

Silencing the Slanderos Accuser of the Brethren

I've faced my fair share of slander from the accuser of the brethren. Sometimes it comes through religious spirits that type 50 words per minute and rip off an email without considering the spirit in which they're written. Other times it comes through atheists or radical gay activists who mock and condemn me for voicing God's Word.

Still other times it can come from who you let get close to you that have believed the enemy's lie.

Of course, it's no coincidence that the slander always makes its way back to your ears. The accuser of the brethren knows that folks—yes, even Christian folks—can't resist the temptation to gossip, despite the fact that the Bible says a perverse man sows strife (Prov. 16:28); despite the fact that death and life are in the power of the tongue (Prov. 18:21); and despite the fact that God warns us not to circulate a false report (Ex. 23:1). Many can't resist the temptation to gossip—especially when slander is involved.

Slander is not pretty. It means "to defame someone; to harm their reputation; to disgrace; or to accuse." Slander is a tool of the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10). Consider this: the word *slanderer* in 1 Timothy 3:11 is the same word for "devil." When we slander someone, we are acting like devils. We are mirroring the character of Satan. We can't walk in the anointing God has for us and mirror the character of Satan at the same time. We just can't.

But what if you are the one being slandered?

How to Respond to Slander

How you respond to mistreatment is one of the most important

aspects of your spiritual life. When we respond the right way, we climb higher—or go deeper—in the Spirit. When we respond the wrong way, we get bitter. Over time, that bitterness will defile our spirits and dull our ability to sense the presence of God or hear His voice. Bitterness is deadly—and it's easy for the people around you to discern. Where true humility lives, though, bitterness can't take up residence. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

As I said, I've endured plenty of mistreatment during my life, and I can honestly say that I count it a blessing. By God's grace, I've always managed to ultimately respond in meekness rather than retaliating against the poor soul manifesting the character of slanderous Satan. And I pray that God's grace will continue to pour over me as the slander from religious spirits, atheists, radical gay activists and, occasionally, even those who I let get close to me who have believed the enemy's lie continues.

No one likes to be slandered. I don't enjoy it. It makes me sorrow for the one who's committing the sin. The Bible says, "Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, Him I will destroy" (Ps. 101:5, NKJV). And Romans 1:30-32 suggests backbiters are worthy of death. Paul told us not to keep company with a believer who has "a foul tongue [railing, abusing, reviling, slandering]" (1 Cor. 5:11, AMP)—Scripture actually lists the slanderer among the sexually immoral, the covetous, idolaters, drunkards and extortioners. The point is, God hates slander.

Understanding how seriously God takes slander has had a twofold impact on my heart. First, I don't want any part of slander. I don't want to engage in it, and I won't listen to anyone else engaging in it. If someone comes to me with slander on their lips, I put out the fire and bring gentle correction to help them avoid Satan's snare. Second, when I see the damage the slanderer is doing to himself by attacking me, I take pity on him. While they think their words are digging a pit for me, they are actually the ones who are bound

to fall headlong into the hole.

Transferring Your Personal Rights

I've learned over the years to transfer my personal rights to God, knowing He will vindicate me amid the slander—or any other mistreatment. And He has confirmed me time and time again in the presence of my enemies when I give Him the reigns. As Paul wrote, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20, NKJV). I've committed my spirit into the Lord's hands, and, in return, He takes responsibility for my protection, provision and vindication when necessary.

I don't want to be like the accuser of the brethren. And I don't want to swap insult for insult (1 Pet. 3:9). I want to be like Jesus, "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23). God is the judge. He will make the wrong things right in His way and in His timing. Vengeance is His. He will repay (Rom. 12:19). I won't be overcome with evil, but I will overcome evil with good (v. 21). I will rejoice when I am persecuted because I know that when I respond the right way, I am blessed. My first response is to pray for those who persecute me. And pray. And pray. And pray some more. It keeps my heart clean.

I've found it true, looking back over the many instances where I've been mistreated, abandoned, robbed, persecuted, falsely accused and otherwise slandered that the initial sting of the mistreatment fades more quickly when you walk in love, speak the truth in love without being defensive, and refuse to retaliate. I've also found it true that God repays, vindicates and takes vengeance on my behalf. If you respond with meekness in the face of mistreatment, you can have the same testimony. Amen.

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Knowing When It's Time to Shake the Dust Off Your Feet

"Shake the dust off your feet." I wasn't really surprised when I heard the **Holy Spirit** say those six words—but when I read the Scripture in context it sent me into **intercession** for the ones who rejected the word of the Lord.

The sad story begins in a local church where I was serving on the pastoral staff. The church's works were good, reaching out to the poor with food, clothing and shelter. The pastor's sermons were not theologically deep, but they were biblically sound.

Indeed, from the outside looking in it looked like an up and coming church that was really being the church. It was a breath of fresh air. Soon enough, I discerned spirit of compromise invading the hearts of leadership. Decision after decision was made to please man rather than please God. I knew these man-pleasing decisions would eventually erode the truth of the gospel in that local body. I just didn't realize it would be so soon.

