

Teaching E-mails

Prophetic Warnings From A Righteous God

45. Do You Understand the Kingdom? (December 2, 2009)

Dear Friends,
Doubtless you receive a lot of articles and insights via e-mail as we do. Every so often one comes our way that we feel is worthy to pass along, especially if it confirms something that we've been praying about and discussing among ourselves and others.

Recently a friend sent an excerpt from a book entitled "[The Bronze Feet of Jesus](#)" by Stuart Peterson. Perhaps the reason that this particular article touched my (Mike) heart is that it struck an emotional chord that's vibrated within me for the past 32 years: the tension of living with a prophetic gifting. Because I believe that the writer clarified many of the cross purposes that exist between prophets and clergy particularly within western Christendom, I've emphasized several points that were meaningful to me.

"Priest against prophet . . . this is the eternal conflict in the church of Christ."
Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

"The conflict and the struggle between prophet and priest is the conflict over the [word of God and the will of God](#); specifically, who speaks for God and thus reveals His will for His people (Amos 3:7). [Note that this in no way denies the discernment given by the indwelling Spirit to individual Jesus followers; rather, it addresses the body as a whole and the corrupting weakness that assails it when an essential gifting (prophecy) is absent.]

This conflict finds the fresh breath of God ever opposing and seeking to put to death a jaded system of churchianity which has for too long wrongly interpreted and applied the pastoral and prophetic callings and responsibilities— and in having done so, grievously maligned the word of God and thus robbed God's people of the joy of suffering the word of God to cut them and cleanse them [sanctification — growth in Christ's likeness] —**all the while claiming to be the defender and keeper of God's word.**

"The greatest hope for the church in this hour is that it listens to God's prophets, those specifically anointed [by the Holy Spirit] to speak for Him at this appointed time. The grave situation in which the church and this nation presently find themselves is due directly to men speaking forth words to the church that were not words from God; men who were never commissioned or anointed to speak for God, but were appointed only to care for His sheep as priests, shepherds, pastors. Well meaning and sincere though they may have been and may be, nevertheless, attempting to carry out a calling that was never theirs, and thus being ignorant of God's designs and desires for His people, these men have for generations spoken little, if any, truth to God's people, leading them into complacency, leaving them in their sin, and now, refusing to hear and receive the word of God spoken by God's appointed men—**all the while believing they are defending the truth!**

“The battle is noticeably pitched at this time because God has sent forth prophets who are making known His will for the church, and too many of the priests, threatened, are responding by rejecting the messenger and the message. Prophets, we must understand, are sent when matters are dire, and the conflict comes when the prophet of God addresses the situation but the priest does not receive the prophet’s assessment as the word of God. The prophet recognizes the priest in his calling, and encourages him to fulfill the ministry God has given him to do. The priest, however, too often does not recognize the prophet in his calling, admonishing him to tone down his acts and words. The priest has a platform. The prophet does not. The priest has a congregation. The prophet does not. Clearly, the advantage lies with the priest. God is with both, but the prophet bears His word, and that word must be acknowledged by God’s servants [and obviously tested according to God’s Word (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22)].

“The priest has much to protect. (Wrongly, he thinks he is protecting the flock of his charge. In reality he is shielding them from God and what He would say to them.) He has his reputation and his honor with the people he serves. He also believes he is guarding the truth from this one who says he speaks for the Lord. And perhaps most of all, the priest has his ministry to protect, his “visions” for God’s people [that nobody rocks the harmonious feeling of his flock], his charge from God to be a good shepherd.

“The prophet, in stark contrast, has nothing to protect. He has no flock. He has no honor. He has no vision (save of God and

His righteousness). He has no ministry. He is a misanthrope, most definitely not priestly, certainly not blessed with a priestly temperament nor blinded by priestly goals. He is a man of God whose only desire in life is to speak the word of God to God’s people that they might repent and return to Him. [The prophet is enacting God’s mercy as he or she is sent to warn people who entertain sin in their lives to repent.] The priest who is a hireling (not all priests are, but far too many fit this description) does not feel that God’s people need to repent. He thinks they are generally healthy sheep [as long as they placidly come in and go out not looking to be changed]. He believes this because their condition is a reflection of his ministry, and he is certainly not going to admit that their condition is bad. That would mean he would have to repent. The prophet, in the eyes of the priest, is a threat to the “peace” that he, the priest, has worked so hard to establish. The reason the priest is threatened is because prophets live in the wind (John 3:8), priests tend to live on the earth (Romans 12:2). The priest does not understand that if he does not recognize the man of God, and encourage his people to listen to God speak through him, he will condemn those he tends to an earth-bound existence...”

Consider this: the vast majority of westernized Christians today have never met a prophetic person who purposes to unswervingly fulfill God’s call on behalf of His beloved. Sadly for the church body, most of the prophets we’ve met over the years are hiding out in their homes because they’ve been so painfully maligned by clergy, even within the congregations our Father had once called these prophetic voices

to serve!

