

December 15, 2008
We ALL Need Communal Spiritual Power!

Dear Friends,

Many years ago I was riding home from a weekend retreat with a leader in his denomination. He was upset with me over my emphasis that a follower of Jesus **MUST KNOW AND USE HIS SPIRITUAL GIFTS**. Those in his denomination prided themselves in being diligent about teaching the Bible as content, but they were lax on applying some of its key points.

As we drove along he admitted that his life had no spiritual power. He'd been taught that spiritual gifts were only for the earliest followers of Jesus but had died out with the apostles. I said to him, "You know that I spent ten years in the Navy. What if you repeatedly asked me, 'What did you do in the Navy?', and my answer was always, 'I was in the Navy'? Would you accept that answer?" He replied, "Of course not! I know that each person in the military has a special duty or assignment. Everyone doesn't do the same thing!" After agreeing with him, I said, "Isn't that the same thing for followers of Jesus? We each have Holy Spirit-empowered assignments (gifts) to carry out in the Kingdom of our Lord. No one can do everything! There is a division of labor as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12, much like the different parts of our body carrying out their function on behalf of the other parts."

The topic of *knowing* and *using* your spiritual gifts has come up in recent conversations. Over the years we've marveled how unaware many followers of Jesus are in this area. Yet, the enactment of the Spirit's gifts through His people to bless others is what we as His people as well as the world needs to see. Our Lord working super-naturally (beyond natural man's ways) through His own is a testimony that the one true God of the universe is powerful!

Paul explores in such depth the body analogy of 1 Corinthians 12 because he is insistent that the family in Jesus realize the interconnectedness they have as His body on earth. The followers of Jesus in Corinth used to be pagans who were "influenced by their idols". Paul knew that ignorance of the truth leaves a void that can allow people to stray (verses 1,2). Therefore, within those for whom Jesus is Lord of their lives, the Holy Spirit has endowed gifts for the common good of each person in their faith family. These giftings are intended to be identified, used and appreciated as the Spirit at work through a necessary "body part"! By this means of serving one another for His glory through our gifts, we go way beyond the world's way of seeking its own. We're passing into the realm of seeking each other's well-being (10:24).

Prior to acting alone, discussing problems or situations with each other in your family or faith community provides the opportunity for you to coordinate the working of the Spirit's gifts in each other. Just like the combined effort

December 20, 2008
Did Our God Establish "Christian Religion"?

Dear Friends,

We're writing today because we sense in our spirit a warning from our gracious Lord. The time is getting short for you and your family to realize that He is restoring the **Hebraic foundations** of love-grounded, obedient trust in Jesus for you to apply as your way of life. If you love your Lord Jesus with a zeal that yearns to see Him lifted up in the hearts of others and long to see the spiritual power of the early Church restored, please go through these videos and discuss them with your family and faith family. (You can also print out our ***Discussing How To Restore the Early Church*** series. As with everything at our website, it's free.)

We'd like to present some prophetic understanding of these times, and why the Hebraic foundations our Father commanded us to share are so vital for you. When the church establishment throughout Europe was as corrupt as the Israel that's recounted in Second Kings, our God sent what has come to be called "The Little Ice Age." This catastrophic phenomenon continued for several years, causing massive crop failures and subsequent famine. But the crop failures and famine were the prelude to what resulted in the death of over 30,000,000 people—the Black Death of bubonic plague carried by flea-infested rats. If not for the preceding years of the Little Ice Age and famine which weakened the population, the plague wouldn't have been as devastating.

So, how do the Little Ice Age and Black Death scourge apply to us today? The economic chaos around the world is coming about as our God takes on the **gods of greed, religion, and misplaced trust in government**. Do you doubt this? Through 10 plagues He confronted the false gods of Egypt, a biblical pattern by which all through the ages He challenges false gods. His holy and loving intent remains the same: to turn people away from the broad path of destruction, and back to His narrow way.

As with the Little Ice Age, the crop failures, and the plague during the Middle Ages, the worldwide economic situation is only the precursor to the Dark Days of Chastisement still to come. And tragically, so many who call themselves Christian but who willfully violate God's commands and blaspheme His Name by their sinful lives will suffer the same judgment as the world. But it doesn't have to be this way! He rebukes and chastens those He loves so that they will zealously repent and be restored (see Revelation 3:19).

