

Sunday, October 23, 2011

The Final Destination

The blood-spattered events of the crucifixion left the disciples in a frightened and painful state of mind. Terrified from the enraged Jews who plotted and conspired to kill the Lord Jesus and disperse away His followers, the disciples fled and hid away. This was their hour- **When darkness reigns**, as mentioned by the Lord Jesus (Luke 22:53).

These horrifying events not only caused the Disciples to be terrified but also caused some of them to lose their memory. Terrible calamities can sometimes cause man to lose his balance and paralyze his ability to think, at least temporarily, and this is what happened to the disciples. They forgot more than three years of their lives, witnessing with their eyes and ears what their great teacher did, raising the dead, creating eyes for the blind, healing the sick with a touch or a word, walking on water, calming the wind, and casting out demons. They forgot His words: ***"I am the resurrection and the life."*** (John 11:25), ***"I have overcome the world."*** (John 16:33), ***"Before Abraham was, I Am"*** (John 8:58), ***"The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up."*** (Matthew 17:22-23). They forgot many signs about Him in the scriptures which He explained to them several times (Lk 4:21).

The gory and frightening events made them lose their memory, so they surrendered to their sadness and sorrow regarding the delightful dream that has suddenly ended and the great hopes that seemed to have vanished and would never come back. This is what was expressed in the words of the two disciples of Emmaus as they were walking in misery and hovering over them a gloomy cloud of sadness and depression. Then, the Lord Jesus drew near them and asked them about the reason of their sadness, they started talking in sorrow about the painful things that happened to Christ in Jerusalem, and how the Jews betrayed Him and sent Him to death, they continued saying: ***"But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel."*** (Luke 24:21) which means that not only they were sad, but also the shocking and cruel events of the cross made them lose their hope in Christ as a redeemer, and made them think that everything has come to an end.

How did Jesus comment on their words?

He rebuked them because of their lack of faith, then He started to explain to them some of the facts: ***"Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"*** Then he continued to explain to them what was written about Him in the books of Moses and the Prophets... His words ignited their hearts!

The Lord wanted to assure them that there is no other way to Glory except through the cross and that we should go beyond the sorrow of the cross. We ought to trust that the cross is not the final destination of our journey, it is not the end, but the end is resurrection, joy, victory, and glory.

Similarly, when Saint Peter followed Christ after He was arrested and the suffering, humiliation, false trials, and the fabricated accusations by false witness had begun, the Bible says that he stood from a distance to see the end (Matthew 26: 58). The result was that he broke down and denied Christ several times before a servant girl. He didn't realize that this was not the end, rather it is just a station on the path of salvation. As to the final destination, it is overcoming death, glorious victory, joy, and strength, to the extent that the situation was completely reversed after the Resurrection. The Jews were trying to spread lies to cover up their failure, while the disciples were witnessing to the power of the resurrected and victorious Christ who granted them the power of His Resurrection

The Cross is never the final destination, It is true that it is a painful event, but we should not be afraid or terrified of it because through the eyes of faith, we trust that it will bring great glory and a big blessing to the Church.

Painful events has always taken place throughout the history of the church, during which the enemy is stirred up in the hour when darkness reign. For instance, the incident of the martyrdom of Steven (Acts 7), then the incident of the martyrdom of James the son of Zebedee (Acts 12:1). In each incident, the attacks did fail without destroying the church, but to the contrary it helped her growth ***"Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word."*** (Acts 8:4). What do we say regarding the powerful waves of persecutions through history which could never shake the faith of the Church!? Kingdoms have vanished and tyrants died, but the church remained surviving, growing, flourishing by the blood of the martyrs and their love, strengthened by the continuous presence of Christ slain in her midst.

Again I emphasize that the cross is not the final destination or the end of the journey, and if the church is now going through a station of this kind, it is not the end. We will never lose our memory despite how vicious the enemy might be. Rather, we believe from the depth of our hearts that after the cross, Resurrection must come because our God is not weak to be overcome by death. Rather he is a great, powerful and victorious God, and he gives victory to all those who rely on Him.

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