

If only there were men of God who heeded His voice.

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Throughout history there have been too many generations who have had to face the consequences for the sins of previous generations. From the creation of the world in Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation our Lord speaks. The Bible reveals that He is patient, not wanting any to be lost. But when He judges people, whether a family or a nation, for willfully refusing to repent, the collective pain is significant. The tragic blindness of human beings — Christians and unbelievers alike — keeps them from recognizing God's ongoing interaction with humanity.

We've noted on previous occasions that most Christians live as **Deists**. Deism is a pervasive thread running through the theology of much of Christianity: God created everything that exists but has left it up to mankind to run it as we see fit. He's merely a "benign overseer" uninvolved in the affairs of humanity. This concept is far more common than you might think! Too many Christians whom we've met live like deists, though they wouldn't admit it. They readily acknowledge that God exists, but they have no interaction with Him until they have a pressing need. THEN they pray, wanting Him to answer according to their bidding. But they are blind to the biblical reality that Father has called those who follow His Son Jesus to serve Him rather than look to their own interests and rely on their own efforts. If you or your faith community have no testimony of experiencing our Lord's activity — His miracles, His interventions, His orchestrated encounters — then it's a sure sign that you live as a Deist!

(Here are just a few examples that our God indeed keeps revealing His will and His warnings ahead of time: 2Samuel 5:18-25; Acts 10:1-21; Acts 11:28; 21:10,11; Acts 23:11.)

"For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being,' declares the LORD. 'But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:2).

Take a moment and compare yourself to David, known as *"a man after God's own heart."* David was a man of justice as well as a man of humble heart who repented when he sinned. As with Abraham and Moses before him, David was guided by Theocracy in his heart — an awareness and recognition of God in all matters of his life. "Theocracy in a man's heart" corresponds to the "kingdom of God" or the "kingdom of heaven". It's the "kingdom within him" as he serves his beloved Lord by the rule of Jesus through His indwelling Spirit (see Luke 17:21). As a just man he is no longer motivated by the things of this world. Rather, he has become an instrument through whom our Father extends His Kingdom on earth of those ruled by their Lord.

David repeatedly sought God's specific guidance, His *rhema*. Have you sought Father's specific will for your own life? Can you explain how God has told you what job to take as His provision for you and your family? How did He confirm for you that your spouse was His will for you as your life partner? How did He tell you where to live so that you would represent Him in your neighborhood? If you didn't hear Him answer you

by His indwelling Spirit, then you may be in harm's way for making yourself the self-dependent "king" of your life.

The "Davids" who are among Christian men can be discerned by several ongoing characteristics which differentiate them from every other man on earth:

1. **They live repentantly, confessing and turning from any sin to God's way of living.**
2. **They live humbly, with a deferential heart that wholly serves their Lord Jesus.**
3. **Their love for our Lord Jesus flows from their appreciation for His sacrifice for them.**
4. **They trust in our Lord Jesus wholeheartedly, on par with the trust of Abraham.**
5. **Their lives are led by *rhema*, the specific guidance of the Holy Spirit.**
6. **They live by grace with Jesus as the Lord Who loves and commands them.**
7. **They live purposefully as children of the Father to actively fulfill His will and bring Him glory and praise.**

"A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed — without remedy" (Proverbs 29:1).

Another hallmark of our compassionate Lord: He always sends warnings, whether prophetic words or other means, to exhort a man in advance to repent of an act or attitude or words that are sinful from Father's perspective. **That humble response of "repenting" horrifies a man's sin nature and hinders many from hearing or heeding our Lord's warnings.** And his sin nature is determined to keep him from experiencing any sense of guilt or taking any responsibility for what he has said or done. Instead, he blames others, or even God, for his unrighteous attitudes and actions.

As Mike has been working on the Realities that focus on males, it's been very disheartening for him. The different topics in these Realities have brought to mind too many men from his past who remained stiff-necked and unrepentant. Oftentimes the sorrow and depression have been so strong that he has had to stop writing for a while. But later the Holy Spirit would give him courage to sit down at the computer again and write what He was prompting him to share with others. It's grieved us that over the years of our following our Lord Jesus, the number of men who resist their sin nature and lead their wives and families in the way of the Lord has increasingly diminished. These men can hide behind "Christian" smiles and appear to others to be very caring. But our Lord sees the hardness of their self-serving hearts.

