

Occupying the Land of Health Care

The nature of our Work and the nature of our struggle in spiritual warfare and prayer

In our worldview, we have deemed that certain spiritual activities are the key to breakthrough. Activities such as worship and prayer, 'leadership' in the Pentecostal setting and Biblical rationalism in the evangelical setting ('if we are in receipt of such truth') can all be greatly used by God as breakthrough mechanisms. These things are very helpful but they have been idealized and seen to be the major tool for breakthrough. One of the main difficulties with this is that our work is relegated to the background.

God wants to turn that around. In the Bible, the tool mentioned predominantly is the 'good works' of the saints. Jesus main reference to the modus operandi for evangelism was, "Let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works and so glorify your Father in heaven." 'Good works' reveal light and reveal the Father in heaven. 'Good works' enable us to draw out the attributes, nature and power that God has placed in creation and in the spheres of creation to bring them out into relational reality. It is in those relationships that the struggle is to work with others in the context of the spheres of business, health, education or otherwise, in the context of family and in the context of marriage, to draw out the goodness of God in the land of the living. That 'good' - the attributes, nature and power of God, is potentially brought forth in the creativity of our work, in the real grind of everyday life. Amazingly as these are drawn out and established through our relationships in work, then His light shines in the world around us.

The "thorns and thistles" which the Lord has placed in creation on the path of our journey in God are there to be a reality check. They are a key to our way through and reveal much about us and our work. Our journey is assisted by truth, by prayer in terms of our relationship with God, by fellowship, by leaders, by those God has placed over us as long as those leaders serve. However, the main way in which we occupy the land, is the Body of Christ being "the fullness of Him who fills all in all". Christ descended and ascended from the heavens, the purpose of which is that He might fill all things and as He made His way through the thorns and through death and He ascended up to the 3rd heaven, He disarmed principalities and powers and made an open show of them. Now the heavens are open again for our occupation. It is really important that we work out how to occupy, how we fill up creation, how we fill up this sphere of health. We are on a journey in God – we are intended to occupy through our good work.

Work is the place that none of us can escape, as in the other 2 reality spheres of marriage and family. Our work is critical because it enables us to occupy. After a period of time something becomes established we find that there is a growth in ourselves. But the further you go on, the more help you will need, the more resources you will need to occupy a larger space in creation. You will have to draw on the Body and you will also have to draw on those outside the Body. Individuals can't occupy the heavens, individuals can break through but we are called in one Body to stand as one Body in creation. I can singularly occupy that area but if we are establishing work we have to engage others. If you want to do a substantial work, the larger the work the more you have to draw from others.

Thus work is the ultimate reality. Throughout scripture, “created in Christ Jesus for good works”, “stir up one another for good works”, “sow into the spirit” in Gal 5 “doing good to all men especially those who are of the household of faith”. Work is a primary creation mandate which was brought back on line especially through Jesus Christ who went about doing good and changing His environment. So good work is really key.

What is Going to Motivate Good Work?

We have relied on extrinsic motivation – external motivation. God has given us a heart which is not perfect but it is true and He has given us the law in our heart and He is drawing back into focus our heart’s desires. 2Thess 1:11 states,

“For this reason I pray that our God may consider you worthy of your calling and fulfil every desire you have for goodness by the work of faith with power in order that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified in you and you in Him”.

So that the pivot of that verse is that God waits to fulfil every desire you have for goodness. That goodness must translate into the work you do and in the work that you do you find that power comes on line. The work of faith with power in order that Jesus might be glorified. “Let your light so shine before men that they may see you good work and they may glorify the Father.” As you in the Son begin to express and draw up from creation the attributes, nature and power of God, light begins to shine from the intrinsic creativeness of God. Because creation is good, it’s not a rubbish tip as it were, it’s fullness is just surrounded by thorns. But inside those and through those thorns are the attributes, nature and power of God still waiting. The creation groans and travails for its fullness to be realized. The only way we can access creation’s fullness is through good work. We can’t do it verbally, we can’t do it cognitively, we can’t sing it, we have to good work it. What is going to get us through the thorns? Fear motivates us but only takes us a small distance. Leaders can make us feel really secure but leaders won’t get us into creation. The thing that moves us through the thorns and gives us sight for the way ahead is our good desire. Frail, motley, confused in its motives and sometimes wicked, (it’s a mixed bag like we all are) good desire is within us. There is a quality here, there is a product and I think this product is good desire that moves us out and moves us through.

