Devotion #316

**Jesus Must Take More Ground**

**John 3:30 (NASB)** *"He must increase, but I must decrease.”*

I believe the hardest thing for the human mind and heart to do is humble itself. Our whole existence in this life is built upon being the best or at least being better than the next person. But that way of life is diametrically opposed to the way God wants us to live.

Our verse for today comes from the words of John the Baptist. John was sent by God to be the herald for the King. In those days a herald was responsible for going ahead of the king and clearing the roads and announcing the king’s arrival. This wasn’t just a figurative position. The herald was responsible for making sure there were no obstacles in the road physically and certainly no obstacles from people.

When John began his ministry, he verbally proclaimed the coming of the Messiah and also condemned the religious leaders who spent their lives elevating themselves. He referred to them as broods of vipers and called them out on their religious fakery. He was truly a herald for the King of all Kings.

When it came time for Jesus to begin His public ministry as the Messiah, King of Israel, John stepped back. He took the role that is proper for all of God’s people. He needed to decrease his ministry so that the Lord would be elevated to His proper place.

That’s the way it should be for each of us who belongs to Jesus. We need to let go of what we want so that Jesus can have His way in us and do His work through us. That will never happen in the way God wants it to happen if we are constantly allowing our pride to motivate us.

When we face challenging times, we need to not fight for our own rights and our own ways but to humbly allow God to work in our hearts what He knows is best. Too often we are blinded by our own ambition and ways of thinking. Too often we want Jesus to follow us instead of the opposite. And many, many times, even though we believe in our hearts we are following Him, we let things get in the way that we don’t even notice anymore, simply because that is the way we have always operated.

The truth is that our hearts should be desiring to let go of more of what we want so that Jesus can take more ground in our hearts. I often view this in my mind as a battle where I am charging forward to take more ground - for Jesus. This is His world, His people, His church. We belong to Him, not the other way around.

In Matthew 9 the Lord tells us that Jesus is not to be a new patch of cloth added to our already-worn clothing and He is not to be new wine put into our old wineskins. Jesus is not to be an addition to our lives as they were, but He is to give us a new lives. He is to be in full control of all our desires in this life. Further, He is not to just occupy a part of us but our entirety. We are to gain all of the ground for Him, not for ourselves.

Trust me when I say that I understand how challenging it is to let Jesus have more. But this is the only way. God wants to use us for His purposes and to reach others with the message of salvation, but we must be willing to surrender more to Him until there is nothing of us left. Paul said it this way, **2 Timothy 4:6 (NASB) “**For I am already being poured out as a drink offering.”. Paul was about to be martyred for His faith in Jesus, and he had come to the place where he was ready for that. But it took time. It took time for Him to be taken through the machine of suffering for Jesus so that there was nothing of himself left, only Jesus. When that was complete, His work on earth was done.

What is causing you to hold onto that which Jesus wants you to give to Him? It’s a good question to use as a way to examine ourselves, our motives, and our hearts. The best thing we can do is to surrender all to Jesus.