No one wants to face the reality that their rebellion and willful disobedience may cause our God to have to use harsh discipline to bring them to the point of repenting and submitting to His will. Biblical examples abound in revealing this character aspect of our righteous and holy God. Yet religious teachers who have no fear of God deceptively portray Him as a doting grandpa who winks at their sin and excuses their disregard of His righteous ways. The consequences of these lies have taken a heavy toll on those who have been deceived. Many families in which the husband and/or father is present in the home are suffering today because these men have ignored God's ways — and their family is paying for their disobedience.

Over the years we have witnessed a number of family situations like this which brought forth strong chastisement from our Father so that these fathers in particular would repent.

Mike:

•One Sunday we visited a congregation whose members frequently used our retreat center. During the service people were invited to bring up any particular needs, and a man went forward with his family to ask for prayer. They had been in a major car accident the day before. The car was totalled and two of his children were still in the hospital. As I bowed to ask the Holy Spirit what to specifically pray for, I heard Him whisper, "I did this to him. The way the man lives in his home is an abomination to Me. Now tell this to the elders before you leave here today." After the service ended I approached two of the elders and told them what the Spirit had said. They assured me they'd go to the man's house that day.

That evening I received a phone call from one of the elders. "Mike, we went to that man's house. It's not only what he does in his home, it's what he has there as well that is abominable. But he refused to repent." A few weeks later we again visited that faith community. The same man again stood up in front with his family and sorrowfully confessed his sin. The day before, his entire house had burned to the ground. (Because of His great love our Lord will use His "severe mercy" to bring people to repentance. You don't want to push Him that far!)

•On another occasion I visited a man whose wife and children wanted to be part of our home fellowship family. It seemed to us that his entire family was trapped in despondent gloom. When I entered his house he was on the phone. Sensing deep spiritual darkness in the home, I went into the bathroom to bind in the Name of Jesus the influence of the demons in the house. As I prayed, a demon began to choke me saying, "You have no right to bind us; the man has invited us here." I told the demon that while I was in that home I had authority in the Name of Jesus and ordered it to not interfere with my time there. The demon released my throat.

Later as I talked with the man I recounted what had happened in the bathroom. He bowed his head in sorrow and admitted how he'd let his family listen to raunchy music, watch indecent TV programs, and use other ungodly materials in the home even though he knew they were wrong. With a sincere heart he repented. And later so did his whole family when he told them what happened. A lot of stuff went out the door that day! And the faces of his whole family were filled with joy when we saw them again.

(So many Christian men are unwilling to confront unrighteousness in their homes. Or they shift onto their wife the responsibilities God gave to them as men. This disregard for God and His righteous ways for husbands and fathers is almost universal and is a contributing factor to the forthcoming chastisement in this land.)

To resist your sin nature within you, YOU must contend against it.

Biblically, to contend is to strive and agonize. A variety of verses in the Newer Testament use a Greek word which describes contending and striving, especially in the

face of opposition. This kind of contending means that you are pressing onward with all that you are and have. For example, consider our Lord's own words about getting to heaven: "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:24). Think of Jude 3 in which the writer is "exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." That's not just a casual reference to the Gospel message. Rather, Jude is indicating an intensity such as Paul's command to Timothy to literally "struggle the good struggle of the faith" (1Timothy 6:12). It's the same word Paul uses regarding himself and the "good struggle I have struggled" to finish the race (2Timothy 6:7). This kind of contending means that you are straining every nerve fiber to the uttermost to achieve your goal. Please see Spot On 7. ***The "Agony" of Striving.***

In our most recent Prophetic Insight, ***Escape Spiritual Darkness And Complacent Mediocrity***, we wrote, "It seems that in every generation our Father raises up "Issachars" who understand the times and what His children must do (1Chronicles 12:32). All we ask of you is to ask the Holy Spirit if what we share is from Him, and if it is meant for you." We recognize that very few people receive as a warning something they aren't perceiving in their own lives. And even fewer pay attention to a warning and do something about it. Consider how God may have used these three men as His messengers of warning:

Lincoln's Proclamation for a Day of Fasting and Prayer

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness." (April 30, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln; emphasis added)

The Man-Centered Defective Gospel

by Rick Wood, US Center for World Mission

"Are we trying to market the Gospel to a generation of self-centered people who don't understand their desperately lost state before a holy God and are therefore not really saved? ... When the Church presents Jesus as the one who came to "solve our problems" and "make us happy" then we attract only those who have problems or are unhappy... If they do not repent of their sins then they are false converts and they are not new creatures in Christ. As unsaved people who claim to be Christians, they have simply brought their sins and problems into the church. This ... defames the name of Christ when supposed Christians continue in their sins."

"The Gospel is a promise of the righteousness of Christ for all who will repent of their sins [turn away from them] and trust Christ as their Savior. To have a right relationship

with God, people must come to the understanding that they are lost and doomed to suffer the wrath of God unless they repent of their sins and trust Christ for their salvation. This must be at the heart of our Gospel message. The Gospel is not a promise of a happy, problem-free life — just the opposite."

"When someone comes to genuine faith in Christ and seeks to live a life of obedience, he becomes an active soldier in the ongoing battle between God and Satan. His faith in Christ essentially puts a target on his back and makes him an object of Satan's wrath. That person becomes an active threat to Satan and his hold on power. Satan will then take every opportunity to take any genuine believer out of action. But if people who come to Christ are not told of this spiritual reality then there will be tremendous confusion and disillusionment when the truth of this unknown spiritual reality breaks in upon their lives." (emphasis added)

Ray Comfort in "The Way of the Master"

"Instead of proclaiming the Good News that sinners can be made righteous in Christ and escape the wrath to come, we have settled for a "gospel" that implies that God's primary purpose in saving us is to unfold a "wonderful plan" for our lives to solve our problems, make us happy in Christ, and rescue us from the hassles of this life. ... Those who come to faith through the door of seeking happiness in Christ will think that their happiness is evidence of God's love. They may even think that God has forsaken them when trials come and their happiness leaves. But those who look to the Cross as a token of God's love will never doubt His steadfast devotion to them." (emphasis added)

A final insight:

Over the years some who have interacted with us have recognized the deep sorrow Mike carries within himself. The verse that painfully haunts him is, *"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life"* (Proverbs 13:12). Many have misunderstood his sadness when the Spirit prompts him to share a prophecy with an individual and the message is ignored. He's not anguishing that someone with whom he shared a prophetic word resists or disregards it, neither praying about it, testing it nor confirming it with others. The sorrow goes deeper than that. Through the Holy Spirit's interaction with Mike's spirit comes the sorrow that our Lord Jesus will not be lifted up in a thankful testimony, nor will our heavenly Father receive any glory — because the prophecy recipient refused to confirm the message and/or take action in response to it. This is the source to his sadness that never leaves him. That's why there are certain people for whom Mike has asked our Lord to never again give him another prophecy.

Some of you who have suffered for Christ in one way or another will understand this last point. As the effects of Agent Orange continue to ravage Mike, it's excruciating for him to sit at a computer or to take a walk or to sleep through the night. He has lost all hope for "nominally Christian", "feather merchant" men. (A "nominal Christian" goes through religious motions but lives with the same goals and values as an unbeliever. A "feather merchant" is military slang for someone who wants acclaim for something which involves little effort on their part, or who calculatingly evades personal sacrifice or responsibility.)

We are willing to suffer on behalf of the contenders who love our Lord Jesus with lives that deny themselves and carry their cross and hear His voice in serving Him. Your prayers are deeply appreciated.

Mike & Sue

P.S. We have uploaded to our website an updated revision of ***Prodigal Church***. In 1998 we wrote Prodigal Church as a condensation of our book, ***Restoring the Early Church***. The updated revision succinctly introduces the various issues that anti-Semitism introduced into Christianity, and what our heavenly Father is doing about this.