How has the absence of prophetic brothers and sisters in your midst hindered your own spiritual walk? The pattern we've observed so often in westernized Christendom today is that many of the churched feel they're "OK" with God as long as they can participate in some sort of faith community that doesn't confront their sin.

Compromise with the world is both accepted and expected. That way they can "love their pleasure rather than loving God" — but their very lives deny the truth that loving God means living according to His Word (John 14:23,24).

Does this describe your "faith" walk? Then we have some things for you to consider so that you won't be among the horrified who hear the Lord say, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who are working lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:23, literal).

"As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15)

Our writings over the years have echoed a biblical theme that's dear to our Father's heart: our Lord Jesus came to establish a Kingdom of the redeemed. This Kingdom is His fulfillment of the prophetic promises that saturate the Hebrew scriptures — a Kingdom that is populated by those who do the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21). As we'll discuss more fully below, the battle for souls today is being fought over whether a person understands the nature of God's Kingdom and lives according to Kingdom purposes. Today's clergy system that deceives

those who would follow Jesus in the intimacy of obedient trust grievously parallels the religious system of the Pharisees in His day. And, His scathing evaluation of that religious system is just as applicable as it was then: "Hypocrites!" People are being made "twice the sons of hell as they were" as they fall for lawless, man-centered teachings. The absence of the prophetic voice enables this tragedy to continue.

How has the lie that God exists to satisfy and gratify people so insidiously taken hold? It begins with seminary training that impresses a "priestly mentality" upon aspiring clergy, setting them above the less-trained laity. Ignorant of their call as a priesthood of believers within the Kingdom of Christ, the individual Christian feels inadequate or not responsible to fulfill his or her Kingdom purpose according to their equipping by the Spirit. (For more on the debilitating impact of clergy as sacerdotal intermediaries, see our Hebraic Article, I Hate Nicolaitanism, a free download.)

Certainly people don't become clergy with the intention of leading others down the broad path of destruction! Yet the system itself, "priests" teaching other "priests" how to be religious CEOs, perpetuates a form of religion which condones worldliness among the churched yet denies the power of Spirit-filled individuals to discern God's Word for themselves and put it into practice (2 Timothy 3:5).

How might sin's deceit be in operation through religious systems so that, as with the Christians in the Book of Hebrews, you might have a sinful, unbe-

lieving heart that turns away from the living God and His Word (Hebrews 3:12,13)? First, recognize that your battle is against an unrelenting, unseen enemy — the same one who thought he could thwart God's eternal plans of redemption. The devil knows the Word of God and is handy at twisting it to serve his purposes. He even cited scripture during his vain endeavor to tempt our Lord (Matthew 4:1-11).

But keep in mind that the enemy of our souls reigns over his own kingdom, served by demons and those who are demonized (Matthew 12:24,26; 2 Timothy 2:26). We contend that Satan has, over the centuries, labored to bring division in order to ruin God's Kingdom people. He heard Jesus' reply to the Pharisees who accused Him of demonic power: *"Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand"* (Matthew 12:25). In response, the devil made division his strategy against Christendom. How else can you account for over 38,000 competing denominations and sects (an increase of 12,000 over the past fifteen years)? Rather than those who claim to belong to Jesus cooperating to extend His Kingdom, we observe with sorrow that cities, neighborhoods, even families are divided into denominational factions.

Don't you think our Father's heart is grieved over this backbiting, competitive defilement of unity in Christ that His Kingdom calls for? Yet where are the prophetic voices that cry out in alarm over bringing down His holy Name among unbelievers? They've been driven out of congregations by clergy

who themselves are clueless about the Kingdom of God. Therefore they focus on serving man rather than serving God — a focus that encompasses the humanism of worldly wisdom.

We realize we're using a big brush stroke to describe the current situation in westernized Christendom. However, our intent is actually to speak to the heart of you as a person/couple/family/extended spiritual family who are reading this e-mail. We would be sinning against both our Father and against you if we didn't exhort you to make sure you're obeying God's Word from His vantage point rather than from the compromised version preached from so many pulpits in the US (2 Timothy 4:3,4). Being found in a pew doesn't mean you're hearing God's Word as a double-edged sword that brings conviction and repentance as He intends it to do (Hebrews 4:12)! Instead, you may be having your ears tickled by entertaining sermons that redefine "grace and love" to mean tolerance of any and all life practices despite their violation of His Word.

"When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44)

At this point your own heart may be troubled. You may be asking, "How has Satan divided us so easily?" Several answers await your prayerful consideration.

