

No More Liberty

Joseph Herrin (04-06-2012)



West Liberty, KY Main Street Before Tornado



West Liberty, KY Main Street After Tornado

Psalms 119:67

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.

Before speaking about the message to be observed in a devastating tornado that destroyed the city of West Liberty, Kentucky I want to share some thoughts regarding the chastisement of sons. I have recently been posting a series of writings on this topic, and I have related to those who read this blog that on March 21 Yahweh broke my leg as an act of discipline. For many years the Father has patiently dealt with me in the area of ruling over my appetite for food. To say that I have been stubborn in this area would be accurate. The Father has had to deal sternly with me, for He is absolutely committed to His sons sharing in His character of righteousness and holiness, manifesting self-control over the flesh.

It has seemed objectionable to some for me to declare that Yahweh is interested in what to them seems to be a petty matter. To declare that He would break a son's leg for bad food choices does not fit with the image of God they have embraced. Some have challenged my testimony of the Father bringing such a hard correction for a failure to submit to His will in the area of eating. Yet, the Bible is filled with testimonies of men and women who were either severely chastened, or disqualified for the birthright and blessing, because they did not rule over their body's appetite for food.

Hebrews 12:15-16

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God..., that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

Numbers 11:33-34

While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of Yahweh was kindled against the people, and Yahweh struck the people with a very severe plague. So the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had been greedy.

I Corinthians 11:29-31

For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.

Yahweh did not strike me with the rod of correction because I chose sweet and sour over a plate of beans and rice. He chastened me because I was acting in a greedy manner. I was choosing to sate my fleshly appetites rather than to buffet my body and keep it under subjection. I was choosing to walk according to the passions and desires of the flesh, rather than by the Spirit. Such conduct is unbecoming one who is a son of God.

Yahshua demonstrated the righteousness and self-control that is pleasing to the Father as He abstained from all food for forty days at the direction of His Father. What the Father requested of me was much less demanding. He asked me to choose to eat healthy foods, and to eat in moderation. My flesh, however, cried out for that which is sensual, and I was greedy in wanting more food than my body physically needed. It was a just act for Yahweh to correct me, and I consider a broken leg to be a mild correction when compared to those accounts from Scripture listed above.

I have observed something as I have been recovering from this broken leg. I do not have a car. My only transportation is my bus/RV and a bicycle. I am unable to drive the bus with the broken leg (my left leg) as the bus has a very heavy clutch. I can ride a bicycle with the protective boot I have for my leg, but I cannot carry my crutches on the bicycle, so I am limited in where I can go. I have found in the past couple weeks that I am unable to run to the store, or to visit a restaurant, etc., due to this decrease in mobility. Before I broke the leg I would think nothing of riding my bicycle across town to a store to purchase whatever I desired or needed. This freedom has been removed from me.

Not only this, but there are two restaurants in town that I used to like to frequent. One was a Chinese buffet. It had been in business for many years here in town, but it closed down some months back. The other is Chick-fil-A. There is a very well managed Chick-fil-A restaurant in town, and it always

does a big business. A couple weeks ago it closed for remodeling. Their sign says it will be closed for a month. I find that my eating options have been greatly curtailed. The things I formerly desired have either been taken away, or getting to them has been rendered so difficult that I find that it takes little effort for me to resist those impulses that would formerly have resulted in quick and impulsive action to satisfy the cravings of my flesh.

I believe there is a message here. Yahweh often lames His sons and daughters to keep them from running so freely after that which their flesh desires. He has used the imagery of inflicting an injury to a person's walk consistently throughout the Bible. The angel touched Jacob in the socket of his thigh, and Jacob had to lean on his staff afterwards.

Genesis 32:24-31

Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him... Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Penuel, and he was limping on his thigh.

When a man is afflicted in some manner where walking becomes difficult, or painful, he becomes more contemplative in choosing where he will go. The man has an inducement to limit unnecessary travel. Experiencing the discomfort, or pain, of walking is embraced at necessity. The casual carelessness of such decisions is gone.

