

REVELATION OF THE GLORY OF JESUS ULTIMATE SPIRITUAL WARFARE!

“Comfort, yes, comfort My People!” Says your God. “Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.” Isaiah 40:1 & 2.

INTRODUCTION

None of us has the full picture! Even Peter considered that Paul's epistles contained “some things hard to understand” (2 Peter 3:16)! Many have used the phrase “In the basics, unity, but in all else freedom” to describe how we are to walk together in all of our creative differences.

However, defining the basics can become a problem! What did Jesus accomplish on the cross? How does that relate to the whole realm of spiritual warfare? Is Satan bound now? Must we bind and throw down principalities and powers, that is, engage in what is called “strategic level spiritual warfare” in order for the nations to come to Jesus? These are not small issues!

Several recent conversations have forced me to again consider these things. “What do you think of Ana Mendez saying God told her to proclaim the 6th day of the 6th month of 2006 as a special day of warfare against the powers of darkness?” Yes that day is number 666! Upon hearing this, one friend said that if he was the devil he would just do something huge on the 5th of June!

Some areas of ministry can acquire a life of their own and become an industry. We accept things without really questioning what is being said or why, simply because someone known is saying it and a lot of people are doing it. You need to question everything! It is your relationship with God! It is your money! The Holy Spirit cannot answer your questions unless you ask them. There are questions that need to be asked all across the spectrum of Christian activity. Questions about content and questions about motivation.

For example, I once wrote an article speaking to some of the problems, as I saw them, of the spiritual warfare movement. When the editor read it he said, “I agree with your view and that it is biblical but I cannot publish it. That is not what is selling now.”

We once listened as a leader of the spiritual warfare movement spoke of his shock at listening to Rodney Howard Browne destroy his warfare theology with a few clear scriptures and then spoke of his fear that if people received Rodney's message they would not come to his conferences or seminars anymore! His main concern was not biblical accuracy but the threat to his income flow!

The truth is that we have created a church in the image of our western culture of consumption. We have taught people to be consumers of religious information and religious experiences rather than sacrificial followers of Jesus. If you want people to come to your conferences and buy your books, you need to give them new information (revelations!) and new spiritual experiences (without the inconvenience of actually obeying God!). It is basically new age spirituality- spiritual experiences valued above (or without) sacrificial obedience.

We have also created a spiritual technology in our own image. That is a technology of how to do the stuff which leaves us in control and makes us look powerful. That is the scientific method applied to church growth, to spiritual victory, to becoming wealthy and to having a great sex life. Just look around the shelves of your local Christian book store to see all the

great “how to” books!

And of course there are always great testimonies in relation to the spiritual warfare teachings! However, I have become more than a little skeptical of all testimonies! If you added up all the reported decisions from Russian evangelistic campaigns you would have more than the present total population of the nation. If you added up all the reported decisions from Ukrainian evangelistic campaigns you would have five times their present population!

A couple of weeks ago a friend told me the story of reading a newsletter about an evangelistic campaign in St. Petersburg. The report was of 1500 new decisions and all of them enfolded into the life of the local churches who sponsored the campaign. So this friend called someone he knew in St. Petersburg and asked for the truth of the matter. Yes, there were 1500 or so decisions and yes they did attend at least one service of one of the sponsoring churches. The question was why did they do so? The crowd was told that each person who came forward would receive a token redeemable for a food hamper at any of the sponsoring churches. Once word got out many came to the meetings, came forward and prayed the prayer to get the token. They then attended one service to redeem their token for a food hamper. Why not?

We have wandered around the second and third worlds long enough to know that all newsletters need to be read with a bit of skepticism! In most of the third world you can have as large a crusade as you are willing to pay for! Does this translate into transformation? It is easy to have crusades and count decision cards and difficult to make disciples! Some say that 70% of those in the Nigerian government would call themselves Christians and yet it is still one of the most corrupt places on the planet.

Are all men liars? Of course not! Is there pressure to give a “good” report since good reports raise good money? Of course! Do leaders in the second and third worlds know this? Of course they do! Do they mislead Western leaders who want a good report? Of course some do! Do Western leaders mislead? Some do!

What about the testimonies of all that God has done as a result of a spiritual warfare initiatives? Many factors could be involved from “stretched truths” to happy coincidences. The conference is held and things happen nearby. Is that a result of the spiritual warfare strategy or the result of others who have worked in the area for years and have begun to see fruit? Besides, Christianity is not pragmatism. It is not true because it works! It works because it is true!

We are not interested in maintaining any spiritual fad or conference circuit. Our methodology is very simple. We want to examine the scriptures used to teach strategic level spiritual warfare in their specific contexts and in the New Covenant. If you cut and paste you can make the scriptures say almost anything you like. The question is what is the line through all of the scripture? Where does the individual scripture fit in the big picture? What do you do with the ones that do not fit? There is a lot of ground to cover so be patient as we make the journey!

Your presuppositions and your foundational beliefs determine what shape your thinking takes above ground. Why you reach the conclusions that you do is often more interesting than your conclusions! Where you believe you are going will determine how you choose your route! For that reason we are going to begin with a sketch of the big picture and outline how I see where we are coming from and where we are going.

A/ OUR FOUNDATION- A COVENANT OF DOMINION AND ESCHATOLOGY OF VICTORY!

1/ OUR COVENANT OF DOMINION UNDER GOD!

Yes, Genesis 1:26- 28 is true! We were created to exercise dominion and especially “over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth”! I believe that it is often very instructive to notice when something is first mentioned in scripture. The first reference to satan in scripture is as a creeping thing that is to be under our dominion! That is God's original intention.

Yes, we were to “fill the earth and subdue it”! From a base of security and order in the garden, that God commanded Adam to “dress and keep” (Genesis 2:15), mankind was to progressively fill and subdue the earth. Why did the earth need to be subdued? It was under satan's control. We were to progressively displace his rule and offer the earth back to God. This same dominion mandate is restated in Psalm 8:4- 6 and quoted I Corinthians 15:27 and in Hebrews 2:6- 7, “... You have set him over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet.”

How the world came under the dominion of satan is another question. What is clear is that God placed man on earth to take dominion over the earth! If the need had been dominion in the heavenly realms, God could have placed man there!

