the centurions and said, "Get 200 soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea at nine o'clock tonight, along with seventy mounted soldiers and two hundred soldiers with spears. Provide an animal for Paul to ride, and take him safely to Governor Felix."

God turned over the table. Paul, a prisoner, was now escorted! He was given royal treatment! Do not worry. God will honour His servants. He will raise and exalt His servants.

The warning has already been given. Times already show the impending turbulence. What are pastors to do? Let us look at some Bible characters and how they responded.

We shall now examine four characters from Genesis and see how they handled turbulences in their lives. They had no role models to emulate - no written Word, no precedence (no similar incidents before this to refer to), and they had limited knowledge of God. Yet when words of warning came, they responded well. They had their sense of bearing clear.

a) Enoch

Enoch was a family man who walked with God
He warned the people of impending judgement

Jude 14-15 "Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied about these people when he said, "Look! the Lord has come with countless thousands of his holy ones. He will execute judgment on all people and convict everyone of all the **ungodly** things that they have done in such an **ungodly** way, including all the harsh things that these **ungodly** sinners have said about him."

A daily walk with God will make us understand God's heart. It will help us get prophetic insight concerning current and future events.

The word '*ungodly / ungodliness*' is repeated. There is always a fight between godliness & ungodliness – within the church and without.

A question - Do you teach your people the difference between godliness and ungodliness, what's holy and what's not, what is of God and what is not?

It is your responsibility to show the congregation what is of the world and what is not. All that you do and teach must edify your people. The Church must grow from holiness to holiness, strength to strength, glory to glory. The church must increase in the knowledge of God and grow in holiness. Enoch had no Bible, had heard no sermon, but he knew all about judgment. He talked about judgment even though at that time only a small population existed.

We have to give account for every word preached. Do we preach about judgment and prepare our people? .

When did you last preach on judgment? Teach them that there's a judgment. And then they will get involved in evangelism! They will reach out to the souls.

God is reminding you to do that today. Be ready! Isa 58:1 says "Cry aloud, do not spare, lift up your voice like a ram's horn, and show My people their rebellion, and the house of Jacob their sins."

Can God's servants cry out for the unsaved? Is there a cry in our churches?

Remember ;

In times of turbulence, you are the trumpet, guard and watchman.

In Mic 3:6- 8 it is written "Prophets, your day is almost over; the sun is going down on you. Because you mislead my people, you will have no more prophetic visions, and you will not be able to predict anything."

We must be bold to speak about the coming judgement.

Those who predict the future to please the people will be disgraced by their failure. They will all be humiliated because God does not answer them. But as for me, the LORD fills me with his spirit and power, and gives me a sense of justice and the courage to tell the people what their sins are.

Tell people clearly that those who accept Jesus will see day, and those who don't, will see night.

Mic 3:11 "The city's rulers govern for bribes, the priests interpret the Law for pay, the prophets give their revelations for money---and they all claim that the LORD is with them. "No harm will come to us," they say. "The LORD is with us." What a lie! They speak out of their deceptive spirits!

Some people say that disaster will not touch them. This is a lie. How often the truth is not told to people. We fear people. We do not want to offend them. Some for the sake of money refrain from telling the hard truth to their people. There is so much compromise to what is untruth.

We need to be like the prophet Micaiah. He told nothing but the truth. And the king , Ahab , never liked him for that. Ahab didn't like Micaiah's prophesies because he told the truth. God is looking for Micaiahs who will tell only the truth and speak God's Word at every situation. The fear of God must come back to our churches. The truth must be told from our pulpits both with firmness and with tender compassion.

b) Noah

He warned people of the coming flood

Hebrews 11:7 "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, reverently prepared an ark to save his family, and by it he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith."

God told him that He was going to destroy the world. And so He commanded him to build an ark.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). When he saw disaster coming, he preached righteousness for 120 years. He had to tell the people about an impending flood, that God was going to destroy the earth through a flood, to a people who had never seen a flood. Yes, he told them about rain, flood and righteousness. He had to build the ark, make preparations, yet preached – and that needed courage. He led a godly life. He was a man sold out to God. He influenced and impacted the people around – his family and the three girls who married his sons. God had actually not asked him to preach but out of compassion for the people around he preached about the coming judgement.