If I find that a craving for a chocolate bar comes upon me I am led to consider my way to a greater degree than I did formerly. I might ride my bicycle to the store (carefully), but when I get there I will have to put weight on my injured leg for I cannot carry my crutches on the bike. I know to do so will be uncomfortable, and will likely prolong my recovery, so although I could do such a thing, I am inclined to put the craving out of my mind, which is what I should have been doing when walking was much easier.

This form of correction is common among the sons of Yahweh. Those who are called to journey to Zion, the place of the overcomers in Christ, will frequently bear upon their bodies the marks of Yahweh's discipline. The remnant traveling to Zion is a broken company who walk haltingly upon injured limbs. This encourages them to not stray far from the path.

Micah 4:6-7

"In that day," declares Yahweh, "I will assemble the lame and gather the outcasts, even those whom I have afflicted. I will make the lame a remnant and the outcasts a strong nation, and Yahweh will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and forever."

It is humbling to confess that apart from Yahweh's frequent corrections, severe at times, I would be far off the path that leads to Zion. I know this to be true, however. Apart from the regular chastening of my Father in heaven I would be a most careless son and would lack any close resemblance to my elder brother Yahshua. Like a stubborn mule that keeps straying from the path that leads to his master's destination, Yahweh has had to strike me with a rod repeatedly while instructing me to return to The Way that leads to life.

All those who arrive at Zion under such a hand of correction will have nothing to boast about pertaining to their flesh. They can only state, "It is because my Father loved me that I have arrived at this place. It is because of His faithful correction that I remained on the path of life."

Romans 9:29

And as Isaiah said before: "Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a posterity, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah."

People of God, I know the wickedness that is bound up in my flesh. I thank God for His faithfulness to discipline me that I might not be given over to wickedness and depravity. In one of the articles I posted on the Christchurch earthquakes where unknown "faults" led to great loss and ruin, I wrote the following:

The flesh must constantly be ruled over. Apart from the restraint of the Spirit of Christ I would long ago have made a shipwreck of my own life. If Christ had granted Satan permission to sift me as wheat, I would have shown all the world what depths of sin I am capable of. When I hear of some failure of another human being, whether it be a Christian minister, or some secular person of renown (Lindsay Lohan, Katy Perry, for example), I know that if the Father had left me to myself, and I had been given the wealth and freedom they have to pursue anything the soul desires, that I would easily have done far worse.

People of God, I do not write these things to excuse unrighteous behavior, nor would I lower the standard of righteousness one centimeter. We are called to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). Rather, I write these things to declare that those who have not yet attained to this perfection (myself included) should tremble when they hear of the fall of another. It could be you or I, but for the grace of God. So let us avail ourselves of the moment of grace we have received. Let us humble ourselves before the Father. Ask Him to not give us over to the sin and depravity that resides within, but to establish us in righteousness and truth.

I encourage you to consider the ways in which Yahweh has labored to keep you "in line" and on the path of life. Have you at times complained that He did not give you the wealth, or health that you have desired? Have you thought His withholding such things has been counterproductive, hindering you from performing the breadth of ministry you might have accomplished if you had been more affluent, or physically stronger? Yahweh chooses what is best for His sons and daughters. He knows that a position of strength (financially or physically) leads to careless living and a diminishment of the fear of God in our lives. Our weakness physically, financially, or in some other area, keeps us from running far astray from Him. Even the apostle Paul needed help to keep his pride in abeyance.

II Corinthians 12:7-10

Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me -- to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with

difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

I could offer up my complaint to God. I could say, "Father, I want to be able to run without hindrance." But He would say, "My son, you would run into error and grievous harm." I could say, "Father, I want to be free and unhindered by this broken body!" In my heart, I know He has chosen what is best for me for He perceives that an unfettered freedom would be turned to licentiousness. I am content, therefore, to be one of those whom Yahweh has afflicted, who is making his way haltingly toward Zion.