2/ OUR COVENANT BROKEN WITH GOD AND MADE WITH DEATH!

You know the story! Adam did not “keep” the garden! His first mistake was to let satan into the garden. His second was to remain silent while satan talked with Eve. His third mistake was to choose Eve, oneness with his own flesh, rather than his relationship with God. His fourth mistake was to blame his failures on God. Eve at least had the honesty to blame the serpent! Books have been written about this but the point here is the result. Man did not “fill the earth and subdue it”. He gave his God given authority over the earth to satan. Adam gave satan the keys of the kingdom! The earth began to be filled with violence and death.

The keys of the kingdom are the words of God. The key that applies here is from Genesis 2:17 where God says that in the day that Adam eats of the tree of knowledge, he would “surely die” or “dying you will die”. Once Adam ate of the wrong tree, he was locked up unto death by those words.

Paul declares the fact that by one man sin and death entered the world and uses that as the background to life and righteousness being brought into the world by Christ, “For since by man came death by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive!” (I Corinthians 15:22- 23 and Romans 5).

3/ OUR COVENANT ENEMY DEFEATED!

Paul's prayer in Ephesians one is that God would give us revelation and we desperately need the revelation of Ephesians 1 & 2, Colossians 1 & 2 and Hebrews 1 & 2. These chapters are central! There are some passages of scripture that may be difficult to understand but these are not. They make clear, simple statements although the implications of these statements may be difficult to accept. However, our first task is to simply accept the plain, simple meaning of the scripture.

Ephesians 1: 19- 23 speaks of the mighty power of God which raised Jesus from the dead and placed Him over any other possible authority or any other possible power in any age past, present or future or in any realm thus placing “all things under His feet”!

Colossians 1 repeats those same truths and then chapter 2, verse 15 tells us why He has all authority. It is because of his death on the cross “where having disarmed principalities and powers He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” This picture is of a Roman triumphal procession where a victorious general would parade kings and commanders, that he had defeated in battle, naked and chained through the streets of Rome to humiliate them.

Hebrews 2:14 and 15 are equally clear and powerful, “In as much then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” This is the same message of John 12:31- 32, “Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all peoples to Myself.”

All of these scriptures speak of satan and his minions being bound, disarmed and destroyed at the cross! I Corinthians 2:8 tells us that if the rulers of this age had understood God's plan “they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” Satan thought he had the keys of death and hell and that he could control the destiny of man. God had said that the soul that sins must die! When Jesus died He entered into the realm of the dead where satan thought he had control but that key could not hold Jesus. He had never sinned. He rose from the dead and now the keys to death and hades are in His possession. That is His declaration in Revelation 1:18, “And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”

Our covenant enemy and his cohorts are a defeated foe!

4/ OUR DOMINION COVENANT RESTORED!

The Great Commission of Matthew 28:18- 20 renews the original covenant given to us by God. The New Man has all authority in heaven and earth, not because He took it by deceit or by force but because He laid His life down in obedience to the Father. Those in that One New Man are given the mandate to go and make disciples of all the nations! We are to progressively fill the earth with the sons of the Kingdom!

The revelation of Paul as expressed in Ephesians, Colossians and Hebrews is that man has been restored in Christ to his place above all other authorities and powers. All things are again under our feet!

“Those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:17).

Jesus has made us to be “kings and priests” (Revelation 1:7) and that is why He is the King of kings! The fact that some have used these scriptures to teach a wrong triumphalism does not take away from their truth. The issue is how do we live them out? Do we demand to be served like a Solomon or do we delight to serve others like a Paul?

5/ OUR COVENANT MANDATE FULFILLED BY THE CROSS OR BY HIS SECOND COMING?

Acts 3:19- 26 is a very powerful scripture. It is the conclusion of Peter's preaching in Solomon's porch after the healing of the lame man. He speaks of God sending Jesus to bring times of refreshing as people repent and at the same time speaks of how “heaven must receive (Him) until the times of restoration of all things which God has spoken about by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” The sense is that Jesus wants to return but is waiting until all things prophesied have been fulfilled! One prophesy referred to by Peter in this passage

is that “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” through the sons of Abraham. Whatever “the restoration of all things” means it is very clear that Jesus will not return until all prophecies are fulfilled!

We have an understanding, inherited from the Plymouth Brethren teachers of the beginning of the twentieth century, that the world is getting worse and worse and that Jesus would come back to rescue us via the rapture just before the church was about to be extinguished. Their favorite verse was Luke 18:8, “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes will He really find faith on the earth?” We also have the whole “Left Behind” industry which keeps putting out books and movies about a deepening satanic night taking over the world. What if that is not true? Why the destruction of all things? Why not the restoration of all things?

What about Romans 15:20, “And the God of peace will crush satan under your feet shortly.” What about such a scripture written to a church under persecution by Nero?

What about I Corinthians 15:25, “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”? That sounds like the fulfillment of the Genesis mandate for man to fill and subdue the earth! Is Jesus coming back to fight for a kingdom or to receive one?

What about Ephesians 4:13, “Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”? The purpose of Jesus in giving the ministry gifts was so that we could grow up into Him! That does not sound like the failure of the church!

What about Ephesians 5:27, “that He might present her to Himself a glorious church”? That does not sound like anything even closely related to “Left Behind”!

What about Philippians 3:21, “according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”? That sounds like the progressive victory of Jesus in space and time, through His body, before He comes again! That does not sound like defeat and escapism.

What about Colossians 1:20, “and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”? The power for total reconciliation has already been released!

What about Hebrews 10:12 & 13, “But this Man after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.” Jesus is not returning to fight for a kingdom. He is returning to receive the Kingdom He already fought and paid for!

What about Isaiah 9:7, “of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.”? That is an increasing Kingdom!

What about Daniel 2:35, “And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”? That is a clear, simple statement of an increasing Kingdom!

These scriptures are not speaking in the language of visions and dreams. They are all simple, direct, propositional statements. Why do we try to make them mean something different?