The Sin of Compromise

Over the course of a year, I gently but directly pointed out areas of compromise. The senior pastor tolerated a woman with a **spirit of Jezebel** wreaking havoc in the church. He frequently attended “rock star” megachurch conferences and brought the seeker-friendly principles he learned back to the congregation. He refused to confront sin of all sorts, from adultery to homosexuality and beyond. Over the course of a year, my prophetic words of warning were pooh-poohed time and time again. I was told, in subtle terms, that I was missing God’s heart in these matters.

The day finally came when the compromise was so blatant that it sent me into weeping and travails for the church. After consulting with ministers more experienced and wiser than me, I boldly confronted the growing cancer in love with Scriptural backing that could not be denied. But the prophetic correction was once again rejected. And not only rejected, I was actually held in contempt for speaking the gospel truth in a Spirit-filled Christian church! And that’s when the Holy Spirit told me to shake the dust from my feet.

Let’s look at the Scripture: “Whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet” (Matt. 10:14). So what does it mean to shake the dust off your feet? I’ve heard that Scripture many, many times but I had never studied it out until the **Holy Spirit** gave me the personal instruction.

Why Shake the Dust Off?

With regard to this verse, Matthew Henry’s Commentary suggests, “At their departure they must shake off the dust of their feet. In detestation of their wickedness; it was so abominable, that it did even pollute the ground they went upon, which must therefore be shaken off as a filthy thing. The apostles must have no fellowship nor communion with them; must not so much as carry away the dust of their city with them.”

That sounds hard-core but it's reality. David Wilkerson used to say a "diluted gospel is no gospel at all." A diluted gospel willfully allows compromise. A diluted gospel refuses to confront sin. A diluted gospel seeks to please man at the sake of grieving God. A diluted gospel tolerates Jezebel. A diluted gospel makes you feel good even when you won't repent. A diluted gospel is powerless. A diluted gospel is no gospel at all.

Henry continues his commentary on shaking the dust off your feet, "It was to signify, that they were base and vile as dust, and that God would shake them off. The dust of the apostles' feet, which they left behind them, would witness against them, and be brought in as evidence, that the gospel had been preached to them, Mark 6:11; Jas. 5:3. ... They who despise God and His gospel shall be lightly esteemed."

In Matt. 10:15, Jesus actually said it would be more tolerable in the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for the city that rejects the gospel. Woah! And that's what sent me into intercession for the pastors that would not receive the gospel truth the Lord had me to deliver in slow and steady drips over the course of a year.

The reality is that a little compromise opens the door for a great compromise. Pastors who tolerate Jezebel will meet with a strong rebuke from Jesus (Rev. 2:20). Pastors who propagate a seeker-friendly gospel that makes people comfortable in their sin will have to give an answer on Judgment Day. Pastors who refuse to preach the gospel to sinners for fear of offending them will be held accountable.

Sometimes we have to shake the dust off our feet and even shake out our garments (Acts 13:51; Acts 18:6). But before we do we must have a clear conscience. We must do everything we can to reach those God sends us to. We must not leave with self-righteousness or anger but with weeping and **intercession** for those who refuse to hear God's truth. Only then can we say

“Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean” (Acts 18:6). Amen.

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Does Grace Forbid Us From Sharing Gospel Truth With Gays in Church?

A practicing homosexual man can't call himself an authentic Christian. It's a contradiction of biblical teaching—it's blatant sin. So when a gay couple started visiting a South Florida church, the pastors welcomed them with open arms. But when one of them decided he wanted to drum for the church band, the worship pastor knew it was time to present the simple gospel of Christ.

After inappropriate displays of affection with his partner in the pews and at the altar, one of the gay men approached the pastor's wife about joining the worship team. She sent him directly to the church's new worship pastor, who was excited about having a new member—until he discerned homosexuality. Nevertheless, he set out to interview the young man without any presumption, just as he would anyone else who wanted to join the worship team.

An associate pastor sat quietly praying in the Spirit as the worship pastor set out to get to know more about the young man. The worship pastor asked about the young man's testimony of salvation (he didn't have one). He explained that worship team members must be holy and set apart for God, not practicing drunkenness, adultery, idolatry, homosexuality and other sins (1 Cor. 6:9). Then the worship pastor asked the man if he was practicing any of the sins he listed.

"I'm a homosexual, but that's not a sin," the man said boldly.

A War in the Spirit

At that point, the war in the Spirit for this young man's soul was peaking. The worship pastor masterfully and lovingly used Scripture to explain why homosexuality is a sin. He told the young man he understood he was experiencing same-sex attractions and assured him that God loved him passionately.

But when the worship pastor extended an invitation for repentance, the young man insisted he was saved. Moreover, he argued that the Holy Spirit already lives in him, that Jesus loves him the way he is, and that—as confirmation that God accepts his lifestyle—he moves in gifts of healings and has worked miracles.

The pastors were shocked at the reasoning. The enemy had not only deceived this man into believing he was right with God despite practicing homosexuality—and even displaying same-sex affection at God's altar—but the enemy had also convinced him he was right with God because he had laid hands on people and seen them recover. The pastors were stunned and heartbroken at the same time. The young man sat there in the office and flat-out rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ, saying, "I guess this is not the church for me."

