

Spiritual Power to Change our World

The world as we see it today is a battlefield at every level—political, moral, mental and spiritual. The arch enemy of our souls is no “push-over.” In recent years the nature and intensity of the war has become more apparent than ever. Yet, there can be no doubt that for the impregnable strongholds to fall, we must follow God’s strategy and wield the ultimate weapon of intercession given to us by our Lord and God.

by Patrick Johnstone

What a privilege to be brought into the Kingdom for such a time as this! Never before has the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ grown so fast or extended its witness so far. The tide of the Gospel now laps at the final bastions of the enemy of souls. World evangelization is a foregone conclusion because of God’s promises.¹ The world, as we see it, is a battlefield at every level—political, moral, mental and spiritual—with many strongholds to be stormed. His infernal majesty is not a “push-over” and in recent years the nature and intensity of the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged has become more apparent. Yet, for these seemingly impregnable strongholds to fall, we must wield those weapons given to us by God.

Extreme Approaches

There are two extreme approaches which can impair our effectiveness in the spiritual warfare associated with world evangelization;

1. *Under-emphasis of the spiritual nature of the conflict.* For too long Western Christianity has done just this and many missionaries have gone into situations ill-prepared for spiritual opposition (Neil 1990:13). This was certainly my experience in Africa. I was working among a people steeped in witchcraft and the fear of spirits. I

owe much to my godly African co-workers who educated me about the spiritual powers at work and their cultural setting. They also demonstrated how the Lord Jesus gives total freedom through a deep repentance with renunciation of the works of darkness and faith in Him.

2. *Too great a preoccupation with the enemy.* There has been a rapid growth of awareness of, and fascination with, the occult. This, together with the infiltration of New Age Hinduism, has radically changed the world-view of many in the Western world. As a result people have become far more conscious of these spiritual forces. We easily become too devil-conscious and lose sight of the reigning Lord Jesus. The more we know of God, His Word and His power, the better we are able to deal with the enemy. Dealing with the occult can become a morbid fascination for Christians. It can be a dangerous side-track to delve into every form of satanic stratagem and technique to overcome them, for we can become ensnared in time-consuming deliverance ministry or live in danger of unconsciously making ourselves open to the dark powers. Jessie Penn-Lewis’s book, *War on the Saints*, which came out of the 1904 Welsh Revival, warns of an over-preoccupation with the things of

Satan. Frank Feretti’s popular novels on spiritual warfare were written to alert Christians to this unseen conflict. These helped to fill the gap in Western theology with a convincing interpretation of the real world. But despite the author’s pleas (Feretti 1989, Wakeley 1995:158) not to build a theology based on these vivid portrayals of demonic forces, we find many readers have. Our Christian bookstores carry a plethora of titles on spiritual warfare, some propounding exotic techniques and speculative solutions. Such extremes can become a divisive element in the Body of Christ.

We need balance and a biblical centrality in our understanding and involvement in spiritual warfare. We need to return to biblical supernaturalism. I aim to keep within this parameter, for it is on this parameter that we all should be in basic agreement. In writing this article I go beyond present controversies and want to focus on world evangelization by active intercession for the countries, peoples and cities still in the thrall of the prince of this world. My premise is that we are largely agreed on Scriptural objectives in spiritual warfare, and further, that the means for attaining those objectives may be just as well expressed in the terms used in the Bible. The main means by

which this will be achieved is intercession.

Our prayers can change and are changing the world. We do not have to understand everything about the forces arrayed against us, but we do need to understand the nature of the power and authority that is ours in Christ. Sometimes our technical knowledge hinders us. I have been impressed by the increasing concern among Christians for the evangelization of Muslims. Yet, often the best missionaries are the ones who have studied little more than the basics of Islamics but have a passion for sharing Christ. In their boldness for Jesus, they plunge in to witnessing to Muslims where an Islamicist would fear to go. By saying this I am not advocating that a knowledge of Islam is wrong, but we must not let that knowledge cripple our faith that the Holy Spirit can bring about the conversion of Muslims through our witness. The same is true as we confront the devil and his kingdom of darkness and forces of evil. We must not be ignorant of his devices (2 Cor 2:11); nor do we have to know everything about demonism, the occult, the hierarchies of the spirit world before we dare bind the strong man and spoil his goods (Matt 12:29). Donald Jacobs, a Mennonite missionary in East Africa, testifies powerfully to the godly balance of African Christians associated with the East African Revival and how their longing was to know more of Jesus and even to turn their backs on the detailed information their traditional religionist compatriots sought about demons (Jacobs 1990:306).

We need the simplicity and faith of children in our waging war against the strongholds of Satan. My late wife, Jill, was long burdened to write a book to help children pray for the world (J. Johnstone, 1993). Its title, *You Can Change the World*, came

about in a beautiful way and illustrates this principle. When Jill began to write the book in 1990, she described the land of Albania. The land was then a Communist hermit state which proudly claimed to be the first truly atheist country in the world and where all religious expression was illegal. At our mission headquarters in England there was a group of praying children who interceded for each country or people as Jill completed each chapter. These children took on their hearts the need of the children of Albania where the Gospel was banned with no known believers. They prayed for religious freedom to come to that land. A few months later the Communist government fell, and freedom for worship and witness came. Jill had to rewrite the chapter. When these children heard of the answer to their prayers, they were delighted. One of them shouted out, "We have changed Albania!" That was true, but, of course, they were not the only ones praying earnestly for the Gospel to have free entry to that needy land! Just 4 years later we now know there is scarcely a town left in that land which does not have a group of witnessing believers. May God give us their faith and simplicity. May these words encourage the reader to engage, not in controversy, but defeat the enemy in the combat of intercession!