Right! Some of you are thinking about Matthew 24 and the Great Tribulation! What if that already took place in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 76 AD? After all the context is the lament of Jesus over Jerusalem! Actually that is what the early church believed! What if it already had a fulfillment during the power of Roman Catholicism when about 25 million people (their own numbers as recorded in the Vatican libraries) were slaughtered for seeking to read the bible in their own languages and in their own homes? That is what the Reformers

believed! What if it has had a fulfillment in the Soviet Union and in China?

What if the reformers were correct in believing that the great apostasy spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2:1- 12 refers to the rise of Roman Catholicism? What if the restraint on the mystery of lawlessness was the Roman Empire? The teaching of an antichrist, tribulation and apostasy yet to come was an invention of a Jesuit priest to combat the Reformation teaching that the Pope was the antichrist and Roman Catholicism was the great apostasy! What if the reformers were even partially correct on that one?

If you have been indoctrinated by rapture escapism you may find these questions almost heretical. They are not. The eschatology of the glorious church and the victorious kingdom was the eschatology of the Reformers. It was the belief of Luther, Calvin, Lattimer, Ridley, Tyndale, Knox, Wesley, Edwards and Spurgeon. It was the view of the Protestant church until the 20th Century! And it is still the view of many!

The problem is that escapism, fear and no responsibility needed sells much better to a consumer culture than engagement, faith and responsibility to disciple the nations. We have even crafted a heaven of escapism where we float on clouds and all have our own mansions. Why does such a heaven need the tree of life for the healing of the nations (Revelations 22:2)? Why does Jesus talk about the reward for faithfulness now being responsibility to rule over cities in the future (Luke 19:17)? Why does John see a new heaven and a new earth and then see “the holy city, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Revelations 21:1- 2)? Coming down to where? Well there are few choices available! That would have to be coming down to the new earth! What happened to your mansion in heaven? Indeed! Heaven is real but it may be a lot different than some popular books make it out to be!

B/ SPIRITUAL WARFARE- STAR WARS OR REALITY?

1/ PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS- DEFEATED FOES!

It should be clear that all principalities and powers are defeated foes under the feet of Jesus and His church. That is the bible and it is also bible that we have to deal with the now and the not yet of this reality. We will come to that in section “C” which talks about our warfare.

However, there is a problem with the term “principlality and power” itself. “Principlality” is a translation of the Greek word “arche” which simply means first in any order and can be translated as magistrate, chief or ruler. “Powers” is a translation of the Greek word “exousia” which simply means might, strength, freedom, ability, force, authority, competence and by extension can mean magistrate or jurisdiction. These are the words used in Romans 8:38, Ephesians 1:21, 3:10, 6:12, Colossians 1:16, 2:15, Romans 13:1 & 3 and Titus 3:1.

In Romans 13:1 & 3 and in Titus 3:1 these words are not translated as “principalities and powers” but as “governing authorities” and “rulers and authorities”. That clearly is a reference to earthly civil authority and government. That is a lot less spooky spiritual! Of the other scriptures mentioned only Ephesians 3:10, 6:12 and Colossians 2:15 have to be translated as referring to dark spiritual authorities.

And what is the point? It is very simple- at least some of the force of spiritual warfare teaching is based upon an alternate and possibly wrong translation of these words. They could be translated as civil authorities which we are called to pray for and bless (I Timothy 2:2)!

And the point of that is? Let me answer that question with an example. The Chinese

church is very nationalistic. They love their country and pray constantly for their rulers. Strategic spiritual warfare teaching was not a part of their thinking. They prayed for their rulers and did the gospel and the rest as they say, is history, the church exploded and continues to explode. I pray they do not become corrupted by western “spiritual experts” on how to pray! They have the fruit of literally millions of new converts in thousands of house churches with testimonies of countless signs, wonders, healings and deliverances. Many of our western friends only have a series of conference bookings.

2/ WHAT ABOUT WRESTLING WITH PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS?

Yes, we need to consider Ephesians 6:10- 20? Paul does say “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.” Is this the strategic level spiritual warfare proof text? No.

The question is how do we wrestle? The answer is by putting on Christ. Each article of armor speaks of who we are in Christ. It is a lifestyle of standing in Christ! And having done all, keep standing! Do you stand in the finished victory of Christ or do you try to complete His victory in your own strength? Do you think Paul had forgotten what he wrote a few verses before about us being seated with Christ in heavenly places far above all principalities and powers? We must keep Ephesians 6 in the context of the rest of the book and see the whole story! The issue is one of faith- do you believe your beliefs or do you believe your circumstances? Do you stand in your revelation of who you are in Christ and where you are in Christ or do you not?

The next question is how do we pray? By tearing down the strong holds? If we know we are above them why we would try to pull them down? That means that first we have to put ourselves under them! It is Old Covenant revelation that satan is under our feet! That is David in Psalm 91 verse 13, “You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.” Paul does not ask us to pray about the demons. Paul asks us to pray for him for boldness to declare the gospel. Circumstances can intimidate and seek to control us but we need the boldness of our faith and position in Christ!

You always have the choice of trampling underfoot the dark powers or letting them tread on you!

3/ WHAT ABOUT BINDING AND LOOSING?

Matthew 16:19 tells us that Jesus will give us the keys to the Kingdom and that whatever we bind on earth will be bound in heaven and that whatever we loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. And that is the proof text for binding the powers of darkness! Or is it? What is the context?

The context is the revelation of Jesus which Jesus says the Father had just given to Peter. Jesus goes on to say that upon that rock of revelation He would build His church and that His church would destroy the gates of Hades. His picture was of satan running and hiding behind the castle walls and the church freely moving around the plains and smashing through the satanic castle gates. He then commands His disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ.

What is being bound and loosed here? Revelation! What smashes through the gates of Hades? A church empowered by the revelation of Jesus, the glorious Christ!

I trust that there are no demons in heaven to be bound and I also trust that if people release demons on earth they are not released in heaven. The covenantal relationship between earth and heaven is about His will being done on earth as it is in heaven! That is what we are to

pray. If we pray that on earth, it is released in heaven for the earth. If we bind revelation on earth, it is also bound in heaven. We become like the lawyers of Jesus day who did not enter the kingdom and then threw away the key of knowledge for those who were trying to do so. The lesson? Open hearts mean an open heaven! Closed hearts? Closed heaven!

