

# 18. RESTORED



*You have forgotten your first love.*

#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

## RESTORED

*Isaiah 57:18: "I have seen his ways, and I will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners."*

At the moment we are facing many trials and tribulations, just to mention COVID-19 and our personal struggles at home. Perhaps God has been tugging at your heart's strings as He has been tugging at mine. Perhaps you have had thoughts of giving up the things of this world which may not seem so harmful but you know is not good for you? Perhaps you also felt that there are certain burdens you need to cast aside in order to now fully live for the Lord?

Do you too feel that the time is short? Do you wonder if it will be possible for you to get to that place where you once were spiritually?

I recall a specific time in my life where I went through a very deep life-changing spiritual experience. It was round about my matric year and I recall how differently my life was. I experienced a quickening in my spiritual life which in turn revived my everyday life. I fell in love with God and was truly passionate about the things of His Kingdom. I did my devotions, sometimes even three times a day. I prayed, always kneeling down, seeking the Lord. I lived more healthfully. I exercised daily and I rested well during the evening times. I led youth meetings and conducted baptismal classes. I did telephonic evangelism with my friends. I visited hospitals with the church youth and shared God's love with the sick and dying through song and His Word.

**HAVE YOU EVER LONGED FOR A  
REVIVAL OF YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE,  
IF SO ARE YOU DOING THE THINGS  
THAT ARE NECESSARY FOR SUCH A  
REVIVAL TO TAKE PLACE?**



I remember preaching fiery sermons during youth weeks of prayer and revivals at the church. Something within me moved me to truly dedicate my life to the Lord for the first time.

I was baptized at the age of 12, but I never really understood God or had a deep-seated love and passion for Him and His ways. As I grew in His grace during that time, I was moved by the Holy Spirit to dedicate my life to God for real for the first time and I decided to be re-baptized round about the age of 17 or 18.

It was a small baptism one Saturday afternoon. Only a few people were in attendance, but I felt the Holy Spirit moving upon my life. I felt passionate and certain about the things of God. I was willing to give up all pleasures, all worldly attractions and even relationships for God and for His cause. Whatever He would call me to do at that stage of my life, I would do. I would die for Him. I would live for Him. I would sacrifice for Him. In the days and weeks and months to come, that was exactly what I did. I recall speaking to one of my friends one afternoon at choir practice at church, telling her that it was time – the end was at hand, and we needed to be ready each day to meet our Lord and our Saviour whom we love. We were on fire for God.

Have you ever felt that kind of love? Have you ever had that kind of spiritual experience with God at some stage in your life? Maybe in your younger years, when you tasted and saw that the Lord was good? A time in your life when you were on fire for Him and when you would give up (and you did give up) anything and everything that separated you from God?

**ARE WILLING TO GIVE UP ALL  
PLEASURES, ALL WORLDLY  
ATTRactions AND EVEN  
RELATIONSHIPS FOR GOD AND FOR  
HIS CAUSE?**

But then something happened! Life happened and it got in the way of your experience with God. We then lose focus of those vows we made at our baptism. We lose that fire we once had. We lose the dedication we had to His laws, to His ways, to His statutes and to His commands. It happens because we start focusing on life here on earth. Life gets in the way.

We go to university, we start dating and we get engaged. We get that new job and that promotion. We buy our first car, we invest in our first home, we plan having a family and children are born. Then we have to take them to school and focus on their education and their lives. Yes, life really starts getting in the way. Slowly but surely we start losing our first love for God, our first real love. We start falling in love with the things of the world because our focus is on the world and its pleasures. Those things become our first priority and we tend to forget the covenant we made with our Lord and Saviour. The covenant that He will be first and that He will be our God and we will be His people.

Perhaps you haven't left God completely, but when life gets in the way, it is never the same again as in the beginning. We've lost something. With the challenges we are facing in the world right now, with the signs of the times fast approaching, I believe God is calling His church, His people, He is calling us to be restored to that relationship, that first love we had for Him when we gave our hearts to Him in the beginning.

The Bible tells us that Israel had a similar experience and we will do well to learn from them; how God worked in them and through them. After many years of them being captives in Egypt, God's people no longer knew Him.

**SOMETIMES LIFE BECOMES SO  
OVERWHELMING THAT WE LOOSE OUR  
DEDICATION TO THE WAYS OF GOD  
AND BECOME LUKE WARM CHRISTIANS.**



He then set them free and after all their traveling through the desert, He met them at Mount Sinai and revealed Himself to them in a cloud. He spoke to them and they trembled. They heard His voice coming out of the fiery cloud. It was such a majestic and all-inspiring event that the people couldn't stand it. They declared that God's presence was too much for them and Moses should rather intervene on their behalf.