The Historical Evidence

One day from the vantage point of Eternity, I believe one of the major praise points before the Throne of the Lamb will be His working in history through prayer. In fact I see Revelation 5:1-8:5 as a demonstration of this. This is about the seven seals that the Lamb alone could open. The whole section is bracketed by references to the prayers of the saints (Rev 5:9; 8:1-5) and interspersed with paeans of praise for redemption and

the Lamb's right to open the seals. The first six seals (Rev 6) show the manner and principles of God's judgments on mankind; Rev 7 shows parenthetically the simultaneous gathering of the disciples from the peoples of the world. Both the judgments and the gathering are the outworking of those prayers. The seventh and final seal reveals the secret of the impact of the prayers of the saints on the world.

I here want to briefly mention just three major turning points of history to illustrate the impact of prayer:

1. *The Moravian 100-year Prayer Chain*. In 1727 revival broke out in the Herrnhut community. A prayer vigil was begun then which continued day and night without a break for over one hundred years. Out of this movement of the Holy Spirit a passion for missions emerged. The Moravians became the first Protestant body to specifically commit themselves as a body for world evangelization (Tucker 1983:70-71). Is it surprising, that through the Moravians, John Wesley came into his "heart warming experience of Christ"? This was followed by the great 18th century revival that swept Britain and North America and then led to the modern mission movement. The mighty flow of the Gospel over the past 200 years was birthed and nurtured in a century-long prayer meeting.

2. *The Evangelization of China*. Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, left an indelible mark on Christians in the last century as he emphasized the need for prayer and pled for reinforcements to reach the millions in China's unevangelized provinces (Taylor 1918). China and missions became inseparable in the minds of most believers. Yet, by the time Communism gained control of China's mainland in 1949 and ended all foreign mission work, the response had been relatively small with a total Christian community of

about 1.5 million Protestants and about 3 million Catholics. It seemed to the human eye that the Gospel had failed again to penetrate China's heart. It appears that the work God wanted to do was too great to have man taking the glory which may have been the reason all missionaries were forced to withdraw. Over a century of prayer for China was not forgotten and the seed sown in tears and blood was watered by fierce persecution.

During the 1980s we began to be aware that something dramatic was happening as reports began to circulate of millions coming to Christ. Before the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident when the pro-democracy protest was crushed, this movement to Christ had been predominantly rural. Subsequently, the urban and intellectual sections of society were impacted. Reasonable estimates in 1992 for the total community of Protestants was reckoned to be 63 million (baptized believers would be half of this), and of Catholics to be 12 million (Johnstone, 1993:163). The world has never before seen a turning to God on such a scale—a harvest against all the odds through definite intercession for China's millions.

3. *The Collapse of Communism.* In January' 1984 Brother Andrew, the Director of Open Doors, put out a fervent challenge to the Christian world to pray for seven years for the tearing down of the Iron Curtain and for freedom for the Gospel. The Holy Spirit must have given Brother Andrew a prophetic burden and vision, for within those seven years Communism in Europe and the USSR had collapsed as a viable ideology. The USSR itself had ceased to exist. Now we see the Church growing rapidly in many countries once dominated by Communism. Ideologies and anti-Christian

systems cannot withstand the concerted, militant, believing prayers of God's people. Why have we so neglected this ultimate weapon? How long could Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, New Age, Western materialistic apathy or any demonic empire remain in place with further global prayer thrusts of this kind? All of these religious and belief systems are in opposition to God and seek to deny full freedom to know the remedy in the

All of the world's belief systems are in opposition to God and seek to deny full freedom to know the remedy in the Gospel. It is the weapon of prayer that will expose their internal contradictions and contribute to God's shaping of events in judgment on them.

Gospel. It is the weapon of prayer that will expose their internal contradictions and contribute to God's shaping of events in judgment on them. Paul's words are true in today's world just as they were in biblical times:

For the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Cor 10:4-5).

Intercessors Who Changed History.

In the histories of revivals that have deeply affected the lives of nations and areas, I have been struck so often by the evidence that the Holy Spirit raised up special intercessors who prayed for the fire to fall. To mention a few:

* David Brainerd agonized for the indigenous Americans (Indians) and saw life-changing revival come (Tucker 1983:90).

* George Muller demonstrated that God could be trusted to support thousands of orphans by the prayer of faith without appeals to man. He laid the faith basis for finances for much of the most innovative and effective missions advances that followed (Pier-son 1899).

* Rees Howells interceded in the heavenlies for divine deliverances in the darkest days of World War II and saw dramatic answers (Grubb 1952), showing how we believers can change the course of human history.

* William Duma, a humble Zulu pastor in South Africa, so walked with God that his prayers led to remarkable miracles, even the raising of the dead, and who gained the respect and love of all races in the darkest days of *apartheid*.

At one time he had the only fully multiracial church in the country. (Garnett 1979). We need many others of like caliber to impact our world.