Matthew 18:18 also teaches us that “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and what ever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” But if we check out the context there are no demons in sight! The context from the first part of the chapter is about humility, offense, seeking the lost, and dealing with relational sin. The last part of the chapter is about forgiveness. It is all about people and relationships. The message is very, very clear! If you do not forgive, you will not be forgiven. If forgiveness is bound on earth it will also be bound in heaven! If forgiveness is released on earth, it will also be released in heaven! The lesson? Again, open hearts mean an open heaven!

3/ WHAT ABOUT BINDING THE STRONG MAN?

In Matthew 12:25- 30 Jesus asks the question, “Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.” The context is very clear that Jesus is speaking about satan being the strong man and He Himself being the one who will bind him.

The rest of the New Testament bears this out. This is why we talked about our eschatology of victory. That Satan has been bound is the testimony of Colossians 2:14 and Hebrews 2:14.

What about Revelations 20 and the talk about binding and loosing satan there? What about the thousand years? The interpretation which has gained acceptance since the beginning of the twentieth century is that satan will be bound some time in the future and that the millennial reign of Christ will begin then.

The view of the reformers was that satan was bound at the cross and that the reign of Christ had begun with Pentecost. They believed the government was upon His shoulders and that of the increase of His government and of His peace there would be no end (Isaiah 9:6 &7). Does that mean that we are in the millenium right now? That is what the reformers believed! One thing is sure- the thousand year thing is a metaphor for a fullness of time and not a literal time period. And that is true for most of Revelations. It is the language of vision, dream and symbol. To make it literal is simply wrong.

Another thing I am sure about is the clear testimony of the New Testament about what Jesus did at the cross. He bound the strong man so that we are free to spoil his house. Do you believe that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth? Those are His words! And after He declared them He commanded us to make disciples of the nations. If He has all authority (and He does!) then we are absolutely without excuse if we do not disciple the nations! Is that the millenium? Maybe we need to rethink what we believe the millenium really is!

There are enough resources in the church to give food and water to the poor. There are enough resources to disciple the nations! They are locked up in selfishness, foolish empires, useless buildings and wasted on executive lifestyles. How will we answer the Master? He says He does not dwell in temples made with hands but looks to the humble. He says that if we serve the least we have served Him and yet we keep wasting vast resources on foolish things.

The strong man is bound. That is not the problem! The problem is the human heart!

4/ IS THE VICTORY OF JESUS IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION ENOUGH?

Of course we all say “Yes” since we know that is the right answer. Jesus Himself said. “It was finished!” while on the cross! What is Jesus doing now? What does that tell us!

Hebrews 1:1- 3 says that God has spoken to us in these last days through His Son “who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

Hebrews 1:13 tells us that God has instructed Jesus to “Sit at my right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool.” Hebrews 10:12- 13 repeats this message! He is seated and waiting for His enemies to made His footstool! This testimony is confirmed again in I Corinthians 15:25, “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.”

The whole point of Hebrews 3 & 4 is that Jesus has entered in His rest and invites us to enter into the rest of His finished work with Him.

Maybe we should put the question this way. Is Jesus coming back to fight for a kingdom or to receive one? Your answer to that question will depend entirely on what you believe He accomplished on the cross. And if you believe He accomplished the victory and bound the strong man in His cross then it will dictate what you believe about strategic level spiritual warfare.

If the victory of Jesus on the cross was complete and if He has all authority what happens if we try to bind principalities and powers? If we try to do something which Jesus has already done what are we doing? If we try to do something through our spiritual technology which Jesus has already done that is refusing to enter into the rest of God. That is another form of works. That is what Oswald Chambers calls “blasphemy against the atonement”! Heavy stuff!

If we yell at the demons are we tearing them down or are we empowering them? Satan's kingdom operates according to the big lie. His big lie is that this is his world, that he is the ruler of it and that he can give it to whomever he wills. Not true since the resurrection! If we buy his story, we empower him. My conviction is that the more we try to bind dark powers, the more we actually empower them! Again, heavy stuff!

It is a spiritual principle that we become like what we focus upon. That is why we become like Him by beholding Him (II Corinthians 3:18). That is why those who worship idols become like them (Psalm 115:18 and 135:18). What happens if you spend your time focused on the dark powers? Our experience has been that you probably need deliverance! Are you depressed or joyful? Are you heavy or light? Do you enjoy life or is it a burden? Are you anxious or free? Does your family enjoy being with you? Do you sleep at night?

Yes, do you sleep at night? That is a good question! We have frequently been asked how we cope with the intense, dark spiritual atmospheres of some of the places that we go to. Some who ask the question even boast of how they cannot sleep in certain places due to all the “warfare” that they experience. Please my friends, if you cannot sleep at night due to spiritual attack that is not spiritual that is foolish! We sleep just fine everywhere we go! Well, most of the time- jet lag, concern for people, night intercessions and encounters with God do create exceptions! Our lives are hid with Christ in God and Psalm 91 is still true!

One of my favorite stories is of Smith Wigglesworth and the time he woke up to find satan standing at the foot of his bed. Smith said, “Oh, its only you!” before rolling over and going back to sleep! Some of our spiritual warfare friends in that situation would try to bind him

and cast him out (to where?!). And then boast about it at their next conference. If that sounds stupid when referenced to satan why do we not think it sounds stupid when someone boasts of pulling down the dark powers over a nation or region?

Satan is a defeated foe. He is a created being. In comparison to God he is like a candle to the sun. Our focus is to be on Christ. We have a great big God and a very small devil. It is not spiritual to make him larger than he really is. That is foolishness!

5/ HIGHER LEVELS AND BIGGER DEVILS?

The spiritual warfare movement would have us believe that there are three different levels of spiritual conflict. The first is on the earth and involves casting devils out of people. The second level is institutional or regional and the third level is the strategic level where you are “dealing” with demons over nations, religions and whole peoples. That there is a hierarchy of demons and angels there is no question. Daniel gives us glimpses of that.

However let me ask the question- in light of the cross of Christ what does it matter? We have already seen that Jesus has bound the strong man. We have already seen that the issue of binding and loosing is a matter of the human heart- open heart, open heaven! Bound, closed hearts mean a bound, closed heaven.

