

TAKING IT ON THE CHIN

In my last post, I talked about a line out of one of the most recent *Rocky* movies: “*You, me, or nobody is gonna hit as hard as life, but it ain’t about how hard you hit, it’s about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward, how much you can take and keep moving forward. That’s how winning is done.*” Little did I know that not even 24 hours later I would be tested in this very area...**LITERALLY.**



There’s an atheist gentleman here who hates me to no end. He told someone he had a very bad experience with a pastor when he was young and that I remind him of him. He has been verbally abusive to me since I first arrived and has a vile mouth. He’s been looking for his chance to get at me for over a year and it finally came. One day after I received my food in the lunch line, I had to wait for a cup because they were out. I finally decided to set my tray down and come back. About five seconds later they put more cups out. This guy was a good six feet away when three of us that had been waiting to get our cups stepped up to get them. He went off on me (and only me) for cutting in front of him. He went berserk and hit me twice in the jaw. It happened so fast I didn’t even have time to “turn the other cheek.” I didn’t respond or even say a word. I just sat down to eat, stunned and a bit shook. I seriously think it’s been over 30 years since I’ve been swung at. Rather than backing off once he’d landed a punch, he continued to try to get me to fight him. I just stood up and refused until he walked away.

He finally got his shot at me, though, and apparently feels better. But truth be told, this was not about him. ***It was about me.*** It was about the Father testing me to see how far I could be pushed before I would react. This is a training module. Would I maintain a state of shalom and humility under extreme pressure? Or would I crack under the heat of it all? This entire experience has been about humbling my heart and training me to stay in love in the middle of chaos. And trust me, when you're in ministry, it's nothing ***but*** chaos. As believers, we can't react to chaos with more chaos. We have to be able to "take it on the chin" and keep moving forward. If I would have hit him back (and I must confess that doing so crossed my mind) I would have lost my witness here for good. I would have won the battle but would have lost the war with no do-overs.

The Pressing

You know, it reminds me of how they made the oil for the menorah for the temple. They would take the olives and begin pressing the oil out of them. But the **purest oil** is what comes out first. That's the oil that was used for the light in the temple. And what a great analogy for today. When you get pressed, ***what comes out first?*** Because what comes out first is what's really inside you. That first reaction is who we really are. When life hits us on the chin, it's simply God's way of showing us what's inside us and it's His way of training us to stop being nuclear reactors. He wants us to be used as the light of the world, but in order for us to step into that role, He has to get the junk out of us so that all that comes out is purely of Him.

Yahweh only operates in spaces of love. And when we get poked, yes, it hurts. But we still have to stay in love. There are reasons a duck's feathers don't hold water. The rain and cold don't bother them. So why do we humans get our feathers so ruffled over the smallest things, much less the bigger ones? Do we believe God is in control or not? If we do, then God allowed that man to hit me for a reason. Maybe I deserved it for something else I got away with in my past. Maybe it was to relieve pressure in his life to keep him from truly hurting someone else. Maybe it was just to get me to pray more, to look at me more. Or maybe it was just for this post. Whatever the reason, and whatever you are going through, remember that He is truly in control more than you think. He's not "squeezing you" for any other reason than He's trying to squeeze the best out of you so He can use you to be the light of the world. So, the next time someone throws a punch at you, take it on the chin and be Messiah for them. Your reaction shows whom you really serve. If Yeshua took it on the cross, we certainly can ***take it on the chin.***

Shalom!
Jim Staley