DUTCH SHEETS

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

How God Can Use Your Prayers to Move Heaven and Earth

"OF ALL THE BOOKS ON PRAYER I HAVE READ, NONE COMPARES TO *INTERCESSORY PRAYER.*"

FROM THE FOREWORD BY

C. PETER WAGNER

Praise for INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Intercessory Prayer is illuminating and motivating. Dutch Sheets sheds fascinating light on this sometimes mysterious subject. Readers will want to pray more, and they will see more results.

Dr. Bill Bright, Founder and President Campus Crusade for Christ International

My heart flooded with excitement as I read Intercessory Prayer. What a blessing it is to have this instructive, God-inspired manual revealing the ways God works through His people. The Body of Christ will be richer in knowledge and depth of intercession, equipped to hit the bull's-eye.

Bobbye Byerly, U.S. National President Aglow International

If you are looking for a textbook on prayer, this is the best! Dutch Sheets's fresh insights will inspire your faith, deepen your understanding, and equip you to fulfill your destiny as one of God's praying people.

Dick Eastman, International President Every Home for Christ

Intercessory Prayer is the book of 1,000 sermons. Dutch's material is power-packed, inspirational and instructional. It answers questions that are too often answered incorrectly. It sets the record straight.

Ted Haggard, Pastor New Life Church, Colorado Springs

Dutch Sheets is one of the most exciting teachers I have ever heard. He explains God's heart for prayer in a clear, concise, powerful way. Dutch makes praying with impact something that is within everyone's reach. I heartily recommend it.

Jane Hansen International President, Aglow International

Praise for 0 NTERCESSORY PRAYER

Every praying Christian and intercessor should read this book! Intercessory Prayer will revolutionize your prayer life. It contains a depth of revelation found in no other book about intercession.

Cindy Jacobs, Cofounder Generals of Intercession

This book is for those who need answers from God, which as yet haven't come. Why? Sheets clearly explains the struggle of prayer that enforces the victory of Calvary. Authority is the issue. Warring and winning are born of worship and waiting. This book shows that the choice is ours.

Freda Lindsay, Cofounder/Chairman of the Board Emeritus Christ for the Nations, Incorporated

Biblical, practical, workable, humorous and God-honoring—Dutch explains the why and how of effective intercessory prayer. You will want to refer to this as a resource book many times as you draw closer and closer to God. I read it through without stopping!

Quin Sherrer,
Author

I am always amazed at how practical and understandable God's Word is when it is explained by Holy Spirit-anointed teachers. I believe God has inspired the truths shared in this book to release an army of intercessors to strategically and powerfully work together with God at this time. I strongly recommend it to all who want to make a difference for the kingdom of God.

Willard Thiessen,
President of Trinity Television and Host of "It's a New Day."[11]

Dedication

The Sheets team—Ceci, my wife and best friend;

Sarah and Hannah, our two precious daughters; and yours truly—lovingly dedicate this labor of love to Jesus. "Thank you, Sir, for the price You paid and the passion that still motivates You. You're our Hero. It is fun and a great honor to serve and represent You on the earth. We look forward to many more wonderful times and days with You!"

P.S. "We hope You like the book—we did it for You!"

Acknowledgments

Foreword

1. The Question Is...

The right answer begins with the right question.

2. The Necessity of Prayer

God chose, from the time of the Creation, to work on the earth through humans, not independently from them.

3. Re-Presenting Tesus

Intercession can be summarized as mediating, going between, pleading for another, representing one party to another.

4. Meetings: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Intercessors meet with God; they also meet the powers of darkness.

5. Cheek to Cheek

He put His tear-stained cheek next to ours and "bore" our punishment for sin.

6. No Trespassing

"No dumping allowed, Satan. Trespassers will be violated."

7. Butterflies, Mice, Elephants and Bull's-Eyes

The Holy Spirit empowers the Butterfly Anointing so we don't confuse the mice with the elephant.

8. Supernatural Childbirth

There is a prayer that births, bringing forth spiritual sons and daughters.

9. Pro Wrestlers

Step into the ring and face the powers of darkness.

10. Most High Man

The sin of pride, passed on from Lucifer to humans in the Garden, is what Satan uses to blind humanity.

11. The Lightning of God

We let the "Son" shine forth through us, directing His light to desired situations, allowing it to "strike the mark."

12. The Substance of Prayer

You must release the power of God inside of you on a consistent basis.

13. Actions that Speak and Words that Perform

Our words or actions impact the heavenly realm, which then impacts the natural realm.

14. The Watchman Anointing

To the degree we are ignorant of our adversary, he will gain on us, prey on us and defraud us of what is ours.

Discussion Leader's Guide

Bibliography

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Acknowledgments

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Foreward

The modern prayer movement began around 1970. True, it had been burning brightly in Korea for some decades previously, but it was around 1970 that it started to spread worldwide. In recent years the expansion of the prayer movement has been exponential. Quality of prayer is increasing along with quantity of prayer. Flames of prayer are being lit in virtually every denomination on every continent. Pastors are giving prayer a higher priority, children are praying fervently and effectively, prayer movements and prayer ministries are proliferating, theological seminaries are introducing courses on prayer and even secular magazines have been featuring cover stories about prayer.

I am one of those who has been deeply touched by the contemporary prayer movement. Up until about 10 years ago prayer was boring to me. Oh, I knew the Bible taught that we must pray and that God answers prayer. I also knew prayer was included as a normal part of the day-by-day routine of Christian individuals, families and churches. But I would look forward to a prayer meeting with about as much enthusiasm as I look forward to visiting the dentist. No longer!

It was the sovereign hand of God that drew me into what would become an intense involvement with the worldwide prayer movement in 1987. Since then I have researched prayer diligently. I have improved my personal prayer life greatly. I do prayer seminars and teach seminary courses on prayer regularly. I help coordinate prayer activities for the A.D. 2000 Movement and I have written several books on prayer. The reason I mention these things is not to blow myself up as some sort of spiritual giant, which I am not. It is rather to display some credentials as a backdrop to a statement I am about to make.

As a professional scholar, I accept the responsibility of keeping abreast of the literature relating to prayer to the best of my ability. My personal library currently includes nine shelves of books about prayer, and the number continues to increase rapidly. Looking over that section of my library, which I can see from where I am now sitting, I see no book that compares to this one written by my good friend, Dutch Sheets.

I know every book has its own unique features. But *Intercessory Prayer* is in a category by itself. In my opinion, Dutch Sheets has provided, more than any other contemporary author, what could be considered the standard biblical theology for the worldwide prayer movement of the 1990s. I was thrilled as I read page after page of solid biblical teaching about the many facets of prayer. As I did, I was pleasantly surprised to come across concept after concept that I

had not considered before. Few things I have read have turned on more lights than *Intercessory Prayer.*

It is a danger, I realize, to classify anything as "theology." To many, reading theology is about as interesting as watching lawn bowling. But Dutch Sheets is one of those theologians who is also a dynamic communicator. Instead of making simple things complicated, like some theologians, he knows how to make complicated things simple.

Sunday after Sunday "Pastor Dutch" preaches to hundreds in Springs Harvest Fellowship, one of Colorado Springs's fastest growing churches. As he does in his sermons, Dutch brings to life every point he makes through real life stories, some about his own experiences and some about the experiences of others. Every one of them shows how God can be glorified through the prayers of any believer.

If you want new power in your prayer life and in the prayer life of your group, you have the guidebook you need in your hands. Your prayers will have more power to the degree they have more substance. You will not read far before you realize you are absorbing some of the most substantial teaching about prayer available today. As I have done, you will thank God and thank Dutch Sheets for this outstanding book.

C. Peter Wagner
Fuller Theological Seminary

chapter one

The Question is...

No Hope

I knew the person I was going to pray for was very ill. What I didn't know was that she was comatose with a tracheostomy in her throat, a feeding tube in her stomach and had been in that condition for a year and a half. Seeing her for the first time was like expecting a prescription and receiving brain surgery. Her sister, who had asked me to visit this young lady, had not given me the whole story for fear I wouldn't go at all. She knew if she could just get me there once, I'd probably go back. She was right!

The doctors gave Diane (not her real name) no hope for living, let alone coming out of the coma. Even if she did regain consciousness, she would basically be a vegetable because of her extensive brain damage, or so the doctors believed.

Have you ever stood beside someone in this kind of condition and asked God for a miracle? To stand beside death and ask for life can be intimidating. It can also teach us a lot—about life, about death, about ourselves and about our God. Especially when we stand beside the same person 60 to 70 times, for an hour or more each time, throughout the course of a year.

Confronted with the Unexpected

It didn't work out as I expected. Life rarely does, does it?

I expected the Lord to heal this young lady through our prayers in a dramatic, easy, quick way. After all, that's how it happened with Jesus.

- I didn't expect to invest three to four hours of my life each week for a year (including the travel time).
- I didn't expect humiliation and insults from the staff of the nursing home where she stayed.
- I didn't expect to cry so much.
- I didn't expect to be so bold at times.
- I didn't expect to be so intimidated at times.
- I didn't expect it to take so long.
- I didn't expect to learn so much!

The Miracle

Yes, God restored Diane! He healed her brain, the outer layer of which the doctors said had been totally destroyed by a virus. Every part of it was covered with infection. "No hope," they said.

The front page of the *Dayton Daily News* (not the real place or newspaper) read, "Woman Awake, Alive, Healthy After Two Years in Coma." The doctors called it a "medical miracle." "We have no explanation," they said, though they stopped short of giving God the glory.

It actually happened on a Saturday morning when she was all alone. Earlier that week Diane had been moved from the nursing home to a hospital for treatment of an infection. After administering more tests, the doctors determined her condition had grown worse and informed her family that she would probably die soon.

When Diane's sister relayed this information to me, I dashed off to the hospital.

Knowing comatose people can often hear and understand everything happening around them, I spoke much to her. As we later learned, because of the damage to her brain Diane was not hearing me. But on this Wednesday afternoon, I spoke to her as usual.

"This nightmare is almost over," I said with tears streaming down my face. "Nothing can keep us from receiving our miracle. Nothing!"

The memory is forever imprinted on my mind. As I exited the hospital weeping, I remember saying to myself again and again, "Nothing can keep us from our miracle. Nothing!"

We don't wait well. We're into microwaving; God, on the other hand, is usually into marinating.

It was not just a strong hope I had at this point but a great faith. I had turned to God many times throughout the course of that year asking Him if He had really sent me to this little girl. Each time I received His assurance: "I sent you. Don't quit."

The Power of Persistence

Now, I've been accused of being quite a stubborn fellow, and I suppose that's true. In fact, I've "stubborned" myself into a lot of trouble, including two major concussions playing football when a couple of fellows had more size and muscle behind their "stubborn" than I did.

Stubbornness, however, can be channeled into a righteous force called persistence or endurance. I've found it to be one of the most important spiritual attributes of the Christian life. Charles Spurgeon said, "By perseverance the snail

reached the ark."[1]

A lack of endurance is one of the greatest causes of defeat, especially in prayer. We don't wait well. We're into microwaving; God, on the other hand, is usually into marinating. So I persisted for a year, and as I did my faith grew until I knew deep inside we were going to win. My motto had become Galatians 6:9: "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary."

My persistence was rewarded when, three days after that Wednesday in the hospital, Diane woke up with full restoration to her brain. News about the miracle spread to other nations. In fact, the nursing home where she had stayed received inquiries from Europe wanting to know about her incredible recovery.

Every hour and every tear I had invested became worth the wait when I saw Diane awake and heard her speak the words, "Praise the Lord."

What did I learn from that year-long endeavor? Much, plus a whole lot! And I'm still learning.

In "The Last Days Newsletter," Leonard Ravenhill tells about a group of tourists visiting a picturesque village who walked by an old man sitting beside a fence. In a rather patronizing way, one tourist asked, "Were any great men born in this village?"

The old man replied, "Nope, only babies."[2]

I've learned that no one is born a prayer hero. They are shaped and refined on the practice field of life.

A Hollywood talent judge said of Fred Astaire, one of the top singers, dancers and actors of all time: "Can't act. Can't sing. Can dance a little."[3] I'm sure Satan has passed his judgment on me at times in my life: "Can't preach. Can't lead. Can pray a little." Thank God for His grace, patience and commitment to me. I've stumbled forward more than backwards in life.

So Many Questions

From this and other prayer journeys—from failures as well as victories—from hundreds of hours of study, I've formed some thoughts to share with you. I believe they will answer many questions such as:

- Is prayer really necessary? If so, why? Isn't God sovereign? Doesn't that mean He accomplishes what He wants, when He wants? If so, why pray?
- Is God's will for a Christian automatically guaranteed or is it linked to prayer and other factors?
- Why does it often take so long to get a prayer answered? Why is persistence required? Jacob wrestled with God. Is that what we are to do in

prayer? I don't like the thought of wrestling with God, do you?

- What about prayer for the lost? How can I be more effective? I get a little frustrated trying to think of new ways to ask God to save people, don't you? I thought He *wanted* to save them. Then why do I feel as though I'm trying to talk Him into it? Is there a better way? Do I ask for their salvation again and again or simply petition Him once and then just thank Him in faith?
- What about spiritual warfare? If Satan is defeated and Christ has all authority, shouldn't we just forget about the devil? Does God bind the devil or do we?
- What exactly is intercessory prayer? And don't just tell me it's "standing in the gap." Enough religious quotes and spiritual jargon. I know the thought is taken from the Bible, but what does it mean?
- What about protection? Is everything that happens to me or my family simply allowed by God? Or is there something I need to do to procure our safety?
- How do we "bear one another's burdens"? (Gal. 6:2).
- Is there a right time for answers to prayer or does the timing depend on me?

Are you getting tired of all these questions? I know I am—so I'll stop. You may even be tired of asking yourself some of them. I know I was. Many people stopped asking them long ago, and probably stopped praying, too.

Please don't do that!

Keep asking! I've discovered that the right answer begins with the right question. I've also discovered that God is not offended by a sincere question. He won't satisfy the skeptic and He is not pleased with unbelief, but He loves an honest seeker. Those who lack and ask for wisdom He does not rebuke (see Jas. 1:5). He is a good Dad. Will you pray this prayer with me?

Father, we need more understanding—not more knowledge. We have so much of it now that we are becoming confused. Yes, and even cynical at times because our knowledge has not always worked. In fact, Father, our Bibles often seem to contradict our experiences. We need some answers. We need a marriage of theology and experience.

We've been encouraged by the stories of other great prayer warriors—the praying Hydes, the David Brainerds, the Andrew Murrays and the apostle Pauls. But frankly, Lord, it gets a bit frustrating when our prayers don't seem to work.

And intimidating as well because we don't know if we will ever be able to pray two to three hours a day, as these great intercessors did. We need more than inspiration now. We need answers.

So, as Your disciples did, Lord, we say, "Teach us to pray."

We know it often requires hard work, but can't it also be fun?

We know there will be failures, but how about a few more successes? We know "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7), but couldn't we see a few more victories?...Souls saved?...Healings?

We are tired of cloaking our ignorance in robes of blind obedience and calling it spirituality. We are tired of religious exercises that make us feel better for a while but bear little lasting fruit. We are tired of a form of godliness without the power.

Help us, please. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Notes

1. John L. Mason, *An Enemy Called Average* (Tulsa, Okla.: Harrison House, 1990), p. 20.

2. Craig Brian Larson, *Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 128.

3. Ibid., p. 75.

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chapter two
The Necessity of Prayer

Because I Said So!

"Because I said so!"

Don't you just hate it when that's the reason given for doing something? Not only is it frustrating, but it's also a motivation killer. It's one thing when the question "Why?" stems from a rebellion-rooted resistance, but when one sincerely doesn't understand why, this answer can be a real bummer. I remember having my knuckles rapped with a ruler for asking the simple question, "Why?"

Whack! "Because I said so! Now be quiet and do it."

I still wish I could rap that teacher's knuckles with a yardstick and not tell her why! (Don't worry, we'll deal with forgiveness and inner healing another time.)

None of us wants to do something just because someone else said so. Oh, I know God requires things of us at times without the full knowledge of why, but they are usually occasional obedience and trust issues—not the way He expects us to live life on a regular basis. We are not programmed robots who never ask why. He does not require an ostrich mentality of us: head in the sand, blind to the truth, the issues, the facts.

I Wonder Why

God has given us a Bible full of answers to the *whys* of life. The one I'm interested in is: Why pray? I'm not speaking of why in the sense of needing this or that. Obviously we ask because we want or need something. I'm speaking of why in the context of God's sovereignty.

Do my prayers really matter all that much? Isn't God going to do what He wants anyway? Most people, even if only subconsciously, believe just that. The proof is in their prayer life, or lack thereof.

Can my prayers actually change things? Does God *need* me to pray or does He just *want* me to pray? Some would argue an omnipotent God doesn't "need" anything, including our prayers.

Can God's will on earth be frustrated or not accomplished if I don't pray? Many would brand me a heretic for even raising the question.

But these and other questions deserve answers. I've discovered that understanding the why of doing something can be a great motivating force. The

opposite is also true.

As a kid I wondered why the sign said "No diving" in the shallow end of the pool. Then one day I hit my head on the bottom. I don't do that anymore.

I used to wonder why I shouldn't touch the pretty red glow on the stove. I found out.

I wondered why a fellow in front of me in the woods said, "Duck."

I thought, *I don't want to duck. 1 don't have to duck.* Then the branch whopped me upside the head. Now I duck.

I Need to Know

Someone said, "To err is human, to repeat it is stupid." I'm sure I've even qualified for that once or twice, but not with these three *because now I know why!* However, we're not talking about bumps, burns and bruises here, we're talking about eternal destinies. We're talking about homes, marriages, the welfare of people we love, revival in our cities—the list continues.

When God says, "Pray," I want to know it will matter. I'm not into religious exercises and my time is valuable—so is yours. Was S.D. Gordon right or wrong when he said, "You can do more than pray *after* you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray *until* you have prayed....Prayer is striking the winning blow...service is gathering up the results'"?

If God is going to do something regardless of whether or not we pray, then He doesn't need us to ask and we don't need another waste of time. If it's all *que sera, sera,* then let's take a siesta and let it all just happen.

If, on the other hand, John Wesley was correct when he said: "God does nothing on the earth save in answer to believing prayer," I'll lose a little sleep for that. I'll change my lifestyle for that. I'll turn the TV off, and even miss a meal or two.

- I need to know if that cyst on my wife's ovary dissolved because I prayed.
- I need to know if I was spared in the earthquake because someone prayed.
- I need to know if Diane came out of her coma with a restored brain because we prayed.
- I need to know if my prayers can make a difference between heaven and hell for someone.

Is Prayer Really Necessary?

The real question is: Does a sovereign, all-powerful God need our involvement or not? Is prayer really necessary? If so, why?

I believe it is necessary. Our prayers *can* bring revival. They *can* bring healing. We *can* change a nation. Strongholds *can* come down when and because we pray. I agree with E.M. Bounds when he said:

God shapes the world by prayer. The more praying there is in the world the better the world will be, the mightier the forces against evil....The prayers of God's saints are the capital stock of heaven by which God carries on His great work upon earth. God conditions the very life and prosperity of His cause on prayer.[2]

I couldn't agree more—and want to share with you why I believe this is so. If you concur with me, you'll pray more. You will most likely pray with greater faith, too.

God's Original Plan

The answer to why prayer is necessary lies in God's original plan when He created Adam.

I used to think Adam had to be pretty awesome. I now know he was, as my kids would say, "way awesome." (For those who don't have teenagers or young kids, "way" means "very or totally")

The name Adam means "man; human being."[3] In other words, God made man and called him "Man." He made a human and called him "Human." He made an adam and named him "Adam." In fact, oftentimes when the Bible uses the term "man" the actual Hebrew word is *adam*, spelled just like our English word. I share this simply to say that Adam represents all of us. What God intended for Adam, He intended for the entire human race.

What was God's intention? Initially, He gave Adam and Eve and their descendants dominion over the entire earth and all creation as we see in Genesis 1:26-28:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

We see this also in Psalm 8:3-8:

When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him? Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God, and dost crown him with glory and majesty! Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens,

and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

Adam, God's Re-Presenter on Earth

The Hebrew word *mashal* translated "rule" in verse 6 of this passage indicates that Adam (and eventually his descendants) was God's *manager* here, God's *steward* or *governor.* Adam was God's *mediator, go-between* or *representative.*

God didn't give away ownership of the earth, but He did assign the responsibility of governing it to humanity.

Psalm 115:16 also confirms this: "The heaven...the Eternal holds himself, the earth He has *assigned* to men" *(Moffatt Translation,* italics added). This translation communicates with greater accuracy the meaning of the Hebrew word *nathan* otherwise frequently translated "given." God didn't give away ownership of the earth, but He did assign the responsibility of governing it to humanity.

Genesis 2:15 says, "Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." The word "keep" is a translation of the Hebrew word *shamar* which means "to guard or protect."[4] It is the primary word used for a watchman in the Scriptures. Adam literally was God's watchman or guardian on the earth.

No serious student of the Bible would argue that Adam was God's representative here. But what does it actually mean to represent someone? The dictionary defines representation as "to present again."[5] Another way to say it might be to "re-present" someone. A representative is one who re-presents the will of another. I, for example, am honored to represent Christ often throughout the world. I hope I *present* Him *again* as I speak in His name.

The dictionary also provided these meanings: "to exhibit the image and counterpart of; to speak and act with authority on the part of; to be a substitute or agent for."[6] Sounds very similar to what God told Adam, doesn't it?

Now, it's no small task to re-present God. Therefore to help us humans more adequately carry out this assignment, God made us so much the same as Himself that it was illusionary. "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). The Hebrew word for "image" is *tselem* which involves the concept of a *shawdow,* a *phantom* or an *illusion.*[7]

An illusion is something you think you see, but on closer observation you

discover that your eyes have tricked you. When the rest of creation saw Adam, they must have done a double take, probably thinking something along these lines: *For a moment I thought it was God, but it's only Adam.* How's that for representation? It's pretty heavy theology, too!

We are also told that Adam was *similar to* or *comparable to* God. The Hebrew word *demuwth,* translated "likeness" in Genesis 1:26, comes from the root word *damah* meaning "to compare."[8] Adam was very much like God!

Psalm 8:5 actually says human beings were made just "a little lower than God." God even gave us the ability to create eternal spirits, something He had entrusted to no other creature! Later the same verse says humanity was crowned with God's very own glory.

Speaking of heavy theology, the definition of the Hebrew word *kabowd* which is translated "glory" literally means "heavy or weighty"![9] This, of course, is linked to the concept of authority. We still use the picture today when we refer to one who "carries a lot of weight." Adam carried the weight on the earth. I don't know what he weighed but he was heavy. He represented God with full authority! He was in charge!

The Greek word for glory, *doxa,* is just as revelatory. It involves the concept of recognition. More precisely, it is that which causes something or someone to be recognized for what it really is.[10] When we read in Scripture that humankind is the glory of God (see 1 Cor. 11:7), it is telling us God was *recognized* in humans. Why? So humans could accurately *represent* Him. When creation looked at Adam, they were supposed to see God. And they did! That is, until Adam sinned and fell short of the glory of God. God is no longer recognized in fallen humankind. We must be changed back into God's image "from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18) for this recognition to be realized again.

My purpose is not to overwhelm or impress you with a lot of definitions, but rather to broaden your understanding of God's plan for humankind at the Creation. Therefore, let's summarize what we've said using a compilation of the preceding verses and definitions:

Adam was comparable to or similar to God—so much like God that it was illusionary. God was recognized in Adam, which meant that Adam "carried the weight" here on earth. Adam represented God, presenting again His will on the earth. Adam was God's governor or manager here. The earth was Adam's assignment—it was under Adam's charge or care. Adam was the watchman or guardian. How things went on planet Earth, for better or worse, depended on Adam and his offspring.

Please think about that. If the earth remained a paradise, it would be because

of humankind. If things became messed up, it would be because of humankind. If the serpent ever gained control, it would be because of humankind. Humanity really was in charge!

Why would God do it this way? Why would He take such a risk? From what I know about God in the Scriptures and from my personal walk with Him, I find only one conclusion: God wanted a family—sons and daughters who could personally relate to Him, and vice versa. So He made our original parents similar to Himself. He put His very life and Spirit into them, gave them a beautiful home with lots of pets, sat down and said, "This is good." Daily He communed with them, walked with them, taught them about Himself and their home. He said, "Give me some grandsons and granddaughters." God was now a dad, and He was thrilled!

Granted, this is the Sheets's paraphrase, but it doesn't really change the Scriptures—it is leading us to a conclusion about the necessity of prayer.

God Works Through the Prayers of His People

Let's move on to this conclusion. Because we are talking about "weighty" stuff such as glory crowns, illusions and people creating eternal things, how is this for a heavy? So complete and final was Adam's authority over the earth that he, not just God, had the ability to give it away to another! Listen to the words of Satan in Luke 4:6,7 as he tempted Jesus: "I will give You all this domain and its glory; *for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.* Therefore, if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours" (italics mine).

The part about the domain being handed over to him was true and Jesus knew it. He even called Satan "the ruler of this world" three times in the Gospels (see John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

And here comes heavy number two: So complete and final was God's decision to do things on earth through human beings that it cost God the Incarnation to regain what Adam gave away. He had to become a part of the human race. I can't think of a more staggering truth. Certainly nothing could give weightier proof of the finality of this "through humans" decision God made. Without question, *humans were forever to be God's link to authority and activity on the earth.*

Here we have, I believe, the reason for the necessity of prayer. God chose, from the time of the Creation, to work on the earth *through* humans, not independent of them. He always has and always will, even at the cost of becoming one. Though God is sovereign and allpowerful, Scripture clearly tells us that He limited Himself, concerning the affairs of earth, to working through human beings.

Is this not the reason the earth is in such a mess? Not because God wills it so, but because of His need to work and carry out His will through people.

Is this not the story woven throughout the Scriptures:

- God and humans, for better or worse, doing it together?
- God needing faithful men and women?
- God needing a race through whom to work?
- God needing prophets?
- God needing judges?
- God needing a human Messiah?
- God needing human hands to heal, human voices to speak and human feet to go?

Doesn't He need us to ask for His kingdom to come, His will to be done (see Matt. 6:10)? Surely He wouldn't want us to waste our time asking for something that was going to happen anyway, would He?

Didn't He tell us to ask for our daily bread? (See Matt. 6:11.) And yet, He knows our needs before we even ask.

Didn't He tell us to ask that laborers be sent into the harvest? (See Matt. 9:38.) But, doesn't the Lord of the harvest want that more than we do?

Didn't Paul say, "Pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified" (2 Thess. 3:1)? Wasn't God already planning to do this?

Are not these things God's will? Why, then, am I supposed to ask Him for something He already wants to do if it's not that my asking somehow releases Him to do it? Let's look briefly at three more biblical passages which support this.

Elijah's Fervent Prayers

In 1 Kings 18 we find the story of God needing and using a person to accomplish His will through prayer. It is the account of Elijah praying for rain after three years of drought. James 5:17,18 also mentions this occasion, and we know from his account that not only did Elijah's prayers bring rain, but they also stopped the rain three years earlier. We know we're in trouble when the prophets are praying for drought!

In verse one of 1 Kings 18, after three years of this judgment, God spoke to Elijah and said, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth." Then at the end of this chapter, after several other events have occurred, Elijah prays seven times and finally the rain comes.

According to the statement in verse one, whose idea was it to send rain?...Whose will?...Whose initiation? Answer: God's, not Elijah's.

Then why, if it was God's will, idea and timing, did it take a human's prayers to "birth" the rain? (Elijah was in the posture of a woman in that culture giving

birth, symbolizing the concept of travailing prayer.)

Why did Elijah have to ask seven times? Seven is the biblical number of completion, and I'm sure God was teaching us that we must pray until the task is accomplished. But why would this or any other prayer endeavor require perseverance, when it was God's will, idea and timing?

And finally, did Elijah's prayers really produce the rain or was it simply coincidental that he happened to be praying when God sent it?

James clarifies the answer to this last question. Yes, "the effectual fervent prayer" of this man stopped and brought the rain:

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit (Jas. 5:17,18).

The only logical answer to the question of why Elijah needed to pray is simply that *God has chosen to work through people.* Even when it is the Lord Himself initiating something, earnestly desiring to do it, He still needs us to ask. Andrew Murray succinctly speaks of our need to ask: "God's giving is inseparably connected with our asking....Only by intercession can that power be brought down from heaven which will enable the Church to conquer the world."[11]

As to Elijah's need for perseverance, I don't want to comment extensively at this time, but for now suffice it to say that I believe our prayers do more than just petition the Father. I've become convinced that in some situations they actually release cumulative amounts of God's power until enough has been released to accomplish His will.

Daniel, a Man of Prayer

Another example which supports our premise of the absolute need for prayer is found in the life of Daniel. In 606 B.C. Israel had been taken captive by another nation because of its sin. Years later in Daniel 9 we're told that while reading the prophet Jeremiah, Daniel discovered it was time for Israel's captivity to end. Jeremiah had not only prophesied the captivity of which Daniel was a part, but he also prophesied the duration: 70 years.

At this point Daniel did something very different from what most of us would do. When we receive a promise of revival, deliverance, healing, restoration, etc., we tend to passively wait for its fulfillment—but not Daniel. He knew better. Somehow he must have known that

God needed his involvement because he said, "So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes" (Dan. 9:3).

No verse in Daniel, as there is with Elijah, specifically says Israel was restored because of Daniel's prayers, but with the emphasis given to them, the insinuation is certainly there. We do know that the angel Gabriel was dispatched immediately after Daniel started praying. However, it took him 21 days to penetrate the warfare in the heavens with the message to inform Daniel that "Your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words" (Dan. 10:12). I can't help wondering how many promises from God have gone unfulfilled because He can't find the human involvement He needs. Paul E. Billheimer says:

Daniel evidently realized that intercession had a part to play in bringing the prophecy to pass. God had made the prophecy. *When it was time for its fulfillment He did not fulfill it arbitrarily outside of His program of prayer. He sought for a man upon whose heart He could lay a burden of intercession....As always,*

God made the decision in heaven. A man was called upon to enforce that decision on earth through intercession and faith.[12]

God Needs Our Prayers

Another Scripture strongly supports our contention that even though God's existence and character are completely independent of any created thing (see Acts 17:24,25) and God already has all resources in His hands (see Job 41:11; Ps. 50:10-12), God *needs* our prayers:

"And I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads," declares the Lord God (Ezek. 22:30,31).

The implications of these verses are staggering. God's holiness, integrity and uncompromising truth prevent Him from simply excusing sin. It must be judged. On the other hand, not only is He holy, but He is also love and His love always desires to redeem, to restore and to show mercy. Scripture tells us that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (see Ezek. 33:11).

The passage is clearly saying, "While My justice demanded judgment, My love wanted forgiveness. Had I been able to find a human to ask Me to spare this people, I could have. It would have allowed Me to show mercy. Because I found no one, however, I had to destroy them."

I don't like the implications of this passage any more than you do. I don't want the responsibility. I don't like to consider the ramifications of a God who has somehow limited Himself to us earthlings. But in light of these and other

passages, as well as the condition of the world, I can come to no other conclusion.

Either God wants the earth in this condition or He doesn't. If He doesn't, which is certainly the case, then we must assume one of two things. Either He is powerless to do anything about it, or He needs and is waiting on something from us to bring about change. Peter Wagner agrees with this when he says:

We must understand that our sovereign God has for His own reasons so designed this world that much of what is truly His will He makes contingent on the attitudes and actions of human beings. He allows humans to make decisions that can influence history....Human inaction does not *nullify* the atonement, but human inaction can make the atonement *ineffective* for lost people.[13]

This truth could intimidate us with the responsibility it implies, or even condemn us because of our lack of prayer. But another possibility exists as well. A responsibility can also be a privilege; a responsibility can be enjoyable. If allowed, this revelation can elevate us in our hearts to new positions of dignity alongside our heavenly Father and Lord Jesus. Jack Hayford said, "Prayer is essentially a partnership of the redeemed child of God working hand in hand with God toward the realization of His redemptive purposes on earth."[14]

Let's rise to the occasion and embrace the incredible invitation to be co-laborers with God...to be carriers of His awesome Holy Spirit and ambassadors for His great kingdom. Let's represent Him!

Awaken us to our destiny, Lord!

Questions for Reflection

1. How complete was Adam's (humankind's) dominion upon the earth? Can you explain how this relates to the necessity of prayer in order for God to work?
2. What did God mean when He said we were made in His image and likeness?
3. How does the story of Elijah praying for rain (see 1 Kings 18) reinforce our assertion that God works through prayer? How about Daniel's prayer for the restoration of Israel?
4. What is the root meaning of "glory"? How does this relate to prayer and representation?
5. How does it feel to be a partner with God?

Notes

1. Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne* (Fort Washington, Pa.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1975), p. 51.
2. Ibid.
3. James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*

(Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), ref. no. 120.

4. William Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1978), p. 236.

5. *The Consolidated Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary* (Chicago: Consolidated Book Publishers, 1954), p. 615.

6. Ibid.

7. Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible—New American Standard* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: AMG Publishers, 1984; revised edition, 1990), p. 1768.

8. Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance,* ref. no. 1819.

9. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., revised edition, 1991), p. 426.

10. Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible,* p. 1826.

11. Andrew Murray, *The Ministry of Intercessory Prayer* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1981), pp. 22, 23.

12. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, p. 107.

13. C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1996), p. 242.

14. Jack W. Hayford, *Prayer Is Invading the Impossible* (South Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1977; revised edition, Bridge Publishing, 1995), p. 92, 1977 edition.

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chapter three

Re-Presenting Jesus

Looking for Answers

When you don't know what you're looking for, you'll probably never find it. When you don't know what you're doing, you probably won't do it well.

I remember sitting in English class one day during high school. I never was very good in English—too busy doing important things such as playing football and running track. It was Friday afternoon and we had a big game that night. You can probably guess where my mind was.

After I spiked the ball into the end zone, listening to the deafening roar of the crowd, my mind gradually drifted back to my English class. The teacher was saying something about a "present participle."

Now, I had no idea what a participle was, but it didn't sound good to me. And I knew the fact that it was "present" either meant it was a current situation or something present in the room.

"Dutch," my teacher said, probably realizing I had been elsewhere, "can you find the present participle for us?"

I didn't know whether to look on the floor, the ceiling or out the window. Trying to appear as innocent, intelligent and concerned as possible, I looked around the room for a few seconds before responding, "No, ma'am, I don't see that participle anywhere. But don't worry, I'm sure it will turn up somewhere."

I never did figure out what that present participle was, but it must not have been as bad or serious as I thought because when I said that everyone sort of laughed. I was relieved, having added a little peace of mind to an obviously troubled teacher and bluffed my way out of a potentially embarrassing situation.

What is intercession anyway?

No, it's not.

I know you said prayer or something similar. But technically speaking, intercession isn't prayer at all. Intercessory prayer is prayer. Intercession is something a person does that he or she can do in prayer. That's about as confusing as a present participle, isn't it?

Think of it this way: Agreement isn't prayer, but there is the prayer of agreement. Faith isn't prayer, but there is the prayer of faith. In the same way that a person can't intentionally pray a prayer of agreement until he or she

understands the meaning of agreement, a person won't be very effective in intercessory prayer until he or she understands the concept of intercession.

Are you still with me?

Before we define intercession—so we can define intercessory *prayer*—we're not only going to do so literally, but also in the context of (1) God's plan for humankind at the time of the Creation, (2) the disruption of that plan by the Fall and (3) God's solution. In other words, we're going to see the concept of intercession in these settings and allow them to help us define it. This will accomplish three things:

1. It will help you understand the concept of intercession so you can understand intercessory prayer.
2. It will enable you to see Christ's role as THE intercessor. (Our intercessory *prayer* will always and only be an extension of His intercessory *work.* This is crucial and will become clearer as we progress.)
3. With that kind of knowledge, it will make you the most spiritual person in your prayer group!

Defining Intercession

Let's look first at the literal concept of intercession; then we'll think about it in the context of the Fall.

According to Webster, *intercede* means "to go or pass between; to act between parties with a view to reconcile those who differ or contend; to interpose; to mediate or make intercession; mediation."[1]

Using the same source, *mediate* means "between two extremes; to interpose between parties as the equal friend of each; to negotiate between persons at variance with a view to reconciliation; to mediate a peace; intercession."[2]

Please notice that these terms are largely synonymous with some of the same words used to define each—between, interpose and reconcile. Notice also that one is used to define the other: mediation defines intercession and intercession defines mediation.

As can be clearly seen from these definitions, the concept of intercession can be summarized as mediating, going between, pleading for another, representing one party to another for, but not limited to, legal situations.

Intercession happens in our courts daily with lawyers interceding for clients.

Intercession happens in contractual meetings daily with attorneys representing one party to another.

Intercession happens in offices and business meetings daily as secretaries or other associates "go between," representing one to another. Nothing spiritual about it.

It involves delegation.

It involves authority.

It boils down to representation. As we discussed in the previous chapter, to represent means to re-present, or present again.

Many years ago my dad hired an intercessor (we called him a lawyer) to represent him in court. Dad had been stopped by some policemen, beaten up quite badly and thrown in jail—all of this with my mother and then three-year-old sister watching. The policemen thought he was someone else! Dad was actually on his way home from a church service where he had preached that night, which added to the irony and injustice of the entire ordeal.

Our attorney went *between* Dad, the judge, the other lawyer and the policemen. He listened to the case, gathered proof, found out what Dad wanted and then *re-presented* it in court. He *mediated* well.

We won.

All intercession is not in the sense of an attorney. That's only one example. Any work of representation or mediation between is intercession.

Now, let's think about this concept in light of the Creation and the Fall. Adam was supposed to represent God on planet Earth—managing, governing or ruling for Him. God told Adam what He wanted and Adam re-presented Him to the rest of the earth. Adam was a go-between for God. Literally, Adam was God's intercessor or mediator on the earth.

Christ, The Ultimate Intercessor

Adam, of course, failed and God had to send another human called the "last Adam" to do what the first Adam was supposed to do and fix what the first Adam messed up. So Christ came to re-present God on the earth. He became the intercessor or mediator, going between and representing God to humanity.

According to John 1:18, Jesus exegeted God for us: "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." The Greek word translated "explained" is actually *exegeomai3* from which we get our English word "exegete."

You have probably heard of the small child who "was drawing a picture and his teacher said, 'That's an interesting picture. Tell me about it.'

'It's a picture of God.'

'But nobody knows what God looks like.'

'They will when I get done,'" said the young artist.[4]

Jesus came and drew us a picture of God! Now we know what He looks like.

But that's not the only direction of His interceding. Great irony exists in the fact that Man who was meant to be God's intercessor, mediator or representative

on earth now needed someone to mediate *for him.* He who was made to represent God on the earth now needed someone to represent him *to* God. Christ, of course, became that representative, intercessor or mediator. Not only did He represent God to man, but He also represented man to God. This God-man was the attorney for both sides!

He is the ultimate, final and only go-between. He is "the Apostle [God to the human race] and High Priest [the human race to God] of our confession" (Heb. 3:1). He is Job's great go-between, hanging between heaven and earth placing one hand on God and the other on humans (see Job 9:32,33).

Are you getting the picture? Christ's intercession, in keeping with its literal meaning, was not a *prayer* He prayed, but a *work* of mediation

He did.

Jesus isn't praying for us; He is interceding for us so we can pray. This is what is meant by asking "in His name."

And I hope you're ready for this: I don't believe the intercession attributed to Him now in heaven on our behalf is prayer either. I'm certain it refers to His work of mediation (see 1 Tim. 2:5), to His being our Advocate with the Father (see 1 John 2:1). He is now functioning as our representative, guaranteeing our access to the Father and to our benefits of redemption.

In fact, He tells us in John 16:26 that He is not doing our asking or petitioning of the Father for us: "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf." So what is He doing as He makes intercession for us? He is mediating or going between, not to clear us of charges against us as He did to redeem us from sin, but to present each of us to the Father as righteous and one of His own.

When I approach the throne, He is always there saying something such as: "Father, Dutch is here to speak with You. He isn't coming on his own merits or righteousness, he is here based on Mine. He is here *in My name.* I am sure You remember that I've *gone between* You and Dutch and provided him with access to You. He has a few things to ask You."

Can't you just hear the Father say in response, *Of course I remember, Son. You've made him one of Ours. Because he came through You, Dutch is always welcome here.* He then looks at me and says, *Come boldly to My throne of grace, Son, and make your request known.*

Jesus isn't *praying* for us; He is *interceding* for us so we can pray. This is what is meant by asking "in His name."

Let's look at one more aspect of Christ's intercession in the context of the Fall. Basically, humanity needed two things after the Fall. They needed someone to "go between" themselves and God to *reconcile* themselves to God; they also needed someone to "go between" themselves and Satan to *separate* themselves from him. One was a uniting, the other a disuniting. One reestablished headship, the other broke headship. It was a two-fold work of intercession.

We needed both. Jesus did both. As the intercessor-mediator, He went between God and humanity, reconciling us to the Father; and between Satan and humanity, breaking Satan's hold. This was the redemptive *work* of intercession and it is complete. Therefore, in the legal sense of humanity's redemption, Christ is the *one and only* intercessor. This is why the Scriptures say, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). The verse could just as easily read, "one intercessor."

This revelation is critical. It means our *prayers* of intercession are always and only an extension of His *work* of intercession.

Why is this so important? Because God won't honor any intercession except Christ's, and also because this understanding will make our *prayers* of intercession infinitely more powerful.

Let's return to our conversation in the throne room. I am there asking the Father to extend mercy and bring salvation to the people of Tibet. The Father could reply, "How can I do this? They are sinners. They worship false gods, which is really worshiping Satan. And besides, they don't even want Me to do this. They themselves have never asked."

I answer, "Because Jesus *interceded* or *mediated* for them, Father. I am asking based on what He did. And He needs a human on earth to ask for Him because He is in heaven now. So, as He taught me, I'm asking for Your Kingdom to come and Your will to be done in Tibet. I'm asking for some laborers to be sent there. I'm asking these things for Christ and through Christ. And I am asking You to do it based entirely on the redemptive work He has already done."

The Father replies, "RIGHT ANSWER! You heard the man, Gabriel. What are you waiting for?"

Distributors for God

When I say our *prayers* of intercession are an extension of His *work* of intercession, the difference is in distributing versus producing. We don't have to produce anything—reconciliation, deliverance, victory, etc. —but rather we distribute, as the disciples did with the loaves and fishes (see Matt. 14:17-19). *Our calling and function is not to replace God, but to release Him.*[5] It liberates us from intimidation and emboldens us to know that:

- The Producer simply wants to distribute through us.
- The Intercessor wants to intercede through us.
- The Mediator wants to mediate through us.
- The Representative wants to represent through us.
- The Go-between wants to go between through us.
- The Victor wants His victory enforced[6] through us.
- The Minister of reconciliation has given to us the ministry of reconciliation (see 2 Cor. 5:18,19). We now represent Him in His representation ministry. *God continues to incarnate His redemptive purposes in human lives.*[7]

We don't deliver anyone, we don't reconcile anyone to God, we don't defeat the enemy. The work is already done. Reconciliation is complete. Deliverance and victory are complete. Salvation is complete. Intercession is complete! Finished! Done! WOW! What a relief. And yet...

We must ask for the release and application of these things. So, let me offer the following as a biblical definition of intercessory prayer: *Intercessory prayer is an extension of the ministry of Jesus through His Body, the Church, whereby we mediate between God and humanity for the purpose of reconciling the world to Him, or between Satan and humanity for the purpose of enforcing the victory of Calvary.*

Christ needs a human on the earth to represent Himself through just as the Father did. The Father's human was Jesus; Jesus' humans are us, the Church. He said, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21).

The concept of being sent is important and embodies the truths of which we have been speaking. A representative is a "sent" one. Sent ones have authority, as long as they represent the sender. And the importance or emphasis is not on the sent one but the sender. The setting of conditions and the ability to carry out or enforce them is all the responsibility of the sender, not the sent one. For example, an ambassador representing one nation to another is a sent one. He has no authority of his own, but he is authorized to represent the authority of the nation sending him.