We have already seen that all believers in Christ are above all principalities and powers. We have already seen that satan is under our feet! We know that Jesus saw satan fall from heaven.

My observation is that all occult and religious systems work according to hierarchies and levels. You have 32 degree masons. You have priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals and a pope. You have pastors, prophets, apostles, vertical apostles, horizontal apostles and ambassadorial apostles. There are already many charismatic bishops and I am waiting for the first cardinal! That should be exciting!

We create religious clubs so that we can feel the pride of inclusion and the power of exclusion. Do we really want to be like Jesus? Jesus is the one person who could out title anybody. He is God. He is the apostle and high priest of our confession. He looked at a circle of fishermen, tax collectors, farmers and zealots and called them friends! He totally destroyed all hierarchies and left only one level possible- friends! Then He took us into glory to sit with him there. Each one of us from new born to old saint. He leveled it all at the bottom and took us all to the top.

He commanded us to avoid being like the gentiles with their hierarchies and titles. Do we really believe Matthew 23? “Do not be called Rabbi”! “Do not call anyone on earth your father”! “Do not be called teachers”! What part of “do not” is difficult for us to understand?

Why do I talk about this in relation to higher levels and higher devils? The implication is that those who have achieved a greater spiritual level by greater spiritual experiences, by seeing more deeply into the demonic realms or by having more experience of the kingdom of darkness, are the ones who are qualified to engage in the highest levels of spiritual warfare! That is raw human pride. And besides it is simply not biblical. Again we see the principle working that we become like what we focus upon! Focus upon hierarchies and become hierarchical! Focus upon the kingdom of pride and become proud!

We all face the same devils. John the beloved called them the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” (I John 2:16). John Wimber called this demonic trinity “the glory, the gold and the girls”. It is not what is outside you that will destroy you! It is compromise from within!

(A short note at this point may be appropriate! I am almost to the place of thinking that all hierarchical systems are inherently demonic! Satan is not God. He cannot be in every place at once and he cannot speak to every one at once. Nor can any man. Satan exercises powers and control through delegation and hierarchy and so do we. We think that is leadership!

Jesus can be in every place at once. He can speak to every one at once. He is God. His sheep hear his voice. He is the head of every man. He is the head of the body. The head can communicate to every member of the body instantaneously without any chain of command! Each of His priests is a royal priest. Each of His priests is a holy priest. He died to build His church! In such a church leadership is influence- no more and no less. It cannot be hierarchical. It cannot be command and control. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." (I Timothy 2:5). Who are we to take His place over any life? That is why Paul told the Corinthians in II Corinthians 1:24, that his relationship with them was not hierarchical. "Not that we have dominion your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy: for by faith you stand."

But that is another whole discussion and if you want to challenge your thinking about leadership you would do well to read "The Seven-Day Weekend by Richardo Semler!"

C/ WHAT IS OUR WARFARE!

1/ ACTING OUT OF THE OPPOSITE SPIRIT!

Is the warfare "out there" or in our hearts? Both James (James 4:6- 10) and Peter (I Peter 5:5- 11) quote Proverbs 3:34, "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble". They both draw the same conclusion- submit to God, to one another and resist the devil. Or we could phrase it, submission to God is resistance to the devil. Why? Because any foothold of pride gives the devil place in our lives.

The principle is that you do not bind and tear down a strong hold of pride. You submit to God and that thing flees from you!

Acting out of the opposite spirit is the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you and do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." Blessing is more powerful than any curse! Good overcomes evil! You are not a victim unless you choose to be so! Men may do their worst but you are always able to choose your attitude and so doing release the power of the cross.

Why do we want to bind and pull down principalities and powers by decree and by superior spiritual authority! We do have superior authority but that authority is to love, to heal, to cast demons out of people and fill the earth with His glory. The dark powers left their created place and in pride and arrogance sought to take a higher place. If we have been given authority over the earth why do we want to leave that place and assume authority in the heavens as well? If we do that we are making the same mistake as the powers we are coming against. We are not responding out of the opposite spirit but the same spirit! We are trying to win by acts of power what can only be won by acts of love and humility.

2/ OUR WARFARE IS BETWEEN OUR EARS!

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," is Paul's

statement from II Corinthians 10:4- 5.

Our warfare is not with strongholds “out there” but in our minds. The strongholds are not principalities and powers but arguments and thoughts which rise up against the knowledge of God. Again these are simple statements whose meanings cannot be argued. It seems to me that one of the main strongholds in some peoples minds is the whole idea of strategic level spiritual warfare!

What is the battle here? It is the fight of faith. What do you believe? Do you believe your circumstances or do you believe the Cross? Read II Corinthians chapter 4 to see Paul's struggle to keep his vision on the things that are hidden and eternal. Some of our spiritual warfare friends would counsel Paul to take authority over his circumstances, to bind the evil powers hindering his ministry and to change his circumstances. Some of our faith friends would counsel Paul to have more faith and to declare the favor of God over his life. After all we are called to victory and not to suffering!

Or are we? Maybe we need to completely change our thinking! My friend Brian Dodd says that the inheritance of the Old Covenant was prosperity but the inheritance of the New is suffering! We teach people how to receive the inheritance of an annulled covenant and to avoid the inheritance of the one which is now in force! Read the verses on suffering in the New Testament! It is amazing how much suffering and glory go together!

3/ WORSHIP AND PRAISE OF THE VICTORIOUS CHRIST!

Our desire for revelation of Jesus and worship of Jesus fulfills Psalm 149. When the saints are “joyful in glory” and “sing aloud on their beds” they have the “high praises of God in their mouths and a two edged sword in their hand”. This “executes vengeance upon the nations and punishments upon the peoples”. To “bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron: to execute upon them the judgment written. This honor have all his saints.”

The focus is praise and worship of the glorious Christ as a lifestyle (even on your bed!) and the continuous declaration of the gospel. That will progressively release the covenant of victory already written at the cross. This is the honor of every saint!

As we travel we are constantly declaring the Kingdom of Jesus, His victory on the Cross, His increasing dominion, His name above every other name, the power of His blood, the power of His Name, the wonder of His Holy Spirit. We are not passive in declaration! We are not passive in praise! We are not passive in honor!