What happened next, though, left the pastors' jaws hanging down. The senior pastor, who had walked in near the beginning of the interview and listened the whole time without saying a

word, rebuked the worship pastor for trying to show the homosexual with all grace why his lifestyle was not pleasing to God. The senior pastor insisted the worship pastor had no authority to share the gospel with a lost soul in bondage who was clearly sent by divine appointment to this very moment of decision. The senior pastor said the worship pastor “ran the man out of the church” and robbed the Holy Spirit of an opportunity to reach him in the next church service.

The young man left, but he left after hearing the truth—truth without condemnation or compromise. If the worship pastor had failed to share the simple gospel of Christ, the blood would have been on his hands. Now, at least prayer can continue to go forth over the seed of gospel truth that was planted in his soul with grace and love.

But the entire experience brought up some serious questions.

How Should We Treat Practicing Homosexuals in Church?

We should treat them with love, but we cannot allow them to mock God at the altar by displaying same-sex affection. We cannot tolerate open sin of any kind in the assembled congregation. Just as we would not tolerate a drunk man disrupting service or heckling the pastor, we cannot tolerate open displays of homosexual affection at the altar or even in the pews. We must correct those who, like this homosexual man, claim to be believers.

Should we preach the gospel to practicing homosexuals who come to the church looking for a visible position of ministry? Or is it wrong to tell them, in love, that they need to seek freedom in Christ first? Of course, we should preach the gospel! And we don’t need permission from any man to do it. Jesus has called us to preach the gospel. Just because the pastor isn’t preaching it doesn’t mean you shouldn’t.

Take it from Paul: “When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. But I

wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that. I meant that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or is a drunkard, or cheats people. Don't even eat with such people" (1 Cor. 5:9-11, NLT).

This homosexual drummer was freely admitting to a sinful lifestyle—and refusing to admit it was a sinful lifestyle while claiming the healing power of God was flowing through him. This is a serious error. No one was trying to run him out of the church because of it yet failing to correct this in love would have been irresponsible at best.

Follow the Holy Spirit

Of course, you must be led by the Holy Spirit because timing is everything. Leading practicing homosexuals to repentance with God's kindness and truth is a very delicate matter, and not everyone is comfortable or equipped to do it. But when a practicing homosexual tells you adamantly that his lifestyle is not sinful and that miracles flow through his or her hands, time may be running out. The deception is deep. Light needs to break in. You may not get another chance, and as a defender of the gospel, you have a responsibility to speak the truth in love rather than compromising your faith to fill another seat in the church.

What happened in this local church is not an isolated incident in American churches. Far too many pastors today refuse to take a stand for righteousness. (One would be far too many!) Instead, they propagate a seeker-friendly gospel and claim that we should not confront sin—that it's the Holy Spirit's job. It's this type of compromised gospel that's sending people to hell.

The more I reflect on the story about these two pastors and

the homosexual man, the more my spirit grieves. With so many gay-affirming churches rising up, it's likely the young man could find a position on a worship team somewhere else without repentance. He may never repent. But at least he was given an opportunity to hear the gospel of grace. Amen.

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Who's Getting Rich With the Get-Rich-Quick Gospel?

Get-rich-quick schemes, er, programs are a dime a dozen—but they'll leave you with empty pockets and plenty of useless products if you buy into them. And the get-rich-quick gospel may cost you a little more.

You may remember the question-mark-suit-wearing Matthew Lesko, the infomercial icon that peddled many books, including *Free Money to Pay Your Bills*. The New York State Consumer Protection Board exposed him for misleading advertisements, but not before he sold countless books at \$40 a pop that he admittedly plagiarized. Get-rich-quick gospel gainsayers are a little more difficult to expose but not hard to discern.

Then there was the "Greatest Vitamin in the World" heist from Don Lapre. All you had to do was shell out \$35 for a chance to make millions selling the vitamins, which promise to help with

everything from diabetes to cancer. There's no telling how much Lapre raked in before the FDA warned the public about Lapre's false advertising. Likewise, there's no telling how much the get-rich-quick gospel preachers will stuff in their pockets before truth catches up with them.

Finding Your Miracle Money

It seems even Spirit-filled, blood-bought believers are buying into the most outlandish scams in order to make miracle money. Some of these are worldly scams; others are churchly scams. Both are leaving believers with big promises and dented bank accounts, and both show desperation or lack of discernment—or both—among many in the body of Christ.

I was talking with a pastor last weekend about a member of his church whose bank account was completely wiped out because he fell for the “Spanish prisoner” scam. You may know it as the “Nigerian 419” scam: You get an email from Nigeria (or India or Russia or South Africa) asking your help accessing unclaimed money in exchange for a cut of a multimillion-dollar inheritance. Scammers ask you to send wire transfers to pay costs associated with processing the claim.

This poor gullible saint—who was actually an assistant pastor in a local church—praised the Lord when he received the email offer. He had been praying for a financial breakthrough and saw the opportunity as a miracle answer from God!

