***Present Attitudes and Future Victories***

An Old Testament story captures well my concern with the effects of a passive spirit. Elisha the prophet was about to die, and Joash, king of Israel, in an unusual show of affection, wept over the man of God. Adding to the intrigue, the king then spoke the very words that Elisha had himself uttered to Elijah in the last hours of his mentor’s life: “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” (2 Kings 13:14).

It is possible that the king sought from the prophet some special blessing for victory in battle. Elisha did accommodate the king, yet he also tested him. Ordering the king to take a bow and arrows, Elisha told him, “Put your hand on the bow.” Elisha then laid his hands on top of the king’s hands and said, “Open the window toward the east.” Joash opened it. Elisha said, “Shoot!” And as Joash shot, Elisha proclaimed, “The Lord’s arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Aram; for you will defeat the Arameans at Aphek until you have destroyed them” (2 Kings 13:16–17).

God thereby declared through Elisha that He was going to honor King Joash for recognizing the anointing on this prophet and seeking his blessing. Yet one test remained. Elisha told the king to take the arrows and “strike the ground.” Joash took the arrows, but he struck the ground only three times and stopped. At this the prophet became angry with him and said, “You should have struck five or six times, then you would have struck Aram until you would have destroyed it. But now you shall strike Aram only three times” (2 Kings 13:18–19). Elisha was angered by the passive spirit in King Joash. He saw that the king did not possess the perseverance to pursue his enemies until he fully conquered them.

What does this mean for us?

The prophet’s anger actually mirrors the Lord’s displeasure toward the passiveness or laziness of His people today. Is it hard to believe that Jesus would actually be angry with His Church? Then consider the Lord’s word to the church in Laodicea, a church that was overly concerned with its own comfort and passive in its attitude toward spiritual realities. Jesus said, “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth” (Revelation 3:15–16).

Jesus would rather we were hot or cold than lukewarm. Does He still love those He rebukes? Of course, but He calls us to change our attitudes. It is not that passivity or laziness is such terrible sin, like murder or adultery. It is simply that such attitudes create a psychological prison around believers that actually holds us hostage to our other sins.

The Lord is not pleased with the spiritual passivity and indifference so prevalent among His people. We are aware daily that terrorists could attack with massive destruction; we watch the advance of perversion in our cultures—yet many Christians remain prayerless and inactive.

This is in spite of the Lord’s promise that if we will come before Him, humbling ourselves in earnest prayer, He will empower us to pursue our enemies and defeat them. But instead of seeking God’s face on behalf of the lost, too many of us are immobilized by the grip of a passive spirit. I am not talking about the level of energy in our bodies, but about the level of fire in our obedience.

Elisha could see that King Joash was a quitter by the passive way he struck with the arrows. Beloved, God has given us authority and He has given us the weapons of our warfare to help us, but we need to get up and fight. We need to repent of a passive spirit and stand with Christ’s authority in this day of war and battle. For if we fail to do either—pray or act—we might actually lose the soul of our nation.

Our defeat might come not because God’s help was not available, but because we saw the advance of evil and did nothing.

For maximum benefit, pray this prayer out loud: Lord God, I thank You that You have given me authority over all the power of the enemy. Forgive me for allowing my voice to remain silent and my will to remain immobilized by a passive spirit. I realize that to be an overcomer I must pursue my enemy until he is consumed. You have given me authority over the plans and works of evil. You have created me to be a minister of Your righteousness. You have filled me with Your Holy Spirit and with fire. This day I confront, renounce and take authority over the power of the enemy. I break the bondage of a passive spirit. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

(To be continued.)