4/ MAKING THE WISDOM OF GOD KNOWN TO THE PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS!

When Paul declared that the church was to make the wisdom of God known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10) what was he talking about? When he declared that “all things” including principalities and powers “were created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16) what was he talking about? It is clear he was not talking about pulling them down!

God has a problem. Job got between God and His problem and suffered a lot because of doing so! God's problem is that satan accuses Him of winning by an exercise of power. In Job's case the accusation was that Job loved God because God blessed him. In the power game God could out bless satan. God was using His power to protect Job so, of course Job “loved” God. Why not? God Incorporated paid the best! God's response was to let satan do his worst in the confidence that Job loved Him for His moral excellence and person, not for what He could do. That is the glory of God- that we love Him for Himself.

The triumph of the cross was not a triumph of force. Might does not make right. It never has and it never will because the basis of the universe is relational. It is love. God is a love relationship of three persons who respect, honor and submit to one another. What satan tried to take by force and deceit, Jesus won back by love and obedience.

How does this work? The Kyrgyzze taught me about “Apostle” Stalin. He arrested Christians around Moscow and sent them as the first missionaries to Central Asia! About one third of them died on the way while another third died on arrival since there was no provision for them there. The remaining third survived and shared Jesus with those around them. Did they suffer? Yes! Did Stalin have the last word? No! Jesus had the last word! His love spread to Central Asia. Was the victory of the cross there one of power? No! Out of weakness and suffering came the strength of forgiveness and new life!

The Chinese church talks about “Apostle” Mao. How is that possible? He pushed the foreign missionaries out of China and many in the west thought the Chinese church was destroyed. He was responsible for the murder of millions and the untold suffering of millions more. He also simplified the Chinese language so many could read the same Bible. He also arrested Christians from the south eastern cities where the church had been concentrated and sent them to prison camps, farms and mines all around the country where their example of love and service won many more to Jesus. He took a church that had been bound by location and dependent upon a professional , foreign, clergy class and, in the process of seeking to destroy it, set it free from buildings and hierarchies and planted it across China. Did multitudes suffer? Yes! Did the power of the cross touch and change lives? Yes. Was this a victory of power? No. It was a victory of love through suffering proving that blessing is more powerful than any curse and that forgiveness is more powerful than any totalitarian regime.

That is the church demonstrating the wisdom of God to the principalities and powers. That is acting out of the opposite spirit. That is the power of the cross bringing God's best out of satan's best/worst! That is the glory of God! Satan cannot accuse God of power tripping mankind! It is a victory of love!

5/ DOING THE STUFF!

There is a tendency in all of us to want to do by conference and decree what can only be done by incarnation and service! We do not want to get our hands dirty! Jesus did three things- ate with people, told stories and did the supernatural of healing and casting out demons. He commanded us to do the same in Luke 10:1- 10. People are not numbers or members or projects. They are friends.

This is not about a few “gladiator” spiritual warriors doing their thing while the others pay to watch. This is about each member of the body of Christ doing the real stuff of loving people from house to house. Anybody can look good on a platform for an hour or so. Anybody can learn how to perform. And any performer can have a double life. Our lives are meant to be lived out day to day in communities of love and service and the accountability of friends.

We must battle the spirit of religious performance! Religious performance is focused on what happens in the meeting where gifting and anointing take precedence over character and obedience and where offerings for the leaders and the selling of products take precedence over concern for the least.

What does the religious gladiator do? Do they claim to discern the spirit over your city? Do they claim to bind and cast it down? If this ministry is so important why is it never mentioned in the New Testament? Why do we accept such foolishness from the spiritual

superstars? Do we accept it because we have accepted the world's cult of personality and celebrity?

Jesus did the heavy lifting so we could do the simple stuff like love people. You cannot really love somebody from a platform. I am not sure if we can really love Jesus from a platform. He identified with the least and told us that whatever was done to them was done to Him and then told us where to go and find Him- in the prisons, in the sick rooms, with the hungry and with the naked. Have you noticed that not too many naked and hungry come to our meetings! Who are the least around you?

We are not passive in casting out demons and addressing cultural strongholds. We have done mass deliverance sessions in rehab centers and with large groups of leaders. We have commandment from the Master to heal the sick and to cast out demons. Do it! Enjoy it! Do it everywhere you go!

When the disciples went and cast out demons, the testimony of Jesus in Luke 10:18 is "I saw satan fall like lightning from heaven". The link is clear! If we will do Luke 10:1- 10, if we will go house to house and cast the demons out of people, the kingdom of darkness will lose its power!

And then Jesus said, "Behold I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall by any means hurt you." (Luke 10:18-19). His authorization is also clear! We are authorized to trample on all the power of the enemy which is under our feet! The earth is our realm of authority and if we will exercise our authority here we are invincible and what we do will affect the heavens!

Acts 19 records the story of Paul's ministry at Ephesus, the unusual miracles, the exorcisms, the burning of occult books and the subsequent riot caused by the craftsman who made the images of Diana. If strategic level spiritual warfare was a reality you would think that this would be a very good time to do it! After all the principality over Ephesus, Diana was certainly stirred up! You know something like, "And while the demonic uproar continued in the assembly the disciples gathered together and bound the queen of heaven and cast her down. Immediately the chanting in the amphitheater stopped and there was a great calm." Not a word of it! Some actually try to read strategic level warfare into this passage but it is not there. The strong man is bound and it is our job to plunder his house. That is what Paul was doing! That is what we are to do!

This is the mandate that Jesus declared as He began His ministry, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because he has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19). Nothing there about doing anything in the air! It is all ground level stuff. It is all the recovery of what was lost of our dominion over the earth. Do we really think that we have a larger earthly ministry mandate than Jesus? Do we really think that our ministry mandate extends into more realms than His did? Who do we think we are?

5/ THE WARFARE OF THE ANGELS!

Revelation 12:7- 12 gives us a glimpse of the warfare in heaven of the angels as "Michael and his angels fought with the dragon and the dragon and his angels fought". Michael and his angels are triumphant and the dragon and his angels are "cast to the earth". That is good

news for heaven but bad news for the earth!

