

Turning Back the Cloud of Spiritual Oppression

Editor's note: *Bart Malone is senior pastor of The Bridge Orlando. The church recently relocated within the city limits of Sanford, Fla., about 20 miles north of downtown Orlando. Malone challenged his congregation on Sunday to take spiritual authority over the volatile situation in his city regarding the tragic killing of Trayvon Martin, which has gained worldwide attention. Charisma publisher Steve Strang, who attends The Bridge Orlando, heard the sermon and invited Malone to write this exclusive for Charisma News.*

Disturbed. That's how I've felt for the past few weeks in light of the events surrounding the death of **Trayvon Martin**.

I've been a resident of the Sanford, Fla., area for the past six years, a business-man-turned pastor. This week I received a word from the Lord about the current events in my city that was as clear as any word I've received in the past 20 years. I knew that receiving such a clear, strong and direct **prophetic word** was significant and I felt compelled to share it with the world.

I heard during prayer the **voice of the Lord** say this: "If the church, civil and business leaders do not take preventative spiritual action on the current events, we will be left responding to physical violence in the streets of our cities."

I clearly understood this as a directive word concerning the recent shooting death of **Trayvon Martin**. While ministers-turned-politicians stir the pot and create a polarized and racial picture of the recent events, God is urging church, civil and business leaders to use the **spiritual authority** He has given us to stand against this dark and ungodly agenda.

After the Lord spoke those words to my heart, He directed me

to 2 Kings 13. In this passage of Scripture, Joash, the king of Judah, goes to the dying prophet Elisha to receive a blessing for battle. The old **prophet** directed the king to take his bow and arrows and shoot them out of the window as a **prophetic act**. It was a symbol of God's hand delivering striking blows of destruction to the enemy's army. The king responded with respect, but took only limited action and therefore only received limited empowerment for the coming battle. Ultimately the nation of Judah was defeated.

I believe this example illustrates how most leaders respond to crises. We take limited action or simply give mental acknowledgement that something should be done, but we miss our opportunity to stand up. Soon we find ourselves responding to the devastating effects that ensue. The reason God speaks to His people is to give us a strategy to divert calamity, overcome the enemy and display His power in the earth.

Again, I immediately understood what the Spirit was showing me related to the current events surrounding the **Trayvon Martin** tragedy. In short, the Spirit was saying that we are to take clear and decisive action in this matter. We are not to hold our peace or remain politely disengaged. We are to stand against the political pressure of those preying on our community. We are to discuss the matter openly and not as onlookers disturbed by events that don't reach our door. We are to take action, stand on the side of justice, and pray **God's will**, God's peace, God's order into the situation. When we hear others speak of the matter as aloof onlookers we are to bring clarity by interjecting the will of God into the matter. We are to bring godly perspective where things are confused. When we do these things, we bring the kingdom of God to bear on this event.

I enlisted our congregation this week to do a few things you may also consider. For example, we are holding weekly corporate prayer meetings that are open to the public on Tuesday nights at 7 p.m. We organized a prayer walk and prayer

drive on Wednesdays. Some members of our congregation have committed to taking an hour of their time to drive through the neighborhoods of the city and pray for every home they pass. And I will be participating in a round table discussion on Thursday about this matter. We must stand up, speak out and stand to together.

Just like the King Joash who had the opportunity to act at the behest of the old **prophet**, we will not sit back and watch or make a tentative response. We will strike the ground again—and again and again—until this enemy of racial and political misuse no longer exists in our city. We the church, we the people and we the families of this community love and respect the values of the Bible, our country and the laws of this land. It is our response that matters now. Join me in turning back the cloud of **spiritual oppression** that is pressuring our city—and our nation—and stand up for righteousness.