The warnings of our Lord Jesus are timeless: ***"Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved"*** (Matthew 24:12,13). Economic scarcity is God's way of rousing fear in those who don't trust Him but instead dread loss. Over time their dread of deprivation brings about cold, unloving hearts. Why does this happen? The worse the financial chaos, the more focused people are on self-preservation! This is becoming the growing attitude of many of the churched in this nation.

Yet the survivalist mentality is not a recent development, especially within western Christendom. For over half a century clergy have feared loss of parishioners who pay the bills, specifically the mortgage on the property. As we've noted previously, when churches became incorporated, they were able to obtain bank loans for building

projects, whereas in previous generations, buildings were paid for by congregations in advance. Fearful to alienate the billpayers, many clergy eliminated the call to repent and watered down any message that would confront sin within the congregation. Some were influenced by humanist teaching in their university and seminary, choosing to believe the lie that there is no sin nature to confront nor is there a holy God Who cares to relate to people.

The result? Decades of pew sitters have been seduced into entertaining the same fears that plague the worldly. Having forsaken God's call to trust Him and to love Him, they've given way to a deist view. They may acknowledge His existence but disbelieve that He will be with them in the midst of any and all affliction. "Gods" of greed and of misplaced trust in government programs and policies have replaced the loving dependence that is due only to our Lord. The entitlements that so many think are their right lure multitudes into compromising their reliance on the Sovereign God of heaven.

Another biblical element comes into play here as well. Love, a sacrificial agape love, should be the hallmark of those who claim to belong to our Lord Jesus. But that which the Word depicts as Christ's love in His followers is far from that which is shown by those who've compromised their relationship with God through spiritual adultery with the world. People who have been enticed and infiltrated by the world's values and ways perceive their **tolerance for each other's sins** to be their way of loving each other. But from God's perspective, through this delusion they are maintaining **communal UNrighteousness**: *"For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you"* (2 Corinthians 6:14,17).

Our God Did Not Establish "Christian Religion"! Man Did...

In the early 1900s, British Bible teacher Samuel Chadwick warned:

**"The world will never believe in a religion in which there is no power.
A rationalized faith, a socialized church,
and a moralized gospel may gain applause,
but they awaken no conviction and win no converts."**

Chadwick's century-old admonition has come true throughout Christendom in the United States. In our next Lifebyte we'll more fully address the **false god of religion**. Are you among those who believe that God established an entity known as the religion of Christianity? He didn't! Rather, our Lord established a new Covenant through which we may personally live in spiritual union with Him. Through reconciliation with our Father by the sacrifice of our Risen Lord Jesus, we can abide in covenant union with Him by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. God offers us a personal relationship with Him on our pilgrimage to our salvation. Never has He offered us religion; that's a ploy of Satan!

Throughout contemporary western Christendom so many clergy have relegated Jesus Christ to a distant historical time and place, subtly severing His intimate connection as the Head of His followers, His Body. Through their perceived position as educated bearers of biblical knowledge, many have also denied the Bible's declaration of truth. Several years ago a survey was taken among 10,000 clergy representing a variety of denominations, both liberal and conservative. Their responses:

Was Jesus born of a virgin? — 19% to 60% said "No."

Was Jesus the Son of God? — 57% to 89% said "No."

Is the Bible the inspired Word of God? — 57% to 89% said "No."

Do you believe that Satan exists? — 14% to 62% said "No."

Was there a physical Resurrection of Jesus? — 13% to 51% said "No."

Do you understand the ramifications of these results? *Preaching* the Bible and *believing* what it says do not necessarily go hand-in-hand. If you regularly occupy a pew, you most likely believe that your pastor is there to serve God and His purposes. But as we've discovered from years of counseling and interaction with clergy, that's probably not the case! So many instead are serving in that position in order to secure personal **financial security** and **acclaim**. To ensure that their boat of security remains unrocked, many clergy have silenced the prophetic voice of God which would warn His people of their sin. God desires a holy, set-apart people who love Him with repentant hearts that are available for His use. Now consider your own faith community. Is there a prophetic voice in your fellowship family who is sounding His warning alarm?