My pastor friend—and others—warned him that it was what the old-timers called a “confidence trick,” but he was either too desperate or too naive to heed the wisdom. He sowed thousands of dollars because he was utterly convinced he would soon be a multimillionaire. His lack of discernment—and his refusal to take wise counsel—devastated his finances.

The Get-Rich-Quick Gospel

The get-rich-quick gospel often works in the same way. You get

email from a ministry asking for your help to keep a television broadcast on the air—or maybe even an orphanage open in Nigeria. There is nothing wrong with ministries sending out pleas for donations. The problem is what some of these ministries are promising in return. The get-rich-quick gospel scams make shallow, hollow promises that are not likely to come true for anyone—except for the few who are propagating the message.

Let's look at a couple of these gimmicks.

Maybe you've watched Christian television programs—or even seen in person—saints coming and laying money at the feet of the preacher, leaving it on the stage or even stuffing it in his pocket when he walks by. The idea here is to give to the anointing to get a quick return. They are sowing into the message they hear in order to reap a harvest. Scripturally, they stand on Acts 4:34 but blur the context, which was to distribute goods for the needs of people in the early church—not to heap up a quick financial return on a seed because of a “special anointing” on a message.

Or maybe you've seen variations of the Luke 6:38 swindle. The preacher says he had a vision or received a prophetic word that all those who commit to sow \$638 over the next six months will get a massive financial breakthrough. Other gospel hucksters have offered a \$1,000 return on a \$58 seed—but only if you'll quickly go to the phone right now! And you'd better hurry because it's only available for 300 people who really need a miracle. Others just look for vows to give in exchange for an anointed prayer, then harass you with letters to no end. Still others offer special anointed prayer shawls, anointing oil, special soaps or other merchandise that promise miracles in exchange for big bucks.

Common Sense and Discernment

Usually it doesn't take much discernment to recognize one of

these schemes, but they aren't always so blatant. Sometimes it's much more subtle. That's why you need to stop and pray about your giving. If you sow a seed into a false prophet's pot, you aren't likely to get the reward you are looking for. Much like the local pastor who fell for the Nigerian scam, the miracle will never come.

Worldly get-rich-quick schemes and churchly get-rich-quick schemes have plenty in common. Typically, both imply a fast return on your investment thanks to a special revelation or a special anointing. Typically, both use pressure tactics to get you to let go of your cash quickly before you have time to really consider what you are doing. Sometimes they use testimonies from others who previously bought into the message and found fast success.

Don't fall for these tactics in the world or in the church. Again, the only one getting rich off get-rich-quick schemes are the ones crafting the scams—or helping promote the scams. Yes, they'll have to answer to God one day for fleecing the sheep. But that doesn't mean you don't have a responsibility to be a discerning, wise steward. So believe God wants to prosper you, but don't buy into the get-rich-quick gospel. It doesn't work any better than Lesko's *Free Money to Pay Your Bills* scam.

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Can We Really Blame All Our Warfare on Spirits Like Jezebel?

Spiritual warfare against churches that are making an impact for God can be fierce—sometimes discouraging and sometimes even deadly. I’ve known some pastors who quit and other pastors who died premature deaths in the face of the intense battle.

Yes, the **spiritual warfare** is all too real at times. But can we really blame spirits like Jezebel, witchcraft and religion for all our warfare? Yes, principalities and powers surely attack, but too often the leadership is willfully opening the front door to every kind of evil.

Indeed, too often the enemy has plenty of help from offended believers. Too often discernment is lacking, and the onslaughts continue unabated—or even increase as spiritual sleuths go on a witch hunt for the Jezebels, Ahabs, Absaloms or other demons that carry rock-star status in the **spiritual warfare** culture. And too often these religious sleuths label certain members of the congregation troublemakers and seek to shut them out when those members aren’t the problem at all.

No, I’m not exaggerating. This is a sad but true reality in some churches. I lived it.

A Badge of Honor?

I was once part of a church where we wore the “I’m under attack” label like a badge of honor. Leadership joked that even attempts to create a flyer for outreach would unleash

principalities and powers against them. The not-to-subtle insinuation was that the church was such a threat to the enemy that he dispatched a host of demons to thwart its every step. This church was proud of its warfare. And it was into extremes.

Taking pride in being attacked was the first sign that something was wrong. If not that, then the constant bickering on the worship team—yes, infighting among those who were supposed to usher in the presence of God—should have been a clue. And if not that, then the literal hissy fits at staff meetings should have made it crystal clear. And if not that, the senior pastor's habit of calling private meetings where he tore people apart with the words of his mouth should have offered a final verdict.

No, it wasn't Jezebel targeting the church for destruction. Many had yielded to a garden variety spirit of strife. You could see this spirit of strife manifest on international outreaches and local community events alike. There was an angry undercurrent woven into the fabric of the church. Oh, how it must have grieved the **Holy Spirit** to see men of God belittling one another and sisters in Christ contending to have their way instead of preferring one another in honor. There was no discernment among the leadership about the true root of the warfare because the staff had grieved the One who offers the gift of **discerning of spirits**.

