

VINEYARD HARVEST

H O U S E C H U R C H



THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

THE WORD OF GOD



Spiritual Enlargement – Isa 54:1 *Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.* Isa 54:2 **Enlarge the place of thy tent,** and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; Isa 54:3 *For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.*

Long time ago in Israel, tents were the dwelling places of Jews. Tents were significant in that it provided shade from the harsh sun, acted as accommodation for the people and above all defined a person's territory (dwelling place). Today, we have an idiom (figure of speech) that says; 'A man's home is his castle'. In the modern day context, we have homes built of brick and cement which are immovable. Whereas, the tent was something fluid. It could be moved from place to place and so, a man's home was where his tent was pitched.

The tent always suggests that we are strangers on this earth and that our permanent dwelling place is in another place created by God for us. Heb 11:13 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that **they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*** Heb 11:14 *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.* Heb 11:15 *And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.* Heb 11:16 *But now **they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly;** wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*

The idea behind Isa 54.1:3 is to tell us to expand our thinking and vision to greater lengths that stretches us to the left and the right and upward into heaven. This means, we should be encompassing previously unclaimed territory for our own. The context is spiritual. The idea is not to claim your neighbour's property but to seek God for more, in more ways than one. Spiritual expansion is the right of every Christian. However, many Christians do not seek it. They are content to remain where they are because to them, the concept of expanding means more work and sacrifice. The reasoning often is; why expand and provoke the devil to attack? Or, be involved in something that will give me more headaches than joy. Well, one person in the Bible who was born with a name called pain realised that if he was ever to get out of his predicament in life of being a pain and thought of as a pain (which meant persecution), he needed to expand. Maybe you are tired of who you are or in pain physically, mentally or spiritually. The encouragement of Isaiah is to think bigger and look to newness through expansion. So, Jabez approached God whom he knew and asked Him for spiritual and physical expansion along with protection. In my opinion this guy was smart. Not only did he realise that expansion would only come through God but that in expanding he would need protection for what he gained. So, God blessed him. You too are in God and know Him because He dwells in you. So, you too should be asking God for expansion in every area of your life. Many instead allow depression and hopelessness to set in, thinking that whatever they do will never really reap any good for them. So they end up in strife which actually causes decline in their lives not expansion.

When I prayed the Jabez prayer under the instruction of the Lord, I received spiritual expansion in my ministry. I knew I had gone sour in my ministry and was not going forward. I needed a boost. As soon as I prayed this prayer of Jabez, it felt and sounded like furniture was being re-arranged in the heavens. I knew immediately, I had been given an expansion in my ministry. At the time I was in Longreach as a Pastor. Though nothing manifested before my eyes, not long after that, I began to travel again and my ministry grew taking me to many nations that brought Jesus fruit that remains. Not only that, I had the pleasure of a greater anointing and provision for my life through faith. All this came through praying a simple prayer of expansion.

Not many years later, I was given Isa 54.1:3 as a word to expand when I was so discouraged in my ministry in 2004. (Yes, discouragement in ministry and our Christian life happens often.) I chose to give up and said to God that unless he would give me a word, I was quitting the ministry. It was then that God gave me Isa 54.1:3. I said to God; I had done what those verses said I should do but was only beaten up by the devil and so I was not interested. He asked me to read the following verse. Isa 54:4 **Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed;** neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. The words 'thou shalt not be ashamed' entered my soul and spirit like water to a dying man. I basically said to God; I will do what you ask but I will hold you responsible to this word. If at any time, it looked like I was going to be ashamed, then I will remind you of this word. There were many scary moments in my life even till today that looked like I was going to be shamed but God never allowed it to happen. He remained true to His word. Yet His instructions to me were to expand and enlarge. Ever since that day I have sought God on how to enlarge and expand.

It certainly was not the time for spiritual weakness. It meant, I had to step out and move by faith. Well, I did and God blessed it but it also attracted much opposition by the evil one. You see, that is why Jabez prayed for protection in 1Ch 4:10 *And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest **keep me from evil,** that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.*

My friends, if we never step out, we will never expand or enlarge. The idea of expansion mentioned in these verses in Isaiah is deeper than you think. It is not just about spreading the gospel but doing it in a way that comes from one's own internal spiritual growth that produces results. For such growth to take place, one must expand their levels of relationship with God and with one another and above all trust in God. It requires one to seek Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge from God which are the three pillars of spiritual growth. This too is expansion and enlargement. We live in a time when confusion and stupidity prevails even to a majority of people in the world today. The Church too in many ways has lost its way to the world and satan. The remnant of the Christians that amount to millions in the world today and ever growing are but a drop in the population of the world. We need to understand what is happening and seek God's supernatural intervention on a large scale. We need expansion. Our hearts and minds need to encounter our God on a supernatural level and bring in the impossible.