In like manner disaster is coming. God is calling you to speak out. What kind of preaching are you going to do? Warn your people and prepare them to be godly.

c) Abraham

He interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah

Gen. 18:17-19

“And Jehovah said, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do, And Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the persons of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his sons and his house after him, and they shall keep the way of Jehovah, to do justice and judgment, that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him.”

Preparing people to face God’s wrath

Abraham was another man like Noah who quickly responded to impending judgement.

God warned Abraham about the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But Abraham pleaded with God..

Man of God, intercessory prayer is needed during turbulent times – pray for others who will be affected. Plead for God’s compassion and mercy to be found.

Your responsibility increases during turbulent times. Prayer must increase. We need to ask God to favour us with an enlargement of the prayer times. Make known that your church is a “House of Prayer”. Pray that God will pour out a great outpouring of His prayer spirit. The church must be soaked in prayer. Prayer saturation must increase manifold. Prayer warriors must rise up. There must be an unending prayer sound in our churches. Prayer chains must be encouraged for the church to stand strong during hard times , otherwise some will fall out of faith and grace.

d) Isaac

Gen. 26:2-3 “And Jehovah appeared to him and said, Do not go down into Egypt. Live in the land which I shall tell you of. Reside in this land, and I will be with you and bless you. For to you and to your seed I will give all these lands; and I will establish the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.”

Gen 26:4 “And I will make your seed to multiply as the stars of the heavens, and will give to your seed all these lands. And in your Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,

Gen 26:6 And Isaac lived in Gerar.

Gen 26:12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundredfold. And Jehovah blessed him.”

We Need Our Isaacs

God blessed Isaac in the midst of a severe famine! He reaped a hundredfold! We must have faith in God. Listen to God and obey Him. Teach people to obey. If the Malaysian church obeys God, she will see marvelous things. Our Isaacs who are under the favour of God will rise up in our churches. They are the ones who witness to the great faithfulness of God! In difficult times the world must see in the church the Isaacs born of godly Abrahams! God’s provisions are above all limitations. The church must experience the greater fullness of God’s provisions in turbulent times. The Isaacs must rise up to show that God is still in the midst of His people and that He will do greater things. The Isaacs must not only rise up at this time but they must also bless the church , the poor and the needy. They will represent the financial strength , integrity and credibility of the church. They will be there to tell the world that the coffers of the church will never go empty! They will be the voice of God’s unchanging faithfulness.

NIGHT RALLY MESSAGES

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS AND THE COUNSEL OF GOD

Rev.3:18 “Therefore, I advise you to buy from me gold purified in fire so that you may be rich, white clothes to wear so that you may keep the shame of your nakedness from showing, and ointment to put on your eyes so that you may see.”

There is great spiritual blindness in our churches. Our people have stopped seeing! They are just blind! It is a spiritual disease plaguing our churches.

So God told his people, “anoint your eyes so that you may see” (3:18).

We must be aware that this is the work of Satan. Paul writes in 2. Cor. 4:4 that “the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe to keep them from seeing the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God.”

Spiritual blindness is a demonic stronghold

A widow worked in the fields from morning till evening.. She had no time to show love to her little son. He grew up not knowing the parents’ love. There was a deep longing within him for love.. Once he found a tract entitled “God loves you”. He then started to pray for the next six months – he wanted to know the God of love. He went to college. There he heard about me preaching. He met me. I explained to him the way of salvation. But he just didn’t understand, even though I repeated five times. I even showed pictures and illustrations. Yet he didn’t understand. I got angry and said “In Jesus’ Name, spiritual blindness go!” And then something happened! He understood! Spiritual blindness is a demonic stronghold – the spiritual eyes get locked up.

Rev.3:18 is addressed to Christians in the church. Christians today are blind! Spiritual blindness has to be treated. Closed eyes have to open up.

God’s remedy is to put salve / ointment on our eyes so that we can see. He wants us to see again! He wants us to see our own actual spiritual condition.

Sometimes, we do not see ourselves in the way we need to, for our vision is blurred.

And we cannot even see others in the way we should. Perception is fuzzy.

