

Faith: The Better Way ~ Part 5

Messianic Jews 12:12-17 Letter to the Messianic Jews

In my last post, we continued on our topic of the **Trust and the Believer** by looking at **Messianic Jews 12:3-11 ~ Chastening for Spiritual Developments**. In this post, we will move on to **Exhortation to Endurance** in **Messianic Jews 12:12-17**.

¹² So, strengthen your drooping arms, and steady your tottering knees; ¹³ and make a level path for your feet; so that what has been injured will not get wrenched out of joint but rather will be healed. ¹⁴ Keep pursuing shalom with everyone and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one misses out on God's grace, that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble and thus contaminates many, ¹⁶ and that no one is sexually immoral, or godless like Esav, who in exchange for a single meal gave up his rights as the firstborn. ¹⁷ For you know that afterwards, when he wanted to obtain his father's blessing, he was rejected; indeed, even though he sought it with tears, his change of heart was to no avail. ~ Messianic Jews 12:12-17 (CJB)

With this passage, the author to the **Messianic Jews** comes to the problems of everyday **Messianic** life and living. He knew that sometimes it is given to us to mount up with wings as an eagle; he knew that sometimes we are enabled to run and not be weary in the pursuit of some great moment of endeavour; but he also knew that of all things it is hardest to walk every day and not to faint. Here he is thinking of the daily struggle of the **Messianic** way.

The contrast between **Messianic Jews** 12:1 and 12:13 is striking; the author no longer offers a pep-talk with advice to **keep running** but concerns himself with those who can barely walk because of physical and social disadvantage, emotional injury or be spiritually backslidden.

Strengthen your drooping arms: gradually increase your spiritual capacity for trust-grounded obedience to God. **Steady your tottering knees:** get hold of your emotions, stop fearing the world. **Make a level path:** *"He restores my inner person. He guides me in right paths for the sake of his own name."* Psalm 23:3 (CJB) **For your feet:** Of the wicked, Isaiah writes, *"Their feet run to evil, they make haste to shed innocent blood"* (Isaiah 59:7). But of God's servant He writes, *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the bringer of Good News, announcing peace... and deliverance!"* (Isaiah 52:7).

Someone who is hurt in any of these ways and neglects himself will have *what has been injured get wrenched out of joint, "so that in the end, the person is worse off than he was before"* (Matthew 12:45). But, if we give out situation proper spiritual attention, *what has been injured will be healed*.

Holiness without which no one will see the Lord. The warning which climaxes at verse 29 (which we will explore in my next post) begins here. Those who fail to heed it, who suppose that mere intellectual acknowledgment of God's existence and **Yeshua's Messiahship**, unaccompanied by good deeds and submissiveness to God, will *"get them into heaven"* are in for rude awakening and disappointment.

Keep pursuing shalom with everyone is reminiscent of Romans 12:18.

The **root of bitterness** again reminds us of the **Tanach**. When presenting the covenant to **the people of Israel** (Deuteronomy 29:1), Moshe warned *"lest there be among you [anyone] whose heart turns away from Adonai... to serve other gods,... a root that bears gall and wormwood"* (instead of *"the peaceful fruit of righteousness,"* Messianic Jews 12:11), *"and it come to pass that when he hears the words of this curse"* (Deuteronomy 28:15-68), *"he blesses himself in his heart and says, 'I will have peace, even though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.... ' Adonai will not be willing to pardon him"* (Deuteronomy 29:17-20).

Speaking of Esav, *even though he sought it with tears, his change of heart was to no avail.* As rendered, this says that even though Esav had a change of heart between Genesis 25:27-34 and Genesis 27:30-41, it did not avail in getting his father Yitz'chak to bless him with the blessing reserved for the firstborn son.

Even if the change of heart spoken of was Esav's, not Yitz'chak's, there is no implication either here or in Genesis that Esav ever truly repented. His tears did not flow from the kind of pain that, *"handled in God's way, produces a turning from sin to God which leads to salvation"* (2 Corinthians 7:10). Rather, his *"repentance"* was only in valuing his rights as the firstborn (Genesis 27) instead of despising them (Genesis 25).

We need to remember that there is a certain finality in life. If like Esav, we take the way of this world and make material things our final good, if we choose the pleasures of time in preference to the joys of eternity, God can and will still forgive, but something has happened that can never be undone. There may be certain things in which we cannot change our mind but must abide forever by the choice that we have made.

It is never too late, God's arms are always open, it is still *"his purpose that... everyone should turn from his sins."* (2 Kefa 3:9)

In my next post, we look at a **Final Warning Against Apostasy** in **Messianic Jews 12: 18-29**.