



Time to Move!

Back in 1991 a picture came into my head which I took to be from the Lord, as a bit of “private instruction” for my own life. Essentially I still regard it in that primary sense; and it has “stayed there”, embedded and active.

Over the years since, I have only shared the picture very occasionally in private discussion; and just as it seemed relevant within particular conversations.

The most recent instance was over a cup of tea during an “Israel” prayer conference last summer. The person I was speaking to asked me if I would write it down. So here goes.....

The matter essentially concerns “timing”. And if we look through the pages of Scripture we can see many examples of the “when” being as vital as the “what” in God’s purposes. The “right thing” at the wrong time becomes the “wrong thing”. (On the march around Jericho, God’s people would have been in a sorry mess if they had “shouted” on the wrong day.... and the walls remained standing).

The picture I felt God was showing to me was that of a “surfer” - not a wind-surfer, but a wave surfer.

And with regard to spiritual things, He was using, as a metaphor, the principles and practice of riding a big breaker in the matter of “getting the timing right”.

The first thing that the surfer must do is “get out of the shallows” and into the “deep water”. (And, in the figurative sense, that part of the picture was, and is, quite clear to me.)

Once astride his (or her) board, the surfer must paddle out from the shore to that place where the waves are merely a “swell”. Having achieved that position, the board must be turned around to face the beach. (And certainly there is no point in expecting to move with God if we are in the wrong place, or facing in the wrong direction.)

Having turned to point towards the beach and the direction of the wave-travel, the surfer then needs to wait; to wait as each passing swell gently lifts and drops the board. Only experience and sensitivity will tell which swell is the one that is going to develop into “the big breaker”. But the characteristics, at the early stages

of the wave formation, are subtle. And in picking the wrong one, the rider can miss the mark.

However, even when the surfer senses that particular swell - “the” swell - the first thing (s)he needs to do is “start paddling” in order to get the board moving. The initial energy input must come from the surfer. And sensitivity is needed here too. Paddle too quickly and the surfer exhausts his/her strength; leave it too late and the swell gets so far ahead, it becomes impossible to catch it up.

But if a correct judgement has been made, and the swell starts to develop into what will become the big breaker, the surfer then needs to jump onto the board. And from that point onwards, the wave itself provides the propulsion. All that the surfer needs to do is ride the wave as it grows - and grows.

Of course while this requires great sensitivity, balance and judgement, the real motive power is now coming from the wave; and not the rider. The surfer just needs to “stay with it”.

This picture has served me well over the years as a “check” against precipitate action - in those times when the temptation was to move at a faster pace than the Lord was setting. But additionally, the reminder was, and is “to be constantly ready”.

The principle which I believe the Lord was showing me is the need to “stay tuned in”; to be continually on the alert, and sensitive to these early signs - often barely discernible - that God is requiring not just prayer, but action. (cf 1 Chron 12:32)

Increasingly, as I look around our world - locally and internationally - I see the havoc and destruction in lives, families and nations that the enemy of God has wrought.

Yet I have also become increasingly convinced, over a period of years and up to the present time, that the Lord is about to “do something” - in the church not least; but also in the nations.

I have no idea exactly what that might be, and I leave it to Him regarding precisely how and when He will do it; and whom or what He will use in the process. Whatever lies ahead may well come by way of judgement, testing and great cost. And repentance, humbling and weeping might be a part of it all.

But I am persuaded that the time is “now”. William Carey’s exhortation was to “expect great things from God; attempt great things for God”. And I believe it is now the time to “be bold” in the strength of the Lord in whatever He is calling each of His children to undertake.

The swell, I believe, is now beneath us.

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