

Words of Life

(December 26, 2007)

I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

Revelation 1:9-11

In the verses above we are given some insight into the circumstances surrounding the aged Apostle John at the time he was given the revelation of Jesus Christ. We are told that he was a companion to other believers in tribulation and kingdom and patience. We are also told that John was on the island called Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. So he had been faithful to God and had openly shared his faith with others. As a result he was taken arrested and banished to a remote island. I imagine things were not working out for John the way he had planned. He was an old man when sent to Patmos and undoubtedly he would have liked to be around family and friends, instead of alone. Church historians tell us of the great love this apostle had for others and his desire to go around from place to place telling of God's great love for His people. However, things weren't working out that way. Instead of being able to go around and share the love of Christ, he was isolated and separated and by himself on a remote island.

Things don't always work out the way we think they should. We can't always make sense of the circumstances. Sometimes in the course of our Christian lives we can find ourselves all alone. I realize that many of you who read this devotional are alone right now. You may be away at school or in your apartment or home or at a desk and be all alone. Things may not be working out in your life the way you thought they would. Possibly there has been separation from friends or family or the split of a marriage. Others of you may be in a house full of people, but may still feel all alone. There are times when circumstances just don't seem to be going our way and a deep sense of loneliness can set in. We can feel isolated and separated and even trapped. Sometimes in our jobs we can become discouraged and wonder what it is all for. We can rapidly lose perspective and feel as though we are alone. We may not be on a remote island, but the sense of our aloneness can be very much the same. I imagine the apostle John had some of those same feelings.

But notice that he was "in the Spirit" on the Lord's day. It would have been easy for John to be "in the flesh" instead of "in the Spirit" on this particular day. His mind could have been filled with all the wrong that had been done him. He could have been angry and uptight. He could have been pacing around the island kicking stones and thinking how unfair it all was. He could have been spending his time figuring out how to build a raft and get off that island and get back to the work he so badly wanted to do for the Lord. He could have been crying out to God for deliverance from that island. Or he could have been spending all his time questioning God as to why this was all happening to him. But that was not what he was doing. We are told that he was "in the Spirit." I believe that means he was in a place of worship in his heart. It was this same apostle who wrote in John 4:24 "God is Spirit, and those who

The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

John 6:63

worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

Then, as John worshipped God, in spite of the circumstances, he was drawn into the Spiritual realm where God broke the silence and spoke and gave him incredible revelation! Isn't that what we all desire? To hear God. To have Him speak to us and reveal His will to us? O how desperate we are for the voice of God. There are many voices in this world, but only One that should rise above all others. We must learn from this passage. We must trust that God knows what He is doing in our lives. We must not be overcome by our circumstances but be over-comers through our worship of Him who loves us. We must be patient and wait for His voice, knowing that the path to hear Him is by being "in the Spirit" and not "in the flesh".

As you look forward to another year I encourage you to grow in your worship of the Lord. You may feel as though you are all alone on a remote island with no one else to share your life with. Well, instead of focusing on the difficulty of the circumstance, view it as a tremendous opportunity to hear God's voice. God went through a lot to get John on that island. Once there, God had something incredible in store for him. And God has something incredible for you as you continue "in the Spirit".

God bless you all!

Pastor Ted

But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

1 Corinthians 2:9