Great Harvests Won Through Prayer

In preparing the latest edition of my book, *Operation World*, I have been awed by the number of prayer requests listed in the 1986 edition which are no longer points for prayer, but rather for praise, because answers have come. The growth of evangelical believers around the world is staggering especially in the parts of the world where the Gospel was still unknown 200 years ago. Part of our research was to make what is probably the most comprehensive attempt ever made to analyze the growth (and decline) of the 25,000 identified

denominations, as well as the Church as a whole, over the past 30 years (Johnstone 1993:23-26). Just to quote one statistic; in 1960 the 29 million Evangelicals in the non-western world constituted about 30% of the world's Evangelicals; by the year 2000 this could have risen to 400 million and nearly 80% of all Evangelicals.

Consider the massive turnings to God in Africa in the 1960s, Latin America in the 1970s, East Asia in the 1980s (especially Indonesia, China and South Korea), and in the former Communist countries of Europe in the 1990s. Even in the belt of territory between the Atlantic and Pacific, between the Latitudes 10^o north and 40^o north often called the 10/40 Window, we are seeing the beginnings of an unprecedented harvest. This is true among Muslims with more coming to Christ individually and as communities than ever before in history. There are also significant initiatives launched for Hindu and Buddhist regions of the world. There is a worshipping and witnessing group of Protestant evangelical believers in every one of the 237 countries and territories of the world, and also a church planting movement launched and rooted in over 10,000 of the 12,000 ethno linguistic peoples in the world.

For the first time in history we can meaningfully speak of seeing a church planting movement within every ethnolinguistic people and making the Gospel available for every person in our lifetime. This has become the driving vision of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement. I can only attribute these advances as a direct answer to strategic prayer by millions around the world.

Characteristics of Prayer Initiatives

I have become aware over the past 20 years of a growing number of prayer initiatives and networks unprecedented in the history of the world. There is, in fact, a *prayer awakening* under way, the scope of which would astonish us if we knew the whole story. The availability of information and the globalization of the world missionary force have increased the emphasis on strategic praying for Gospel advances in unevangelized parts of the world. What are some of the characteristics of this prayer awakening?

1. *The intensity* of an early morning Korean prayer meeting in almost any Protestant church in the country, or of the extensively attended Friday all-night prayer meetings in many congregations in Brazil.

2. *The militancy* of the praying Christians expecting Satan's forces to yield in power encounters, leading to significant movements to Christ in hitherto resistant peoples. I well remember a Dorothea Mission Week of Prayer we held in the then Portuguese-ruled Mozambique in 1965. To that point little Protestant mission work had been permitted in much of the country. We definitely claimed that land for Christ and an opening for the Gospel. Within weeks, missionaries had gained entry into that land.

3. *The variety of expression* in simultaneous prayer at full volume, prayer walking, marches for Jesus, hands raised to heaven, lying prostrate before the Lord.

4. *The global networks of prayer that has been birthed.* Peter and Doris Wagner, coordinators for the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement Prayer Track, have links with dozens of prayer networks around the world—with millions of Christians involved—The Day to Change the World (now becoming

an annual event on a day in October involving millions to pray for the nations, Gateway cities, Key Unreached Peoples.) The Marches for Jesus (involving 16 million in 1995 with a major component of praying for world evangelization), Intercessors International (launched by Dennis Clark in 1969), Concerts of Prayer International (in which God has used David Bryant to revive the vision of the great Jonathan Edwards two centuries ago), The Lydia Fellowship (mobilizing women for intercession), The Esther Network (mobilizing children as intercessors), and the YWAM initiative to mobilize Christians to fast and pray for the Muslim World during Ramadan, etc.

5. *The specific nature of the praying.* A decade ago we were wondering whether most of the unevangelized world would be closing to any form of Christian presence. Yet in answer to prayer, country after country has opened up for witness whether overtly or covertly. Such countries as Nepal, Cambodia, China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, and many others are evidence of this. Many of the closing or closed doors have proved to be revolving doors in answer to prayer.

We are, therefore, in the early stages of a prayer-fueled advance of the Kingdom of Christ—a fact that gives me great hope for the future despite the evident negatives in the world and failures of the Church. What could happen for the Kingdom if that prayer mobilization further increased? The majority of evangelical churches have yet to catch this vision. The wider world is so big, complex and remote and their own outreach often discouraging. Their energies and resources are spent on local concerns and programs that benefit the gathered saints, more than the millions of Satan's captives heading for a lost eternity.

The Biblical Basis

So many and powerful are the references to the power and importance of prayer that we sin if we fail to pray to our heavenly Father interceding for a lost world, a needy Church, a limping army of the Lord's servants (1 Sam 12:23, 1 Thess 5:17). Yet how weak, short, limited, selfish our prayers so often are. We have a Father who delights to receive us in His Throne room, not only to hear our hesitant requests, but to answer us above all that we could ask or expect (Jer 33:3).

Hans von Staden, the Founder and Director of the Dorothea Mission in South Africa, was a mighty man of prayer. He was an inspiration to those of us whom he led. In fact, it was his vision for taking up the challenge given by Andrew Murray for weeks of prayer for the world (Murray 1900: 167ff) that led to von Staden's request to write the first *Operation World*. It was he who also suggested the title. He had some powerful comments, several being:

The miracle would be that God NOT answer prayer. He has so committed Himself to answer that it is no miracle that we receive an answer!

When man works, man works; when man prays, God works.

We should not pray for our ministry; prayer is our ministry.

