

## SOMETHING TO CHEW ON

A Persian General had a peculiar way of dealing with his soldiers who had been condemned to die before the firing squad. Just prior to their execution, he would call them in before him and give them a choice. He would ask the condemned to choose between facing the firing squad or going through the black door. On one occasion, the condemned man was one of his own officers who had been caught spying for the enemy. He summoned the man into his presence and asked him the question: "Do you want to go before the firing squad or pass through the black door?" The condemned man hesitated for a short time and then chose the firing squad.

A short time later, shots rang out in the courtyard of the prison signifying that the grim sentence had been carried out. One of his top aides observed the General's reaction as he heard the shots. The General sighed and said, "They invariably choose the firing squad. It seems that men prefer the known to the unknown even when the known means death." "What is beyond the black door, sir?" asked the aide of his commanding officer. "Freedom!" was the reply of the General. He went on to add, "Few men are brave enough to choose it, even though they know that the firing squad is certain death"

Paul tells us that "the things which are seen are temporal while the things which are not seen are eternal." Almost everyone chooses the things that they can see and their choice also ends in their death. It takes faith, it takes courage, to choose the things that are not seen - the things which are eternal. Moses pleaded with the children of Israel to make the right choice. He said, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life."

History is a grim reminder of the fact that by the millions, these chosen people of God chose death. They could taste the leeks and the garlic. They could see the gods of wood and stone that those around them worshipped. On the other hand, no man has ever seen God. They chose what they could see. They chose death and they died.

All around us are the gods of this world. The temporal pleasures of this world are not only on every side, they can even be piped right into our homes in stereo and living colour. They look attractive. They take up our time. They can be seen, felt and experienced right now. Out of sight is the crown of righteousness which is laid up for us. We know it is real, we know it is sure, but it is at present unseen. Which do we choose? By our actions, by the way we live, by the thoughts that run through our minds as we go about our daily tasks, we are answering the question as to what we choose.

We do get that which we choose. The Persian soldier chose to face the firing squad and he perished in his choice. He could not see what was on the other side of the black door and he turned down the offer to go through it.

Only a few make the right choice. The fact that most choose what they can see and end up dead is no reason for us to make the same mistake. Let us choose the door. The kingdom is on the other side of the door and it is at present unseen. We have a choice to make. Life or death. Choose life. Remember Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

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It has been said that we do not appreciate some things until we lose them. We recently read of a man who regained his sense of smell after having lost it for some time. It is common to take for granted the fact that we can smell the flowers, see the falling leaves, hear the patter of the rain and feel the chill of the autumn breeze. It is only when our eyes begin to dim and our ears cease to hear the chirping of the birds that we come to fully appreciate our God given senses which we had taken so much for granted.

It is this way with our spiritual gifts as well. Years ago a young girl attended a Bible School and was aghast at the matter of fact way the young people took for granted the hope of salvation that God has offered us. She had only just learned these things and their brilliance dazzled her eyes while the others seemed very nonchalant about this wonderful hope. The teacher explained to her that those who have just come into the light are blinded more by its brightness than those who have become accustomed to it over a period of time.

While we recognize that this is true, we should each try to thank God every day for those things others accept as a matter of course. This thankful type of attitude toward life will keep us humble and happy. So many people are not happy because they fail to count the blessings that they have. Every morning when we get out of bed we should thank God that He has given us the health and strength to get up, for there are millions who are dying because they do not have anything to eat. Do we complain because our hamburger is not steak or that our diet will not allow us to eat cake? There is a story about a man who complained because he had no shoes until he saw a man who had no feet. From God's viewpoint do we appear like a bunch of squabbling, complaining children who are ungrateful for all that has been provided for us? It is a very useful exercise to sit down with pen and paper and make a list of all things that we can thank God for. The next time we pray let us thank Him for all He has done for us instead of asking Him for all the things we think we want.

David as an old man made a remarkable statement. The thoughts he has expressed should be remembered by us. He said "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lends; and his seed is blessed." There is tremendous comfort in this. It all depends on if we are His seed and we remember Paul telling us in Galatians how we do this. The fact is that if we belong to God then He will provide. He does not always provide what we want but He will always provide what we need. Parents who love their children will not give them everything they ask for. The wise man Solomon who incidentally was very rich, taught us that we should pray saying, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Thanksgiving is something we should celebrate everyday of our lives for we have so much to be thankful for. Let us thank our loving heavenly Father for all the blessings He has bestowed upon us. Let us not take for granted the smallest of His gifts. We know He cares about the little things of little people for Jesus tells us that even the hairs of our head are all numbered. Knowing this let us take courage and be thankful that "the angel of the Lord is on guard around those who fear him, and rescues them. Taste, then, and see that the Lord is good. Happy is the man who finds refuge in Him!"

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