

Fanning it into Flame
Sunday, July 24, 2011
Are Your Hearts Hardened?

James and Jennifer Brito dedicated their daughter Kaiya to the Lord this morning. Their desire is that Kaiya will grow up knowing that she belongs to the Lord and that he has great plans for her life. He will never leave her or forsake her. His plans for her are nothing but good plans that are filled with hope. This act of dedication also included the realization that her parents, extended family, and church family all have a part in this. Kaiya will be observing all of us to understand the world she lives in. She needs to see real faith demonstrated in tangible ways. It's not a matter of "talk." As we live it, she sees the reality of it.

Just as James and Jennifer desire only the best for their daughter, so does God for us. We allow ourselves to get knocked off course a bit by looking at things the wrong way. Past hurts or disappointments can fester within us and fuel wrong thinking regarding God's plans for us. I met a man on vacation with his son and I inquired about his arm in a sling. I wanted to pray for his healing. He fabricated a story to try to satisfy my curiosity so I would just move on, but I had more in mind. He then began to talk about how he keeps seeking God and wanting to be forgiven for things in his past. As we continued our conversation he realized that I was genuine and not what he had initially thought. I prophesied over him about his future with the Lord's help and to not dwell on the past, but look to the God who loves him and paid for his forgiveness and healing. It was a powerful moment. While his paralyzed arm was not healed on the spot, he had an encounter with the Living God.

I also had a very vivid dream the other day that I believe in part captures the heart of this message. A friend from my past who has carried a deep secret and wound from the past was weeping before me in this dream because of the guilt he has borne. I told him in the dream that his deliverance was today in church. God desires only the best things for us. We can't walk ahead by continually looking behind. We must fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith!

In **Mark 16:9-14** Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to Mary Magdalene. When she told the disciples they didn't believe her. A little while later Jesus appeared to two others who also told the disciples. They didn't believe them either. Then Jesus appeared to the Eleven and rebuked them for their lack of faith and their *stubborn refusal to believe*. That phrase means hard-heartedness. They allowed the limitations of the natural realm to hinder their reception of the supernatural realm.

Mark 8:14-21 (NIV)

¹⁴ *The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat.* ¹⁵ *"Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."* ¹⁶ *They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread."* ¹⁷ *Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?"* ¹⁸ *Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?"* ¹⁹ *When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"* *"Twelve," they replied.* ²⁰ *"And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"* *They answered, "Seven."* ²¹ *He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"* Jesus had to remind the disciples that they were not thinking right. The fact that they had witnessed God's miraculous provision should have been their default mode of thinking from then on. It's never about not having enough bread; not when God miraculously multiplied it on two occasions. We must be careful to not allow our hearts to get hardened by viewing things from the natural realm. God loves us and he wants to heal us and bless us super-abundantly. He's a good God!

Are you believing that God is for you and not against you? Are you confessing his promises over your life and expecting him to perform his Word over you? Do you walk in a continual state of guilt and shame or do you believe that there is *no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*? Choose his way of thinking and be blessed!