

3. Fathers—Living Spiritually Empowered June 10, 2013

This is the third and final e-mail I'm sending to fathers of all ages as Father's Day approaches. The first one pointed you to the primary expression in your faith journey in Christ: getting on your knees in humble trust and asking our Lord Jesus for His love to pour through you onto others. In the second e-mail I encouraged you to get past good-ol'-boy friendliness with other men and pursue sacrificial love that doesn't look for reciprocity. That kind of love means you're willing to confront them as a brother to help them identify and forsake compromise with worldly goals, ways and values. I also emphasized how important it is for a father and/or grandfather to be certain that you and your family's names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. You are in a key position to make sure you and your family are also free of demonic strongholds and toxic memories, and that your home is free of anything that would defile our Lord's reputation or reveal you as a phony hypocrite.

In this e-mail I want to encourage you to put into practice the spiritual power our Lord has given you if you have experienced new birth in Jesus. If you're an older man, you need to live as an example of how a man who belongs to Jesus speaks, acts and even thinks. Consider for yourself the intentional purpose the psalmist proclaims for those our Lord has granted numerous years:

***"Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God,
till I declare Your power to the next generation,
Your might to all who are to come"*** (Psalms 71:18).

Our Lord wants to reveal His power through you, and nothing less is acceptable to Him: not the church services you attend or the Bible facts you've stored in your head but don't apply to your everyday life and relationships. He intends for you to be His instrument so that people would have **awe** regarding the glorious might of God rather than consider Him just another philosophical or theological concept that's equal to all other religions.

We who know and follow Jesus as Lord of our life aren't "religious" in the sense of giving intellectual assent to creeds but lacking the spiritual power that flows from His Spirit at work in and through and around you (2Timothy 3:1-7). We who follow Jesus in loving, obedient trust according to His Word serve the ONE TRUE GOD of all the universe, the Sovereign Maker of all there is! Therefore, if you belong to Jesus as His blood-bought child, then you've been given His power if you trust His promises.

However, if the friendly weekly comfort of religious form and ritual has lulled you into ignoring or even resisting being used by the Spirit to reveal the power of our Lord the rest of the week, take this warning to heart:

***"See to it that no one takes you captive
through hollow and deceptive Bible teaching,***

***which depends on human understanding
and man-made creeds rather than on Christ"***

(an adaptation of Colossians 2:8).

- Are you in a faith community in which the Bible is taught as an academic document (or as a jumping-off platform for entertainment) so that you feel comfortable about yourself and how you live?
- Or, does each sermon message leave you convicted and repentant to cast off that which has been revealed as unChristlike in your way of life and your choices?
- Does the teaching inspire, strengthen and exhort you to represent our Lord during the week?
- Are there frequent testimonies among your fellow faith family that bear witness to the power of our Lord as He has used your lives?
- Have you shared anything with your faith family which testifies that He has worked in power through you?

Don't confine yourself within a faith community which makes you feel comfortable but excuses your personal sin! That comfort zone walls off any intrusion into your life by the Spirit of Christ to prompt you to develop Jesus' sacrificial love and His spiritual power. Are you really living for Jesus as Lord of your life—a relationship in which your name will be written in His Book of Life? Don't answer too quickly; if His Spirit indeed abides within you, He would prompt you to live as our Lord Jesus would if He were you. Think about that for a moment...

***"I tell you the truth, anyone who has trust in Me
will do what I have been doing.
He will do even greater things than these,
because I am going to the Father"***

(John 14:12)

Jesus leaves no doubt of a direct correlation between trusting Him as Lord and enacting the power His Father gives to those who love and serve Him. We discussed this issue in a recent e-mail. Our Lord Jesus sent out His disciples, first the twelve the seventy-two, to accomplish specific works of power: ***to preach that people should repent, and drive out demons, and anoint the sick with oil and heal them*** (see Mark 6:12,13). These very works of power which Jesus had been doing in His own ministry were the same which He commanded His disciples to do (see Matthew 4:17;8:28;15:30).

- Demonic captivity and human sickness still plague humanity. What better way to ignite **awe** about the authority of Jesus' Name than for His power to be revealed through people who are delivered and/or healed, and they then share that wondrous testimony with others?
- Do you really think that since Jesus did these mighty works of power and commanded His disciples to do likewise, He isn't calling you to obey Him in this as well?
- Have you pursued by faith the repentance, deliverance and healing which the Spirit of Christ brings about for those who trust and obey? If not, why not?

