

Call to Obedience
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Shattered Dreams

“Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.”—2 Kings 5:1-2

How many of you would say that many of your youthful dreams have been shattered? They could have been dreams about your education, marriage, occupation, ministry, children, home, health, and the list goes on. Everyone can list many disappointments because of shattered hopes.

It is obvious that this little maid in the story of Naaman the leper had most if not all of her childhood dreams shattered. She never dreamed that she would be brutally captured by the Syrians, separated from her country, her religious community, her parents and siblings to become a slave in the house of the very general who destroyed her dreams.

We can all identify with this little maid and her shattered dreams. We are all together in this painful fact of life: we don't get everything we want. Everybody wants something they will never get. We can choose one of two responses: 1) We can spend the rest of our lives living in our shattered dreams and disappointments or 2) We can believe that most of what we wanted was not God's plan anyway, and that *“all things work together for good to them that love God”* (Rom. 8:28). That is, we can embrace the cross and let God fulfill His purpose for the rest of our lives. If you choose the first option, your gravestone could read, "He lived in vain." If you choose number two, it could read, "One life poured out for Jesus."

Christian parents should teach their children that nothing in life matters but doing the will of God. We must teach the words of God, *“that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Is. 5:5-9). Our lifestyle and choices must continually reinforce this truth. I think that this maid had someone who taught her to hold her dreams lightly, so that God could replace them with His dreams without emotional upheaval. People who hold their dreams tightly normally sink with them as soon as they are shattered. Hold all your dreams in an open hand so that you will not be jarred when they are destroyed and replaced with God's dreams. This girl must have believed that *“he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways”* (Ps. 91:11). This young lady had a stronger hold on the Psalms than on her dreams.

I believe that this little girl did not go into a pity party when the Syrians came, nor did she sulk, nor did she keep living in her lost dreams. It is more likely that she believed that God makes no mistakes. Instead of looking upon herself as a miserable slave, she saw herself as a missionary with an opportunity to evangelize her slave masters, just as the apostle Paul saw his Roman prison guards as souls to be converted. What a little maid! Little only in the eyes of man, but *“mighty with God to the pulling down of strongholds”* (2 Cor. 10:4).

What is your perspective in your hard place? Are you breaking down strongholds, or are you letting strongholds break you because you are holding on to your dreams? Friends, some of you have lost many fruitful years because you have not let go of the past. Didn't Jesus say that he that looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God? (Luke 9:62) What is the focus of your life?

We will never put a cross into our dreams, so God has to do it for us. We don't put rain into our vacation plans, demotions into our vocational plans, sickness into our healthy life plans. The dreams of the natural man are selfish and self-fulfilling. They make no room for God nor for souls to be saved. It is only as we suffer with Christ that we may be glorified together with Him (Rom. 8:17). Only through the cross can we come into His likeness, to fruitfulness. Only through the cross can we experience God's anointing and come to joy unspeakable and full of glory; and peace that surpasses understanding. We must let go of the past. Those who live in the past have no future! Cross-less dreams are worthless dreams. God puts a cross into everything that He is in. Our life is through the cross. Eternity is through the cross. It is a fact of life in God's kingdom that all of **our** dreams have to be shattered because they fall short of **His** dreams for us.

If we want to be Jesus' disciples we must forsake all we have, **including our dreams** (Luke 14:33). Adam and Eve thought that their dream for life was better than God's, so they ate the forbidden fruit. It brought them death. Our dreams deceive us. So when the Syrians came to get the maid, she knew why she was on earth and wasted no time. She became a foreign missionary overnight. Every heart with Christ is a missionary. Every heart without Christ is a mission field. You can abide in Christ, anywhere, under any circumstances. Paul was in prison and not in a palace when he said, *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”* (Phil. 4:11-13).

Forget about your unfulfilled dreams. You have a mission to fulfill. The young girl had lost all rights on earth, but no one could take away her rights to the throne of God. The only place she could go without her master's permission was to God in prayer. But that was good enough for her: she did not join the idolatry and paganism in the general's home. She set up a station for God. She stuck with her convictions, she was a non-conformist. She never dreamed what would come out of her loving assignment in housekeeping, cooking, cleaning and laundry. She prayed, she loved, she listened and she waited. Her master contracted leprosy, and the maid told her mistress that there was a prophet in Israel who could call on God to heal.

Who would listen to little foreign slave girl in a world where women meant little and slaves less? The general did, and so did the king. Why? Because this maid had built credentials. She came with none, but she built them up one by one as brick upon brick as she served the Lord joyfully. Godly character was etched upon her youthful face through joyful suffering. You are not responsible for your face when you're born, but you are responsible for what it looks like when you're grown up. If a man is a liar, it will show on his face; if he is a saint his countenance will show it. Joseph's countenance took him from slavery to the palace. Where is your countenance taking you? You pay for what is on your face. If you do your assignment well and with joy, you will leave a mark for God.

So the girl told her masters about the prophet who could heal leprosy. Naaman told the king of Syria, who sent a letter with Naaman to the king of Israel. Naaman went on his way with \$163,000 worth of gold and silver and 10 changes of garments. Oh, my friend, what kind of girl was this to move a general and a king? Don't you believe that since this teenager could do that, you can do so also? Live for God. Forget your shattered dreams.

Most scholars put the whole attention of Naaman's healing on Elisha, since he gave instructions to wash seven times in the Jordan River. But the hidden truth is that for everyone who harvests a great miracle, there is a hidden person who sowed it. That someone is always one who left his dreams to enter fully into God's divine purposes. All ministry is of value. In God's kingdom, the one who plants is equal to the one who waters and the one who harvests, because God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:7). Do not belittle yourself. Someone raised the girl to be a giant for God, so that girl could testify to Naaman's wife, and Naaman could be healed. And he declared afterwards, *"There is no God in all the earth, but in Israel"* (2 Kgs. 5:15).

Naaman came home, healed, and a new convert. What is the rest of the story? Well, we have the divine right to imagine. Here are my ideas. The young girl became the general's Sunday school teacher for a season. Naaman, having proved himself an eager rewarder (v. 15, 16), promoted her or gave her freedom from slavery and sent her home with a purse full of money. These are only speculations. But what is not speculation is this: that **God's dreams for us are not only higher than ours but also better than our own.** Don't question God in the time of your afflictions. Believe and you will always come out a winner.

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