Jesus was a sent one. That is why He had authority. He received it from the Father who sent Him. Forty times in John's Gospel alone He mentions the important fact of being sent by the Father. The result of this arrangement was that, in essence, He wasn't doing the works, but the Father who sent Him (see John 14:10).

The same is true with us. Our authority comes from being sent ones, representing Jesus. As long as we function in that capacity, we function in Christ's authority. And, in essence, we're not really doing the works, He is.

Let me illustrate. In 1977, while praying about an upcoming journey to Guatemala, I heard the words: *On this trip, represent Jesus to the people.*

At first I rebuked the voice, thinking it was an evil spirit trying to deceive me. But the voice came again, this time adding the words: *Be His voice, be His hands, be His feet. Do what you know He would do if He were there in the flesh. Represent Him.*

Suddenly I understood. I was not going to represent myself or the ministry with which I was working. In the same way that Jesus represented the Father—speaking His words and doing His works—I was to represent Jesus. And if I really believed I was functioning as an ambassador or a sent one, then I could believe it wasn't my authority or ability that was an issue but Christ's—I was simply representing Him *and what He had already done.*

A Galilee Jesus Became a Guatemala Jesus

Once in Guatemala I traveled with a team to a remote village far from any modern city. There was no electrical power, no plumbing, no phones. Our purpose in being there was to build shelters for the villagers whose adobe homes had been destroyed in the devastating earthquake of 1976. It had killed 30,000 people and left 1,000,000 homeless. We had trucked in materials and were building small, one-room homes for them during the daylight hours. In the evenings we would hold services in the center of the village, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to them, explaining that His love was motivating us to spend our time, money and energies helping them.

We had been ministering for one week with very few people coming to Christ. The people were listening, but not responding.

I was to preach on the final night of our trip. Just as the service was about to begin, a team member told me about something he and others had found on the far side of the village—a little girl, six or seven years old, tied to a tree.

Not believing what they were seeing, they asked the family that lived there, "Why is this small girl tied to that tree?" It was obvious she lived there, much like a dog, in the back yard—nasty, filthy, helpless and alone.

"She is crazy," the parents replied. "We can't control her. She hurts herself and others and runs away if we turn her loose. There is nothing else we can do for her so we just have to tie her up."

My heart broke as the member shared what he had seen. It was on my mind as we began the service. A few minutes into my message, standing on a folding table under the stars, the same voice that had spoken to me before the trip began speaking to me again.

Tell them you are going to pray for the little insane girl across the village tied

to the tree. Tell them you are going to do it in the name of this Jesus you've been preaching about. Tell them that through Him you are going to break the evil powers controlling her—that when she is free and normal, they can then know that what you are preaching is true. They can believe that the Jesus you are preaching about is who you say He is.

I responded to the voice in my heart with fear and trembling. I believe the words were something like, *WHAT DID YOU SAY???*

Same instructions.

Being the man of faith that I am, I replied, *What is plan B?*

Rebellion and failure, came the response. *Remember what I said to you before the trip began? Represent Jesus.*

Faith began to rise. *The emphasis is not on me in this situation,* I thought, *but on the One who sent me. I am simply His spokesman. I merely release what He has already done. He has finished the work of delivering this little girl; my prayers release the work. I'm only a distributor of what He has already produced. Be bold, sent one. Enforce the victory!*

With new assurance I began informing the people about what I was planning to do. They nodded in recognition as I mentioned the girl. Expressions of intrigue turned to astonishment as they listened to my plans.

Then I prayed.

On a moonlit night in a tiny, remote village of Guatemala with a handful of people as my audience, my life changed forever.

Jesus came out of hiding. He became alive: Relevant... Sufficient...Available! A "hidden" Jesus emerged from the cobwebs of theology. A yesterday Jesus became a today and forever Jesus. A Galilee Jesus became a Guatemala Jesus.

And a new plan unfolded to me. A new concept emerged—Jesus and me.

The Heavenly Pattern

For the first time I understood the heavenly pattern: Jesus is the Victor—we're the enforcers; Jesus is the Redeemer—we're the releasers; Jesus is the Head—we're the Body.

Yes, He set the little girl free.

Yes, the village turned to Christ.

Yes, Jesus prevailed through a sent one.

So the partnership goes on—God and humans. But the correct pattern is critical: My *prayers* of intercession release Christ's finished *work* of intercession.

His work empowers my prayers—my prayers release His work.

Mine extends His—His effectuates mine.

Mine activates His—His validates mine.

In Kingdom Enterprises we're not in the production department. We're in distribution...BIG difference. He's the generator. We're the distributors.

Awesomites Re-Presenting His Awesomeness

I think this makes us His co-laborers. What do you think? I think Christ is awesome and wants us to be "awesomites." Humble awesomites representing His awesomeness, but awesome nonetheless. More than conquerors! Christ and His Christians, changing things on the earth.

There are many wounded and hurting individuals "tied to trees" around the world. You work with some, others live across the street. One of them probably just served you in a check-out line, seated you in a restaurant or served you food. Their chains are alcohol, drugs, abuse, broken dreams, rejection, money, lust....Well, you get the point.

Plan A is for supernatural, but ordinary people like you and me to: (1) wholeheartedly believe in the victory of Calvary—to be convinced that it was complete and final and (2) to rise up in our role as sent ones, ambassadors, authorized representatives of the Victor. Our challenge is not so much to liberate as to believe in the Liberator; to heal as to believe in the Healer.

Plan B is to waste the Cross; to leave the tormented in their torment; to scream with our silence: "There is no hope!"; to hear the Father say again, "I looked, but found no one"; to hear the Son cry once more, "The laborers! Where are the laborers?"

Come on Church! Let's untie some folks. Let's tell them there is a God who cares. Let's represent—let's mediate—let's intercede!

"Can anyone find the present participator?"

Questions for Reflection

1. Define intercession and intercessory prayer. What is the difference? Why is this important?
2. How are intercession and mediation related?
3. Can you explain what I meant when I said Christ was THE intercessor and that our *prayers* are an extension of His *work?*
4. Explain the two aspects of Christ's intercession—reconciling and separating—relating it to humankind's twofold need created by the Fall.
5. What is the significance of being a "sent one"?
6. Do you know anyone chained to a "tree"? Please help them.

Notes

1. *The Consolidated Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary* (Chicago: Consolidated Book Publishers, 1954), p. 384.
2. Ibid., p. 450.

3. James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), ref. no. 1834.

4. Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, *Chicken Soup for the Soul* (Deerfield Beach, Fla.: Health Communications, Inc., 1993), p. 74.

5. R. Arthur Mathews, *Born for Battle* (Robesonia, Pa.: OMF Books, 1978), p. 106.

6. I have used the phrase "enforcing the victory of Calvary" throughout this book. Though not a direct quote, the seed thought was planted in my mind by Paul Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne* (Fort Washington, Pa.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1975), p. 17.

7. Mathews, *Born for Battle*, p. 160.

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chapter four

Meetings: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Boy Meets Girl

"Dutch Sheets, I want you to *meet* Celia Merchant." The world suddenly stood still and my life changed forever.

The second most important *meeting* of my life was taking place—only my introduction to Jesus ranked higher. It was 1977 and I was a student in Bible college.

Having just enjoyed a time of private prayer, I emerged from the prayer room to see two individuals carrying a large folding table. One of them was a male friend of mine, the other was the most beautiful young lady I had ever laid eyes on.

Oh, it wasn't the first time I had seen her, but it was my first face-to-face encounter. Weak-kneed and tongue-tied, I nearly tripped over myself grabbing her end of the table. With a gallant demonstration of chivalry and muscle, I relieved her of her burden and nearly knocked the other guy off his feet showing how fast I could carry that table.

He then introduced me to what had to be my missing rib, and I knew life would never be right if I didn't marry this woman! I told God as much. Fortunately, He agreed and so did she. Life is good!

I sure am glad I spent that time in prayer. I would not have wanted to miss that *meeting!*

Boy Meets Baseball

I had another memorable *meeting* when I was in the sixth grade. This one wasn't so pleasant. It would also remain with me the rest of my life, however. A baseball *met* my front teeth. The baseball won—they usually do. I have two nice caps on my front teeth today as a result of that *meeting.*

I thought about revealing that I was trying to teach another kid to catch a baseball when it happened, but that would be too embarrassing. I won't mention that I was demonstrating what not to do when the accident happened. But I will say that when teaching your kids the fine points of baseball, show them what to do—not what not to do. Doing it backwards leads to unpleasant *meetings* and cosmetic smiles.

God Meets a Mate, Satan Meets His Match

A figure hangs on a cross between heaven and earth. Two *meetings* are about to take place—one good and pleasant, one ugly and violent. A Man is about to *meet* His bride and a serpent is about to *meet* a curveball to the teeth:

For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church (Eph. 5:31,32).

Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God! For Thou hast smitten all my enemies on the cheek; Thou hast shattered the teeth of the wicked (Ps. 3:7).

Such beauty, such ugliness...union, disunion...joining, breaking....

Actually, many other *meetings* could be mentioned as taking place through the Cross:

- Mercy *met* judgment.
- Righteousness *met* sin.
- Light *met* darkness.
- Humility *met* pride.
- Love *met* hate.
- Life *met* death.
- A cursed One on a tree *met* the curse that originated from a tree.
- The sting of death *met* the antidote of resurrection.

All the good guys won!

Only God could plan such an event—let alone have it turn out perfectly. Only He could marry such extremes in one occurrence. Who but He could shed blood to create life, use pain to bring healing, allow injustice to satisfy justice and accept rejection to restore acceptance?

Who could use such an evil act to accomplish so much good?

Who could transform an act of amazing love into such violence and vice versa? Only God.

So many paradoxes. So much irony.

Don't you find it fascinating that the serpent who accomplished his greatest victory from a tree (of the knowledge of good and evil) suffered his greatest defeat from a tree (the Cross of Calvary)?

Don't you find it ironic that the first Adam succumbed to temptation in a garden (Eden) and the last Adam overcame His greatest temptation in a garden (Gethsemane)?

Can God ever write a script!

Perhaps you have guessed by now that hidden somewhere in these three stories—my wife, the baseball and the Cross—are pictures of intercession. In

fact, I've actually used one of the definitions of the Hebrew word for intercession, *paga,* 23 times thus far. I'll continue to use it more than 30 additional times by the end of this chapter. How's that for redundancy?!

Intercession Creates a Meeting

The Hebrew word for intercession, *paga*, means "to meet."[1] As we have already seen by studying the English word, intercession is not primarily a prayer a person prays, but something a person does that can be done through prayer. This is also true in the Hebrew language. Although the word intercession has come to mean prayer in our minds, its Hebrew word does not necessarily mean prayer at all. It has many shades of meaning, all of which can be done through prayer.

Throughout the remainder of the book, we will look at several of these meanings, then put them into the context of prayer. As we do, our understanding will increase of what Christ did for us through His intercession and what our representing of it on the earth through prayer really entails. As the opening stories imply, the first usage of *paga* we will explore is "to meet."

Intercession creates a *meeting.* Intercessors *meet* with God; they also *meet* the powers of darkness. "Prayer meetings" are aptly named!

A Meeting for Reconciliation

Similar to Christ's, often our *meeting* with God is to effect another *meeting—a* reconciliation. We *meet* with Him asking Him to *meet* with someone else. We become the *go-between:* "Heavenly Father, I come to you today (a *meeting)* asking You to touch Tom (another *meeting).*[11] On the opposite end of the spectrum, as Christ did through spiritual warfare, our *meeting* with the enemy is to undo a *meeting—a* breaking, a severing, a disuniting. All of our praying intercession will involve one or both of these facets: reconciliation or breaking; uniting or disuniting.

First, we will look at a couple of Scriptures that describe what Christ did when He *met* the Father to create a *meeting* between God and humanity. Then we will look at the warfare aspect. Psalm 85:10 states, "Lovingkindness and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Let's examine more fully this beautiful description of the Cross.

On the Cross lovingkindness and truth met. Righteousness and peace kissed each other. And when they did, so did God and humanity!

God had a dilemma seen through four words in this verse. He not only is a

God of *lovingkindness* (which represents His mercy, kindness, love and forgiveness), but He is also a God of *truth* (which represents His integrity and justice). He does not merely represent *peace* (safety, wholeness and rest), but also *righteousness* (holiness and purity) without which there can be no peace.

The dilemma is this: A truly holy, righteous, just and true God cannot simply forgive, grant mercy to or bestow peace on a fallen humanity without compromising His character. Sin cannot be excused. It must be judged and with it the sinner. So, how can this holy, yet loving, God marry the two? THE CROSS!

On the Cross lovingkindness and truth *met.* Righteousness and peace kissed each other. And when they did, so did God and humanity! We kissed the Father through the Son! We *met* Him through the blood of Christ! Jesus grabbed our end of the table and was introduced to His bride.

In one sovereign, unsearchable act of wisdom, God satisfied both His love and His justice. He established righteousness as well as peace. "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord? Who can describe Your great mercy, Your awesome power, Your infinite wisdom?"

When this took place Christ's ministry of reconciliation was being accomplished: "Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ...namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself," (2 Cor. 5:18,19).

Because we now represent Christ in His intercession, let's apply these verses to ourselves. Verse 18 says He "gave us the ministry of reconciliation." In other words, through our praying intercession, we release the fruit of what He did through His act of intercession. We bring individuals to God in prayer asking the Father to *meet* with them. We, too, have been given the ministry of reconciliation. Whether for a person or a nation, regardless of the reason, when we're used to create a *meeting* between God and humans, releasing the fruit of Christ's work, *paga* has happened.

It might be as you are prayerwalking through your neighborhood asking God to *meet* with families and save them.

It could be a prayer journey into another nation. Our church has sent teams of intercessors into some of the darkest countries upon the earth for the sole purpose of prayer—creating *meetings* between God and humanity—divine connections through human conduits.

Meetings that Heal

I have witnessed miracles of healing as God *met* with people. In 1980 I was on another of my many journeys into Guatemala. On one occasion my wife, another couple and I were ministering to an elderly lady who had recently been

saved. We had gone to her home to share some teaching with her.

Approximately six months earlier this lady had fallen from a stool and severely broken her ankle. As is often the case with the elderly, the fracture was not healing well. Her ankle was still badly swollen and she was in much pain. While we visited with her, the other gentleman and I both sensed that God wanted to heal her ankle—right then.

After sharing this with her and obtaining her agreement, we asked her to prop her leg on a stool. I began to pray, sort of.

Has God ever interrupted you? He did me on this occasion. (Oh, that He would always be so "unmannerly!") When I stepped *between* her and God to effect a *meeting*, the presence of God came so powerfully into the room that I stopped in mid-stride and mid-sentence. I had taken one step toward her and uttered one word, "Father."

That's all He needed!

It's as though He was so eager to touch this dear lady that He couldn't wait any longer. I realize that what I'm about to say may sound overly dramatic, but it's exactly what took place.

The presence of the Holy Spirit filled the room so strongly that I froze in my tracks, stopped speaking and began to weep. My wife and the other couple also began to weep. The lady we were ministering to began to weep. Her foot began to bounce up and down on the stool, shaking uncontrollably for several minutes as she had a powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit—a *meeting!* The Lord healed her and filled her with His Spirit.

On the same visit to Guatemala, my wife and I, along with the couple previously mentioned, were asked to pray for a woman hospitalized with tuberculosis. We found her in a ward with approximately 40 other women, the beds being only about three feet apart. It was simply an area in the hospital where the doctors and nurses could attend the very poor. Not even partitions separated the women. And yes, this woman was coughing her tuberculosis all over those around her.

As we talked and prayed with her, we noticed the lady in the next bed observing us closely. When we finished she asked if we would be willing to pray for her. Of course we were glad to and inquired about her need. She pulled her arms out from under the covers and showed us her two hands, curled back toward her body, somewhat frozen in that position. They were totally unusable. Her feet were also the same way.

While in the hospital for back surgery, the doctor had accidentally cut a nerve in her spinal cord, leaving her in this condition. There was nothing they could do to correct the problem.

Compassion filled our hearts as we asked the Lord to *meet* her need. Nothing noticeable happened, but we encouraged her to trust the Lord and drifted across the room to see if we could share Jesus with anyone else. No hospital employees were present, so we had relative freedom to do as we pleased.

Just as we began to visit with another lady across the room, we heard a sudden commotion and someone screaming, "Milagro! Milagro! Milagro!" We turned to look and saw the lady moving her hands wildly, opening and closing them, wiggling her fingers, kicking her feet under the covers and shouting the Spanish word for miracle. A *meeting* had taken place!

I don't know who was more surprised—the lady who was healed, the other ladies in the room or me. I hoped for a miracle but I don't think I believed for one. I remember thinking, *This sort of thing only happened during Bible days.*

The next thing we knew, every woman in the room was begging us to minister to them. We went from bed to bed—just like we knew what we were doing—leading women to Christ and praying for their recoveries. I remember thinking, *This is wild. Is it real or am I dreaming? We're having revival in a hospital ward!* Several were saved, the lady with tuberculosis was also healed and another lady who had been scheduled for exploratory surgery the following morning was instead sent home healed. In general, we just had a good time! We even sang a song or two. Probably shouldn't have because a hospital employee heard us, came to the room and asked us to leave. She left but we didn't. Too many women were begging for prayer. A few minutes later she returned and "graciously" escorted us out of the hospital.

What on earth can turn a sad, hopeless, disease-filled ward into a church service? God! God *meeting* with people. And prayer *meetings* create God *meetings!*

I don't want to mislead you into thinking that miracles will always happen as easily as they did on these two occasions. However, we can bring individuals into contact with God and that is the very meaning of the word intercession. It often requires much intercession; but whether it takes days or minutes, it's always worth the effort. The important thing is that we do it.

She-Bear Meetings

Let's progress in our thinking to the breaking aspect of intercession *meetings —enforcing* the victory of Calvary. I call this "the bear anointing" because of Proverbs 17:12: "Let a man *meet* a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly."

I've never met a she-bear in the wild with or without her cubs, and I hope I never do. But a wise old woodsman instructing me in the art of surviving bear

encounters gave me the following piece of wisdom: "Son, try to avoid them, if possible! But if you can't and it's a female you run into, don't ever get between mama and her cubs. Because if you do there's fixin' to be a *meeting*, and you're gonna be on the receiving end!"

Now, before I'm lynched for contextual murder of the Scriptures, let me say I am not insinuating that this verse is talking about prayer. I am saying, however, that the word for "meet" is our Hebrew word translated "intercession," *paga*. Other Hebrew words could have been used, but this one was chosen partly because it often has a very violent connotation. In fact, *paga* is frequently a battlefield term (for examples see: Judges 8:21; 15:12; 1 Sam. 22:17,18; 2 Sam. 1:15; 1 Kings 2:25-46).

Intercession can be violent!

Meetings can be unpleasant! Some can be downright ugly!

Such as the one Satan had with Jesus at Calvary when Christ interceded for us. Satan had come between God and His "cubs." He ought not to have done that! Satan's worst nightmare came true when with 4,000 years of pent-up fury, Jesus *met* him at Calvary. The earth rocked, and I do mean literally, with the force of the battle (see Matt. 27:51). The very sun grew dark as the war raged (see v. 45). At the moment of what Satan thought was his greatest triumph, he and all his forces heard the most terrifying sound they had ever heard, God's laugh of derision! (see Ps. 2:4).

The laughter was followed by the voice of the Son of man crying with a loud voice, *"Tetelestai*." This Greek word is translated "It is finished" in John 19:30. Please don't think Jesus was talking about death when He spoke that word. No way! *Tetelestai* means to fully accomplish something or bring it to its completed state[2] as the word finished would imply, but it was also the word stamped on invoices in that day meaning, "Paid in full."[3] Jesus was shouting, "The debt is paid in full!" Hallelujah!

Christ was quoting from Psalm 22:31 when He chose this statement. Three of His seven sayings on the Cross come from this Psalm. The Hebrew word He quoted from this verse is *asah.* He may have actually been speaking Hebrew, using this very word, even though John recorded it in Greek. The word means, among other things, "to create."[4] It is used in Genesis, for example, when God created the earth. I believe that not only was Christ saying, "The debt is paid in full," but also, "Come forth, new creation!" No wonder the earth shook, the sun reappeared, the centurion was terrified (see Matt 27:54) and Old Testament saints were resurrected (see Matt 27:52,53). Don't tell me God doesn't have a flare for the dramatic. The Cross defines drama.

And yes, behind the scenes it was violent. Captives were rescued (see 1 Pet. 3:19; 4:6; Isa. 61:1), bruises were inflicted (see Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53:5; 1 Pet 2:24), keys were exchanged, authority was transferred (see Matt. 28:18).

An interesting word is used in 1 John 3:8 *(KJV)* that adds insight to what happened at the Cross. The verse reads, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Destroy is the Greek word, *luo,* which has both a legal and a physical meaning. Understanding its full definition will greatly enhance our knowledge of what Jesus did to Satan and his works.

The legal meaning of *luo* is (1) to pronounce or determine that something or someone is no longer bound; (2) to dissolve or void a contract or anything that legally binds.[5] Jesus came to dissolve the legal hold Satan had over us and to pronounce that we were no longer bound by his works. He "voided the contract," breaking his dominion over us.

The physical meaning of *luo* is to dissolve or melt, break, beat something to pieces or untie something that is bound.[6] In Acts 27:41 the boat Paul traveled on was broken to pieces *(luo)* by the force of a storm. In 2 Peter 3:10,12 we're told that one day the elements of the earth will melt or dissolve *(luo)* from a great heat. Jesus not only delivered us legally, but He also made certain the literal consequences of that deliverance were manifested: He brought healing, set captives free, lifted oppression and liberated those under demonic control.

Enforcing the Victory

Our responsibility is to enforce the victory as we also *meet* the powers of darkness. It is interesting to know that Jesus used the same word, *luo,* to describe what we, the Church, are to do through spiritual warfare. Matthew 16:19 tells us, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The word loose in this verse is *luo.*

Now, the question is: "Did Christ *luo* the works of the devil or do we *luo* the works of the devil?" The answer is yes. Although Jesus fully accomplished the task of breaking the authority of Satan and voiding his legal hold upon the human race, someone on earth must represent Him in that victory and enforce it.

With this in mind and remembering that the Hebrew word for intercession, *paga,* means *to meet,* let's state it this way:

We, through *prayers* of intercession, *meet* the powers of darkness, enforcing the victory Christ accomplished when He *met* them in His *work* of intercession.

This is exactly what took place in Guatemala when we prayed for the little girl tied to a tree, mentioned in the previous chapter. We *met* the powers of darkness and enforced the victory of the Cross.

Several years ago in Guatemala, a friend of mine pointed out a vibrant, healthy young woman and told me the following story. When he first saw her

just a few months prior to this time, she was paralyzed from the neck down. She could move her head slightly, but could not speak. "The young lady has been this way for two years," my friend was informed by her pastor. "And the puzzling thing is that the doctors can find nothing physically wrong with her to create such a problem."

My friend, who was visiting the church as a guest speaker, discerned that the cause was demonic. Not knowing the church's position about such matters, he discreetly approached this wheelchair-bound young lady, knelt next to her and whispered in her ear. As he did he was *going between* (intercession) her and the powers of darkness, *meeting* them with the power of Christ. He prayed: "Satan, I break *(luo)* your hold over this young lady in the name of Jesus. I command you to loose *(luo)* your hold over her and let her go." (Parenthetical words are mine.)

No manifestation or immediate change occurred. A week later, however, she was able to move her arms a little. The following week she was moving her arms normally and her legs slightly. The recovery continued for a month until she was totally free and well.

She then told my friend the following details about the cause of her condition and why the doctors could find no reasonable explanation. "A teacher in my school who was also a witch doctor made a sexual advance toward me, which I refused. He grew angry and told me that if I didn't have sex with him, he would place a curse on me."

She knew nothing about such things and didn't think much about it. A short time later, however, this condition of paralysis came upon her. Her inability to speak prevented her from communicating with anyone about what had taken place.

What happened to bring about this girl's freedom? An individual stepped *between* this young lady and the powers of darkness, *meeting* them in the name of Jesus, enforcing His victory. That...is intercession!

A *meeting* can be a good and pleasant experience or it can be a violent confrontation between opposing forces. The intercessor is either going to *meet* with God for the purpose of reconciling the world to the Father and His wonderful blessings, or he is going to *meet* Satanic forces of opposition to enforce the victory of Calvary The purpose will vary, but one thing is certain:

The prayers of an understanding intercessor WILL create a *meeting.* And when the *meeting* comes to a close, something will have changed.

Don't be intimidated by the size of the giant. Jesus has qualified you to represent Him. And don't be intimidated by past failures. Be like the small boy playing in the backyard with his bat and ball:

"I'm the greatest baseball player in the world," he said proudly. Then he

tossed the ball in the air, swung and missed.

Undaunted, he picked up the ball, threw it into the air and said to himself, "I'm the greatest player ever!" He swung at the ball again, and again he missed. He paused a moment to examine bat and ball carefully. Then once again he threw the ball into the air and said, "I'm the greatest baseball player who ever lived." He swung the bat hard and again missed the ball.

"Wow!" he exclaimed. "What a pitcher!"[7]

Deny unbelief access. You can do it!

Let's have a prayer *meeting!*

Questions for Reflection

1. In what way does a meeting picture intercession? How does *paga* establish the correlation between the two?
2. Explain the two opposite kinds of meetings discussed in this chapter. How does each one represent Calvary?
3. Define *luo* and comment on Christ doing it and the Church doing it.
4. Think of someone you know who needs a meeting with God. How and when can you help facilitate this?
5. Don't you think God will be thrilled when you do number 4?

Notes

1. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver, Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), p. 803.
2. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* (Iowa Falls, Iowa: Word Bible Publishers, 1992), p. 1375.
3. Ibid.
4. William Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1978), p. 263.
5. Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Creek Key Study Bible—New American Standard* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: AMG Publishers, 1984; revised edition, 1990), p. 1583.
6. Ibid.
7. Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, *Chicken Soup for the Soul* (Deerfield Beach, Fla.: Health Communications, Inc., 1993), p. 74.

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chapter five
Cheek to Cheek

Lean on Me

Charlie Brown was pitching and doing a lousy job. Lucy was giving him grief, as usual. Finally, he could bear the misery and humiliation no longer. In an expression of exasperation that only Charlie Brown could think of, he stood on his head right there on the pitcher's mound.

As Lucy's degrading mockery continued, the ever-loyal Snoopy did the unexpected. He walked onto the pitcher's mound and stood on his head beside Charlie Brown, sharing his humiliation.

Sound biblical? The Bible says, "Weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15) and "Bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). Although this involves "standing on our heads" together—sharing each other's pain, it does NOT convey the full scope of these verses. We're not merely to *carry* burdens for our brothers and sisters in Christ, we're to *carry them away*....Big difference! One involves sharing a load; the other involves removing a load.

Actually, two words are used for "bearing" in the New Testament. One word could be construed to mean standing beside a brother or sister in times of need to strengthen and comfort. The other, however, means something entirely different.

The first one, *anechomai*, means "to sustain, bear or hold up against a thing,"[1] much as a person would tie a stake to a tomato plant to sustain it from the weight it carries. The strength of the stake is transferred to the plant and thus "bears it up." When the Lord commands us to bear with one another in Colossians 3:13 and Ephesians 4:2, He isn't simply saying, "Put up with one another."

Although He is telling us to do that, He is also saying, "Stake yourselves to one another." In other words, we're to come alongside a weak brother or sister who is "weighted down" and say, "You're not going to fall and be broken or destroyed because I'm staking myself to you. My strength is now yours. Go ahead, lean on me. As long as I can stand, you will."

What a wonderful picture for the Body of Christ. Fruit will result.

Jackie Robinson was the first black to play major league baseball. While breaking baseball's color barrier, he faced jeering crowds in every stadium.

While playing one day in his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. His own fans began to ridicule him. He stood at second base, humiliated, while the fans jeered. Then shortstop "Pee Wee" Reese came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie Robinson and faced the crowd. The fans grew quiet. Robinson later said that arm around his shoulder saved his career.[2]

Sometimes the world is more biblical than we are!

Carry the Burden Away

The second word is *bastazo* meaning "to bear, lift or carry" something with the idea being to carry it *away* or *remove* it.[3] It is used in Romans 15:1-3 and Galatians 6:2 which we will look at shortly.

An amazing and little understood aspect of intercession is exemplified by Christ in which He performed both of these bearing concepts. We have already established that His intercession for us was not a *prayer* He prayed, but a *work* He did. It was a work of "going between" to *reconcile* us to the Father and *break* Satan's dominion. And, of course, understanding His work in this area paves the way for an understanding of ours.

The intercessory work of Christ reached its fullest and most profound expression when our sins were "laid on" Him and He "bore" them away:

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every

one to his own way; and the Lord hath *laid on* him the iniquity of us all...he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he *bare* the sin of many, and made *intercession* for the transgressors (Isa. 53:6,12, *KJV,* italics mine).

The Hebrew word *paga* is used twice in these two verses. Isaiah 53 is one of the most graphic Old Testament prophecies of Christ's cross. *Paga* is translated "laid on" once and "intercession" once. Both instances refer to when our sins, iniquities, diseases, etc., were placed upon Him. The New Testament describes this identification accordingly: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Christ then "bore" our sins and weaknesses away, "as far as the east is from the west" (Ps. 103:12). He is not still carrying them—somewhere, somehow—He disposed of them. The Hebrew word for "bore" or "bare" in this chapter is *nasa* meaning "to bear away"[4] or "remove to a distance."[5] (We would spell the *KJV* "bare" today "bear.")

As already mentioned, the Greek counterpart, *bastazo,* means essentially the same. This connotation of bearing something to get rid of it becomes increasingly significant as we discuss our role in this facet of Christ's ministry of

intercession. It is imperative to know that we don't simply carry someone's burden. We *stake (anechomai)* ourselves to the person and *carry the burden away (bastazo),* helping them *get rid of it!*

The Scapegoat

The concept of a scapegoat comes from this redemptive intercessional work of Christ and illustrates well our concept of carrying something away.

A scapegoat takes someone else's blame and resulting consequences. My older brother, Tim, who is now a pastor in Ohio, was an expert at diverting blame to me when we were kids. I was always perfectly innocent as a child, never doing anything wrong. He was always the troublemaker.

Mom and Dad were forever taking his side—they could never see through his falsities and manipulation nor believe that I was so perfect. My entire childhood was one of enduring false accusation—being Tim's scapegoat! I've spent the last 20 years as an adult seeking inner healing for this injustice.

Of course you know that none of that is true—I was only almost perfect. But at least it allows me to get even with Tim for the few times he did successfully divert blame my way and it also illustrates my point. (By the way, I never did this to him.)

In the Old Testament two animals were used on the Day of Atonement. One was sacrificed, the other was used for the scapegoat. After the high priest placed his hands on the scapegoat's head confessing the sins of the nation, it was released into the wilderness never to be seen again. It symbolized Christ the scapegoat crucified outside the city *bearing away* our curse.

Christ, the scapegoat, bearing our curse is well illustrated by a story I read in the book *What It Will Take to Change the World* by S. D. Gordon. The following is my paraphrase of this story about a couple who discovered that their 14-year-old son had lied to them. The young boy, whom we'll refer to as Steven, had skipped school three consecutive days. He was found out when his teacher called his parents to inquire about his well-being.

The parents were more upset by Steven's lies than his missing school. After praying with him about what he had done, they decided on a very unusual and severe form of punishment. Their conversation with him went something like this:

"Steven, do you know how important it is that we be able to trust one another?"

"Yes."

"How can we ever trust each other if we don't always tell the truth? That's why lying is such a terrible thing. Not only is it sin, but it also destroys our ability to trust one another. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your mother and I must make you understand the seriousness, not so much of skipping school, but of the lies you told. Your discipline will be that for the next three days, one for each day of your sin, you must go to the attic and stay there by yourself. You will even eat and sleep there."

So young Steven headed off to the attic and the bed prepared for him there. It was a long evening for Steven and perhaps longer for Mom and Dad. Neither could eat, and for some reason when Dad tried to read the paper the words seemed foggy. Mom tried to sew, but couldn't see to thread the needle. Finally it was bedtime. About midnight as the father lay in bed thinking about how lonely and afraid Steven must be, he finally spoke to his wife, "Are you awake?"

"Yes. I can't sleep for thinking about Steven."

"Neither can I," answered Dad.

An hour later he queried again, "Are you asleep yet?"

"No," answered Mom, "I just can't sleep for thinking about Steven all alone up in the attic."

"Me neither."

Another hour passed. It was now 2:00 A.M. "I can't stand this any longer!" murmured Dad as he climbed out of bed grabbing his pillow and a blanket. "I'm going to the attic."

He found Steven much as he expected: wide awake with tears in his eyes.

"Steven," said his father, "I can't take away the punishment for your lies because you must know the seriousness of what you have done. Y ou must realize that sin, especially lying, has severe consequences. But your mother and I can't bear the thought of you being all alone here in the attic so I'm going to share your punishment with you."

Father lay down next to his son and the two put their arms around each other's necks. The tears on their cheeks mingled as they shared the same pillow and the same punishment...for three nights.[6]

What a picture! Two thousand years ago God crawled "out of bed" with His blanket and pillow—actually three spikes and a cross of crucifixion—"staked" His tear-stained cheek next to ours and "bore" our punishment for sin. His attic was a tomb, His bed a slab of rock and the cheek next to His was yours—yours and mine.

That's right. Christ was not alone on the cross. We were with Him. He was actually there to join us in our sentence of death. No, we may not have been there physically, but we were there spiritually (see Rom. 6:4,6). And of course, as He hung there He was "bearing" some things. Our sins were being "laid on"

Him and He was carrying them away.

Christ didn't quite finish the job, however.

Wait! Before you "stone" me with letters and phone calls, please look at Colossians 1:24: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His Body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions."

Our Part

What could possibly be lacking in Christ's afflictions? Our part. In fact, the *Amplified Bible* actually adds those words: "And in my own person I am making up whatever is still lacking and remains to be completed [on our part] of Christ's afflictions, for the sake of His body, which is the church." Ours isn't exactly the same as His was, of course: carrying another's sin, curse or blame. "But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time" (Heb. 10:12) took the sins of the world upon Himself.

Nonetheless, there is a "sharing" and "a filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions."

That which is lacking is really the point of this entire book, not just this chapter. It's the "re-presenting" of which we have spoken. It's the mediating, the going between, the distributing, the enforcing. It's our part.

Let's look, then, at our part in this *bearing* aspect of Christ's work of intercession. We have already mentioned the "staking" facet in Colossians 3:13 and Ephesians 4:2. Let's examine the other aspect in Romans 15:1-3 and Galatians 6:2, then we will see how the two work together in our intercession:

Now we who are strong ought to *bear* the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell upon Me" (Rom. 15:1-3, italics mine).

Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2, italics mine).

As mentioned earlier, the Greek word for "bear" in both verses is *bastazo* which, synonymous with the Hebrew *nasa*, means "to lift or carry" conveying the idea of removing or carrying away. In implementing Christ's priestly ministry of intercession, we're not simply to carry burdens/or others, we're to carry them *away from* others —just as Jesus did.

Please remember, however, we're not literally *re-doing* what Christ did, we're *re-presenting* what He did. There's a big difference between the two. We're representing Him, extending His work; He who bore our infirmities, diseases, sins, reproaches and rejection when they were "laid on" *(paga)* Him.

He is the balm of Gilead (see Jer. 8:22), but we apply this healing salve.

He is the fountain of life (see Jer. 2:13; 17:13), but we are dispensers of His living water.

His is the comforting shepherd's staff (see Ps. 23:4), but He allows us the privilege of extending it.

Yes, not only did He bear our weaknesses, but He's also still "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15, *KJV).* And He wants to touch us with the same compassion that we, too, might be bearers.

Think about it. The great Healer "healing" through us; the great High Priest "priesting" through us; the great Lover "loving" through us.

He inaugurated the new covenant with His blood (see Heb. 12:24), but in reference to *our part,* He has "made us able ministers of the new testament" (2 Cor. 3:6, *KJV*— "testament" is just a *KJV* word for "covenant").

Yes, Christ has made us "able ministers." And if I understand the word correctly, ministers administer something. What do we administer? The blessings and provisions of the new covenant.

And who secured and guarantees those benefits? Jesus, of course. Then this verse is just another way of saying that we have been made able distributors of what Christ already accomplished.

Released Through Others Coming to Your Aid

This verse came alive for me when my friend Mike Anderson made the following statement: "Sometimes the covenant of the Lord is released to you through others coming to your aid." At the time Mike and his wife were missionaries in Jamaica. The statement was made on the heels of a life and death struggle they had just experienced with their son who had contracted a critical illness. The young child, two or three years old, had regressed for several days to a point of near death. That's when Mike called me and a few other individuals in the United States.

I knew something fairly serious had to be occurring when the prayer meeting I was leading was interrupted to inform me about an emergency phone call from Jamaica.

"I'm sorry to interrupt your meeting, Dutch," my friend Mike began, "but I desperately need your help."

"What is it?" I asked.

"It's my son, Toby," Mike replied. "He is deathly ill with a raging fever. The doctors haven't been able to find the cause. They've done all they know to do, but nothing seems to help. It is questionable whether or not he can survive another night in his condition. I have been praying and praying for him, but can't

seem to break this attack. The Lord has now revealed to me that his condition is being caused by a strong spirit of infirmity, which He actually allowed me to see as I was praying. I have not been able to break its power over my son, however, even though I've warred against it for hours. But I feel the Lord has shown me that if some strong intercessors join me, we can break this attack."

Mike and his wife, Pam, are strong in the Lord. They pray. They have faith. They understand authority. They were not in sin. Why then, you might ask, could they not get the breakthrough they needed on their own?

I don't know. But I suspect the Lord wanted to teach them (and those of us praying with them) the principle I'm now sharing with you.

The people I was meeting with and a few others Mike had called went into prayer. We asked God to meet *(paga)* with this child. We said essentially, "Father, allow us to move into our priestly role as intercessors *(paga)* enforcing the victory of Jesus in this situation, representing or administering the blessings of the new covenant. Stake us to Toby and allow us, along with Christ, to be touched with the feeling of this infirmity. Lay on *(paga)* us this burden that we might bear *(nasa, bastazo)* it away. We ask this in Jesus' name—based on who He is and what He has done, Father."

We then bound the power of Satan over this child's life—in Christ's name, of course, because it was His victory we were "administering." Then we growled with "the bear anointing" (see chapter 4). No, we didn't really, but lighten up and enjoy the symbolism. Besides, I think maybe there was a growl in the Spirit! Perhaps a roar would be more accurate because the Lion of the tribe of Judah roared through us. He does "roar out of Zion," you know (see Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2). And we are certain He did because Mike called back a few hours later and said, "Almost immediately after I contacted several of you to pray with me, the fever broke and my son began to improve. Within a few hours he was well and released from the hospital."

Praise God! The Body of Christ had functioned as the Lord intended and Jesus was glorified.

Mike continued, "I asked the Lord why I needed others to help me break this attack against my son. He reminded me of the story of Joshua and the army of Israel coming to the aid of the Gibeonites, who were helplessly outnumbered by five armies." Mike then recounted the story from Joshua 9 and 10 for me, which I'll briefly summarize for you.

The Gibeonites were one of the Canaanite tribes that Joshua and Israel were supposed to destroy. They had deceived the Israelites, however, into believing they had come from a far country in order to enter a covenant with them. Joshua and the Israelites neglected to pray about this and were therefore deceived into a

binding, covenantal agreement. (Have you ever "forgotten" to pray about something and gotten into trouble?)

Even though it was born of deceit, the covenant was still valid and made Israel an ally of Gibeon. Therefore, a few days later when five armies marched against Gibeon, they called upon Joshua for help—based on the strength of covenant. Even though the agreement was conceived in deception, Joshua and his army traveled all night to arrive in time and rescue the Gibeonites. The entire story is an incredible demonstration of the power of covenant.

After calling my attention to this story, Mike then spoke these words to me: "Dutch, after reminding me of this story, the Lord planted the following thought in my heart as to why I needed help overcoming this spirit: 'Sometimes the covenant of the Lord is released to you through others coming to your aid!'"

Isn't that profound? The Almighty administering the blessings of the covenant through us. That's what intercession is all about. *Paga:* He "lays on" us someone else's need. *Anechomai:* We "stake" ourselves to that person. *Bastazo:* We "carry away" the weakness or burden.

Enforcing and Treading upon the Enemy

A further profound picture of this partnership between Christ and the Church is exemplified in this same story of Israel and the Gibeonites. It's found in Joshua 10:22-27. Joshua is an Old Testament picture or type of Christ, and Israel pictures the Church. Joshua's name, which is actually the Hebrew equivalent to the name, Jesus, had been changed earlier in his life to paint this picture. It had formerly been Hoshea.

After Joshua and the army of Israel defeated the five Canaanite armies in defense of the Gibeonites, the kings of these armies fled to hide in a cave.

Upon discovering them, Joshua ordered the kings to be brought to him and made them lie down on the ground. He was about to enact a very familiar custom, which was to place his foot on their necks or heads to display his conquest. Oftentimes the defeated army, or armies in this case, would then be paraded before the conquering king or general observing him as he "displayed" his conquest. This is what Colossians 2:15 is referring to when it says of Christ, "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him."

Joshua, however, is about to do something very different and very prophetic. Rather than place his foot on the necks of these kings, as was the typical custom, Joshua summoned some of his soldiers and had them do it. No more literal picture of Christ and the Church, His army, could have been given to us. In fulfillment of this prophetic picture, when Jesus defeated Satan and his

principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, He, too, called His army to Him and said, "You put your feet on the necks of these enemies."

When Ephesians 2:6 says He "raised us up with Him," Christ is saying, "It's not only My victory, it's yours."

He is also saying, "What I have done, you must enforce. I have put them under My feet legally—under My authority—but you must exercise that authority in individual situations, causing the literal fulfillment of it."

That is why Romans 16 says, "And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under *your* feet" (v. 20, italics mine). And Luke 10:19 tells us: "Behold, I have given *you* authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you" (italics mine). This is what happened when we helped Mike: an enforcing and a treading.

Sometimes a "laying on" requires a "treading upon"!

Psalm 110, a futuristic Messianic Psalm relating to Christ, also pictures our partnership with Him. It foretells that Christ would, after His resurrection, ascend to the right hand of the Father. According to the New Testament, at the time of His ascension and enthronement He had *already* placed all other authorities under His feet:

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22).

For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him (1 Cor. 15:27).

But Psalm 110 informs us that He would still be *waiting* for them to become His footstool: "Sit at My right hand, *until* I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet" (Ps. 110:1, italics mine).

Wait a minute. Do we have a contradiction between this Messianic prophecy and the New Testament verses that say after He ascended to the Father's right hand they were *already* under His feet? No. Then why the seeming inconsistency? *Are* they under His feet or *will* they be placed there? The answer is YES!

He [Jesus] conquered Satan and his kingdom; we enforce the victory.

They are *legally* through the Cross. They will be *literally* as we do "our part." Verses 2 and 3 of Psalm 110 describe our part:

The Lord will stretch forth Thy strong scepter from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of Thine enemies." Thy people will volunteer freely in the day of Thy power; in holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Thy youth are to Thee as the dew.

The word "power" in this passage, *chayil,* is also translated "army."[7] Christ is looking for a volunteer army that will stretch forth His strong scepter of authority, ruling in the midst of their enemies, enforcing His great victory. So, once again, did He place all other authorities under foot or do we? YES! He did, we enforce. He conquered Satan and his kingdom; we enforce the victory.

As we stated, sometimes a "laying on" results in a "treading upon."

In other words, at times when Christ lays a prayer mission or burden on us *(paga)* that we might bear it away *(nasa, bastazo),* the task involves warfare. No serious Bible student could study the word intercession *(paga)* and separate it from the concept of warfare. This will be obvious as we focus more directly on spiritual warfare in upcoming chapters.