Good desire moves us through good work, so that when we come up against the obstacles, we are more likely (but no guarantee) to move through. Good desire gives us the capacity to take risks, to pay the cost. The fears and strongholds come up, and it is good that they do so because we need to recognise them. Work is designed to see you come through because it draws up all the stuff that we are, our protective mechanisms, pride, lust, and our woundedness. If we are moved by good desire we will want to keep going to reach the goal, we want to do the good, we want to get the richness. In the work situation, you find that relationships are not as good as they should be and you find that there are things in your leadership that need to be dealt with. Good desire gives you the site for the good that is in creation which in many ways is calling your name. This is why inventions and innovation happen. There is something in creation that makes a sound to us. The whole of creation cries out for the sons of God Rom 3. There is something in creation that cries out for the sons of God. It cries out from its good, from its attributes, nature and power, from its potentiality in God. It cries out to us, it says come across. We hit the thorns and thistles and we begin to bog down. But we look at what we want to see produced,

the good, then that thing says come on keep going, keep going and helps me align my thinking.

So the good becomes my reality call just as the thorns and thistles are my reality check. "Come on you want this don't you?" It enables you to keep going. If you lose sight of the good you are going after in creation you won't be able to keep going, you won't have the right compasses in place. That's why creation makes this sound to us, we see it in Romans 8 "The whole of creation groans and cries out". What is creation saying, what is the sphere of health saying to us? We have become accustomed to hearing His sound (voice) and that is great but the 3 sounds (cries) of Romans 8 are:

- the sound of our heart,
- the sound of creation
- the sound of the Father and the Spirit who searches all the hearts and makes for linkage.

It is in that context that we need to align ourselves. If we only have a sound from heaven we will become dependent and what has happened in a lot of churches is that that which is meant to empower us (Spirit, word and law) becomes that which takes power over us. Now how can the Holy Spirit take inordinate power over us – it is the use of the Holy Spirit and our interpretation of what the Holy Spirit is saying.

Unless we hear these sounds we won't be able to properly contextualise ourselves in this journey ahead. The sounds we are accustomed to hearing are the sounds from heaven which is great but God becomes quiet and doesn't give us the interpretation or clarity. At the moment, there doesn't seem to be a lot of clarity as to what is happening, there is a good degree of fuzziness in our brains, not clear ideas as to what God is saying now. There is wisdom coming from God but what the saints haven't been trained to hear is the sound of their own heart, they have been trained to dislodge from their own heart.

If God will fulfil every desire for goodness that we have and we don't know what our desire is then that can be a problem for God. We need to hear the cry of creation which is our inheritance and is the very gift of the Father and in which the Father exists in terms of His attributes, nature and power. The church will become lost, will have lost its anchor because it's attached to the rational realm, the spiritual realm and the leadership realm. We are at sea ourselves and so, in line with platonic thinking, we are right to be ruled over because we are passive. It's a great tragedy and the world is also in the same spot but it is good that it is coming into focus so vividly in the church. We should not despair over this just be aware that we have a lot of travelling to do.

There is much to be unlocked in health which will come through good desire, good work and the engagement of the thorns. We haven't seen it as yet because we have been thinking with a Greek grid – however, a lot of wisdom and the sound of creation is coming in health. We are scared of this, we are not accustomed to it because we think that it is New Age.

