

May 27, 2013

Standing Together With Spiritual Power

Dear Friends,

We live in a city with several military bases, so the conflict in Afghanistan is in our news almost daily. Rarely do we head out somewhere and not encounter military personnel who have recently returned home from battle or are heading out for yet another deployment. We greatly appreciate the men and women currently serving in harm's way on our behalf, and they are often on our minds and in our hearts.

You probably aren't as personally involved with military matters unless you know someone by name who is serving overseas. Perhaps your Memorial Day commemoration entails watching parades or visiting a cemetery to honor the memory of relatives and friends who served their country in previous wars.

We'd like to use this Memorial Day to help you remember the *spiritual* war in the unseen realm that is raging all around. Because this battle for human souls occurs in an invisible arena, it may not seem real to you. In fact, spiritual warfare may seem almost irrelevant to your life, like wars this nation fought decades and even centuries ago. While you may have studied about them in history classes, the wars and the lives lost have probably had little effect on how you've chosen to live. But an oblivious disregard of the unseen conflict being waged against those who follow Jesus as their Lord cannot continue—we are at war! As a spiritual "soldier for Christ" you can't call yourself a pacifist and refuse to fight. As Paul reiterates in 2Corinthians 10:3,4, we *do* wage war — but not with the kind of weapons the world uses. Through the indwelling Spirit the weapons we fight with have divine power to demolish strongholds.

We Must Reflect Together and Then Stand Together

"Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in His presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored His Name. 'They will be Mine,' says the LORD Almighty, 'in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him'" (Malachi 3:16,17).

We've noted previously that almost all the commands in the Newer Testament are given in the *plural* sense rather than singularly to just an individual. God's commands in the Older Testament were also given to the Israelites *collectively* to obey. And He purposes that His commands in the Newer Testament be **reflected on, discussed, and applied collectively** by His children as they stand together in love-grounded obedient trust. In the account of the prophet Malachi, above, the majority of Israel had spoken in harsh unbelief against God. Yet in their midst were a number who honored Him with holy fear and took part in reflective discussion. God was so pleased by what He heard that He

promised to set them apart and spare them as His special treasure.

Can you see the connection in Malachi to our Lord's assurance of the benefit of collective reflection and discussion? *"I tell you the truth, **whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.** Again, I tell you that if **two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them"** (Matthew 18:18-20). Some of God's commands give us freedom to do that which pleases Him and serves other people's needs. Other commands depict boundaries of what we should not do. When followers of Jesus collectively seek to bind or loose the commands of our Father in both Testaments, Jesus will be in their midst through His Spirit in them.*

While mutual discussion and application of God's Word is thoroughly scriptural and edifying, it's practically foreign to most western Christians today. This culture has grown exponentially more ME-oriented and individualist than in generations past. Therefore they have neither a desire nor will to mutually discuss with others how they are living the commands of their Lord as their way of life. It grieves us that even most *married* couples aren't on the "same page" of conviction about how to put into practice that which God says in His Word. That's why it's so easy for Satan to induce strife and doubt between them — the husband and wife haven't come to common agreement so they just ignore how their Father would have them live as His children.

Consider your own home and fellowship family: **How often do you reflect on God's commands together, seeking how to apply each of them to your daily lives? How regularly can you bear witness together of how your obedient responsiveness brought about a praise to our Lord?**

***"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power...
so you may be able to stand your ground,
and after you have done everything, to stand"***
(Ephesians 6:10,13)

Several e-mails ago we mentioned how our little home fellowship family is focusing on reaching the lost in Colorado Springs and the surrounding communities. About six weeks ago we went to a high place at a park in the center of the city and bound the principality and spirits that were controlling the people here. We've continued to bind these agitating spirits daily in the powerful Name of our Lord Jesus. This warfare hasn't been without repercussions. For weeks the demons counterattacked with many hours of lost sleep, numerous near collisions with distracted drivers, and other devil-induced frustrations. Then it seemed like the siege lifted. We sense that our Father wanted to test the authenticity of our love for Him and our steadfast determination regarding the burden we carry for the lost souls in this city.

We've begun to have some wonderful divine encounters in our community! Slowly, more friends and neighbors who follow Jesus have been putting the repentance bumper sticker on their vehicle windows, and/or an ichthus decal in the front window of their home. A Christian bookstore in our area recently started distributing the bumper stickers. As more people point the way toward repentance and are willing to put themselves on the line to stand up for their trust in Jesus, the more we know we have a chance to seize this city for Christ. And more importantly, to hold it for Him as people respond in loving and obedient trust.