Both the Hebrew and Greek words used for "tread," *darak* (Hebrew)[8] and *pateo* (Greek),[9] involve the concept of violence or war. The Hebrew word *darak* actually came to be used for "bending the bow"[10] when about to shoot an arrow and is still used today in Israel for the command, "Load your weapons." Both words are used of treading or trampling in a wine press, a fittingly used symbolism of Christ overcoming His enemies in Isaiah 63:3 and Revelation 19:15.

The verse in Revelation says, "And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty." We in America even have a verse from the famous hymn "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" taken from these two verses of Scripture: "He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored, He has loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword."[11]

It's amazing to me that these same two words are used to describe not only Christ at war, but also our warfare. Let me give you one such reference. In Joshua 1:3 the Lord said to Joshua, "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses." The word "tread," of course, is *darak.* God wasn't telling Israel that everywhere they walked or stepped was theirs. He had already marked off the perimeters of the inheritance. He was saying symbolically, "Every place that you are willing to load your weapons and take, I'm going to give to you."

So, one more time, was God giving or were they taking? YES! And just to prove my point, remember that the previous generation under Moses was afraid and wouldn't *darak* (load their weapons and fight) and God wouldn't give.

Please don't think for a moment that it's any different for us today. These

things happened to Israel as types or shadows for us (see 1 Cor. 10:6,11). That which our Joshua-Jesus has and is giving to us won't automatically come to us, either, just because we belong to Him. We, too, must take "the weapons of our warfare" (2 Cor. 10:4) and *darak!*

This is intercession, as it was through Christ and is through us. Oftentimes it is to be done for our brothers and sisters as we, like Christ, climb into their attics of despair, place our cheeks next to theirs and carry away the burdens or weaknesses.

- May Christ live *through you!*
- May that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions—our part—be lacking no more!
- May the scepter be extended from us as we rule in the midst of our enemies, making them His footstool!
- May the terrifying roar of the Lion of Judah resound from the Church!
- May the covenant of the Lord be administered in the earth!

I read the following father-and-son story which serves as a fitting end to this chapter:

In spite of repeated warnings, a small boy continued coming home late after school. One morning his parents informed him that there was no more grace—he must arrive on time that evening. He was late again.

At dinner that night the young man discovered his punishment. On his plate was only a piece of bread. The boy was shocked and dismayed. After waiting a few moments for the full impact to do its work, the father took the boy's plate and gave him his fill of meat and potatoes.

When the boy was grown to manhood he said, "All my life I've known what God is like by what my father did that night."[12]

To be like Christ will cost us. Our cause is costly. The work of intercession has a price. Let's pay it. Let's push back from our bountiful table once in awhile and show someone what God is like.

Questions for Reflection

1. Explain the two types of bearing in the Scriptures. How do they pertain to intercession? What does *paga* have to do with bearing?
2. Can you explain how the scapegoat is a picture of intercession?
3. How does the account of Joshua and the Israelites in Joshua 10:2227 picture the partnership between Christ and the Church?
4. In what way does Psalm 110 picture the relationship between Jesus and the Church?
5. Have you told Jesus yet today that you love Him?

Notes

1. Joseph Henry Thayer, A *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 45.

2. Craig Brian Larson, *Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), p. 144.

3. Ibid., p. 99.

4. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver, Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), p. 671.

5. F. F. Bosworth, *Christ the Healer* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House/Revell, 1973), p. 26.

6. S. D. Gordon, *What It Will Take to Change the World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), pp. 17-21, adapted.

7. *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1981), ref. no. 2428.

8. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., revised edition, 1991), p. 453.

9. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* (Iowa Falls, Iowa: Word Bible Publishers, 1992), p. 1128.

10. Harris, Archer, Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, p. 453.

11. Words by Julia Ward Howe, America melody attributed to William Steffe.

12. Larson, *Illustrations for Preaching*, p. 26.

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chapter six
NO TRESPASSING

Protective Boundaries

"No dumping allowed. Trespassers will be violated."

I used to laugh every time I drove by the sign. This wasn't a homemade sign. It was a professionally made metal sign posted by a city in Oklahoma (I won't tell you which one). It was even the fancy kind with fluorescent letters that could be easily seen at night. But those who made it were confused and instead of saying "Trespassers (or Violators) will be prosecuted," they worded it "Trespassers will be violated."

I hope they were merely confused. Perhaps they weren't. Maybe in that town the law violated lawbreakers instead of prosecuting them. I decided I didn't want to find out.

There is an aspect of intercession that relates to protection: protective boundaries. Posting signs in the spirit, if you please: "No dumping allowed, Satan. Trespassers will be violated."

In the nineteenth chapter of Joshua, the word *paga* (intercession) is used several times. The passage is describing the dimensions or boundaries of each of the tribes of Israel. It is translated several ways in different translations, including "reached to," "touched," "bordered," "boundary." The *Spirit-Filled Bible* says *paga,* when used in this context, is the extent to which a boundary reaches.[1]

Does it surprise you that the word used for intercession, *paga,* is also translated "boundary"? It really shouldn't. It only seems logical to me that perimeters of protection be linked to prayer. I want to state emphatically: We CAN build boundaries of protection[2] around ourselves and others through intercession. What a comfort to know that this truth is inherent in the very meaning of the word.

Many Christians believe that protection from accidents, destruction, satanic traps and assaults, etc., is automatic for the Christian—that we do nothing to cause it—that it is based on the sovereignty of God alone. In other words, when God wants to protect us from these things, He does; when He chooses not to, He allows them to happen.

This belief simply means that whether or not we are delivered from destructive things is based entirely on God, not us. Those who adhere to this teaching usually believe nothing can happen to a Christian that is not allowed by God.

Others go so far as to say this is true for everyone, not just Christians. They believe God is in control of everything that happens on earth.

That God is not directly in control of *everything* that takes place on earth can be seen in the simple facts:

- He would never decide a person should be raped or abused.
- He would never desire that the innocent suffer.
- He would never will murder, pillage, racial genocide and a thousand other things.

Governing Principles

Whether or not God directly controls every event in the life of a Christian can be answered by stating that the basic laws of sowing and reaping, cause and effect, individual responsibility and the free will aren't negated when we come to Christ. *All* promises from God are attached to conditions—governing principles. Most, if not all, of these conditions involve responsibility on our part. Protection is no exception.

Most of us don't like that. It threatens us and somehow weakens God in our minds to imply He's not in total control of everything. And the majority are greatly offended if anything is taught implying that a failure to receive protection, provision, healing, an answer to prayer or anything else from God could be our fault.

I can understand how it might threaten us—I'm threatened by me —but I don't understand why it offends. Are any of us claiming perfection? Aren't all of us going to fail once in a while? Then why are we offended when a teaching suggests that these imperfections and failures might hinder us?

Why are we offended and opposed to a teaching that says our unbelief kept us from receiving something when so often the Bible says if we believe and do not doubt or waver we'll receive (see Matt. 17:20; 21:21; Mark 11:22-24; Jas. 1:6,7)?

Why are we offended when it is implied that our inability to persevere created lack when the Bible says that we "through faith *and patience* inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12)?

Why are we confused or angry when it is suggested that our not doing something caused failure when the Bible says if we're "willing *and obedient"* we'll eat the good of the land (Isa. 1:19, *KJV)?*

As many as 80 percent of those who consider themselves born again don't tithe, thereby opening themselves to a curse. Yet they are offended when

someone implies that their lack of provision might be their own fault (see Mal. 3:8-12).

We don't forgive and still have the gall to think God will hear and answer our prayers (see Mark 11:25,26).

Often, we eat poorly, don't exercise and abuse our bodies in other ways. Then we blame our sicknesses on God's will.

We don't properly train our children, yet we're offended with the suggestion that their rebellion might be our fault (see Deut. 6:7; Prov. 22:6).

We don't abide in Christ and His Word. Still we blame it on "God's will" when we "ask what we will" and it isn't done (John 15:7).

We know faith comes through hearing and meditating on God's Word (see Rom. 10:17), and most of us do very little of that. But let someone imply that we didn't receive a promise because of unbelief and we're irate.

The Scriptures teach that "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High" *(KJV)* receives the protective promises of the remainder of Psalm 91...that I have an armor I must wear and carry, including the shield of faith, to ward off Satan's fiery darts (see Eph. 6:13-18)...that Satan goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour and that I am to resist him (see 1 Pet. 5:8; Jas. 4:7)...and yet, let someone suggest that my lack of protection from some destructive happening could be my own fault and I'm offended. How about you?

I'm certainly not implying that God *never* allows us to walk through difficulties, that *all* our problems are because of disobedience or that *all* unanswered prayer is because of unbelief. I'm simply saying that many of our failures and difficulties are our fault, not "God's will"; we have a part to play in the securing of protection and other heavenly provisions.

Let's try to lay down our fears, insecurities and tendencies toward offense. Let's accept the fact that the Scriptures are filled with principles that put responsibility on us, which must be met to receive God's promises. Let's realize this doesn't cancel grace and promote salvation by works. Grace does not imply "no responsibility" on our part. Let's realize the love of God is unconditional, but His favor and blessing are not.

Let's cast off all laziness, complacency and apathy. Let's realize we will fall short at times and not feel condemned when we do. *Let's!*

Building Boundaries Through Prayer

If you're still willing to finish this book after such a dissertation—back to protection. You've probably guessed by now that I don't believe it is automatically ours just because we are Christians. We must do things to secure it, one of which is building boundaries *(paga)* of protection through prayer.

I heard a minister in Fort Worth, Texas tell the story of another pastor who years ago received divine protection as a result of prayer-building walls or boundaries of protection *(paga).* This pastor had developed the discipline of beginning every day with an hour of prayer.

One particular day, however, he felt a strong leading of the Holy Spirit to pray longer so he continued for a second hour. After two hours he still felt the need to keep on praying, so he persevered for a third hour asking for God's protection and blessing on his day, as well as for other things. He then felt released from the need to pray longer so he stopped.

That evening as he was mowing his lawn, he felt something repeatedly brush up against his leg. He looked down and saw a coiled rattlesnake trying to strike him, but it just couldn't hit him. Instead, it kept brushing either side of his leg.

Why had the man felt the need to pray longer that morning? What was he doing? Among other things he was building "boundaries" of protection through prayer—*paga.*

Some would say, of course, that God doesn't need three hours of prayer to protect one from a rattlesnake. I would agree. He didn't "need" seven days of marching around Jericho to tear it down either,

but He chose to do it that way. He doesn't "need" to spit in a person's eye to heal them, but He did once. Why He requires things to be done certain ways, we don't always know, but we do know that for us *obedience is the key.* If He says "three hours" then three hours is exactly what it will take.

Dwelling in the Secret Place

Consistency is also a key when it comes to prayer for protection. We must "dwell" in the secret place to "abide" under the Almighty's protective shadow: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. 91:1, *KJV).* Jesus equated the "secret" place to the prayer closet in Matthew 6:6. The word "dwell" in Psalm 91:1 is *yashab* which means "to remain or abide; to dwell in or inhabit."[3] The point is that it must be a lifestyle, not a once in awhile activity. We must make the secret place our habitation or "dwelling" place. Many believers' prayer lives are too sporadic to build solid walls of protection.

Prayer is like the Word of God-we don't read enough today for the entire week.

The word "abide" in this same verse is *luwn* which means, among other things, "to spend the night."[4] Let's read it with that meaning: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, shall *spend the night* under the shadow of the Almighty." In other words, prayer is like the Word of God—we don't read

enough today for the entire week. We must have "daily bread" or manna. Likewise, we must go to the secret place daily and when we do we can "spend the night" there. Tomorrow, however, we must go again. Consistency is a key.

I heard a visiting minister in Eaton, Ohio share this testimony of God's protection in World War II. He served on a ship and every day he and a few other sailors would have a prayer time, seeking God for protection for themselves and the ship. What were they doing? Building boundaries *(paga)* of protection.

"In one battle," he related, "an enemy plane dropped a bomb onto the deck of our ship. Instead of exploding, however, to everyone's astonishment the bomb bounced off the deck and into the water, just like a rubber ball would!" This minister went on to say that in battle after battle they and the ship were miraculously spared.

Well-Timed Times to Pray

Boundaries of protection! No trespassing! Life in the secret place!

This facet of intercession is not only to be something we do on a *general* regular basis for our family and loved ones. There are also *specific* times when the Holy Spirit will alert us to particular situations that need protective prayer. These are what the Scriptures call *kairos* times.

There are two Greek words for "time." One is *chronos,* which is time in general; the general "time in which anything *is* done."[5] The other word, *kairos,* is the strategic or "right time; the opportune point of time at which something *should be* done."[6]

A window of opportunity would be *kairos* time.

A well-timed attack in war would be *kairos* time.

When someone is in danger or about to be attacked by Satan, that is a *kairos* time.

What time it is would be *chronos* time.

The Bible speaks of well-timed *(kairos)* temptations (see Luke 4:13; 8:13). No doubt coincidental temptations occur—a person just happening to be in the wrong place at the wrong time—but there are also well-planned, well-timed temptations. It pays to be alert, both for ourselves and for others. I've had the Holy Spirit prompt me to pray for individuals, especially young believers, with the thought, "It's a *kairos* time of temptation for them." This is what took place in Luke 22:31,32 when Jesus interceded for Peter, praying that his faith not fail him after he denied Christ. It worked.

Is it possible that some who have fallen away from Christ would not have if someone had interceded for them?

The Scriptures also inform us of strategically-timed persecution (see Acts

12:1; 19:23). This is usually to discourage, distract or, in extreme cases, to destroy us. In these references, during times of renewal and success in the Early Church, Satan launched orchestrated attacks of persecution. They failed.

Is it possible that much successful persecution against the Church could be stopped or rendered unfruitful if we were alert and interceded against it?

Often we forget the instruction to not lean on our own understanding, and fail to acknowledge Him in our intercession (see Prov. 3:5,6). We do not wait for or listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, usually to our own hurt. We forget that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood" (Eph. 6.T2, *KJV)* and that the "weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Cor. 10:4, *KJV).* We are so afraid of becoming demon conscious (putting an overemphasis on them) that we become demon unconscious. Sometimes our quest for balance gets us out of balance.

Ephesians 6:18, the context of which is spiritual warfare, says that we are to "be on the alert...for all the saints" and "pray at all *(kairos)* times in the Spirit." He is not telling us here to pray all the time, which would be *chronos,* but to pray at all strategic times *(kairos).* In other words, we are in a war and if we are alert He will warn us of the well-timed attacks *(kairos)* of the enemy, so we can create a boundary *(paga)* of protection by praying.

Kairos, a Time to Paga

One morning several years ago as I was praying, the Lord gave me a mental picture. Some might call it a vision. Whatever it is called, I saw something: A rattlesnake coiled at my dad's feet. Seemed like a *kairos* time to me! I spent about 15 minutes praying earnestly for his protection until I felt released from the urgency.

The next day he called me—he was in Florida, I was in Texas—and said, "You'll never guess what happened yesterday. Jodie (my stepmother) went out back to the shed. Before walking in as she normally would, she pushed the door open, stopped and looked down. There where she was about to step was a coiled rattlesnake. She backed away carefully, came and got me and I killed it."

I said to Dad, "Yeah, I know."

Surprised, he asked, "How did you know?"

"I saw it in the spirit," I responded, "and prayed for your protection. You owe me." (No, I didn't really say the part about owing me. I acted real humble and said something like, "Praise God" or "Praise Jesus." You know how we do it!)

What was I doing as I prayed for him? Setting boundaries *(paga)* of protection around him and Jodie.

How did I pray? I asked the Father to protect them. I bound any attempt of Satan to harm them. I quoted a verse or two of Scripture promising protection.

Then I prayed in the Spirit.

Gail Mummert, a member of our fellowship in Colorado Springs, shared this remarkable testimony of protection during a *kairos* moment in Lancaster, Texas:

As we were driving home in threatening weather, my husband, Gene, turned on the radio for a local report. Funnel clouds had indeed been spotted nearby. After arriving home, things grew strangely calm.

In a short while, the wind started to blow fiercely Trees were bent over and the very walls of the house began to flutter. Windows rattled and hail beat on the car port.

"Get into the hall and close the doors," my husband shouted. "Get pillows, blankets and a flashlight."

"Nana, I'm scared," cried our five-year-old grandson, William.

"Jesus will take care of us. Don't be afraid," I told him.

Suddenly sirens began to go off in our small town. The walls moved as though they weren't anchored to anything. "If we're not in a tornado, we're close," shouted Gene as he ran into the hall.

"Link arms and sit on the floor," I said.

"I love you," Gene said to us as he surrounded us with blankets and pillows, covered us with his body and enveloped us with his arms.

A mighty rushing wind was all around us and sucked us together into a ball. "Pray! Keep praying," he said.

"God Almighty, help us!" we screamed.

Explosion!

Windows shattered, glass flew everywhere. Another explosion. The walls caved in. Debris shot everywhere like arrows toward their target.

"Jesus, help us! You are our Savior! You are our King!" my voice cried. I looked up—the roof was falling on us. A ladder crashed down on my husband's back.

"Now start praising Him," Gene shouted through the wind. The next blast was the worst. There was nothing we could do. Only He could help us. Everything was out of control, but we knew the sovereignty of God. We knew we were at the point of death but we shouted, "Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!"

Suddenly, peace filled me like a flood. A sweet voice filled my heart, "I've heard your cry for help. I've bent the heavens for you. No matter what happens around you, I'm here protecting you." Tears flooded my face and I knew Jesus was protecting us. It seemed His arms had surrounded us. I knew we would be safe.

The tornado was over. The rain beat down on us with a force I had never felt before. We were safe. "Mama, I see the sky," little William said.

"William, that's because the roof is gone. We probably won't have any walls, either," Gene informed him.

"I'm so thankful we're okay," our daughter Wendy cried. "Jesus protected us, didn't He?" Though buried under tons of debris, our hair covered with insulation and glass, we were okay. Just a few minor injuries.

Talk about walls of protection! Several people were killed and many injured in that devastating tornado, but the everlasting arms of the Lord protected the Mummert family. Gail was privileged to share her entire story with *The Dallas Morning News.* The newspaper even printed her testimony about the protection of the Lord.

I had a friend in Dallas several years ago who experienced an interesting answer to prayer in a *kairos* situation. She had gone early one morning to visit her son and daughter-in-law. The son worked an all-night shift so, awaiting his return from work, his wife and mother visited for awhile. As time wore on and the son didn't arrive, Mom began to feel uneasy. Something didn't seem right.

Thinking that perhaps he was still at work, they called his place of employment, "No," they were told, "he has already left."

Becoming more alarmed the mother said, "I'm concerned. Let's drive toward his place of work."

She had assumed her son had left work at his normal time and should have been home by then when, in fact, he had left just moments before their call. But the Lord was directing even in that because, though he was not in any danger yet, the Holy Spirit knew a *kairos* moment was coming for this young man, and He wanted this praying mother there when it happened.

As Mom and daughter-in-law drove toward his workplace on a busy Dallas parkway, they saw him coming from the other direction on his motorcycle, traveling around 40 to 50 miles per hour. As they watched, he fell asleep and veered off the road, hit the curb and flew 40 or 50 feet through the air. He was not even wearing a helmet.

As the boy was moving through the air, Mom was praying, *"Jesus, protect my* son!" She continued to pray as they turned around and drove back to him. A crowd had already gathered around him, and they ran to the scene wondering what they would find.

They found a miracle! No injuries—no bones broken, no lacerations, no internal injuries. Just a dazed young man wondering what had happened.

Paga happened...Kairos paga happened! Boundaries happened. A mother picked up on the warning from the Holy Spirit and was therefore in the right place at the right time.

Does this mean that if you weren't there praying when someone you loved had an accident, you're to blame for their injury or death? Of course not. If we all

played that guessing game, it would drive us insane. It simply means we must be alert, and when warnings do come from the Holy Spirit, we must respond by praying—building some boundaries.

I heard a guest lecturer at Christ for the Nations in Dallas, Texas tell another interesting story involving not a kairos *moment,* but a kairos *season* of building boundaries *(paga)* of protection.

He had a vivid reoccurring dream, which he felt strongly was a warning from the Lord, of his married daughter dying. In the dream he was not shown how her death happened, but he felt strongly that Satan had a well-laid plan to take his daughter's life. So as not to alarm her, he told only his son-in-law and the two of them began to intercede *(paga)* daily for her safety. They were building boundaries *(paga)* of protection around her.

This minister related how several times a day—while he worked, drove his car, walked, whenever it came to mind—he would bind Satan's plan to take his daughter's life. "How would he do this?" some might ask. "What did he say?" He probably said things like:

- "Father, I bring my daughter to You." That is creating a "meeting" *(paga)* with God.
- "I ask You to protect her from any trap Satan has set for her. You said You would deliver us from the snare of the trapper" (see Ps. 91:3). That is building "boundaries" *(paga)* of protection.
- "Thank You for laying this prayer burden on me that I might lift off and carry away from her *(nasa)* this assignment of death." That's having someone else's burden or weakness "laid on" *(paga)* us.
- "Satan, I bind this plan of yours and break any hold you may have gained in this situation. Your weapons against her won't prosper and you're not going to take her life." That is "meeting" *(paga)* the enemy to break.
- "I do this in the name of Jesus!" That's basing all our *prayers* on the *work* Christ has already done. It's *representing* Him...administering what He has already *accomplished...enforcing* His victory.

About a month later—remember, I said this was a kairos *season* and I said he prayed *daily—his* daughter received a promotion at work. With the promotion came a life insurance policy which mandated a physical exam.

At one point in the process, after a blood sample had been taken, a doctor addressed her in a near panic with the question and comments, "Lady, what have you been doing in your diet? We can find no potassium in you at all! You should be dead. There is no reasonable explanation as to why you're alive. When this deficiency occurs a person normally feels fine but suddenly drops dead. We must get you to the hospital immediately and begin to replenish the potassium."

She lived, of course. She had been on a strange diet for several weeks during which she had eaten only one or two kinds of food. Though there was no reasonable explanation as to why she lived, we know the spiritual explanation: A boundary *(paga)* of protection built in the spirit through prayer.

Under the Shadow of the Most High. Keep Out!

Perhaps the most amazing example of *kairos-timed* intercession in my life happened on one of my journeys to Guatemala. I was one of 40 to 45 individuals traveling to a remote place on the Passion River in the Peten Jungle. Our mission was to build a combination clinic and outreach station on the river. We were to be constructing two buildings as well as doing a little preaching in the nearby villages.

It was an amazing trip. We ate monkey meat and boa constrictor. We killed huge tarantulas, a nine-inch scorpion and a coral snake in our camp. I was attacked by ants which, unbeknownst to us, had taken refuge in the lumber we were hauling and sleeping on as we traveled all night up the river. We flew in old, rickety army planes and landed on fields from which goats had to be cleared prior to our arrival. (None of this has anything to do with prayer, but it lets you know how incredibly brave I am and how much I've suffered for the cause of Christ.)

Our leader, Hap Brooks, had me leading songs from the front of our long dugout canoe as we journeyed up and down the river. His favorite was "It's a Good Life Livin' for the Lord." He also made me utter my famous Tarzan call, which was incredibly good and would reverberate across the river and into the jungle. Natives from the villages would stand on the banks and listen. Having never seen or heard of Tarzan, of course, they were not terribly impressed—in fact they sort of had that "who is that idiot?" look on their faces. That is, until the animals in the jungle began to come to me! They had the same expression. (This has nothing to do with prayer, either, but it lets you know how incredibly talented I am.)

Back to the purpose of the story. Prior to leaving for the jungle, we spent our first night (Friday) in Guatemala City, the capital of Guatemala. We had arranged months earlier for the Guatemalan airlines to fly us the following day into the jungle. On our arrival at the airport Saturday afternoon, we were informed that they had changed their plans and would fly us to our destination not that day but the next.

Feeling an urgency to go as scheduled due to the limited amount of time to accomplish our mission, our leaders pressed the airlines for three hours to honor their original agreement.

"No," the manager said in his broken English, "we take you tomorrow."

"But you agreed months ago to take us today," we argued.

"We have no pilot available," they countered.

"Find one," we pleaded.

"What is your hurry? Enjoy the city," they encouraged us.

And so it went for three hours, in and out of offices, meeting with one official, then another. Finally, in exasperation, one of them threw up his hands and said, "Okay, we take you now! Get on that plane—quickly!"

We all ran to the plane, throwing our bags and tools into the baggage area ourselves. We wanted to leave before they changed their minds.

That night, while we were 250 miles away, an earthquake hit Guatemala City and killed 30,000 people in 34 seconds! Had we stayed in the city one more night—as the airlines wanted us to—some of our team would have been killed and others injured. We know this for certain because on our return to the city we saw the building we had stayed in the night before the earthquake—and would have been staying in again had we not left on Saturday—with huge beams lying across the beds.

The connection between all this and our subject is that an intercessor from our home church back in Ohio had received a strong burden to pray for us on the second day of our journey. For *three hours* she was in intense intercession for us. Can you guess which three hours? Yes. The three hours that our leaders were negotiating with the airline officials.

We didn't know that our lives were in jeopardy had we stayed another night in Guatemala City, but God did. This intercessor didn't know it either. She only knew that for some reason she had a strong burden to pray for us. She was alert, as Ephesians 6:18 instructs us, and perceived the *kairos* time. There isn't a doubt in my mind that she helped create the protection and intervention we experienced.

There is a life in the secret place, but it's not automatic for believers. Although we are promised protection from our enemy, we have a definite part to play in the securing of it for ourselves and for others. The intercessor knows this and leaves nothing to chance, posting signs for all the forces of hell to see: "Under the shadow of the Most High. Keep out!"

Questions for Reflection

1. How is the connection between *paga* and protection made?
2. Is all protection automatic for Christians? Is everything that happens to us allowed by God or do our actions and prayers have a part in it? Explain.
3. Comment on consistency in prayer as it relates to protection.
4. Explain the difference between *chronos* and *kairos* and how this relates to intercession.
5. Have you posted any "No Trespassing" signs lately?

Notes

1. *The Spirit-Filled Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), p. 1097.

2. I first heard the phrase "prayer that sets boundaries" in a live message by Jack Hayford in Dallas, Texas, in 1976. He has since written about this in one of his books.

3. James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), ref. no. 3427.

4. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver, Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), p. 533.

5. Ethelbert W. Bullinger, A *Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), p. 804.

6. Ibid.

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chapter seven

Butterflies, Mice, Elephants and Bull's-Eyes

A Happening by Chance

I was riding high, literally. About 200 feet high, as a matter of fact. I was parasailing in Acapulco.

My wife, Ceci, and I were on the last day of our three-day vacation in this tourist hot spot. I had been watching this activity all week, seeing the boats pull individuals from off the beach, up into the air and across the beautiful waters. These airborne sailors would soar effortlessly for 5 to 10 minutes, enjoying their freedom from the bonds of earth, and then be swung back onto the beach. To the amazement and cheers of us less adventurous earthlings, they would land softly and accept our applause. They didn't even get wet.

For two days I watched this. Now I've always wanted to parachute—actually wondered what it would be like is closer to the truth—but was smart enough to not do it before I married. My wife has since asked me not to, which is now my face-saving excuse. *But maybe this would satisfy my curiosity,* I thought as I watched this activity Finally, I decided I wasn't quite that curious.

We men have a constant need to impress the ladies in our lives, demonstrating our fearlessness and ability to rise to any challenge.

"Wow, that looks pretty awesome," my wife said.

"Aw, it doesn't look that difficult," I replied in my best matter-of-fact "any guy could do it" voice. "All you do is run off the beach and let the boat do the rest. I'd do it, but you probably wouldn't want me to. Besides, it's not worth the money."

To my absolute horror, she responded excitedly, "Oh, I wouldn't mind. In fact, I'd love to see you do it and it's not really that expensive. Give it a try!"

Oh, my dear heavenly Father, I cried inwardly, *get me out of this!*

Get yourself out of it, I heard in my heart. *You got yourself into it.*

"Oh, you're just saying that for me, Dear," I responded to her. "I know you would really be terrified if I did this, but thanks for thinking of me. I won't put you through it, though."

"No, really, I *want* you to. It would make a great picture and, besides, what could go wrong?" she asked. "Go for it."

"Okay," I said foolishly. "Yeah, what could go wrong?"

There are times in your life when the thing to do is fake an injury, come up with an unexplainable headache or simply humble yourself, admit you're an egotistical male liar and repent of your sin. But I decided to save face. Now tell me, with God's sense of justice and humor, do you really think He was going to allow that?

It was the final morning of our stay. We were to leave in an hour or so. I was in my street clothes, shoes and all. Even kept my watch on. After all, you didn't even touch the water. I should have known this didn't always go as planned when they made me sign that release form but....

I was the first of the day. Takeoff was fairly routine and within seconds I was 200 feet high, enjoying a bird's eye view of the beach. Being the first of the day, they were pulling me along the beach, only about 50 or so yards out from the shoreline so they could advertise for their day's business.

I actually began to enjoy it. It was a real high (pun intended). People along the shore began to wave at me and cheer me on. I was the center of attraction for everyone. I, of course, waved back in a "not too demonstrative, this is no big deal" sort of way. Just being cool.

Suddenly, I had the strange sensation the water was getting closer.

A second later I knew it was getting closer. Another second and I *lighted upon* the water with a great splash. "How the mighty have fallen!"

This is impossible, I thought. *This is a dream. A BAD dream.* Remembering that I had never tasted salt water in a dream, it didn't take me long to realize that it wasn't a dream at all and that it was very possible. I swam to the boat, which had experienced engine failure, and climbed aboard. Now I was totally cool—wet and cool!

The driver of the boat finally got it started again and we drove back to the starting point. With my best "it's no big deal, in fact, it was kinda fun" swagger, I waded back onto the beach. To this day I don't think my wife knows how I really felt. Like most women she never picks up on it when my male ego is asserting itself. Why, just the other day when she thought we needed to stop and ask for directions....

I can hear the wheels of your mind turning. You are wondering what part of this story could possibly have anything to do with intercession, except for a couple of fleeting seconds when I was in SERIOUS prayer. Actually, another of our definitions of *paga* is used, which is "to light upon."[1] The concept, of course, is landing on or coming to a certain place, and the inference is that it is happening by chance. We might, therefore, use the phrase "chance upon" or "happen upon." I'll give you the reference for this shortly and explain its connection to prayer, but first let's look at a couple of other introductory points.

Our Helper

This chapter is about our Helper, the Holy Spirit. Without any doubt the greatest single key to successful intercession is learning to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to be all He was sent to be in us. Jesus called Him our "Helper" in John 14:26: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

Some translations use the word Comforter instead of Helper, but the word is *Parakletos* and means one called alongside to aid, help or support.[2] It is such a powerful word that the *Amplified* version uses seven words to communicate its rich meaning: "Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, Standby), the Holy Spirit." I want to focus on Him as our "Helper" and "Intercessor."

We read in Romans 8:26-28 that He wants to help us in our prayer lives:

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness;

for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Notice that verse 28 begins with the word "and" which is a conjunction connecting verse 28 to verses 26 and 27, making it dependent on what is said there. In other words, all things DON'T work together for good in the lives of Christians unless certain conditions are met. All things CAN work together for our good, and God's will is for all things to work together for our good, but this isn't automatic. We have a part to play. It happens as verses 26 and 27 are being implemented.

I don't believe the intercession of the Holy Spirit spoken of in these verses refers only to "tongues." However, most of us in Pentecostal and charismatic circles believe it has to include this gift, which we believe allows the Holy Spirit to literally pray through us. It is not my intention in this book to prove this, nor am I implying that those who do not practice it are second rate in their praying.

If you do not pray in this way, it is my strong desire not to offend you. I have great love and respect for my non-charismatic brothers and sisters in Christ. Yet, it is impossible for me to share what I believe the Lord has taught me concerning this passage without referring to praying in tongues, or as the Scriptures also word it, "praying in the Spirit."

I will, therefore, be saying a good bit about this. From this point on, however,

in an effort to be as inclusive and inoffensive as possible, I will only use the phrase "praying in the Spirit." To charismatic readers, when you see this phrase, please know that I am including "tongues." To the rest of you, please interpret with your belief of what it means to "pray in the Spirit."

This passage says that the Holy Spirit wants to help us in our "weakness." The word in Greek is *astheneia* and means literally "without strength"[3] or ability. An "inability to produce results" is the concept communicated by the word.

Have you ever felt an inability in your prayer life to produce results? Have you ever come up against a "mountain" you couldn't move? I recall that happening to me a few years ago, or was that a few hours ago? It's a fact of life.

The Lord then says in this verse that one of the reasons we have this "inability to produce results" is because we don't always "know how to pray as we should." The word "should" here is a very important word. *Dei* is primarily a legal term meaning that which is necessary, right or proper in the nature of a case; what one must do; that which is legally binding for someone.[4]

For example, Luke 18:1 *(KJV)* tells us, "Men *ought* always to pray, and not to faint." The verse does not mean, "It would be a good idea to pray." It is declaring, "It is absolutely necessary—binding upon you—that you pray."

Jesus used the word when He said of the woman bent over from a spirit of infirmity, "And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" (Luke 13:16, *KJV).* His reason that she should be loosed from this spirit was her being "a daughter of Abraham." In other words, she had a covenantal right to it. Because He had the ability to give her what she had a covenantal right to, He said in essence, "Is it not necessary and binding upon me that I deliver this daughter of Abraham from this infirmity?"

Now that we understand the strength of the word, let's put it back into Romans 8:26. The Lord is saying that we don't always know what needs to happen in a given situation. We don't always know what is necessary or right.

I find myself wondering at times, *How do 1 pray for this person or situation, Lord? What needs to happen?*

At other times I have felt led by the Holy Spirit to pray for someone, yet had no way at that moment of knowing why they needed prayer.

Sometimes mature intercessors are prompted by the Lord to pray and not only do they not know what they are praying for, but they don't know for whom they are praying. They just feel a burden to pray. Talk about a weakness—an inability to produce results. Talk about not knowing what is "necessary, right or proper" in

a situation.

What do we do in these circumstances? This is when the Holy Spirit wants to help us. He will lead us as we pray, perhaps revealing things about the situation to us, or bringing Scriptures to our minds so we can pray them in the situation. He will certainly help us by empowering our prayers. But another way He wants to help us is by literally praying through us as we pray in the Spirit.

The Right Place at the Right Time

This now brings us to *paga* and the definition mentioned earlier: "light upon," or "light on *by chance*.[11]The setting where the word is used this way is in Genesis 28:10-17.[5] The passage is describing Jacob's flight from Esau after conniving from him his birthright. After traveling all day Jacob needed a place to spend the night "because the sun was set." Verse 11 says he "lighted upon" *(KJV)* a particular place and there he spent the night. Notice that Jacob had not predetermined to spend the night there, he didn't choose the place in advance, but was guided *by chance*—"because the sun was set."

The place as it turns out was a very special place, Bethel, which means "house of God." Jacob actually referred to it as a "gate of heaven." Even though most translations say Jacob lighted on "a" place, the literal Hebrew wording is "the" place. What was simply *a* place to Jacob, chosen by chance, was *the* place to the Lord and sovereignly chosen by Him. It was there that Jacob had a mighty, life-changing encounter with God.

It was there that he saw the angels ascending and descending from heaven. It was at that time that God extended to him the same covenant He had made with Abraham, and informed Jacob that through his lineage He would save the world. He also promised great blessing to Jacob, to protect him and bring him back to his homeland safely. In short, it was a place where Jacob's entire destiny was foretold and his history shaped.

Nice story but how does that relate to intercession and to Romans 8:26-28? I'm glad you asked!

Like Jacob, who was not guided to this special place by his own reasoning or understanding, we are not always able to be directed in prayer by ours either. Consequently we often feel weak and anemic in our ability to produce results. At times it seems the process is hit and miss, as though we have to land or "light upon" the situation correctly "by chance."

That's okay. It's one of the primary meanings of *paga*.

And it isn't really hit and miss because what is by chance for us is not to our Helper, the Holy Spirit. In fact, *paga* also means "bull's-eye."[6] They still use the

word this way in Israel today. Close your eyes and fire! When we allow Him to intercede through us, just as He sovereignly guided Jacob to the right place at the right time, He will cause our prayers to light upon *(paga)* the right person or place, in the right way, at the right time, bringing forth the will of God in situations. And that's right good!

- Bethels will occur!
- Meetings with God will occur!
- Heaven's gates will open!
- Destinies will be written!
- History will be shaped!

"Too dramatic," you say? If you said that, you don't know God well enough. Or perhaps you don't believe strongly enough that we can involve the miracle worker in our praying. I submit to you that one of the reasons we don't see more miracles is because we don't expect more miracles. Our Bible—on both sides of the Cross—presents a lot of them. They come from God, however, and the way to see more of them is to involve Him in more situations. Praying in the Spirit does this.

The Butterfly Anointing

At times when I'm praying in the Spirit I feel like a butterfly looks. Have you ever observed a butterfly flying from one location to another? They flutter this way and that, up and down, "herky-jerky." It appears they do not have the slightest idea where they are going. They almost look drunk. When I begin to pray in the Spirit, not knowing what I'm saying, sometimes with my mind wondering this way and that, I feel as though I'm trying to move in the "butterfly anointing."

Where am I going?

What am I doing?

Will I land in the right place, on the right person?

Is this really accomplishing anything?

But just as surely as that butterfly knows exactly where it's going, so the Holy Spirit directs my prayers precisely! They WILL "light upon" correctly.

This truth is profoundly illustrated by a story I heard a minister from Cleveland, Tennessee relate which happened in one of his meetings. He was ministering in a small church in Canada. He did not know anyone in the church well, as it was his first time there. About 15 minutes into his message, he heard the Holy Spirit speak inwardly to him, *Stop your message and begin to pray in the Spirit.*

I'm sure you can imagine the awkwardness of such a thing, especially since

he really didn't know these people. The leading of the Holy Spirit was so strong, however, that he obeyed. "You'll have to excuse me," he said, "but the Lord has just instructed me to stop my message and pray in the Spirit." He began to pace the platform, praying in the Spirit audibly.

Five minutes went by. Nothing.

Ten minutes went by Nothing.

Fifteen minutes went by. Still nothing.

I don't know about you, but I would be feeling pretty nervous by that time. I would have been looking for that button on the podium I've longed for a time or two that I could push to disappear through a trap door! Talk about a weakness—an inability to produce results *(anaideia).* He hadn't even the slightest idea what this was all about.

Talk about not knowing how to pray as he should—what was necessary, right or proper *(dei)!*

Talk about needing to light upon by chance. Talk about the butterfly anointing!

Twenty minutes.

The people had simply sat and watched and listened. Suddenly a woman in the back began to scream, leaped to her feet and ran to the front of the church.

"What is happening?" the minister asked.

"My daughter is a missionary deep in Africa," the lady began. "So deep, in fact, that it takes 3 weeks to get where she is. You have to travel by automobile, then a boat, ride an animal and walk for a total of 21 days. My husband and I just yesterday received a telegram from the people she works with informing us that she had contracted a fatal disease that runs its course in 3 days. If she was in civilization it could be treated, but it would take too long to get her there. 'She'll probably die within 3 days,' they told me, 'and all we can do is send you her body as soon as possible.'"

"The last time my daughter was home," the lady continued, "she taught me some of the dialect of the people with whom she works. And you just said, in that dialect, 'You can rejoice, your daughter is healed. You can rejoice, your daughter is healed.'"

And she was!

WOW! Now that is *PAGA!* That is lighting upon the right person at the right time in the right way. That is Holy Spirit help. That is the butterfly anointing.

Why did it take 20 minutes? Because it's a long way from Canada to Africa and it took the Holy Spirit awhile to flutter like a butterfly all that way?! Well, maybe not. I'm not sure why it took 20 minutes. There are several reasons why I believe perseverance is often necessary in prayer, but that is for another chapter.

(Persevere and you will come to it.)

Taking Hold of Together with Against

Another tremendous way the Holy Spirit aids us in our intercession is hidden in the meaning of the word "helps." "And in the same way the Spirit also *helps* our weakness" (Rom. 8:26, italics mine). The Greek word is *sunantilambanomai.* I think you have to speak in tongues just to say this word. There must be a revelation in it somewhere. It is a compound word made up of three words. *Sun* means "together with," *anti* means "against," and *lambano* means "to take hold of."[7] Putting them together, a very literal meaning of the word would be "take hold of together with against."

How's that for help?

If we allow Him [the Holy Spirit] to pray through us, He will take hold together with us.

In situations where we're experiencing an inability to get results, the Holy Spirit not only wants to direct our prayers precisely, causing them to light upon correctly, but He also wants to take hold of the situation together with us, adding His strength to ours. "'Not by [your] might not by [your] power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6) will the mountain be moved.

Although the context of 2 Corinthians 12:9 is not prayer, praying in the Spirit is perhaps the greatest example of when His strength is made complete in our weaknesses. When we realize our weaknesses, our inability to produce results, it causes us to look to Him for help. If we allow Him to pray through us, He will take hold together with us. We just have to believe that when the Holy Spirit takes hold, something is going to move!

Please notice that both the word "helps" and its literal definition "takes hold *together* with against" implies not that He is doing it *for* us, but *with* us. In other words, this isn't something the Holy Spirit is simply doing in us, with or without our participation. No, we involve Him by praying in the Spirit, which is actually allowing Him to pray through us.

Several years ago my wife, Ceci, developed a troubling pain in her abdomen. It began as a minor discomfort and grew in intensity over the course of a year, at which time she went to have it checked. The doctor found an ovarian cyst about the size of a large egg. He informed us that surgery was necessary to remove it and possibly the ovary as well.

The doctor was a believer and understood spiritual principles so I talked with him about giving us a little time to pray for healing. "Doc," I said, "if you can give us some time I think we can get rid of it by prayer."

Being fairly confident that the cyst was not malignant or life threatening he replied, "I'll give you two months. If you don't get it your way, we'll get it mine."

"Fair enough," I agreed.

We prayed for Ceci with every biblical method we knew of: laying on of hands, elders anointing her with oil, the prayer of agreement, speaking the Scriptures, binding, loosing, casting out and, like good charismatics, we even knocked her on the floor and let her lay there awhile—sometimes you just have to try everything! The next time you speak with someone who insinuates they always know exactly what needs to happen in prayer and spiritual warfare, tell them Dutch Sheets doesn't believe it. (They will then ask you who Dutch Sheets is, but don't be intimidated by that.)

No change in her condition occurred, and I realized we were going to have to obtain this healing through perseverance and laying hold by faith (see 1 Tim. 6:12). That, by the way, is the way most answers to prayer come—not as instant miracles, but through fighting the fight of faith and patience.

I felt I needed to spend an hour a day praying for Ceci. I began my prayer times by stating my reason for approaching the Father. Then I referred to the Scriptures on which I was basing my petition. I would quote them, thanking the Father for His Word and Jesus for providing healing. This usually took no more than five or six minutes. I prayed in the Spirit for the remainder of the hour. This went on for a month.

Some would believe that to be an unreasonable amount of time to pray for something—an hour a day for a month. Others would say God doesn't need that long to heal someone. I'm only telling you what worked for me. And I've discovered that He does not have only one way of doing things, even the same things. His creative varieties never seem to end. The key for us is always obedience.

After a couple of weeks of this, one afternoon the Lord showed me a picture as I was praying in the Spirit. I saw myself holding this cyst in my hand squeezing the life out of it. I did not yet know that the literal meaning of "helps" in Romans 8 was "taking hold of together with against," but the Holy Spirit was teaching me a wonderful truth.

I knew, of course, that I couldn't really get my hands on the cyst, but He was showing me that as I allowed Him to pray through me, HE was "lighting on" and "taking hold with me against" the thing. Obviously, it was His power making the difference.

It sort of reminds me of the mouse and elephant who were best friends. They hung out together all the time, the mouse riding on the elephant's back. One day they crossed a wooden bridge, causing it to bow, creak and sway under their

combined weight. After they were across, the mouse, impressed over their ability to make such an impact, said to the elephant, "We sure shook up that bridge, didn't we?"

