

September 2004

Dear Friends,

All that I have spoken to you remains true.

Jesus said this to me some time ago; I think it was about a year back, when I was wrestling with life and the latest round of uncertainties that had struck at the time. It was a precious word to me, just what my soul needed. I had been asking God for a fresh word from him, a new assurance. But instead he said, “All that I have spoken to you remains true.” It was better than some new insight from God. It settled me in a much deeper way than the “next thing” would have. Let me try and explain why.

First, the cumulative effect of life upon our hearts is a sort of *erosion*.

O, how we need to understand this. Picture a river, flowing day after day, night after night, along its banks. Flowing, flowing, flowing. Over time, the mere presence of ever-flowing water begins to undercut the soil alongside the river, wear it away, and carry it off to the sea. Sometimes it happens bit by bit. Other times whole portions of the bank topple and give way, swallowed by the current. Whether or not it notices, the bank is being eroded.

That is the effect of time, and life, upon the soul.

A relationship goes sour. A dream goes unfulfilled. A friend or loved one suffers and despite prayer, cannot find breakthrough. It wears us down. We live in a world that doesn't “get” us. They don't see what we see; they don't seem to want what we want. It, too, wears us down. Of course, there is also the Thief, who comes to steal our convictions and our clarity, who puts his spin on the events of our lives to diminish God and his goodness. On top of all this add our busy-ness, the endless stream of days rushing by, pulling us into this meeting and those chores, as the river pulls the earth with it. The effect is *erosion*.

Subtly, very subtly, we lose the clarity and passion we once had.

No matter how resolute we are, no matter how remarkable our experiences of God may have been over the years, this happens to all of us.

It's not just a danger for the oblivious – those folks who just sort of sleep-walk through life, going from work to church to home without ever really looking at any of it. This is a danger for the self-aware also. Maybe even *more* of a danger for them.

The reason is this: An experience of God, and freedom, and Life is a wonderful thing. Sometimes it brings us to tears; other times it takes our breath away. It's so good. We don't just know in our heads that God loves us – we know it in our *hearts*. We've *experienced* it.

But what begins to happen with these gifts is a shift, a turning from the objective to the subjective. We shift from reality to our *experience* of reality. We begin to measure our progress and well-being on “how we're doing.” Our gaze turns to the gift rather than the Giver. And we are set up for a fall.

The fall comes when our experience is no longer life-giving. Because we all face the erosion of life upon our souls, we lose even the best of memories and the firmest of our convictions. It leaves us wondering what happened. Where is God? Why can't I find my way? Did I do something wrong?

The Enemy jumps on this and says, *Yes, you did. You've done something to make God pull away.* Or, he puts the blame on God, *You see – he's not that reliable. You really are on your own.* It can be a deeply distressing time, even for the stout-hearted.

And that is why we need to hang onto what is true, what *remains* true of God and of us, despite the flow of time. This is what the saints have meant by clinging to the faith once delivered. We need to hang onto that objective reality which really exists, whether or not we feel it to be true.

The heart is a beautiful thing, but a tender and vulnerable thing, and many influences are trying to capture our hearts each day. Those wonderful experiences of God we have – those are simply the moments when our hearts are clued into to the objective reality of the Kingdom of God. Our hearts are responding to what is true, what has always been true. We have perceived God. And that Kingdom does not change, nor does its' King, who remains the same yesterday, and today, and forever ^{Hebrews 13:8}. That is why he says to us,

All that I have spoken to you remains true.

That is the only resting place for our hearts. That is the only safe place for our hearts. Let it be true for a moment, and you'll see what I mean. Nothing has changed between you and God. All he has spoken to you remains true. May your heart respond to the beauty of this lasting reality.

From our hearts,



John