

By Bala Samson

EMPTY OURSELVES!

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2 Corinthians 4:12 “So then death is working in us, but life in you.”

We need to empty ourselves, if we want God to fill our life! When I say the word ‘empty’, I literally mean empty. Not an iota of ‘self’ should remain. However, this emptying process is easy to talk about and write about, but going through it, is no small pain. Ask Joseph who was transferred from the pit to the prison and made to stay there for more than a decade, and he would be able to tell about the training of getting emptied.

Unless death works in us, we can never bring life to others! The above words of the Apostle Paul can only be understood by people who had been in the Potter’s Hand for the refining process. Malachi 3:3 says “He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness.”

The life and testimonies of the world renowned Evangelist Reinhard Bonke has been a challenge to me. I have kept his books in my study room and I read it, whenever I face crisis in my own life. While Mr. Bonke was studying in the Bible College he learnt to walk in faith from the Principal of that college. He was astonished at the way they received everything through prayer. The principal would always say, “do not ask anybody for your needs, always trust God and make your supplications only to Him”. This immensely touched Mr. Bonke and he wanted to live that way too. God one day placed it in his heart to give away all the money that he had to an Evangelist who would be visiting his college and trust Him for his expenses. Mr. Bonke felt that it would be ‘wisdom’ to keep back one pound with him for urgent expenses but God immediately rebuked him for his lack of faith and asked him to give away everything. The Evangelist did come the next day and Mr. Bonke gave away all the money that he had, from the next day onwards he had to pray and wait for every need. It was a thrilling experience for him to watch God Himself meet his needs. A severe test for his faith came when he had to go to his hometown for the vacation. Trusting God for his ticket expenses, he makes a reservation which did not need any money. On the day of departure, the agency called him and requested him to pick up the tickets. Mr. Bonke was not deterred in any way but faithfully kept praying, as time was ticking away he started praying more earnestly, suddenly he felt a release in his spirit and he ran back to his room to pick up his suitcase. While he dashed to his room, one of his friends come running to him and asked him “how much do you need”? Mr. Bonke holds on to his determination to ‘ask only God’ and he said “God knows my need”. His friend immediately dives into his pocket and pulls out some pounds and dumps into Mr. Bonke’s hands and tells him “GOD TOLD ME TO GIVE IT TO YOU.” When Mr. Bonke counts the money it was exactly the amount that he needed for the tickets. What a wonderful God we serve!

There was no turning back in his life and later on he was able to testify boldly and tell the world that he started his ministry from “nothing”.

On the tenth year of our ministry, we had to face tremendous heat everywhere in our life and ministry. After walking into the new city, everything looked hunky dory for a while, little did we know that God was preparing and heating the furnace for us. Children were suffering trying to adjust to the new environment, with different culture and language. Doors were closed! Have you ever experienced the doors suddenly slamming on your face? It did for us. Our ministry bank account could not be operated because the local banks were insisting for documents pertaining to our stay in Hyderabad, the bank account was frozen for the time being. There was no in-flow of funds either. School fees of my son Joshua was not paid. As we sent him to school everyday, it was nightmare because it was exam time and we wondered if he would be prevented from writing the exam. He came home one evening and said, “I thank Jesus that my name was not read out in front of the class, though my name was in the list.” Besides this, house rent, electricity bill, maintenance bill and other dues were accumulating. A huge pile of outstanding bills! Freshly printed devotion books were stocked in the Printer’s office because we had no money to take delivery of the stock. My husband’s wallet was cleanly wiped out! The provisions in the home were wiped out, that is, we reached a stage when we did not even have a single grain or a drop of oil at home. Wiped out! I can never adequately explain the pain in words. It was like being blind-folded and let out in the dark in an unknown territory!

The situation was absolutely eerie! One particular morning, my husband and I fasted and we were praying, my Bible reading portion for that day was the book of Deuteronomy and within few minutes, God spoke to me beautifully through Deuteronomy 2:7 "For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God *has been* with you; you have lacked nothing." The words “He knows your trudging through this great wilderness”, was enough for me to burst into tears! I knew that God was speaking to me!

He knows about the empty kitty, He knows about the school fees, He knows about the empty rice bag and the empty oil can. He knows about the books stocked in the Printer’s office. He knows the pain and the tears. He knows it all! I felt relieved and rejuvenated just hearing His voice, nothing else mattered, though.

