

Verse: Jeremiah 12:5

Questions for reflection:

1. Who are the 'footmen' who weary you in your life and ministry?

2. What are the 'horses' the Lord wants you to run with?

3. What should we be doing in our 'land of peace' to prepare for the flooding of the Jordan?

At a tea party that Senior Pastor attended, many shared that they were wearied by the footmen at the work front and on returning home, they were exhausted. Who are the footmen who weary you?

To run with horses, we must look to

1. Protect the capacities in our lives. Quick revision of these:
 - a) Spiritual capacity
 - b) Mental capacity
 - c) Emotional capacity
 - d) Physical capacity
2. Strengthen them
3. Enlarge them

What are we doing to protect our spiritual capacity; to protect our time with God; to develop our prayer-life and to build the altar of praise, worship and thanksgiving? What goes into our mind? We have to watch what we see and to guard the leakages. Are we growing emotionally healthy? As we get older, we must eat well nutritionally, exercise and have good rest.

Running with horses – 2012 challenges

1. Community Penetration
Talk to those who have a passion for this. The harvest is ripe and plenteous.
2. Evangelism
Some cells have reached a stage where all Oikos have come to know the Lord. Be encouraged to try out new platforms, e.g. Is there an orphanage to adopt? A leader from another church wanted to reach out to the Bangladesh workers and asked for 20-30 volunteers. 70 people then turned up to befriend the workers at the dormitories. What's your new platform?
3. Alpha
We have tribes anchoring this.
4. Missions
We can consider adopting overseas missions.

How to run with horses? Let's look at 4 significant milestones in our discipleship journey.

2 Kings 1-14

¹ When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel."

But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

³ The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," Elisha replied, "so be quiet."

⁴ Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho."

And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho.

⁵ The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," he replied, "so be quiet."

⁶ Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan."

And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So the two of them walked on.

⁷ Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. ⁸ Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?"

"Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied.

¹⁰ "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not."

¹¹ As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹² Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.

¹³ Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. "Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.

The above is a typology of 4 spiritual milestones:

- a) Gilgal
- b) Bethel
- c) Jericho
- d) Jordan

What is Gilgal?

It is the cutting away of the flesh. After 40 years in the wilderness, Israel landed in Gilgal. All those who had murmured had died in the wilderness. It was at Gilgal that they were circumcised; it is the rolling away of the reproach of Egypt. How?

Principle of First Mention

Joshua 5:9

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you. Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day."

Application #1: We must bring our past under the Blood.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God is faithful because the price has been paid. He is faithful not because we are good. His mercy and grace is unmerited, undeserved. When the Blood of Christ covers, then there is no foothold. The problem we see in our lives – schizophrenia, depression, verbal abuse, relationship problems are the combinations and permutations of the curses in Deuteronomy 28. One of the ways to revoke this is Galatians 3:13. We appropriate the Blood to cover the gaps and doorways previously given to the evil one to steal, kill and destroy.

What is reproach? It is shame, blame and disgrace. We have skeletons in the closet. Some have sinned, some cheated, some have revealed a secret he should have kept, some have lied to bosses, some have seen unwholesome movies or have done some things during NS. What do we need to do? We need to bring them under the Blood of Christ so as to be cleansed from defilement and stop the devil from coming after us.

Philippians 3:13 – Paul was a murderer but he wanted to press forward to know the things of God.

Colossians 1:20

And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

Application 2: We must know the divine exchange.

Hebrews 10:17

Then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

All our sins are paid for and are under the Blood and Father God remembers them no more. We can go to God 24/365. All our sins are placed on Christ and as in 2 Cor 5:21, we are the righteousness of God.

Romans 8:1 says there is no condemnation. We are completely forgiven. For believers, we are in the window of grace which is open until we die or when the rapture takes place. Birth pangs will increase. The picture of the Lord today is the father of the prodigal son. The Son of God has taken the brunt of all the judgment. There is Judgment to come at the Great White Throne but we are now in the window of grace. That's why we give ourselves to reach out to others. The window is open for us now.

Application 3: As we do so, we must deal with all aspects of the flesh in our lives.

a) The flesh that sins.

Galatians 5:19-21 (sins of commission)

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions and factions.

These are sins of commission which violate the will of God.

James 4:17 (Sins of omission)

Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

Are we honouring our parents? Some people are happy when their parents are placed in the old folks' home. The good we ought to do but fail to do is sin. Next, what about submission to authority, to government and church leaders? They may not be perfect but we ought to submit as unto the Lord. The husband is to lead and the wife to submit as a helper. Are we obeying the commandments of the Lord?

b) The flesh of our own natural goodness, abilities, zeal, wisdom, strength and power.

We may serve in the flesh and some may serve in the zeal of the flesh. Until and unless we understand the corruption of the flesh, we have not grown spiritually nor understand spiritual life.

Moses was very well taught. His education was comparable to the top universities in our time. At 40, his zeal for God was of his flesh and natural gifting but they were of no use to God. For 40 years, God stripped him. When God called him, he was a stutterer but 40 years later, he was one mighty in deeds. There was a cutting of the flesh, a journey in brokenness.

