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ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

“And Jacob was wrath, and chode with Laban; and Jacob answered and said to Laban, what is my trespass? What is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty” [Gen. 31:36, 41-42]

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from thee” [Jam. 4:7]

On December 1, 1955, 42-year old Rosa Parks was returning home from work after a long and tiring day. At the time, she and other African-Americans were subjected to racism, segregation and Jim Crow laws. For example, on buses, blacks and whites were segregated. On that fateful day in Montgomery, Alabama, U.S.A., Rosa Parks was asked to give up her bus seat to a white man. Ordinarily, by her Christian values, she would willingly give her seat to a child or elderly person. On that occasion, however, she felt that “our mistreatment was just not right, and I was tired of it.”¹ She refused to give up her seat. She was arrested and tried. The event triggered a 381-day Montgomery bus boycott by the African-American community, and in 1956, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation on transportation is unconstitutional.² That was the beginning of the Civil Rights movement that has changed America, forever.

We still have similar experiences today, but in more subtle forms. At work, we are at the mercy of bosses and supervisors who have chosen to make our lives miserable, for no justifiable causes. They inflict mental torture on us through intimidation, non-recognition of our contribution, and denying us our due rewards, among others. This phenomenon is replicated in the family, politics, government, church, and school, social or professional club or even in inter-racial or inter-ethnic relations. Your patience has run out.

All this while, you had hoped that things would get better, but they are actually getting worse. The more you give, the more your tormentors want. You have turned your two cheeks and there is none other to turn, but they are ready to slap you all over again! There has to be a way out because you cannot take it any longer! Let’s get help from today’s lesson.

¹ Rosa Parks, **Quiet Strength** [Zondervant Publishing House, 1994]

² Rosa Parks, the woman who changed a nation, www.grandtimes.com/rosa.html

1. Bullies come in various forms

Let us look at the bigger picture. Remember that before his fall, Lucifer was “the anointed cherub” that “wast upon the holy mountain of God” and “walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire” [Ezek. 28:14]. After he had led a rebellion in heaven against God, he and his wicked angels were thrown down to the earth [Rev. 12: 7-9]. Then, he surfaced in the Garden of Eden and successfully tempted Adam and Eve to give up their birthright of eternal life. As punishment, God promised to send Jesus Christ as the seed of a woman, “and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” [Gen. 3:15]. Having failed to stop the coming of Jesus and His triumph on the cross, Satan is still enraged with the woman and her seed by continually making war on us, “the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” [Rev. 12:17].

How does Satan make this war? He walks about “as a roaring lion,” “seeking whom he may devour” [1 Pet. 5:8]. He poses as an angel of light, just like his ministers [2 Cor. 11: 14-15]. Those who have refused Jesus Christ “are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” [Jn 8:44]. Therefore, Satan is the prince of demons [Matt. 12:24] and of this world [2 Cor. 4:4] and the ruler of darkness [Eph. 6:12]. Thus, we come across him in the following settings and forms:

a) *Inter-personal*

Spouses, family, friends and neighbours can bully us. For example, it was Laban, the maternal uncle of Jacob who manipulated Jacob’s blessings for his own purpose for “I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake” [Gen.30: 27]. Therefore, when some bosses insist on your remaining in their departments, even if that means your losing promotion chances, it is not for your own but for their good.

b) *Economic domination*

The rich may oppress the poor. For example, many poor countries in the developing world are weighed down by debts owed the rich countries of the developed world that do not necessarily *need* the money.

c) *National/racial/ethnic/religious discrimination*

People find themselves discriminated against by virtue of their nationality, race, tribe or creed. The people of Egypt oppressed the

children of Israel and killed their newborn baby-boys so as to slow down their population growth [Ex. 1:15-22]. Haman got king Ahasuerus to make a decree to destroy all the Jews in the empire on account of their race and beliefs [Esth. 3:7-15].

d) *Spiritual attacks*

Satan's war against the followers of Christ is a spiritual one. That is why we are not wrestling "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" [Eph. 6:12].

2. Why do they bully us?

There are many reasons but the following should be noted:

a) *Inferiority complex*

Deep down in every bully is an inferiority complex, which he/she tries to hide from others. A terrorist leader who is urging others to die for his cause is always the first to flee when danger comes close! Till date, the whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden remain unknown. Yet, he allegedly urged others to kill themselves in the process of crashing planes into the World Trade Center towers in New York on 11 September 2001.

Satan and his evil spirits hate to believe that Jesus came in flesh because that would remind them of God's promise that it is the seed of a woman that would defeat them! Secondly, believers are sons of God by virtue of their faith in Jesus [Jn 1:12]. In like manner, people in leadership positions over us may realize that we are superior to them professionally, ethically or spiritually. Therefore, they may want to behave otherwise so as to give the impression that they are in charge. Haman, a descendant of the Agagites, the people that God had ordered king Saul to destroy in the days of prophet Samuel [1 Sam. 15:8], found himself in a leadership position over Mordecai, a Jew, during their exile in Persia. "When Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath ... wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, ...the people of Mordecai" [Esther 3: 2-6]. Therefore, it was Haman's inferiority complex that motivated him to want to hurt Mordecai, not the latter's disrespect.

b) *Envy*

Sometimes, people in leadership positions envy, i.e., resent the success of their subordinates. Such success may be in the form of self-control, ability

to initiate new ideas, ability to get along with others, a stable marriage, good looks and good grooming, etc. Whatever the boss cannot match, he/she counts as your success!

