

" CROSSING OUR BRIDGES "



HEBREWS 12:1

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“WHEREFORE SEEING WE ALSO ARE COMPASSED ABOUT WITH SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES LET US LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT, AND THE SIN WHICH DOTHS SO EASILY BESET US, AND LET US RUN WITH PATIENCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US.”

INTRODUCTION

WE’VE GATHERED TO CELEBRATE OUR BLACK HISTORY, BUT EXACTLY WHAT ARE WE CELEBRATING?

- **ARE WE CELEBRATING THE FULFILLMENT OF DR. KING’S DREAM? YOU DO KNOW THAT WE HAVE NOT YET ARRIVED AT OUR FINAL DESTINATION, DON’T YOU?**
- **ARE WE CELEBRATING THE HISTORY OF A PEOPLE WHO HAVE FINALLY LEARNED TO SHED THE DIVISIONS IMPLANTED BY THE SLAVE MASTER AND EMBRACE OUR BLACK BROTHERS AND SISTERS WITH LOVE? YOU DO KNOW THAT WE STILL CIRCULATE OUR BLACK DOLLARS IN THE WHITE COMMUNITY MORE THAN IN OUR OWN, DON’T YOU?**
- **ARE WE CELEBRATING JUSTICE AND EQUALITY? YOU DO KNOW THAT THE JAILS ARE STILL FILLED WITH JUST US, DON’T YOU?**

SO WHAT HAVE WE COME TO CELEBRATE?

I PRAY THAT WE’VE COME TO CELEBRATE OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO WALLOW IN THE SEAT OF COMPLACENCY OR PARK OURSELVES IN THE HALLS OF THE STATUS QUO.

WE’VE COME TO CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION OF DR.

KING'S DREAM...

WE'VE COME TO CELEBRATE THE FACT THAT EACH OF US IS DETERMINED TO LIVE OUT THE TRUE MEANING OF OUR NATION'S CREED.

BUT TO DO THAT, WE HAVE TO BE WILLING TO CROSS SOME BRIDGES. AND BRIDGES ARE NOT EASY TO CROSS.

ASK THE 600 BLACK MEN AND WOMEN WHO TRIED TO CROSS THE EDMOND PETTUS BRIDGE ON MARCH 7, 1965, ON THEIR WAY FROM SELMA TO MONTGOMERY.

ON THAT DAY, SEVENTY-EIGHT OF THEM WERE BEATEN WITH NIGHTSTICKS AND BULLWHIPS BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO WERE DETERMINED TO STOP THEIR FORWARD PROGRESS.

IT MAY TAKE SACRIFICE TO CROSS YOUR BRIDGE.

NOT EVERYONE'S BRIDGE IS THE SAME.

- **YOUR BRIDGE MAY BE THE REINSTATEMENT OF YOUR VOTING RIGHTS.**
- **YOUR BRIDGE MAY BE THE NEED TO OVERCOME A SUB -STANDARD EDUCATION.**
- **YOUR BRIDGE MAY BE A LONG-OVERDUE PROMOTION ON YOUR JOB.**
- **YOUR BRIDGE MAY BE THE RESTORATION OF YOUR SELF-ESTEEM.**
- **YOUR BRIDGE MAY BE THE RECLAMATION OF A GOOD CREDIT SCORE.**

WHATEVER BRIDGE YOU HAVE TO CROSS, REST ASSURED, IT WILL *NOT* BE EASY.

BUT *EASY* IS NOT WHAT WE'VE COME TO

CELEBRATE TODAY.

WE'VE COME TO CELEBRATE OVERCOMING THE IMPOSSIBLE.

LIKE PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA, WE'VE COME TO CELEBRATE ALL THE SMALL VICTORIES ALONG THE WAY THAT BROUGHT US TO THIS POINT IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY.

WE OVERCAME DRINKING FOUNTAINS FOR 'WHITES AND BLACKS;

WE OVERCAME 'COLORED BALCONIES' IN MOVIE THEATERS,

WE OVERCAME LYNCHINGS,

WE OVERCAME THE 'BACK OF THE BUS',

WE OVERCAME 'POOR WAGES',

WE OVERCAME 'POORER SCHOOL',

AND WE OVERCAME THE POOREST OF NEIGHBORHOODS.

MANY OF OUR CAUCASIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS HEAR THE ACCOUNTS OF SLAVERY AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA, AND THEY SOMEHOW THINK THAT THESE ACCOUNTS ARE ISOLATED INCIDENTS THAT DID NOT EFFECT ALL AFRICAN-AMERICANS.

BUT EVERY BLACK MAN AND WOMAN, BOY AND GIRL ALIVE TODAY HAS A STORY TO SHARE ABOUT THE BRIDGES THEY HAVE BEEN TRYING TO CROSS.

RACISM HAS TOUCHED THE LIVES OF EVERY AFRICAN-AMERICAN IN THIS ROOM.