Kind of reminds me of some of our advertisements and testimonials. You'd think He was the mouse and we were the elephant. (Maybe that's why we don't shake many bridges.)

After seeing the picture of myself squeezing the life out of the cyst, I asked Ceci if there was any change in her condition. "Yes, the pain is decreasing," she informed me.

The doctor's response was, "If the pain is decreasing, the cyst must be shrinking. Keep doing whatever it is you're doing."

I tried hard to make sure I wasn't conjuring up any mental images, but twice more the Holy Spirit showed me this same picture. Each time the cyst was smaller. The last of them, which was the third time overall, was about a month into the process. In the picture the cyst was about the size of a quarter and as I prayed it vanished in my hand. I knew the Lord was letting me know the work was finished. Even though Ceci said there was still a very small amount of discomfort, I could not bring myself to pray about it any further. I knew it was done.

Three days later she informed me that all the pain and discomfort was gone. The subsequent ultrasound confirmed what we already knew in our hearts—no more cyst!

You know what happened, don't you? *PAGA!*

- A "taking hold of together with against" happened.
- A "Bethel" happened.
- A "lighting on" happened.
- A "laying on" and "bearing away" happened.
- A "meeting" happened.
- An "enforcing" happened.
- A "representation" happened.

Intercession happened! And it can happen through you!

The butterfly anointing combined with the bear anointing and a serpent was defeated again. (Please don't give this book to any superreligious people or any of the ministries called to fix all of us "crazimatics." They'd put my bear into hibernation and transform my butterfly into a worm again.)

The most important point I want to communicate to you through this book is that God wants to use YOU. You don't have to be a pastor or prophet. You don't have to be Brother or Sister Well Known. You don't have to know Greek from Swahili. You simply have to be a believer in Jesus—one of His chosen

representatives—one called and authorized to administer the blessings of the new covenant—a Christian.

God the Father wants to release the *work* of Jesus through your *prayers.* The Holy Spirit wants to help you. Bethels are waiting to be discovered. Histories are waiting to be written, destinies shaped.

Don't be intimidated by your ignorance, "not knowing what is necessary, right or proper." Don't allow your weaknesses to paralyze you into inactivity. Rise up! Better still, allow your Helper to rise up in you! Together, you can shake any bridge!

Just make sure you know who the mouse is.

Questions for Reflection

1. Can you explain the connection between Genesis 28:10-17 and Romans 8:26,27? Be sure to include comments on *paga*, the butterfly anointing and praying in the Spirit.
2. What does the Holy Spirit do to "help" us in our weaknesses?
3. Think of situations where you don't know how to pray as you should. Make a decision to allow the Holy Spirit to help you. Decide when you're going to give Him the opportunity to do so.
4. If you had it to do over again, would you still choose Jesus? (What a dumb question!)

Notes

1. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver, Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), p. 803.
2. W. E. Vine, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), p. 200.
3. Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible—New American Standard* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: AMG Publishers, 1984; revised edition, 1990), p. 1812.
4. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* (Iowa Falls, Iowa: Word Bible Publishers, 1992), p. 400.
5. The connection between Genesis 28:11-22 and Romans 8:26-28 along with several of the related thoughts, including the butterfly illustration, I first heard in a live message by Jack Hayford in Dallas, Texas, in 1976. He has since written about this in one of his books.
6. Communicated to me by Israeli student, Avi Mizrachi, at Christ for the Nations Institute in Dallas, Texas.
7. James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*

(Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), ref. no. 4878.

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chapter eight
Supernatural Childbirth

(Warning: This chapter could drastically alter the population of the kingdom of darkness and increase the need for new-convert classes.)

The Coach

I coached my wife, Ceci, through 65 hours of labor during the births of our two daughters, Sarah and Hannah. Told her exactly what to do and when—for about the first 10 minutes. She then assumed the roles of coach, player, umpire, referee and any other position that presented itself. Being the intelligent man I am and loving life as I do, it didn't take me long to discern that the only way to survive this "bonding" effort was compliance—quick and without questions.

It was an education. I had no idea she was such a capable instructor. We have it all on video, which can be ordered through Dutch Sheets Ministries, P.O. Box...just kidding!

I learned all about how to do what I did in those first 10 minutes from several weeks of classes on "natural childbirth." After the first 10 minutes I didn't need the training. Everything came quite naturally.

This chapter is about "supernatural childbirth." My success rate was poor in praying for the lost, as was everyone else's I knew. So I thought I'd see what the Bible had to say about it: Not much! At least not directly. Nowhere does it say to ask God to save someone. This puzzled me. How could something so important have so little said about it? It seemed that general principles of prayer would have to be applied to intercession for the lost.

I did find one verse that said, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance" (Ps. 2:8, *KJV).* But I knew this was a prophetic Old Testament verse referring to the Father telling Jesus to ask. I figured Christ had already done this and the Father had probably said yes.

I found that we were to ask for laborers to be sent into the harvest (see Matt. 9:38). But that wasn't asking God to save anyone, it was asking for workers. I also discovered some things concerning spiritual warfare, which we will look at in a later chapter, and I found a few Scriptures concerning travail.

Travail, What Is It?

Travail, what was it, anyway? What did it do? I knew what I thought it was,

but I wasn't satisfied. *Is it a valid form of prayer?* I wondered. *Is there really a prayer that births?*

Yes, I now believe, although it is not easy to define and explain. And it is controversial. How can a mere human have a part in birthing spiritual life? What do groaning, weeping and hard work have to do with it?

One segment of the Body of Christ probably believes they already have an adequate understanding of what it is. Another has likely heard enough to think they don't want to know any more about it. And there's probably a group who have heard nothing about it. I appeal to all three: Read on with an open mind.

This chapter becomes quite theological and perhaps requires deeper thinking than others. But please realize that the word "theology," contrary to popular belief, is not a swearword, nor does it mean "boring." It actually means the science or study of God.[1] And I'm sure I've read somewhere in the Bible, *"Study* to show yourself approved unto God." So don't be hesitant to do some. "He who studieth this chapter, yea verily, shall be truly awesome" (Additions 1:1).

This prayer called travail always puzzled me. I was raised in a stream of the Body of Christ that believed in it, although it didn't occur often. The few times I did see what I was informed was travailing intercession, it involved a little old lady who was also one of the few prayer warriors in the church. It seemed to me that it was treated as a sort of mystical thing no one really understood (such as where babies came from), very few ever did (and those only rarely), but everyone revered.

It Happened to Me

It actually happened to me once, although I didn't make the kind of noise I'd heard others make. (Those I had heard sounded a lot like my wife when she was in labor.) I was probably 9 or 10 years old and it occurred while praying for an unsaved aunt.

One night as I lay in bed, I felt a strong burden to pray for her salvation. I remember getting out of my bed, onto my knees and weeping uncontrollably, asking God to save her. I was so young and it was so long ago that I can't remember how long it lasted—probably 30 minutes to an hour. Finally, the burden lifted and I went to sleep.

My aunt lived about an hour and a half away from us. For some "unknown" reason, however, she called us later that week and said she wanted to come to our church that Sunday morning. We did not know at the time that she was actually coming to the service planning to give her life to Christ, and did. I was amazed. I had travailed for her, and that very same week she drove the long distance to give her heart to the Lord.

Travail was wonderful but I didn't understand it. And I only did it once. I couldn't help wondering why something that helped people get saved happened so infrequently. But the truth was, this sort of intense and anguishing prayer just didn't seem to "come upon" anyone very often. Because that defined travail to us, we just had to wait and be patient—like the troubling of the pool of Bethesda in John 5.

I didn't question the concept—I knew that would be irreverent. *God forbid that anyone would have questions about something so spiritual!* The things we couldn't explain, we treated as too holy to question. We were supposed to act as if the questions weren't there—admitting them might be too disrespectful. So we didn't let God or anyone else know we had them. (I still think I can fool God once in awhile!)

The Thomas Anointing

Then one day I discovered that the disciples asked Jesus a lot of questions when they didn't understand things. Sometimes the questions even seemed a little irreverent, implying that His teaching skills weren't all that great. They would ask about His parables and question some of His difficult sayings. Oh, they couched their words in nice language calling Him "Master" and such, but you know as well as I that they were really saying, "What in the world are you talking about?"

Once when He told them to eat His flesh and drink His blood, a group of them told Him it was "a hard saying." We know what they really meant: "This is weird stuff." That bunch finally left Him.

On another occasion Christ was waxing eloquent about the disciples not being troubled because there were lots of houses where His Father lived. He was going to go there, build a few more for them, then come back and take them there. And of course, they knew the way to this place...(see John 14:1-4). About this time Thomas—thank God for Thomas—said what all of them were thinking: "Time out, Jesus. We don't have the foggiest idea what You're talking about. We don't even know *where* You're going, let alone *how to get there."* I'm sure Christ's answer really helped, "I'm the way, You go through Me." I don't think the disciples understood a lot of what Jesus said until later.

As the Twelve usually did, I still most often do the safe, reverent and spiritual thing: I act like I understand, even when I don't. It keeps me ignorant but I look good, which is what really matters! Once in awhile, however, the Thomas anointing comes and I just go ahead and tell God He has done a poor job of explaining something...such as travail.

As I thought about this subject of travail, I decided to allow some of the

nagging questions I had buried to go ahead and surface: *If travailing intercession really helps get people saved why is it so hard to do and why does it happen so seldom and why do only a few do it and why does it have to be so loud and strange and why didn't You say more about what it is and how to do it?*

That's lousy English, but it's a great question!

Spiritual Experiences Versus Physical Facades

I would like to suggest two things at this point. First, I believe biblical travail is an important, if not essential, part of intercession for the lost. Second, I don't believe it is defined by groaning, wailing, weeping and hard work. Natural travail certainly is, and spiritual travail *can* include these things. I do not believe, however, it *must* include them, and I'm convinced it is not defined by them. In fact, I believe a person can travail while doing the dishes, mowing the lawn, driving a car—anything a person can do and still pray.

We in the Church have done with this subject what we do with many. By our very natures we have a need to see or feel something in order to believe in it. Thus, *we tend even to judge what is happening in the spirit by what we see naturally.*

For example, if we pray with someone for salvation or repentance, we tend to believe the person who weeps is probably receiving more than the one who doesn't. We even say things such as, "The Holy Spirit really touched him or her." This is because we see his or her reaction.

In actuality, however, I have observed some who did not cry or show any emotion while praying who were totally transformed. On the other hand, I have witnessed some who sobbed and wept in seeming repentance, much like Judas (see Matt. 27:3-5), but experienced no change whatsoever. Again, the point is *you cannot judge what is happening in the realm of the spirit by what takes place in the natural realm.*

We in charismatic and Pentecostal circles have a phenomenon we call being "slain in the Spirit." Although this is not a biblical term and the practice is certainly abused, I believe people can and do fall under the power of God. We have, however, done a similar thing with this experience. During a meeting where this particular phenomenon is happening, we tend to believe those who fall down are receiving more from the Lord than those who do not. At times we even judge whether anything at all is happening by whether or not people fall down.

I have been in meetings where I have observed this happening to the degree that I am certain the emphasis and goal became getting people to fall down, rather than a faith that allowed the Holy Spirit to do whatever He wanted,

however He wanted. In other words, *we began to judge what was happening in the spirit realm by what we saw naturally.* This is dangerous. It leads to extremes, imbalanced teaching, wrong expectations and striving after the flesh.

In any spiritual release of power and anointing, the possibility of a physical manifestation always exists—that is biblical. People may weep. People may at times fall down under the power of God. People may laugh, perhaps hilariously. They may even appear drunk. Sometimes when God moves there is a physical manifestation; oftentimes there is not. But *we can never ever judge what is happening in the spirit by what we see in the natural.*

Travail, a Spiritual Happening

This is also true with travail. When choosing the term, the Holy Spirit uses a *physical* phenomenon—childbirth—to describe a *spiritual* happening or truth. In doing so, His emphasis is not on the physical realm but the spiritual. And the comparison is not meant to be literal or exact. In other words, the Holy Spirit is not trying to describe what is happening *physically* but rather *spiritually* when He uses the word travail. It isn't a natural birth, but a spiritual one.

The emphasis is meant to be on the *spiritual* power released to give birth *spiritually,* not the *physical* phenomenon that might accompany it (groanings, weepings, crying out, etc.). Most of us who have been associated with travailing prayer have made what happens physically the focal point, thereby missing the spiritual point that something is being born of the Spirit.

It's easy to find out if you have made this mistake. Ask yourself the question and answer it honestly: When you hear the word travail in the context of prayer, do you think first of *what* is taking place in the spirit (a birthing), or *how* it is happening outwardly (in the body)? Most of you probably answered with the latter—how. The rest of you—well, I'm suspicious. You most likely relied on the theology of the little boy in Sunday School who was asked what a lie was. "It is an abomination unto God," he replied, "and a very present help in time of trouble."

Most of us have unconsciously defined a work of the Spirit by a work of the body. It would probably be wise to use different verbiage, perhaps "birthing through prayer" rather than the word travail to aid in changing this. This phrase would be acceptable biblically because, as we will see later, the Hebrew words for travail actually mean "give birth" or "bring forth." The translators, not necessarily the Holy Spirit, decided when to use the term travail.

In defining travail outwardly we have not only missed the real issue, but we have also unconsciously accepted what I believe is a lie of Satan: Only a few people can really travail and then only rarely. I do not believe this is true. In fact,

I believe all of us can involve ourselves in travailing (birthing) intercession, and do so regularly. The key is to realize that the emphasis is on birthing something spiritually, not on what happens to us as we do it. (Please remember I have said travailing intercession can include strong physical manifestations, but it doesn't have to and isn't defined by them.)

The Birthing Prayer

For the sake of changing our mindset, from this point on in the chapter, I will use the words "birthing prayer" interchangeably with travail in referring to this type of intercession.

We are the womb of God upon the earth....We do not generate life, but we release, through prayer, Him who does.

Having said all that, let me say plainly and emphatically: There is an aspect of prayer that births things in the Spirit. We are "birthers" for God. The Holy Spirit wants to "bring forth" through us. Jesus said in John 7:38, "From his *innermost being* shall flow rivers of living water" (italics mine). "Innermost being" is the word *koilia,* which means "womb."[2] We are the womb of God upon the earth. We are not the source of life, but we are carriers of the source of life. We do not generate life, but we release, through prayer, Him who does.

David and Polly Simchen, members of our church in Colorado Springs, recently received the answer to more than four years of prayer for the salvation of their son, Jonathan. Polly, and a few of her friends, demonstrated throughout this course of time one of the most tenacious and thorough examples of intercession I have ever witnessed, including this concept of birthing. The following are some excerpts from Polly's testimony. They are somewhat lengthy but filled with pertinent illustrations of things I intend to discuss in this and other chapters (italics mine):

We gave Jonathan to God before he was ever born and raised him in church, but at 17 years of age, through a combination of several well-laid plans of the enemy, he began to wander away from God. It wasn't long before he was living a life of total rebellion, characterized by drugs and all the things that accompany such a lifestyle. Through these things, his diabetes became a greater problem, and at times he would end up in the hospital, only to get out and go back to running and doing drugs.

About that time Pastor Dutch began teaching the church about intercession. Though initially devastated and at times frozen with fear, we began to learn more and more. As my friends and I would intercede together, God gave instructions

of how to pray along with many uplifting promises and words of encouragement.

We would *paga,* asking the Holy Spirit to *hover*—around his bed as he slept, in his car, wherever he was—and *birth life* into him. I did this daily.

Many times, for seasons almost daily, we anointed his room, his doors and windows, his bed, his car, his clothing and anything else he came in contact with. Many times I would go into his room and sing in the Spirit for an hour or more. I sang things like, "The name of Jesus is exalted in this place—over this bed, over these things, these clothes, everything!" I sang, "Jonathan has a destiny I know he will fulfill." My friends, Shirley and Patty, and I would sometimes pray four to six hours late at night.

On one occasion Pastor Dutch taught about prayer cloths. Immediately I thought, *We can do that for Jonathan!* Pastor Dutch, David and I together laid hands on a prayer cloth, releasing God's power and anointing into it, agreeing that the anointing would break the yoke of drugs, sin, ungodly friends, perversion and anything else that needed breaking. We cut the cloth into about 12 pieces and put them under his sheets, inside his pillow, hidden in the flaps of his wallet, sewed into the cuff of his pants, under his pocket, inside holes in his walls and inside the tag on the tongue of his shoes. With each one we would *declare,* "The anointing breaks the yoke."

At times it seemed things would get worse; it was like Jonathan was on a mission to destroy his life. But we stood fast in loving him, speaking God's plan over his life, anointing and singing over his room and car, interceding daily and declaring Scripture after Scripture. We also declared and called forth every word and promise God had ever given to us about Jonathan. The more we declared the Scriptures, the more our faith grew. Every few months we would take a new prayer cloth to Pastor Dutch and repeat the process.

We also involved ourselves in *spiritual warfare* for Jonathan. We cursed the power of drugs and asked God to remove every ungodly influence in his life—although we always prayed for the salvation of his friends, three of whom have also come to Christ. God took our fears and converted them into fighting!

In January of this year, 1996, we received a word from a friend saying God was about to *"tip the bowl"* of our prayers. Pastor Dutch had taught us about that, and we could hardly wait.

In February 1996, after more than four years, we could see God was dealing with Jonathan. He wanted his life to be straight. He started to read his Bible and became concerned about the salvation of his girlfriend. He began to hate the power drugs had over his friends. Then one night at one of our prayer meetings, he prayed a prayer of re-commitment to Christ. We watched in amazement as the things of the world began to fall away from Jonathan and the things of the

kingdom of God became clear and appealing. Just last week (May 1996) his girlfriend also gave her life to Christ. Does God answer prayer? You bet He does!

Throughout four years of intercession, the Lord taught us much about prayer and gave us great encouragement along the way—a pastor who cared and taught us, friends who cared and prayed, prophetic words concerning Jonathan's call and God's hand on him. He even allowed my husband, David, to see the angel that would ride in Jonathan's car everywhere he went, even twice when he spent the night in jail. All fear left and we were able to fully trust God.

Thank you, Pastor Dutch, and Ceci too, for everything you have done. We are so thankful to God for the miracle that has taken place in our precious son. No one could ever convince us prayer doesn't work! God is faithful and we are forever grateful!

As stated earlier, I will examine more fully many of the ways in which Polly prayed, which I italicized, throughout the remainder of this book. At this point, however, let's examine this amazing facet of prayer

— travail. May the Holy Spirit give us ears to hear.

Can we de-mystify this subject of travail? I believe we can. The following passages either directly mention travailing (birthing) prayer or the context and wording implies it:

First Kings 18:41-45: "Now Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower.' So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth, and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, 'Go up now, look toward the sea.' So he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing.' And he said, 'Go back' seven times.

And it came about at the seventh time, that he said, 'Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea.'

And he said, 'Go up, say to Ahab, "Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you." So it came about in a little while, that the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel.'" (The posture of Elijah in this passage is that of a woman in his day while giving birth. We are meant to see that Elijah was actually in travailing [birthing] prayer. James 5:16 also refers to this event and calls it "fervent" prayer.)

Psalm 126:5,6: "Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him."

Isaiah 66:7,8: "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came,

she gave birth to a boy. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons."

John 11:33,35,38,41-43: "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her, also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled....Jesus wept....Jesus therefore again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it....And so they removed the stone. And Jesus raised His eyes, and said, 'Father, I thank Thee that Thou heardest Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people standing around I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me.' And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.'"

Matthew 26:36-39: "Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.' And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying,

'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt.'"

Romans 8:26,27: "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (The context of this passage is travail—see Rom. 8:22-25. The Lord speaks of all creation and us groaning and travailing, then speaks of the Holy Spirit doing it in us.)

Galatians 4:19 *(KJV):* "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

Although these passages do not fully explain *what* it is or *how* it is done, some things are clear:

- The Holy Spirit is involved.
- It is associated with spiritual reproduction.
- It aids in the maturing process of believers.
- It can be very intense, involving fervency, tears and even groaning.
- Assuming Christ was in travail at Lazarus's tomb and Elijah was in birthing prayer on the mountain, it is involved in producing physical miracles, not just the new birth.

The Holy Spirit, God's Birthing Agent

It will help to keep us from error and alleviate some of your concerns if I state clearly up front, we don't birth anything spiritually, the Holy Spirit does. He is the birthing agent of the Godhead (see Luke 1:34,35; John 3:3-8). He is the power source of the Godhead (see Acts 1:8; 10:38; Luke 4:14,18). He is the power behind Creation which, as we will see, is likened to a birthing (see Gen. 1). He is the one who supplies power to God's will, giving it life and substance. He gives birth to the will of God. He is the one who breathes God's life into people, bringing physical and spiritual life (see Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 37:9,10,14; Acts 2:1-4). Concerning salvation, we call this the new birth or the new creation.

Therefore, anything we might accomplish in intercession that results in a birthing would have to be something that causes or releases the Holy Spirit to do it.

For example, Elijah as a human being couldn't birth or produce rain. Yet, James tells us his prayers did. Paul couldn't create the new birth nor maturity in the Galatians, yet Galatians 4:19 implies that his intercession did. We cannot produce spiritual sons and daughters through our human abilities, yet Isaiah 66:7,8 tells us that our travail can. If we cannot create or birth these and other things through our own power or ability, then it seems fairly obvious that our prayers must in some way cause or release the Holy Spirit to do so.

Understanding, then, that it is the Holy Spirit's power actually doing the work, I want to say unequivocally *there is a prayer that births.*

If this is indeed so, we should be able to find some references that use the same words to describe what the Holy Spirit does in birthing or bringing forth life as are used to describe what our prayers accomplish. Can we? Yes! And the contexts make very clear what the Holy Spirit actually does to release this life-giving power.

Genesis 1:1,2 *(KJV)* says, "In the beginning...the earth was without form, and void." The words "without form" are the Hebrew word *tohuw,* which means "a desolation; to lie waste; a desert; a worthless thing";[3] "confusion";[4] "empty (barren); a formless, lifeless mass."[5] The basic concept is lifelessness or sterility; no order, no life. Verse two goes on to tell us "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." What does it mean when it says the Holy Spirit moved?

We use the term today in Christian circles when we speak of the Holy Spirit moving in a service. We say things such as, "The Lord really moved today," or "The Holy Spirit was moving mightily." But what do these and similar statements mean? We have an ethereal concept of what it means to us: We are implying that He was doing something; He was active. But what was He doing?

Was He moving from one place to another? Was He moving upon the hearts of people? What does the word "move" mean in these contexts?

Actually, this usage of the word finds its roots here in Genesis. The Hebrew word used for "moving," *rachaph*, literally means "to brood over."[6] The *Amplified* translation actually uses the words "was moving, hovering, brooding over." The margin of the New American Standard also uses the word "hovering." So, *rachaph* is a hovering or brooding over something.

Webster's Dictionary defines brood as "offspring; progeny; that which is bred or produced."[7] A hen's brood, for example, is her chicks that she has produced. It comes from the root word "breed," which we know means giving birth to something.

In using this term to describe Creation, the Holy Spirit is using the analogy of "birthing" something. He was "bringing forth" life. A Hebrew scholar informed me that *rachaph* is, indeed, a reproductive term in the Hebrew language that can be used to describe a husband hovering over his bride. Pretty graphic, but it confirms that *rachaph* is literally a reproductive term. One lexicon defined it as "brooding and fertilizing."[8]

We know from the New Testament that Jesus was calling forth life in this Genesis setting. We are told that all things were created by His Word (see John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16). But it was the Holy Spirit that brooded or hovered over the earth, releasing His creative energies or power at the words of Jesus, giving birth to what Christ spoke.

Psalm 90:2 confirms this, actually calling what the Holy Spirit did at Creation a birthing. The verse uses two important Hebrew words, *yalad*[9] and *chuwl.*[10] It reads, "Before the mountains were born *(yalad),* or Thou didst give birth to *(chuwl)* the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God."

Although the words are not translated as such in this verse, they are the primary Hebrew words for travail. Each one is translated variously in the Old Testament: "bring forth," "born," "give birth to," "travail," and others (see Deut.32:18; Job 15:7; 39:1 for examples). Regardless of how they are translated, the concept is that of giving birth to something. It is not always referring to a literal, physical birth, but is often used in creating. We do the same thing in our vocabulary. We might say an idea, vision or nation was "born" or "conceived." We're obviously not speaking of a physical birth, but of something new coming into being. In much the same way, Psalm 90:2 likens the Genesis Creation to a birthing.

Hovering Over and Bringing Forth

Now, let's make the prayer connection. These are the very same words used in Isaiah 66:8: "As soon as Zion *travailed (chuwl)* she also *brought forth (yalad)* her sons." This is extremely important! *What the Holy Spirit was doing in Genesis when He "brought forth" or "gave birth to" the earth and the world is exactly what He wants to do through our prayers in bringing forth sons and daughters.* He wants to go forth and hover around individuals, releasing His awesome power to convict, break bondages, bring revelation and draw them to Himself in order to cause the new birth or new creation in them. Yes, *the Holy Spirit wants to birth through us.*

Marlena O'Hern, of Maple Valley, Washington, tells of doing this for her brother. We'll share more details about this in chapter 10, but Marlena had been praying for her brother, Kevin, for about 12 years. Not realizing how to pray scripturally and specifically, she often grew frustrated and made the mistake of trying to pressure him into doing what was right, which would only make things worse.

Early in 1995 she heard me teach about intercession for the lost. She, her husband, Patrick, and their children all began to pray for Kevin. One of the things they prayed was that the Holy Spirit would hover over him. In about two weeks, Kevin was born again and is serving the Lord today.

The second example of the Holy Spirit hovering and bringing forth life out of lifelessness is in Deuteronomy 32:10-18. All four of the previously mentioned Hebrew words are used in this passage: *tohuw, rachaph, yalad* and *chuwl.* In this passage Moses is recounting to the Israelites their history and speaks of Israel as an individual, obviously referring back to Abraham, the father of the nation. In verse 10 Moses says God found him in a *tohuw* situation—in other words, lifeless or barren.

Abraham was in the same barren condition the earth was in prior to the Creation. Neither he nor Sarah had the ability at this point to produce life. They were sterile, lifeless. We are then told in verse 11 that like an eagle hovers *(rachaphs)* over its young, the Lord hovered over them. The Holy Spirit brooded over Abraham and Sarah, releasing His life and power, giving them the ability to conceive!

We read in Hebrews 11:11 that by faith Sarah received *dunamis* (the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit)[11] to conceive. As He hovered, God was actually birthing a nation in them. The renewing the Holy Spirit did to their bodies as He hovered was so real that it was after this point a king wanted Sarah as his own wife because she was so beautiful. Also, Abraham received a lasting

change and had other children after this.

Later in the passage (Deuteronomy 32:18) *yalad* and *chuwl,* the primary Hebrew words for travail or giving birth, are used: "You neglected the Rock who *begot* you and forgot the God who *gave you birth"* (italics mine). The identical words are chosen in this passage to describe the Holy Spirit's hovering over Abraham and Sarah to bring forth life as were used in the Genesis Creation and in Isaiah 66:8. *The hovering that brought forth natural Israel will also bring forth spiritual Israel.*

Our third example of the Holy Spirit bringing forth life as He hovered or brooded over is found in Luke 1:35, the conception of Christ in Mary. The angel of the Lord came to Mary telling her that she would bear a child. She responded by asking, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" (v. 34).

The answer was, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." Overshadow is the Greek word *episkiazo* which means to cast a shade upon; to envelope in a haze of brilliancy; to invest with supernatural influence.[12] It is in some ways a counterpart for the Hebrew word *rachaph.* Thayer says it is used "of the Holy Spirit exerting creative energy upon the womb of the Virgin Mary and impregnating it."[13]

The word is only used three times in the New Testament. At the transfiguration of Jesus in Matthew 17:5, the passage says the cloud of the Lord "overshadowed" them. It is also used in Acts 5:15 when people were trying to get close to Peter—in his shadow—that they might be healed. Have you ever wondered how Peter's shadow could heal anyone? It didn't. What was actually happening was that the Holy Spirit was "moving" out from Peter—hovering—and when individuals stepped into the cloud or overshadowing, they were healed.

Perhaps you have seen this phenomenon. I have. I've been in services where God was moving in such a strong way that before people were ever prayed for or touched by anyone, they were saved, healed or delivered. They came under the *episkiazo* or hovering of the Holy Spirit.

Maybe you've been in a meeting where the Spirit of the Lord began to hover over the whole room and move in a particular way. At times God has even done this over entire communities. In many of the classic revivals of the past, stories are told of an individual driving close to a church where God has been moving in mighty ways and the person begins to weep, goes to the church, walks inside and says, "Something drew me here and I want to get saved."

What happened? The moving or hovering of the Holy Spirit became so great that He brooded over an entire geographical area to bring forth life. I believe this

will even happen over nations as more and more prayer is generated for the unreached people of the earth. There has never been a time in history with the amount of prayer that is currently being offered for the lost. The Spirit of the Lord is being released through this intercession to hover over not only cities, but entire nations. We will see dramatic revivals as this hovering continues and intensifies through the prayers of the saints.

Can a Land Be Born in One Day?

I was preaching in Ohio in 1990, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall and some of the Communist nations in Europe. This was the season, you will recall, when governments were falling like dominoes and events were happening weekly that would normally have taken decades to occur. It was indeed extraordinary.

As I preached under a very strong anointing, the Holy Spirit came upon me and I began to prophesy. In the course of my message I said, "Just as you have seen nations fall politically in a day, so you will see nations fall before Me spiritually and be born again in a day." Even as I said this, I found myself wondering if it could really happen. After the service I went to the Lord in prayer saying, "Father, I do not want to speak in Your name when it is not You. Nor do I want to hype Your people with sensational statements. I need to know if that was You speaking through me."

The Lord's answer to me was surprising. He gave me the reference Isaiah 66:7,8 in which I knew verse 8 said, "As soon as Zion travailed she also brought forth her sons." What I did not realize until looking up the reference was that the preceding verse is a question, "Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once?" "As soon as Zion travailed she also brought forth her sons," is actually an answer to this question.

I knew the Lord was assuring me that He was, indeed, declaring through me that nations would be born again in a day. There would come such a move of the Spirit, such a hovering and brooding, such a power released by the Spirit of God over areas that entire nations would come to Christ overnight. I don't know if overnight is literal or figurative, but I'll accept either, won't you?

The passage in verse 8 informs us that this will be through the travail of Zion. If Zion includes the Church, which it certainly does (see Ps. 87; Heb. 12:12; 1 Pet. 2:4-10), and those being born are sons and daughters of Zion, this is a promise that not only pertains to Israel, but also to us, the Body of Christ. *We can birth sons and daughters through travail.*

A Sense of Birthing

Carol Millspaugh, also of our fellowship in Colorado Springs, tells of an

experience she had in Germany several years ago. At the time she worked in counseling, first as a psychotherapist, then in full-time ministry as a Christian counselor. Carol would spend time interceding for her clients' situations and for their salvation.

One particular couple she counseled had many problems: addictions, eating disorders, family problems and others. Neither were believers, in fact the wife was an atheist. Carol said she felt as though she were pregnant with them, that she was carrying them in her spirit. She would intercede for them daily, often moaning and crying for hours. This went on for several months.

During her times of intercession, the Lord would reveal things about them to Carol and she would share this information with them on an individual basis. Carol wasn't aware of it initially, but the Lord was preparing them for salvation.

Then one day the Spirit powerfully hovered over them during their session, enabling them to be able to hear and understand as Carol shared Scriptures with them. The next time she met with them, both of them received the Lord together. Carol said a strong sense of a birthing was happening. Then began the time of growing and maturing as Carol nurtured them and helped them find solid biblical teaching and Christian relationships.

Based on these examples from the Scriptures—Creation, the birth of Israel and Christ's conception—I would like to offer the following as a definition of spiritual travail: "Releasing the creative power or energy of the Holy Spirit into a situation to produce, create or give birth to something." Travailing intercession would simply be prayer that causes this. At the risk of redundancy, I want to restate this phrase, using it to offer a formal definition of travailing intercession: *"A form of intercession that releases the creative power or energy of the Holy Spirit into a situation to produce, create or give birth to something*."

I use the words "produce" and "create" because travail is not only spoken of in the Scriptures in the context of someone being born again, but of bringing forth other things. For example, when the Holy Spirit was hovering through Peter, He was bringing forth healing (see Acts 5:15). Through Elijah it was rain (see 1 Kings 18:45); through Paul it included maturity (see Gal. 4:19).

Christ's Travail

Let's look at the two previously mentioned examples from Christ's ministry where He was involved in travail or birthing prayer. The first is John 11:33-44, the resurrection of Lazarus. Just before going to the tomb, verse 33 says Jesus "was deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled." A more literal translation of this phrase is that Jesus "was moved with indignation in His spirit and deeply troubled Himself."[14]

The word "troubled" is *tarasso.* It means "to stir up or agitate," like an agitator in a washing machine. Jesus was stirring up the anointing within Himself. Verse 38 literally says He again was moved with indignation.

According to these verses the tears Christ shed were not merely tears of sympathy, but of indignation and the stirrings of His spirit. We also know they were taking place in the context of prayer because verse 41 informs us that before raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus said to the Father, "I thank Thee that Thou heardest Me." He then gave the command, "Lazarus, come forth."

Although it cannot be conclusively proven, I believe Christ was in strong travail, releasing the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit before He ever gave the command, "Lazarus, come forth." As I stated earlier I do not believe it is *necessary* to weep and groan, etc., in order to release the birthing power of the Holy Spirit (travail). It *can* and *will* happen at times, however, when we move into deep intercession as it did in this circumstance with Jesus.

This is what took place when I interceded for my aunt. I was involved in a form of travail. Although not groaning, I was weeping heavily. It was obviously not the emotion that caused her salvation, but my response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to move through me. This released Him to go hover around my aunt, enveloping her with His power and life, convicting her of sin and possibly breaking some strongholds.

It doesn't always happen quickly. Occasions do occur when we move into a time of intercession and almost immediately see the results, as was the case with my aunt. However, as with Polly and her son, a season of prayer is usually necessary when, on a regular basis, we allow the Spirit of God to intercede through us. This releases Him to go hover around an individual with His life-giving power, doing what is necessary to cause the person to be born again.

Another occasion when Jesus was involved in travail was in the Garden of Gethsemane. Without any question Christ's redemption of humanity—the work of intercession—began with His travail in the Garden. Isaiah prophesied of Him: "He shall see of the *travail* of His soul and shall be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11, *KJV,* italics mine).

In fulfillment of this, Jesus cried out in Gethsemane saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:38, *KJV).* It was in the Garden of Gethsemane that redemption began and the victory of the entire ordeal was won.

We know that redemption was beginning in this travail for a couple of reasons. Luke tells us Jesus began to shed great drops of blood. Jesus was not simply sweating so profusely that it was like a person bleeding. He was literally bleeding through the pores of His skin, a medical condition known as

hematidrosis. We must understand that when the blood of Christ began to flow, redemption was beginning, for it is through the shedding of His blood that we have the cleansing from sin (see Heb. 9:22).

We also know that redemption was beginning in the Garden because when Jesus said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," the word used for death is *thanatos.* This word is often used for death as the result and penalty of sin.[15]This is the death Adam experienced when he fell.

Two other words could have been used that mean simply physical death. When *thanatos* is used, however, it frequently implies death as a result of sin. For Christ to use this word quite possibly meant that the sin of the world was already being laid upon Him.

Through these two occurrences, we see that the redemption that ended at the Cross most likely began in the Garden travail. I believe the term travail was used, not so much because He was working hard, but because He was bringing forth the new birth. It also seems logical that because our intercession releases the fruit of this birthing, it too is called travail.

Bringing Forth the Fruit of Calvary

In summary, the Holy Spirit desperately wants to release His creative, birthing powers through us, bringing forth the fruit of Calvary. He wants to use us in *tohuw* (lifeless, fruitless, desolate, barren) situations, releasing His life into them:

- As He did at Creation. But through our intercession, He wants to bring forth "new creations" in Christ Jesus.
- As with Israel when He hovered over the barren bodies of Abraham and Sarah bringing forth a nation, He wants to bring forth "spiritual Israel" from us.
- As with Mary when He hovered, bringing forth or conceiving the Christ in her, He desires to bring forth Christ in people through our intercession.
- As happened with Lazarus's resurrection, through our intercession He wants to bring forth spiritual life from death.
- As in Gethsemane when the fruit of our redemption was pressed from the vine, Christ Jesus, He wants the fruit of that work to be pressed forth again through our intercession.
- As through Peter people were healed, He wants to heal people through our intercession. He wants to hover around them, releasing His life.

Not only does He want to do this for salvation and healing, but travail is also to be done for maturing and developing believers. Paul said in Galatians 4:19 *(KJV),* "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." He called them his children because he had travailed once until they

were born again. Then he said he was in travail "again" until Christ was formed in them. These people were already born again. Paul was obviously referring to their maturing process. This is an aspect of intercession we can involve ourselves in to help believers mature.

Hospitals have intensive care units where the staff is able to keep a close eye on patients who have undergone organ transplants. Even when the operations are successful, it is routine procedure to classify these patients as being in "critical, but stable condition" and keep them in ICU until they gain strength.

Spiritual organ transplants occur as people become Christians and receive new hearts. To grow strong in the Lord, they must receive intensive nurturing. It is exciting to be part of the birthing process— praying them into the kingdom of God. However, it is also necessary to intercede for them through their critical, but stable condition stage.[16]

When the Lord first taught me this truth, I was counseling with four or five people who were in very difficult situations. Three of them were extremely suicidal. I was spending hours each day with these people trying to help them through their situations. There were times when they would call me saying they were going to take their lives right then. I remember one of these people calling at 2:00 A.M. saying, "I have a gun to my head right now and I'm going to blow my brains out." It was a stressful season, to say the least.

It was at that time the Lord revealed to me this concept of our prayers releasing the Holy Spirit to hover around individuals, birthing life in them. He clearly spoke these words to my heart: *If you spent a fraction of the time releasing My Holy Spirit to go and hover around them bringing life as you do talking to them, you would see many times the results.*

I know a good deal when I hear it! I began to spend a couple of hours every day praying for them. Most of my prayer was in the Spirit. I would simply say, "Father, I bring so and so before You now, asking that as I pray the Holy Spirit would be released to go hover around so and so, bringing forth Christ." Then I would usually just begin to pray in the Spirit. I saw immediate results. Maturity came quickly. Almost overnight bondages began to fall off. Victories occurred in their lives. It was remarkable.

What was taking place? The Holy Spirit was being released through my prayers to go hover—*rachaph, episkiazo—around* these individuals, releasing His power and life.

Releasing the Rain of the Spirit

The Bible speaks of travailing for other things as well. In 1 Kings 18 Elijah prayed fervently seven times for rain. We are told in this passage that the posture he maintained while praying was the position of a woman in that day giving

birth.

The symbolism is clear. Elijah was in travail. He was birthing something. Without any question, the posture of Elijah is to symbolize this for us. Why else would God give us the position he was in while praying? And please don't miss the implication of this passage. *Even though it was God's will to bring the rain and it was also God's time for the rain, someone on earth still had to birth it through prayer.*

In this example, travail released literal rain. We could take the story to its fullest symbolic picture and say that our travail releases the rain of the Spirit. I'm sure that would be valid because the physical drought pictured Israel's spiritual dryness, and the rain pictured God's ability to bless again after the purging of the idolatry earlier in the chapter.

Our prayers can and do cause the Holy Spirit to move into situations where He then releases His power to bring life. We do have a part in producing the hovering of the Holy Spirit. The power that created the universe through His *"rachaph-ing"* has been deposited in the Church—while untold millions await their births into the kingdom of God.

Like Elijah, we must take up our position believing that the prayers of mere men can accomplish much. We must release the power of the Holy Spirit through our intercession to hover, bringing forth the fruit of what Christ has already done. We are an integral part of the Father's birthing process into the kingdom of God.

As I said while coaching my wife, "Come on, Church, *push!"*

Questions for Reflection

1. How have we defined travail improperly and how has this hindered intercession?
2. Explain the connection between Genesis 1:1,2; Deuteronomy 32:1018; Luke 1:35 and travail.
3. What do we mean when we speak of the "moving" of the Holy Spirit?
4. When and where can one travail? For what can one travail? Can you think of a situation in which God might want to do some birthing through your prayers?
5. Does God answer prayer?

Notes

1. *The Consolidated Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary* (Chicago: Consolidated Book Publishers, 1954), p. 749.
2. W. E. Vine, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), p. 110.

3. James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), ref. no. 8414.

4. Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible—New American Standard* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: AMG Publishers, 1984; revised edition, 1990), p. 1790.

5. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume 1* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted 1991), p. 48.

6. William Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1978), p. 175.

7. *The Consolidated Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary* (Chicago: Consolidated Book Publishers, 1954), p. 89.

8. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver, Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), p. 934.

9. Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance,* ref. no. 3205.

10. Ibid., ref. no. 2342.

11. Ibid., ref. no. 1411.

12. Ibid., ref. no. 1982.

13. Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 242.

14. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* (Iowa Falls, Iowa: Word Bible Publishers, 1992), p. 1366.

15. Vine, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary,* p. 268.

16. Craig Brian Larson, *Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 165, adapted.

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chapter nine
Pro Wrestlers

Brother Wonderful and His Interpreter

"Resist the devil and he will flee from you! How many of you talk to the kingdom of darkness once in a while?" I asked in my most anointed preaching voice.

I was on a roll. Preaching up a storm, as we said back in Ohio where I was raised. I was fresh out of Bible school and feeling like God's latest edition to the Brother Wonderful Fraternity of World Changers International. Had those people right where I wanted them— hanging on every word. If Mom could have seen me then! She and God would probably have found a place for me at the Lord's right hand—next to James and John.

The only problem was that I was in Guatemala preaching through an interpreter.

"So," you might ask, "why should that be a problem?"

Because my interpreter didn't seem to share my theology, and her convictions ran deep. She looked at me indignantly and said in no uncertain terms, "I won't say that!"

Her words kind of interrupted my eloquent flow. "Huh?" I replied.

"I won't say that."

"What do you mean you won't say it? You're supposed to say what I say."

"Well, I won't say it."

"Why not?"

"I don't believe in it."

"Well, the Bible says to do it."

"Where?"

"James 4:7."

Now, keep in mind that we were standing in front of a church full of people who were watching this obviously unpleasant verbal exchange between Brother Wonderful and his interpreter.

They hadn't prepared me for this in Bible school. As I stood wondering what to do next, she began to look for James 4:7....Took her forever to find it. She then read it to the audience, I think. She may have been telling them how stupid I

was for all I know.

We tried to continue. She wouldn't allow me to quote any other verses, though. As I would mention one, she would take her time finding it and read it, I think....Didn't take me long to figure out she didn't know her Bible very well, however, so I started paraphrasing verses so she wouldn't recognize them as Scripture. After she had unknowingly said the verse, I would look at her with a smug smile and say, "That was found in...." At which time she would bore into me with very unspiritual eyes.

We just never did seem to get that flow back.

Laying Hold of the Victory

Intercession, according to our definition, involves two very different activities. One is a *reconciling*, the other is a *separating.* One is a *tearing away* —a disuniting, the other a *joining* to—a uniting. This is what Christ did through His work of intercession, and it's what we do in our continuation of it. In light of this, it is important to realize that much of our intercession must be a combination of the two.