I see so many clear promises about prayer and the assurance of answers in Scripture. How can I even select several and do justice to them? However, Psalm 2 always impresses me. Here the spiritual warfare is vividly portrayed as the Son meditates on the futility of the opposition and assurance of total victory. The Son repeats the promise given to Him:

Ask of Me and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You

shall break them with a rod of iron (Ps 2:8-9RSV).

Here is the plea of the Father that the Son pray and specifically ask the Father for the world. This Jesus did in His earthly life. Prayer was fundamental to His ministry of redemption for the world. It should be in our ministry too! Amazingly, in Rev 2:26 we see Ps 2:9 applied to believers as well. We too are charged by our Father to ask

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for and rule over the nations as a kingdom of priests.

Do we really grasp the significance of the atonement—how the Triune God identified with us sinful men in the incarnation so that through the Cross we, who are redeemed by faith through grace, are joined to Christ? We are a kingdom of priests identified with His death, resurrection, ascension and present reign (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:4-7; 5:10; Rom 5:17). We are now identified with God Himself, seated with Christ in heavenly places sharing in all that He is and has (Col 3:1-4). The greatest of all these is sharing with Him in the ministry of intercession.

It is an awesome thing that we are all called into such a ministry of intercession. We become co-workers with God (1 Cor 3:9, Is 64:4, Mk 16:20). Prayer is the only human activity that moves heaven (Rev 5:9, 8:4-5). In fact in his booklet, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, Andrew Murray shows how our prayers enter into eternity and work together with God

in the extension of His Kingdom and even in the formulation of His eternal decrees. I do not pretend to understand this, but I do know that prayer is not a manipulative tool for us to force a reluctant God to do what we want. Nor is it a means for God to gain entrance into our being to manipulate us. I pray not just because I need to obey God, but because He has so ordained that this is the means by which He will work in this world. Note Murray's words:

This perfect, harmonious union of Divine sovereignty and human liberty is an unfathomable mystery because God as the Eternal One transcends all our thoughts. But let it be our comfort and strength to know that in the eternal fellowship of the Father and the Son, the power of

prayer has its origin and certainty. Through our union with the Son, our prayer is taken up and can have its influence in the inner life of the Blessed trinity. God's decrees are no iron framework against which man's liberty struggles, vainly. God Himself is living love, Who in His Son as man has entered into the tenderest relationship with all that is human. Through the Holy Spirit, He takes up everything human into the Divine life of love, leaving Himself free to give every human prayer its place in the government of the world (Murray 1900:128ff).

The Teachings of the Lord Jesus

The numerous promises, extensive teaching and prayerful life of the Lord Jesus all show the importance of intercession. Here is not the place to expand on this, but just to share one extraordinary passage where Jesus taught His disciples about prayer. I refer to John 14:12-14 (RSV):

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works

than these will he do, because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

What are these greater works? Many times I have asked Christians to explain the meaning, but rarely have I heard what I believe to be the answer. Some have suggested working miracles, raising the dead, winning multitudes, casting out demons, more conversions, but these are all works that Jesus did in abundance and promised that we will also do. That still leaves, the question, what are the greater works? I believe that this is intercession in the name of the conquering, risen, reigning Lord Jesus Christ. This challenge is followed by a promise that is deliberately repeated for emphasis about asking in prayer and the assurance that Jesus will do it. That is an awesome promise for spiritual warfare and for world evangelization.

The world is going to be evangelized only through prayer. This is the ultimate weapon, the master strategy for overthrowing every plan, argument, power structure, bondage and even the gates of Hades that are in opposition to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Through the Cross He conquered, and by applying the victory of the Cross we become more than conquerors. We do not have to understand its efficacy, we just believe the promises of God in the Bible. I have been moved by the ready acceptance of simple African believers that if they pray for someone to be delivered they expect it to happen. May we return to the profound simplicity of trust in a Father who, if we ask, will give (Luke 11:9-13).

Intercessory prayer is the means by which we exercise the authority of Christ in the world. There is a power in prayer that takes it outside of time and place. It is perhaps important to

emphasize that prayer's power is not diminished by passage of time. God knows how to store up prayer for answers to be revealed much later. Nor is prayer limited by distance. Prayers in one continent immediately have an impact on the situation in another. Prayer walks are now becoming a big emphasis as a mission strategy.² It is important to realize that the physical presence of the intercessor does not increase the power of the prayers—though the insights gained, the time set aside for the walk, the commitment involved and the combined and earnest agreement of the participants are all ingredients in the strengthening of faith and the effectiveness of the intercession. Prayer moves the hand that moves the universe. So it is being in God's presence, rather than in a physical location, that pulls down strongholds.

Back to the Basics

Our effectiveness in spiritual warfare is not dependent on technique or intimate knowledge of the situation, but rather on our relationship to God. As a believer, only as I know who I am and know the revealed will of God for me will I be able to confidently exercise the authority delegated to me. Ignorance of these truths opens me up to all the wiles and deceptions of the enemy. Tragically, we no longer emphasize these basics. Here are, briefly, what I regard as some of the most important.

1. Knowing Our Position in Christ

How little is preached on the precious blood of Jesus, the meaning of repentance from dead works and faith in the finished work of Christ on the Cross! What a privilege, what security to be *in Christ*—the message of Ephesians. I am redeemed; I now belong to Jesus. I am in the hand of both Jesus and the Father (John 10:27-30). No one can pluck me from that double

clasp. Greater is He that is in me than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). The only danger is my sin which gives Satan his opportunity. Lack of understanding of these basics, results in too many Christians being "poorly born."