This church opened the door to the principalities and powers that were assaulting it by refusing to resist strife's whispers. That spirit of strife stymied the growth of the church and its people, many who left complaining, "There's no love in this church!" I dare say the spirit of strife helped lead many into deception, as they were always buffeting the air against principalities and powers but never repenting for the spiritual pride in their own hearts. They didn't see it. They didn't want to see it.

What Causes Strife?

Yes, the spiritual warfare is all too real at times. But too often we tap into a spirit of strife that afflicts the entire congregation. Strife spreads like wildfire. And it's not always so obvious as bickering on the worship team, screaming in staff meetings, or behind-the-door browbeatings. You may never see these things going on if you aren't part of the "inner circle." Politically correct church leaders are experts at masking an angry spirit. Or maybe you do see it. And maybe you see it in your own heart.

So, what does strife look like and what causes it? Where you see power struggles and exertion of superiority, you can't automatically blame **Jezebel**. Strife is the likely motivator. When you see arguing or contending over anything, it's not always rebellion. Strife is typically lurking. When you see double standards, where one escapes correction for a major offense and another is sternly rebuked for a minor offense, strife could be at the root.

Beloved, strife is an abomination to God (Prov. 6:16-19). Strife affects the anointing and the flow of the Holy Ghost (Ps. 133:1-3). Strife grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). Strife destroys relationships (Prov. 17:9). Strife is rooted in anger (Prov. 29:22), hatred (Prov. 10:12), pride (Prov. 13:10) and a quarrelsome, self-seeking spirit (Gal. 5:14-18; Luke 22:24-27). James put it this way:

"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:1-3, NKJV).

It was James who also said this: "But if ye have bitter

envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:14-16, KJV).

Let me repeat what James wrote so you don't miss it: Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. Strife opens the door to principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Strife opens the door to **spiritual warfare**.

If your church is under attack, I urge you not to have a knee-jerk reaction. Don't go on a witch hunt for **Jezebel**. (I talk more about this in my book, *The Spiritual Warrior's Guide to Defeating Jezebel*.) Don't ignore the devil, either, and certainly don't take pride in the fact that the enemy has targeted you for attack. Instead, get on your face and worship God. Repent of anything He shows you that's not right in your own heart. Then ask Him what the source of the warfare is. It could be Jezebel or any number of spirits coming against you. But it could be internal strife. And nothing kills the anointing faster than strife. Don't lie against the truth. If strife is the root of your spiritual warfare, repent so you can see clearly to battle your other spiritual enemies. Amen.

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Burning the Bridges to Your Past

When I was a small child, my grandmother used to read me Bible stories—and not from books with large letters and colorful cartoons. I’m talking about King James Version stories from her tear-stained, oversized, white leather-bound Bible.

As I was so young, the only passage I clearly remember was about Lot’s wife. Considering Jesus instructed us in Luke 17:32 to “remember Lot’s wife” in the end times, I am grateful for the early impression on my soul. Indeed, Lot’s wife turning into a pillar of salt as she looked back on Sodom and Gomorrah engulfed in flames has burned in my mind for decades now.

The **Holy Spirit** reminds me of this verse at key times when I need to burn the bridges to my past or risk paralyzing my soul with thoughts and memories of things from which the Lord has clearly called me out. There’s a saying in the world that urges, “Don’t burn your bridges.” But sometimes we need to burn them with a passion to follow God into a new thing unhindered.

When Familiar Spirits Speak

Lately, I’ve noticed a pull to my past. Memories arise of the good old days and what it would be like if things had turned out differently. That’s the enemy working to take me back—in my soul—to a place from which God delivered me. The enemy sometimes follows those thoughts with phone calls and emails from past associates. The goal is to get me to look back, to reminisce, to cling to what was good amid the bad. But I remember Lot’s wife.

If God has called you out of a place, if God has called out of a relationship, if God has called you out of anything: Don’t

give in to the wanderings of the soul that wonder how it could have been or what it would be like if you went back now. Don't look back. It paralyzes your soul. It's impossible to move forward and look back at the same time. It tears you apart. And that's what the enemy wants. Remember Lot's wife.

Of course, sometimes I talk about my past as a testimony of where God has brought me from, but not as a memorial to where I was or who I was with—and only when the **Holy Spirit** leads me to share it for His glory. When we dwell on the past for too long, we open our minds to confusion and all sorts of emotional turmoil. If we chose to leave, we begin to doubt our decision. If we were left, we ponder what we could have done differently. Either way, it's paralyzing. Again, it's impossible to look forward and look back at the same time. Remember Lot's wife.

Following the Spirit of God

All that said, I don't believe in burning bridges unless there's no other choice. The kingdom of God is built on relationships. We need each other. The decision to burn a bridge with anyone, especially believers, should not come easy. Indeed, it should come only through much **prayer** and even weeping. But there are times to set the bridge aflame.

In obedience to the **Holy Spirit**, I once left a church where I had many friends. The leadership painted me with the brush of disobedience on my way out the door. Many members were told I had turned my back on Christ. They burned the bridge between them and me. It was painful, but it was for my own good. It was God protecting me from an unhealthy church system. God was delivering me out of bondage, and the bridge had to be burned so I would not be tempted to go back.