Revealing His Spirit Confirms That You Belong To Our Lord

Children are great discerners of hypocrisy in their parents' attitudes and actions. When Sue and I taught at a retreat center we often asked teenagers on retreats about what they feared. By far, they feared becoming like their parents in the hypocrisy of talking "Christianese" with other people but acting like the devil's spawn at home. On the other hand, the few who commended their parents saw the Spirit of our Lord operating in and through them on a regular basis. These parents made mistakes and asked forgiveness from their kids. But these children also heard frequent testimonies of divine encounters as their parents were at work or around other people. Husbands and/or fathers who regularly bear witness to their families about what our Lord Jesus accomplished in and through them have taken Him at His Word: *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and **puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock"* (Matthew 7:24).

You need to make a decision NOW which will impact every other decision you make: **Either you start living as our Lord would if He were you so that your wife and family can commend you for your faithfulness; or you role model hypocrisy and lead your family into duplicity and perhaps everlasting shame.**

Our Lord Jesus delegated His power to His first disciples so that people who had yet to trust in Him would recognize by the *miraculous works* that He had come from His Father (John 10:38). So that they might bear witness to Who He is, Jesus empowered His disciples to pray for the sick and deliver people from demons in the power of His Name (Matthew 10:8; Luke 10:1,9,17). The enactment of power to heal and deliver was intended to continue long after Jesus had ascended to heaven—in fact, right up til His return! As a reminder to you of this essential truth, I want to recap some key points:

Examples of the Power to Heal

*"One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon... Then Peter said to the cripple, 'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. **In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk**'"* (Acts 3:1,6). The rest of the chapter recounts how this one mighty act certainly got the apostles noticed! By means of this powerful work these two disciples could then bear witness to a crowd of observers of the Person of Jesus: *"**By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through Him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see**"* (Acts 3:16).

Word gets around when our Lord Jesus uses you in mighty ways to draw people's attention to His love and power. When you rely on the power of the Name of Jesus to work through you to reveal Him to other people, our Lord will see to it that other opportunities come your way because He wants to be revealed to the lost! Because the Jews of Jerusalem saw and heard about God at work through Peter, *"people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might*

fall on some of them as he passed by" (Acts 5:15). The presence of the Spirit at work through this man opened the ears of the people to hear about Jesus.

The life of Paul also serves as an example for us today that our Lord intends that we serve as vessels for His power to be poured out through us for His glory. Let's look at two instances in which the Spirit accomplished physical healing to demonstrate the gospel of Jesus as truth: *"In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. **He listened** to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, **saw that he had faith to be healed** and called out, 'Stand up on your feet!' At that, the man jumped up and began to walk" (Acts 14:8-10). You can be sure that this man proclaimed far and wide the Person of Jesus as his healer, rousing their interest to seek Him.*

In another account of the power of Jesus at work through healing, Paul was shipwrecked on the island of Malta (Acts 28). The father of the chief official was suffering from fever and dysentery. When Paul prayed for this man and healed him, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. What a door was opened for the gospel of the Kingdom to be proclaimed! Can you imagine how many people put their trust in Jesus because of the divine power they encountered? The message of Jesus wasn't just another religious belief to the Maltese. By the time Paul left the island, lives had changed.

The Power to Engage Demons

The power of the Name of Jesus surpasses just physical needs. There's a very real war going on in the unseen realm which brings just as much (if not more) torment than bodily ailments. As an example, Paul was used by God to deliver a young slave girl who could predict the future (Acts 16). His confidence in the power of Christ to bring spiritual freedom is the same confidence He calls for us today to enact. As His representatives in this desperate and needy world, the Name of Jesus gives us the same authority to deliver others as He gave Paul. Listen to that delegated authority at work: *"**In the name of Jesus Christ** I command you to come out of her!' At that moment the spirit left her" (Acts 16:18).*

Our Lord has never called His followers to live independent of His power. The kind of childlike trust that keeps us looking to Him to be at work in and through us allows His power to prevail. That's the message in Paul's commands to the faithful in Ephesus: *"Finally, **be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.** Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* (Ephesians 6:10-12).

Heed this warning: If you hold on to any unconfessed sin or give way to the redevelopment of strongholds, you will not experience the spiritual power Jesus offers. You've given the devil a foothold, a basis to hold you captive to do his will. Scrutinize your own

life, and ask those in your family and fellowship family to tell you any unChrist-like areas of your life you may be blind to. If you resist their input out of false pride or a hostile attitude, though, they'll probably shrink back—and all of you will be worse off for your stubborn opposition.