Jill, my late wife, often used to say, "It seems that to be a Christian today you need to give your heart to Jesus and have 50 years of counseling!" There is a counselling craze that has swept through modern Christianity which has become almost a substitute for the objective truths of redemption in Christ. I am not against biblical counselling, but so much that is termed such is a masquerade using biblical verses which overlay humanistic premises and modern psychology. It leads to a dependence on counsellors and not on God alone and is far from the truth recovered in the Reformation—the priesthood of all believers.

As a believer I cannot be affected by witchcraft when walking with God. Stephen Lungu,³ a long-time colleague and close friend in Zimbabwe, often used to stand in our big evangelistic tent and boldly say, "I am staying at the house over there; you can try to practice your witchcraft on me but it won't work because I belong to Jesus." That in an African context was a tremendous testimony. Many Christians live in fear that they or their loved ones may have inadvertently been exposed to some form of witchcraft or the occult.

Missionary friends of ours once traveled back by ship to their homeland for furlough. For years afterwards they were troubled because they blamed subsequent problems with one of their sons on the fact that there was an occultist in the adjoining cabin during the voyage. We can rest assured that no attack of the devil can touch us (1 John 5:18-19) so long

as we obey the conditions for abiding in Christ.

I cannot be harmed by curses when walking in obedience to God. In 1990 Jill and I had to go to the house of a friend who had been tricked out of much of her capital and was even being deprived of her house by a con man who had been given hospitality. He had once been a Baptist pastor and manipulated our friend through purported prophecies and speaking in tongues. We had to take strong action to have him evicted from the house, and as we left the house he cursed us. Our friend was convinced that the cancer diagnosed in Jill a few months later was the result of that curse. It was with some difficulty we persuaded her that we were immune to such in Jesus (Gen 27:29; Prov 26:2), and that He had all under His control⁴ and had encouraged us with specific words from Scripture on this. In fact, in retrospect, we realized that the early symptoms of the cancer had been there before the cursing incident. We were sure of our security in Christ, so these words did not rock our equilibrium, but how easily it could have done so (Rom 8:38-39).

In the 1970s we had a strange incident at our Dorothea Mission Bible School in Harare, Zimbabwe. A gardener employed on the grounds was sacked (fired), but on the side he was a practicing witch doctor. He placed a curse on our people and the property in retaliation. At that time two of the ladies were involved in a bitter war of words and this gave the occasion the enemy needed. There were many unpleasant incidents that were only explicable by the demonic. One of the students (now a respected leader of a significant ministry in Zimbabwe) had the experience in a dormitory with other students in the room of being roused screaming in pain

because he had been burnt by a hot hand under his blanket at night, the burn marks of the hand were evident in the morning. It was only after the fellowship breakdown was dealt with in repentance, and prayer made to drive out these demonic forces, that these incidents ceased.

2. *Knowing our Deliverance*

I am free (John 8:36); in Christ I am a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). The

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fall in the Garden caused my spiritual death. It affected my spirit and thereby tainted and warped my God-given personality. New birth and life in the Spirit gave me a new Start, but sanctification changes my attitudes and actions so that all may be under the lordship of Christ and dependent on Him. My personality created by God is now free to be what God had originally intended when He created it. It is sad that the word "flesh" in the older translations of the Bible has been so misunderstood. The best, though not necessarily all-inclusive, definition I know is in the long and brilliant coverage of the subject by Watchman Nee in *The Spiritual Man* (Nee 1968:69ff). The flesh is any attitude or action done without total dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 7:25; 14:23). The NIV has further muddied the theological waters by frequently translating the Greek *sarx* as "sinful nature." Fallen human

nature is not a biblical term but frequently used and gives the impression that I have a fallen personality. Knowing my new creaturehood in Jesus is the great liberation from all my genealogical, social, sinful past. Repentance, renunciation of the works of darkness in my own life and in my heredity, and faith in the efficacy of the blood of Christ sets me free. His indwelling life is my life and I am free to be the person God originally made me to be.

As I look back to my years in Africa working among a people among whom the practice and fear of witchcraft was normal, I am surprised how few of those who were soundly converted needed deliverance ministry—though some did, and demons had to be expelled in the name of Jesus. We made a point of ensuring that any seeker faced up to the total commitment needed, which also involved the destruction of all occult charms and medicines and open testimony to family and peers.⁵ A solid conversion cleared up many of the problems of association with the powers of darkness.

There was a time at our mission headquarters in Britain when deliverance ministry became a major issue and many sought help. One missionary of another agency staying with us for a course had deep spiritual problems. She approached Jill saying that she believed Jill could help her. Jill told her that if she wanted deliverance ministry she ought to go to others, but if she was willing, Jill would spend half an hour with her and show her who she was in Christ and that she could be different for the rest of her life. This lady was a prime candidate for deliverance—depressed, an alcoholic father and an identical twin sister who was seeking to use the occult on her. However she saw by

faith the secret of her new creaturehood and was free from then on. Months later she wrote thankfully to tell us that she was indeed changed! Too often people run around looking for dramatic spiritual deliverances when a good dose of humility in repentance and renunciation is what is truly needed.