By the same token, I was once forced to burn a bridge with a good friend who began claiming—and telling everyone—that I would be his wife. I knew God had not called me to marry this

man whose wife had recently walked out on him. He didn't realize it, but he was latching on to me to ease his pain. After some months of asking him to stop his pursuit, I finally had to burn the bridge. Led by the Holy Spirit, I cut off all communication. It wasn't pretty or easy, but it was necessary. It was difficult to lose a good friend, but it was God's will. Some months later, he and his ex-wife got remarried. God forbid I didn't heed the voice of the God to burn that bridge!

Pressing On Toward the Goal

Burning bridges isn't always the right response, but sometimes it's the only response. If God wants reconciliation, He is mighty enough to work it out. The key is to remain sensitive to His Spirit.

Whether we're moving on from sin, moving on from places or moving on from relationships the Lord has shown us are not His will for our lives, we need to exit peaceably as much as it depends on us. We need to show the character of Christ as we move on. Sometimes you can move on and still maintain relationship—but sometimes you have to burn bridges so you won't go back to a thing God has made abundantly clear is harmful to your relationship with Him. We have to press on.

Paul put it this way: "But I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind" (Phil. 3:12-15). Amen.

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How Jezebel's False Doctrine Distorts God's Grace and Truth

Jesus clearly warned His church against Jezebel's **false doctrines**, but this ancient evil has succeeded in hiding behind the mask of control and manipulation while few recognize its deeper agenda. Indeed, most do not see Jezebel as the propagator of false doctrines that give the saints a license to sin.

The Greek word for *Jezebel* in Rev. 2:20 is actually a synonym for **false teacher**. Jezebel is teaching false doctrines. I believe one of the false doctrines Jezebel is pushing is a distorted message of God's grace.

Here's how it works: Jezebel first seduces you into immorality and idolatry—or drunkenness or homosexuality—by telling you it's OK. After you've fallen into the trap, Jezebel's doctrine eases your conscience by telling you your past, present and future sins are already forgiven—that there's no need to repent. In fact, Jezebel would not repent (Rev. 2:21)—and neither do those who are seduced by this spirit's **false doctrine**. This is a dangerous, even damnable error.

Jezebel Would Not Repent

Despite its good works, love, service, faith and patience, Jesus had a few things against the church at Thyatira because its leadership allowed a false prophetess named **Jezebel** to

teach and seduce His servants to commit sexual immorality and idolatry (Rev. 2:20). Jesus said:

“And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works” (vv. 21-23).

Jesus went on to give an encouraging word to the rest in Thyatira: “As many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden” (v. 24). That confirms that Jezebel was guilty of teaching false doctrines. But for those who did not embrace Jezebel’s false doctrine, Jesus encouraged them, “Hold fast what you have till I come” (v. 25). In other words, don’t give into this **false doctrine**—don’t be deceived.

Satan’s Twisted Scripture

Some argue that the **spirit of Jezebel** does not exist because it is not named specifically in Scripture, but it’s clear that the same demonic force was influencing both the Thyatira Jezebel and Old Testament Queen Jezebel. A study of Scripture shows the influence of this wicked spirit running from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation. (I dive deeper into this study into my book, *The Spiritual Warrior’s Guide to Defeating Jezebel*.)

Suffice it to say that Jezebel has, for thousands of years, seduced God’s servants, in part, with false assurances that God’s grace is sufficient without repentance. The Bible clearly states that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). But we have to confess our sin. When we sin, we also need to repent to maintain an intimate

relationship with God.

The devil doesn't have any new tricks. The **Jezebel spirit** perverts God's Word, just like Satan did when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Satan told Jesus, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God"' (Matt. 4:6-7). Satan also tried to get Jesus to idolize him, and Jesus told Him, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve'" (vv. 9-10).

Much the same, Jezebel works to seduce you into sin by twisting Scripture. Jezebel's teachings give you a license to commit immorality and idolatry. Jezebel will tell you that it's OK to fornicate if you love one another because it doesn't violate the one new commandment Jesus gave us (John 13:34). Jezebel will set you up to idolize your favorite preacher, possibly while working behind the scenes to seduce him into sexual immorality.

Much of the church is so fascinated with this demonic rock star's mask of control and manipulation that it misses the subtle deceptive doctrines. And much of the church denies the existence of the **Jezebel spirit**. Jezebel is like the Lady of Kingdoms whom no one sees (Is. 47). But the Jezebel deception is slowly eroding, as spiritually discerning saints begin to see behind the mask of control and manipulation to the deeper agenda—**false doctrines** that pave a highway to God's judgment.

Sitting Under Wrong Teaching

Jezebel would not repent—and she doesn't want you to, either. With regard to Jezebel, the late David Wilkerson put it this way: "I want to say, in no uncertain terms, that it is dangerous to sit under the wrong teaching. **False doctrine** can damn you more readily than all the lusts and sins of the

flesh. False preachers and teachers are sending more people to hell than all the drug pushers, pimps and prostitutes combined. That is not an overstatement—I believe it. Multitudes of blind, misled Christians are singing and praising the Lord in churches, enslaved by false doctrine. Thousands are sitting under teachers who are pouring out the doctrine of demons—and they come away saying, ‘Wasn’t that wonderful?’”