Having shared this, I would now recount a recent story that was in the news. I was made aware of it this morning when a sister in Christ sent me a link to a blog she had written about a recent ministry trip to help the people of West Liberty, Kentucky. On March 2nd a tornado passed right through the center of the town of some 3,500 people. It has been categorized as either an EF3 or EF4 tornado with winds between 150 and 165 miles per hour. The damage it inflicted was catastrophic. Homes and businesses were damaged, or in many cases totally destroyed. This sister wrote the following:

Unless you have personally visited a site that has been affected by a tornado as large as the one that struck West Liberty, you cannot be prepared for the devastation that meets your eyes. Places where homes once stood now bear only the foundations that bore them. The buildings that are standing have no windows, roofs are torn off, parts of the building are gone and are marked for demolition and/or for repair. Trees are knocked over like bowling pins in an alley. Trees that are standing have been visibly changed with splinters sticking out where leaves and branches used to be. The most notable thing, though, is the people and the haunted look in their eyes; at least the ones who have lost everything.

[Source: <http://theincrediblegift.blogspot.com/2012/04/my-journey-into-serving-from-girlhood.html>]

According to Wikipedia, the National Weather Service determined that the tornado was on the ground for 86 miles and left a swath of damage over a mile wide. Six people were killed by this tornado and at least 75 injured. West Liberty is the county seat for Morgan county. Significantly, both the old courthouse that had been built in 1907, and a new courthouse that was 60% complete, were determined to be a total loss. This detail speaks of Yahweh holding court and judging His people.

1 Peter 4:17-19

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.



West Liberty United Methodist Church Before Tornado

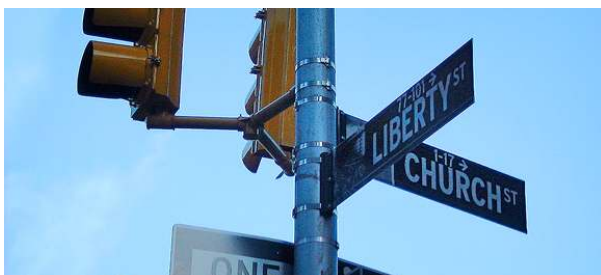


West Liberty UMC After Tornado

This expression, “those who suffer according to the will of God” does not speak only of those who encounter persecution due to obedience in following Christ. It is also a reference to those who are chastened by God that they might learn to walk in holiness. In either case, we are exhorted to trust God to do what is best and needful toward us, for He is a faithful Creator.

I believe this tornado is a further sign of that judgment coming quickly to the Western world. The Western nations have long been regarded as offering the most freedoms and liberty to their citizens. The Liberty in these Western nations will be abruptly brought to an end, even as the town of West Liberty was suddenly, and calamitously, reduced to ruin.

The Father has been speaking of the misuse of liberty for many years. The World Trade Towers that were destroyed on September 11th, 2001 were located at the corner of Church Street and Liberty Street in Manhattan.



The church has misused her liberty and has pursued trade with the world. Yahweh must therefore judge His people. He will remove their liberty that they might learn to walk in righteousness. If they will not voluntarily abstain from a pursuit of the world and the things in it, He will induce them to do so.

I John 2:15-17

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

Those things coming to the nations will be devastating in a natural sense. What could be worse than a loss of liberty? To have one's freedom taken away is tragic. Yet, when that freedom has been used to pursue a course of sensuality, living to please the flesh, it is well and good that it be removed. Even then, it will be a remnant that turns to righteousness, holiness, and truth. For the sake of the remnant, Yahweh will do these things.

Isaiah 26:9

For when the earth experiences Your judgments the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

One interesting note that has come out of the tornado aftermath was recorded on a site I visited. The following was stated:

A temporary Courthouse is open for business. The Morgan County office of the Circuit Court Clerk is open for business and providing full services out of a temporary location at 155 University Drive in West Liberty. One of the most popular services provided so far has been replacing lost driver's licenses.

A loss of mobility is observed in these words. Many drivers lost their licenses in the storm. Yahweh will bring such circumstances to the world in coming days that His people will not run to and fro as they once did. They will not casually, with little consideration, run after those things that were so easily pursued in days of prosperity, ease and freedom. Yahweh will cause His sons and daughters to give heed to their ways, and to walk circumspectly in the midst of a wicked generation.

The liberty God's people once possessed, and employed in a manner displeasing to Yahweh, will come to a sudden end. God's people will no longer be able to run freely after the things of the world, or to pursue with ease the satisfying of the passions and desires of the soul. Yahweh will afflict them. That which He afflicts them with will slow them down and cause them to consider carefully their way. I will close this post with the same words that were used to open it.

Psalms 119:67

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.