3. *Being Seated with Him*

I have often heard people say, "When you have troubles you should look up (to the Lord)." I respond that we ought to do the opposite. When we have troubles we need to look down! Do we realize what Jesus has done for us? Not only are we dead, buried and raised with Him to new life (Rom 6:1-11), but we are also ascended with Him in heavenly places to share now in His reign and throne (Eph 2:6), and this is where our real life is hidden (Col 3:1-4). We are with Christ in the control room of the universe. Do we realize this and do we live in this reality? It will revolutionize our prayer life if we embrace this truth. My intercession makes a difference. We are a holy priesthood standing between God and man with one foot on earth and the other in the heavenlies. With one ear we hear what is going on down below and with the other we hear what God is saying. What privileges we have in Christ.

Knowing the Will of God

Guidance is the birthright of a child of God (Rom 8:14). Jesus promised us as His friends that we would know, as He did, what the Father says and does (John 15:14-15). He promised that the coming of the Holy Spirit would both teach and remind us what Jesus spoke, but would also guide us into all the truth (John 14, 16)—both the written Word and in our day to day walk with Jesus. All Bible believing Christians agree with the former. It is the latter which is open to discus-

sion and abuse, yet is essential for effectiveness in prayer and in spiritual warfare. If I know that I am where God placed me and doing what He has shown me, no suffering, no attacks of the enemy will deflect me until I gain the assurance that it is my Father's will for a change. Many a missionary in a hard field has been kept true to God's calling because of that conviction that God personally revealed His will. All over the world I have challenged Christian workers with these words, "Never leave for negative reasons where God has placed you." The enemy of souls will do all he can to provide all possible negatives and convince us, that this is God's guidance. Over the years I have been moved at how many have come-back, often years later, and said that that particular word I had spoken kept them in God's will.

In day-to-day ministry the Holy Spirit uses many ways to prompt God's servants—the Word or a particular verse that comes to us in deep power as His Word to me, other people, circumstances, or most frequently the deep inner conviction or burden to pray, speak or take some action. We have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16), so there is often that deep inner knowing that comes from the Spirit which is hard to explain. All of these promptings are subservient to the absolute of Scripture and have to be held loosely and in humility. We can sometimes get it wrong. Yet how often that gift of the Spirit of a word of knowledge, wisdom or prophecy has been spoken into situations in a redemptive way! This has to be self-authenticating, including the witness of the Spirit in others too. It is very hard to give any corrective advice to one who says "The Lord has guided me," or "Thus says the Lord."

I have not the time nor space to share wonderful accounts of God's guidance in this way, but how we

need that leading in intercession. I share but one from my own life. For many years I have kept a special prayer list specifically for prayer burdens I believe the Lord assigned to me for intercession. It is astonishing to look back on what must now be over 500 definite prayer requests—only about 40 of which are still active. Nearly all the rest have been answered, and with some I had the deep conviction that God had already answered before I saw the answer, but most were crossed off when I saw the answer. We cannot intercede for everything. We need that leading of the Spirit to those that are our corporate or individual responsibility. We have a God who speaks today, who communicates with us so that we exercise a ministry through revelation. What liberation to know that my Father will always show me what to pray for, which sick person should receive healing, what to preach, where to go, how to write a letter, as well as discern the wiles of the enemy.

There are terms rarely heard today: "effectual praying" and "praying through." Elijah was one who prayed this way (Jas 5:16-17). As Elijah prayed on Mt. Carmel for rain he knew that God would answer, even though he had to send his servant seven times before the cloud became visible. The New Testament is even more explicit on this way of praying:

And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we HAVE obtained the requests made of Him. 1 John 5:14-15.

Jesus said;

I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there and it will move: and nothing will be impossible to you. Matt

17:20.

We need to know far more about this kind of prayer depth in today's battle as we come into the final supreme effort to evangelize the world. We need to know the mind of God (1 John 5:14), and be agreed together (Matt 18:19-20), as well as know that what we ask in the name of Jesus will be granted. We can then say the word of faith to the situation knowing that we have the answer. We can then praise expecting to see the deliverance. The battle is usually more severe than these words may sound, but the principles are there. So it was in the prayer lives of great men of God such as Andrew Murray of South Africa, George Muller of Bristol, Rees Howells of Wales, Praying Hyde of Pakistan. In our own mission agency, WEC International, Norman Grubb (the biographer of Rees Howells) brought us into these basic principles for the growth and advance of our work (Grubb 1940).

I use one illustration from recent years. In 1990 we held our sixth annual International Leaders Conference in Scotland. During one of our many prayer sessions, our leaders from Senegal in West Africa shared their concern. Senegal is over 90% Muslim and was to host the World Islamic Conference in their capital the following year. The leaders of the Muslim nations were to gather to discuss united action on a number of fronts, one being the ending of all Christian mission work and the elimination of indigenous Christian minorities in their lands. After prayer, we shared together how we believed God was leading us as to what to ask. We all agreed that we must pray for the nullification of the impact of that conference. We had a mighty time of prayer which reached a climax when a

deep conviction came that God had heard and we ended with glorious praise. The Gulf War came some four months later. This event so polarized the Muslim world that the conference was postponed. When at last the conference was convened the following year the divisions were still so marked that most of the leaders left the con-

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ference before the scheduled time with little decided. God stepped in to thwart the plottings of the rulers of this world (Ps 2:1-3) in answer to those definite prayers in which we were sure of God's answer long before the event.

Using our Weapons

We have no need to fear anything the devil can do. We respect his power and understand that detached from the Lord Jesus we are fair game for him. God has given all we need to both defend ourselves and also to take the offensive in the warfare against Satan's wiles, principalities, powers and world rulers of this present darkness. Here I can only refer to two important passages as illustration of this truth.