Wilkerson wrote those words in relation to Jezebel’s false doctrines in 1988. It’s been 25 years since he sounded the alarm, and yet more believers today are being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine than ever before (Eph. 4:14). The Jezebel deception is real, whether you want to believe that a spirit of Jezebel exists or not. God’s people are indeed selling out to Satan with a distorted message that some so staunchly defend that they work to publicly assassinate the character of anyone who speaks against it, labeling them Pharisees and legalists—and worse.

Make no mistake: I love the grace of God, but grace must stand on truth to be true grace.

Beloved, be not carried about with different and strange doctrines (Heb. 13:9). Set your heart to endure sound doctrine rather than heaping up for yourself teachers that tickle your itching ears (2 Tim. 4:3). Stay true to the doctrine of Christ. It’s been said that the devil’s greatest deception is convincing people he doesn’t exist. If that’s true, Jezebel’s greatest deception is convincing people she’s all about control and manipulation while she’s subtly perverting God’s grace, even as a loving God longs for them to repent. Amen.

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Why We Must Judge a Righteous Judgment

When you start throwing golden calves into the fire—when you expose false doctrines, false gods, destructive heresies, false prophecies and anything else that perverts the Word of God—some people start gnashing their teeth at you.

Most are grateful that more prophetic messengers are lifting their voices against the heresy in hopes that innocent sheep won't fall prey to wolves in disguise. But deceived believers work to discredit prophetic voices publicly—and even send threats privately. Yes, I've received threats for my recent columns about rock-star preachers spewing false gospels and my follow-up on naming names.

Of course, that's not going to stop me from throwing golden calves into the fire. The public character assaults and the private threats only confirm the need to expose false doctrine and reveal truth. Jesus put it this way: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt. 5:11-12).

Thou Shalt Not Judge?

One of the most common outcries against calling out false doctrines insists, "Thou shalt not judge." That's actually not one of the 10 commandments Moses brought down from Sinai when he found the Israelites worshipping Baal and got so angry that he took the golden calf they had made, burned it in the fire, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it (Ex. 32:19-20).

“Thou shalt not judge” isn’t actually in the Bible. Jesus did say, “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Matt. 7:1), but this was in the context of the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle. Jesus was talking about judging your brother in a wrong spirit. He actually went on to say that we *should* judge—but not until we deal with our own hearts (the speck in our eye). We have to speak the truth in love. Sometimes the truth sounds harsh to one in deception or sin. But our motive is never to cut. Our motive is always to heal.

Jesus also said, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with a righteous judgment” (John 7:24). What is a righteous judgment? Sometimes things look spiritual. Some things smell holy. Some things sound godly. The Pharisees are a good example. But the Pharisees, as a group, were among those Jesus judged most harshly—even pronouncing woes on some of them! In fact, Jesus does more judging than any other figure we find in Scripture. His motive in judging is to expose the sin and deliver people from evil. Again, that should be our motive in judging.

Think about it for a minute. Let’s say there’s a patient sitting in a doctor’s office awaiting test results from a biopsy. The results clearly show that cancer is killing him, but the doctor doesn’t want to point out anything negative so he tells the patient everything looks fine and sends him on his merry way. The cancer progresses, and the patient dies. That’s called malpractice. It’s also called carelessness. The doctor didn’t care enough about his patient to tell him the truth. That’s not love.

Jesus Didn’t Tolerate False Doctrine

It’s the same way with righteous judgment. When we judge in the spirit of Christ, we are obeying Jesus. We are pointing out the cancer. Exposing error in the church is an expression of Christ’s love and grace. We are sounding the alarm so that people can turn and run in the other direction. Jesus

commended the church of Ephesus for calling out the false apostles (Rev. 2:2) and rebuked the church at Thyatira for tolerating a false prophetess called Jezebel (Rev. 2:20).

Judging a righteous judgment is not about judging ministries whose style you disagree with. Judging a righteous judgment is not about finding a point of contention over a small difference in interpretation—like the timing of the rapture or even the infilling of the Holy Spirit—and trying to mark someone as a heretic. Judging a righteous judgment deals with flat-out sin or false doctrine that is leading people away from the truth.

Jesus didn't preach a message of tolerance for false doctrine, nor did John, Paul, Peter or Jude. Paul said he would continue to "cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ" (2 Cor. 11:12-13).

Paul also taught Titus to do the same, noting "there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.' This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" (Titus 1:10-13). Paul also taught Titus, "Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you" (Titus 2:15).

Remaining Loyal to Jesus

We must remain loyal to Jesus. That means we must remain true to the Word of God. We must abide by the doctrines of Christ. We must be faithful witnesses in this generation. We must

sound the alarm, hoping and praying that the ones who preach false doctrines will repent and the ones who have bought into false doctrines will find deliverance. We must judge a righteous judgment. In order to do that, we must be students of the Word and sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Just as Jesus prophesied, false prophets and false teachers are rising. Many will be deceived. The love of many will grow cold. And many will fall away. As much as we want unity, we can't compromise truth for the sake of unity. That's really not unity at all. We cannot stand by—like a physician who doesn't want to tell his patient he has cancer because he wants to stay positive—while so many in the body of Christ worship another Jesus centered on a different gospel. That, my friends, is not love, and it's not biblical. And I won't take part in it. Amen.

