

LET US NOT BE AMONGST THOSE WHOM GOD OPPOSES

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As a speaker in citywide and regional prayer conferences, I am often asked to unmask the "spiritual power" opposing the body of Christ in the conference region. City leaders and intercessors have even asked if I knew the "name" of the principal spirit that is resisting the church in their area. "Do you want to know the name the most powerful spirit opposing most Christians?" I ask. Eager faces respond affirmatively. "It's Yahweh."

My questioners, who suddenly look like a tree full of owls, are always bewildered by my answer. They are sure I misunderstood their question. Then, I explain. I remind them that, according to the Scriptures, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). So, if we are divided in our hearts from other churches, if we instinctively look down on other Christians or if we are at all self-promoting in attitude, we are walking in pride. As such, the Spirit that stands to resist our endeavours is not demonic; it's God.

The Lord will not excuse our pride just because we worship Him on Sundays and consider ourselves "saved." God resisted Lucifer's pride in heaven and He will oppose our pride on earth. What is most sad is, religious pride has been so homogenized into our Christian experience that we don't even perceive it as being wrong. Yet it is without doubt the most offensive blight upon God's people. The Lord does not want the lost added to churches where they must assimilate the poison of pride at the same table as salvation.

Jesus said of Himself, "I do not seek My glory." Yet, how many of our actions are expended doing the exact opposite of the nature of Christ! Our choice of clothes and cars, homes and roles in life so often have self-exaltation working in the background. Jesus continued, "there is One who seeks and judges" (John 8:50). Listen carefully to His words, for every time we seek to exalt ourselves we run face to face with God. One dimension of the Father's heart is that He "seeks and judges" those who, through pride, exalt themselves. Though it is highly esteemed among men, self-promotion is actually "detestable in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15).

The Old Testament is replete with examples documenting the Almighty's opposition to man's pride. Time after time it was not Israel's enemies that thwarted national prosperity; it was God. From generation to generation, the Lord allowed Israel's adversaries to humble His people, to drive them toward desperation, humility and finally repentance. There, in brokenness and honesty, God could deal with their sins and finally lead them into national revival. Listen how the Lord pleaded with Israel: "Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! I would quickly subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries" (Ps. 81:13-14).

So also with us. We need the might of God to be unleashed against our foes. For truly, terrible powers of darkness have invaded our land, and our adversary stalks our streets seeking whom he may devour. Our hope, however, is not merely in confronting the enemy, but in allowing God to confront us. Our victory over the enemy is directly attached to our full surrender to God. If we truly learned of Him, we too would be "meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29 KJV). And God, who gives grace to the humble, would rescue us from the spiritual enemies of our nation.

The promise of the Lord is familiar. He says, "If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (2 Chron. 7:14). You say, But I'm humbling myself and praying. Yes, but our humility to God is not complete until we learn to humble ourselves to one another.

The fact is, because of pride, we have yet to accept what the Lord means in His words, "If My people." We still interpret His phrase "My people" to mean "our people"---our limited circle of friends, relatives and Christians whose culture or style of worship is, more or less, like our own.

However, when the Lord thinks of His people, He sees a more expansive group. He includes all who have been born again in a city. All of us who "are called by His name," though we are diverse in gifts and assignments, we must find unity of spirit before Him. And this begins with an amazing strategy: we must humble ourselves.

I know this goes against the grain of our historic church relationships. Satan has not only divided us from others, he has made us proud that we are separate. We think being separate is a virtue. But consider: only one group of people consistently found the Lord confronting and resisting them in the New Testament: the Pharisees. Literally translated, the word "Pharisee" meant "the separate." Of all the religious groups in the first century, it is the pride of the Pharisees that, today, the church most resembles.

We pray, "Lord, heal our land." But the land He intends to heal first is that which exists beneath the feet of the humble. It is the world of the praying meek, who find the transforming power of God as their companion. The Lord's remedy for our society is hidden within the life-relationships of Christians. We are always so mindful of what others have done wrong to us, but where have we failed others? What can we do to heal the land that exists between us and those whom we have hurt?

You see, as we become those who "humble themselves and pray" about what we have done wrong, healing from God begins to flow. When white Christians humble themselves and ask for forgiveness from our Indigenous people, God begins to heal the land under their feet. If God resists the proud, remember also, He gives grace to the humble. Grace is more than being covered; it is being cleansed and changed by the power of God. Grace is God's transforming power doing in us what we cannot do for ourselves.

When we pray, "heal our land," it is the land beneath the feet of the humble that God promises to touch and restore to blessedness. Let's pray: Dear Father, You said the healing of our land begins with the humbling of ourselves. Master, reveal to my heart those with whom I am estranged. Grant me courage to forgive and honesty to see where I contributed to the strife. I long to be an ambassador of reconciliation. Therefore, lead me to bring healing to the relationships in our world, and so bring healing to the land in which I dwell. In Jesus' name. Amen

Source: Francis Frangipane