If you're going to follow the call and opportunity our Father has given us in taking your own city or town for Jesus, know that the demonic principalities will ignore your words to desist *if* they have a foothold in you or in those who would stand with you. Once you begin binding them by the delegated authority Jesus gave His own in using His Name, you'll soon discover if you have any *unconfessed sin* or have *missed demolishing any strongholds*. That pressure within you will be undeniable! If you do find any areas of unrenounced unrighteousness, do what you should have done initially: repent and/or demolish any strongholds, and then take your stand in Jesus against the principality.

In your repentant obedience to pave the way for people to have ears to hear the truth of Jesus, you'll soon find out you have Jezebel's attention. This demonic entity hates not only prophets but *anyone* who points the way to humble repentance. At that point you'll also discover how much you and those with you are ***"rooted and established in the powerful love only our Lord can give you and those who take their stand with you. His love has breadth to it: wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, a love that surpasses knowledge—so that you are filled to the measure of all the fullness of God"*** (Ephesians 3:17-19, paraphrase).

We've mailed the bumper stickers and ichthus decals to folks in a few other states. These are just one means to help people put their own faith on the line as others ask for the reason of the hope they have in Jesus (1Peter 3:15). If enough in a particular faith community or an area of town display this message on their vehicle, they can collectively remind people that only repentance before our heavenly Father has any hope of changing this nation. Something will begin to happen when a sufficient number of Jesus followers point to the same truth!

We do have to admit that we really weren't surprised by how relatively few people on our mailing list asked for a bumper sticker. It's not just the sticker itself. For 36 years we've observed that so many Christians avoid any identification with *repentance*. How many faith communities are you aware of in which sin within the body is confronted the way our Lord commanded (see Matthew 18:15-17)? As we wrote in our last e-mail, "For decades many of those the Spirit has called to serve God prophetically have been warning about the spirit of Jezebel. This domineering demonic entity manipulates and influences both men and women in its control of this nation and much of Hellenized Christendom as well. **Its**

primary purpose is to hinder and thwart our Father's call for repentance."

This spirit is *not* confined to exercising evil power within the world; it also influences and agitates the lives of people within so many faith communities. Remember, it was the *believers* in Thyatira that our Lord accused of tolerating Jezebel in their midst to teach and seduce the faithful into sin (Revelation 2:18-29).

Repentance is the doorway that opens up all that our heavenly Father seeks in His love relationship with His children. That's why Jezebel not only seduces Christians within faith communities away from their need for personal repentance; this demonic entity also deceives them that the lost *don't need to repent*. Because of this lie, modern missiologists have reported that Christianity ceased to grow in this nation back in 1977. In reality the "Church Growth" movement is only the slosh of people wandering from one congregation to another.

While a great many people receive our e-mails, few have responded to our offer to help them begin the process to take their own city or town for our Lord and His Kingdom purposes. Spiritual embarrassment and spiritual lethargy are at work hand in hand. The Jezebel entity induces a fear that discourages people from taking action. They're afraid that others will shun them if they act in holy boldness out of love for Jesus. This trepidation is further deepened by Hellenized Christendom's ability to deceive people that God has no problem with their complacent silence about representing Jesus to the lost. Sadly, this is what has become the acceptable standard among much of western Christianity!

But know this: Only by crying out for the love of Jesus for others can these two schemes of Satan be overcome! It's the power of our Lord's love for the people He died for that enables each of us who are in Him to ***"overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of our testimony, and to not love our own lives so much as to shrink from death"*** (Revelation 12:11). Over the past several decades the Jezebel principality has taken away that intensity of love and replaced it with a "cold love" of fulfilling a religious duty because you're supposed to. No wonder there's so little loving power being poured forth from individuals and faith families today! But courage which love for Jesus and for those He puts in our path comes only by His Spirit at work in you—a humble, dependent intimacy of spirit which can't come through religious props.