However, it does give us another glimpse of God fulfilling His original mandate for man! Man is given another opportunity to take dominion over “every creeping thing”! “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony and they did not love their lives to the death.”

The victory of mankind as recorded here was not a victory in the heavenly realm. That was the angel's realm and the angel's victory! The victory of mankind was on the earth and over satan who was on the earth! Their victory was not won through any “strategic level spiritual warfare” since satan was not in the heavens any more! He was on the earth! And he was overcome through the blood of the Lamb and the testimony of the saints about the blood of the Lamb as they were willing to give their lives because of the vision of Jesus!

We have had several of our team in Central Asia beaten for their testimony of Jesus. Two young women were almost killed by a knife attack by one of their husbands because of their testimony of Jesus. Revelations 12:11 is not theoretical. How would you prepare people to give their lives for Jesus? It happens around the world every day.

Daniel 10:10- 14 gives us another glimpse into the warfare of the angels. In this case an angel had been sent in response to Daniel's prayer but had been held up by the “kings of Persia” until sent on his way to Daniel by Michael. However, this is not a proof text for strategic level spiritual warfare. Daniel was fasting and mourning (Daniel 10:2). He was not praying spiritual warfare prayers! His prayer style is given in Daniel 9:20, “Now while I was speaking, praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the Holy mountain of my God”. His focus was not on any dark power but His focus was on God whom he approached with repentance and supplication. That was his realm! The angels were busy in another realm! He knew his area of warfare and, as he fulfilled that, the angels fulfilled theirs.

Jude verses 5- 11 gives another glimpse into the realm and the warfare of the angels with some very sobering thoughts about divine order and keeping to your assigned realm! Verse 6 says, “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chain under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”

This issue of realm and authority is so important that verse 9 says, “Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The lord rebuke you!’” You would think that if anybody could deal directly with the devil, it would be Michael but even he leaves that to Jesus!

Jesus has dealt with the strong man. He has rebuked him! Our warfare is to declare, worship and honor what Jesus has done!

6/ SEEING JESUS!

The yet and not yet of the kingdom is a constant tension of suffering. Hebrews 2:8- 9 puts it this way, “You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all thing put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than death, crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

We do not see everything under His feet but we see Jesus! While Stephen was being martyred he saw “the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55).

Was the glory on his face and his declaration of forgiveness to his murderers a part of the conversion of Saul who watched the whole thing? Was Satan or God in control when Stephen was martyred? We see a young man die a violent death and think it must have been the devil. Satan presents his lie that God either did not care enough to intervene or was not powerful enough to do so. What would Stephen say? He would say that God was in control. He died seeing the glory of God and his death still speaks to us of the glory of God!

Paul and Silas were thrown into jail in Philippi and at midnight as they sang hymns, the jail rocked, and they were set free to continue their journey. Satan tried to stop them and God set them free! Praise God! Later Paul is in jail in Rome. He wants to go to Spain. Maybe he tried another midnight worship session in hopes of another jail house rock but nothing happened! Is Satan in control? Is Satan stopping his ministry and influence? While in that jail Paul wrote half of the New Testament. His influence continues in ways it never could have if he had gone to Spain. If he had seen prison as Satan's victory and turned on himself in self-pity and turned on God in anger, then his influence would have been over. He saw Jesus and wrote his chunk of the New Testament.

Joseph had a few detours on the way to the fulfillment of his dreams. His brothers tried to kill him and then sold him into slavery. God needed him in Egypt and needed to shape his character. Joseph could have destroyed himself with self-pity and bitterness. He did not! He saw Jesus. He stayed in the process of the dealings of God. He was in the place to save the civilization of that day from famine and his own family as well. His statement at the end of it all to his brothers who feared for their lives? "You meant it for evil but God meant it for good!" (Genesis 50:20). Yes, what they did was evil and they meant it to be evil but God meant it for good!

We may not see all things under our feet yet! But we see Jesus! Whether we look victorious in the world's eyes or not is not the issue. Do we see Jesus?

D/ WHAT IS OUR PRAYER?

1/ FOR REVELATION OF THE GLORY OF JESUS!

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...." ! The prayer of Ephesians 1:15- 23 is foundational. We are to enter into the rest of the finished work of Christ. We need revelation of that finished work and that is of the glorified Christ seated at the right hand of God!

The appeal of any "spiritual technology" is that we feel in control. If we just do this we will have that result! That is the pride of man! How much of our preaching and teaching merely ministers the spirit of the age? Goals are accomplished by techniques and methodologies. We have seven steps to any and every desired result. The stumbling stone of biblical spirituality is that we must wait on God and that we are not in control! He is God and we are not! We cannot create revelation. We must wait for it! We cannot build it. We must receive it! We can only live it out in obedience and humility.

2/ FOR REVELATION OF THE GLORY OF JESUS IN US!

Ephesians 3:14- 21 is a well worn page in my bible! He "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us"! "Christ in you the hope of glory" is the mystery which has been hidden through the ages but is now revealed (Colossians 26- 27)!

This is the inheritance of each saint! The head of every man is Christ. Each of His sheep hears His voice. We are each members of His body! We are each a holy priest. We are each a royal priest.

Let me shock you a little. Is it possible that the better someone preaches (or performs), the more dangerous they are to the body of Christ? Paul refused to exploit his skills as an orator when he preached to the Corinthians. He did not want their faith to rest in him but in the power of the Spirit! That is the point of I Corinthians 2:1- 5! He could have performed like any Greek orator. He knew how to do it. The point is that he chose not to do so!

He did not want to create an audience. He refused to play the gladiator! He wanted each of them to know the revelation of Christ in them by the Spirit and to move in that. He wanted a functioning body. The better you speak the more successful you may appear if your success is measured by how many people come to your meetings. How many of those people are actually doing the commands of Jesus may be another story! We like to fill “warehouses” with church members so we can count them and feel successful. What do they do once they leave the building?

Paul moved in the opposite spirit to the celebrity and personality cult of that day. We need more of that today! Do we really believe in Christ in each member of His body working His glory through them?

3/ FOR INCREASING LOVE!

