

Prophetic Insight
What Wishes Do You Have
Before You Die?

August 24, 2016

Shortly after we completed the last of our three-part Prophet Insights series on *Blind Loyalty To A Common Darkness*, certain things in our lives changed dramatically. During the past several weeks some medical situations arose culminating in Sue receiving a heart pacemaker. She considered the possibility that our Lord might be calling her home, especially after the cardiologist called her one morning to let her know that the pre-surgery heart monitor she was wearing indicated her heart had stopped and restarted during the night!

You need to know that for both of us the thought of departing this life to be with our Lord Jesus forever gets us excited! But the thought of dying also prompted Sue to think about my future if she went on ahead of me. She told me two specific things she wanted for me when she passed from this life—and it turned out we *both* wanted the same two things for each other if either of us went first! We believe it's the *love of Jesus* which He's grown in our marriage over the years that's given us the same wishes.

Just before her surgery Sue told one of the medical staff that she knew she was facing a win/win situation when she awoke: she'd either see the smiling face of her husband or the smiling face of her Lord Jesus!

As Sue was recovering, I got to thinking about my own years of following Jesus and what grieved me about Christianity in this nation if I were to die now. Two very painful situations came to mind immediately as I could feel the Holy Spirit's sorrow in my spirit too. This

morning the Spirit stopped me from doing anything else until I shared with you two sources of His and my sorrow.

Sorrow 1. The lack of peacemakers both in families and throughout Christendom at large.

Our Lord Jesus calls for people who represent His heart by pursuing peace among those who experience relational strife: "*Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they will be called sons of God*" (Matthew 5:9). The apostle James too cites the need for followers of Jesus who bring about peace: "*Now the fruit of righteousness is sown **in peace** by those **who make peace***" (James 3:18).

Yet because so few are willing to serve our Lord's purposes as authentic peacemakers, millions of people attend religious services each week silently harboring the pain of **emotional scarring**. Sadly, most of the scarring comes from **unresolved bitterness** and **unforgiveness** toward others, especially family members and relatives. You'd think such a common prison of anguish would be on the front burner of all religious leaders so their flocks could experience the power of Jesus to heal them. But that's not the case, and I discovered why in a seminary counseling course.

Shortly after becoming a follower of Jesus in 1977 I wanted to learn why denominationalism was dividing Christendom into so many competing "Christian fiefdoms"—organized religious structures controlled by a single dominant person or group. The next year found me enrolled at an interdenominational seminary at which I was required to take a course in "Christian" counseling. It seemed that throughout the whole semester the professor and I agreed on NOTHING. He'd keep teaching various **psychological techniques**, and I'd bring up the **power of Christ**, citing pertinent Scriptures. I think he gave me a passing grade just to be rid of me!

That said, in recent decades through much of what is called “Christian counseling,” Satan has minimized the essential **power of Jesus** in favor of **psychological techniques**. (Way back in the late 1970s studies revealed that couples facing marriage problems had a higher divorce rate if they went to “Christian” counselors than couples who didn’t seek their help.)

Fifteen years later, after our workbook *Demolishing Strongholds* had been in print for some time, we were invited to address an international conference of 4,000 “Christian” counselors. We said we’d accept under one condition: that the person who’d asked us would give us some names (with permission) of those who’d been helped by his very popular counseling ministry, and we’d provide him names of people who’ve been helped through our book. He retorted, “What do you want to know *that* for?” We told him, “God judges everything by the *lasting fruit* something produces, while you and the other counselors like to argue **psychological technique**.” Their invitation was rescinded.

Several years later while doing a seminar in a small storefront congregation in Texas, we were invited to speak at a Sunday School class of the largest church in that city. The class had been going through a popular three-month-long curriculum on ridding themselves of demonic strongholds.

As Sue and I told the 200 people in the class how, because of the power and authority that’s represented in the Name of Jesus, they could be immediately free of these demonic influences, many in the class broke into tears. We were filled with compassionate desire that they’d postpone the worship service which was about to follow and stay there and become free! But that didn’t happen.

The class teachers who’d invited us were angry with us because they enjoyed their position and influence in the lives of the attendees. We could sadly identify with how

Jesus must have felt when He confronted the Pharisees who enjoyed their prestige but still managed to make people “*twice the sons of hell*” (see Matthew 23:15).

We mention these anecdotes because “stranger-based” counseling and reliance on techniques instead of confident trust in the power of Jesus will never be as effective as the intervention of a peacemaker—someone who has experienced the power of Jesus in their own life, and can be used by Him to help those in his or her relational sphere be emotionally healed!

“I don’t want to get involved.”
“I don’t want to judge.”

These responses are indicators of some hidden skeletons within people who decline an opportunity for our Lord to use them as a peacemaker. They:

- are still under the control of demonic strongholds;
- and/or enjoy secretly despising one or both of the people who have the relational impasse;
- and/or fear the loss of acceptance by others if they get involved;
- and/or enjoy being the popular person amid two estranged individuals.