Jesus was too much for the Pharisees and the Scribes. First, He performed miracles, which they could not replicate. Then, He claimed to be the Son of God, which they thought was blasphemous. Then, He claimed that Abraham had seen His day. That was too much for their envy:

Then said the Jews unto Him, thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at Him [Jn 8:57-58].

c) *Our fear*

In most cases, it is our own fear, which attracts the bully's attention to us. We visibly show our anxiety over an approaching danger that may never come. That is why somebody has defined fear as the interest we pay on trouble before it comes! But, a lion will not roar when there is no prey [Amos 3:4].

Ten of the twelve people sent by Moses to spy on the Promised Land brought an evil report, laced in the language of fear: "and there we saw giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" [Num. 13:33].

King Saul's forces were paralysed by fear when they saw the giant Goliath. He was 3 metres (9 feet 9 inches) tall, and heavily armed. "And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid" [1 Sam. 17:24]. In deed, "fear hath torment" [1 Jn 4:18].

d) *Power show*

Power, they say, corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. When some people find themselves in leadership positions, they cannot differentiate between *power* [control of the instruments of incumbency] and *authority* [doing only those things permitted by law or regulations]. Therefore, as the lead character played by Michael Douglas says in the movie, *Disclosure*, sexual harassment in the work place has to do with power, not morality. Consequently, all forms of harassment of subordinates by bosses stem from power show.

David, as the commander-in-chief of Israel's armed forces, sexually harassed Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of his foot soldiers, and no one was bold enough to raise the issue until God Himself did [2 Sam.

11:1-5]. King Ahab lied against and killed Naboth so as to be able to take over the dead man's vineyard near the king's house "for a garden of herbs" [**1 Kgs 21:1-16**].

Unless we stop the bullies, they will never stop coming at us. Therefore, the ball is in our courts.

3. How to stop the bullies

a) *Stop running!*

Until you stop running, you may never know what you are running from! Therefore, the day you decide "enough is enough!" is the beginning of the end for your tormentors, for "resist the devil and he will flee from thee" [**Jam. 4:7**]. David was under 20 and, therefore, not yet qualified to enter the army. When he brought supplies to his older brothers at the war front, he saw and heard Goliath boasting and scaring the army of Israel. David could not take it and he asked, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" [**1 Sam. 17:26**]. From that point on, the end of the giant was in sight.

b) *Overcome your fear*

Those who have ever got rid of bullies in their lives will attest that bullies are cowards! The day you can stand up to them, they will run and leave you alone. But can we summon the courage to fight back?

Jesus assured His disciples, "in the world, ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" [**Jn 16:33**]. Paul added, "in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" [**Rom. 8:37**]. Therefore, the source of our boldness is Christ's victory over Satan two thousand years ago.

Unfortunately, we hardly know the significance of overcoming fear. In **Ephesians 6: 13-15**, the whole armour of God for our spiritual warfare is explained. It consists of the loins of *truth*, the breastplate of *righteousness*, feet to spread *the gospel of peace*, the helmet of *salvation*, the shield of *faith*, and the sword of the spirit, which is *the word of God*. The signs of victorious walk with Christ are listed in **Mark 16:17-18**: ability to cast out demons, speak with new tongues, take up serpents and drink poison without being harmed, and lay hands on the sick to make them well. Now, for these signs to follow believers, it means that we should be moving forward, not running back! Our backs are exposed "for God hath not given us the spirit of fear" [**2 Tim. 1:7**]. Therefore, until we overcome fear, our faith cannot be activated.

c) *Ask God for the roadmap*

Don't just plunge into fighting off bullies in your lives until you have prayed about it and God has given you clear guidelines on how to go about it. This is because "though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of God" [2 Cor. 10: 3-5].

As Jacob began to perceive the hostilities towards him from his father-in-law and his children, Jacob sought the Lord's face and He told him, "return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred, *and I will be with thee*" [Gen. 31:2]. After Jacob had escaped with his wives, children and property, Laban pursued him, but God appeared to him in a dream and warned him to leave Jacob alone [v.24]. The Jews were hostile to Paul in Corinth and he determined to go to the Gentiles. However, the Lord appeared to him that night in a vision and assured him, "be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace. For *I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee*; for I have much people in this city." He spent one-and-a-half years there! [Acts 18:4-11]

d) *Overcome evil with good*

No matter what harm has been done to you by bullies in your lives, learn to forgive them. After all, you have overcome them because of God's love and mercy towards you. Jesus set the example on the cross when He prayed for those who had crucified Him, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" [Lk 23:34]. Twice, David had the chance to kill Saul, but each time, he spared his life. Ultimately, Saul killed himself! [1 Sam. 24:4-6; 24: 9-12; 31:4].

4. Conclusion

Jesus has taught us, "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" [Matt. 5:44-45]. I doubt if these enemies include Satan and his human agents who bully us to make us derail from our walk with Christ. Nevertheless, you should forgive them and pray for them, but be vigilant [1 Pet. 5:8] and fight them off your case [Jam. 4:7].

We shall know them by their fruits!