It is often not enough to simply ask the Father to do something, although this is most Christians' total concept of prayer. Many times it is necessary to accompany asking with a spiritual "warfare" or "wrestling," enforcing the victory of Calvary. As Arthur Mathews said, "Victory is an accomplished fact, but it does need a man to lay hold of that victory and precipitate a confrontation with the enemy, and resist him."[1]

Jack Hayford, in his book *Prayer Is Invading the Impossible,* says:

To see both sides of Jesus is to see both sides of prayer. It is to see the need for compassion, for care, for concern, for weeping with those that weep, for sympathy, for groaning, for aching deeply because of what you sense transpiring in human lives. And it is to learn the place and time for anger, when we see Satan's wiles successfully destroying; for indignation, when the adversary's program violates territory that is rightfully Christ's; for boldness, when demonic hordes announce their presence; for attack, when the Holy Spirit prompts an advance.[2]

As with my interpreter in Guatemala, many don't believe in spiritual warfare. They believe Jesus took care of the devil and we don't need to concern ourselves with him. Others believe our actions, holy lifestyles, obedience and I suppose other things bind the devil, but we don't address him or his demons. Still others believe we can deal with or address evil spirits, but only in people. We cannot, they would say, command or rebuke demons in places or situations.

This book is not meant to offend those who disagree, nor is it to defend my

position on this subject. It would take an entire book—perhaps several—to adequately prove the validity and demonstrate the how-tos of spiritual warfare. Several wonderful books are available that thoroughly defend and explain the subject. I have listed several in the bibliography at the end of this book. My intent in this book is to establish the absolute connection between spiritual warfare and intercession, especially for—but not limited to—warfare for the unsaved.

Paga Involves Warfare

To be sure extremes do exist. I heard someone recently describe a cartoon. It portrayed the devil with 40 to 50 strands of rope around him and several individuals next to him discussing the situation.

"What do we do now?" one asked.

"I say we bind him again!" was the response of another.

Although imbalances occur, nonetheless, it is impossible to separate the word intercession, *paga*, from warfare. Fifteen times it is used in this context.[3] I tell you emphatically, *violence and war are rooted in the very meaning of the word.* It is translated in various ways when speaking of warfare: "attack," "fall upon," "strike down," "impinge" as well as others (see Judg. 8:21; 1 Sam. 22:11-19; 2 Sam. 1:11-16: The essence is the same in all of them—people in battle attacking one another). Hear me clearly: *Paga* involves warfare!

Again, Jack Hayford says, "But there is a way to face impossibility. *Invade* it! Not with a glib speech of high hopes. Not in anger. Not with resignation. Not through stoical self-control. But with violence. And prayer provides the vehicle for this kind of violence."[4]

When we try to separate warfare from intercession, we do so to our own detriment. Much time and energy is wasted dealing with symptoms, when in many situations the real cause of the problem is spiritual or demonic: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12, *KJV).* We must guard against an overemphasis upon Satan and demons, but we in America err in the other direction. Most people stop in Ephesians 6:12 after the words, "we wrestle not."

Ignorance Is Costly

Our ignorance of Satan and his tactics, as well as how to deal with them, is costly for us. Second Corinthians 2:11 tells us: "In order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes." The context is forgiveness, but a general principle is also revealed in this verse.

The word "ignorant" is the Greek word *agnoeo.* It means without knowledge or understanding of.[5] Our English word "agnostic" is derived from it. Technically, an agnostic is not a person who is unsure if he or she believes in God. We now use the word this way; but in actuality, an agnostic is a person who does not know or understand, regardless of the subject. We also get the word "ignore" from the same root. In this verse we're urged not to ignore or be an agnostic—without understanding—where the devil is concerned.

"Schemes" is the word *noema.* It literally means "thought."[6] The verse is essentially saying, "Don't be without understanding of the way Satan thinks." *Noema* came to also mean "plans, schemes, plots, devices" because these things are born in the thoughts of the mind. For greater insight, let's insert all of them into the verse: "Don't be without understanding of the way your enemy thinks and operates—of his plans, plots, schemes and devices." Is there not also a subtle promise here? If God suggests we are not to be ignorant of Satan's schemes, He must be willing to reveal them to us.

What if we are unaware of his schemes? He'll take "advantage" of us. The word is *pleonekteo,* which is a compound word meaning literally "to have or hold the greater portion" *(pleon*—"the greater part"; *echo*—"have or hold").[7] It is easy to see why this is a word for "covet." It also means "overreach."[8]

In boxing, the person who has the longer reach has the "advantage" and usually gets in more blows. The word is also translated "make a gain"; Satan makes a lot of gains on those who are unaware of his ways. Bullinger says it means "to make a prey of, to defraud."[9]

Let's put all these definitions together: "To the degree we are ignorant of the way our adversary thinks and operates—of his plans, plots, schemes and devices—to that degree he will gain on us, prey on us, defraud us of what is ours and have or hold the greater portion."

The greater portion of what? Whatever! Our homes, marriages, families, communities, money, government, nation and more.

Twenty-five years ago the Church in America was without understanding of what Satan was planning and he got the greater portion of our schools. The same could be said of our government.

Have you ever been taken advantage of? Have you ever received the smaller portion? In my Bible college days we had a way of enlightening the superspiritual who thought it necessary to intercede for the world while giving thanks for a meal. They were ignorant of our scheme when we asked them to pray over the food. While they traversed the globe, we enjoyed the greater

portion of their meals! It was a real test of their true spirituality. (I am deeply embarrassed by this abominable practice in my past and would never do it today. But for those of you who feel you must intercede over your food, save it for your prayer closet!)

Paul was taken advantage of in 1 Thessalonians 2:18. Satan gained on him *(pleonekteo)* in the ongoing war over spreading the gospel: "For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan thwarted us." We know Paul won more battles than he lost. But he was human and at times Satan succeeded in thwarting his plans. Please notice it doesn't say God changed His mind about where Paul was to go. It clearly says that Satan hindered him. Those people who would have us think Satan can do nothing except what God allows, and that we are to ignore him should reread these two verses. God doesn't ignore the devil and neither should we. And he certainly does a lot of things God doesn't "allow" him to do.

The only sense in which it can be said that God allows everything that happens on earth is that He created the laws and principles—sowing and reaping, cause and effect and the free will of humans—that govern the earth. We, however, implement these principles and determine much of what we reap and experience. Satan, too, understands these laws and uses them to his advantage whenever possible.

Satan's Hidden Schemes Prevail

I heard a minister in Tulsa, Oklahoma, tell of the deliverance of a person for whom he had prayed at length. It seems this person could never achieve any stability in life or in his walk with the Lord. He would find a job, then quickly lose it; walk with the Lord for a while, then turn away. This cycle repeated itself again and again with no amount of prayer seeming to make a difference.

One day as the minister prayed for this young man, the Lord showed him a picture of three demons that were following the fellow everywhere he went. They were not in him, but always there to influence him. The minister saw names over each demon, describing what they did. One at a time he bound them in Jesus' name and commanded them to leave the young man alone.

From that moment on, everything changed. Stability came. Success followed. Eventually the young man became a wealthy businessman as well as a minister. And he is still walking with God today. It is always good and right to ask the Father to strengthen and mature individuals, but this man needed something more: someone to exercise authority and enact a deliverance. His instability was the symptom of demonic influence that he was not strong enough in himself to overcome. Satan had the advantage and as long as his schemes remained hidden,

he prevailed.

Although some issues concerning spiritual warfare are open for debate—certainly it is a subjective area—others are a certainty:

- We are in a very real war (see 2 Cor. 10:4; 1 Tim. 1:18).
- We are soldiers in this war (see Ps. 110:2,3; 2 Tim. 2:3,4).
- We are to wrestle against all levels of the kingdom of darkness (see Eph. 6:12).
- We are to resist the devil (which would in most situations be his demons) and he will flee from us (see Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9).
- We are to tread on Satan and his demons (i.e., exercise authority over them—see Luke 10:19; Rom. 16:20).
- We are to cast out demons (see Mark 16:17).
- We have authority to bind (forbid) and loose (permit) when dealing with the agents and gates of hell (see Matt. 16:19).
- We have powerful weapons designed to overcome the kingdom of darkness (see 2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:10-20).

This is by no means an exhaustive list of warfare Scriptures.

To be sure, God doesn't give us detailed formulas for doing all the previously mentioned warfare acts. God is not into formulas in any area of biblical truth. He is concerned with relationship and He gives us principles that must be applied as the Holy Spirit leads us.

For example, the Lord does not give us a particular formula for a worship service. It is not important that we worship in exactly the same way, but that we worship. He does not give exact formulas for church government or placing pastors. Every stream of the Body of Christ seems to do it differently. What matters is not that we all govern the same, but that we have godly government.

I'm not implying absolutes don't exist in Scripture; I am simply saying that rarely do they appear in the area of method. There is nothing sacred or unsacred about the method. What is important is that we walk according to the revelation of the Scriptures we have been given, and that we do this by the direction of the Holy Spirit. He alone knows exactly what is needed in each situation.

Be a Pro Wrestler

Likewise, in spiritual warfare the point is not so much how we wrestle, but that we wrestle. None of these assertions from Scripture about warfare are defensive in nature. They are all offensive. We are to aggressively deal with the forces of darkness whenever the challenge or opportunity arises. Five times the word "against" is used in Ephesians 6. The word in Greek is *pros,* which is a strengthened form of *pro.*

Pro means "in front of,"[10] either literally or figuratively (in the sense of superior to). We use the concept today in the word "professional," or in its shortened form "pro." A pro athlete is one who is "in front of" or "superior to" others. *Pros* also has the connotation of stepping forward and facing toward something or someone.[11] The symbolism in this Ephesians passage is of a wrestler stepping forward and facing his opponent. God is saying to us, "Step forward and face the powers of darkness. Be a pro wrestler!"

Don't be like the bodybuilder visiting Africa, who was asked by a village chief what he did with all his muscles. The bodybuilder thought an exhibition might better serve to explain it, so he proceeded to flex his bulging calves, thighs, biceps and triceps, demonstrating how he performed in competition. After admiring this amazing specimen for a few moments, the chief inquired, "What else do you use them for?"

"That's about it," answered the muscular man.

"That's all you use those huge muscles for?" reiterated the chief.

"Yes."

"What a waste," muttered the chief in disgust. "What a waste."

So many of us are like this bodybuilder. We're strong in the Lord, well equipped to deal with our adversary, but we never use our strength or our weapons. Step into the ring!

As we wait upon the Lord, He will show us which strategy or method of warfare to use. God is a God of relationship. He is a Father who is passionately in love with His family and He prioritizes love over labor. It is our relational aspect of our walk with Christ that prepares us for the warring aspect.

Devotion to Christ, the Springboard for Everything

It is interesting, even paradoxical, but true, that warfare is often born from worship. *Out of our waiting often comes warring.* It is the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ that must be the springboard for everything we do. "But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

Our depth of revelation in any other area of truth does not diminish the need for simple, pure devotion to Christ. In fact, it increases it. The larger the tree, the deeper must go the roots. Likewise, the more we spread ourselves upward and outward into the multidimensional aspects of the Kingdom, the more we must allow the decomplicating effect of our relationship with Christ to go downward.

The context of 2 Corinthians 11:3 is deception. To whatever degree Satan can distract us from our relationship with Christ, to that degree we are walking in deception, regardless of how much other revelation we may be walking in.

I want to mention three of the Old Testament words for "waiting" upon the Lord, each of which has a different shade of meaning. The first one is *dumiyah,*

which means silently waiting with a quiet trust.[12]The thought conveyed is a strong, calm, quiet trust in the Lord. David said in Psalms 62:1,2, "My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken."

The second word, *chakah*, means "adhere to" or "long for."[13] "Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield" (Ps. 33:20). This is what David felt when he said, "My soul thirsts for God" (see 42:2; 63:1). He was *chakah—longing* for God's company.

The third word *qavah* means to "wait for...with eager expectation."[14] It also means "to bind something together by twisting" or braiding.[15]The main thought, then, for *qavah* is "eager expectation and oneness; a joining, a braiding together." The following verses are examples of this:

Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the Lord (Ps. 27:14).

Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary (Isa. 40:31).

Let's summarize the three meanings, putting them all together: "Silently waiting with a strong, calm trust, longing for His presence and eagerly expecting Him—for you know He'll show up—anticipating and then experiencing the oneness that results as your hearts become entwined." Hallelujah!

Psalms 37:7,9,34 demonstrates how waiting upon the Lord can relate to warfare:

Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes....For evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land....Wait for the Lord, and keep His way, and He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you will see it.

Waiting upon the Lord brings with it the ability to possess our inheritance. "Inherit" is the word *yaresh*, also translated "possess," and means "legally an heir; military invasion in order to seize."[16] Those who wait upon the Lord inherit and possess—worship and warfare! It's like David waiting upon the Lord, longing for Him, worshiping Him, writing songs to Him, and the next minute rising up, grabbing a lion by the mane and ripping his head off! Warring and winning were born from worshiping and waiting.

Looking Good, Lacking Anointing

When Mary was seated at the feet of the Lord and Martha was busy in the

kitchen (see Luke 10:40), the passage says Martha was distracted with all her preparations. The word "distraction" is the word *perispao.* It means literally "drag around in circles."[17] The word for "preparations" is the New Testament word for "ministry"—the same word we would use for a person in the ministry. Even pure ministry for Jesus can become a weight we drag around.

Spiritual warfare and prayer in general can also become a weight we drag around. It often loses its life, becomes legalistic and a chore—something required and endured. We become so busy *for* Him, we don't have time to be *with* Him. We're dragging our ministry around in circles, going nowhere and accomplishing nothing for the kingdom of God.

Several years ago I was going through a difficult place in my life. Al Straarup, a dear friend of mine, called me and said, "I was praying for you with a friend this morning and God gave him a picture."

I thought, *Thank You, Jesus. Here comes my answer.*

Al continued, "There was a circle on the ground." (I was ready for a great revelation—the wheel in the middle of a wheel or something!) "You were walking on that circle."

I replied, "Yeah? Yeah?"

He said, "That's it. You were just walking in circles."

"That's my word from God?" I asked.

He responded, "Yeah, that's it. Sorry."

I hung up the phone and said, "I guess it's true. That's what I'm doing, Lord—walking in circles...busy, but going nowhere." I stepped off that treadmill and into the presence of the Lord. I stopped walking and started waiting.

We must wait in His presence and allow all ministry, including our warfare, to be born of relationship.

Jesus looked at Martha and said, "Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (see Luke 10:42). "Good part" is the word *agathos.* It's contrasted to another word for "good" in Greek—*kalos,* which means something is "constitutionally good"[18] or, in other words, is made well. But *kalos* doesn't necessarily imply any practical usefulness or benefit. It may simply look good. Nothing is wrong with it, but it may not have any practical purpose.

On the other hand, *agathos—the* word for "good part" that Mary chose—is a word that means "good and profitable; useful; beneficial."[19] It is often translated "good works." The Lord is saying, "If you spend time waiting upon Me, seated

at My feet, it puts something in you. You will not only look good, but you'll also be good for something." We often look good, but lack anointing. We must wait in His presence and allow all ministry, including our warfare, to be born of relationship.

God's Timing, God's Terms, God's Method

Waiting upon the Lord will keep us from becoming reactionary to the devil. Our response is not to the devil. We do nothing on his terms, nor are we to do anything in his timing. God chooses the times and the terms of battle. He told Joshua at Jericho (see Josh. 6), as he was on his face in worship, "Seven days, Joshua. Not a moment before. Don't do anything until I tell you." He was saying, "I choose the timing of battle."

God chose the terms, also. "Take no prisoners—only Rahab escapes. The spoils are to be given to Me. I choose the terms—you don't, Satan doesn't, no one else does. If you do it My way, you'll always win. Do it the devil's way and you will find yourself walking in circles." God chose the timing, the terms and the method. Warfare is not a responsive reaction but responsible action. It must be born from obedience, not necessity. We follow our Captain, not our foe.

The Lord told David to go to battle when the wind blew in the treetops, not until then (see 2 Sam. 5:24). He told Saul to wait seven days for Samuel to come and offer the sacrifice (see 1 Sam. 13:8-14). The enemy was encamped about them and the people were getting nervous so Saul finally said, "I'm going to have to offer this sacrifice myself—do it my way—because we've got to get on with the battle here." Samuel showed up immediately after the sacrifice and gave him God's perspective: "You blew it, Saul, and the kingdom is going to be taken from you and given to someone after my heart. I can't have a warrior or leader who is reactionary—who leads the people according to his own wisdom and ideas. It has to be My way. You wait on Me!"

At times, God may say that worship is the key, as it was for Jehoshaphat on the battlefield (see 2 Chron. 20:1-30) and for Paul and Silas in the jail (see Acts 16:16-36). As we ministered on the streets of the Mardi Gras several years ago, the Lord led us on one occasion, 200 strong, to march silently down the street. An awesome fear of the Lord and presence of God began to hover over the entire area. The Lord had established His awesome presence and silenced His foes. A literal hush came to the streets.

On another occasion, however, He led us to march down the middle of Bourbon Street singing the poignant worshipful song "Emmanuel" by Bob McGee. This time a spirit of conviction began to hover over the street as we sang this powerful song that speaks of humanity's true destiny. As before, a silence

came. It seemed as though the Lord had totally taken charge. At one intersection, which was blocked off for foot traffic, we gathered in a circle on our knees and continued to sing. As we knelt worshiping, a man literally ran into our circle, crying out that he wanted to know God.

That's praise warfare! It's also intercession (paga)—attacking the enemy. As Christ is enthroned in worship, Satan is dethroned in the heavenlies (see Ps. 22:3; 149:5-9). As we lift up the Son, we pull down the serpent.

The strategy of the Holy Spirit at other times might be love—acts of kindness, giving, forgiving. I was part of a reconciliation ceremony at Confluence Park in Denver, Colorado, on November 12, 1992, between Native Americans and several European Americans. I emceed the gathering, in fact, which was sponsored by Reconciliation Coalition, a ministry led by Jean Stephenson.

The strategy was really quite simple: repent and ask their forgiveness for stealing their land, breaking covenants and killing their ancestors. When one of them, on behalf of his people, extended forgiveness to us and welcomed us to this land, *something broke in the spirit realm.* It was a cold, dreary day, but the moment he spoke those words the sun broke through the clouds and shone upon us. That day marked the beginning of a major work of reconciliation between these two people groups. Why? Our act of humility and love, along with theirs, was also an act of warfare that tore down strongholds in the spirit realm....Warfare through humility....Violent love. Paradoxical, isn't it?

On other occasions the Holy Spirit may lead a person to join with others in agreement to break the back of the enemy. John G. Lake, a missionary to South Africa in the first half of this century, tells the story of a fever epidemic that in a single night struck a portion of South Africa. The devastation was such that in one month a fourth of the entire population of that region died. There were not caskets enough to meet the need and people were being buried in blankets, so great was the devastation.

Lake tells of a powerful intercessor who began to pray. For days—all day long and into the night—he stationed himself under a tree and prayed against the plague. Several times Lake asked the man, "Are you getting through?"

He would reply, "Not yet." But one day he said to Lake, "I feel today that if I had just a little help in faith my spirit would go through." Lake got on his knees and joined the man in prayer. What happened next is amazing. It is recorded in Lake's own words:

As we prayed, the Spirit of the Lord overwhelmed our souls and presently I found myself, not kneeling under the tree, but moving gradually away from the tree.... My eyes gradually opened, and I witnessed such a scene as I never

witnessed before—a multitude of demons like a flock of sheep!

The Spirit had come upon him also, and he rushed ahead of me, cursing that army of demons, and they were driven back to hell, or the place from whence they came. Beloved, the next morning when we awoke, that epidemic of fever was gone.[20]

A Time to Shoot

Truly, there is a time for aggressive, violent spiritual warfare in intercession. I realize many would shrink from such extreme action in prayer—running and shouting at the enemy. There is, however, a time for such spiritual intensity. More than once I have found myself shouting at spiritual powers or mountains of adversity while in intercession. I'm not spiritually ignorant enough to believe a certain volume level is required to rebuke evil forces, but the Scriptures do allow for it and even suggest that, at times, it unleashes something in the Spirit:

- Zerubbabel shouted grace to a mountain (see Zech. 4:7).
- Israel shouted at Jericho (see Josh. 6:16).
- Gideon's army shouted before the battle (see Judg. 7:20).
- Jesus shouted on the cross (see Matt. 27:50).
- Israel shouted when the Ark of the Covenant would lead them to a new place: Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered (see Num. 10:35; Ps. 68:1).

I'm not trying to start the First Church of the Screaming Warriors, but I am trying to demonstrate that warfare, even intense and sometimes loud warfare, is valid. Joash, the king of Israel, was rebuked and suffered defeat because of his lack of spiritual intensity in striking with the arrows (see 2 Kings 13:14-19).

At other times, the strategy of the Lord may be to simply speak the Word as a sword or make biblically based declarations into the situation. When led by the Holy Spirit, this strategy is devastating to the enemy.

On one occasion I was trying to mediate a peace between three parties. The circumstance had reached a potentially violent point, and I had been assured by one party that on the following morning he was going to get physical. I knew he meant it and that someone would be hurt and others would be in jail. I was up quite late praying, pleading with God to stop this when, at around 2:00 A.M., the Lord shocked me with these words: *Why are you begging Me to do this? You know My will in this situation. And the problem is being caused by a spirit of anger and violence. Bind it! Declare My Word and will into the situation.*

I did and went to bed. The next morning, for some "unexplainable" reason, without any discussion, everyone had a change of heart. Peace and harmony ruled where the night before violence and anger had reigned. What had happened?

Paga happened.

Calvary happened.

Psalm 110:2 happened: "The Lord will stretch forth Thy strong scepter from Zion, saying, 'Rule in the midst of Thine enemies.'"

Seizing and Securing Our Inheritance

A word of caution is necessary at this point. As we involve ourselves in spiritual warfare, it is imperative that we remember we are not trying to defeat the devil. He is already defeated. We do not re-defeat, we represent, the victory of the Cross. All that we do in our praying intercession must be an extension of what Christ did through His work of intercession.

Christ *paga'ed* the devil. He attacked him and crushed his headship over the earth (see Gen. 3:15). The Hebrew word for "head" in this verse, *rosh,* is actually speaking of headship or authority.[21]

Psalm 2:9, speaking prophetically of Christ, says, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware." The crushing of Genesis 3:15 and the breaking and shattering of Psalm 2:9 all have essentially the same meaning: To break something into pieces and scatter it. Christ shattered and scattered the headship of the serpent like a broken piece of glass. It was a total defeat.

But what Christ did, we must release and enforce. What He provided for us, we must seize by faith with spiritual weapons. Timothy was told in 1 Timothy 6:12, "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." Timothy already had eternal life, yet he was told to "take hold of" it.

Is that interesting to you? You can have it and not have it. You can own it and not possess it. The word is *epilambanomai* and means "to seize"[22] something. Like Israel in the Old Testament, who had been given their inheritance by God yet still had to take it, so it is with us. Their inheritance was not necessarily their possession. Ours won't automatically fall into our laps either, just as theirs didn't.

Moffatt translates the verse, "Fight in the good fight of the faith, *secure* that life eternal to which you were called" (italics mine). *Wuest* translation reads, "Take possession of the eternal life into a participation of which you were called."

As one would seize and secure territory in war, so we must seize and secure our inheritance in Christ. Who are we to seize it from? Certainly not God! We must take it from the world, the flesh and the devil.

Jack Hayford gives an enlightening amplification of Matthew 16:18,19, based on what the Greek literally says:

Whatever you may at any time encounter (of hell's counsels which I'm declaring my church shall prevail against), you will then face a decision as to whether you will or won't bind it. What transpires will be conditional upon your response. If you do personally and consciously involve yourself in the act of binding the issue on earth, you will discover that at that future moment when you do, that it has already been bound in heaven![23]

Amazing! So much depends on our obedience and responsible action. Our inheritance in Christ is not guaranteed or automatic.

She Stepped Forward

Sue Doty shared the following testimony regarding doing spiritual warfare in her city. She stepped forward!

I sensed the Lord wanted me, along with a team of intercessors, to go on a prayer walk over a specific route, but that some preparation was necessary. First, I talked with my pastor about this and then went to drive along the route I knew we were to prayerwalk. As I approached a theater (X-rated movie house, video shop and bookstore) the Holy Spirit started to give me specific instructions. He told me to cast out the spirits of pornography and lust, and I did so. He also told me to pray in the Spirit. After a short time I was released from praying, and I continued on the rest of the route before going home.

On that Friday the Lord revealed to me what had actually happened. I turned on the local news to hear that this particular theater had been ordered by the city to close its doors. The day after I had been there to pray, the city conducted a surprise inspection. The theater was cited for several violations and its doors were immediately closed and locked.

What was so remarkable was that the city had already inspected the building a short time before and it had passed inspection. But without warning, and for no apparent reason, it was being inspected again. God had really moved! The theater did meet code violations and was re-opened for a short period of time before a judge ordered it to close for one year. Now the property is up for sale.

I had taken the course "Intercessory Prayer—The Lightning of God" by Dutch Sheets and I knew many charges had been placed in the wall, but this was the *kairos* time and the wall fell under the power of God. (By "charges" she is referring to the duwamis—dynamite—of the Holy Spirit that I teach about in the previously mentioned course.)

A Legal Breaking of Headship

"But why would warfare ever be necessary if Christ defeated Satan and his demons?" many ask. "Didn't Christ take away his power, disarm him and destroy his works? Didn't He deliver us from Satan's power?"

The answer to these questions lies in an accurate understanding of what Christ actually did when He defeated Satan. Satan's destruction wasn't a literal one, but rather a legal breaking of his headship or authority. Nowhere does the Bible say Christ delivered us from Satan's power. It says He delivered us from his *exousia—authority—or* in other words, the right to use his power on us:

Colossians 1:13: "For He delivered us from the domain *[exousia]* of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son."

Luke 10:19: "Behold, I have given you authority *[exousia]* to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power *[dunamis]* of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you."

Colossians 2:15: "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." The word "disarmed" is the Greek word *apekduomai* and means Christ divested Himself of the rulers and authorities.[24]That's theological jargon for,

"He whipped them!"

Power never was and never will be the issue between God and Satan. Authority was the issue—the authority Satan had obtained through Adam. Jesus did not come to get back any power, nor to remove Satan's power. He came to regain the authority Adam lost to the serpent and break his headship over the earth.

Satan still has all the inherent powers and abilities he has always had. He "prowls about like a roaring lion" (1 Pet. 5:8). And, contrary to what some teach, he still has his teeth. He still has "fiery darts" (Eph. 6:16, *KJV).* If you don't believe this, try going without your armor. What he lost was the right (authority) to use his power on those who make Jesus Lord. However, Satan is a thief and a lawbreaker and will use his power or abilities on us anyway if we don't understand that through Christ we now have authority over him and his power. *Authority is the issue.* Power does the work, but authority controls the power.

This truth is well illustrated in the battle between Israel and Amalek in Exodus 17:8-13. In this famous passage Moses went to the top of a hill with the staff of God in his hand while Joshua led the army on the battlefield below. As long as Moses held up the rod of God, Israel prevailed; when he lowered it, Amalek prevailed.

The victory was not decided by the strength or power of Israel's army. If this had been the case, they would not have faltered when the staff was lowered. Nor was it a morale thing—they weren't watching Moses for inspiration while in hand-to-hand conflict! An unseen battle in the heavenlies actually decided the outcome on the battlefield. And when the rod, representing the rule or authority of God, was lifted by the authorized leader of Israel, Joshua and the army prevailed. In other words, it was not power on the battlefield—though it was

necessary—that was the deciding factor, but authority on the mountain. *Authority is the key issue; power never has been.*

Approaching the Father

One final thought in introducing this subject of warfare: It is important to know that in our wrestling we are not to wrestle with God. I don't know about you, but the very thought terrifies me! The verses most often used to teach that we should are from Genesis 32:22-32 where Jacob wrestled all night with the angel of the Lord. Many a dynamic message has been preached using the words of Jacob as an example for what we should do in prayer: "I won't let you go until you bless me" (see v. 26). I've done it myself.

However, Scripture does not present this wrestling match as an example of how we are to pray. The reason it lasted so long is (1) God allowed it—the angel could have flipped Jacob into orbit had he wanted to. He once sent one angel to destroy an army (see 2 Chron. 32:21). (2) God and Jacob were after different things. Jacob wanted protection from Esau; God desired a nature change in Jacob.

Notice what, on the surface, seemed like a ridiculous question the angel asked Jacob: "What is your name?" Doesn't it seem strange to you that in the midst of this wrestling match they began to have a nice little conversation trying to get acquainted? That is not really what was happening. God was trying to get Jacob to acknowledge the truth about his nature, which was described by his name. The *Amplified* translation demonstrates this clearly: "[The Man] asked him, What is your name? And [in shock of realization, whispering] he said, Jacob [supplanter, schemer, trickster, swindler]!" (Gen. 32:27).

That's all the Lord needed: revelation and confession. Immediately grace was released and a nature change occurred. His name was also changed to Israel. A study of Jacob from this point on shows the great difference in his nature.

"But Jacob prevailed," some might say.

Only by losing. The only way to win a wrestling match with God is to lose. If you win, you lose; if you lose, you win. The only way to find our lives is to lose them (see Matt. 16:24-26; Luke 9:23-25). Jacob lost Jacob and found Israel. Such sweet defeat!

The point of our study, however, is to reveal that this story is not an example of how we are to petition our heavenly Father. We are to approach Him with bold confidence (see Heb. 4:16), knowing He is our Friend and Father. We are to ask "according to His will" (1 John 5:14), not try to wrestle from Him something He might not want to give. We are laborers together with Him (see 2 Cor. 6:1), not warring against Him. We storm the gates of hell (see Isa. 28:6; Matt. 16:18), not the gates of heaven.

Persistence in prayer is necessary, but it is not to overcome God's reluctance.

This is vital to know and remember. It is impossible to ask in faith, which is a requirement, if a person does not believe it is God's will to do what he or she is asking. Why then, is persistence necessary? That is for another chapter. He who persists will find it!

The purpose of this chapter, however, is to say: *There is a warfare or wrestling necessary at times in our intercession. Paga* includes the concept and the Scriptures teach it. We must do it with balance and understanding, but *we must do it!* To ignore Satan is to abdicate to Satan.

In the next chapter we will apply this concept of warfare to doing it for the lost. We have a vital role to play in setting the captives free. Let's make a gain on the kingdom of darkness!

Questions for Reflection

1. What are the two opposite activities usually needed in intercession? Why are both necessary? Does the meaning and use of *paga* reinforce this?
2. Explain 2 Corinthians 2:11. How does it reinforce the fact that we're not to ignore Satan?
3. Can you explain the connection between worship, waiting and warfare? How does Joshua picture this? Similarly, what insights can be gleaned from Mary and Martha concerning this?
4. Why would spiritual warfare ever be necessary if Christ defeated and destroyed the powers of darkness? Include comments on the difference between authority and power.
5. Are we supposed to wrestle with God in prayer? Explain.
6. Define the word *pro* from Ephesians 6, commenting on its connection to spiritual warfare.
7. Why is it important to choose preaching interpreters carefully? (Hint: "I won't say that.")

Notes

1. R. Arthur Mathews, *Born for Battle* (Robesonia, Pa.: OMF Books, 1978), p. 113.
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3. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., revised edition, 1991), p. 715.
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5. Ethelbert W. Bullinger, A *Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), p. 400.

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21. Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, ref. no. 7218

22. Joseph Henry Thayer, A *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 240.

23. Hayford, *Prayer Is Invading the Impossible*, p. 140.

24. Bullinger, A *Critical Lexicon and Concordance*, p. 731.

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chapter ten
Most High Man

Peeling Off the Veils

I watched the cesarean section delivery of a baby on television once. It was on one of those educational channels that enlighten us to some of the things we need to know to survive in life. Thank God for cable!

I also saw a face-lift on the same channel. They peeled the skin right off the face! Then they sucked up a bunch of cellulite. I don't know what kind of cells those are, but they also sucked up some fat—I knew what that was. Seemed to me they should have left the "lite" cells and sucked up the fat cells, but I reckon they had some reason for doing what they did. The things we do to look better. Believe me, now I know why they say beauty is only skin deep.

The delivery of the baby fascinated me the most. I always figured they just cut the skin and out plopped the baby. No way! They pert-near (that's Texan for nearly) turned that poor woman inside out. Pulled out and pointed out things I didn't even know I had (!)—ovaries and stuff like that. When they finally got to the baby, it was all they could do to pull it out. I don't know why it held on like it did. If it had been seeing what I was seeing, it would have wanted out of there fast.

Anyway, all of us need to be educated on the finer points of C-sections and face-lifts. And if you're gonna read a book by someone, you probably want to know that person is well versed in many areas of life. We don't need no more dumb authors!

Hopefully by now you know there is a method to my madness and somehow —perhaps minutely—but somehow, this relates to intercession.

The Bible says there is a veil that keeps unbelievers from clearly seeing the gospel:

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:3,4).

My lexicons told me the word "veil" means "to hide, cover up, wrap around."[1] The Greek word is *kalupsis.* They said the inside of a tree is veiled by

bark, the inside of a human body is veiled by skin. I understood immediately!

The New Testament word for a "revelation" is simply *kalupsis* with the prefix *apo* added—*apokalusis. Apo* means "off or away"[2] so literally a revelation is an unveiling, an uncovering. As I watched those surgeries, I received a revelation of the inside of a human body—at least some of it.

The Veil in the Unbeliever

This chapter is all about spiritual warfare for the lost. It is perhaps the most important in the book. The primary purpose of the previous chapter was to prepare us for this one. We have a part to play in lifting the veil off the mind of the unbeliever. Second Corinthians 10:4, which we will elaborate on later, speaks of strongholds that are a part of this veil. We participate in the destruction of these fortresses. Strongholds are not demons, they are places from which demons rule.

We will look closely at several words from these two passages to gain a more thorough understanding of what is being said. The passage in 2 Corinthians 4:3,4 tells us there is a veil or covering over the minds of unbelievers that keeps them from clearly seeing the light of the gospel. It is important to know *they don't see the gospel because they can't see it. They don't understand it because they can't understand it.* They must have an unveiling—a revelation.

Recently, I was visiting with a brother in Alaska who was telling me about a friend to whom he has been witnessing. He said, "It's just like you teach, Dutch. The man actually said to me, 'I know there is something to what you're saying because it's obvious what it has done for you. *But I can't yet fully see it'"* (italics mine).

In times past it always seemed difficult for me to understand how some people could hear and reject powerful gospel presentations. Now I know. When "hearing" it, they didn't hear what I heard, see what I saw or understand what I understood. What the unbelievers heard was filtered through a belief system—a veil—that caused them to hear something totally different. The fourth verse of 2 Corinthians 4 clearly states this: "that they might not *see* the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the *image* of God" (italics mine). They simply do not see the same "image" of Christ that we do. To clearly see Him is to love and want Him. We'll describe some of the components of this "stronghold" in more detail later in the chapter. At this point it is imperative to establish that it exists.

A Distorted Perspective

This distorted perception of the unbeliever is well illustrated by the story of a woman driving home alone one evening when she noticed a man in a large truck

following her. Growing increasingly fearful, she sped up, trying to lose her pursuer, but it was futile. She then exited the freeway and drove up a main street, but the truck stayed with her, even running red lights to do so.

In a panic, the woman wheeled into a service station, jumped from her car and ran inside screaming. The truck driver ran to her car, jerked the back door open and pulled from the floor behind her seat a man that was hiding there.[3]

The lady was fleeing from the wrong person. *She was running from her savior!* The truck driver, perched high enough to see into her back seat, had spied the would be rapist and was pursuing her to save her, even at his own peril.

As was this lady's, the perspective of unbelievers is distorted. People run from the pursuit of a God who is desiring to save them from destruction. Those of us who know Him realize we love God because He first loved us. When sinners, however, hear of a loving God who wants only their best and died to provide it, they often see instead only the promise of loss and a lack of fulfillment.

Letting in the Light

The word "light" in 2 Corinthians 4:4 is *photismos,* which means "illumination."[4] It is similar to another word in Ephesians 1:18, "enlightened" which is the word *photizo—"to* let in light."[5] We can almost see the English words "photo" or "photograph" in these Greek words; they are, indeed, derived from them. What happens when one takes a photo? The shutter on the camera opens, letting in light, which brings an image. If the shutter on the camera does not open, there will be no image or picture, regardless of how beautiful the scenery or elaborate the setting.

The same is true in the souls of human beings. And this is exactly what is being said in these two verses in 2 Corinthians 4. It sounds like photography language. It makes no difference how glorious our Jesus or wonderful our message, if the veil (shutter) is not removed, there will be no true image (picture) of Christ.

Oh, sometimes we talk people into a salvation prayer without a true revelation (unveiling), but there is usually no real change. That is why fewer than 10 percent—I've heard figures as low as 3 percent—of people who "get saved" in America become true followers of Christ. The reason is that there is not true biblical repentance, which only comes from biblical revelation.

Repentance does not mean to "turn and go another way"—a change of direction. That's the Greek word *epistrepho,* often translated "converted" or "turn" and is the *result* of repentance. Repentance—*metanoia—means* to have "a new knowledge or understanding"—a change of mind.

In biblical contexts repentance is a new understanding that comes from God through an unveiling (revelation). It is the reversing of the effects of the Fall through Adam. Humanity chose their own wisdom, their own knowledge of good and evil, right and wrong. Humanity now needs a new knowledge—from God. Paul said in Acts 26:18 he was called "to open their eyes"—enlightenment, unveiling, revelation, repentance—"so *that* they may turn *(epistrepho)*[6] from darkness to light."

Information Versus Revelation

We need to understand—and I'm afraid most do not—the difference between *information* and *revelation.* Information is of the mind; biblical revelation, however, involves and affects the mind, but originates from the heart. Spiritual power is only released through revelation knowledge. The written word *(graphe)*[7] must become the living word *(logos).* [8] This is why even we believers must not just read, but abide or meditate in the Word, praying as the psalmist: "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law" (Ps. 119:18). The word "open," *galah,* also means "unveil or uncover"[9]—revelation.

Information can come immediately, but revelation is normally a process. As the parable of the sower demonstrates, all biblical truth comes in seed form. Early in my walk with the Lord, I was frustrated because the wonderful truths I had heard from some outstanding teachers were not working for me. When I heard the teachings, they had seemed powerful to me. I left the meetings saying, "I will never be the same!" But a few weeks and months later, I was the same.

As I complained to God and questioned the truth of what I had heard, the Lord spoke words to me that have radically changed my life: *Son, all truth comes to you in seed form. It may be fruit in the person sharing it, but it is seed to you. Whether or not it bears fruit depends on what you do with it.* Spiritual information seeds must grow into fruit-producing revelation.

Knowledge or information alone, which is what humans have glorified and where they have begun their quest for meaning ever since the Fall, does not produce salvation. It does not necessarily lead to a true knowledge of God. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me" (John 5:39).

The Pharisees knew the Scriptures *(graphe)* probably better than you or I, but they did not know God. Many theologians today know the Scriptures thoroughly, but don't know God well. Some, perhaps, do not know Him at all. They couldn't sit quietly in His presence for two hours without being bored silly. They have much information, but little or no revelation. Revelation makes the Scriptures

"spirit and life" (John 6:63). It makes them live.

Why is this so important? Because we are forever short-circuiting God's process and in so doing short-circuiting the results. It is revelation that leads to biblical faith and true change. Without it we are simply appealing to a fallen, selfish, humanistic mind that is always asking, "What's in it for me?" When we appeal to this mentality through human wisdom and intellect alone, we often preach a humanistic, "What's in it for them" gospel, and we produce—at best—humanistic, self-centered converts.

If, on the other hand, we preach a pure gospel, including repentance and the laying down of a person's own life (lordship of Christ), unbelievers are sure to reject it unless they receive a biblical revelation. In fact, our gospel is often ridiculous or moronic to them: "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Cor. 2:14). The word "foolishness" is *moria,* from which we get the word "moron."

Birthing True Repentance

What is the solution? We must allow the Holy Spirit time to birth true repentance in them through God-given revelation. This produces God-centered Christians, not self-centered ones. God knows we could use some of those, especially in America.

Two or three years ago a lady, we'll call Sarah, related to me a testimony of praying for her sister and brother-in-law. Although generally nice people, "they were very anti-Christian, and were my husband's and my greatest persecutors spiritually, mocking and making fun of us."

You may need to forgive your spouse, child or loved one before God can use you to deliver him or her.

Sarah had been praying for them *for 20 years,* but they had shown no interest in the gospel. "Because of their attitude toward God and the gospel," Sarah admits, "I had developed a hard heart toward them. I was religiously proud against them and praying out of a wrong motive."

After listening to me teach on intercession, Sarah's hope was renewed and the Holy Spirit prompted her with the question, *When are you going to do this for your family?* She repented of her attitude, got her heart right and forgave them for their attitude toward God. Then she began to pray as I had instructed.

Sarah's need to repent personally and change her own attitude is a valuable lesson for us. Attitudes in our own hearts often keep God from being able to answer our prayers. Isn't it ironic and tragic that our own sin might hinder our

prayers for another sinner? Jesus said, "First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matt. 7:5). You may need to forgive your spouse, child or loved one before God can use you to deliver him or her.

Sarah prayed several things and remembers praying specifically" for the veil to be lifted off of their eyes so they can see and understand the truth of the gospel." Also, she prayed "that they would come to Christ together so one would not persecute the other."

A couple of months later—remember, before applying these principles and dealing with her own heart she had prayed for *20 years* —Sarah called to speak with her sister. She heard this amazing report: Earlier that day her brother-in-law had awakened and felt they should go to church. (They *never* went to church.) So they found a small church and during the altar call, *both of them gave their lives to Christ.* She then apologized to Sarah for the way they had treated her—their attitudes totally changed. They are still walking with the Lord. About nine months later, Sarah's father also came to the Lord.

This will work for you, too!

Blinded by Pride

How does Satan blind the mind of the unbeliever? What gives place to this veil? I believe the Lord has shown me a valuable clue. The word "blinded" in 2 Corinthians 4:4 *(KJV)* is *tuphloo,* which means "to dull the intellect; to make blind."[10] The root word, *tupho,* has the meaning of making smoke,[11] and the blindness in this passage is like a smoke screen that clouds or darkens the air in such a way as to prohibit a person from seeing. This made sense to me, but it didn't seem to fully answer how he did it. Then I made a fascinating discovery.

From this same root comes a word *(tuphoo)* that is used for being high-minded, proud or inflated with self-conceit.[12]The picture is of one who is "puffed up" much like smoke puffs up or billows. When I saw the connection between the words blindness and pride, a major missing link was supplied for me. I realized immediately it was the sin of pride, passed on from Lucifer to humankind in the Garden, that Satan uses to blind them. I realized that most rejection of Christ, whether from the works motivation of most false religions or the simple fact most people just don't want to give lordship of their lives to another, is due to pride. It is the ultimate enemy of Christ and will ultimately be dealt with in finality when every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Christ is Lord. Pride will be dealt its final blow!

The captain of a ship on a dark night saw faint lights in the distance. He told his signalman to send the message: "Change your course 10 degrees south."

Immediately he received the response: "Change your direction 10 degrees north."

The proud captain was angry that he was being challenged, so he sent a

further message: "Change your course 10 degrees south. This is the captain speaking!"

He received the response: "Change your direction 10 degrees north. I'm Seaman Third Class Jones."

The captain, thinking he would terrify this insubordinate sailor, wired a third message: "Change your direction 10 degrees south. I am a battleship."

The final reply came: "Change your course 10 degrees north. I am a lighthouse."[13]

The Male Pride Factor

God, the light of the world, is forever trying to get fallen humanity to alter their course. Arrogant humans, who have chosen to captain their own lives, usually charge on to their own destruction.

This pride factor also answered my question of why, regardless of where I went in the world, I found more women saved than men. I knew it couldn't be because they were smarter! The reason is that this root of pride is stronger in men than in women. Most men at least; some of us in the ultra-humble class no longer have a problem with it.

The reason pride is stronger in men is *that which was strongest in us in a pure form before the Fall became strongest in a perverted form after the Fall.* The motivation in men that found its greatest fulfillment in covering, nurturing, protecting and caring for—leading from a servant motivation—turned inward at the time of the Fall.