Several years ago we were talking with an older woman who had the opportunity to reconcile her sister and niece. When we asked her why she didn’t help these two women, she replied how much she relished seeing her sister (whom she despised) being hurt. Listen, this is far more common in families and faith communities than most people would admit! There’s a certain ungodly power in watching people emotionally hurt each other rather than intervening as a peacemaker representing our Father’s love.

Please take this to heart: No one who is indwelled by the Spirit of our Lord and has experienced His healing power would shirk an opportunity to serve Him as a peacemaker in the lives of those at an impasse and seeking His intervention!

A few days ago I lamented with a close friend about not being able to reproduce in the lives of others what it takes to be a peacemaker. I've felt so totally ineffectual as His representative in this role among my relatives and in the Christian communities in which we've shared, or through the materials we've produced over the years. This person had just endured the pain of a "church split" which no one in the congregation knew how to stop, so he understood my despair.

What Does It Take To Be A Christ-centered Peacemaker?

Certain character qualities and motives dwell within a biblical peacemaker who can be used by the Spirit in the midst of interpersonal discord:

1. You have experienced firsthand the emotional healing which only Jesus can give, and can bear witness to His faithfulness to you (Psalm 103:2,3).
2. You need a clear conscience between you and God. Only a righteous person can produce a harvest of righteousness in others (James 3:18).
3. You must have a just heart. This means not taking sides but rather treating each person with equal consideration (Proverbs 1:3).
4. You have to facilitate back and forth discussion until ALL the issues between the parties are in the open, allowing the emotional pain to be expressed *without accusation* (Proverbs 18:17). In most cases it will take you *at least* six back-and-forth exchanges for all the issues to come forth. (Most Americans aren't used to more than one or two exchanges in

their conversations.)

5. Never, never lose sight that you are leading the involved people *to Jesus* to do what only He can do: heal the pain of the past. No one can change a past event. But Jesus can heal the *pain* and take away the sting of those memories—changing toxic bitter thoughts into healthy, Christ-like ones. With His healing power they can then move forward and not be trapped in the past.

Finally, if one or both of the people with whom you have a relationship and are trying to serve as a peacemaker *don't want to experience the emotional and relational peace that only Jesus can give them, then warn them that you'll no longer participate. Also tell them that in their stubborn pride you're going to turn them over to Satan like Paul did to bring them to repentance (1Corinthians 5:5). Anyone who chooses darkness over the light that Jesus would give needs to experience the pressure that the Adversary can bring upon them. This will take love on your part to allow them to remain in Satan's hand until they humbly cry out to Jesus!*

Sorrow 2. The millions of bitter and unforgiving self-proclaimed "Christians" who are headed unforgiven to hell.

Whether those who are beset by unforgiveness and/or bitterness consider themselves "born again" or "believers" just "good Christians" of any persuasion, their bitter unforgiveness against anyone nullifies the blood which Jesus shed on their behalf. Ungrateful for the cost of our Savior's sacrifice for *their* sins, they have deceived themselves that somehow our Father is obligated to forgive them no matter who they refuse to forgive. (See the eyeopening lesson about Father's response to unforgiveness in Matthew 18:23-35.)

You have only to talk with the people you know to recognize how widespread bitterness and unforgiveness are throughout Christendom in this nation. If you can't perceive the depravity of holding onto unforgiveness and bitter attitudes toward anyone, then you haven't grasped the heinousness of your own sin nature before our holy Lord.

When we held seminars in various congregations, we'd often ask the congregants such questions as, "How many of you are bitter toward someone?" or, "How many of you have unconfessed sin right now?" Almost unanimously hands would go up, or sheepish grimaces would emerge. But when we talked with their clergy there was no expression of concern about this, or that these very people were not being forgiven by our Father (Matthew 6:15). They seemed more concerned that these folks showed up every Sunday! If you don't believe us about how widespread this kind of darkness is within Christianity, ask your own faith community the questions we asked.

If you believe that our Lord would never condemn so many bitter and unforgiving people, keep in mind that this isn't His desire! But also understand our Father's perspective: Jesus has *already* shed His precious blood for them *IF* they repent and forgive so they might be forgiven! His Word has told them what they must do to walk in His forgiveness, and what His Father does to those who remain bitter and unforgiving: He refuses to forgive them (Mark 11:26) and turns them over to demons to be tortured until they repent.

Something we've observed: You can recognize many "Christians" who remain bitter and unforgiving because they're often busy

with activities, especially in their faith communities. But you'll also notice that they don't exhibit the *love and joy of Jesus* in their own life or in their relationship with others because they've *never experienced His healing power*. They may appear like they're caring because they participate in so many programs and activities within their faith community. **BUT** the loving joy within someone who's been healed by our Lord Jesus displays an entirely different persona —His!

Being A Peacemaker And Confronting Bitterness and Unforgiveness Often Go Hand-In-Hand

You may not be bitter or unforgiving yourself, but you do know bitter and unforgiving people in your family and/or faith community. So ask yourself:

- Do you have the Christ-given character qualities and motives we cited earlier to serve as His peacemaker?
- Will you be a biblical peacemaker, both reconciling the parties with Father and with whoever has hurt them?
- If you can't serve His interests like this, what darkness remains in you?

