

A Prophetic Word for 2013: Return to Antioch

I was taking a long drive from South Florida to Orlando, praying in the Spirit, and asking the Lord to reveal some prophetic direction for 2013. I must have prayed in the Spirit for two hours before I heard these three words: "Return to Antioch."

With a long, dark stretch of highway still in front of me, I could not readily dive into Scripture to seek understanding about what the Holy Spirit was trying to tell me. So I continued praying in the Spirit and meditating on those three words: "Return to Antioch."

When I opened my Bible to Acts 14, prophetic revelation for the body of Christ—particularly the leadership of the body of Christ—began to unfold:

When Paul and Barnabas were serving together in the mission fields, they made a return visit to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. With the return to Antioch, they had a clear mandate: to "strengthen the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God'" (Acts 14:22).

I like how the Amplified Bible draws out this verse: "Establishing and strengthening the souls and the hearts of the disciples, urging and warning and encouraging them to stand firm in the faith, and [telling them] that it is through many hardships and tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

And the Message Bible puts it this way: "putting muscle and sinew in the lives of the disciples, urging them to stick with what they had begun to believe and not quit, making it clear to them that it wouldn't be easy: 'Anyone signing up for the

kingdom of God has to go through plenty of hard times'."

As I meditated on this verse, it became abundantly apparent how different the apostles' message was to what we hear in most local churches—and on most Christian TV channels—today. The apostles understood that we are in a spiritual war against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (see Eph. 6:12). The apostle urged and warned believers to fight the good fight of faith—not for cars and houses and bigger ministries but pure faith in Christ that refuses to compromise the gospel. And the apostles made it clear that it wouldn't be easy.

We need to "return to Antioch." We need to return to sound doctrine that strengthens the spirits and souls of the disciples, encourages them to contend for the true faith, and refuses to sugar coat the Christian walk. We need to "return to Antioch" and leave behind the Hollywood Christianity, the pillow prophets, the prosper-me gospel and the other foolish practices that have crept into the 21st century church while we were sleeping. We need to "return to Antioch" and walk with Christ no matter what it costs us. We need to be found faithful when the Lord returns.

The apostles knew that a Great Falling Away was a reality. Today, I believe we are seeing the shadows of the Great Falling Away—and some leaders in the body of Christ are escorting their disciples through the doorway that leads to compromise. Some are giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. Some are speaking lies in hypocrisy. Some have iron-seared consciences. Some are deceived, being deceived and deceiving others.

When the apostle's returned to Antioch, their message was clear. And their message rings as true in this hour as it did 2,000 years ago: "We must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God." There's no getting around that no matter what

famous television pastors tell you. So, leaders, I implore you to return to Antioch. Strengthen the believers. Encourage them to continue in the truth faith, not the perverted “gimme-gimme” faith that is so prevalent in the Western culture. Please, return to Antioch. Amen.

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