



# THE PASTOR'S PEN

July 18th, 2016

## Do We Have a Choice?

I believe that God is calling us into a future waiting for us to claim it. As such, individually as believers and collectively as the church whose desire it is to remain faithful, can we afford to reject that call?

In *Deuteronomy 1:1-8* God's people found themselves in a situation where they really had no choice. They had to make some changes. They had to trust and move ahead no matter how uncertain, unclear or frightening those changes were.

As the text demonstrates, it's possible for a whole group of people to become stuck in one place and to make little or no discernable progress on their journey. It certainly happened to the people Moses led - the people of God. Moses stood before the people of Israel and he spoke the words of the Lord, "*You have been here long enough.*" Essentially, break the camp and get on with the journey. The Promised Land is not going to come to you. You've got to go and claim it.

In other words, *verses 6 & 7* amount to God's challenge through Moses for the people to put away their fears, rise above their apathy, their comfort zone and get on with living out the promise. The price for staying where they were was simply too high.

There's a time for caution and a time for patience. In fact, patience will do wonders in some situations. But patience won't be much help to a person who plants an orange grove in Alaska, will it? He or she can wait *until the cows come home* and never pick an orange from one of their trees. Likewise, a *let's wait and see* attitude is not much help when you are trying to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ and change their lives by its power.

When you take that kind of approach to reaching people, things and people just go from bad to worse, and they do it more quickly than you would ever imagine.

Over the years, I've noticed some things about churches and people who make a noticeable difference, who leave a significant mark on their community and on the lives of other people. They know how to discern what's worth more and what's worth less in life. I've also noticed that at key times, they acted out of a sense of

urgency, as well as in the confidence that God has led them to do what they've done.

That brings us to the second part of Moses' challenge to the people. He called them to learn how to rely upon God, how to depend on God's ability to keep his word and how to trust God for the outcome (vs 8). *"God told you,"* he said, *"that the land is yours. God has given it to you. What are you waiting for? Why are you still standing here?"*

Indeed dear ones, God has given us a great opportunity to make a marked difference and a significant impact on our community and in the lives of numerous people all around us. In short, as your pastor, everything I've said adds up to simply trusting God, and faithfully acting on that trust. In and through Christ, we too are God's People. God is in charge and we are ultimately responsible to him. That means you and I are not responsible for the outcome, but we are individually and collectively responsible for obedience and faithfulness to him.

As we proceed, as we grow to know and share with one another, may we each be willing to trust a little more; may we each be willing to step outside the box and faithfully follow where God leads. For our personal sake, for the sake of God's church, and for the sake of our collective call...let's embrace it...together!

**Peace, promise and faithfulness in Christ,**

**Pastor Mark**