

When Apostles and Prophets Use Prophetic Witchcraft Against You

As we enter into a political season in America—with candidates of many different ideologies contending (sometimes with nasty insults) to become the 45th president of the United States—it seems some in the body of Christ are tapping into the same spirit.

From coast to coast, I see Christian leaders spreading false rumors about the brethren, jockeying for prime position, prophesying witchcraft against people that anger them, and exalting their camp above another. These manifestations of rivalry among brothers and sisters grieve me—and I know they grieve the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, this is nothing new in the religious world. Jesus and Paul dealt with it directly in their days—and they spoke into it with boldness and humility.

A spirit of rivalry manifests when people are competing with each other. Merriam-Webster defines “rival” as a person or thing that tries to defeat or be more successful than another; something or someone that is good or almost as good as another person or thing; one striving for competitive advantage.” Let me put this plainly: If we want revival, we need to get rid of the rival-mindset.

The Bible clearly speaks against rivalry. Paul told the church at Philippi, “Let nothing be done out of strife or conceit, but in humility let each esteem the other better than himself. Let each of you look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4). You can’t tap into a spirit of rivalry and a spirit of humility at the same time. People who walk in a rivalry spirit are haughty, prideful and arrogant. They think more highly of themselves than they ought

and don't hesitate to tear you down to build themselves up.

Who Will Be the Greatest?

Jesus dealt with a spirit of rivalry among His disciples—more than once. Luke recorded a scene in which Jesus had just cast a devil out of a little boy. Jesus turned to His disciples and told them He was about to be betrayed into the hands of men. The disciples did not understand what He meant, and they were too scared to ask. But they weren't too disturbed to start jockeying for position.

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“A dispute arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child and put him by Him, and said to them, ‘Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great’” (Luke 9:46-48).

Apparently, they didn't get it because Luke recorded a second, almost identical episode later in his Gospel. Jesus again talked about how He would be betrayed. At the very scene of the Last Supper, the disciples once again started arguing about who would be the greatest. That was an especially irreverent move given they were eating the Passover meal. Luke said there was a “rivalry” among them concerning which of them was to be counted the greatest.

Jesus to them: “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But you are not so. Instead, let him who is greatest among you be as the younger, and he who rules as he who serves. For who is greater: he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? But I am among you as He who serves” (Luke 22:25-27).

Contending for Honor

That rivalry spirit contends for honor—and will manipulate to get its way. It seems every time Jesus announced He would be leaving the scene, the disciples got their mind off Him and on their own futures. Matthew recorded an especially selfish scene that took place right after Jesus announced He would be mocked and scourged and crucified. Read this from Matthew 20:20-25:

“Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Him with her sons. And kneeling before Him, she asked for a certain thing. He said to her, ‘What do you want?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your kingdom.’

“But Jesus answered, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink from the cup that I am to drink, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’ He said to them, ‘You will indeed drink from My cup and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with. But to sit at My right hand and at My left is not Mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.’

“When the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Him and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.’”

Behaving Like Worldly Men

Paul dealt with the same spirit with some of his disciples—or, should we say, the same flesh. The apostle rebuked some at the Corinthian church, grieved that he had to speak to them not as spiritual men but as worldly men—even babes in Christ.

“I have fed you with milk and not with solid food. For to this day you were not able to endure it. Nor are you able now, for

you are still worldly. Since there is envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not worldly and behaving as mere men? For while one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not worldly?" (1 Cor. 3:2-4)

I've been talking about a rivalry spirit and sometimes I do believe it's a spirit. I certainly discern a spirit of jealousy and strife rising. But at the end of the day, the flesh that Paul pointed to is the ultimate culprit of rivalry—but no flesh shall glory in His presence, and if we want to see revival, we need to kill these tendencies toward rivalry in our carnal nature (see 1 Cor. 1:29). Of course, if you give yourself to your flesh, sinning against God, a spirit will eventually come to fortify your stance. God forbid!

When we talk about the works of the flesh listed in Galatians 5:19-21, we are quick to point to adultery, sexual immorality, impurity, lewdness, sorcery, heresies, murders, drunkenness, carousing and the like. But Paul also points out hatred, strife, jealousy, rage, selfishness and dissensions. Whether you want to call it a rivalry spirit or a work of the flesh, this jealous ambition and backbiting in the body of Christ needs to stop. This prophetic witchcraft and self-exaltation needs to stop—now.

There's a lot of talk about judgment on America right now. Let me assure you, judgment starts in the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17). We need to repent and walk in love if we want to see another Great Awakening.