Ephesians 6 is beloved by all Christians because of the superb

description Paul gives of our spiritual armor. He shows each part of the soldier's armor has deep spiritual application to our total defense for life in a non-Christian world permeated by sin and also every stratagem and attack of Satan. He also shows us the mighty weapons for attack—the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and prayer in the Spirit. The strong message is that we need to be constantly in close fellowship with our God, or we are in danger of ineffectiveness in ministry, or worse become a victim of Satan's wiles and fiery darts. There have been too many examples of servants of God who have become deeply immersed in the area of spiritual warfare, but have failed to put on and maintain that armor daily and have become casualties themselves.

Revelation 12 is an amazing chapter. I believe it is a key chapter in a book written as a manual for spiritual warfare.

There are many interpretations of the symbolisms in this chapter into which I will not go here in this article, but I believe this chapter gives a picture of the warfare of Satan against the Seed of the woman (the Lord Jesus Christ) and the woman (the people of God throughout history from the Garden to the Consummation). In this amazing chapter, the Holy Spirit exposes Satan and his weapons. Nowhere else in Scripture are we told so many of Satan's names, functions and titles. He is revealed in his true colors as in no other Scripture passage. He is the accuser of the brethren, the deceiver of the whole world and, by implication, the one who engineers compromise among believers. Yet here we are also shown the three invincible weapons God has given us:

1. For Satan's weapon of accusation we have *the Blood of the Lamb*. My safety is not in knowledge of the

enemy's stratagems and the precautions I take, but in the efficacy of the blood of the Lamb once slain to deal with the sin issue Satan has no more claim on me once I have repented and continue to walk in the light. I have total freedom and life more abundant what ever my suffering, difficulties or stress in the battle. I am totally safe in Jesus, as are all other true believers.

2. For Satan's weapon of deceit we have *the word of testimony*. This testimony is first about who Christ is and what He has done. Then I can boldly say what God has made me in Christ, what God promises me in His Word, what I know my prayers can achieve and what the ultimate conclusion of the war will be. I have the witness of the Holy Spirit who assures me of these things. He gives me the words to utter whatever my circumstances. He gives assurance that God can use even me to testify so that the devil's captives have their blindness removed and can be set free. The Holy Spirit also gives discernment in every situation. We can have that gift of inner knowing what is of God and what is of Satan; His peace being our referee whistle blower. This testimony becomes the means by which those enslaved to the prince of this world through their belief systems, practices, moral actions and spiritual bondages are liberated.

3. For Satan's weapon of compromise we have to *be totally committed*. We love not our lives even unto death. That is the extent to which we are willing to go for Jesus sake. Over such the enemy has no hold. How we need to walk in that total abandonment to God. Any compromise lays us open to the enemy. The more dangerous we are to his kingdom the greater our humility, dependence and commitment to our Lord must be!

The Great Commission as expressed by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-

20 shows that through the victory of the Cross all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him. In Christ we have been delegated His authority (Luke 9:1; 10:19). Jesus has given us, the keys of the Kingdom (Matt 16:19). By faith we can move mountains, We have the power to bind and loose (Matt 18:18-19, Jn 20:23). This gives us the boldness to take kingdoms (Dan 7:14, 22, 27), expect miracles, command demons to submit to our word of command in the name of Jesus, break down strongholds (2 Cor 10:4), resist and bind Satan (1 Pet 5:9), spoil the strong man's goods and bring release to his captives in the name of Jesus. All we can say is to repeat Paul's triumphant words, "If God is, for us, who can be against us." They don't have a chance!

The victory of the Lord Jesus in His cross and resurrection over sin, death and Satan was so decisive that we only have to apply that victory to any opposition of the enemy. I cannot agree with the title of Hal Lindsay's book, *Satan is alive and well on Planet Earth*. The truth is that Satan has been mortally wounded, his defeat is irreversible. He is *not well* (Rev 12:10-12). Simple believers in Africa, Asia and Latin America expect God to work in these ways. We Western Christians make things so theological and complicated. If God says it, of course He will do it! All His enemies are now being put under His feet (Heb 10:14) and we by faith ensure the continuation of the process (Luke 10:17-19). What confidence this gives, what assurance that as we walk with the Lord in the center of His will every assault on us will ultimately fail, and every advance we make will ultimately bear fruit for eternity.

Too often believers have the impression that they have to go out and do the fighting, not seeing that the battle is the Lord's. I have seen

deliverance sessions where those praying seem to think spiritual authority is measurable by vocal volume or physical activity. It also troubles me that many in their praying can be presumptuous and demand or claim things beyond our sphere of authority. Note how Jude writes in warning that we be humble in this regard.

But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." But these men revile whatever they do not understand (Jude 9-10).

