

## ASHES THE CURRENCY FOR BEAUTY

WILLIS 2/7/10

Is61:1-4

Having spent the past number of weeks looking at how to break the cycle of complacency and say no to the quo, we want to turn our focus now to the fire. **Fire is the most fundamental, intended condition of the believer.** Spiritual fire is to be our surrounding atmosphere.

- John the Baptist said, “I have baptized you with water but one in coming mightier than I, He will baptize you with Holy Spirit fire.”
- **Fire is one of the first things we receive when we accept Christ.** Fire is one of the first tangible fruits of our salvation experience. Inwardly we receive the forgiveness of sin but outwardly we receive the immersion of fire. A fire that enables us to burn.

Today I felt compelled of the Lord to address a well known, universal reality that all of us experience but few of us like to acknowledge. How many know **where there is fire there will also be ashes.** Don't you wish that was a reality you didn't have to experience?

- Ashes are a known consequence of the burn. You can't burn for God without leaving a few ashes behind. Now that is bad news until you understand God's redemptive purpose for ashes.
- **In the Kingdom of God ashes are the currency for beauty.**
- In the natural ashes are the final conclusion of the fire. In the Spirit however, **ashes are the staging point for an upgrade.** In the natural we get nothing but ruin for ashes but in the Spirit we are to exchange the ashes of circumstance for the beauty of redeeming grace.
- **Ashes are a known reality of life so God has ordained ashes to be the currency with which we buy the beauty of redeeming grace.**
- Yes life happens, yes we often make a mess of many things and ashes are the result. Jesus however is the God powerful enough to give us all beauty for whatever ashes we might produce.

The scriptures tell us, “The rain fall on the just and the unjust.” Unfortunately the realities of life happen. Most often they happen for the good at times they happen for bad. Sometimes our hopes and dreams burn down and nothing is left other than the ashes disappointment. It is at this appointment with disappointment that we must decide:

1. **Will we become enslaved to the ashes and settle for the quo of bitterness and negativity?**
2. **Will we turn the ashes in for beauty and live in the wonder of the divine exchange?**

**Is44:9-20** Here the prophet speaks of those feeding on the ashes of life because they made idols of past circumstance. (Read v.20) We feed on the ashes of life when:

- 1. We turn the perceived hurts of the past into idols through lack of repentance or the withholding of forgiveness.** Unforgiveness keeps us enslaved to the ones who did the perceived wrong. Bitterness grows offenses into idol like proportions. The longer we feed on the ashes of hurt the more idol like the perceptions become.
  - Exchange the ashes of past hurt through forgiveness, repentance and or release.
- 2. We conclude the perception of loss as final and a perceived delay as a denial.** When we serve a God who stands outside of time, it is not final until we are dead and even when we die it is in fact a new beginning.
  - Exchange the ashes of perceived loss by embracing the timing of God.
- 3. We settle for defeat or give in before God is done.** It is never too late for God. 11:59, 12:00 or even 2 hours past, it is still not too late for God. Freddy and Dion's friend had been dead for a several hours but they didn't give up, they went in and prayed and she came back to life.
  - Exchange the ashes of perceived defeat by believing God calls into being that which doesn't exist.

**In the life of King David we see our only posture in the ashes is to rise from their perception of finality and exchange them for the beauty of redemption.** In the face of ashes and loss we discover, we serve the God who has the power to buy back...the power to redeem.

1Sm30:1-8 Here we see King David was dealing with the physical ashes of life. These were not figurative ashes or spiritual ashes, they were the real thing as in the Ziklag had been burnt with fire and all the women and children were taken captive.

- In a moment David goes from the hero to the hated with threats of being stoned. But the scriptures say "David encouraged himself in the Lord." That is David took courage by exchanging the ashes of Ziklag for the beauty of a battle with promise.
- **David didn't quit, he inquired of God and fought.** Though David's life had been reduced to ashes he refused to settle for ashes. God had beauty on the other side for David so David inquired of the Lord and fought himself out.
- **When going through the ashes of disappointment and loss...don't stop.** The place of ashes is never a good place to stay. The place of ashes is like going to the bank...you go there to get something not to stay. Once you get it...go.
- **There is beauty in those ashes. Ashes are a place of exchange not a destination of destiny...so make your exchange and move on.**

**Ps113:7 "He raises the poor out of the dust and the needy out of the ash heap that He might seat them with Princes.** Wow what a promise. From ash heaps to thrones...it's the way of the Kingdom. To get the throne you must pass through the ash heap.

- **It's the humility of the ash heap that qualifies you for the throne.**

So how do we make the exchange? What must we do to exchange beauty for ashes? 4-R's

1. **Repent: Rom8:36 Repentance is an act of turning around and being positioned to receive the divine exchange.** Paul said in Rom8:36 "For His sake we are being put to death all day long." Repentance is daily. Repentance is a moment by moment act that keeps us rightly positioned to receive the exchange.
2. **Remove: Lev6:10-11** Every morning the altar was to be cleansed from the previous day's ash lest the ashes of yesterday's issues snuff out today's fire. Every day we must remove the debris of what happened yesterday lest the fires of our passion get snuffed out by the ash of bitterness, negativity or offense.
  - **If the negative memories of yesterday's issues are not removed from today's thoughts, they will quench the fire of God's Spirit and prevent the fire of God's passion from burning hot in your life.**
  - Jn5:5-6 "Do you want to become well..." When the ashes we are in are the ashes of unforgiveness, bitterness or resentment some don't want to become well. "If trading my ashes for beauty means forgiving or perhaps admitting maybe I was wrong, I would rather keep my ashes."
  - **Wounds become prisons when there is no willingness to remove yesterday's ashes.**
3. **Rejoice: Phil4:4 Praise is the ingredient of distinction in the ashes that give the ashes a value for exchanged.** The more we praise and rejoice through our fire, the more valuable our ashes become.
  - "No this is no ordinary ash, this is valuable ash. "This was the ash of cancer and pronounced death, so I began to rejoice and give God praise in it. As I did I exchanged the ashes of death for the beauty of holiness."
  - Ps149:6-8 "Let the high praises (**high praises are praises that get lifted above your circumstances**) of God be in our mouth and a two edged sword in our hand. To execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the people..."
  - Praise is an act of war that when released, God gives beauty for ashes. Is61:3 calls it a mantle. Praise is something we "put on" and when we do we are given authority.
4. **Restore: Is58:12 Restoration has everything to do with a "phoenix like" expectation.** The word phoenix is defined as "a person who has become renewed or restored after great calamity or apparent annihilation."
  - "Phoenix" is taken from the mythical bird that at the age of 500-600 years would burn itself up in order to rise from the ashes in the freshness of its youth.
  - Sounds like what we read in Ps113:7 "He raises the poor out of the dust and the needy out of the ash heap that He might seat them with Princes."

- **Being beauty for ashes is a promise it must also become a phoenix like expectation that we make demands on.** Expect beauty, decree the exchange, see the beauty not the ash.

Beauty in the Hebrew comes from a root word meaning “to explain or make clear.” **When in the ashes of misunderstanding or accusation, turn your focus to pleasing Him and let Him explain you.**

Let’s do some exchanging before we leave here today. I would like the band to come and we are going to Praise our way through...Praise our way out of the ashes we might find ourselves in.

- If you are here today in the ashes of life don’t stay there...exchange them for the beauty of Christ’s redeeming power. Praise is a mechanism of exchange, through praise we present ashes and receive beauty in exchange.
- That’s called “Divine Upgrade.”