It was during that meeting with God at the foot of Mount Sinai where they received the laws and the statutes of God. There at the foot of the mountain they saw God for the first time, face to face and getting to know Him. They understood that He is the only true God. It was there that they **vowed** to keep God's ways and to teach their children His ways. Israel made a solemn oath to be God's children and that He would be their God. God also vowed that He would be their God and that He would never leave them and never forsake them. You know what happened after that. The Bible tells us that apostasy, disobedience, mistrust in God, complaining, idolatry and following the ways of the nations around them, followed. God sent them back into the wilderness for 40 years where they could reflect and where they faced hardships.

The Bible further tells us that after the 40 years of wandering the wilderness, a new generation reached the Promised Land, Canaan. When they finally reached the Promised Land, standing upon the borders, ready to enter in, God called them together just like He did at the foot of Mount Sinai, and He **renewed** His covenant with His people. At the border of the Promised Land, He declared once again to them that He was their God and that they should be His people.

**BE CAREFUL THAT YOUR  
DISOBEDIENCE, MISTRUST AND  
COMPLAINING DOESN'T END UP  
KEEPING YOU TRAPPED IN A DESERT  
FOR 40 YEARS LIKE THE ISRAELITES.**

They, on the other hand, declared that they accept the covenant; and they vowed to be His people and He would once again be their God. After much trial, God brought them back full circle.

At our baptism or elsewhere, we too made a covenant with God. I believe we too are standing at the border of the Promised Land at this moment in time. Have you also heard God calling you to renew your covenant with Him before you can enter into the Promised Land? Have you heard God calling you to cast off worldliness and to once again keep His laws and His ways?

When you came to know the truth about God the first time round, you were on fire for Him, you gave up things for the Lord, but you may have fallen back. You may have forgotten your vows, just as Israel did. Israel forgot their first love and God told them to return to Him, to give up their wrong ways and to be loyal to Him again.

After Israel vowed their loyalty at Mount Sinai, their apostasy developed gradually. You also don't just wake up one morning saying you are leaving God and that you are not interested in Christianity anymore. It happens slowly and gradually. Moses traced the evils of Israel back to their departure from the law of God. The evil that came into the nation was because they no longer kept the ways of God. Satan made repeated attempts to get them to forget God's laws and statutes and to follow after other gods. The Israelites truly cheated on their first love with the things of the world. They gave up on God.

Over time we also may have drifted, gradually departing from God's laws. Maybe just neglecting the reading of God's Word once in a while and therefore forgetting His ways and His promises, because it's not kept fresh in our minds.

**SIN ENTERS LIFE SLOWLY AND  
ALMOST UNKNOWINGLY, BE ON  
YOUR GAURD.**



Eventually we cannot recall why we did His ways in the first place. We don't feel so happy or so on fire anymore as we did in the beginning. That is when the pleasures of the world start taking His place in our hearts.

With Israel there was hope even though they drifted away from God. In some of the darkest hours of Israel's history, when it seemed as if the forces of evil were going to gain the victory, the Lord graciously revealed Himself to them. He still sent prophets to them to remind them to keep God's laws – line upon line He taught them, precept upon precept. Had they obeyed, they would have been spared the humiliation of the apostasy that followed.

It is the same today. Despite darkness that might have come into our lives, despite the hardships we might face, God still sends His bearers of light into our lives. Here and there people speak to us and encourage us and we still hear the Word of God. If we obey, we will be spared much grief and trial, but if we do not obey, destruction will follow.

In every age, transgression of God's law had been followed by the same result – destruction. If we look at the times of Noah when the people disobeyed God's law, God destroyed the earth with water and only a few were saved. When Sodom and Gomorrah were cast into disarray, when they stopped following the ways of God, He destroyed them with fire. The same happened with the ten tribes of Israel after they entered into the Promised Land. God told them if they do not follow His ways, another nation would come to take them captive. That was exactly what happened. When we follow the worldly ways, the result is hardship and pain.

**DESPITE DARKNESS THAT MIGHT  
HAVE COME INTO OUR LIVES,  
DESPITE THE HARDSHIPS WE MIGHT  
FACE, GOD STILL SENDS HIS  
BEARERS OF LIGHT INTO OUR LIVES.**

It is not because God is necessarily punishing us, it is our ways that lead to hardship. It is a consequence of sin.