WE ALL HAVE STORIES OF HOW HIGHLY EDUCATED BLACKS WERE ROUTINELY DENIED THE RIGHT TO VOTE

OR SERVE ON JURIES,

HOW WE WERE TURNED AWAY FROM LUNCH COUNTERS,

**HOW WE WERE DENIED ACCESS TO A MOTEL,
HOW WE WERE FORCED TO LIVE IN SUB-STANDARD
HOUSING,**

**HOW WE WERE FORCED TO READ OLD TORN BOOKS IN
OUR SUB-STANDARD SCHOOLS WHILE SITTING AT
DESKS CARVED WITH THE NAMES OF PRIVILEGED
WHITE CHILDREN,**

**HOW WE WERE COMPELLED TO CROSS THE STREET TO
LET A CAUCASIAN WALK BY.**

**THESE WERE THE 'HORROR' CONDITIONS IN AMERICA
THAT WE CALL "THE LAND OF THE FREE" AND "HOME OF
THE BRAVE" ... NOT CENTURIES AGO....JUST A FEW SHORT
45 YEARS AGO. AND SOME ARE STILL STRUGGLING TODAY.**

**AS AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN, MAYBE YOU HAVE NO DIRECT
CONNECTION TO THE STRUGGLES I'M TALKING ABOUT.**

**MAYBE YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO REMEMBER THE STING OF
A FIRE HOSE, OR THE BITE OF A GERMAN SHEPARD'S
TEETH, OR THE WELT FROM A POLICEMAN'S BILLY CLUB.**

**SO LET ME REMIND YOU OF THE TENS OF THOUSANDS, AND
THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF COURAGEOUS MEN AND
WOMEN WHO DO!**

**THEY STRUGGLED TO CROSS THOSE BRIDGES SO THAT YOU
WOULD NOT HAVE TO.**

**AS A YOUNG MAN I NEVER CONSIDERED THAT FREEDOM
HAD A COST.**

**I JUST THOUGHT THAT FREEDOM WAS "FREE." THEN
I GREW UP AND DISCOVERED THAT NOTHING IN LIFE**

IS FREE.

THE SALVATION THAT I SO FREELY ENJOY TODAY COST MY LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST HIS LIFE ONE DAY OUT ON A HILL CALLED CALVARY.

FREEDOM IS NEVER FREE.

I DIDN'T COME TODAY TO GIVE YOU A LITANY OF EVENTS OR QUOTES FROM OUR STRUGGLE AS A PEOPLE ... THERE ARE A MYRIAD OF BOOKS YOU CAN READ IN THE LIBRARY, AND EVEN MORE THAT YOU CAN "GOOGLE" ON THE INTERNET.

NOR IS MY INTENT TO REMIND YOU OVER AND OVER AGAIN ABOUT AMERICAN'S DARK PAST OR THE BLOOD STAINED HISTORICAL RECORD OF AMERICA'S GUILT AND PAIN.

BUT I WILL TELL YOU THIS ... THAT MANY RISKED THEIR LIVES TO COMBAT SOCIAL INJUSTICE AND TO ENHANCE THE WELFARE, *NOT* JUST FOR AFRICAN-AMERICANS, BUT FOR *ALL* PEOPLE.

SOME OF THE BRIDGES *WERE* CROSSED AND HAVE BECOME A REALITY ...

- 1. TWO YEARS AGO, WE INAUGURATED THE *FIRST* AFRICAN-AMERICAN PRESIDENT OF THESE UNITED STATES...BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN WE HAVE ARRIVED AT PERFECTION, IT ONLY MEANS THAT WE HAVE *BEGUN* THE ARDUOUS JOURNEY TOWARD UNITY AND EQUALITY AS A PEOPLE.**
- 2. WE CELEBRATE OUR SUCCESSES EVEN AS WE FACE THE DIFFICULT CHALLENGES THAT STILL LAY AHEAD.**
- 3. THE PURPOSE OF THIS CELEBRATION IS TO CONTINUE TO DREAM. !!!**

THIS CENTURY IS CHALLENGING...BECAUSE NOT ONLY DO MILLIONS OF PEOPLE STILL LIVE IN POVERTY IN A COUNTRY OF GREAT WEALTH, BUT ALSO BECAUSE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, HEALTHCARE AND EMPLOYMENT ARE STILL NOT EQUAL AND ACCESSIBLE FOR MANY AMERICANS.

DR. KING ONCE SAID. *“THE ULTIMATE MEASURE OF A MAN IS NOT WHERE HE STANDS IN MOMENTS OF COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE BUT WHERE HE STANDS AT TIMES OF CHALLENGE AND CONTROVERSY. THE TRUE NEIGHBOR WILL RISK HIS POSITION, HIS PRESTIGE AND EVEN HIS LIFE FOR THE WELFARE OF OTHERS.”*

SO, THE QUESTION THAT I HAVE FOR EACH OF YOU THIS MORNING IS ...WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO ADDRESS THE BRIDGES WE STILL HAVE YET TO CROSS?