Fuzzy Spiritual Perception- Seeing People As Trees

In Mark 8:22-24 it is stated that “ The man looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees walking around." The vision was blurred. For too long he was without sight.

Some of us are suffering from blurred vision. We need a second touch as the blind man needed. We still see “trees” and not people. Jesus is asking His ministers “ What do you see?” Trees or people? If we see people as trees than we will treat them as trees! But if we see them as people then we will minister to them with great compassion. Do you need a second touch from Jesus? How often we do not see people in the way we must see them – as a people are who are wounded, injured and maimed. As a result our pulpit preaching lacks sufficient compassion. There is so much of harsh coldness at the pulpit. There is a vast gap between the pulpit and the people.

We all need sharp spiritual perception

Jeremiah – it was required of him right at the onset of his ministry.

God asked him “ what do you see?” Clear perception determined the depth of our understanding of what has to be done.

Unless you see it the way God is showing you, you cannot understand what you are required to do. Sharp spiritual perception brings with it an enriched measure of knowledge in dealing with situations and conditions of people.

The Two Disciples On The Road To Emmaus

Jesus was walking with two men to Emmaus. Jesus quoted scriptures. They talked with Him, but they didn't understand Him, they couldn't see "HIM".

There is a veil before the eyes of believers today. It is a veil that clouds our thinking and seeing. There is a serious lack of spiritual understanding of God's holy things.

Mary – Could not see

Mary was at the tomb of Jesus. Others had come and gone. When she saw Jesus, she didn't "see" Jesus – she thought He was the gardener. She did not see Him as the risen Christ.

We Must Be Able To See The Spiritual State of Our Churches - Do Not Be Blind

In Revelation 2 and 3, God deals with the condition of the seven churches. Seven conditions or dispensations of the church are explained here. The church has gone through these seven conditions. The angels of the churches are the church leaders. Therefore, leaders, you need to know the condition of your church. The early church (Rev. 2:1, 2:2,3,6) was able to identify sin. They could not bear those who were evil. They were so zealous for the Lord.

There is a great need today for pastors to discern the spiritual state of their congregations. How are they faring spiritually? How many have been saved? How many are in a state of hardness? Most pastors tend to go on in their usual way without discerning what God is showing them about the spiritual state of their people.

The Wake Up all

Therefore God gives a wake up call, (Rev 3:2) "So wake up, and strengthen what you still have before it dies completely. For I find that what you have done is not yet perfect in the sight of my God."

Oh! The standard of perfection is low amongst us! The standard must be raised.

Through its own blindness the church has become insensitive to sin. The church does not see its own nakedness.

Therefore God exhorts the church to cover her nakedness, "Buy also white clothing to dress yourself and cover up your shameful nakedness." (V.18). The church needs its proper spiritual covering.

Elisha's Servant – His Problem

2 Kings 6:13-14, 16, 17

Elisha prays "O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!" (v. 17). Elisha's servant was fearful because he could only see the opposition that was against them. He could not see the favour of God surrounding Elisha. He saw the enemy but not God's warrior angels.

Oh! How often you need to see through barriers and see the hand of God. Lots of things may seem to "choke" you, but ask God to enable you to see the things He has for you. Satan always blocks spiritual perception. He simply does not want you to see all that God has for you. And because you do not see you do not believe. You doubt. You are empty. Isn't spiritual discernment the greatest need of the hour for the church? The church must have the prophetic vision to see into God's mighty glory and strength.

For too long we have seen nothing but our own limitations, struggles and failures. It's time we look beyond. It is time to gaze at God's glory in order to draw strength and faith to fight our spiritual enemies. Prophetic visions see through barriers erected by the devil. Prophetic visions break through and break out! We must stop seeing our adversaries and adversities. We must get to see our angelic hosts!

How Satan Blinds People

2 Corin.4:4 – Spiritual Blindness

In North India, there are thousands of naked Hindu priests. It is their practice to bathe in the Ganges before others. When they die, their bodies are thrown into Ganges. If others see a corpse, they would sit on it and eat its flesh. They do 'puja' (prayer) on it. It is considered holy. Even highly educated people do this. See how Satan has blinded their spiritual eyes. What horrible things people do! Yet they cannot see!