The desire to lead became a desire to dominate or lord over, a giving nature turned into a getting nature and a secure humility was transformed into an insecure pride. To see how we men were supposed to cover and lead, we need only to look at Jesus, who led and walked in amazing authority and power, yet from a pure serving motivation.

Counselors will counsel many more women than men because it is so difficult for a man to say, "I need help." Women are usually the first to say, "I'm sorry" or "I was wrong." Men are usually more competitive. Women are usually more giving and selfless. Why are these things true? The pride factor in men.

Praying for the Lost

This understanding of the blinding ability of pride is a tremendous clue in how to pray for the lost. It is mentioned again, along with several other important insights, in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the

destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Most Christians have interpreted these verses, especially verse five, as something we are to do for ourselves. Although I have no problem with doing it for ourselves, the context is certainly that of spiritual warfare for others. *The Living Bible* makes this very clear. As you read it in this paraphrase, notice also the references and inferences to the root of pride we saw in 2 Corinthians 4:4.

It is true that I am an ordinary, weak human being, but I don't use human plans and methods to win my battles. I use God's mighty weapons, not those made by men, to knock down the devil's strongholds. These weapons can break down every proud argument against God and every wall that can be built to keep men from finding Him. With these weapons I can capture rebels and bring them back to God, and change them into men whose hearts' desire is obedience to Christ.

As we observe these verses more closely, we'll see that the Lord gives us not only a solution for the pride problem, but also identifies and offers God's remedy for other aspects of the stronghold. This passage is both fascinating and enlightening.

Notice first that God tells us what should be obvious: The weapons of our warfare are not carnal or fleshly. This simply means they aren't human. God knows we often overlook the obvious, so He states it clearly. We will never win people on an intellectual basis, nor will we do it through innovative techniques or methods alone. We certainly won't do it by nagging them, putting notes in their sandwiches or berating them with statements such as "When are you going to get right with God?"

When we approach people on a human basis, especially if they feel we are pressuring them, we generally make things worse. This is because the root of pride in them which says, I *don't want anyone else controlling me or telling me what to do,* rises up and defends itself. If we attack this pride on a human level, we will only strengthen it.

God's Holy Detonators

On the other hand, we have weapons that are "divinely powerful" to pull down strongholds, if we would only realize it. God says, "Instead of using yours, I'll let you use Mine. Yours won't work, Mine will." The word "powerful" is *dunatos*[14] and is actually one of the New Testament words for a miracle. These weapons empowered by God will work miracles. The word is also translated "possible." I like that. Do you have anyone that seems impossible? Will it take a

miracle? With this power, they become possible. And, of course, this is the Greek word from which we get the word dynamite. This stuff is explosive!

This dynamite is explosive for the "destruction of fortresses" or, as the *King James* translation says, is capable of "pulling down strongholds." "Destruction" and "pull down" are the word *kathairesis.* This important and powerful word has a couple of pertinent meanings. One of them is "to bring down with violence or demolish" something.[15]With this powerful, miracle working dynamite behind our weapons, we can become demolition agents violently tearing down Satan's strongholds.

I remember as a small child watching the destruction of an old, brick school. I was fascinated as the huge cement ball, attached to a gigantic crane, was swung time after time into the building, crashing through walls and ceilings, bringing incredible destruction. I suppose this would be, in one sense, a viable picture of our warfare as we systematically—one divine blow at a time—work destruction on the strongholds of darkness. It truly does usually happen this way—a systematic, ongoing, one-blow-at-a-time war against Satan's stronghold.

Yet, I saw another huge building in Dallas, Texas, demolished several years ago. This edifice was much larger than the school I had seen destroyed as a child. This one covered nearly an entire city block, or at least it seemed that way to me. The demolition crew didn't use a wrecking ball for this one. And it didn't take days—it took seconds. They used dynamite, strategically placed by experts to demolish this major structure in less than 10 seconds.

I like to think that this in some ways can also be a picture of our intercession. Unlike this physical building, we don't usually see the answer in seconds—we may be strategically placing the dynamite of the Spirit for days, weeks or months. But every time we take up our spiritual weapons and use them against the strongholds of the enemy, we are placing our explosive charges in strategic places. And sooner or later the Holy Detonator of Heaven is going to say, "Enough!" There will be a mighty explosion in the spirit, a stronghold will crumble to the ground and a person will fall to their knees.

Mary's *Paga*

Eva Popham from Ohio shared the following testimony with me of this very thing happening to a lady to whom she ministered:

When Sandra Sims and I first saw Mary in the nursing home, she was demon possessed. Whenever we would come down the hall toward her, she would begin to shake, make violent noises and say things such as, "I know who you are. I know who you represent. I don't want you here." She would use a lot of profanity and disgusting, vile language.

Everyone at the nursing home was afraid of Mary. No one, from the cleaning

staff to nurses, would enter her room alone and no one wanted to take care of her because of her violent nature. Thus, she did not receive very good care. When it was absolutely necessary to enter her room, several of the staff would go together. Mary would not allow anyone to touch her or get near to her.

We prayed and fasted for Mary on a consistent, regular basis. It was a couple of months before Mary would even allow us to enter her room. We prayed that God would remove all calluses and pain from her heart *(logismos)* so the demons would no longer have anything to hang on to.

God showed us that Mary had been severely abused as a child. We would bind Satan from exercising power over Mary and declare that he could not speak to her *(noema).* We asked for a hedge of protection to be around her and for God to give her dreams and visions as well as for angels to minister to her. We bound up the evil forces that were already in her so they could no longer operate.

For approximately eight months after we were first able to enter her room, we consistently prayed and fasted for her as well as ministered to her. At this time I gave a testimony at our church, Love and Faith Christian Fellowship in Cincinnati, Ohio, about reaching out to Mary. I asked everyone to please pray for her. We joined together in prayer for Mary during that service, and many continued to pray for her. Pastor Mike Murray was given a picture of her to pray over. We continued to pray for God's perfect will to be done in Mary's life. We bound Satan and prayed for all of his doors to be closed in her life.

Sandra and I ministered to Mary's hurts and she eventually let her anger go by an act of faith (another *logismos).* She willed for her life to be changed. There was nothing left for the enemy to have as a stronghold in her.

About two weeks later Mary gave her life to the Lord! Today she is dramatically different: She lets people love her and touch her; her voice is becoming more and more soft and gentle; there is even a marked difference in her before and after pictures. It's like the real Mary is just now finally appearing. The presence of God is on her now.

The head nurse of the nursing home called Sandra and I into her office to give us a thank-you gift for what we have done with Mary. She told us the staff had all been asking,

"What have they been doing with Mary? She is so different!"

Because she is no longer violent, the staff is no longer frightened of her so they are beginning to properly care for her.

Hallelujah! That's *paga!* That's a demolition!

I will be explaining the italicized words *logismos* and *noema* as we progress —they are specific components of the stronghold. But first...along with demolish, there's another interesting meaning to *kathairesis.* It was used

figuratively of "removal from office."[16] Wow! Is that ever what we're after!...A new Lordship.... A different ruler. Our weapons, charged with God's authority, can enforce the breaking of the headship of the serpent. Jesus legally broke it; we can see it become literal through our prayers. Hallelujah!

The Stronghold, Satan's Prison Within

But just what does this word "stronghold" that we throw around so pervasively in the Body of Christ actually mean? The word is *ochuroma,* coming from the root word *echo*, which means "to have or hold."[17] This word for "stronghold" *(KJV)* or "fortress" *(NASB)* is literally a place from which to *hold* something *strongly.* It is also the word for a fort, a castle or a prison.

I've seen pictures of foxholes and trenches hastily dug in times of war to maintain a position. That's a hold. On the other hand, I toured a huge castle on top of a mountain in Salzburg, Austria, several years ago. From this seeming impregnable fortress on a hill, someone had ruled the territory. That's a stronghold!

In essence, Satan has a place of strength *within* unbelievers from which he can hold on to them strongly. They are prisoners, captives, slaves. Christ was sent "to proclaim release to the captives" (Luke 4:18).

I can guarantee you, however, that as His proclamation goes forth now, it will be through the mouth of the Church!

Now we come to verse five of 2 Corinthians 10, an extremely important verse. Let's read it again: "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." It is important to know that "destruction" in verse four and "destroying" in this verse are the same words.

The *KJV* does a most unfortunate thing in using two totally different words, "pulling down" and "casting down." It is necessary to know these are the same words in order to realize the Holy Spirit is carrying on the same thought. Verse four says our divinely empowered weapons can demolish strongholds, and verse five is going to elaborate more fully just what the strongholds are that we're going to demolish. In other words, *He describes for us exactly what comprises the stronghold or prison!* This is critical information as we begin to war for the lost.

Specifically, He shares with us three major components of the fortress. These are the things we will begin to call out and demolish as we war over individuals with our divinely empowered weapons. I believe this can be done over people groups as well, but the context here seems to indicate that it is speaking primarily of individuals.

Mind-Sets

The first aspect of the stronghold He mentions is "speculations"— *logismos.* This word speaks of not the scattered individual thoughts of humans, but of their calculative reasoning, their wisdom or logic. [18] Our word "logic" is actually derived from this Greek root. *Logismos* is the sum total of the accumulated wisdom and information learned over time. It becomes *what one really believes —the* person's mind-set. Moffatt calls them "theories." Humanity, before the Fall, got their wisdom and logic—their beliefs—from God. Now, James 3:15 tells us they come from the earth, the soul or intellect, and demons.

These *logismos* would include philosophies (whether formally identified or unnamed personal ones), religions, humanism, atheism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, racism, intellectualism, Judaism, materialism, roots of rejection, perversions—anything that causes a person to think a certain way.

How do these *logismos* blind individuals? How do they veil truth? The way the human mind functions dictates that when people hear the gospel, *before they even have time to think or reason about it,* it is filtered through the subconscious where all other information—including these *logismos—is* stored. This means that unbelievers don't hear what we are saying, they hear what we are saying *plus* what they already believe.

For example, I was sharing the gospel with a girl who had been horribly abused. "God is love," I said. "He loves you so much He sent His Son to die for you."

She did not hear only what I said. She also heard in her mind—I know because she said to me—"Oh? If He is love, why would He have allowed me to have been so abused? Doesn't sound like a loving God to me." That is a *logismos —a* belief, a philosophy, her wisdom, her logic. Someone will need to intercede for her and help tear it down.

On another occasion I was sharing the gospel with a fellow who had a *logismos* I call "good-ole-boy-ism." He was just too nice a guy to think he needed saving. "I'm a pretty good guy," he said. "I don't cheat on my wife, beat my kids, lie, curse or steal. I don't think God would send me to hell."

How does the gospel break through these arguments? Certainly the gospel of truth itself has power to break down some of this when anointed by the Holy Spirit. But it usually takes a long period of time—*if* you can get them to listen. It is much wiser to plow the ground ahead of time, preparing for the reception of the seed by pulling down these strongholds.

Perhaps you already know what these *logismos* are in the person for whom you are praying. If not, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal them to you. He will. And when He does, call them by name, quoting 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Say "In the

name of the Lord Jesus Christ I am destroying you, stronghold of...." Do it daily until the person comes to Christ.

All Pride That Rises Up

The second part of the stronghold we must demolish is "every *lofty thing* raised up against the knowledge of God" (v. 5). I like using the *KJV* for this verse because it uses "high thing" to translate the Greek word *hupsoma,* which is actually the same root word for "Most High" God. It actually means "any elevated place or thing."[19] This is referring to the same root of pride we discovered hidden in the word "blinded" in

2 Corinthians 4:3,4. It is the "most highness" that came to humanity at the Fall when Adam and Eve bought the lie "You too shall be as God" (see Gen. 3:5).

Humankind, like Satan, attempted to exalt themselves to a place of equality with the Most High. We became not the Most High, but our own most high, filled with pride. One leading lexicon even defined *hupsoma* as "all pride that rises up."[20] The word would then encompass all mind-sets that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God.

The good news is that we can also tear down this stronghold in people through spiritual warfare so they can humble themselves and bow their knees to Christ. Listen to this entire verse again in the Living Bible:

These weapons *can* break down *every* proud argument against God and *every* wall that can be built to keep men from finding Him. With these weapons I *can* capture rebels and bring them back to God, and change them into men whose hearts' desire is obedience to Christ (italics mine).

I like the "cans" and "everys" in the verse. The Lord doesn't wish us luck or tell us that we will win a few once in awhile. He lets us know we *can* break down *every* proud argument and *every* wall; we *can* capture rebels! And we must!

Thoughts and Temptations

Considering the third aspect of strongholds, the Lord tells us we can "take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." The word "thought" is *noema,* which also means plans, schemes, devices or plots. It refers to the spontaneous thoughts and temptations Satan uses to assault the unbelievers, as well as the schemes and plans he uses to keep them in darkness. In intercession we must declare boldly that no weapon of Satan's will prosper. We must bind his plans and stand against them through prayer. We can and should pray that the unbeliever be shielded from Satan's thoughts and temptations.

Marlena O'Hern, of Maple Valley, Washington, had been praying for her

brother, Kevin, to be saved for approximately 12 years with no seeming results. She basically prayed things such as "Lord, come into his life," or "Lord, reveal Yourself to him." As with many of us, she didn't realize there were more specific biblical ways to pray.

Also, similar to the rest of us, she sometimes grew frustrated and tried to take things into her own hands saying things such as, "You just need to give your life to the Lord"; or "You have to quit doing the stuff you're doing." Predictably, this would only result in her seeing the pride and rebellion in Kevin rise up, actually making things worse. "Then I would really feel like I had blown it," she said.

"Kevin was heading down a rocky road. He had major problems, including drugs, depression and extreme anger," Marlena relates.

Early in 1995 she took a class of mine in which I taught these principles about praying for the lost. Marlena shared them with her husband, Patrick, and their children. They began to pray the principles over Kevin. They specifically prayed the following (all parenthetical remarks are mine):

- That God would lift the veil over him (revelation and enlightenment);
- For the Holy Spirit to hover over him and protect him;
- For godly people to be in his pathway each day;
- To cast down anything that would exalt itself against the knowledge of God, specifically pride and rebellion (This would include the *hupsoma* aspect of the stronghold.);
- To take down all known strongholds—thought patterns, opinions on religion, materialism, fear (This is the *logismos* dimension of the stronghold.);
- To bind Satan from taking Kevin captive; to bind all wicked thoughts and lies Satan would try to place in Kevin's mind (These would be the *noema* aspect of the stronghold.);
- That the armor of God would be placed on him.

After two weeks of praying in this way Kevin overdosed on drugs and in his time of need cried out to God. "The Lord met him in a powerful way. The veil was definitely lifted and he had a revelation of God. He now has an understanding of the Word and responds to it. The confusion is gone! Kevin separated himself from the world and his former friends. He is now pursuing God and Christian relationships. His focus is on pleasing God, knowing Him more and more. He is even considering missions."

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). Yet we have been given authority! We can turn unbelievers "from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18). We are called to enforce and make effectual the freedom Christ procured.

The unbeliever cannot war for himself. He cannot and will not overcome the strongholds of darkness, and he will not understand the gospel until the veil lifts. We must take our divinely dynamic weapons and fight. The powers of darkness will resist, but "do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses" (Neh. 4:14).

Questions for Reflection

1. What is meant by the word "veil" in 2 Corinthians 4:3? How does this apply to unsaved people? Can you explain how this is related to a biblical revelation?
2. What is meant by Satan "blinding" the minds of unbelievers? How is this connected to the Fall of humanity? How is this significant where men (versus women) are concerned?
3. Explain the meaning of enlightenment. Can you describe the analogy to this and photography?
4. What is the true meaning of repentance? How is this connected to biblical revelation?
5. Define a stronghold. Now describe the three aspects of the stronghold in unbelievers and how intercession can be applied to each.
6. Who are you going to do this for? Will it work for them? Hallelujah!

Notes

1. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* (Iowa Falls, Iowa: Word Bible Publishers, 1992), p. 816.
2. James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), ref. no. 575.
3. Craig Brian Larson, *Illustrations for Preachng and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 98.
4. Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary,* p. 1464.
5. Ibid., p. 1463.
6. Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, ret.* no. 1994.
7. Ibid., ref. no. 1124.
8. Ibid., ref. no. 3056.
9. Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible—New American Standard* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: AMG Publishers, 1984; revised edition, 1990), p. 1718.
10. W. E. Vine, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), p. 125.
11. Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance,* ref. no. 5188.
12. Ibid., ref. no. 5187.

13. Larson, *Illustrations for Preaching,* p. 134.
14. Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance,* ref. no. 1415.
15. Ibid., ref. no. 2507.
16. Walter Bauer, A *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 386.
17. Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance,* ref. no. 2192.
18. Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary,* p. 923.
19. Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, ret.* no. 5313.
20. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* p. 851.

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chapter eleven
The Lightning of God

Strike the Mark

This was about the coolest thing I had discovered since baseball. I was in the fifth grade, and in that ornery, but not mean, "can't stand baths," "all girls have cooties" stage of life. I had recently procured my first magnifying glass.

I'm not sure how I discovered I could hold a magnifying glass at just the right angle to the sun and catch a piece of paper on fire. I didn't do anything majorly bad, like the time I nearly burned the science classroom down with my volcanic exhibition. Never did figure out why that teacher gave me a C just because he had to run to the window with a burning volcano and throw it outside. Looked pretty real to me. Nor was it like the time I burned the kitchen cabinets because I forgot about the french-fry grease. I didn't get a grade on that endeavor, although my mom's response was very educational.

This was nothing like those incidents. I just burned a piece of paper on the playground. Then this brilliant idea leaped up from my fallen Adamic psyche. I called my friends over, assuring them I had a really cool demonstration to show them. Looking at Duncan, one of the mean guys in the class, I said to him in my best "you're the lucky guy" tone of voice, "Duncan, hold your hand out. I want to show you something."

Duncan didn't leave his hand there very long. He chased me all around that playground! Some guys just can't take a joke.

Is there a picture of intercession hidden anywhere in this? Yes. One of the ways *paga* is translated is "strike the mark." The reference is Job 36:32: "He covers His hands with the lightning, and commands it to *strike the mark"* (italics mine). When God releases His light, causing it to flash forth from His presence like lightning, its striking the desired target is likened to intercession.

Although the word *paga* is not used, Habakkuk 3:4 also speaks of light flashing forth from the hand of God: "His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, and there is the hiding of His power." *The Amplified* translation is also very descriptive: "And His brightness was like the sunlight; rays streamed from His hand, and there [in the sunlike splendor] was the hiding place of His power."

We are like a magnifying glass in one sense—no, we don't add to or magnify

God's power—but we do let the "Son" shine forth through us, directing His light to desired situations, allowing it to "strike the mark."

Have you ever seen a tree struck by lightning? If so, you've seen a picture of intercession. I do lots of praying in a woods nearby. At times I come across trees struck by lightning. The lightning is so hot it literally changes the molecular structure of the trees and twists the trunks until they look like the stripes on a candy cane. The temperature in a lightning bolt can reach 30,000 degrees Celsius (45,000 degrees Fahrenheit), hotter than the surface of the sun. That's hot stuff! And God uses this to picture His judgments!

If I have my theology straight, the Creator must be greater than the creation. That means the power or energy in God is greater than a lightning bolt. No wonder the Scriptures say, "As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish before God....The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord....He raised His voice, the earth melted" (Pss. 68:2; 97:5; 46:6).

"For our God IS a consuming fire!" (Heb. 12:29).

To explain this chapter adequately, I need to lay a good foundation. Therefore, I want us to look at quite a few Scriptures that associate God with light or lightning. One of the purposes of looking at so many is to demonstrate the consistency and prevalency of this theme. I hope you don't get bored with the Bible. If you do, you probably should skip this chapter. Better yet, repent and read on!

God Is Light

The following verses associate God with light or lightning, and there are numerous others that could be given. I have italicized various words or phrases to call your attention to the theme of light:

1 John 1:5: "And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that *God is light*, and in Him there is no darkness at all."

Hebrews 1:3, *(Amp.):* "He is the sole expression of the glory of God *[the Light-being, the outraying or radiance of the divine]*, and He is the perfect imprint and very image of [God's] nature, upholding and maintaining and guiding and propelling the universe by His mighty word of power. When He had by offering Himself accomplished our cleansing of sins and riddance of guilt, He sat down at the right hand of the divine Majesty on high."

1 Timothy 6:16: "Who alone possesses immortality and *dwells in unapproachable light;* whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen."

(See also Jas. 1:17; Exod. 19:16; Ezek. 1:14; Rev. 4:5.)

At times His light, or the release of it, is associated with His glory. The

following verses are examples of this:

Luke 2:9: "And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and *the glory of the Lord shone* around them; and they were terribly frightened."

Luke 9:29,32: "And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and *His clothing became white and gleaming*....Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His *glory* and the two men standing with Him." (We read in the margin of the *NASB* that the word "gleaming" means literally, *"flashing like lightning.*[11] Wuest also translates it this way. No wonder Peter wanted to build tabernacles there!)

Revelation 21:23: "And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, *for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb*."

(See also 2 Cor. 3:7.)

Sometimes this light, lightning or glory of God is released from His mouth and often called a sword. The first four verses identify God's words or mouth as His sword. The remaining verses make the connection to light or lightning:

Ephesians 6:17: "And take the helmet of salvation, and the *sword* of the Spirit, which is the *word* of God."

Revelation 2:16: "Repent therefore; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the *sword of My mouth*."

Revelation 19:15: "And *from His mouth comes a sharp sword,* so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty"

(See also Heb. 4:12.)

Psalm 29:7, *(Amp.):* "The *voice of the Lord splits and flashes forth forked lightning*."

Ezekiel 21:9,10,15,28: "Son of man, prophesy and say, "Thus says the Lord,' Say, *'A sword, a sword* sharpened and also polished! Sharpened to make a slaughter, polished to *flash like lightning!.... I* have given *the glittering sword.* Ah! It is made for *striking like lightning,* it is wrapped up in readiness for slaughter....And you, son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord God concerning the sons of Ammon and concerning their reproach,' and say: *'A sword, a sword* is drawn, polished for the slaughter, to cause it to consume, that it may be *like lightning*."

Deuteronomy 32:41, *(Amp.):* "If I whet My *lightning sword* and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will wreak vengeance on My foes and recompense those who hate Me." (Sometimes movies can have interesting parallels to Scripture. Luke Skywalker from *Star Wars* isn't the only one who overcomes evil

with a sword of light. God has the real one!)

(See also Ps. 18:13,14; Hos. 6:5, *NIV.)*

Thus far, we have God associated with light or lightning, which sometimes shines forth as His glory. It is released from His mouth at times, becoming a powerful weapon. The following Scriptures speak of God's light in the context of Him dealing with His enemies:

Psalm 97:3,4: "Fire goes before Him, and burns up His adversaries round about. His *lightnings lit up the world;* the earth saw and trembled."

Revelation 8:5: "And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and *flashes of lightning* and an earthquake."

Revelation 16:18: "And there were *flashes of lightning* and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty."

(See also Ps. 78:48; Rev. 11:19.)

These last few Scriptures associate the release of God's light in the context of deliverance of His people:

Psalm 18:14: "And He sent out His arrows, and scattered them, and *lightning flashes* in abundance, and routed them."

Psalm 77:17,18: "The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth a sound; Thy arrows flashed here and there. The sound of Thy thunder was in the whirlwind; The *lightnings* lit up the world; the earth trembled and shook."

Psalm 144:6: *"Flash forth lightning* and scatter them; send out Thine arrows and confuse them."

(See also Ps. 27:1.)

According to all these and other fascinating Scriptures, God is light and at times this light or glory flashes forth from Him as bolts of lightning. Many times the Bible says that in order to deal with His enemies—whether for Himself or His people—God simply releases this glory or light into the situation. It flashes forth like lightning and *PAGA* HAPPENS! God's power "strikes the mark."

This happened once several thousand years ago when there was a coup attempt in heaven. Lucifer, inflated with pride, decided he would exalt himself to God's position. "Not!" as my kids would say.

Bad idea, Satan.

This war didn't last long—about as long as it takes for a lightning bolt to flash its brilliant light across the sky. Jesus said it this way in Luke 10:18-20 (Sheets's paraphrase): "Don't get excited, guys, just because demons are subject to you in My name. That's no big deal. I watched Satan cast from heaven. It didn't take long—lightning flashed and he was gone. Get excited because you have a

relationship with God."

Light Overcomes Darkness

We don't know that lightning literally flashed when Satan was ousted, but for some reason Jesus used this picture. He said it was "like lightning" (v. 18). I believe it actually flashed. It doesn't really matter, however, because whether it literally flashed or not, the analogy is certainly given of light overcoming darkness.

The Cross was a war-light overcoming darkness.

In fact, I don't necessarily think that in all of the previously mentioned references literal lightning bolts were observable in the natural realm of sight. At times there certainly were, as when Christ's clothes were glowing and flashing at His transfiguration or when His glory lights the throne room of heaven.

The point, however, is not what can be seen with the human eye, but what happens in the spiritual realm: light overcomes darkness. And the light is more than a symbolic representation of God's goodness or purity, it represents His power or energy. So whether the lightning itself is literal or symbolic, the results are the same: God's power overcoming the kingdom of darkness.

This analogy of darkness and light is prevalent throughout Scripture. Another powerful example of God's light prevailing over the darkness of Satan is at the Cross. John 1:4,5 says, "In Him was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."

The word "comprehend" is the Greek word *katalambano,* which can mean either "comprehend" or "apprehend."[1] Many scholars believe it should be translated with the latter word in this passage because the powers of darkness were not trying to comprehend or understand Christ. They were trying to apprehend or overpower Him, much like a policeman would apprehend a criminal. This makes much more sense to me.

Wuest translates verse 5 accordingly: "And the light in the darkness is constantly shining. And the darkness did not overwhelm it." Moffatt says it this way: "Amid the darkness the light shone, but the darkness did not master it." The Cross was a war—light overcoming darkness. God arose and His enemies were scattered.

Bob Woods, in *Pulpit Digest,* tells the story of a couple who took their son, 11, and daughter, 7, to Carlsbad Caverns. As always, when the tour reached the deepest point in the cavern, the guide turned off all the lights to dramatize how completely dark and silent it is below the earth's surface. The little girl, suddenly enveloped in utter darkness, was frightened and began to cry. Immediately was

heard the voice of her brother: "Don't cry. Somebody here knows how to turn on the lights."[2]

All creation was terrified, groping in the darkness of sin. Two thousand years ago, God announced to His groping and frightened humans, "Don't cry. Somebody here knows how to turn on the lights."

I believe Satan has some reoccurring nightmares. One of them is when the light—lightning—flashed in heaven and kicked him out. He probably hates thunderstorms. Why, they even sound like the majestic voice of God!

"The Lord also *thundered* in the heavens, and the Most High uttered His *voice,* hailstones and coals of fire. And He sent out His arrows, and scattered them, and *lightning flashes* in abundance, and routed them" (Ps. 18:13,14, italics mine).

"The *voice* of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory *thunders,* the Lord is over many waters" (Ps. 29:3, italics mine).

Imagine Satan's horror when the light of God flashed forth at the Cross, the same light that had expelled him from heaven. I can just hear him screaming, "Oh, no. Hear it comes again! He wouldn't let me have heaven and He won't let me have earth either."

The Lightning Anointing

Yes, at the Cross the counterfeit "angel of light" met Mr. Light himself and nothing has been the same since! The great "light" being even reproduced Himself into a bunch of little lights—"For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8)—filling them with His very glory!

For the first time Satan understood Isaiah 60:1-3:

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Bummer! he must have thought.

For the first time he understood that the Old Testament temple was a picture of us, this new race of people called Christians ("little Christs"), and that the glory of God was in every one of them. "Major bummer!"

Which brings things back to us. Please read the following statements carefully, making each connection. If intercession is pictured by God's lightning striking the mark...and if Christ's work of intercession when He met Satan, breaking his headship, was light overcoming darkness...and if our praying intercession simply releases or re-presents Christ's...then I think it safe to say that our intercession releases the lightning of God to flash forth into situations, bringing devastation to the powers of darkness:

- Calvary flashing forth again;

- The light of the world shining again;
- The royal priesthood proclaiming the excellencies of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (see 1 Pet. 2:9);
- The laser of prayer burning intensely;
- The lightning sword of the Spirit flashing brightly;
- Jesus and the Father are glorified in the Church (see Eph. 3:21)!

We have looked at the "bear anointing" and the "butterfly anointing"—maybe this is the "lightning anointing"!

In John 1:5, which we quoted earlier, the phrase "the light shines in the darkness" could just as accurately read "the light is constantly shining," due to the tense and mood of the verb. Some translations actually do translate it this way. The light that overcame darkness is still shining—the victory lives on. Yet it must be released through the Church!

In his first All-Star game, Roger Clemens, the great pitcher for the Boston Red Sox, came to bat for the first time in years due to the American League's designated hitter rule. After watching a blazing fastball by Dwight Gooden whiz past him, Clemens turned and asked the catcher, Gary Carter, "Is that what my pitches look like?"

"You bet it is!" responded Carter.

From then on Clemens pitched with far greater boldness, having been reminded of how a good fastball can be so overpowering to a hitter.[3]

We often forget how powerful the Holy Spirit in us is...how destructive to darkness is His lightning sword. It has supernatural power to overcome the works of darkness—when we release it with confidence.

Dutch Meets Goliath on Bourbon Street

I led an outreach of 200 students from Christ for the Nations Institute to Mardi Gras in 1979. We focused most of our ministry on Bourbon Street, where the biggest portion of the partying occurs. I have seen few places where darkness rules so dominantly as it does at this continuous celebration of evil.

We had many hours of prayer and preparation before going on this outreach, and were assured in our hearts that we had established victory in the Spirit. The light had preceded us. We felt we were going physically only to reap the spoils. We saw dozens of people come to Christ and experienced many dramatic events as time and time again light triumphed over darkness. It was not without its tests, however. One of the events that impacted me greatly was an encounter we had with a demonized man who intended to do some of us bodily harm— kill us.

I spent most of my time walking the length of Bourbon Street interceding for the "troops" as they witnessed and prayed with folks. One evening my partner

and I crossed the street to speak with two of our students, who happened to be carrying a sign that read, "God Loves You!"

As we stood talking, a giant of a man, whom we'll call Goliath, came at us seemingly out of nowhere. He was about 10 feet tall (at least 6' 6"), weighed 500 pounds (at least 260 pounds). He was dressed from head to toe as a Roman soldier—or maybe as a Philistine soldier—and carried a long whip he was cracking as he came up to us. His lips were covered with bloody froth and blood was trickling out of the corners of his mouth.

He approached us cracking the whip and growling like a mad dog. The area around us cleared as people backed off and watched. Goliath then began to shout in a deep, raspy voice, "God is love, huh? I'm gonna kill you!"

This is not good, I perceived quickly, being the astute man I am. I wanted to speak some powerful Scripture as a sword, but the only verse that came to mind was, *To live is Christ; to die is gain.* It just didn't seem like the one I wanted!

As I stood wondering why one of the other three team members didn't do something, the reason suddenly occurred to me—I was the leader! Being the wise leader that I am, I shouted, "Every man for himself." Then to myself I added, *Legs, don't fail me now!* I felt more like the butterfly anointing than the lightning anointing.

Of course, I didn't really say and do those things, but there was a strong fear that tried to rise up in me. What did I actually do? I PAGA'ed—big time *paga!* And when I glanced at the other three, their lips were silently moving. They were *paga'n* too!

It was *paga* times four. Magnifying glass don't fail me now!

As we stood and bound the powers of darkness in this man in the name of Jesus, within seconds he began to change. His countenance changed, his voice changed and his attitude changed. The demons controlling him had been overcome. Light prevailed. The man actually appeared confused. He looked at us with a strange expression, muttered something about going ahead with what we were doing and walked away slowly as the crowd watched in amazement.

Light overcame darkness. God's power "struck the mark," *(paga)* quieting the evil spirits and saving us from embarrassment and probable injury.

Later that night as we all gathered and shared our war stories of the day, all were amazed as we related how fearless, confident and in control we were as "Goliath" confronted us. "Never a doubt," we all assured the group. "Never a doubt." May God forgive us!

Living Temples That Carry Glory

My father, Dean Sheets, who pastors in Ohio, saw light overcome darkness while on a missions trip to Haiti. He was preaching the gospel and praying for

the sick according to Mark 16:15-18. As you are probably aware, the national religion of Haiti is voodoo; consequently, demon activity is prominent and strong. The powers of darkness have been given free reign.

Dad felt specifically led by the Holy Spirit to pray for blind individuals, so he invited them forward. Twenty people responded. As he stood before them one at a time, waiting for direction from the Holy Spirit, he was given the same instruction for 19 of the 20: "Cast out the spirit causing the blindness." Each time he did they were healed instantly, seeing perfectly.

Paga! Light striking the mark, penetrating darkened eyes, bringing sight.

What many believers are not aware of is that we are filled with the very glory and light of God. When the apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, said, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16), he used the Greek word *naos* for "temple,"[4] which always referred to the holy of holies. He was literally saying, "Don't you know you are the holy of holies?"

The word "dwells" is taken from the Old Testament word *shakan,* which means "dwelling or abiding."[5] The *"shekinah* glory" was the abiding or dwelling glory found in the holy of holies. Paul was saying that in Christ the *shekinah* glory of God now *shakans* in us (see 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:12-19). We are the new holy of holies, a temple of living stones not made with hands, but by God Himself. Second Corinthians 4:6,7 *(KJV)* says it this way:

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Israel carried the Ark of the Covenant representing the presence and glory of God into battle (see Josh. 6:6). When the Ark set out, the shout would go up, "Rise up, O Lord! And let Thine enemies be scattered, and let those who hate Thee flee before Thee" (Num. 10:35). Psalm 68:1, a warfare verse, is a quote of this verse in Numbers. That same presence and glory now abides in us. The message we are to understand is that the key to victory is carrying this presence of God into battle with us. He rises and scatters His enemies *through us!* We are now His carriers!

Release the Light

Arise, shine, Church, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Darkness, indeed, does cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples, but it is a defeated darkness. Nations are looking for the light, kings for the brightness of our rising (Isa. 60:1-3, Sheets's paraphrase). We are soldiers of

the light. We must boldly release the power of the Most High into situations, allowing the victory of Christ access. He has given us His light, He has given us His sword, He has given us His name. Use them!

Position yourself toward the Son and allow Him to shine through you, striking the mark! Wield the laser sword of the Spirit. We often forget how powerful the Holy Spirit in us is—how destructive to darkness is His lightning sword. It has supernatural power to overcome the works of darkness—when we release it with confidence.

Station yourself spiritually in front of your rebellious children and ask God to send a bolt of meekness to them. Aim the light of liberty at their addictions, whether they be drugs, sex, alcohol or whatever. Be aggressive in the spirit.

Spouses, ask God to shine forth into the lives of your mates, breaking through the darkness of deception and liberating them.

Pastors, call upon the Holy Spirit to flash, breaking strife, division and complacency over your congregations. While you are waiting for God to do something, He may be waiting on you. Release the light! Call it forth in Jesus' name.

As the Israelites carried the presence and glory of God into battle, so must we. All that was in the Ark of the Covenant is in us: the Bread of Life, the rod of priestly authority and the law of God. And the glory that was upon it now shines through us. Act like it! Strike with the sword—speak the Word! "Let God arise" through your intercession "and His enemies be scattered."

Questions for Reflection

1. How is *paga* related to lightning?
2. Explain the connection between God's light/lightning and His judgments. Can you explain how this happened at the Cross?
3. What is the relationship between God, light, His sword and our intercession?
4. Where is the holy of holies? How does this relate to intercession?
5. Think of a situation where light overcame darkness. How did God do it? Now, think of a current situation in which intercession can be used to see the same results.
6. Do you like representing Jesus?!

Notes

1. Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible—New American Standard* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: AMG Publishers, 1984; revised edition, 1990), p. 1846.
2. Craig Brian Larson, *Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand

Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 133.

3. Ibid., p. 72, adapted.

4. Joseph Henry Thayer, A *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 422.

5. James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), ref. no. 7931.

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chapter twelve

The Substance of Prayer

Two frogs fell into a can of cream, or so it has been told.
The sides of the can were shiny and steep, the cream was deep and cold.
"Oh, what's the use," said number one,
"It's plain no help's around.
"Good-bye, my friend, good-bye, sad world" and weeping still he drowned.
But number two, of sterner stuff, dog paddled in surprise.
The while he licked his creamy lips and blinked his creamy eyes.
"I'll swim at least a while," he thought, or so it has been said.
It really wouldn't help the world if one more frog were dead.
An hour or more he kicked and swam, not once he stopped to mutter.
Then hopped out from the island he had made of fresh churned butter.
(Author unknown)

Lessons from Three Men and a Frog

I first heard this witty poem 20 years ago in a message by John Garlock, one of my professors at Christ for the Nations Institute, on the subject of tenacity. There aren't many messages a person remembers 20 years later, but John Garlock has a knack and an anointing for preaching "rememberable" sermons. Others, of course, have a similar gift of preaching very forgettable messages. I've heard lots of them, and even preached my share.

Brother Garlock mentioned the story found in 2 Samuel 23:8-12 about three of David's mighty men: Shammah, Adino and Eleazar. Shammah had tenacity in the face of a humble assignment, defending a small plot of lentils from a bunch of Philistines. Adino personified tenacity in the face of overwhelming odds as he killed 800 Philistines single-handedly. Eleazar pictured tenacity in the face of incredible overwhelming fatigue as, after fighting for several hours, his hand had to be pried from his sword.

Thanks, Professor Garlock, for teaching me through three men and a frog the importance of perseverance and endurance. I rank it near the top of my list of most important spiritual traits. And the longer I live, the higher it rises. "Hang in there" didn't make it into the Ten Commandments, but it did into the nine fruits of the Spirit.

The word *makrothumia,* translated "long-suffering" in Galatians 5:22 *(KJV),*

is defined by *Strong's Concordance* as "longanimity or fortitude."[1] That's what I said, "Hang in there."

In this day of instant everything—from "fast foods" to "get rich quick schemes" to "how to have the biggest church in town overnight" conferences to "four easy steps to answered prayer" seminars—we are rapidly losing the character trait of hanging in there. We cook faster, travel faster, produce faster and spend faster...and we expect God to keep pace with us, especially in prayer.

Dick Eastman, in his book *No Easy Road,* states:

Much of society has forgotten to persevere....Few have a striving spirit like the artist Raphael. Once he was questioned, "What is your greatest painting?" He smiled, saying, "My next one." One finds Raphael always striving to do better. This is what we need in prayer, an attitude of persistence."[2]

We are much like the African cheetah that must run down its prey to eat. It is well suited for the task, as it can run at speeds of 70 miles per hour. The cheetah has only one problem, however, in that it has a disproportionately small heart, which causes it to tire quickly. If it doesn't catch its prey quickly, it must end the chase.

How often we have the cheetah's approach in prayer. We speed into our closets with great energy, we speed to the front of the church, or we speed to someone else for prayer. But lacking the heart for a sustained effort, we often falter before we accomplish what is needed. For our next prayer excursion, we decide to pray harder and faster, when what is needed may not be more explosive power, but more staying power—stamina that comes only from a bigger prayer heart.[3]

George Muller was a "stayer." One example of his persistence is related by Dick Eastman in the previously mentioned book:

"The great point is never to give up until the answer comes. I have been praying for sixty-three years and eight months for one man's conversion. He is not saved yet, but he will be. How can it be otherwise… I am praying." The day came when Muller's friend received Christ. It did not come until Muller's casket was lowered in the ground. There, near an open grave, this friend gave his heart to God. Prayers of perseverance had won another battle. Muller's success may be summarized in four powerful words: He did not quit.[4]

Easy Doesn't Do It in Prayer

The very Son of God spent many entire nights praying in order to fulfill His ministry. It took Him three arduous hours in Gethsemane to find strength to face the Cross. "He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and

tears" (Heb. 5:7).

We, on the other hand, have mastered the art of one-liners in prayer, and think if we give God a two-hour service once a week we're fairly spiritual. "Easy does it" might be good advice in a few situations, but for most of life, including prayer, easy *doesn't* do it.

A pilot early in a flight went to the back of the plane to check on the reason for a warning light. The problem was a door ajar, which flew open as he approached it. The pilot was immediately sucked from the aircraft.

The copilot, seeing by his panel that a door was open, turned back toward the airport immediately and radioed for a helicopter to search the area. "I believe I have a pilot sucked from the plane," he said. After landing the plane, everyone was astonished to find the pilot holding on to the rung of a ladder, which he had miraculously managed to grab.

He had held on for 15 minutes and, still more amazing, had managed to keep his head from hitting the runway, though it was only six inches away!

Upon finding the pilot, they had to pry his fingers from the ladder! That's perseverance![5]

Anyone long associated with the Church of this century, especially in America, knows that our problems do not result from a lack of information or material strength. If we fail in achieving what God asks from us as we run our race, it will be a failure of heart and spirit.

Like the frog, I have kicked and swum my way over time to more victories than I have accomplished quickly and easily. I have fought until my hand clove to the sword. I have found that a tenacious endurance is often the key to victory in prayer.

But WHY?

Why is persistence required in prayer? This I have labored about for years. Does God have a certain amount of prayers required for certain situations? Do we talk Him into things? Does God ever "finally decide" to do something? Do we earn answers through hard work or perseverance?

The answer to all these questions is no.

"What about the prayer of importunity in Luke 11:5-13?" some will ask. "Doesn't it teach that we importune or persist with God until He decides to give us what we need?"

The answer is an emphatic no! We don't persist against God.

The word "importunity" in Luke 11:8 (KJV) is an unfortunate translation of the word anaideia, which actually means "shamelessness"[6] or "bold unashamedness."[7] *Aidos,* the root word, means "modesty or shame"[8] and is

translated as such in 1 Timothy 2:9. Here in Luke 11, it is in its negative form, making it "without modesty or shame."

The point of this story is the same as Hebrews 4:16, which is to approach the throne of grace boldly, not with a sense of unworthiness or shame. As the petitioner in the story, we can approach our friend, God, at any time knowing we are accepted.

Is God using the waiting period to teach us? I think at times this is certainly the case, and yet, if this is the reason for a delay, we shouldn't need to pray for the same thing again and again. Once and then a waiting in faith would be adequate.

In other situations the delay might be that God has the right time for an answer to prayer. "And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary" (Gal. 6:9). But, again, if this is the reason, asking once and waiting in faith should be sufficient.

So why is a persistence or perseverance necessary in prayer? Why did it take me 30 hours of praying to get the cyst dissolved on my wife's ovary? Why did it take a year to obtain a miracle for the little girl in the coma? Why does it sometimes demand several years of intercession to see someone saved? Why did Elijah have to pray seven times before the rain came? Why did Daniel have to pray 21 days before the angel broke through with his answer?

His Throne in Our Hearts

There are probably reasons I am not aware of for the need for persistence in prayer. I certainly don't have all the prayer answers, but I want to submit one explanation for your consideration. I believe our prayers do more than simply motivate the Father to action. I have become convinced of something Gordon Lindsay, a great man of prayer and the founder of Christ for the Nations, called the "substance" of prayer.[9] In fairness, I must say I don't believe it can be conclusively proven, but there is great weight of evidence suggesting it, and I have embraced it as truth.

The concept is that our prayers do more than just motivate the Father to action. They actually release the power of the Holy Spirit from us to accomplish things. Certain types of praying would of course do this more than others.

For example, in our chapter on travail we spoke of this happening as we pray in the Spirit. Another powerful way this occurs would be through speaking the Word of God as a sword into situations (see Eph. 6:17). General declarations or commands are other activities that release the power of the Holy Spirit (see Matt. 17:20; Mark 11:23). The practice of the laying on of hands is another scriptural method of imparting power (see Mark 16:18; Heb. 6:2).

That there is literal power from the Holy Spirit which can be released from us is absolute. The power of God that brings life, healing and wholeness to the earth flows out from us—the Church.

