

The Gospel Gazette

A Media Resource of Jonathan Ministries and Friends
Volume 3 * Number 1 * 2013



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WATCH YOUR WITNESS, WALK AND WARFARE OF WORSHIP

by Jonathan

THE WITNESS OF WORSHIP

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

Our worship of God is based on a vital relationship with the Lord. Unless an individual is "born of the Spirit or born again" (according to John 3:5-8), he or she can only know God in the intellect.

Just like the Pharisees of old, many educated non-Christians today may have excellent and profound philosophies and theories about religion, but still very much foreign to the things and ways of God. We have to be "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11) in order to have a relationship and a walk with Him. We have to receive His life by confessing and believing this, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

As important and precious as it is, it is not enough to know the written Word as a doctrinal or a historical Book. We must allow the Spirit of God to quicken our spirit each time we study the Holy Scriptures as it will lead us to know and love the Living Word, Jesus Christ Himself, "IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

As we live in Him, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

THE WALK OF WORSHIP

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God- which is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1; NIV).

To many Christians, the idea of worship is a once-a-week, happy hour kind of celebration. It is possible to go through the motions of clapping, dancing and singing in a church service and still be addicted and comfortable with the world for the other parts of the week.

Friend, to enter into the Presence of the King of kings with an unprepared heart is to be guilty of "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:5).

While God is tired and weary of spiritual phonies and He says, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even as the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood" (Isaiah 1:13-15); I know there are sincere and true Christians who love God and yet, plague with some private pains, some secret sins that only they know what they are. God wants to release the Spirit of faith in these lives!

Do we have difficulties with bitterness, doubt, fear, hate, idolatry, lust, unforgiveness, etc.?

I am not proud to tell you this. There were occasions where I have allowed circumstances to dictate my confession and walk of worship. Instead of having faith as "...a grain of mustard seed, [I] shall say unto this mountain (of whatever difficulties or problems I was experiencing), Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto [me]" (according to Matthew 17:20), I was

fretting and panic-stricken, allowing the spirit of fear to attack me.

At other times, instead of blessing them that “curse [me], and pray for them which despitefully use [me]” (according to Luke 6:28), the flesh would rise up and I would be in a bad mood. I would be so frustrated that I felt like giving up and quitting. But God would be so patient with me as I have learned and am still learning to take strength in His Word, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified” (2 Peter 4:12-14).

Before we can experience the victory that Christ has already wrought on the cross, God wants us to call the lack of faith, positive confession, prayer (or whatever besetting hindrances) the manifestations of sin without excuse or justification.

We need the power of the cross in pulling down the strongholds and the works of the enemy- “ ...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

Why are some of us still spiritually weak and starving even though we are “born again” and have received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour?

I believe it is because we are too addicted and comfortable with the world to where we rarely, if ever, take the time to listen and obey God’s inner promptings, “ ...dull of hearing. For when the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:11-14).

True, the transformation in the “renewing of [our] mind” (according to Romans 12:2) is a continuous lifelong process that will not be completed until we are called home to be with Jesus, but the peace in knowing that “even in the midst of tribulation, we can be of good cheer because Jesus have overcome the world” (according to John 16:33) is something we can experience here and now.

But it must begin with the desire to walk with God. Enoch walked with God so much that God simply took him home (according to Genesis 5:18-24 and Hebrews 11:5). Do we see God only as our Father and Saviour, or is He our Friend as well?

Let us express our love, obedience and reverence for God, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37).

THE WARFARE OF WORSHIP

“And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:40-41).

I read that there are churches where people wear combat fatigues and hold imaginary swords to denote that they were engaged in spiritual warfare. They would scream loudly and stamp their feet evidently to supposedly frighten the devil away. This is foolishness and presumptuousness.

Now, I have every respect for people who needs to wear such attire in the line of duty and service to their nation, but to suggest that there are some powers in the adornment of such uniforms when it comes to spiritual matters is to be a laughing-stock not only to the people of the world, but to the powers of darkness as well. On the authority of God’s Word, I say that the foundations of victory in spiritual warfare lies in our position in Christ Jesus as we are clothed in His righteousness and that we put on the whole armour of

God, and not because we act or look “militant” on the outward. True spiritual warfare is not playing games with the enemy. It is not a joke. In fact, it is a conflict that will not end until the trump of God sounds or when the Lord calls us home to glory. Just as “when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him (Jesus) for a season” (Luke 4:13), we can be sure that there is nothing we can do to stop Satan from coming back to attack or tempt us. However, “lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11), God’s assurance of victory will be ours if we respond scripturally, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Theologically, I constantly accept the fact that Satan will always return to try to hinder my faith and my walk with God but in practice, there has been moments when I feel so great in God that I thought I would never fall flat on my face again, only to find days, hours or even minutes later that I am shaking and struggling.

Where have I gone wrong?

Was I fighting in the flesh or in His Spirit?

Even though I know the anointing and the touch of God through the years, it is humiliating and painful to know that there were still some unscriptural areas in which I was operating.

In this merciless spiritual wrestling match, I am as a little child, saying of my infirmities as Paul said of his, “...Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

No, I am not talking about wilful failure or sin, but I am talking about the joy and peace I can expect to receive from God even while people curse, misunderstand or wrongly judge me. It is not easy and I am still learning, but through it all, the Lord is saying, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness... ” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

I believe the words of Jesus at Gethsemane when he said of Simon Peter, “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not... ” (Luke 22:32) is a lesson to show us that even the strongest Christian is no match for Satan if there is pride present. You see, Peter was a strong individual and when he said, “Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death” (Luke 22:33), he was sincere and was not lying about it. But when the test came, he failed miserably. Was he an outright hypocrite or a liar? No, I do not think so. The answers are often due to spiritual attacks that are especially vulnerable either to a more mature child of God or one who subtly trust in his or her spiritual accomplishments.

I confess that there are many times I can identify with this problem. I have the best and well intentions of will to accomplish certain things for the Lord only to find that I failed to “make it” later.

I have learned some things the hard way, and I am certain that there are so much more to learn when it comes to the things and the ways of God. But as I have attempted to briefly relate to you my personal spiritual battle as well as examples from the Word of God, it is my prayer that it will somehow be of comfort and help to you, my beloved in Christ, “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward” (2 Corinthians 1:12).

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(This article was originally printed in 1995.)