

## BUT AS FOR ME

It is, in many ways, easier to follow the crowd than to stand alone, under the scrutiny of the majority, because we are all connected; we are social beings. It is natural for us to copy each other's behavior, follow the trend, life styles, the way we dress, even the way we speak. We are copy-cats in many aspects of life, learning from each other, as in, "Monkey see, monkey do." However, there will be times when exercising our faith, we must separate ourselves from the crowd to follow the Word of God. In Romans 12:1-2 *"Paul appeals to them saying, Therefore, brethren, I beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service and spiritual worship; do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect."* The Lord spoke to the prophet Isaiah with His strong hand and warned and instructed him not to walk in the way of the people saying, *"Do not call conspiracy all that this people will call conspiracy; neither be in fear of what they fear nor in dread. The Lord of hosts- regard Him as holy and honor His holy name, and let Him be your fear and let Him be your dread and He shall be a sanctuary; but He shall be a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem"* (Isaiah 8:11-14).

God's instructions and guidelines continue for us today. Life is without meaning, and without success when God is out of the equation. The phrase, "But as for me," denotes a personal commitment, based on knowledge of Scripture coupled with the desire to follow God's instructions. It is also based on the love we have for Him, as we have died for the world and live for Him. While the report from the spies who were sent to explore Canaan was discouraging to the congregation, Joshua's report and Caleb's report had a different view. They had made a choice not to support what they had heard, but stood firmly to change the congregation's view, saying, *"The land through which we passed as scouts is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land flowing with milk and honey, only do not rebel against the Lord, neither fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their defense and the shadow are removed from over them, but the Lord is with us. Fear them not."* (Num. 14:7-9)

In the days before Israel was governed by a king, Samuel served them as prophet, priest and judge. Having been given to the Lord to serve Him in the temple at a young age, later Samuel faithfully served the nation in these three capacities. As a priest, he made a decisive choice to pray for Israel, never giving up the task of an intercessor. Moreover, (he said), *"as for me far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way. Only fear the Lord and serve Him faithfully with all your heart; for consider how great are the things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, both you and your king shall be swept away."* (1 Sam. 12:23-24) Samuel seemingly had a heart for the people. He faced many challenges in his days as God's minister, but he endured them all. One of them was choosing a king for the nation, who failed and was removed from his position as king, for God

had rejected him. However, David, a man after God's heart, was aware of the need to commit his life to please God. Psalm 39:1 he said, *"I will take heed and guard my ways, that I may sin not with my tongue; I will muzzle my mouth as with a bridle while the wicked are before me; Lord, make me to know my end and the measure of my days -what it is; let me know and realize how frail I am; boasters can have no standing in Your sight; you abhor all evildoers; You will destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty man. **But as for me,** I will enter Your house through the abundance of Your steadfast love and mercy; I will worship toward and at Your holy temple in reverent fear and awe of You."* (Ps. 5:5-7)

The choice David made to control his tongue should be ours in every aspect that concerns it. A tongue is a small member of the body, but with great power to destroy lives. As James puts it, *"it is a fire; the human tongue can be tamed by no man. It is restless, irreconcilable evil, full of deadly poison."* (James 3:5-10) We have many times, caused pain, as well as were victims of one's tongue, because we do not restrain our tongue. It seems that a muzzle is necessary to keep the tongue from sinning against others, a decision we must make daily. David's goal was that of *"But as for me, I will walk in my integrity."* That included taming his tongue. Joshua, a faithful servant of the Lord, replaced Moses to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land. Still with hearts uncircumcised, the Israelites continued being unfaithful to God, when they worshipped many other gods. Then Joshua summed them to remind them of their past experiences in their pilgrimage to the Promised Land and to counsel them to be faithful to God saying, *"Now therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and in truth; put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. He concluded by saying, And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."* (Jos.24:14-15) Joshua was no ordinary man; he was trained when a young man to be the Israel's future leader. As Moses did, Joshua experienced the presence of God at Mount Sinai; he saw first-hand all that Moses went through. At the end of Moses' life, the Lord commanded him to lead the people, instructing him saying, *"Be strong and of good courage, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers, to give them; only you be strong and very courageous, that you may do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go...Be not afraid, neither be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."* (Jos. 1:6-7,9b) Joshua faithfully served the Lord until his death at 110 years old.

The Patriarch Job, whom the Lord allowed misfortune to fall on, in the midst of his ordeal said, *"I dictated a covenant to my eyes, how then could I look upon a girl? For what portion should I have from God above, and what heritage from the Almighty on high?"* (job 31:1-2) Job made a conscious effort not to sin against God, by lusting after a girl. A thing that many today are falling prey to, having destroyed their families- an institution that God established as a foundation of high morals and a boundary. Temptations are always present to challenge our beliefs; they are not to steal our strength; they are not to destroy, but they are to test the genuineness of our faith. Eve did not have conviction of what was told her concerning God's order not to eat that

particular fruit, when the garden was full of other fruits for them to enjoy. The choice they made was not the one of commitment to the word of God. Peter said, “exercising faith [develop] virtue, and in exercising virtue [develop] knowledge, and in exercising knowledge, [develop] self-control, in exercising self-control [develop] steadfastness, and in exercising steadfastness [develop] godliness, and in exercising godliness [develop] brotherly affection, and in exercising brotherly affection [develop] Christian love. For as these qualities are yours and increasingly abound in you, they will keep you from being idle or unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord YAHSHUA Messiah” (II Peter 1:5-8)

My friend, the reason why we fail to take a stand for what is right, is because our faith lacks the strength and the commitment necessary to be an overcomer and stand alone for the truth. It is easier to follow the crowd than to be persecuted and bullied. However, the victor’s crown is not for the coward; it is for those who are not afraid to fight the good fight; it is for those who act faithfully. “But as for me” I will choose to follow the Lord.