***"He did this so that all the peoples of the earth
might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful
and so that you might always fear the LORD your God"***
(Joshua 4:24)

How does our Father intend that you live as His Son's representative to the lost? First, remember that our God always wants to show Himself powerful through those who belong to Him through Jesus. We are *dynamically* empowered by His indwelling Spirit to

do the mighty acts He did. Both testaments bear witness to God working through individuals He had set apart to reveal His might. He did miracles through Moses to show Himself powerful to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He used Elijah as His instrument on Mount Carmel to confront the priests of Baal (1Kings 18:19-40). And His power was at work in His servant Elisha to raise the dead, heal the poisoned (2Kings 4), feed many with little, heal a leper (2Kings 5), and rain down fire on Israel's enemies (2Kings 6).

Our Lord Jesus delegated His power to His first disciples so that people who had yet to trust in Him would recognize from the miraculous works that He had come from His Father (John 10:38). To bear witness to Who He is Jesus empowered first the twelve, then the seventy-two 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 to continue long after Jesus had ascended to heaven, as the following reveals.

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 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. As we noted earlier, 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 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).

Many Christian teachers today tell people to ignore the devil, or to not give the demonic realm credence or attention. But they say this because they're deceived! Time and again God's Word calls the followers of Jesus to take their stand against the enemy and resist his evil schemes, not retreat from his wicked workers. (See, for example, James 4:7; 1Peter 5:8,9.) For too long the "Great Commission" to make obedient disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20) has been carried out without understanding the nature of spiritual warfare that's essential to break the control of demonic principalities holding people groups in bondage. That demonic resistance which has gone largely unopposed after two thousand years has left the majority of the world in spiritual darkness. It doesn't take boldness to teach the Bible as religious doctrine; Muslims and Buddhists do the same with their own texts. But it takes a person who is filled with the loving courage of the Spirit of Christ, someone who has no regard for their own life other than to be poured out for His purposes, to engage the demons and free the captives!

Do you still have lingering doubts that we who follow the Captain of our souls are engaged in spiritual warfare? Consider the military imagery so vibrantly presented by Paul: ***"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ"*** (2Corinthians 10:3-5). In order to wage war effectively, your thought life must align with that of Jesus. You can't be entertaining demon-induced deceits and troubling lies and expect that you can clearly hear the Spirit of Christ in you as well! No one can take your thoughts captive but you. It's within your mind that victory or defeat is achieved, for your thoughts lead to emotions and subsequent actions.

Our Father has never called His children 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). Keep in mind that if you're to live victoriously you can't hold onto any bitterness or resentment toward any person for whom Jesus died. He never gives you the right to withhold forgiveness. If you do, you're defeated already! (See Matthew 6:14,15.)

To serve Satan's malevolent purposes, demons use people in whom they have a foothold or have taken captive to incite into unChrist-like attitudes and actions. That's why followers of Jesus are warned, *"do not give the devil a foothold"* (Ephesians 4:27). And make sure you don't despise people who don't agree with the stand you're taking. Recognize that they may be ensnared in a spiritual prison. Your role is to make the truth of God's Word clear in a way that respects their dignity, with the aim that *"they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will"* (2Timothy 2:26).

If you hold on to any unconfessed sin yourself or give way to the redevelopment of strongholds, you're giving 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 as the only Way to eternal life, 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 had a 12-year-old daughter and there was a rapist-murderer prowling your neighborhood, how vigilant would you be about guarding her? You need to be even more alert about yourself 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!**

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. 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, 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.

The example of Elijah reminds us who follow Jesus today 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 have cowered in doubt, refusing to trust in the authority He has given them.

- Who have you seen healed or delivered from demons because you prayed in the power and authority of our Lord?
- Who have those in your fellowship family seen healed or delivered because they trusted in His Spirit to work through them in the authority of Jesus' Name?
- When was the last time you laid your hand on an unbeliever and prayed for them?
- 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?
- When will you start revealing Him to the lost by allowing our Lord to reveal His power through you? Isn't now the time?

If you find it hard to be used by our Father to reveal Jesus through His power, then your resistance indicates you're being held captive through strongholds and/or unconfessed sin. Don't allow complacent lethargy or doubtful fear to silence you or your fellowship family. You don't want to stand in shame before His throne that you were too embarrassed to speak up for Him to those who needed to hear. Instead, He desires that our lives stand out as different from those who are in bondage to the world's ways and values. Whether they are attracted to His presence in us or are repelled by it, at least they'll see the difference (2Corinthians 2:15)! And that difference evidences that our love for Him and for the sake of others sets us apart as those He has called out of the world system into His Kingdom. As the apostle 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).

Mike & Sue