Be mindful that when you purpose to follow Jesus wholeheartedly and avail yourself of the opportunities He gives you to represent Him through spiritual power encounters to heal and/or deliver, you're going to encounter demonic opposition. That's a reality and you need to be on guard—not in fear but in diligent awareness: *"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour"* (1Peter 5:8). If you're to trust in the spiritual power of Jesus, then you need to be even more alert when it comes to demonic schemes to seduce you and make you ineffective in the battle against Satan. Remember this maxim:

**YOU ARE ALWAYS ENGAGED IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE
BUT YOU'RE NOT ALWAYS IN THE BATTLE!
IF YOU'RE NOT ENGAGED IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE
THEN YOU'RE LIKELY A PRISONER OF THE DEVIL.**

For far too long, erroneous man-made gospels have lacked the spiritual power that reveals the Lord of the Gospel. False, incomplete "gospels" persuade people to convert through human rhetoric and persuasive words that cater to self-benefit. But that's not how Jesus, KING of kings, and LORD of lords, wants Himself represented to the world. The miracle which God performed through Elijah on Mount Carmel was God's design to not only show His power but also to force people to decide if they were going to serve Him alone or not: *"Elijah went before the people and said, 'How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him'"* (1Kings 18:21). As He always has done, God revealed Himself in power to the people because one person had the confidence to stand in His might no matter what the outcome. You need to be that person today, and those who walk as fellowship family with you need to choose if that's to be their life in Christ with you or not.

To stress the truth of spiritual power for us, the Bible reminds us who follow Jesus in love and obedient trust about the power we have in Him to serve His redemptive purposes: *"Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops"* (James 5:17,18). In His divine foreknowledge our Lord puts people in your path for you to pray for so He can reveal Himself in miraculous ways. You need to have confidence that He never fails to answer the prayers of those who ask according to His will! (See 1John 5:14.) But too often His followers cower in doubt, refusing to trust in the authority He has given them.

- Who have you seen a person healed or delivered from demons because you prayed in the power and authority of our Lord Jesus?
- Who have those in your fellowship family seen healed or delivered because they trusted His power to work through them in the authority of Jesus' Name?

- When was the last time you laid your hand on an unbeliever and prayed on their behalf?
- Isn't it time you start being an "Elijah" and trust in the power of the Name of Jesus to do what He promises to do?

If you're unable or unwilling to be used to reveal Jesus by His power at work through you, then you're being held captive through strongholds, through unconfessed sin, and/or His Spirit isn't indwelling you. Now is the time to find out. Humble yourself and ask our Lord what is holding you back from being used by Him for His glory.

Whether people are attracted to His presence in you or are repelled by it, at least they'll see the difference as He works through you (2Corinthians 2:15)! And that difference demonstrates that your love for Him and for others sets you apart as someone He has called out of the world system into His Kingdom. As the apostle whom Jesus especially loved proclaims to encourage us, "In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like Him" (1John 4:17). Don't wait for the day of judgment to see if you'll have confidence. Begin NOW to exercise the spiritual power Jesus has entrusted to you.

"And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through His own blood. Let us, then, go to Him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace He bore"
(Hebrews 13:12,13).

As one older man to you other seniors: You have the opportunity to lead the way in revealing the power of our Lord. For years most of you have taken care of your own interests and comfort in **friendly faith communities**. Your faith practices developed out of what made you feel comfortable and self-satisfied. It's time for you to leave that zone of complacency and find out how our Father would use you while it's yet day.

In the book of Hebrews the city of Jerusalem represented the corrupted religious system of Rome-appointed Jewish leaders who had seduced people away from their devotion and service to God. These religious leaders had also constructed spiritual fences of added-on regulations and obligations which the regular folk couldn't possibly keep. It was in Jerusalem that Jesus faced His greatest opposition in revealing His Father. He went outside the system and reached the humble who had ears to hear, and He's calling each of us to go outside the religious system to serve in extending His Kingdom. When you're outside the system, self-centered comfort and outward friendliness are replaced by sacrificial love and spiritual power which bring our Lord praise.

Please, prayerfully consider what I'm saying for your sake and that of your family. I'd like to close this e-mail by repeating this timeless petition: "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare Your power to the next generation, Your

*might to all who are to come" (Psalms 71:18). The psalmist expressed his heart's plea that God not forsake him. Yet he also knew what was required of him in revealing His power to the next generation. Our Lord has promised His own, "[You] will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." Your trust in His promises and your obedient availability for Him to use you attest to your children and grandchildren that you truly belong to Jesus. And because you belong to Him, people will have **awe** of our Lord when they see His power at work through you in Jesus' Name.*

Mike

P.S. I realize that many of you men have been involved in some form of Christendom for a good many years. If the various points I've brought up in these three pre-Father's Day e-mails are different than your prior faith experience, you're going to need others alongside you to help you implement them. The points I've made need to be discussed with your wife and your close Christian male friends so that you're convinced these are the way of life Jesus wants from you. You'll also need continuing encouragement until your life is a reflection of the love and character of Jesus.