Please don't picture some throne in heaven and feel like it's all there. He has now made His throne in our hearts and we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are the *naos* of God. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19 this word means, "holy of holies."[10] We are now the holy of holies, the dwelling place of God upon the earth. When He moves to release power upon the earth, it doesn't have to shoot out of the sky somewhere—it comes from His people where His Spirit dwells upon the earth.

The Church, God's Womb upon the Earth

Whether through speaking, touching, laying hands on the sick, declaration or worship, when God's power starts flowing upon the earth, it is flowing through human vessels. We, the Body of Christ, are God's womb from which His life is birthed or released upon the earth. The life that Christ produces flows from the womb of the Church.

In John 7:38 Jesus said, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" The innermost being, or belly (KJV), is the word koilia which literally means "womb." Translating it literally, we would say, "Out of his womb shall flow rivers of living water." The word "womb" speaks of reproduction. It speaks of birthing. It speaks of the bringing forth of life.

A similar phrase is found in Revelation 22:1,2:

And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

The picture here is of Jesus as the source of life. Out of Him flows the river with trees on either side. Leaves are produced by the trees, which are fed by the river, which is fed by Jesus. People—the nations—eat the leaves and are made whole.

What I want to point out is that the phrase "river of the water of life" in this passage is the same phrase in Greek as the "rivers of living water" in John 7. There is no difference between the river of life flowing out of the Lamb bringing healing and wholeness to the earth, and the rivers of living water that are to be flowing from the womb of the Church. We are His birthing vessels, His incubation chambers. Why should that surprise us? Is it not supposed to be the very life of Jesus in us that we are ministering to the earth?

John 7:39 tells us, "But this He spoke of the Spirit." It is the Spirit of God flowing from us. He doesn't lay hands on the sick—we lay hands on the sick. He doesn't lay hands on a person and ordain—He tells us to do it for Him. He, inside of us, releases a river to flow into that person, and they are now anointed and appointed by God. When He wants to bring forth the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation and life, He does not echo it from the heavens. He speaks it through us. God's life, the literal power and energy of God flows out of our mouths and penetrates the hearts of unbelievers, and they are born again.

We are the ones who wield the sword of the Spirit—the spoken Word of God. When the Spirit of God wants to cut and bring judgment into situations, He doesn't just speak from the clouds. He speaks from His people—out of our spirits. When I speak His Word into a situation at the direction of the Holy Spirit, it is as if the Lamb of God Himself spoke the Word. It releases God's life! We are the womb of God from which the river is supposed to flow.

Measurable Power

It is important to realize that this power is measurable. There are cumulative amounts of it. That there are measurable levels of almost any spiritual substance is easily proven.

There are measurable levels of faith. Romans 12:3 says, "as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." The word "measure" here is *metron* from which we get the word "meter." In other words, God has "metered out" to each a portion of faith; from there it must grow. There are levels of faith. There are measurable portions of righteousness. There are even measurable portions or degrees of sin.

In Genesis 15:16, God told Abraham He was going to give the land to his descendants in four generations. The reason He could not give it to him yet was because "the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."

There are measurable levels of grace. Second Corinthians 9:8 says, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you." In fact, in Acts 4:33 *(KJV)*, we are told that "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." The Greek word for "great" is *megas* from which we get "mega". There is grace, there is mega grace and there is all grace!

There are measurable degrees of love. John 15:13 speaks of greater love. Matthew 24:12 talks of love that has grown cold. Philippians 1:9 refers to love abounding more and more.

There are measurable degrees of the power of God. In Mark 6:5, there was a measurable degree of the power of God missing. The verse says that because of the unbelief of the people in Nazareth, "He could do no miracle there." The

Greek does not say, "He chose not to" or "He didn't." It says literally, "He could not" because their level of faith or unbelief had hindered the flow of the power of God. Although He was able to heal a few sick people, He could not work a miracle.

The same verse that talks about a "mega" grace talks about "mega" power (see Acts 4:33, *KJV).* They had mega power because they had mega grace! My point is simply that the aspects of the spirit realm are very tangible and real. The anointing is real. Power is real. We do not see it, but it is there. There are measurable, cumulative amounts that exist in the realm of the spirit.

Certain amounts of this power or river or life must be released in the realm of the spirit to accomplish certain things. Different amounts are required for different things. Just as in the natural you need different levels of power for different things, so it is in the spirit realm. It is like the difference between the amount of power it takes to light a flashlight versus a building, or a building as opposed to a city. The same thing is true in the spirit. Different amounts of God's power are needed to accomplish certain things.

Differing Measures of Power

Let's look again at Mark 6 where Jesus could not get enough power flowing in Nazareth to work a miracle. Enough power was flowing to get some healings, the implication being that they were minor, because the verse differentiates between the healings and miracles. Enough power was flowing for one, but not the other. This implies that differing amounts are needed for different things. Jesus could release enough to get a few healings, but He couldn't get enough flowing, because of their unbelief, to work a miracle.

The disciples in Matthew 17:14-21 had been casting out demons and healing the sick because Jesus had given them authority and power to do so. A lunatic boy was brought to them, however, and they couldn't get the job done. Jesus came along, and it was no problem for Him to exorcise the demon causing the lunacy.

The disciples had enough power flowing in their ministry to deal with most demons and diseases, but they came up against one that required more faith and power—and they didn't have enough to overcome that one! Again, the obvious implication is that different measurable levels are needed to accomplish different things.

After asking, we tend to sit back and wait on God when He is often waiting on us.

I'm thoroughly convinced this principle is a reason it takes awhile to get most prayers answered. Receiving an instant miracle is far and away the exception.

Usually it is not just a matter of asking the Father to do something, but rather a matter of releasing enough power in the spirit to get the job done. Most Christians are not aware of this. After asking, we tend to sit back and wait on God when He is often waiting on us. We have failed to understand that there are prayers which do more than just ask Him.

Sometimes, when it appears God has finally "gotten around to it" or when we think something just suddenly happened, the truth is that enough power has finally been released through prayer to accomplish it.

Prophets Who Persevered for the Power

When the prophet Elijah came to the widow's son who had died, he spread himself out on the corpse face-to-face and prayed three times (see 1 Kings 17:21). Why did it take three times? Because the man of God wasn't where he needed to be spiritually? Because he didn't have enough faith? Because he didn't do it right the first two times?

We are not told the reason, nor is it insinuated that any of those things are true. I believe the reason was that he was releasing a little more life out of his spiritual womb or spirit each time. It takes a good bit of life to raise the dead!

In previous chapters we have looked at 1 Kings 18 where Elijah prayed for rain, and discussed the significance of God choosing to work through man and man travailing to bring forth God's will. Let's look at this passage again.

In 1 Kings 18:1 the Lord said to Elijah, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth." God didn't say, "I might." He didn't say, "If you pray hard enough." He didn't say, "I'm thinking about it." He just said, "I'm going to do it." It was God's timing, God's idea, God's will.

Yet, we are told at the end of this chapter that Elijah labored in prayer diligently seven times in the posture of a woman in travail before clouds appeared and the rain came. He didn't casually walk to the top of the mountain and say, "Lord, send the rain," and immediately it was done. That's not the "effectual, fervent prayer" James 5:16-18 tells us Elijah did to first stop and then bring the rain.

The question we must ask ourselves is: If it was God's will, timing and idea, then why did Elijah have to pray seven different times until the rain came? The most reasonable explanation to me is that it was necessary to persevere until he had completed enough prayer—until enough power had been released through his intercession to go up into the heavens and get the job done.

Why did it take Daniel 21 days to get his answer when God sent an angel to him the very first day he started praying? I would think if God wanted to send an angelic messenger, He could get it through immediately if He wanted. He has

enough power, doesn't He? Then why was this angel detained for 21 days?

I believe Daniel's faithful praying every day was releasing power into the realm of the spirit. Not until enough power was released to break through the demonic opposition in the spirit could God get the angel through with the answer!

Please understand that I am not limiting God's power. I am fully aware that one word from God could rout every demon in hell. What must be factored in is God's decision to work on the earth through man. It seems reasonable to me that if a man's Prayers were responsible for the angel being dispatched, they would also be the key to breaking through with the message. As Billheimer said, "Although the answer to his prayer was granted and already on the way, if Daniel had given up it presumably would never have arrived."[11]

Releasing the River of Power

Why did it take Jesus three hours in the Garden of Gethsemane to break through? Why didn't the angels come immediately and comfort Him? Surely God was not holding out on this righteous, sinless man! Power was being released in the spirit to cause the breakthrough.

I am not speaking to you about vain repetition. I am not talking about asking God again and again and again. I am talking about understanding the ways and principles of God enough to know how to release the river in order to give birth to things out of your spiritual womb. When we intercede, cooperating with the Spirit of God, it releases Him to go out from us and hover over a situation, releasing His life-birthing energies until that which we are asking for comes forth.

Why did it take a month to get rid of the cyst on my wife's ovary? What was I doing as I prayed for her an hour every day during that time? I was releasing the river from my womb!

Some would say that God finally did it after I had persevered enough. No. Throughout the entire month her pain was decreasing, which according to our doctor had to mean the cyst was shrinking. It didn't just suddenly happen. Power being released in the realm of the spirit was accomplishing something physically inside of her. Every day when that power was released, it was destroying the cyst just a little bit more...and more...and more.

Why did I have to pray for more than a year for the comatose young lady I told you about at the beginning of this book? I went to see her at least once a week for a year speaking the Word of God, weeping, calling forth a new brain inside of her head and fighting the good fight of faith. Why did it take a year? Because it takes a lot of power to form a new brain. Why didn't God do it

instantly? I don't know. I tried everything I knew to get Him to do so.

I said, "Damsel, I say unto you, 'Arise!'" She arose not! I did all the things I'd read about the heroes of faith doing. In faith, I even sat her up in the bed and commanded her to wake up, but like a limp rag doll she flopped back down on her pillow. I do not know why God chose not to do it as an instant miracle, but because He didn't I'm relatively certain of this: A measurable amount of the river had to flow until there was enough of it to produce that miracle.

Ephesians 3:20,21 says:

Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and forever, Amen.

The word for "exceeding abundantly beyond" is the same word for the abundant grace of God in Romans 5:20. The word is *huperperissos. Perissos* means "superabundant,"[12] *huper* means "beyond" or "more than."[13] Together, they would mean superabundantly with more added to that. That's like saying more than more than.

Ephesians 3:20 says He has enough power to do more than we can ask or think with more added to that—more than more than.

So, why are we often deficient?

Operative Power

The power source is not the problem. The rest of Ephesians 3:20 gives us a clue. It tells us He is going to do this more than more than enough "according to the power that works within us." Wuest translates the phrase "in the measure of the power which is operative in us." The word "measure" is *kata* which not only has this implication of that which is measured in us, but Strong says it is also used at times with the connotation of "distribution."[14] He is going to do this superabundantly more than we can ask or think in the measure of the power that is distributed from us. Are you distributing power? Are you distributing the river?

Please don't think you are releasing enough power to accomplish the miraculous by sporadic or casual praying. You are not! You must release the power of God inside of you on a consistent basis. James 5:16 *(KJV)* says, "The *effectual fervent* prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (italics mine). Wuest translates it this way: "A prayer of a righteous person is able to do much as it operates." Notice the verse doesn't say, "A prayer of a righteous person is able to do much because it causes God to operate."

It certainly does this, but that's not what this verse is telling us. It says, "A prayer of a righteous person is able to do much as it—*the prayer* —operates"

(italics mine). The *Amplified* translation reads, "The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working]." Wow! Our prayers go to work. Notice the word "continued." The *Amplified* captures the present tense meaning of the verb. We have the power inside of us that created the world. We have the same power in us that went into the depths of the earth and took the keys from the kingdom of darkness. We must release it. Release the river! Release the power! Release it and release it and release it and release it some more! Again and again and again!

Tipping the Prayer Bowls of Heaven

As we do, the Scriptures indicate that our prayers accumulate. There are bowls in heaven in which our prayers are stored. Not one bowl for all of them but "bowls." We don't know how many but I think it very likely that each of us has our own bowl in heaven. I don't know if it's literal or symbolic. It doesn't matter. The principle is still the same. God has something in which He stores our prayers for use at the proper time:

Revelation 5:8: "And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints."

Revelation 8:3-5: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake."

According to these verses, either when He knows it is the right time to do something or when enough prayer has accumulated to get the job done, He releases power. He takes the bowl and mixes it with fire from the altar.

I want you to picture this. He takes the same fire that fell on Sinai, the same fire that burned the sacrifice consuming the rocks and water and everything else when Elijah was on the mountain, the same fire that fell at Pentecost, the same fire that destroys His enemies, the very fire of almighty God, and He mixes your bowl of prayers with His fire! Then He pours it upon the earth...lightning starts to flash, thunder crashes, the earth quakes. Something awesome happens in the realm of the spirit which then affects the natural realm.

This must be what happened when Paul and Silas were in jail and began to sing praises late in the night. Worship started ascending, God was anointing it,

the bowls filled and God poured it out. The earth literally started quaking, the jail door opened and their shackles fell off. As a result the first convert in Asia was born again in Philippi. The gospel made its first penetration into a new continent on earth.

Recently, I believe the Lord showed me what sometimes happens when we come to Him with a need, asking Him to accomplish what He says in His Word. In answer to our requests, He sends His angels to get our bowls of prayer to mix with the fire of the altar. But *there isn't enough in our bowls to meet the need!* We might blame God or think it's not His will or that His Word must not really mean what it says. The reality of it is that sometimes He cannot do what we've asked because we have not given Him enough power in our prayer times to get it done. He has poured out all there was to pour and it wasn't enough! It's not just a faith issue, but also a power issue.

I hope this doesn't alarm you. I get excited when I think about it. I didn't know it at the time, but when I was standing over the comatose girl, every time I spoke the name above every name, every time I prayed in the Spirit, every time I laid hold of His Word and promises, every tear I shed was put in a bottle (see Ps. 56:8)—or a bowl—and God was just watching until finally it was full.

Get Radical-Pour on the Power

And on a Saturday morning in 1986, the Almighty looked over at one of the angels and said, "See the little girl over there whose brain is no longer functioning that has to be fed through her stomach and breathe through a hole in her throat and is lying there like a living dead person and the doctors say there's no hope and that she's going to die? Do you see her? Take this bowl that's been filled, mix it with My fire, and go dump it on her head." The rest is history.

Go into your child's room if he or she is not born again and, preferably when they're not there, put prayer power—substance—in everything they touch. This power can go into clothing or handkerchiefs and minister to people. Enough anointing and power from the river flowed out of Paul's innermost being and went into his handkerchief that notable miracles took place when people touched those handkerchiefs. Enough of it was in Jesus' clothes that when they reached out and grabbed the very bottom edge of it, something flashed out of Him.

You will recall the testimony of Polly Simchen who came to me with a handkerchief and said, "Would you pray over this? We're going to cut it up and put a piece everywhere our son goes. We're going to hide it everywhere we can." As she shared earlier, Polly would come to me every once in awhile and say, "I've run out of them. I need another one." So we would pray and douse another one in the anointing of God.

She hid one piece under the insole in her son Jonathan's shoe and he loaned his shoes to a friend. This was the most radical drunk, burned-out freak I'd seen in a long time. The friend made a mistake! He wore the wrong person's shoes! No, actually his life was saved—radically saved, filled with the Spirit of God and turned on for Jesus. Jonathan lost a rowdy friend because the friend became so filled with the presence of God that Jonathan couldn't stand to be around him anymore. As we mentioned earlier, Jonathan is now also living for the Lord.

Smear everything your children have with the anointing! The Old Testament word "anoint" means to pour or smear with oil. It's okay to get a bit radical. Jesus liked it when people tore roofs off, crawled on hands and knees pressing through crowds, climbed trees, shouted obnoxiously crying out for mercy, bathed His feet with tears and hair—He simply loves whole-heartedness.

John Killinger tells about an interesting method used in the past to break a wild steed by harnessing it to a burro. The powerful steed would take off across the range, twisting and bucking, causing the burro to be tossed about wildly. What a sight! The steed would run away, pulling the burro alongside, and they would drop out of sight—sometimes for days. Then they would return, with the proud little burro in charge. The steed had worn himself out, fighting the presence of the burro. When he became too tired to fight anymore, the burro assumed the position of leader. And that's the way it is many times with prayer. Victory goes to the persistent, not to the angry; to the dedicated, not to those who can provide great demonstrations of emotion and energy. We need committed, determined, systematic prayer, not once in awhile fireworks.[15]

Forgive Us, Father

Father, why is the thing we need the most, the thing we do the least? Why are most of us so busy we don't have time? You must have many frustrated days when Your eyes roam to and fro throughout the earth in search of someone whose heart is completely Yours. You must weep often when You seek for a man or woman to stand in the gap to fill the breech and find no one. Your heart must ache at times for us, Your people, to rise up and be what You've called us to be.

We humble ourselves before Your throne and ask You to forgive us for our lack of prayer. And forgive us as leaders, Lord, who have not told Your people the truth. Forgive us as a church—the Body of Christ—for allowing evil to rule in this land when You have more than more than enough power in our wombs to change it.

Forgive us, for it is not Your fault, that we have a generation marked X. It is not Your will that we kill the next generation before it takes its first breath. It is not Your plan that we still have not overcome the principality of hatred that

divides this land.

Forgive us, Lord. Cleanse us now and break the curses we have allowed to rule over us. Forgive us and cleanse us from the sin of apathy, complacency, ignorance and unbelief. Wash us with the water of Your Word. Break off of us this lethargic prayerlessness, which we justify a thousand different ways. It really boils down to disobedience, unbelief and sin.

Father, please forgive us and deliver us. Set us free from being hearers of the Word only, and not doers. Give us homes and churches that are founded on the rock of obedience to Your Word. Rise up in Your people with the stubborn tenacity that Jesus had, that the Early Church walked in. Cause us to cast off everything that would oppose Your Spirit and move us into a realm that pays a price and lays hold of the kingdom of God.

Fill us with Your Spirit. Baptize us in fire. Let there be an impartation of the Spirit of grace and supplication. Let there be an anointing that comes from Your throne to hungry people who are tired of status quo, of mediocrity, of death and destruction. We are tired of it, God. We are tired of being defeated by a defeated enemy. We are tired of being held back from our destiny, both individually and as a nation. We are tired of lack and disease. We are tired of sin. We are hungry for something—the God of the Bible!

Questions for Reflection

1. Can you explain the real lesson being taught by the story in Luke 11:5-13? Is "the prayer of importunity" a good phrase to use in summarizing this passage?
2. What is meant by "the substance" of prayer? How does this relate to perseverance?
3. Provide some Scriptures demonstrating that spiritual things are measurable. Now apply this truth to prayer using Ephesians 3:20,21 and James 5:16.
4. Can you think of any situations where you may have stopped praying before your "bowl" was filled? Are there any current situations in your life that might need more power released to receive an answer?
5. Do you love Jesus?

Questions for Reflection

Notes

1. James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), ref. no. 3115.
2. Dick Eastman, *No Easy Road* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), pp. 96-97.

3. Craig Brian Larson, *Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 245, adapted.

4. Eastman, *No Easy Road,* pp. 97-98.

5. Larson, *Illustrations for Preaching,* p. 114.

6. Joseph Henry Thayer, A *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 38.

7. Jack W. Hayford, *Prayer Is Invading the Impossible* (South Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1977; revised edition, Bridge Publishing, 1995), p. 55, 1977 edition.

8. Thayer, A *Greek-English Lexicon,* p. 14.

9. Gordon Lindsay, *Prayer That Moves Mountains* (Dallas: Christ for the Nations, Inc., revised 1994), p. 43.

10. Thayer, A *Greek-English Lexicon,* p. 422.

11. Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne* (Fort Washington, Pa.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1975), p. 107.

12. Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance,* ref. no. 4057.

13. Ibid., ref. no. 5228.

14. Ibid., ref. no. 2596.

15. Larson, *Illustrations for Preaching,* p. 177, adapted.

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chapter thirteen

Actions that Speak and Words that Perform

A Most Amazing Prayer Meeting

In 1988 I was invited to England with a dear friend of mine, Michael Massa, to teach for a week. Two intercessor friends of ours from England, Derek Brant and Lew Sunderland, had invited us to minister to a group of about 40 representing the four British Isles (England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland).

I didn't realize several things going into that week. First, I didn't factor in the combined *years* of intercession represented by the group—Lew alone had been interceding for England nearly 30 years. This small, insignificant detail meant simply that *anything could happen.*

Second, I didn't know the Holy Spirit was going to show up with such intensity that on the final evening I wouldn't be able to finish my message. When I paused and said, "The presence of God is so strong, I just cannot continue," a spirit of repentance and intercession for England came upon everyone and lasted all night.

Without question, it became one of the most amazing prayer experiences of my life. The prophetic actions and declarations that went forth—terms which I'll explain shortly—were incredible. We spoke Ezekiel 37:1-10 over the land in the same way Ezekiel himself prophesied to the dry bones of Israel and to the breath of God. We sat silently for over an hour—no one moving or uttering a word—in deep repentance and the fear of the Lord. The men among us walked the grounds all night in repentance and prophetic intercession, standing in the gap for the men of the land. It was truly an amazing night.

Third, I wasn't aware at the time that God was calling me to and giving me spiritual authority for the nation of England. I had received prophetic words and Scriptures from individuals speaking of a call to the nations. And I had certainly felt this was true, but wasn't aware of a particular call for England, nor of the divine authority accompanying it.

I had been given Jeremiah 1:10 on more than one occasion: "See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." However, I wasn't sure I wanted such a calling, and must admit I didn't fully embrace it.

England's Call to a Reluctant Prophet

In May of 1994 this same group invited me back to England, along with a worship team from the States, led by a close friend and associate, David Morris.

"It is time to follow up our last meeting by marrying the Spirit and the Word through anointed prophetic worship, followed by you, Dutch, speaking a prophetic message over the nation" they told me. "We're going to rent some of the old cathedrals around England and have the services in them. We feel this will release some things in the spirit and further pave the way for God to move."

"I don't have a prophetic message for England and besides, I'm too busy," was my response. I maintained this position for months, up until several weeks before the meetings were to take place. At that time three different intercessors told me within the span of one week that I had missed God's leading and was supposed to go to England.

Oh, they were nice about it and very respectful, but the Holy Spirit was a little more blunt in interpreting for them: *Wake up, Sheets!*

Being the astute man spiritually that I am, three independent words of correction were enough. After the last one, I immediately picked up the phone and instructed my secretary to call England informing them that I had missed God and would come if they had no one else.

"No, we don't have anyone else" they told her. "We knew he was supposed to do it. We've just been waiting for him to hear."

It makes you feel terribly unspiritual when everyone in the world knows God's will for your life, but you!

Lest you begin to mistake this book for an autobiography, I'll get to the point. In the last of our meetings in England, all of which were very powerful, we were ministering in Westminster Chapel.

As I was preparing myself to preach in this well-known church laced with a rich and wonderful heritage, located just a block or two from Buckingham Palace, I heard these words deep in my spirit (I trust you're ready for this. You probably know by now that I can be a bit on the radical side.): *You are not preaching to the people in attendance tonight. You are preaching to this nation. You are to declare My Word to it, calling it back to righteousness, to holiness, to repentance, to Me. Call forth My anointing, My fire and My presence to this land again.*

Not wanting my hosts to think me too strange, I informed them as to what I intended to do. Then I did it!

I preached to the air.

I preached to the government.

I preached to the sinners of England.

I preached to the entire Body of Christ of England.

And I've never worked harder in my life. I felt as though I Was warring against and trying to push through hordes of demons. At the conclusion of my message I sat down behind the platform totally exhausted, drenched with perspiration and almost in a daze. I had no sense of victory or defeat, only of exhaustion from the battle.

Lew Sunderland, the matriarchal intercessor responsible for inviting and praying me there, a true mother in the faith, approached me with a sweet and understanding smile. Placing my cheeks in her hands she assured me, "It's all right, darling, you made it through. You accomplished what was needed." She then said to me later, "You have accepted now, haven't you, darling"—to Lew everyone is darling—"that God has called you to this nation and has given you authority here?"

"Yes, Ma'am," I said meekly and submissively, as would a small child to its mother after having just learned a valuable lesson.

"You won't question it any longer, now, will you?"

"No, Ma'am."

"That's good. We'll just have you back when the Lord says it's time. Okay?"

"Yes, Ma'am."

I'm returning next month!

We received a call from England the week following our ministry. The message was, "Revival has broken out in London." Renewal had, indeed, hit the nation, with many people coming to Christ and thousands receiving a renewing touch of the Holy Spirit.

The Boomerang Anointing: Action and Declaration

I would never presume that revival came solely because of our ministry. The years of intercession by many and the countless hours of selfless labor by hundreds of godly men and women had much more to do with it than anything our team ever could have done. What part did we play? Prophetic worship—declaring through pageantry and song the splendor, greatness, rule and authority of God, and prophetic declaration—proclaiming the will and Word of the Lord into the spirit realm.

There is an interesting aspect of intercession few people understand and still fewer do. It is *prophetic action and declaration.* What do we mean by this? When we say something is "prophetic," we mean it's either foretelling—speaking about or predicting future things, or forthtelling—actions or words that declare something for God. In the latter case it may not be futuristic at all.

Something that is prophetic in nature can be one or both—foretelling or forthtelling.

Either of them can have a forerunning or preparatory purpose. Prophetic words or actions prepare a way, in the same sense that John the Baptist, the prophet, prepared the way with his words and actions for the Messiah to come and for the glory of the Lord to be revealed (see Isa. 40:1-5). Prophetic ministry releases the way for the glory of the Lord and the ministry of Jesus to follow. Prophetic actions and declarations prepare the way for God to work upon the earth.

In a sense they release God to do something, as they become the implemented means or method through which He has chosen to work. They do not release Him in the sense that He is bound—God obviously is not bound. But they release Him in the sense that:

1. Obedience to God brings a response from God. As we shall see later in the chapter, prophetic actions and declarations mean nothing if they are not directed by God. In the same sense, when He gives instruction, it must be obeyed. He chooses to do things a certain way and when that way is implemented, it releases God to do what He wants to do. He doesn't always explain why we must do it a particular way. Being God, He has that right. But when His chosen way is implemented, He does what He needs to do.
2. Faith releases God. When He says, "Do this," faith and obedience release Him.
3. They release Him in the sense that His creative and effectual Word is released upon the earth. God's creative power, energy and ability that come forth through His Words are released upon the earth through prophetic declaration! If you are not open to revelation, you'll never be able to embrace this. Open your heart to enlightenment.

A more complete definition would be: Prophetic action or declaration is something said or done in the natural realm at the direction of God that prepares the way for Him to move in the spiritual realm, which then consequently effects change in the natural realm. How's that for God and man partnering? God says to do or say something. We obey. Our words or actions impact the heavenly realm, which then impacts the natural realm. Maybe this is the "boomerang anointing!"

I'm sure by now you could use some biblical examples of this, so let me give you several. First, I want to give you biblical examples of prophetic action that preceded and/or released literal action in the earth. Then we'll examine some prophetic declarations.

Prophetic Action

Moses stretching forth his rod over the Red Sea is an example of prophetic

action (see Exod. 14:21). Why did he have to stretch forth his rod? Because God said to. He wanted the symbolic rod of authority to be stretched over the Red Sea. If there had been no extending of the rod over the sea, there would not have been a rolling back of the sea. God essentially said, "I want a prophetic act to release Me to do this!"

Another example of prophetic action is Moses holding up the rod of authority at Rephidim where Israel was battling with Amalek (see Exod. 17:9-13). I shared the story in chapter 9 to point out the difference between authority and power, but it is also a vivid demonstration of prophetic action.

Moses was up on the mountain with the rod of authority lifted. When he held it up, Israel prevailed. When he let it down because of fatigue, Amalek prevailed. Morale wasn't the issue. Do you think those soldiers on the battlefield, instead of fighting, were watching Moses? It had nothing to do with morale—they probably didn't even see the rod going up and down.

It had to do with something happening in the realm of the spirit. This prophetic action was releasing something in the heavenlies. As it did, the authority of God was bouncing back to earth and giving victory to the Israelites. I can't explain it any more than that. Some things, when dealing with God, simply cannot be explained.

God's Way, Even When It Makes No Sense

Moses hitting the rock in Exodus 17:6 is another example of prophetic action. He took the rod of authority, struck the rock and water came out. Why? Because God wanted it done that way. We could elaborate on all the symbolism of these actions and possibly understand why God did them, but the bottom line is: When He chose to do it a certain way, someone had to perform an act upon the earth that often made no sense, but when performed, released something in the spirit, which released something upon earth. A person doesn't normally get water out of rocks when he or she hits them with a rod...unless God says to do it. Again, when He tells us to act, it impacts the spirit, affects the earth and produces results—like bringing water out of rocks. That's prophetic action!

Many of these examples appear in Scripture. In 2 Kings 13:14-19 Elisha was about to die and King Joash came to him for advice. The Assyrians were camped around Israel and he wanted some instruction from the prophet. Elisha said, "Take your arrow and shoot it out the window toward the enemy camp!" It was a declaration of war. The king and the prophet put their hands on the bow together, shooting the arrow. Elisha then said, "That's the arrow of the Lord's deliverance, King. Now take these arrows and strike the ground."

The king was about to be tested. His actions were going to be prophetic. Not knowing what the prophet was up to, he took the arrows and struck the ground

three times.

The prophet was grieved and angry. "Three times you will have victory over your enemies, and then they will conquer you," he said. "You should have struck with the arrows at least five or six times, then you would have conquered them!"

This story doesn't seem fair to me. How was the king supposed to know he should keep striking? I think the point is that if God says to hit it three times, then you hit it three times. But if God simply says hit it, you hit it until He says stop! God was after prophetic action, but He didn't get what He wanted. Neither did the king!

People were healed in Scripture through prophetic action. Jesus made clay with saliva, rubbed it in a blind man's eyes and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam (see John 9:6-7).

Naaman the leper had to dip in the Jordan River seven times (see 2 Kings 5:10-14).

"I don't want to," he said.

"Then you won't get healed," replied Naaman's servants. Why? Because God chose to work in that way. And when God chooses to do it by a certain method, no other means will work.

Cindy Jacobs describes prophetic acts in her book, *The Voice of God:*

At other times, God would ask His people as a whole to do something that not only was prophetic, but also had great power as a form of intercession to bring profound change when obeyed....In 1990, a team from Women's Aglow went to Russia to intercede for that nation. We were led to perform several prophetic acts. Our trip came before the fall of Soviet communism and several things happened that led us to believe we were being monitored. Before we left, my friend Beth Alves had a dream that we had actually buried the Word of God in the ground. This was to result in a critical prophetic act later in the trip.

One strategy we used for intercession was to take a bus tour around the city. City tours are great because they take the visitors to all the historical sites. One place the tour visited was Moscow State University, a bastion of communist teaching. As we sat on a wall near the school, I suddenly remembered Beth's dream and thought of the "Four Spiritual Laws" tract I had in my purse. In a flash, I knew this was the place to do what Beth had dreamed about.

I quickly jumped up (we had just a few minutes before the bus was leaving) and said, "Come on, let's plant the Word in the ground!" Several of the ladies came after me. Huffing and puffing as we ran, I reminded them of Beth's dream and told them of the tract. I glanced around to find the shelter of some trees in which to do the prophetic act. (We had encountered a person in Red Square that day whom we were pretty sure was a KGB agent, and since we weren't

interested in a premature prison ministry we had to be careful!)

Finding a sheltered place, I knelt and started to dig. This was a dismal failure as I only succeeded in breaking my fingernails. Finally, I found a stick and dug a hole. Dropping the tract into the ground, I quickly covered it up while the ladies prayed. Pointing toward the university, I began to prophesy, "The seed from this tract will grow schools of evangelism, and theology will be taught here.'

Later on, after the fall of Russian communism, Billy Graham did start schools of evangelism there. Sister Violet Kitely, a friend of mine, told me that a church has been planted in Moscow State University by Shiloh Christian Center (a large church in Oakland, California).

What happens through these prophetic acts? They are intercessory in nature. In fact, they might be called intercessory acts. Certain aspects of what happens might seem speculative in nature. We cannot prove a correlation between obedience in doing a prophetic act and, say, the starting of schools of evangelism. Time and time again in Scripture, however, we see where God spoke to His children to perform an intercessory, prophetic act, and He powerfully moved as a result.[1]

Prophetic Declaration

Let's look at some biblical examples of prophetic words that precede God doing something. In Jeremiah 6:18,19, Jeremiah prophesied and said, "Therefore hear, O nations...Hear, O earth." Similarly, in Jeremiah 22:29 *(KJV)* he again prophesied saying, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."

Many would think I was an utter fool if I walked out of my house and said, "All the earth, hear me now! And all the nations, I'm speaking to you." But that's what Jeremiah did. It was prophetic declaration that made no sense naturally.

We must understand that it is not an issue of what our words would normally do. It is rather speaking *for God,* which releases His power to accomplish something. Isn't this what happens as we preach or declare the gospel, which is the power of God for salvation? (see Rom. 1:16).

Our mouths, speaking God's Word, release the power of those words. Is this not also what occurs when we speak His Word as a sword in spiritual warfare? He infuses our words with divine power. Why then would He not in other situations allow us to be His voice? When Jeremiah said, "O Earth! Earth! Earth! Hear the Word of the Lord!" it was exactly the same as if God, Himself were saying, "O Earth! Earth! Earth! Hear My Words!"

God told Jeremiah earlier that He was going to use him "to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10). Notice, then, in Jeremiah 31:28 He says He has done just that: plucked up, broken down, overthrown and destroyed. It is imperative to see that God did

these things through the words of His prophet.

In Micah 1:2 the prophet said, "Hear, O peoples, all of you; listen, O earth and all it contains."

Wouldn't you feel rather foolish saying, "O earth and everything in it, God wants me to talk to you. Are you listening?" Micah did just that, however. Obviously all the earth didn't hear him...no more than the storm heard Jesus tell it to be still or the fig tree heard Him command it to die. Whether anything hears us isn't the point. What we are to understand is the power of Holy Spirit-inspired declaration—it releases the power of God into situations.

We Become His Voice

"But those were the prophets and Jesus," some might argue. Yes, but after rebuking the storm, Jesus rebuked the disciples for their fear and unbelief, implying that they should have rebuked it. He also followed up His cursing of the fig tree with a promise that we could speak to mountains and cast them into the sea. He is describing the power of Holy Spirit-inspired declaration. We become the voice of God upon the earth.

In her book, *The Praying Church,* Sue Curran quotes S.D. Gordon:

Prayer surely does influence God. It does not influence His *purpose.* It does influence His *action.* Everything that ever has been prayed for, of course I mean every right thing, God has already purposed to do. But He does nothing without our consent. He has been hindered in His purposes by our lack of willingness. When we learn His purposes and make them our prayers we are giving Him the opportunity to act.[2]

Hosea 6:5 is a powerful verse about God bringing judgment: "Therefore I have hewn them in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth." How did He do this? Through His words spoken by the prophets. God's words, released for Him by humans.

It is important to state clearly that to be effective, declarations must be the words or actions God commands. "So shall *My* word be which goes forth from *My* mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what *I* desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which *I* sent it" (Isa. 55:11, italics mine).

Please realize that when God said this, He was not talking about speaking from the clouds. He was referring to what He had been saying and was still saying to them through the prophet Isaiah. In essence He was declaring, "This man's words are My words. He is My voice. The words won't return to Me void, but will do exactly what I send them to do through this man!" That's pretty awesome!

Of course, there are some who say God doesn't speak anything directly to us

today—He only uses the Bible—which would mean the only thing we can declare for Him is Scripture. I have great respect for my brothers and sisters who believe this, and would encourage them to speak the words of the Bible into situations. To others of you who believe the Holy Spirit does speak in our spirits, listen for His direction as you pray and when so led, boldly speak and do as He instructs. Of course, all that we do must be judged by and never violate the Scriptures.

Beth Alves, in her outstanding prayer guide, *The Mighty Warrior,* gives excellent and thorough instruction about hearing the voice of God.[3] It would be wise to study this or a similar book to ensure accuracy in learning to hear God's voice. Also, check with godly and mature leaders before doing anything of a public nature or something that seems extremely strange. Don't take your cue from the prophet Isaiah and run around town naked (he Probably wore a loincloth). Use wisdom and when in doubt, always check it out. If that isn't possible, when in doubt, don't. Never do anything that contradicts Scripture or might bring a reproach on the name of the Lord.

Saying What God Says

The word in the New Testament for "confession" is *homologia,* which means "say the same thing."[4] Biblical confession is saying what God says—no more, no less. If it isn't what God is saying about a situation, it does nothing. But if it is what He says, it accomplishes much.

The Word of God is never ineffective; it will always produce.

The Word of God is called a "seed" in the Scriptures. The root word in Greek is *speiro. Spora* and *sperma* are variations of the word, both of which are translated "seed" in the New Testament. It is easy to see the English words spore and sperm in them.

God's method of reproducing or bringing forth life is His Word by which we are: born again (see 1 Pet. 1:23), cleansed (see John 15:3), matured (see Matt. 13:23), freed (see John 8:31,32), healed (see Ps. 107:20)—as well as many other results. When God speaks His word, He is sprinkling seeds that will bring forth. The Word of God is never ineffective; it will always produce. When we speak God's Words into situations, as the Holy Spirit directs, we are sprinkling the seeds of God, which then gives Him the ability to cause life to come forth!

Job 22:28 declares, "You will also decree a thing, and it will be established for you." The word "decree" means literally "decide and decree"[5]—determine

something and then decree it. The actual meaning of *omer,* the word translated "thing" is "a word; a command; a promise."[6]

A more precise wording would be, "You shall decree or declare a word." Then He says it will be established for you. "Establish" is the word *qum,* meaning not only to establish, but also to "arise or stand up."[7]Here's what I believe God is saying: "You shall decree a word and it will rise up. You shall sprinkle My seed. It will arise (grow) and establish something in the earth."

Why don't you establish some salvation upon the earth by decreeing salvation seeds? Establish freedom for someone by declaring freedom seeds. Establish unity over your church or city by commanding unity seeds. Establish God's destiny over your children by sowing destiny seeds. Plant your own personal garden. Tend it well. See if God's Word won't produce a harvest. Re-present the victory of Calvary from your mouth!

Job 6:25 *(KJV)* reads: "How forcible are right words!" Forcible is the word *marats,* which also means "to press."[8] As the signet ring of a king presses a document with his seal, our words also seal things. They seal our salvation, the promises of God, our destinies and many other things.[9]

Ecclesiastes 12:11 *(KJV)* tells us "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies." Our words act as nails constructing things in the spirit. Just as a nail is used to keep a board in place, words are used to keep God's promises in place, allowing them to build or construct things in the spirit.[10]

Prophesying to Bones and Breath

Ezekiel and the Valley of Dry Bones is another example of prophetic declaration. "Speak to the bones!" God said to the prophet.

Can you imagine what Ezekiel thought? *Speak to them? God, if You want something said to skeletons, why don't You just do it?* But Ezekiel obeyed and said, "O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." And they did! Bone came to bone, flesh came on them.

There was no life in them, however, and Ezekiel's next assignment amazes me more than prophesying to the bones. The Lord said, "Prophesy to the breath." Later in the passage we're told that the breath he was prophesying to was the Holy Spirit. God didn't say, "Prophesy *by* the Holy Spirit," nor did He say, "Prophesy *for* the Holy Spirit." God said, "I want you to prophesy *to* the Holy Spirit." Ezekiel did and the Spirit of God did what a man told Him to. Incredible!

Did the prophet actually command the Holy Spirit? Not really. He wasn't commanding God; He was commanding *for* God. As has been God's plan and

heart from the Creation, He was partnering with man. Father and Sons, Inc. managing the planet! God working through the prophetic declaration of a human being. Who can fully understand such a thing?

Talking to the Wall

Several years ago the Lord sent Dick Eastman, president of Every Home for Christ, to Berlin. How would you like to get this assignment from God? The Berlin Wall was still up, and Dick felt the Holy Spirit prompting him with these instructions: *I want you to get on an airplane, fly to Germany, go to the Berlin Wall, lay your hands upon it and say five words to it: "In Jesus' name, come down!"* That was it—end of assignment! Five words and he could go home.[11]

How would you like to go to your spouse and say, "Uh, honey, the Lord has told me to do something."

"Yes, what is it?"

"Well, He wants me to go to Germany."

"Okay, what are you going to do over there?"

"Go to the Berlin Wall."

"Oh? What are you going to do at the Wall?"

"I'm going to put my hands on it and say, 'In Jesus' name, come down!' and then I'm going to come home."

Wouldn't that make for an interesting discussion?

That's exactly what Dick did, because he understood the power of prophetic action and declaration. Dick would never claim to be the only person used by God to bring down the Berlin Wall. However, shortly thereafter the Wall was torn down.

A Vision for the Youth

A few years ago I was in Washington, D.C., for the National Day of Prayer with the Master's Commission, a group of young people from Spokane, Washington. My wife, Ceci, and I accompanied them because, while I had been ministering to them a couple of months prior, I had an incredible picture—I believe it was a vision. The picture was of a stadium filled with young people who were radically committed to God. As I watched, this multitude of young people filed out of the stadium and flooded the nation, taking revival with them.

I shared the picture with these young people and a spirit of intercession came upon us that lasted for about 30 minutes. It was truly an awesome time of prayer for the youth of America. As we finished praying, I felt I was to join these youths on their upcoming trip to Washington, D.C.

Shortly after we arrived in Washington, D.C., I sensed the Lord speak to me, *I'm going to confirm to you on this trip that I am sending revival to this nation.*

I'm also going to demonstrate to you that the youth will play a major role in it.

The Vision Confirmed

My first confirmation came on The National Day of Prayer. There were probably 400 to 500 people gathered for the primary prayer meeting that morning—senators, congressmen, statesmen and spiritual leaders of the nation. I wasn't part of the program, but was there to agree in prayer, as were most of the attendees. The Master's Commission had somehow received permission to be in the program, which was a miracle in itself. When these young people were invited up for their 15 minutes, they walked down the aisle singing, "Heal Our Land."

As they sang, the Spirit of God fell over the room like a blanket. Perhaps hovered would be a better way to phrase it. At no other point was the presence of God felt as strongly. I didn't see anyone present who wasn't weeping. Dr. James Dobson, who spoke after the Master's Commission, commented through tears that it is not often we get to witness history in the making. I'm sure everyone in attendance believed that day impacted the history of our nation.

These young people then rendezvoused with Norm Stone, a man from their church, Harvest Christian Fellowship. God called Norm several years ago to walk across America seven times as a prophetic act of repentance and intercession for the babies murdered in America through abortion. He is now on journey number five—walking and interceding for the unborn. That...is prophetic action! The Master's Commission, most of whom were from the same church, walked behind him, 20 miles a day for two weeks, praying.

The night before these young people were to join Norm, I heard these words from the Lord: *This is a prophetic declaration by Me that the generation which Satan tried to annihilate through abortion—My next generation of warriors in the earth—have not and will not be destroyed. I'm sending these young people to march behind Norm as a prophetic message saying, "No! This is My generation, Satan, and you will not have them!"*

Later that evening I heard the words, *I'm going to confirm to you once more that I'm sending revival to this nation in which the youth will have a major role. I'll do it through the Bible reading you're to do tonight.*

I was scheduled to be part of a three-day read-a-thon, the entire Bible being read by individuals while facing the Capitol building. Each person participating was allowed to read for 15 minutes, no more. We were required to read from wherever the progression happened to be in the Bible when our turn came. I didn't pick my reading time—someone else had signed me up the previous day and informed me I was supposed to be there at midnight the following night.

Due to the nature of the Lord's dealings with me at that time, I told Him,

"Lord, there is only one way I could know of a certainty that You are confirming these things to me through my Bible reading. When I arrive, they must tell me that I can either read the book of Habakkuk or Haggai." This was not a fleece, nor was I testing God. It was because of the things I had already sensed Him saying to me through these two books.

Do you know the size of these books? They consist of *eight pages* in my Bible. What would the odds be, when not choosing my own reading—nor even the time of my reading, of my showing up and being told, "Here, read from these eight pages."