The prayers of Philippians 1:9 and I Thessalonians 3:11- 13 are for increasing love. Was the victory of Jesus a victory of power and force? Or was His victory a victory of love and self sacrifice? We would all answer “love and self sacrifice” because we know that is true. We all know John 12:23- 26 about the grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying to bear much fruit. We all know John 15 about the greatest love being to lay down our lives for our friends. These things are easy to repeat and difficult to do!

We cannot function by authority and decree or command and control in this universe where God has designed love to be the highest expression of reality. He is Love. He laid His life down.

What spirit will we move in? The revelation is that love never fails. According to I Corinthians 13, authority to move mountains without love means nothing!

4/ FOR BOLDNESS TO DECLARE THE GOOD NEWS!

What happened when the apostles were arrested by the religious authorities and commanded not to preach anymore in the name of Jesus? Acts 4 carries that story. Did they bind the religious spirits controlling Jerusalem and pull them down so that they could preach freely and without persecution?

No! They prayed, “Now Lord, look on their threats and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching forth your hand to heal and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” (Acts 4:29- 30).

When Paul was asking for prayer while he was imprisoned in Rome did he ask them to bind the spirits ruling over the Roman Empire and tear them down so that he would be set free and so that persecution would stop? No! He asked them to pray “...for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains: that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Ephesians 6:19- 20).

Actually if you study all of the prayers of the New Testament they are all about people, revelation, boldness, grace, love, knowledge, discernment and releasing heaven on earth. None of them are directed at the powers of darkness. That should tell us something!

E/ MINISTERING AS PRIESTS & OFFERING UP THE NATIONS!

Some of the energy behind the spiritual warfare movement is the desire for an aggressive advancement of the Kingdom. If God has touched you, you do not want a passive faith. You want to make a difference! I am not passive! But let us have the right activity! We, like Paul, do not want to fight “as one who beats the air” (I Corinthians 9:26). We want to really fight! Loud shouts at the devil from a conference platform may impress some folks who do not know their bibles but it is only shadow boxing. Let us do the real stuff!

Maybe we need to adjust our metaphors a little bit (well maybe more than a little bit!). The metaphor of warfare is powerful and accurate in many ways. However, God's intention was never for a nation of warriors! His intention was for a nation of priests. David disqualified himself from building the temple, the house of God in the old, because he was a man of war (I Chronicles 28:3). Could we do the same? I believe so if we pursue an extreme focus on “pushing out the darkness”. (And yes, I put that phrase in quotation marks since it is used so much in the spiritual warfare literature. Who in their right mind tries to push out darkness? Sane people simply turn on the light!)

How did Paul see his ministry? He was not passive! He understood God's desire for a nation of priests. He understood that desire fulfilled in the New Covenant. He would have fully endorsed Peter's declarations in his first epistle, chapter two that each “newborn babe” is also part of a “holy priesthood” whose purpose is to “offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

If we look at Romans 15:16- 21 we can understand how Paul saw himself. Verse 16 says, “that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering (as a priest), the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” Paul saw himself as a priest ministering before the altar of glory which is Jesus Christ and placing the Gentile nations on that altar where he trusted the fire of the Holy Spirit to fall on them and make them an acceptable offering!

The powers of darkness are not even mentioned! Why should they be? Paul is a priest standing in the glory and making sacrifice. What demon could stand in that place? And what a sacrifice! He accepted his role and calling as apostle to the Gentiles and now shows us how he views his ministry before the altar of glory. He sees himself as picking up all of the Gentile nations and placing them on the altar who is Jesus Christ. He sees himself as waiting upon the fire to fall in order to sanctify the offering!

He was not passive in working it out! “For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient- in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation” (Romans 15:18- 20).

Now when we say “ministering as a priest” many have a picture of black robes, incense, chants and repetitive rituals. That is all very passive and safe. We need to adjust our picture! A priest in the Old Covenant was responsible for killing, bleeding, skinning, cutting up and placing

the oxen, the calves and the sheep upon the altar. Killing and cutting up even one cattle beast is a big job! I know! I have done it. Sheep and lamb not so big but still a job!

Sheep will keep walking up to the place of slaughter (hence the phrase “led as a lamb to the slaughter”) without any fear or understanding of what the smell of blood means. Cattle on the other hand go wild. Once the smell of blood is in the air you cannot drag them to the place of slaughter. That is why we have the instruction to “tie the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar”. If you did not tie it well, it would be gone! Sometimes they slaughtered hundreds and even thousands of animals. I find it hard to imagine what they did with all the waste, the skins, the meat. How did they handle that without heavy machinery?

What is the point? Priesthood was not for the weak, the passive and the effeminate! Wash that pagan catholic or protestant pastoral nice guy picture out of your minds and see what Paul was seeing! He was seeing blood and guts. He was hearing roars and groans. He was smelling blood and fire. His clothes were soaked with blood and his feet were covered with offal. He was seeing the strongest men of the nation hoisting up the slabs of meat and sometimes whole carcasses and place them on the altar of fire! He was seeing black smoke and smelling burning flesh. He was seeing mountains of fat and rivers of blood! He was serving a God who answered by fire and signs and wonders!

He was placing the Gentile nations on the altar of glory and we are a part of his sacrifice! He did not ask their permission. He did not ask our permission. He fulfilled his secret ministry and then went out to make them obedient in word and deed, by sign and wonder by the power of the Spirit.

He knew that the gospel had no power until it was declared and demonstrated. What deprives the principalities of their power is the loss of people who believe in them. That is our part! They only have power in degree to the numbers of people who believe in them and fear them.

Our warfare has been accomplished. We do not need to waste time trying to do what Jesus has already done. We need to take our place as priests and offer up the nations to Jesus. We need to pray down fire to sanctify the offering. We need to go across the street and across the nations to sit in people's homes, share their lives and cast out the demons that afflict them and heal their bodies. We need to declare the Kingdom to them! It is not their responsibility to come to us. It is our responsibility to go to them.

We need to do the words of our Master in Luke 10:1- 10. He has all authority. Anything that could possibly hinder us He has taken out of the way. We are without excuse. The way to the altar of glory is open. The sacrifice is waiting to be offered up to Jesus!

What are you waiting for?