There is the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world. The foolishness of God will confound the wisdom of the world (1 Cor 1). When the flesh is not cut, we will not enjoy entering the promised land, victory or the more abundant life.

Luke 9:23 – there is a cost to intentional discipleship.

The arm of flesh to steady the ark - the Israelites did what the Philistines did. They put the ark on the cart. The ox stumbled and the ark appeared to be toppling. Then Uzza stretched out his hand to steady the ark but he was struck dead. When the ark was placed near to Dagon, the limbs and head of Dagon was broken. God can take care of Himself. We need to make the main thing the main thing. Some people go about taking upon themselves to defend the Bible. Some are heresy hunters and others, critical of messages. Today, they are in the wilderness. Don't fall into the snare of the devil. It may seem to be a noble thing to be hunting heretic preachers but it is actually the arm of flesh to steady the ark.

i. Deny our self-life.

Romans 6:11 says to reckon yourself dead to sin, i.e. do not react; do not respond according to the sinful nature. E.g. taking revenge, getting even; keeping a record of wrongs; vicarious anger; expectation and judgmental.

Why must the flesh die?

- 1) This is because the flesh is hostile to God and cannot please God (Romans 8:7-8)
- 2) The flesh profits nothing (John 6:63)
- 3) The sin nature is corrupt and cannot be transformed. It must be crucified and be put to death!

How do we do it?

ii. Take up our cross daily.

- 1) The cross means crucifixion and death to self-life.
- 2) Our cross is not our sister's or brother's cross.
- 3) Our cross is unique and a personal one.
- 4) Our cross are:
 - a) The people that cross our paths
Kids, parents and spouse can be our cross. Pay attention as God can use a donkey or a rooster to speak to us.
 - b) The circumstances that we are in, that invokes the sin-nature in us must be crucified and put to death.

The life of Christ is increased (manifested) to the extent the I-Me-Myself is decreased. The day I fail to take up my cross is the day I:

- Lose my temper
- Fall into sin
- Get offended
- Get overly stressed
- On performance treadmill
- Gossip, lust, etc.

We need to intentionally put off the old man and put on the new man. We must consciously do this all the time. Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:11; Colossians 3:9-10; Ephesians 4:22-24

Understand the whys of Spiritual Discipline, Serving and Ministry

Why do we have word-intake? Why do we go to church? Why read the word? Some do it out of guilt. Some do it out of wrong motivation. We cannot earn the favor of God. We must know why we serve.

We serve because we love God (1 John 4:10,19)

We serve because we love people and desire to be His instruments to touch.

We serve because we want to fulfill God's destiny for our lives. We are God's workmanship in Christ Jesus.

Understand the basis of Prayer

We think that by making long prayers or fasting, we impress God. Travail is in the atonement. The fruit of his agony has been done for us. We go by faith, not by beating ourselves. On the cross, it is finished. We can do nothing to earn His mercy and grace. What's required of me is to act on His grace and mercy. That's why we come here to celebrate each Sunday, not to mourn. There is a place for personal solitude; at the beach, inside your car, etc.

iii. Follow Me

Yield to the Holy Spirit to circumcise our hearts

Romans 2:29

But he is a Jew who is one inwardly and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

This is to allow the Spirit to do spiritual surgery. Peter preached and they were cut to the heart. We are priests and kings of God. If we do not revere our calling, we trivialize it. In a sense, we spit at our salvation that is purchased with the precious Blood of Christ. When we understand that, we will arise and our lives will be changed.

What sort of BBTicians does the Lord want?

Psalm 51:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart – these, O God, You will not despise.

Is there brokenness in our lives? One of the evidences of someone who is humble and contrite is he who trembles at the word of God. Israel did not. They stumbled and murmured and they died. At Gilgal, they were circumcised, healed and ready to go on to the promised land.

Isaiah 66:2

For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist, says the LORD. But on this one I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.

Conclusion

Gilgal = circumcision
= cutting of the flesh
= step to promised land.

Which aspect of our flesh is holding us back from experiencing the promised land? Which aspect of our flesh needs to be cut off?

Galatians 5:17

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to one another so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Romans 8:8 tells us that those who live in the flesh cannot please God.

We can do many things on our own but it will be out of the flesh. Gilgal is the place just before the Promised Land. If we are constantly plagued with problems, perhaps some aspects of our flesh is not cut off and standing in the way of our victory and of our entering the promised Land, of entering the super abundant life.

Galatians 5:16

I say then: Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

We need to deal with the flesh as the Holy Spirit reveals to us.

End

Question for Discussion

1) Is there a past that you need to bring under the Blood of Jesus?

2) Personal reflection:

a) Are there sins of commission or sins of omission that you need to deal with?

b) Are you serving in the flesh?

c) Which aspect of your flesh do you need to cut off?

3) What are some things we can liken to the 'arm of the flesh that reaches to steady the ark?'

4) What are some things we could have given ourselves more to performance than to the act of true worship?

5) What should we be doing so as to prevent getting caught by the snares of the devil?

6) What kind of people is God looking for? What would make us the kind of people God is looking for?

No condemnation, no comparison, no competition but only encouragement