I walked up to the lady in charge.

"Are you Dutch Sheets?"

"Yes, I am."

"You are on in 15 minutes, after this person. You have your choice. You can either read the book of Haggai or the book of Habakkuk."

I nearly passed out! You can believe I read the Word of the Lord with authority making prophetic declaration over the government of this nation with absolute faith that revival is coming.

Whatever He Says, Do It!

God is calling the Church to a new understanding of prophetic action and declaration, functioning as His voice and Body upon the earth. When He speaks His plan to us, however foolish it may seem—to hold up a rod, speak to the spiritually dead, walk our neighborhoods, march through our streets, hit rocks, decree to the earth, lay hands on and speak to oppressive walls, walk across America, read the Bible toward the Capitol, speak to a nation that isn't listening—He needs us to DO IT!

The Lord may lead you to go to the bedroom of a rebellious child and anoint things with oil, pray over clothing, speak over the child's bed or some other symbolic act. Others of you will be called to make declarations over your cities and governments. Some will be told to march on land, claiming it for the kingdom of God. Whatever He says to you, do it. Be bold to declare the Word of the Lord over and into situations. Sprinkle the seed of His Word into the earth and expect a harvest. It will be established. It will arise! Life will come!

"You do know now that you're called to do this, don't you, darling?"

Questions for Reflection

1. Define prophetic action and declaration. Explain how they "release" God. Now give some biblical examples.
2. Can you explain the connection between God's Word, seeds and our Holy Spirit-inspired declarations?

3. Can you find some verses of Scripture that would be good to decree for an individual's salvation?...Healing? How about Scriptures to decree over your city?

4. Isn't God good?

Notes

1. Cindy Jacobs, *The Voice of God* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1995), pp. 251, 252, 253.

2. Sue Curran, *The Praying Church* (Blountville, Tenn.: Shekinah Publishing Company, 1987), p. 140.

3. Elizabeth Alves, A *Mighty Warrior*: A *Guide to Effective Prayer* (Bulverde, Tex.: Canopy Press, 1992), pp. 69-96.

4. Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible—New American Standard* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: AMG Publishers, 1984; revised edition, 1990), p. 1861.

5. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., revised edition, 1991), p. 158.

6. Ibid., p. 118.

7. Ibid., p. 793.

8. James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), ref. no. 4834.

9. Adapted from a message by Pastor Tim Sheets, Middletown, Ohio.

10. Ibid.

11. Dick Eastman, *The Jericho Hour* (Orlando, Fla.: Creation House, 1994), pp. 10-11, adapted.

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chapter fourteen
The Watchman Anointing

The Genetic Plague

The only thing worse than shopping is watching someone shop. Except for my wife, of course. I don't mind at all following her around a mall for two or three hours. I show my interest periodically with pleasant little grunts—"Umph"; "Un-huh"; "Ahh-hum." Sometimes I get downright wordy—"Yes"; "No"; "Sure"; "HOW MUCH!" I've gotten pretty quick at correcting that one, "Wow, what a deal!" I hastily add. About the closest thing I can compare "shopper watching" to would be watching a sewing match.

Which is why I'm sitting in the food court writing while my wife and youngest daughter, Hannah, shop. It's one of those outlet malls where they sell you the flawed stuff "on sale." My oldest daughter, Sarah, who is 10 years old, is with me, reading. She doesn't like shopping, either—yet. I informed her on the way to our "food court refuge" of the gene in her—which God gave all women—that simply hasn't kicked in yet. Told her not to worry, it'll happen.

In my studies of this genetic plague—most of them done through conversing with other men in food courts—I have discovered that no one knows for sure when the gene kicks in or what triggers it. It can hit anytime between the ages of 6 and 13. Sometimes it happens in the middle of the night; they just wake up with the shakes—flulike symptoms. When it happened with Hannah, I was ready to anoint her with oil, until Ceci informed me it wouldn't help.

"What do you mean it won't help?" I asked in surprise. "Of course it will."

"No," she said, "it's her shopping gene kicking in. We've got to get her to a mall—fast."

Mom was right, of course. She usually is. Hannah came home proudly holding her shopping bag, looking like she'd just caught her first fish. Women! Who can figure?

To prove my point, I just counted the men and women in the food court and surrounding stores—26 females and 9 males. Half the males were kids that had been dragged there against their wills. Another was writing—yours truly—and the rest were grunting, "Uh-huh." I felt sorry for one guy; he actually looked like a zombie. I think he finally cracked under the stress.

Ceci and Hannah are back now, getting something to drink and showing us their "deals." I'm grunting. Ceci is merely dropping Hannah off so she can run back for one more thing. Seven-year-olds—apprentice shoppers—can't always keep up with the pros. They haven't had enough aerobics classes, for which the real motivation is shopping conditioning.

Watching What You Watch

Why couldn't God have made women to like normal things, such as sitting in a woods for days in sub-zero weather, waiting for a deer or elk to walk by? Now that's my idea of exciting watching!...Or watching a football game! I'm not into TV too much—unless it's a good sporting event. Ceci doesn't always understand me in this area, but she is kind about it. "Who are you rooting for?" she sometimes asks.

"I don't care who wins," I often reply.

"Are these any of your favorite teams?"

"No, not really."

"A favorite player or two, perhaps?"

"Naw, I don't know much about these guys at all."

"Then why are you watching the game?" she asks with a quizzical expression.

"Because it's football," I reply as patiently as I possibly can. Sometimes people can't figure out the obvious. I'll tell you what puzzles me—why she and my two daughters like to watch stuff that makes them cry. Go figure!

Many kinds of watching take place: TV watching, parade watching, watching the clock, stock market watching, bird watching (ranks right up there with sewing matches to me) and a thousand other things. I like to watch kids laugh. I hate to watch people cry. I've watched individuals born, I've watched others die.

I once watched a lady in San Pedro, Guatemala, look for a watch. It was her husband's—he died in the earthquake of 1976. So did three of her kids. All she and her surviving infant had left were the clothes on their backs. Their small adobe home was a mound of dirt.

When our interpreter asked her what she was digging for, she replied, "A bag of beans we had and my husband's watch. He was sleeping about here when he was killed," she said, pointing at an area of approximately 10 square feet. "It would mean so much to me if I could find his watch."

We started digging.

Although it was like looking for a needle in a haystack, we asked God to help us and waded into the three-feet-deep dirt. Right then I'd have charged hell for that watch. We found it an hour or so later.

"Muchas gracias," she repeated through tears, as she clutched the watch to her breast.

"Treasure" is such a relative term, I thought as I wiped my eyes. *I wish the world could see this. Maybe some priorities would change.*

I watched another lady, holding her three-year-old daughter, walk away from a food line in which I was serving. She was the last in line for the soup. As she

held out the jar she had found, we looked at her and said, "No mas" (which means "No more"). Then I watched her walk away, holding her hungry child.

Things got all messed up at that point in my life. Neat little lists of needs disappeared. Certain important goals became strangely irrelevant. Things that mattered suddenly didn't. Bank accounts were looked at differently, success was redefined. Funny how one glance into four eyes can bring such chaos. In many ways, order has never been restored.

Be careful what you watch.

Be on the Alert

The Bible talks about watching—in various ways and for different reasons, not the least of which is watching in prayer. This chapter is about the "watchman anointing"—our calling and equipping as intercessors to be forewarned of and to pray against Satan's schemes and plans. It is a vital aspect of our intercession. Ephesians 6:18 says, "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, *be on the alert* with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (italics mine). The *KJV* version uses the word "watching" for the phrase "be on the alert."

First Peter 5:8, in warning us about our enemy, says, "Be of sober spirit, *be on the alert.* Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (italics mine). Again, other translations use the word "watchful." The context of both verses is spiritual warfare. Each mentions our adversary and challenges us to alertness or watchfulness, both for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Another related verse, which we discussed in great detail in chapter 9, is 2 Corinthians 2:11, "In order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes." So as not to duplicate the material, I will simply summarize the deducted meaning we gave of the verse based on the Greek words used: "To the degree that we are ignorant of the way our adversary thinks and operates—of his plans, plots, schemes and devices—to that degree he will gain on us, prey on us, defraud us of what is ours and have or hold the greater portion."

I want to draw four conclusions from these three verses—Ephesians 6:18, 1 Peter 5:8 and 2 Corinthians 2:11—as an introduction for this teaching:

1. *Protection from the attacks of our enemy—even for believers—is not automatic.* There is a part for us to play. Though God is sovereign, this does not mean He is in control of everything that happens. He has left much to the decisions and actions of humankind. If God were going to protect or safeguard us from Satan's attacks regardless of what we did, these verses would be totally

irrelevant to Christians. Somewhere in our theology, we must find a place for human responsibility. At some point we must begin to believe that we matter, that we're relevant, for ourselves and for others.

2. *God's plan is to warn or alert us to Satan's tactics.* This is deducted from the simple fact that since God says not to be unaware of Satan's tactics, He must be willing to make us aware of them. If He says to be on the alert, this must mean that if we are, He will alert us. God wouldn't ask of us something that He wasn't also enabling us to accomplish.

3. *We must be alert—remain watchful—or we won't pick up on God's attempts to warn us of Satan's attacks and plans.* If these attacks were always going to be obvious, alertness wouldn't be necessary. Isaiah 56:10 speaks of blind watchmen. What a picture! I'm afraid it has been a fairly good description of many of us in our watching roles. We're often like the disciples of old: we have eyes, but we do not see (see Mark 8:18). It's time we do more than gaze; we must alertly watch!

4. *If we are not alert and watchful, if we are ignorant of Satan's schemes, he will take the bigger portion.* He will gain on us, taking advantage of our ignorance. Contrary to popular belief, we really can be destroyed due to ignorance (see Hosea 4:6). We may not like to admit it, but Satan really has gained a lot of territory in America. Don't be like the desert nomad who awakened hungrily one night and decided he'd have a midnight snack. Lighting a candle, he grabbed a date and took a bite. Holding the date to the candle, he saw a worm, whereupon he threw the date out of the tent. Biting into the second date, he found another worm and threw it away, also. Deciding he might not get anything to eat if this continued, he blew out the candle and ate the dates.[1]

Sometimes we, too, prefer the darkness of denial to the light of truth. Though the truth really does hurt at times, it is still truth. Denial doesn't change it. Where Satan has made gains, let's admit it and determine to take them back!

Two New Testament words for watching make the connection to the Old Testament concept of watchmen: *gregoreuo* and *agrupneo.* Both mean essentially to stay awake, in the sense that a sentry would need to refrain from sleep. Some of the verses where they're found are the following:

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving (Col. 4:2).

And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch....Keep watching and praying, that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:34,38).

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like

a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong (1 Cor. 16:13).

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints (Eph. 6:18).

But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:36).

The last two verses combine *agrupneo* with *kairos,* the strategic time (discussed in chapter 6), challenging us to be on the alert for the *kairos* times and pray accordingly. Again, so as not to be repetitive, we won't repeat the teaching. However, another look at the full definitions of *paga* and *kairos* in chapter 6 will enable you to make the obvious connection between the watchmen and setting boundaries of protection.

The Trophies of Intercession

I will share one story, however, to illustrate. Cindy Jacobs, in her book *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy,* tells of walking in the watchman anointing at a *kairos* time. While attending a prayer gathering in 1990, she was awakened one night at 2:00 A.M. with a sense of alarm. As she waited on the Lord, He brought to her mind the picture of a couple and their three children, a family she knew was traveling in their van to the meeting. In this vision she saw a wheel on their van come off, causing a terrible accident.

Cindy began to pray fervently for their safety and continued throughout the night. Upon their arrival the following day, she asked if they had had any problems with the right wheel. Though they had not, Cindy insisted they go to a garage and get it checked. The mechanic who inspected the van was amazed. He said there was no way they should have been able to drive the van without the wheel coming off.

Upon returning from the mechanic, Cindy's husband, Mike, who had accompanied the brother to the garage, held up a bag and declared, "The trophies of intercession." It held the old bearings from the right front wheel.[2]

That is the watchman anointing in operation, sensing the danger at a *kairos* time and establishing boundaries *(paga)* of protection through intercession.

Biblical Watchmen

Let's broaden our understanding of biblical watchmen. What was their purpose? The term "watchmen" comes from the Old Testament, and was used to describe what we would today call "sentries," "guards" or "lookouts." These individuals were responsible for protecting primarily two things: vineyards or fields from thieves and animals, and cities from invading forces.

Those watching crops were stationed on rocks, buildings or towers to provide a better range of vision. Towers or outposts in the fields usually had sleeping quarters because it was necessary to keep watch day and night during harvest. The watchmen would take shifts—one working, one sleeping—and thereby watch 24 hours a day.

This has great symbolism for us. In seasons of harvest, there is a more urgent need for watchmen, as the "thief" is going to do all he can to steal it, keeping the greater portion. It is little wonder that God has preceded the greatest harvest of souls the world has ever known— which is now happening—with the greatest prayer awakening in history. The Lord of the harvest is wise. I can assure you He has 24-hour sentries "watching" the harvest. May we be able to say with our Lord—of those You have given me, not one of them perished (see John 17:12).

These watchmen were also posted on the city walls, where they would function as sentries. The following are a few Old Testament references:

For thus the Lord says to me, "Go, station the lookout, let him report what he sees. When he sees riders, horsemen in pairs, a train of donkeys, a train of camels, let him pay close attention, very close attention." Then the lookout called, "O Lord, I stand continually by day on the watchtower, and I am stationed every night at my guard post" (Isa. 21:6-8).

Lift up a signal against the walls of Babylon; post a strong guard, station sentries, place men in ambush! For the Lord has both purposed and performed what He spoke concerning the inhabitants of Babylon (Jer. 51:12).

On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves (Isa. 62:6).

From the walls of the cities they would watch for two things: messengers and enemies.

Watching for Messengers

They watched for messengers to inform the gatekeepers about when to open the gates and when not to. In those days runners were used to carry messages from city to city, and the watchmen would cry out when a friendly messenger was corning. Skilled watchmen could sometimes even recognize the runners by their stride before ever seeing their faces. In 2 Samuel 18:27 the watchman said, "The running... is like the running of Ahimaaz." Do you see any important symbolism here?

Seasoned watchmen are often alerted by the Holy Spirit, before they ever have any concrete evidence, that certain "messengers" are not to be trusted. They recognize "wolves" sent to devour the flock, or "hirelings" with improper motives. They bring warnings to those in leadership. They recognize them "by

their stride," as it were—something just doesn't seem right. They sense and discern. To be sure, we must guard against human suspicion and judging after the flesh. But I have learned to listen to my trusted watchmen (one of whom is my wife) when they tell me they are uneasy about so and so. They are usually right.

At times, they are unable to give me specific reasons, which is difficult for my analytical mind, but I have learned to trust them. Most false doctrine, division and general destruction in the Body of Christ could be averted if the watchmen would watch and the leaders would listen! Peter speaks of this need in 2 Peter 2:1,2:

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned.

Paul warned the Ephesians of it in Acts 20:28-31:

Be on the guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

Evidently they heeded Paul's advice for the Lord commended them in Revelation 2:2:

I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false.

Watching for the Enemy

The watchmen on the wall also looked for the enemy. When they saw the potential danger approaching, they sounded an alarm, either by a shout or a trumpet blast. Soldiers could then prepare themselves for battle and defend the city. Watchmen do this today, in a spiritual sense. They alert the Body of Christ to attacks of the enemy, sounding the alarm. When the watchmen are functioning properly, we need never be caught off-guard by Satan and his forces.

As watchmen we do not live in fear of our adversary, nor do we live in "ignore - ance" of him. Contrary to what some would teach, alertness and vigilance are not synonymous with preoccupation. I must warn you, it is a

common tactic of the enemy to dissuade Christians from watching for him by accusing them of a wrong emphasis.

Sadly enough, this message is often purported by well-meaning Christians. They teach that Satan is to be ignored or that little attention is to be paid him. No passage in the Bible supports this. Certainly we are not to become infatuated with Satan, but a good soldier is a well-informed soldier concerning his enemy. Be infatuated with and in awe of Jesus—be aware of the enemy. Love worship, not warfare, but when necessary, go to war.

Love worship, not warfare, but when necessary, go to war.

In their book *How to Pray for Your Family and Friends,* Quin Sherrer and Ruthanne Garlock tell of a friend's pastor who had this attitude. "I don't think you should teach on spiritual warfare," the pastor told Hilda one day. "Concentrate on Jesus and not the devil."

Her response showed her wisdom and experience. "'Pastor, I do concentrate on Jesus and his victory,' she answered respectfully. 'Jesus taught that we have authority over the evil one. Until I began to use Christ's authority in spiritual warfare, I had four children going to hell. I've learned to bind the enemy's work in my family members' lives. Today *all* my children and grandchildren serve the Lord. I've seen the results of spiritual warfare, and I want to help others.'"[3]

The Watchman Looks Ahead

Watchmen did not only guard cities and fields in Scripture. The Hebrew words translated "watchman" are *natsar, shamar* and *tsaphah.* They mean to guard or protect by watching over, but also by "hedging around something"[4] as with thorns. They even have the connotation of hiding or concealing something.[5]The watchman—through intercession —creates the secret place of protection (see Ps. 91).

Another interesting meaning of *tsaphah* is to "lean forward and peer into the distance." The connection to prayer should be obvious. The watchman looks ahead, "peering into the distance,"[6] to foresee the attacks of the enemy. He is pro-active, not re-active. This is prophetic intercession!

Let's look at several references where these words are used, with each usage referring to guarding or protecting something different. The first is in Genesis 2:15, which also happens to be the first time one of these words is used in the Bible. "Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and *keep* it" (italics mine).

Theologians have what is known as "the law of first mention." This refers to the general rule that the first time a major subject is mentioned in the Bible, significant facts are given concerning it that will remain consistent and relevant throughout the Scriptures.

For example, the first mention of the serpent—Satan—is in Genesis 3:1: "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said, "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?.....It is easy to see this law at work here, as the verse speaks of Satan's subtlety or craftiness. God is informing us of one of the most important things we must remember about Satan: He is far more dangerous to us as the crafty serpent than as a roaring lion.

Be Defensive—Keep the Serpent Out!

Adam was told in Genesis 2:15 to guard or "keep" the garden. From what? It had to be the serpent! I assert this because first of all, it is much in keeping with the nature of God to have warned him. To have done otherwise would not have been consistent with God's character. Second, neither Adam nor Eve seemed shocked when a snake talked to them. It evidently didn't come as a total surprise. Third, what else could there have been (before the Fall) to guard, keep or protect from in the garden? Only the serpent.

I want to emphasize an important point—the first mention of this term in Scripture gives us one of the primary responsibilities of the watchman: *Keep the serpent out!* Guard or protect that which God has entrusted to your care from the subtle encroachment of the serpent. Keep him out of your garden!...Your home, family, church, city, nation!...Keep him out!

The word is used again in Genesis 3:24 when God stationed a cherubim at the entrance of the garden to keep man from the tree of life. Adam didn't keep the serpent out so an angel had to keep man out.

In Genesis 30:31 the watchman concept is used in guarding a flock. It doesn't take much insight to see the correlation here. We can guard the flock of God through intercession. Ecclesiastes 12:3 refers to protecting a house. Psalm 127:1 uses the concept in reference to guarding a city. And 1 Samuel 26:15 and 28:2 speak of doing it for a person. Proverbs 4:23 instructs us to do it for our hearts.

These three Hebrew words are also translated in several other ways. I'm going to list a few of them, elaborating briefly, to provide a more well-rounded understanding of the concept. As you will plainly see, pages could be written commenting on the symbolism and connection to prayer. For brevity's sake I have not done so, but would encourage you to think and meditate on each one, allowing the Holy Spirit to bring insight to you personally.

1. **Keep or Keeper:** This is by far the most frequent usage of these words —at least 250 times. Watchmen keep things, places and individuals safe. They ensure against loss, theft or damage. They keep things intact, in possession.

2. **Guard:** Watchmen are guards. This word is obviously similar to the next one.

3. **Bodyguard:** Watchmen guard individuals, protecting them from danger and harm. They are shields—the secret service agents of the kingdom, guarding and protecting others. Watchmen represent Jesus by watching over others.

Often, intercessors in our fellowship inform me of times they have spent covering me in prayer. More than once I've been told, "Pastor, I was up most of the night praying for you." Occasionally they ask, "Was something wrong?"

"No," I usually respond, "and that's probably why." Often my problems and distractions are "laid upon" others and they "carry them away from me." I am grateful and wise enough to realize that much of my success is due to their faithfulness. What a comfort to know I have bodyguards in the spirit! There would be fewer casualties in our ranks if we had more faithful watchmen.

Peter Wagner, in his book *Prayer Shield,* offers five reasons pastors and other Christian leaders are in such great need of watchmen interceding for them:

1. *Pastors Have More Responsibility and Accountability*

James 3:1, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."

2. *Pastors Are More Subject to Temptation*

Make no mistake about it, the higher up you go on the ladder of Christian leadership, the higher you go on Satan's hit list.

3. *Pastors Are More Targeted by Spiritual Warfare*

It has now become known that over the last several years satanists, witches, New Agers, occult practitioners, shamans, spiritists and other servants of darkness have entered into an evil covenant to pray to Satan for the breakdown of marriages of pastors and Christian leaders. The spiritual warfare has intensified.

4. *Pastors Have More Influence on Others*

The fourth reason why pastors need intercession more than other Christians is that by the very nature of their ministry they have more influence on others.

5. *Pastors Have More Visibility*

Because pastors are up front, they are constantly subject to gossip and criticism.[7]

In the book, Wagner elaborates more thoroughly on each reason. Elsewhere he says, "To the degree the intercessors pray, the leaders gain protection against the

fiery darts of the wicked one, over and above the whole armor of God they are responsible for using."[8] This excellent book provides outstanding guidance about intercession for Christian leaders.

In the excellent training resource, *A Mighty Warrior: A Guide to Effective Prayer,* Beth Alves offers a suggested daily guide to praying for spiritual leaders, which Wagner summarized as follows:

Sunday:	Favor with God (spiritual revelation, anointing, holiness).
Monday:	Favor with others (congregations, ministry staff, unsaved).
Tuesday:	Increased vision (wisdom and enlightenment, motives, guidance).
Wednesday:	Spirit, Soul, Body (health, appearance, attitudes, spiritual and physical wholeness).
Thursday:	Protection (temptation, deception, enemies).
Friday:	Finances (priorities, blessings).

Saturday: Family (general, spouse, children).[9]

4. **Doorkeeper:** Obviously similar to the next, so I will comment on them together.

5. **Gatekeeper:** Watchmen have the ability spiritually—in the prayer closet—to determine who or what goes in and out of their homes, their families' lives, their churches, their cities, etc. They discern by the Holy Spirit what to allow in, and through prayer, open and close the door. They invite in the work of the Holy Spirit, and reject the works of darkness. They set boundaries, keeping enemies out. At times, when informed or confronted by an intercessor with the information that something improper has crept into our fellowship, I respond by asking, "What happened? Weren't you on the job?" I would simply say to the Body of Christ, "Don't blame it all on the pastors. You, too, are responsible for gatekeeping."

6. **Preserve or Preserver:** Watchmen preserve or keep things from ruin and destruction. They preserve lives, anointings, moves of God and a host of other things by covering them in prayer. Sherrer and Garlock tell of four ladies who functioned as watchmen for their farms. These women walked the perimeters of the fields while the husbands worked, sometimes covering as much as six miles in a day.

They prayed for protection from insects, crop diseases, hail and drought. They asked God to give their husbands wisdom in farming and marketing and prayed for angels to be assigned to the efforts.

The results were amazing. It turned out to be one of their better years. No

storm or insect damage, no unwise decisions and a good profit—while others around them had a difficult year with little profit.

We simply aren't practical enough at times with our intercession tactics. These ladies, watching in intercession, opened the way for God's blessing upon their families' financial endeavors.[10]

7. **Pay attention:** Watchmen must be on the alert. They must pay attention. Though obvious, it is important enough to emphasize. As soldiers, God "calls us to attention." Lives are at stake. The harvest must be guarded. Pay attention, watchmen!

8. **Observe:** This embodies the same concept as paying attention, yet adds the emphasis of contemplativeness and sharpness. Don't just look—see. Be observant. Quite simply, watchmen watch! They observe what others fail to see. We can observe much in prayer, often even before it happens.

9. **Behold:** This one is similar to observe, of course, but I list it because it reemphasizes the need for seeing clearly.

10. **Beware:** Watchmen must be vigilant, aware, on the alert. Again, 1 Peter 5:8 warns us to be of sober spirit. Always beware, intercessor! Watch for the lion and when you see him at work immediately "meet" him, enforcing Calvary's victory with the "bear anointing."

11. **Protect:** In the same sense as guarding and keeping, watchmen protect. They build walls or boundaries of protection from the attacks of the devil. They distribute this blessing of the Lord.

12. **Maintain:** Watchmen maintain things for the Lord. They are maintenance people. They may not set vision, build or plant in the way that some do, but they maintain. They keep things working well and prevent breakdowns. They maintain the anointing, integrity, health and many other necessary blessings of the kingdom.

In summary, God is raising up prophetic intercessors—watchmen—*to keep the serpent out!* Men and women who will "lean forward, peering into the distance" watching for the enemy's attacks. Sentries, bodyguards, gatekeepers, boundary setters and preservers in His kingdom. It is, indeed, a high calling!

Be Offensive-Lay Siege!

There is another facet to this type of prayer, however, which I now want us to consider. One of the most interesting and surprising things I discovered as I studied these words is that they embody not only protective or defensive meanings, but offensive as well.

The words mean "to besiege or lay siege to a city,"[11] the idea being to watch it to keep people and supplies from coming or going. One definition was "to spy

on" or "lie in wait for someone to ambush the person."[12] They are actually translated this way in 2 Samuel 11:16, Isaiah 1:8, Jeremiah 4:16,17, Jeremiah 51:12 and Judges 1:24.

In 1989 when the Lord gave me this teaching, He clearly spoke in my heart that He was releasing the watchman anointing, which would enable individuals to "lay siege to" cities and nations through prayer. Where Satan had taken advantage and held the greater portion, the people of God would be given instruction about how to lay siege to these situations, cutting off his supply lines and removing that which had given him place. They would take back from him people, cities and nations.

This was before there was talk (at least in a broad degree) of reconciliation ceremonies, identificational repentance, spiritual mapping, prayer walks, marches and journeys—all of which are terms associated with systematically removing from Satan his hold on places and people to take them for Christ. These and other strategies are all a part of the watchman anointing God has released to the Church.

The Body of Christ is learning to *systematically* pull down the strongholds of darkness. God is giving us the ability—by His Spirit—to discern the enemy's plans, strengths, weaknesses and points of entry—to cut him off and take nations, cities and individuals through prayer. The strongholds of darkness are being torn down. Those imprisoned in satanic fortresses are being freed. Sieges are being laid in the spirit. God is showing us what to bind and loose, as well as how to do it. There is opposition, of course.

One of the things that keeps some from this kind of prayer is the time element. The very concept of laying siege implies a duration of time. It may take days, weeks or years of daily intercession to receive the breakthrough. I certainly believe this can be sped up by more intelligent and informed praying, as well as by the multiplication of power that takes place through agreement.

However, nothing can change the fact that some situations require a degree of time. I laid siege to the cyst in my wife for 30 days. Polly Simchen, whom we spoke of in chapter 10, laid siege to the bondages in her son for 4 years. God gave her and her friends much strategy as they prayed, enlightening them on what to cut off and what to call forth. That is a siege. They discerned Satan's strategies, "spying out" his plans. Was it worth the effort and wait? Absolutely. They gained the greater portion.

This concept of laying siege is well-illustrated in a story about Theresa Mulligan, editor of a newsletter for intercessors called *Breakthrough*, related by Sherrer and Garlock in *How to Pray for Your Family and Friends.* Theresa and a

friend had prayer-walked their neighborhood for a season, stopping in front of each house, taking hands and agreeing in prayer for the occupants' salvation.

Soon reports started coming in: A colonel's wife accepted Christ, the teenage daughter of a Jewish family met Jesus, an arthritic woman made a commitment to Christ and a college-age daughter of another family came to the Lord. Even after she moved away, Theresa continued to hear of these former neighbors coming to Christ.[13]

That is laying siege! It is the watchman anointing at its best and anyone can do it.

Taking Cities and Nations for God

I have focused most of my attention in this book to intercession for individuals. I would now like to comment briefly on intercession for cities and nations, especially as it relates to the watchman aspect of laying siege.

Scripture clearly shows that God deals with—relates to—not only individuals, but also groups of people. Because of the principles of authority, responsibility, free will, sowing and reaping, etc., which operate not only on an individual level, but also on the corporate level at which individuals join, God relates to people *groups.* Why?

Many of the decisions we make, the rights and privileges we enjoy, are not individualistic, but are jointly made with the people to whom we relate. For example, I make many decisions privately regarding my personal life. But for our household—our children, finances, home, time and so on, my wife and I make the decisions together.

The same principle of shared authority can be incrementally expanded all the way up to a national level—from organizations to cities to counties to states to nations. These groupings could be secular or religious. In whatever way a group of people can be said to have rights, decision-making power and freedoms, there is reciprocal responsibility. As the decisions on laws, leaders, morals, interests, tolerances and intolerances are shared, so are the ramifications.

For example, I do not favor abortion, but I cannot escape the effects, though they may be indirect, of God's judgments on this nation due to this tragic holocaust. If God brings drought or inclement weather that affects our crops, I too, will pay higher prices. As He turns us over to our degraded and perverted desires, accidents and illnesses increase, which raise my insurance rates, also. If the judgment happens to be war, I too, pay for it in higher taxes and share in the grief of lost American lives. Numerous other examples could be given.

Although we may not like it, none can live as an island. Though we as believers can enjoy a certain degree of protection from these judgments—God

might increase my prosperity to help me pay higher prices or taxes, for example —there is no way to totally avoid the principle of shared responsibility.

The Corporate Dealings of God

Having given the reason, I want to validate it by listing several ways in which God dealt with cities or regions in Scripture on a corporate level:

1. Cities were addressed or prophesied to: Jonah 1:2; Nahum 3:1; Micah 6:9; Revelation 2 and 3.
2. Cities and nations were judged: Nineveh, Sodom, Gomorrah, Tyre, Sidon, Bethsaida, Capernaum, Jericho, Jerusalem and others. The nation Israel was judged as a whole on many occasions in Scripture, as were other nations.
3. Cities and nations were forgiven or spared judgment: Nineveh; Sodom could have been, had there been enough righteous people; the nation Israel was forgiven as a whole, as were others.
4. Cities and nations had divine purposes or callings: Israel, Jerusalem, the seven cities of refuge, and many others.
5. Cities were spoken of as being kept or preserved by God: Psalm 127:1.
6. Cities and nations had principalities ruling them: Tyre (see Ezek. 28:12); Persia (see Dan. 10:13); Ephesus (see Acts 19:28); Pergamum (see Rev. 2:12).
7. People groups have a corporate righteousness or sin level: Any nation (see Prov. 14:34); Sodom and Gomorrah (see Gen. 18:20,21); the Amorites (see Gen. 15:16).
8. Cities have a corporate faith or unbelief level: Nazareth (see Mark 6:5-6).
9. Cities have a corporate peace or welfare (see Jer. 29:7).
10. Cities can have revival: Nineveh (see Jonah 3:5-10).
11. Cities can miss revival: Jerusalem (see Luke 19:41-44).

I gave this entire list and the preceding explanation primarily to substantiate one thing: *God deals with people as groups, not just as individuals.* This fact is what also substantiates our intercession for people as groups.

Abraham successfully interceded for a city (see Gen. 18:22-33); Moses for a nation (see Exod. 32:9-14). Exiles from Jerusalem were told to intercede for the cities they now lived in (see Jer. 29:7). We are told in 2 Chronicles 7:14 that our prayers and lifestyles can cause healing for a nation. Ecclesiastes 9:15 and Proverbs 21:22 inform us that wisdom can deliver a city and bring down strongholds.

Without question, God is releasing an anointing to lay siege to cities and nations to take them for Him! He is equipping us to "spy out" the enemy's plans

and strongholds, "ambushing" him in the spirit. We are the Melchizedek order of priesthood prophesied in Psalm 110. We're a priestly army, stretching forth the scepter of our conquering hero, ruling in the midst of our enemies. Come on, join us!

For those who are serious about city taking, Peter Wagner's book, *Breaking Strongholds in Your City*, contains a wealth of information. In it, Victor Lorenzo tells of the three-year plan to evangelize the city of Resistencia, Argentina. One of the key elements of the effort was the spiritual mapping of the city by Lorenzo. Through this mapping he discovered four spiritual powers influencing the city. Lorenzo tells of praying to tear down these powers and the ensuing results:

"The next day our team went out to the plaza with the pastors of the Resistencia churches, a group of trained intercessors and Cindy Jacobs. We battled fiercely against the invisible powers over the city for four hours. We attacked them in what we sensed was their hierarchical order, from bottom to top. First came Pombero, then Curupi, then San La Muerte, then spirit of Freemasonry, then Queen of Heaven, then the Python spirit whom we suspected functioned as the coordinator of all the forces of evil in the city. When we finished, an almost tangible sense of peace and freedom came over all who had participated. We were confident that this first battle had been won and that the city could be claimed for the Lord.

"After this, the church in Resistencia was ready for full-scale evangelization. Unbelievers began to respond to the gospel as never before. As a result of our three-year outreach, church attendance increased by 102 percent. The effect was felt in all social strata of the city. We could undertake community projects such as providing drinking water for the poor. The public image of the evangelical church improved greatly by gaining respect and approval from political and social leaders.

We were invited to use the media to spread our message. The spiritual warfare and mapping we were able to do opened new doors in Resistencia for evangelism, social improvement and reaping of the spiritual harvest."[14]

That is the watchman anointing! *We can impact our cities and nations through intercession.* We can lay siege to them, taking them for God. Strongholds of darkness can become strongholds of light.

Cities Transformed

Canaan, a cursed land (see Gen. 9:25) became the Promised Land of blessing. Jerusalem, once a stronghold of evil giants, became the city of peace.

Seven cities, once ruled by idolaters and wicked giants, became cities of refuge where people who had accidentally taken a life fled for safety and

protection. Hebron, the most famous of the seven, was formerly called Kiriath-Arba, which means the city of Arba. Arba was the greatest of the Anakim or giants (see Josh. 14:15). Hebron, its new name, means "association, friendship, fellowship, communion."[15]

Fittingly, Abraham, the friend of God, is buried there. Caleb, a man of faith and courage, was used to transform the stronghold of the greatest giant to a place where people ran to find safety and sweet fellowship or communion with God. This can happen to our cities!

Also, as a city of refuge, Hebron was a picture or type of Christ. One who killed accidentally could find safety in one of two places: in a city of refuge (for long-term protection) or holding onto the horns of the altar in the Holy Place (for short-term protection).

In Hebrews 6:18 the Lord draws from both of these pictures in one phrase, "In order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for *refuge* in *laying hold of the* hope set before us" (italics mine). Interestingly, individuals who were there for safety had to remain in a city of refuge until the death of the current High Priest (see Num. 35:28), after which they were free to go safely. What a picture of our great High Priest who died so we could go free from judgment and penalty.

My point for this story, other than just to enjoy a beautiful picture of Jesus, is to demonstrate that a former stronghold of giants was transformed into such a place of protection, refuge and fellowship with God that it became a picture of Christ Himself.

Can God do this again today? Can our cities and nations be so thoroughly transformed? Yes, unless God has changed in the last 3,000 years! That is, if He can find some Calebs....If He can find some giant killers....If He can find some "We're well able" attitudes.

He is asking us, as He did Ezekiel, to look on the dry bones of our nation—the men and women, the young and old, the rich and poor, the hurting and those who think they're healthy—and answer the same question he asked the prophet: "Can these bones live?" I say they can. What do you say?

Are You Ready?

We need to be like Sam and Jed. Hearing that a $5,000 bounty had been offered for the capture or killing of wolves, they became bounty hunters. Waking up one night, Sam saw that they were surrounded by 50 pairs of gleaming eyes —ravenous wolves licking hungry chops. "Jed, wake up," he whispered to his sleeping partner. "We're rich!"[16]

We need to see the multitude of unbelievers around us, not as threats, but as opportunities. Our task would be overwhelming were it not for the fact that we are relying on God's strength and ability, not ours. Though a host should encamp against us, we can still be confident (see Ps. 27:3). Gideon's 300 were more than enough to defeat 135,000 with God on their side. If He is for us, who can successfully be against us (see Rom. 8:31)?

Let's do it! Let's let God arise and His enemies be scattered. Let's fill our bag with the stones of victory and run to meet Goliath. Let's take Kiriath-Arba. Let's run through some troops and leap over some walls.

Let's demonstrate the awesomeness of our God. Let's growl! Let's roar! Let's let Jesus live through us.

He is ready—are you?

Are you ready to walk in your calling as an intercessor?...To represent Jesus as the reconciler and the warrior?..To distribute His benefits and victory?...To meet, to carry away, to set boundaries?

Are you ready to birth, to liberate, to strike the mark?...To fill some bowls, to make some declarations, to watch and pray?

Are you ready?

Remember: "Life is fragile, handle with *PAGA!"*

Questions for Reflection

1. Can you summarize the four conclusions drawn from Ephesians 6:18, 1 Peter 5:8 and 2 Corinthians 2:11? Using the verses themselves, give reasons for these conclusions.
2. Describe the functions and responsibilities of Old Testament watchmen. How do they symbolize watching intercession?
3. Where is the first usage of the Hebrew word for watchman in the Scriptures? What significant insight can be drawn from this?
4. Based on the definitions and usages of the three words for watchman, can you give some summary statements about the defensive aspect of the watchman anointing? How can you apply this to your family?... Pastor?... Church?
5. Describe the offensive aspect of the watchman anointing. Can you relate it to intercession for an individual?...How about a city?
6. Can you give the reason God deals with groups of people, not just with individuals? List three or four biblical examples.
7. Think of ways you and your prayer group can lay siege to your city. Do it!

Notes

1. Craig Brian Larson, *Illustrations for Preachng and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 59, adapted.
2. Cindy Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1991), pp. 2122, adapted.
3. Quin Sherrer with Ruthanne Garlock, *How to Pray for Your Family and Friends* (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1990), p. 127.
4. James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), ref. no. 8104.
5. Ibid., ref. no. 5341.
6. Ibid., ref. no. 6822.
7. C. Peter Wagner, *Prayer Shield* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1992), pp. 66-73.
8. Ibid., p. 180.
9. Ibid., p. 177.
10. Sherrer with Garlock, *How to Pray for Your Family,* pp. 152,153, adapted.
11. Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible—New American Standard* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: AMG Publishers, 1984; revised edition, 1990), p. 1752.
12. Ibid., p. 1787.
13. Sherrer with Garlock, *How to Pray for Your Family,* p. 95, adapted.
14. C. Peter Wagner, *Breaking Strongholds in Your City* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1993), pp. 176,177.
15. Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, ref. no. 2275.
16. Larson, *Illustrations for Preaching,* p. 12, adapted.

Discussion Leader's Guide

The purpose of this book is to ignite and empower the prayer lives of those who read it. As the group grows in faith and unity you may want to implement some of the prayer tactics mentioned in the book, such as using prayer cloths, prayerwalking and engaging in spiritual warfare for each other.

As a leader it is important to be sensitive to the maturity level of the group. It is also important that you do not impose your beliefs on those who differ in the way they worship the Lord.

The optimum-sized discussion group is 10 to 15 people. A smaller group can make continuity a problem when too few members attend. A larger group will require strong leadership skills to create a sense of belonging and meaningful participation for each person.

If you are leading a group that already meets regularly, such as a Sunday School class or weekly home group, decide how many weeks to spend on the series. Be sure to plan for any holidays that may occur during your scheduled meetings.

Use creativity. This book's 14 chapters will fit a regular 13-week quarter if a couple of chapters are paired to provide time for personal sharing.

The first session would provide a perfect time for an open forum to create a sense of unity as you begin the series. A time for introduction followed by nonthreatening questions is often helpful for building close ties within the group. Chapter 1 can be used as the introduction. Consider one or more of the following questions:

1. Are you satisfied with your prayer life? If not, where are you struggling?
2. Why do you think prayer is such a lacking discipline in the Body of Christ?
3. What do you hope to gain from studying this book?
4. After reading chapter 1, do you think we should pray only once or do you think we need to be persistent? Why?
5. If you could ask God one question about prayer, what would it be?

Such questions will create a sense of identity among the class members and help them to discover their similarities.

Many individual questions may arise that will significantly contribute to the group's understanding of the subject. Group members should be encouraged to maintain lists of their questions. Suggest that they be submitted anonymously and combine them together to eliminate repetition. Many questions may be

answered by the time the series reaches its conclusion. It is, therefore, a good idea to wait until your last session to discuss them.

Enlist a coleader to assist with calling class members to remind them of meeting dates, times and places. Your coleader can also make arrangements for refreshments and child care.

People will have a greater appreciation for their books if they are responsible for paying for them. They will also be more apt to finish the course if they have invested in their own materials.

Be sure to have several extra Bibles available. *The Living Bible* is often helpful for people who have little or no Bible background, however, it is important to explain that the *NASB* differs considerably and will be the main version used in this book.

Be aware of the basic principles for group dynamics, such as:

1. Arrange seating in a semicircle with the leader included rather than standing in front. This setting invites participation.

2. Create a discussion-friendly atmosphere. The following tips are helpful for guiding discussions:

a. Receive statements from group members without judgmentalism, even if you disagree with them. If they are clearly unbiblical or unfair, you can ask questions that clarify the issue; but outright rejection of comments will stifle open participation.

b. If a question or comment deviates from the subject, either suggest that it be dealt with at another time or ask the group if they want to pursue the new issue now.

c. If one person monopolizes the discussion, direct a few questions specifically to someone else. Or, tactfully interrupt the dominator by saying, "Excuse me, that's a good thought, and I wonder what the rest of us think about that." Talk with the person privately and enlist that person's help in drawing others into the discussion.

d. Make it easy and comfortable for everyone to share or ask questions, but don't insist that anyone do so. Reluctant participants can warm to the idea of sharing by being asked to read a passage from the book. Pair a shy person with someone else for a discussion apart from the main group, and ask reluctant participants to write down a comment to be shared with the larger group.

e. If someone asks you a question and you don't know the answer, admit it and move on. If the question calls for insight from personal experience, invite others to comment on it, however, be careful that this sharing is limited. If it requires special knowledge, offer to look for an answer in the library or from a theologian or minister, and report your findings later.

2. Guard against rescuing. The purpose of this group is to learn to pray for others, not fix them. This doesn't mean that poignant moments won't come up or unhappy problems won't be shared, but the group is for sharing and prayer—not fixing others. The leader should be open and honest about wanting to grow with the group instead of coming across as an authority about the subject.

3. Start and stop on time, according to the schedule agreed upon before the series begins. This is especially important for those who have to hire a baby-sitter or arise early for work the next morning.

4. During each session, lead group members in discussing the questions and exercises at the end of each chapter. If you have more than 8 or 10 class members, consider dividing into small groups, then invite each group to share one or two insights with the larger group.

5. Be sensitive. Some people may feel comfortable praying for others, but don't force those who don't. It is necessary to set aside a time either at the beginning or end of the meeting to pray for those in need.

6. Encourage members of the group to pray daily for each other. This will perpetuate a sense of unity and love.

7. As a leader, pray regularly for the sessions and the participants, asking the Holy Spirit to hover over each person throughout the week. The Lord will honor your willingness to guide His people toward a more intimate relationship with Him.

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Dutch Sheets serves as senior pastor at Springs Harvest Fellowship in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He received a theology degree from Christ for the Nations Institute in Dallas, Texas. Dutch has traveled extensively, teaching throughout the United States. America, Africa Canada, Central of Europe. He and his wife Ceci, Sarah and Hannah, and their two daughters, live in Colorado Springs

