

Elijah House Ministries is a non-profit ministry founded in 1975 by John & Paula Sanford with the mandate to restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers Malachi 4:5-6 and Matthew 17:11. We offer Prayer Ministry as well as schools and Internships to help the body to be equipped for the challenges of ministry today. For more information see our website @ www.elijahhouse.org.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 2008

Three Wolves and Two Towers



Danger on the path to unity in Christ; Exposing two high-level strongholds resisting the Church.

"Watch our for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod" Mark 8:17 (NASB)

As I walked into a computer store near Elijah House, I was sure some of the employees were Christians. It was great to meet a talented young fellow who knew about our ministry! When I asked where he attended church, he said he was burned out on church. He had been a worship leader on a church staff, but because of politics and the way every church he walked into felt like a cookie cutter model of the last one, he just couldn't bring himself to keep attending, at least for now. He said, "I know I need to plug in somewhere, but nothing feels quite right."

I have had similar conversations with numerous others, like the two young men who stopped by just the other day to find out what Elijah House is all about. They wanted something in church-related fellowship that was relevant, something alive. They didn't feel they could find that in the organized church.

Church, I believe we have a big problem. There are forces coming against us that have been in place for centuries.

Recently we completed our 3rd Turning Point retreat. This is a week long retreat sponsored by Elijah House and Restoring the Foundations ministries providing healing keys for wounded leaders. One of the elements of this conference is to help leaders identify "cabals" over their ministries. A cabal is an evil plotting group of demons that seek to hinder the growth and effectiveness of any group or individual that is gaining Kingdom ground. It is my view that many of these cabals are given access by the strongholds of thought I will discuss shortly. Our lack of unity has contributed to the problem. (Watch our web site for materials we are currently developing on understanding the power of cabals.)

A Mystifying Vision:

It was a sleepless Monday night. Usually when my head hits the pillow I am off to dreamland. But from time to time the Lord stirs up my spirit and speaks to me, usually during and after the biblical "third watch" between 3 and 6AM.

Restlessly I tossed and turned. Eventually I pleaded with the Lord to speak. For hours there was only silence and sleeplessness, so I prayed about every need I could think of and waited either for sleep or for some message to come. I thought perhaps the Lord wanted to give me something to share the next morning at the 7:00 "Gatekeepers" meeting (a group of pastors and Christian leaders that prays for our region).

Shortly after 3:00 A.M., I found myself in the midst of a vision. I was standing in the open near a wood. In front of me were two magnificent white wolves. They paced impatiently, never taking their eyes off their prey (me!). Their faces looked innocent, and at times they seemed to compel me to venture closer. But in my spirit the message was clear- don't get any closer! Danger! As these menacing animals sized me up, I wondered what I should do. I knew it would be hopeless and reckless to run. I stood my ground. I felt a lingering premonition that something or someone was protecting me and that as long as I didn't show fear or bolt I would be okay.

As I studied my nemeses something moved in the shadows behind them. I looked more closely and barely made out the camouflaged shape of a larger, even more ominous black wolf. I sensed it was directing and controlling the two white wolves. I continued to watch the scene for 15 to 20 minutes, then relaxed and fell asleep.

At 6 A.M. I was startled awake by the intruding, obnoxious "beep-beep-beep" of my designer alarm clock. "Where did we get this thing anyway?!" I thought. As I shuffled off to the bathroom I puzzled over my vision-or had the whole thing been just a dream? Dark circles under my eyes confirmed my lack of sleep. I stared blankly into the mirror and wondered, "What could this vision mean?"

I dressed for the day and hurried off to our Gatekeepers meeting, wondering if I should share the vision. We prayed and asked the Lord for an interpretation. Nearly everyone felt certain it was a clear warning of danger.

A friend had just returned from South Africa. When she heard my vision she was immediately reminded of a vision someone related to her just a few days earlier in Cape Town. It was of two towers, glistening in the sun. On one tower was inscribed the word, "Herod," and on the other, "Pharisee". A large wave marked the words, "the Love of God", raced toward the towers, knocking them down. She had a strong sense that the two white wolves were a political and a religious spirit that plague the Body of Christ.

Mark 8:12-17 says: "He sighed deeply and said, 'Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it'. Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side. The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. 'Be careful.' Jesus warned them. 'Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.' (emphasis mine) They discussed this with one another and said, 'It is because we have no bread.' Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?

I have often wondered about these words. What did Jesus mean by "the leaven of Herod and the leaven of the Pharisees" and "a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" I have begun to suspect it means that the character of Herod and of the Pharisees work hand in hand.

The Religious Spirit...