The Bible says of Israel that there was a time when it seemed as if they were without God. Maybe in your life it seems as if God has been far off, that God has not been there for you. Hosea 3:4-5 describes the position of Israel as follows: *"The ten tribes of Israel 'would abide without a king, without a prince, without a sacrifice, without an image of God, without an ephod and without a teraphim.' And afterwards, the prophet says: 'then only shall the children return and seek the Lord thy God and to a descendant of David their King; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.'"*

Hosea declares in Hosea 3:4-5, that because of Israel's apostasy and departure from God, there was a time of darkness where it seemed as if God was far off and there was no hope for Israel. But after that time of darkness, God would not abandon His children and the time would come where in that darkness, the children of God would seek the Lord again.

The worst part of the destruction that took place, was not the captivity or the death or the persecution or the destruction of Jerusalem. The worst part was that they had to be without the visible evidence of God's favour and intervention in their lives. Maybe you have felt this way in your life in the times that have passed? Times when you have felt that God has not really been there for you, that there hasn't been any visible sign, any evidence of Him showing favour to you. This could be because you have **departed from His ways.**

**CAPTIVITY, DEATH & PERSECUTION  
EVEN THE DESTRUCTION OF  
JERUSALEM WASN'T AS BAD AS  
THE ABSENCE OF GOD'S VISIBLE  
FAVOUR AND INTERVENTION IN  
THEIR LIVES.**



But despite the darkness the prophecies of judgement were accompanied by predictions of future glory. After God left them to their own self-imposed hell and destruction, they would return to the Lord and they would fear Him once again as before. They would return to their first love. The reason they would return was not fear, but because God would fetch them and gently show them love again. Like a harlot that runs away to her lovers. God would not be angry and chastise them anymore. In Hosea, God declared to the fallen Israel: *"I will allure her; and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her vineyards again and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it will be at that day, says the Lord that thou shalt call Me Ishi ('my husband') and you shall no longer call Me Baali ['my Lord']"* (Hosea 2:16).

We too need to come to the place where we fall in love with the Lord again. The Lord is calling (and I believe we are at that place, symbolically speaking, where Israel was) and He is tugging at our heart strings. Maybe He has led us into a wilderness, a place of desolation, where He was speaking to our hearts' comfortably, alluring us, getting us to fall in love with Him again, to call Him our husband again and to regain that first love we had.

We perhaps have been on a detour but we need to go back to where we first saw the light, back to the beginning. God is busy with a restoration to bring us back to who we were. God has a plan and we need to trust the plan. God's plan of restoring every penitent soul in His church will be fulfilled in the last days.

**YOU TOO NEED TO COME TO THE PLACE WHERE YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH THE LORD AGAIN. THE LORD IS CALLING & TUGGING AT OUR HEART STRINGS CAN YOU NOT TELL?**

We need to keep our eyes open for the moving of the Holy Spirit and obey His call when He calls us softly and gently. God wants to restore His people and to renew them again. We may have broken the covenant, we may have become unfaithful after our baptism, but God has never broken His covenant. God will always be there for His people, pursuing us, calling on us, sometimes gently, sometimes aggressively. We are on the border right now and again God says to us: *"Now is the time to renew the covenant with Me." The Bible tells us in the book of Hosea 2:23: "It shall come to pass in the days past. I will say unto them which were not my people: 'You are My people'; and they shall say: 'Thou art my God.'"*

Just like in the days long passed, when we gladly left the worldly things behind, we need to do it again. The hour of God's judgement is at hand. I don't know how far off it is, it might still be many years, but there is something, there is a spirit moving within us and we need to give glory to Him once again. We need to turn away from the idols of this world. We need to worship Him who made the heaven and the earth, the sea and the foundations and the waters. We need to free ourselves from every entanglement that stands between us and God. We need to learn to be obedient to His divine requirements again so that we can recognise God's covenant and be His faithful people.

The Bible tells us that God promised Israel a restoration. There was hope amidst the prophecies of doom and trial. He says in Amos 9:13-15: *"Behold, the days come, and I will bring again the captivity of My people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens and eat the fruit of them."*

**IT IS TIME TO FREE YOURSELVES  
OF EVERY ENTANGLEMENT THAT  
STANDS BETWEEN YOU AND GOD.**



*And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, says the Lord thy God."*

The day is coming when God will restore Eden to us as well. The day is coming when in our heavenly home we too will be renewed; when we will once again declare that God is our God. We will plant our vineyards and we will drink the wine thereof.

God has not come to condemn us, He understands the process of restoration. He wants us to be restored. He wants to bring us back into a relationship with Him.

Is God speaking to your heart today? Is He calling you to renew your vows with Him as we stand at the border of the land that is promised to us?

**GOD HAS NOT COME TO CONDEMN  
YOU HE WANTS TO BRING YOU  
BACK INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH  
HIM.**

# Podcast



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