1. Failure to understand God's perspective and Kingdom purpose leaves people vulnerable to falling away from the truth, which is the seed in Jesus' para-

ble of the soils. This is a painful reality He made clear: "When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path" (Matthew 13:19). Counterfeit creeds fill the void in which the sown seed of the Kingdom message is snatched away by Satan. In other words, a person may hear with his ears, but because he doesn't hear with an intent to obey. Thus, the message is uprooted. Calloused hearts refuse to take action upon the truth (see Acts 28:27), so what they've heard is to no avail in their lives.

For centuries Satan has been craftily dividing Christendom as "learned" theologians (priests) have nullified the role of the prophet who speaks from God through His Spirit. Disregarding the pattern of our Father to bring forth prophetic warnings in the Older Testament, the unbiblical, self-serving religion of lawlessness that so characterizes this nation has become the norm. Neglect of God's Word as the only absolute source of truth about a life that pleases Him has led to the curse of revisionism — subjugating the Bible to ever-evolving standards of man's ideals and beliefs. Is it any wonder that 38,000 fragmented belief systems have soiled the garment of the One Christ and Lord? [You may want to peruse our booklet Christian Halakhahs (a free download) to ascertain whether you've given way to what seems right (revisionism) but leads to destruction because you've departed from scriptural truth (apperception).]

Even a rapid reading of the Gospels pro-

claims that Jesus came to establish a Kingdom among those who love and trust Him. However, if you are to both understand His Kingdom call and fulfill your part in seeing His Kingdom expanded, you need to abide in union with the Spirit of Christ within you (Romans 8:13,14). Adjusting our focus toward Kingdom living means that we understand how completely different His Kingdom is from the kingdom of this world's values, ways and goals. Being the "called-out ones" is the literal meaning of the Greek word *ekklesia* that's used for "church" in the Newer Testament. Therefore, walking in union with Jesus as Lord in the loving, obedient trust He commands means setting aside any thought of "church" as a place to go.

Leaving behind the Levitical system of religious forms and rituals that are mediated by clergy sets each of us free in His Spirit to follow Him and fulfill our part in His Kingdom. Those who first put their trust in Jesus followed Him with all their heart and soul. Walking "in His steps" as we purposefully seek His Kingdom and His righteousness at work in us means we will face rejection and/or persecution by those who have no Kingdom understanding. Don't be surprised! Rather, recognize that the path of suffering authenticates that our trust in Him is genuine — another facet of Kingdom living (1 Peter 4:14).

Based upon what "born again" meant to His first followers, our Lord calls people out of the world, and even out of the religious system, in order to enact their love for Him as they do their part in His Kingdom. He has equipped us

with everything in Christ that we need to do His will. It's in doing that Kingdom will that He works in our character that which pleases Him (Hebrews 13:20,21).

In scripture, spiritual rebirth entailed a new life dedicated to God and empowered by His Spirit to obey His purposes. The apostle Peter made this relational responsiveness clear to the Dispersion "sojourners" he was encouraging in hope, those who had been "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father and set apart by the Spirit for obeying Jesus the Messiah and for sprinkling with His blood" (1 Peter 1:1,2).

The Hebraic followers of Jesus clearly understood what it meant to be chosen for a purpose, since that was the underlying theme of the entire Hebrew Scriptures! The rabbis of the Hebraic Stream who walked in the steps of their Patriarch Abraham had been teaching the truth of spiritual rebirth for over 200 years before the coming of Jesus. In Hebraic terms, the new birth, or what today is termed "conversion", involved an individual's total being responding to God's call on his life. Conversion equaled rebirth, i.e., "being born from above", and answered the inner appeal of God to the spirit of His people to live in covenant union with Him. In essence, rebirth represented a person's determination to wholly relate to God as did Abraham, whose trusting obedience to "go anywhere, do anything, believe the impossible" prompted God to establish a covenant with him.

Are you understanding this amazing "new birth" from God's perspective? In

this covenant in Christ you exchange slavery to sin for intimacy and union with Him through the gateway of Jesus' sacrifice. Your sin-laden soul is purified by the Spirit as you obey the truth in unfeigned brotherly love toward others in Jesus (1 Peter 1:22,23). This God-initiated offer is available to each of us today who, as with our forefathers in the Spirit, leave behind empty religion to enter His Kingdom.

2. Many who consider themselves "Christian" are void of any visible evidence of their repentance. Living to please themselves, their lives from Father's view are fruitless — and that's a dangerous place to be. Followers of Jesus are exhorted to "produce fruit in keeping with [your] repentance" (Matthew 3:8), since Spirit-empowered fruitfulness is the most recognizable sign that you've turned away from darkness into light. Spiritually barren trees have sadly proliferated among the church, due in large part to the pervasiveness of false gospels taught by clergy "priests" who ignore the mandate from both testaments to repent. Without repentance, there is no forgiveness of sin, and therefore no indwelling Spirit of Christ.

