

## **EVEN OUR BROTHERS IN CHRIST WILL ABANDON US**

### **ON THE DAY YOU STOOD ALOOF**

A. Brother

**“On the day you stood aloof  
while strangers carried off his wealth  
and foreigners entered his gates  
and cast lots for Jerusalem,  
you were like one of them.  
You should not look down on your brother  
in the day of his misfortune...”  
Obadiah 1:11,12**

Even our brothers in Christ will abandon us when we hit hard times. When the wolf is at the door, and there are those who wait to take us down, and money is low, and our circumstances are dire; when sickness and weakness are our companions, and sadness grips us, and our lives are failing; when our enemies prowl around us, circling for the kill; when those we counted on are busy doing their own lives, not wishing to be associated with failure; when family backs away and talks against us, and trusted friends doubt us; when our own spiritual leaders quietly fade away, choosing to distance themselves; these are the times we begin to learn that men are ‘sharp sticks’ and we must not lean on them unless they are proven in the sufferings of life themselves.

Rarely will a man die for another man, Jesus said. Even a close friend. He knew first-hand the fickleness and selfishness and shallowness of men. The Savior of mankind would be abandoned by everyone, even His closest companions, and all would distance themselves, while the wolves tore Him and hung Him up to die.

Jesus didn’t trust Himself to men, which is evidenced in many places in the gospels. He hid Himself, He slipped away. He wouldn’t submit to their whims, whether the whim was to kill Him, or the whim was to crown Him. He was in charge, and He determined the timing of His life and ministry.

We are to live as Jesus did, walk as He walked. Know this, my brother who chooses to follow close to Christ, that you will experience the same suffering He did, and that includes opposition, abandonment, and aloofness on the part of those you lean on and trust. It will happen. And you must expect it. Many of our problems and doubts in our discipleship walk with Jesus come from our wrong expectations. If we go through the Narrow Gate, and walk the Narrow Road, we must expect that it will be difficult. The first apostles and early disciples taught this, because they were taught this by the Lord Jesus Himself.

What were you taught?

If you’ve grown up as I did, in modern America, you were taught an easy discipleship, which we don’t even term ‘discipleship’ anymore. You were taught to expect a normal life, such as the world lives, with the only difference being we trust in ‘Christ as our personal Savior’ and we are now centering our lives around church, instead of the local bar. And we were expecting to live happy, normal, productive lives, with God taking care of our needs, and the church providing activities and fellowship. All we need do is ‘keep in touch with God’ by having ‘devotions’ and making sure we pray a few minutes a day at least. The especially zealous (a small minority) showed their intensity by attending a regular Bible study in addition to church services, and studying for their weekly session.

We were told to listen for the highest calling, which was to go into ‘full-time ministry’, and that would involve going to Bible College, or getting an advanced degree in some ministry discipline. This would prepare us for a life-long vocation within the churches. Otherwise, we were ‘lay people’, rank-and-file members of the local church, who attended, tithed, and participated to the extent we wished in the ‘programs’ instituted by the leaders.

The church I grew up in taught us that earnestness in worship, with raised hands and loud voices, and suitably deep emotions, was very acceptable and pleasing to God. This made up for many shortcomings in our lives.

The church you grew up in may have emphasized service, which meant giving a little time to help organize church functions, or to teach Sunday School, or volunteering with this and that charity, or visiting old people in a rest home once a month. Your church might have had evangelistic outreaches, where your youth were taught how to knock on a door, and canvas neighborhoods, asking them to come out to special meetings.

No matter the specifics.

All of it is outside the Biblical model.

There is nothing but Christ. We are the branches, and He is the Vine, and apart from Him we can do nothing. We are His, and everything we do matters. Every moment, every hour, every day. We are either remaining in Christ, and bearing His fruit, or we are not. This has nothing to do with all the above churchy things which men have invented to make the 'Christian life' easier and more palatable to the masses.

When Jesus taught, He winnowed out His disciples, getting rid of those He knew were following Him for the wrong reasons. He was tough, giving the hard Word, explaining that to follow Him meant giving up one's own life, laying down one's own desires and dreams and goals, and doing only what Jesus did, and the Father instructed. When He informed the crowds they would have to die as He died, and live only on His flesh and blood as their sustenance, they went home in droves.

When He turned away the rich young man because He wouldn't give away His wealth to follow Jesus, even His own disciples were dismayed, figuring they could never meet His high standards for discipleship. Jesus asked even the twelve at one point if they, too, were going to abandon Him as the crowds had.

We give out an easy Christianity, which is not Christ.

Therefore, when the hard times come, we are shocked. We think all is wrong, but actually, God disciplines those He loves as sons, and they are the ones going through the tough times. So not only do many fall away, but many living the good religious life, the easy churchy life, look down on their brothers who suffer. They think, like Job's 'comforters' did, that it is a sign of sin in their brother, and their own prosperity is a sign of their own obedience to God. The opposite is usually true.

Obadiah's warning extends to these complacent men who occupy the preferred pews and the places of honor in the churches.

**"The pride of your heart has deceived you,  
you who live in the clefts of the rocks  
and make your home on the heights,  
you who say to yourself,  
'Who can bring me down to the ground?'  
Though you soar like the eagle  
and make your nest among the stars,  
from there I will bring you down,' declares the Lord."  
--Obadiah 1:3,4**

You can show your true devotion to Jesus by not standing aloof at the plight of those brothers around you who suffer. Lay down your life for them.

<http://narrowgatepub.blogspot.ch/2013/05/even-our-brothers-in-christ-will.html>

Tuesday, May 7, 2013