The devil is laughing all the way to the bank because he has many Christians believing the wrong things. While caution needs to be adhered to in all spiritual matters, one cannot afford to live in fear or criticism. Criticism of the moves of God are born out of fear of what is not happening in one's own life and the inherent lack of discernment. The second kind of fear is actually watching so called moves of God and throwing the baby out with the bath water so to speak. ***Error in the Church should never be a deterrent to one's own spiritual growth.*** The third kind of fear is watching moves of God and not wanting it because it does not fit in with one's theology. This is the most common kind of fear that prevails in the Church today. Many Christians have been stemmed just because of wrong teaching and being over cautious through fear and sheer ignorance. There are churches who believe only in the word whether they have understood it correctly or not. Others stick to one doctrine or another and many have become exclusive or cults because of such fear. This is all the devil's doing amongst us. He is the one perpetrating the lies about spiritual expansion. He uses fear as a tool and causes Christians to go against each other.

To counter such things, God has given us the Holy Spirit. He is the one who will never allow you to be ashamed *Rom 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.* It is evident that God has given us the Holy Spirit to keep us from being shamed. When we begin to expand our lives in a manner instructed by the Holy Spirit we will never fall. It is those who go ahead without the Holy Spirit that fall. I have seen many a dead man's bones along the journey of my spiritual walk. I have also seen many who have not listened to the Holy Spirit to expand and enlarge their thinking and relationship with God and have been wasted or walked away from their ministry. Yet, I have seen many who have embraced what God is doing in the world and in their lives and have expanded tremendously. They are no longer the same. **They are like twice born again creatures.**

The whole idea of expansion is primarily about building a relationship with God. This takes time and effort of a discipline few like. Reading the Bible, praying, fasting and spending time with likeminded Christians who can sharpen iron with iron is often a deterrent to many Christians. They would prefer to spend time watching TV, relaxing, idle chatting or doing some mundane task that they think is important. Many are so busy with everyday chores that they do not have time to spend with God or one another. Relationship building goes two ways. God said; 'Love the Lord with all your heart, mind and strength and to love your neighbour as yourself'. These are two amazing commandments that few practise. We miss out on so much because we neglect to follow these two primary commandments. We try and please God in so many other ways except this. I am convinced of these two primary relationships. One requires an upward spiral of adoration, praise and worship to God and the other a horizontal expression of love upon this earth to people.

The truth is, people who are saved and unsaved both need our attention. God's primary desire is to see us saved. He has given His Son for this very reason. Yet, many do not understand salvation. They think it is about getting into heaven. For those of us who think that, allow me to refresh your thinking and renew it with an idea. **You were created.** That is a refreshing idea. Many think they are because they can think. The truth is, you are because God created you. No one can say; 'I AM that I AM' except God. Therefore, as created beings we need to understand relationships. This is the key to expansion. Building relationships takes time and can be laborious at times and at other times it will flow like a river. Salvation is an ever expanding idea of God. That is why He says; 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.'

My hope is, we will all understand expansion on a spiritual level first so that, we can access God who will reveal all to us about what we need to know. If I cannot love God, I cannot love my fellowman. If I cannot love my fellowman, I cannot love God. It is a Catch22 situation. Many go to God with their gifts with impure hearts which causes Him to say, 'Leave your gift at the altar and make up with the one you have a problem with before you offer your gift'. Others neglect to love God and spend all their time loving people which causes God to say 'Return to your first love'. It seems both relationships demand sacrifice and expressions of love out of a pure heart. It is called unfeigned love.

The power to expand is basically in our own hands. When we reach for the heavens we will see expansion like never before. It is my determination that God should expand me and my territory. I am seeking Him for it. I am taking steps toward it. I am sacrificing many areas of my life for it. The value of it cannot be discounted in anyway. Many will not understand this need in you to seek God first and His kingdom but will soon change their mind when they see God walking with you. Everyone has to start somewhere. Don't stop after you have gone a distance. Let God take you by the hand and lead you into green pastures and still waters and give rest to your soul. Learn to rest in Him. He has you covered. Just step out by faith into the future and say to God you will walk in His love and not fear of the world, your inadequacies and the fear of satan and the unknown. You will not be ashamed, this is the promise of God to all who believe His word in Isaiah 54.4.

Lots of love

Pastor Noble

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