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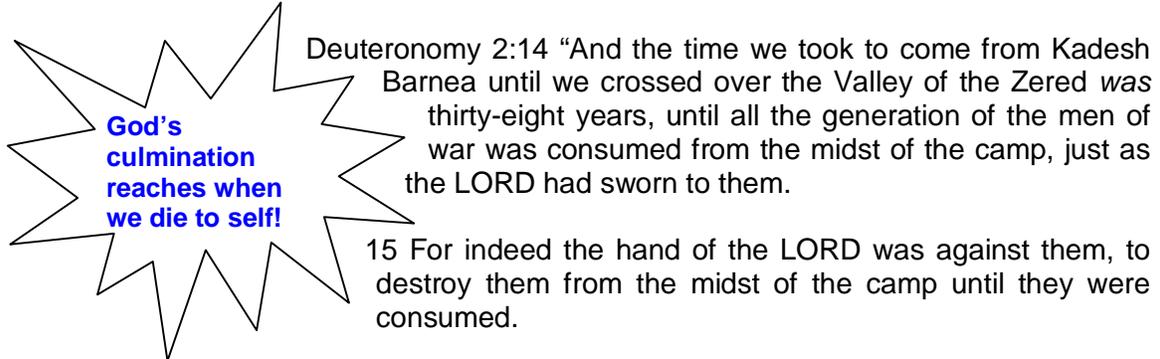
In the afternoon my husband enthusiastically came to me with the Bible and said ‘God spoke to me’ and quoted Deuteronomy 2:7 and said, specifically he was touched by the words, “He knows your trudging through this great wilderness”. Wow! I was dumbstruck! God had spoken to both of us at the same time and through the same scripture! In the midst of emptiness, we were both encouraged and thrilled by hearing His voice. Slowly, very slowly, God cleared the mist of uncertainty little by little and revealed to us in a magnificent way that He is at work! We dare not move! We did not pull out our swanky credit card nor did we call our near ones for help, with each passing day, we humbled ourselves in His mighty Hand. The lessons we learnt during the process is enormous and precious!

Further down in the same chapter, we have profound learning pertaining to emptiness. Mathew Henry says, “Though God contend long, he will not contend for ever.” Deuteronomy 2:1 says, "Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness of the Way of the Red Sea, as the LORD spoke to me, and we skirted Mount Seir for many days." For

nearly *thirty-eight* years they wandered in the deserts of Seir. However, through this rough path, God not only chastised them for their murmuring and unbelief, but, prepared them for Canaan. He was humbling them, purging them from sin and teaching them that “He is all that they need.” Habakkuk rightly said, “For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. “ (Habakkuk 2:3)

I want to take you further into the depths of God’s perfect plan for His people. **God’s culmination reaches when we die to self!**

Now read the following scriptures:



16 So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people,

17 that the LORD spoke to me, saying:

18 This day you are to cross over at Ar, the boundary of Moab.”

Oh, I am excited about the above scriptures! God had to keep the Israelites in the wilderness for long, not to harm them but to build them. Now watch this, when all the men of war had perished, then God commanded Moses, ‘this day you are to cross over at Ar, the boundary of Moab.’ Which day? The day all the men of war perished!

Mathew Henry puts it this way: “Observe, Israel is not called to engage with the Canaanites till all the men of war, the veteran regiments, that had been used to hardship, and had learned the art of war from the Egyptians, *were consumed and dead from among the people (v. 16)*, that the conquest of Canaan, being effected by a host of new-raised men, trained up in a wilderness, the excellency of the power might the more plainly appear to be *of God and not of men.*” *Hallelujah! Not by power nor by might but by His Holy Spirit!*

There are many out there who sing, “I trust thee Lord” gulping gallons of medicines every day. How does it feel if the medicine stops working? Perfect trust in God is whole-heartedly trusting in His power! God was able to mightily step in to heal me when I took a giant step of faith to stop taking medicines and injections. If you dare to boldly step forward to walk into the Red sea then you can also sing like Moses " I will sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The LORD *is* my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He *is* my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him. The LORD *is* a man of war; The LORD *is* His name.” (Exodus 15:1-3)

Coming back to Moses, further God commanded him in verse 24 "Rise, take your journey, and cross over the River Arnon. Look, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to possess *it*, and engage him in battle." When all the men of war have perished, God commands Moses to fight Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon. Yes, God cannot use the previous rebellious men to fulfill His purpose, hence He delayed their journey in the wilderness so that the sinful men perish. Now, He was going to use a host of new-raised men, trained up in a wilderness so that no flesh boast and all the glory goes to God. Hallelujah! The Lord says, "I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images." (Isaiah 42:8)

Once the emptying process is completed to His satisfaction, now He steps in to fill it! Boy, when the Creator steps in to fill, that's going to be awesome! Job 42:12 says, "Now the LORD blessed the latter *days* of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys." Well, what captured my attention were the six thousand camels! Think of that! Wow, that was abundance! I am sure Job would have needed a lot of space to store those tall, huge fellows - six thousand camels! I have always been amazed by this scripture! After the trial, the blessings just bowls you over!

The Lord says in Isaiah 60:6 "The multitude of camels shall cover your *land*, The dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba shall come; They shall bring gold and incense, And they shall proclaim the praises of the LORD." The camels from Midian and Ephah shall bring the richest commodities, not to trade with, but to honor God with, and not in small quantities, but camel-loads of them. When gifts come from God, He uses camels! When it is God's time, the blessings pour and flow like a river! There is no stopping!

"We are not in the hands of blind fate! We are in the hands of God, whose purposes are very clearly set forth and whose goal fit perfectly into His plan. Our all-wise, all-knowing God is in charge! He has all the answers. He is the originator, the enforcer and the provider. To Him be the glory forever and ever." (Charles Swindoll from his book "Perfect Trust")