An over-emphasis on deliverance ministry can be unhealthy and even dangerous. There is a place for it, but this course should be pursued when it is plain that demonization is indeed the issue. Arthur Neil, a Baptist pastor used of God in the life of a witch, Doreen Irvine, has written two masterly and biblical volumes dealing with this whole area (Neil 1990, 1991; Irvine, 1973). He shared with me that in all his long experience in ministering in the area of deliverance from demonic activity, he only has had to deal with two clear cases of demon possession but many more with oppressions and attacks of various kinds—the latter being the more difficult to deal with. Jill and I had to make an urgent pastoral visit to one of our Latin American fields. One of the problems we faced concerned an over-involvement with deliverance ministry. One of our most effective church planting missionaries had become so involved with delivering Christians from demons. She claimed that thousands of demons had to be cast out of pastors in her many months of ministry around the country. This ministry was causing dismay to many, and appeared to be even possibly a side-tracking of the enemy

into endless conversations with demons and time-consuming deliverances. She was even cross-examining lesser demons to find out more concerning the upper echelons of the demonic hierarchy. We sought to warn her of the real dangers associated with the latter and the need for a well rounded balance in ministry in the former. I cannot help but feel that she was laying herself open to believing the lies and distortions of the enemy and having all her energies consumed in this deliverance ministry. She took some of our advice and moderated some of the excesses in her ministry.

How we need a holy caution in this area. We do not seek the demonic in everything, but we deal with any evident manifestation of demonic powers. Doreen Irvine with her background of Satanism and witchcraft followed by years of ministry and counselling wrote these words:

There was no long dialogue with the demon. There is no need for that. Jesus cast out demons with one word, 'Go,' and the demons left at once. We can cast out demons with six words today: 'Go in the name of Jesus'. If demon-possessed people are willing to be free and are repentant of their sins, demons have to go at once. The devil is highly delighted with eight hour deliverance meetings, which last until three in the morning, while demons play hide and seek, wear out Christians, confound them with their knowledge, and frighten them by their strength (Irvine1986:129).

Being Willing to Pay the Price

I cannot conclude without a word of caution. There is always a price to pay. Grace was freely given to us in Christ, and is freely available to us day by day. But if we are to become ministers of that grace it will cost. We

therefore rejoice in our sufferings for the sake of others and in our flesh we complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body (Col 1:24). There are the death points in every ministry—the dealing with our self-reliance (2 Cor 1:8-11). We need to identify totally with the objects of our intercession as did Moses (Ex. 32:32), Paul (Rom. 9:3),

World evangelization is achievable, but at a cost. Our major commitment must be to intercession so that every barrier—whether moral, political or spiritual—be broken down and the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ come.

and also the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Is 53:12). This was true of Elisha's intercession for the son of the Shunammite woman. Gehazi's use of Elisha's staff did nothing for the boy; it needed costly and committed intercession for the boy to be raised up (2 Ki 18-37). There is the danger in spiritual warfare that we rely on "the staffs" of techniques and experience and not on the total costly commitment for true and eternal deliverances.

Conclusion

Never before has the completion of world evangelization been such a possibility as in our present generation! The basic minimum requirements given by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Great Commission, in its various renderings, could be attainable in our generation. In Mark 16 we are commanded to preach the Gospel to

every person. And in Matthew 28:18-20 to disciple every ethnic people (the Greek meaning for the word "nation" most frequently used in English translations). My estimation is that 15% to 20% of the world's population is still beyond the present preaching of the Gospel. Of the some 10,000 peoples in the various countries of the world, an estimated 2,000 to 2,500

have yet to see a missiological breakthrough to produce a viable Christian church-planting movement within their cultures. Possibly and only 1,000 or so have very little being done on a long-term basis to ensure their evangelization.

The task is achievable, but at a cost. Our major commitment must be to intercession so that every barrier—whether moral, political or spiritual—be broken down and the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ come.

Let us not allow anything to deflect us from the real goal which is world evangelization and a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells and all evil is forever banished!

End Notes

1. Numerous Scriptures assure us of the final victory achieved through Jesus in His death and resurrection and applied by us: Matt 24:14; Matt 28:18-20; Psalm 2; Dan 2:44; Dan 7; Rev 1, 5, 20-22, etc.
2. The theology of prayer walking needs to be spelled out. There is a danger that if the premise of territorial spirits is accepted, this can easily extend to the premise that physical presence of intercessors in the area controlled by the territorial spirit is essential for its binding. The practice of prayer walking needs to be examined—I see many negatives; the huge expense to the detriment of funding for workers on the front line, the motivations for

going can be mixed, the drain on the time and energies of workers serving in glamorous places. It can even endanger ministries in sensitive areas.

3. Stephen Lungu was for many years an evangelist with the Dorothea Mission. He is now one of the leaders in African Enterprise based in Malawi, but with a global ministry. His life story has been published under the title *Freedom Fighter* by Anne Coombes, 1994, Kingsway, England.
4. Jill lived to complete her book *You Can Change The World* just before she went to be with Jesus in June 1992.
5. The Scriptural pattern is to destroy all occultic articles (Acts 19:18-19). For that reason I would advise all Christians to avoid keeping such articles even for deputation programs. Whatever one's view of the attachment of demons to inanimate objects, there are dangers, whether moral (causing others or ourselves to stumble) or spiritual (demonic influence). It certainly can miscommunicate!

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Photo here of Patrick Johnstone

Patrick Johnstone, served for 16 years with the Dorothea Mission as a missionary evangelist in the poor

urban areas of South Africa, Zimbabwe, Bostwana and Mozambique. During this time he learned something of the spiritual warfare needed to see people steeped in witchcraft and the occult come into the liberty the Gospel. Also during this time he commenced the task of compiling data and information for the writing of successive versions of his world famous Operation World. He is now serving with WEC International as part of the leadership team of the Mission-Director of Research, and Deputy International Direction. He is also Chairman of the Unreached Peoples Network of the AD2000 and Beyond

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