We know the characteristics of the Pharisees were as follows:

- 1 They were devoted to the law and added their own interpretations
- 2 Such utter devotion made them blind to the Messiah for whom they claimed to be waiting and watching
- 3 They were proud, arrogant and puffed up, the "authority" for everyone and everything they observed
- 4 They challenged Jesus' words and His authority
- 5 They saw themselves as God's favourite ones, and demonstrated self-righteousness
- 6 They expected to be obeyed but we are warned not to emulate them, for they were hypocrites (Matt. 23:2)

- 7 They put heavy burdens on others, but didn't lift a finger to help lift them (Matt. 23:2-9)
- 8 They shut up heaven for others and for themselves (Matt. 23:13)
- 9 They presented themselves as pious and holy

Of course, a religious spirit cannot operate on its own; it works in and through individuals. Sometimes it operates through the sheep and sometimes through the shepherd. Legalism is one of its most evident fruit. Individuals judge one another. People feel judged and criticized. Creativity suffers. Fear of failure or censure and fear of rejection become rampant. Control and barrenness are the goals of this spirit. Anyone who doesn't agree is criticized and rejected. Value is based on how well a person performs and conforms to the rules. Relationship with Jesus and with one another suffers. Obligation is over-emphasized. Joy erodes and eventually disappears. Separatism and prejudice toward other groups begin to grow.

When we are doing anything in our walk with Christ out of obligation or a sense of duty and not from the motivation of love for Him we are inviting and empowering the religious spirit to operate.

The Political Spirit:

Jesus warned of the leaven of Herod, which can be expressed through a political spirit. What are some of the characteristics of Herod?

- 1 He was ambitious in an unhealthy way
- 2 He was morally corrupt (he was lustful and he murdered the innocents, killed his wives and children, and banished others. On his death bed he ordered soldiers to murder hundreds so the day would become a day of great mourning; thankfully the orders were not carried out)
- 3 He did everything for political gain
- 4 He was paranoid (many historians agree on this point)
- 5 He was jealous
- 6 He was an amazing builder (his building accomplishments are astounding), but he built his reputation and his kingdom
- 7 There was a shame-fear-control stronghold operating in his life
- 8 He had a low self image (he was half Jewish and half Hellenist-an outcast)
- 9 He ruled by the maxim "the end justifies the means"
- 10 He influenced by intimidation
- 11 He was power-hungry
- 12 He was self-centred
- 13 He was an enemy of the faith and the things of God

When the political spirit is present, power groups begin to form. Church members gravitate toward causes and strong persuasive personalities. A condition similar to "parental inversion" sets in. Leaders treat followers as children too immature to make decisions for themselves. This kind of spirit helped give rise to abuses that occurred during the "Shepherding and Discipleship" movement in the late 70's and early 80's. Some other consequences of the political spirit are:

- Individuality is lost
- Personal choices are compromised
- Leaders become controlling

- Unreasonable financial sacrifice is demanded
- There is multiplication of codependent relationships
- Spiritual adultery proliferates, and often leads to physical adultery and divorce

These destructive forces are empowered by "bitter roots" lodged in the heart. Judgments, lies, inner vows, resentments and reactions to unhealed wounds are access points for the enemy to exploit. Hebrews 12:15: "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

Pursuing transformation and sanctification is the responsibility of every serious follower of Christ. By resisting the Holy Spirit's call for inner healing we may be hindering unity and delaying the coming revival. Repentance is the key to healing, both personally and corporately.

Unity is Elusive (but possible).

Jesus expressed His desire for the Body of Christ in the High Priestly Prayer he offered while sharing his last few hours with his disciples in the upper room:

John 17:21-22: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

These have become my life verses (especially verse 21). I have committed my life to promote and bring healing to every believer, which I believe is one of the most important keys to true lasting unity. It is unity that will bring the greatest revival the world has ever seen!

The apostle Paul expresses the importance of maintaining unity in Eph. 4:2-3: "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

What a wonderful, difficult, distressing yet beautiful, anointed timely word this is! Unity has always seemed an elusive vapour, impossible to catch and hardly able to be held. Throughout the ages, the church has struggled with this endeavour.

When a political and/or religious spirit is allowed to operate, it does great harm to both sheep and shepherds. There may be church splits, people may leave with unresolved hurts and misunderstandings, and lose relationships in the process. Unity suffers, the Heart of the Father is wounded and the Holy Spirit is grieved.

Oh, how I long to be part of the answer to Jesus' heartfelt cry as expressed in John 17:21. It is time we recognize the schemes of the devil, expose the political and religious spirits and fight the Lord's battle instead of each other. Repentance and reconciliation are our first and most powerful weapons for spiritual warfare. Together let's ask the Holy Spirit to expose anything in us that gives these demons access.

By Robert Fetveit

Posted by Elijah House at 4:43 PM