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Who Exactly Are the False Prophets and False Teachers?

I've come under a lot of fire recently for not naming names in articles in which I call out specific examples of false doctrine and destructive heresies in the church.

I would expect the gay agenda to attack me for calling homosexuality a sin, but it puzzles me how some Christians are so quick to pummel me with virtual stones for calling out **false gospels** that are hyped-up, watered-down, seeker-

friendly, mixed with compromise, humanistic, self-help-centered and New Age-principled that insist there is no hell, proclaim all will go to heaven in the end and give masses a license to sin.

Some are accusing me of being on the wrong side of the gospel. Others are pronouncing shame on me. Still others are accusing me of reading my Bible for information only. Others say I'm bringing division or complaining. Others say I need to keep my mouth shut—that I'm deceived. Of course, I'm also getting a flood of email privately, thanking me for sounding the alarm. In fact, the flood of positive email far outweighs the criticism. But I'm not doing this to win the approval of man. And I'm not intimidated by the anger of man.

Who Exactly Are These False Teachers?

So, who exactly are the **false prophets** and **false teachers** spewing different gospels and centered on another Jesus that I spoke about in my previous article?

I'll tell you that if you can answer me this: Who were the men who "crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness," whom Jude talked about in his letter to the church (Jude 4)? Who were the ones Jude pronounced woe on—the ones who went the way of Cain, ran greedily in the error of Balaam for profit and perished in the rebellion of Korah (v. 11)? Who were the "spots" in the love feasts (v. 12)?

You can't tell me because Jude never named them.

What about the false teachers Peter pointed out? He called these depraved false teachers "spots and blemishes" who were "carousing in their own deceptions," having "eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls." He called them out for having "hearts trained in covetous practices." He called them accursed children (2 Pet. 2:13-14). He marked them as those who "have forsaken the right

way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (v. 15). And he called them out for promising liberty when they themselves were slaves of corruption (v. 19).

Tell me, who were they? You can't tell me because Peter never named them.

And let's not forget the false apostles Paul pegged. He called these false apostles "deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." And then he dared to say that it was no wonder, since Satan himself transforms into an angel of light. Paul went on to say that it's no great thing if Satan's ministers, these false apostles, "also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Tell me, who were they? You can't tell me because Paul never named them.

When Is It Right to Name Names?

There is a time to name names and there is a time not to name names. Paul named Phygellus and Hermogenes as ones who turned away from him (2 Tim. 1:15). He also named Demas, who forsook him because he "loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10). But keep in mind that this was a personal letter warning his spiritual son rather than a letter to the entire body of Christ warning of **false gospels**.

John named Diotrephes in a letter to the local church at Gaius. He said, "Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church" (3 John 1:9-10). But keep in mind that John did this from a disciplinary stance in that single church body, not as a warning to the universal church

about **false gospels**.

Jesus issued warning after warning about **false prophets** and **false teachers** and false Christs and wrong doctrine. We don't know the names of the ones He was warning about. He often shared the principles these false ones taught, but He didn't always. For example, Jesus didn't tell us what doctrines the false Christs and false prophets who will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive would be propagating (Mark 13:22). He told us so we could be ready and discerning.

When Jesus pronounced woe on the scribes, Pharisees and hypocrites, He explained why they were worthy of woe, but He didn't follow up His list of woes with a list of names (Matt. 23). He clearly outlined the reasons for the woes, but that doesn't automatically paint every Pharisee with the brush of guilt.

Jesus called out Satan by name, but He wasn't in the habit of calling out specific people. I believe that's because Satan is the one influencing the **false prophets** and **false teachers** and false Christs and wrong doctrine. We're not wrestling against flesh and blood but "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

Follow the Holy Spirit

So, why did those who scribed the Bible choose to name names sometimes and not other times? Could it be possible they were led by the **Holy Spirit**? If the Scripture is Spirit-inspired, and it is, then these men were led at times to name names and at other times not to name names.

The same holds true today. I've named names and been criticized for it. I've declined to name names and been criticized for it. I've named names and been thanked for it. Makes no difference to me. I'm not here to win man's approval.

I've been delivered from the man-pleasing spirit.

It's the fear of the Lord that drives me to write these warnings. I'm staying true to my prophetic calling. These warnings coming through my pen—and the pen of many others—are not what is bringing division to the body. Rather, the people preaching error (or not living right) are causing the controversy. When we expose the error, we are pointing people back to Jesus and toward true unity.

I refuse to stand by and watch this cancer grow in the body and then turn a blind eye as many are led astray. I refuse to whitewash a **false gospel** in the name of unity. That's called compromise, and there's a price to pay for taking that route. I'm willing to pay the price for standing for truth. I don't want to pay the price for compromising God's calling on my life. Do you? Amen.

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