Trying to enact a Kingdom understanding, many in recent decades have been striving to bring "new wine" into the old wineskins of contemporary man-centered religious systems. For example, the home church movement has offered an environment in which God's people could come together apart from a designated building. Yet all too often, home church gatherings imitate the clergy/laity experience: one leader predominates with teaching, the others lis-

ten, and everyone eats and goes home unchanged. In decades past, certain groups have emphasized a need for immersion baptism, or focused on identifying and using spiritual gifts. Both are vital components of elementary teachings about Christ, as the writer to the Hebrews notes (Hebrews 6:1,2). But at what point does desire to mature come in?

Why is it that these movements never seem to bear the lasting fruit that God intends? Because so many people have been content to go through religious motions, practices and rituals but have never taken ownership of the new wine of righteous Kingdom life! Having been taught to listen to teaching, nod in agreement, and walk away to serve their own goals and interests, too many define “being a Christian” as making everyone feel good as they go their own way. But that’s a tattered “humanist wineskin” that has nothing to do with the Kingdom wineskin into which the Spirit is poured for God’s purposes!

The command of Jesus stands as firm today as it did with the religious leaders who were clinging to traditions and rituals from the past to make themselves pleasing to God. You can’t pour new wine into old wineskins. If you do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved (Matthew 9:17). As a “called-out” Jesus follower in union with Him, you have to leave behind the old wineskin establishment that focuses on YOU so that you can clearly identify the Kingdom purpose that the King you love has for you, your family, and your extended spiritual family.

3. What a sorrow that so many have failed to understand the intimate relationship our Lord Jesus speaks of in His metaphor about the Vine and the branches. The “life-giving sap” of the Spirit runs through the branches that are as closely attached to the Vine as your arm is secured to your body. If your arm is severed, it can do nothing on its own apart from your heart bringing it nourishing blood and your brain orchestrating its motions. But when your arm is functioning as God intended, you’re able to use it to fulfill distinct actions and purposes — it’s a fruitful part of your body!

Think about your own fruitful purpose in Kingdom living that comes from abiding trust in the Vine: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

Abide [or, Remain] in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:1-6).

Rather than uniting with the King of the Kingdom Who indwells His followers through His Spirit, many become trapped in religious enclaves because

they agree with the denominational creed. Others join church gatherings because they feel accepted and comfortable even if their lives bring shame to the name of Christ. A number of our previous writings, including the book *Restoring the Early Church*, counter “convenient Christianity” and its disregard for holy living. An authentic Hebraic home fellowship honors our Lord and builds up His body in two specific ways:

- The presence of Jesus in your midst through ongoing repentance and loving obedience must be foremost in your gathering together.
- Children must be welcomed as integral members of the body because they are precious to our Lord (see Matthew 18:1-5,10) and are our responsibility to nurture and train collectively and intergenerationally (Psalm 78:1-7).

Consider this: If Jesus doesn’t “show up” in your gathering because you haven’t taken the time to examine your hearts and repent of any ungodliness, should you be a part? In other words, authentic unity in Christ represents your own ongoing fellowship with Jesus and your heavenly Father: [“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ”](#) (1 John 1:3). When your relationship with Jesus is intimate, your home fellowship gatherings will reflect that as you’re edified collectively by His Spirit and equipped to serve His purposes beyond your homes.

Concluding thoughts:

If you’ve read our booklet *God's*

Instruments for War, then you’re aware that our Lord gathers His followers into a faith community so that their spiritual giftings can be used collectively for His purposes. And on a more personal level, when a married couple identifies their own spiritual gifts, their relationship is deepened and their Kingdom service is broadened. The extended spiritual family of brothers and sisters in Christ in the earliest Church was not based on creed (which didn’t exist at that time), nor would anyone be received because they “felt good” being included among the believers but were ruled by their flesh.

Please, heed a prophetic voice that is calling out from a heart of love. Get on your knees and cry out to our Lord if you don’t understand His Kingdom and are in fact living for yourself. Purpose with every bit of grace He gives you to [“seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness.”](#) This one goal will lead you by His Spirit into a life that pleases Him, and will eventually guide you to others of His children who are wholehearted for Him.

Westernized, “religion-based” Christendom emanates from the ruler of this world’s values and ways, Satan. Countless Hellenist-influenced theologians from the past and their proteges, the man-centered clergy system, can recite creeds but are disconnected from the Vine. By neglecting our Lord’s Kingdom intent, western Christianity in particular has become prey to the satanic scheme of dividing the church into opposing camps. That’s the big picture. But what about you? Are you enmeshed in the ways and goals of this earth, or are you actively bearing fruit in the

Kingdom of God for His glory?

May we all reach unity in the faith and
in the knowledge of the Son of God
and become mature, attaining to the
whole measure of the fullness of Christ?
Mike & Sue