The Communist mantra that **"Religion is the opiate of the masses"** is accurate. Religion is man defining his god and prescribing the religious practices and rituals by which he'll abide. Today's "Christian religion" with its over 23,000 diverse denominations and sects is the creation of man, not of God! Their common characteristic? To one degree or another, most compromise biblical truth with pagan religious practices of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

Both the Roman and Greek religious systems were syncretistic, adapting whatever suited them from other religious practices and expressions.

From the pagan Greeks come the concepts of: • clergy • religious services in pew-lined temples that are errantly called "churches" • rhetorical discourses from a pulpit; preaching that's generally not applicable to personal life • set-apart choirs. Pagan Rome then exerted its influence by elevating the role of clergy as an intermediary between God and man. An entire hierarchical organization from the Pope down to the priest developed. At the bottom of the heap was the common "lay" person, prevented from fulfilling his priestly, biblical role: ***"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light"*** (1 Peter 2:5,9).

So much of Protestant religious expression has adapted the same pagan practices in one form or another, contributing especially to the destruction of the priesthood of ALL the followers of Jesus. There are no "lay" people in our Lord's Kingdom. All of His followers are priests before Him!

Our Lord has neither intended nor been part of the **Christian religion**. He is a God of personal relationship with His called-out ones, and over the centuries has repeatedly called His followers out of the religious establishment that has silenced them. Sadly, so many who have fled their bondage in one form of establishment have then created their own particular group with its own pharisaical rules and designated "creeds." Each of the 23,000 different versions of Hellenism and Romanism is glued together by its own form of creedal persuasion rather than by the unifying power of the Holy Spirit and intimacy of loving, obedient trust in the Lordship of Jesus.

Again, our Lord desires a personal relationship with each of His followers who love and serve Him in Spirit and in truth. He's taking on the counterfeit god of religion. Judge for yourself. Are you His loving and obedient follower and servant, or are you serving yourself and your own interests through the god of religion?

We'll discuss this further in a forthcoming Lifebyte.
Serving Him with trusting love,
Mike & Sue

orts of the organs working together that make up the human body, communal discussion enables the various gifts to cooperate together as a spiritual body. The Holy Spirit often uses the combination of gifts to give a more complete solution to the situation.

Many years ago in one of our newsletters we shared that one of the most frequent causes of tension in a Christian marriage was the lack of knowing each others spiritual gifts and using them. You can't appreciate and cooperate with God's work through your spouse if you aren't even aware that he or she has been gifted differently than you have!

Mike: If we want the same attitude as that of Jesus, we are commanded, ***"...in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others"*** (Philippians 2:3,4). As Sue's husband, one of my deepest concerns is to ensure that the Holy Spirit in her is neither grieved nor quenched if He can't use her gifts because of me. One of my greatest daily joys is to encourage Sue to use her gifts of exhortation and faith. Anyone who has met her notices the wonderful twinkle of joy in her eyes because the Spirit has not been hindered from using her to bless others. I never want to stifle that wonderful work in her, nor live in such a way that He isn't working out His gifting in me either.

Please download our workbook, [**God's Instruments For War — Discovering and Coordinating Spiritual Gifts as Weapons of Warfare**](#). We encourage you as an individual, a married couple, a family, or a faith family: please, don't quench or grieve the Holy Spirit in you! Our Father and His Son have given His children the Spirit so that we can access His great, loving power and do our part in the spiritual warfare His Kingdom is confronting. Are you quenching and grieving the Holy Spirit either by struggling in your own power, or by disregarding how He would use you in the lives of others? If so, you'll discover a growing sense of apprehension and tension in your midst until a divisive spirit severs your relationships. Is this what you want? If not, then please go through our short workbook. It can help you determine what gift(s) the Holy Spirit has given you so that you can bless others as His hands, feet and heart.

If you have the gifts of evangelist or shepherd in particular, we'd love to hear from you, since these are the two primary gifts for the formation of a Hebraic home fellowship.

Mike & Sue