We had a woman co-worker as a missionary working with us in Bihar. She was a very educated woman. She became the coordinator for our children's ministry. She was very talented and devout. She did not want to get married. She had written songs and books.

One day while praying alone, she sensed a person beside her. She heard a voice say "You've lost your first love." She re-dedicated herself. The deceiving spirit told her, "two saries are enough for you. You dedicated your mouth, hands, feet etc, but you did not dedicate your breasts to me."

She got up to burn all her other clothes. That's when God told my wife to go and see what she was doing. When the girl related what she was told to do, my wife realized that it was an evil spirit. A three day spiritual warfare followed to set her free.

Even a dedicated person like her could be deceived, be blinded. How easily others can be deceived and be spiritually blinded. Demonic perceptions lead us into deceiving behaviour.

You need to see clearly. You need a touch of God. The greatest snare of church leaders is when they become spiritually blind, when they are unable to see the deceptions of the devil. Don't deceiving "alleluia singing spirits" dance and sing along with is in our churches! Isn't there a strong counterfeit spirit at work in our churches! We cannot discern the counterfeit from the genuine. Everything looks the same to so many of us. We have lost our spiritual sharpness. The counterfeit is the greatest danger that is now invading the church – counterfeit anointing, tongues and worship! And also counterfeit preachers. It is time to see through what is real and what is not real. We cannot be fooled anymore. The counterfeit is growing in its influence in our churches.

Hagar' Problem Of Perception

God had to forcibly open Hagar's spiritual eyes.

Gen. 16:13 – She tried to live in her own deception and illusion. But God had to deal with her.

In 16: 7-8 we see that she had problems of rejection and bitterness. So she fled. She thought that she was Mrs. Abraham but the angel told her "Go back to Sarai and be her slave." It was almost like telling Hagar "You are thinking you are Mrs. Abraham. I never accepted that marriage. As far as I'm concerned you are her maid and slave, that's all!"

Hagar was trying to claim more for herself, that which rightfully belonged to Sarah.

Is this not a serious problem with some who think more highly of themselves. Are there not some who covert their pastors' anointing? They are not able to operate within the anointing released upon their lives. They want more, but for the wrong reason.

Hagar's Problem Of Direction

Hagar also had another problem. The angel had to ask her “Where are you going?” “Where are you coming from?”

People with dulled spiritual understanding eventually lose their sense of direction. They are spiritually lost! Do you know where you are going? It is good to stop all your activities. Enter your closet. Go back to God. Ask Him. Know your direction. Don't be in a forest. Let the forest be cleared. Seek the highway. And be humble.

Seek not another man's anointing. Let Sarah be Sarah and Hagar be Hagar. Be what God has meant you to be. Do not copy another man. Be God's man in your own way.. Be original. Do not duplicate.

Final Words

In the midst of all these we need to be reach-out church. In our difficult times we cannot pull back from serving the poor , the unfortunate and the under resourced. The church must be a caring church. It is during hard times that the church must show its relevance to the world. Turbulent times must become times of opportunity for the church.

We have adopted 114 children in 2 villages. In one village all the mothers are prostitutes. Over 66 children do not know their fathers' name. Many are HIV positive. They see their mothers sleeping with different men. These children are taught to pray for their families. They return home at night.

Children learn what true love is. They have learnt to share their clothes.

Their eyes are opened. They have a passion to help others - to be a watchman for those in sin and who going to hell.

God opened my eyes to see the pitiable condition of the people in Bihar. Have you seen the pitiable condition of fellow Malaysians – the blinded, those in bondage? Or, are you after blessings for yourself?

The church must have a compassionate heart. It must share its blessings with those less fortunate. It must be a church without walls. It must reach out as much as possible. It must see the needs around. It must know where the poor stay. It must know where the wounded are hiding. It is time for the good Samaritans in our churches to go out with their healing oil. The wounded are lying by the roads. Some have been robbed. Some maimed. Some have been dropped. In the midst of turbulent times the less fortunate have been abandoned. But the church must not. It must continue to serve.

May the Lord open your eyes to see the needs around you.