- 1. IT'S TIME TO CROSS YOUR OWN BRIDGES!**
- 2. IT'S TIME TO ERASE OUR DIFFERENCES, AND INSTEAD, MELD OUR TALENTS AND MERGE OUR RESOURCES TO IMPROVE OUR CITY, OUR COUNTY, OUR COUNTRY, AND THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY.**

ON THAT DAY IN SELMA, WHEN 600 HUNDRED MEN AND WOMEN, BOYS AND GIRLS DETERMINED TO CROSS THE EDMOND PETTUS BRIDGE AND MARCH FOR FREEDOM, IT WAS THEIR COLLECTIVE UNITY THAT ERASED THEIR INDIVIDUAL FEARS.

IMAGINE WHAT INDIVIDUAL FEARS WE CAN ERASE IF WE BECOME DETERMINED TO WORK TOGETHER AND PUSH TOGETHER, AND CROSS TOGETHER.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS ... OUR LIVES AND THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN *DON'T* HAVE TO BE LIVED SO SEPARATELY.

1. WE CAN TEACH OUR CHILDREN TO SHARE THEIR COLLECTIVE RESOURCES, SHARE THEIR EDUCATION, SHARE THEIR HOPES AND DREAMS.
2. WE CAN TEACH OUR CHILDREN TO LIVE OUT THE TRUE MEANING OF BROTHERHOOD IN OUR COMMUNITIES.
3. WE CAN TEACH OUR CHILDREN THAT WE ARE ONE IN GOD'S EYES, AND THAT NO BRIDGE SHOULD EVER FRIGHTEN US OR SEPARATE US FROM OUR COMMON GOALS.

I CAME TO TELL YOU TODAY THAT EACH ONE OF YOU HAS A RESPONSIBILITY.

1. MAKING A DIFFERENCE WILL REQUIRE US TO BUILD AND THEN TO CROSS BRIDGES OF HOPE.
2. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO LIVE THE DREAM OF DR. KING. NOT JUST IN WORDS BUT IN ACTION. NOT JUST IN TALK ... BUT IN YOUR DAILY WALK.

THE SACRED MISSION TO SAVE AMERICA IS NOT PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S ALONE, BUT A CHALLENGE TO EACH OF US.

1. IF AMERICA IS GOING TO PROSPER AGAIN... IT IS GOING TO TAKE THE EFFORTS OF COUNTLESS NUMBERS OF EVERYDAY PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME, WHO DECIDE THAT THEY CANNOT SIT IDLE AND ALLOW OTHERS TO CLOSE DOWN OUR BRIDGES OF POTENTIAL.
2. THE INAUGURATION IS OVER....THE SHOUT IS OVER. NOW IT'S TIME TO WORK...
3. WORK TO CROSS THE BRIDGES THAT SEPARATE US FROM DIS-UNITY AND DESPAIR.

4. **WORK TO REMOVE THE COMPLACENCY THAT KEEPS US UN-INVOLVED.**
5. **WORK IS WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO IMPROVE OUR LIVES AND MAKE THIS COUNTRY A BETTER PLACE.**
6. **NEVER SEE THE CHALLENGE BEFORE YOU...SEE ONLY THE POSSIBILITY BEYOND.**
7. **GOD HAS SHOWN US THAT WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE, ONE SMALL WIN AT A TIME.**
8. **GOD HAS SHOWN US THAT WE CAN RISE FROM THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR ON THE WINGS OF HIS ETERNAL HOPE.**

GOD IS SENDING THE CLEAR MESSAGE THAT THE TIME TO CROSS OUR BRIDGES IS *NOW!*

1. **THE TIME TO ERASE THE BITTERNESS OF OUR PAST IS NOW !**
2. **THE TIME TO RESURRECT THE HOPE OF OUR FUTURE IS NOW!**
3. **THE TIME TO CROSS OUR BRIDGES IS NOW !**

CONCLUSION

THE TEXT SUGGESTS THAT WE ARE RUNNING IN THE RACE OF LIFE, AND IN LIFE, THERE ARE MANY BRIDGES WE WILL HAVE TO CROSS.

THE TEXT SUGGEST THAT THOSE WHO HAVE GONE ON BEFORE US, MAKES UP A GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES CHEERING US ON TO CROSS OUR BRIDGES:

1. **WE MUST LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT:**
2. **WE MUST LAY ASIDE THE SIN THAT DOES SO EASILY BESET US;**
3. **WE MUST RUN WITH PATIENCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US;**
4. **WE MUST LOOK UNTO JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH, WHO FOR THE JOY THAT WAS SET BEFORE HIM ENDURED THE CROSS.**
5. **HE DIED ON FRIDAY....THEY BURIED HIM....BUT EARLY SUNDAY MORNING, HE ROSE WITH ALL POWER IN HIS HAND.**

**PATIENCE - (HUPOMONE) ENDURANCE, FORTITUDE
STEDFASTNESS,**

**AUTHOR – (TON-ARCEGON) HE AUTHORED, BEGAN,
ORIGINATED, CREATED.**

**FINISHER – (TELEIUTEN) HE PERFECTED, COMPLETED
CONSUMMATED.**