

## BEAUTY FOR ASHES

WILLIS 4/8/18

Is61:1-3

It is a universal fact that bad things happen to “good people.” I’ve come to discover this reality for 2 basic reasons. **According to the Biblical record:**

1. **There is no such thing as “good people.”** Outside of Christ “There is none that is righteous not even one.” Outside of Christ all have sinned and totally missed the mark.
2. **In a backward kingdom “bad things” are not what they appear to be.** When the believer’s life is backed by the promise of “All things work together for the good...” the things that appear bad are just the staging process for the goodness of God to happen.

When Jesus said, “in this world you will have tribulation...” **it wasn’t just the inevitability of tribulation that He warned us of...Jesus was also addressing the inevitable blessing intrinsic in all tribulation.** We see this truth in **Is 43:2...**

- **“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.**

Don’t you think if Jesus has the power to keep us from being burned in the fire He could just go ahead and keep us from the fire? Problem is we see the fire as a bad thing so want to be kept from it whereas God see’s it as a redemptive thing so allows us to go through it.

- **It takes fire to produce ash and the Lord requires ashes to buy beauty. So He allows the fire to produce the ash then exchanges the worthlessness of our ash for the treasure of His beauty.**
- Is 61:3 “I will give them beauty for ashes...” The ashes of life are the currency through which we receive the beauty of God. Even self-imposed ash. No ash; no beauty.
- In the natural ashes is the final conclusion of a fire. In the Spirit however, **ashes are the staging point for an upgrade.** In the natural we get nothing but ruin for ashes but in the Spirit we are to exchange the ashes of circumstance for the beauty of redeeming grace.
- Yes life happens, yes we often make a mess of many things and ashes are the result. **Jesus however is the God good enough to give us beauty for whatever ashes our decisions might produce.** Ashes of divorce; beauty after divorce, ashes of addiction...

The scriptures tell us, “The rain falls on the just and the unjust.” Unfortunately the realities of life happen. Very often they happen for the bad. Sometimes our hopes and dreams burn down and nothing is left other than the ashes of our disappointment. **It is at this appointment with disappointment that we must decide:**

1. Will we become enslaved to the ashes of our brokenness and settle for the pain of bitterness and acrimony? OR
2. Will we exchange the ashes of our adversity for the beauty of God's promise and live in the miracle of the divine exchange?

**Ps113:7 "He raises the poor out of the dust and the needy out of the ash heap that He might seat them with Princes.** Wow what a promise. From ash heaps to thrones...it's the way of the Kingdom but to get to the throne you must pass through the inevitable ash heap.

- Ashes are never the conclusion they are only stage one of the process. **For every problem there is a promise. For every promise there is a process. For every process there is a tremendous need for patience.**
- It's the humility of the ash heap that qualifies you for the promise of the throne.

So how do we make the exchange? What must we do to exchange beauty for ashes? 4-R's

1. **Repent: Acts 3:19** (if self imposed ash) **Repentance is an act of turning around and getting positioned to receive the divine exchange.** Repentance is dispositional before it is transactional. It's a attitude before it is an action.
2. **Remove: Lev 6:10-11** Every day figuratively remove the debris of what happened yesterday lest the fires of our passion get snuffed out by the ash of bitterness, negativity or offense. Ash is the toxic aftermath of negative circumstances. Ash can't be left behind.
  - **Wounds become prisons when there is no willingness to remove yesterday's ashes.** Ashes are the wounded places in our lives that if held onto produce unforgiveness and bitterness but if surrendered God replaces them with beauty..
3. **Rejoice: Phil 4:4** **Praise adds value to the ash and readies them for the divine exchange.** The more we praise through hardship and misfortune, the more exchangeable our ashes become. **Through praise the worthless becomes priceless.**
  - The ashes of our misfortune are lethal to us but when given back to God in praise they are very currency He uses to redeem us, restore us and rebuild us.
  - Is61 calls it a mantle of Praise. Praise is a mantle we "put on" and when we do we are given authority to exchange the devastation of misfortune for the promise of redemption. Through praise God buys our adversity back.
4. **Restore: Is58:12** **Beauty for ashes is a promise that becomes a "Phoenix like" expectation that we can put our hope in.** Phoenix: "a person who has become renewed or restored after great calamity or apparent annihilation."
  - "Phoenix" is taken from the mythical bird that at the age of 500-600 years would burn itself up in order to rise from the ashes in the newness of its youth.
  - **Grace is God's permission to rise up from the ashes of our mistakes.**
  - Sounds like what we read in Ps113:7 "He raises the poor out of the dust and the needy out of the ash heap that He might seat them with Princes."

In closing let me say **Jesus never looks to your ashes to define you; He only uses them to beautify you.** After promising beauty for ashes in v.3; Is 61:7 promises “instead of your shame you will receive double for our trouble.”

- **Jesus invites us to exchange the ashes of our shame for the beauty of a double blessing.**
- As you know on June 5<sup>th</sup> our house burned and they determined it to be a 100% loss. Our builder just told us whatever you determined the previous value of your house to be double it by the time we are done. **You will receive double for your trouble.**
- Circumstances don't define you and failures can't disqualify you. God promises He will take the ashes of your tribulation and upgrade you double.