**Mike Hipes – Facebook Lesson, February 10, 2021**

Good afternoon!

Sometimes it’s easy to forget your roots! I once had a stranger say to me while I was living in NC after hearing me say something, “Wow, either that was a great impression of a New Yorker or you are really from New York! It reminded me of my roots being from Queens NY. When we were living in Ohio for a number of years, Margie and I were at the grocery store shopping one day. Margie said to me, “would you mind picking up some pop?” I said, “do you mean soda?” I had to remind her of her roots...NY! Over the years, as we lived around the country, we both needed an occasional wake-up call on this. It came while we were living in Texas. A couple from church invited us over for dinner. Knowing we were from NY and my Italian family background, they decided to invite us over for dinner and make a lasagna to help us experience a little bit of home. My mom, being from Bari, Italy, made homemade lasagna all the time with fresh ingredients including homemade noodles. I could almost taste the fresh mozzarella cheese, ricotta cheese, fresh basil, and sauce made from scratch. Yum! However, when we got there, they had made their Texas version of lasagna! Store-bought noodles, jar sauce, and different types of cheese! They had replaced the ricotta cheese with cottage cheese! Ugh! But the kicker was that instead of using fresh mozzarella cheese, they used yellow Velveeta cheese! What? I thought, this is not back to my roots... this is a sin! (LOL)

Spiritually speaking, when you get away from Jesus, the bible, or church services for a while, sometimes we need a good old fashion reminder to refocus on our roots and get back to Jesus! Today we will refocus on Jesus and get back to our roots in Matthew chapter 9.

Two root principles that we need to be reminded of.

1. Having a spiritual focus: our first priority. In Matthew 9:1-7, Jesus heals a paralytic that some friends brought to Him, lying on a stretcher. “And they brought to Him a paralyzed man lying on a stretcher. And seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man who was paralyzed, “Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven.” You can almost picture the man on the stretcher thinking as he is placed before Jesus, yes, I’m a cripple but thank goodness I made it to Jesus the healer! Jesus says to the man, “take courage My son.” I can imagine the man saying, OK Lord I’m ready for the healing! But Jesus instead first says, “your sins are forgiven.” I can almost hear the crippled man respond, “I really appreciate that Lord, but can you also do a little something about my legs?” Sure, Jesus physically healed the man second, to prove that He had the authority to forgive sins as well, but it also drives home the point that Jesus’ prime reason for coming to earth was not our physical needs as a top concern, but our spiritual needs! This was His first priority and should be ours as well! Please don’t misunderstand! When we suffer in this life Jesus cares and hurts right along with us! One of the most powerful verses in the bible is also the shortest verse. John 11:35, “Jesus wept.” However, the heart of humanity’s problem is not our fleshly deficiencies, but our sin! If your life is right with Jesus and you have been forgiven of your sins and your relationship is strong, then praise God for heaven rejoices! But if your priorities need to be spiritually re-focused as a first priority, then take courage and seek His spiritual healing first!

2. Having a personal focus: our inward priority. In Matthew 9:14-15, Jesus tells some disciples that a time will come when they will fast. “And Jesus said to them, “The attendants of the groom cannot mourn as long as the groom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the groom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.” Fasting was a time of sober refocusing on God. It was not only to heighten our awareness of our ongoing need for God but was to be an inner consecration and rededication to our God. Going without food would not only heighten our awareness of Him in our life, but it would also illustrate our commitment to Him and His cause. It was an inward personal focus! Rather than keeping my focus on others, fasting helps us look inwardly at ourselves on a personal level. When was the last time you fasted sacrificially for the purpose of deepening and rededicating your personal relationship with God? This is all about having an inner personal focus! The practice of fasting may not be talked about or practiced much, but it is powerful indeed! Let’s take the time to fast for the kingdom of God and the future of His church to be a shining light in this world!

In His service,

Mike