On our journey, as we seek to proceed through the thorns, we come up against generational strongholds against the culture of health itself and we have all

experienced what it is like to come up against these strongholds. These have been laid down by generations of thinking – people just like us, because of their fears, hopes and aspirations and their woundedness – have come up with thinking which has established a culture. Now over these generational strongholds there has established a power structure, not just governmental structures in the political sense but power structures, they're vested interest scenarios eg the pharmaceutical industry which in one way is a blessing and in another is problematic. Over and integrated with these structures, are principalities and powers – basically angelic powers in Hebrew cosmology (as distinct from Greek cosmology - Gnostic) the angels back up man's creation reality. In Gnostic worldview, the angels determine spiritual reality, they create it, so we are hapless victims of this angelic realm which can do anything it wants and we are basically out there within the fantasy. We do have more of a Gnostic tendency in our understanding of angels - we think that angels really are setting the agenda and we are here on earth ducking, binding and loosing and we are trying to get out of the way until we overthrow them in some victorious onslaught. The Hebrew brings it into context much more strongly than that – angels are the ministers of the heirs of salvation and they back up the work that we do and the atmospheres of God over the city. The fallen angels get their toe in because of power structures that are brought into being by generational strongholds.

On our way through to the heavens we need to go through these things. The beauty of it is that it is all designed to change our personal strongholds that are raised up against the knowledge of God. Greek thinking on the other hand, sees all of these as adversarial so that we need to attack them and make sure they are all ruined so we can get through to the heavens.

Creation enables us to get up – the Bible says in Eph 7:4 – “growing up in all things under the head which is Christ”. So what we can begin to see in terms of spiritual warfare is that the things that are against us are in many, many ways the things that as we go through them, are the things that propel us forward. The Bible says in Numbers “I will not conquer the land before you in a short space of time lest they become desolate and the haunt of jackals and asses or ostriches but as you bear fruit you will inhabit the land.” We want all this to clear up and we want there to be some sort of vacant waste land so that the Christians can race in. Even if we did we wouldn't know what to do, for example, if every obstacle that you are up against is removed tomorrow, you wouldn't have a clue what to do, you'd atrophy, you'd be in bed.

Before the fall, the initial creation was wild and needing subjugation because it was that force, that movement that enabled us to grow. The fall has happened and this is the reality, it's not a Gnostic reality to be knocked out of the way and not a capricious reality, it's a decided scenario that we are up against here and as we come up against this stuff, the generational strongholds will begin to do business with ours.

I talked to my friend here about the established culture in social work and they say, 'We don't do that this way here', 'We don't do that this way here'. Let's see a way through for myself, let's get personally free of this before we get corporately free.

As we do that there will come a time when the power structures will move against us. I can explain it in this way: when Jesus came to Israel He set out to die on the Cross, He was prophesied over by Simeon who said to Mary,

"this Son is appointed for the rise and fall of many in Israel (power structures) and the thoughts and the intents of many hearts will be revealed and a sword will pierce your own heart" Matt.

Jesus came as a second Adam and He did business with the generational strongholds of Israel. Everyone thought that the Pharisees were a nice bunch and couldn't quite work out what was wrong with them but He drew them and the power structures out into the open and the power structures finally killed Him and in the process of killing Him those power structures lost their right to control Israel.

"I have come to you and you have killed me and now your sin remains, from now on your house is desolate" Matt

The whole thing was designed to draw out the power structures so that it actually killed people.

That travail even unto death – don't fear that, don't fear that because it is drawing out the power structures and when they kill you and when they move against you and when their sword falls on you, you live and they die. Because they surrender the good things that they hold, the good things that people have given to those power structures, the good things that we need to get through to the heavens.

It is important that we see these things because the stuff that comes against us is our saviour. It takes a long time to override the power structures. It can happen in part, it happened in Ephesus, but it's not just a one off thing that one day they will all go; we take ground, we occupy through good fruit. When the power structures begin to give way then the angelic host (dark angels), which only had their power in relation to humankind, give way in that area as well. The principalities and powers only have power in relation to what man has given them as distinct from the Gnostic view of them where they had intrinsic power over the earth.

Our good work is absolutely critical to this, without it there is no movement. Our good work is not ideal we can't idealize this. However, it's the relationships we have established, it's the character growth that is happening, it's the aspirations of heart – we shouldn't worry about whether things work out well or not. Our measuring sticks are a bit problematic because of our training and what we see on TV. Life is a mess but you can grow and your character can enlarge. I have always looked to health because you are closest to the cry, to the pain, which is why health is positioned first and business and the like can follow.

It is good work that occupies, your good work is absolutely critical in what needs to occur. As that good work is moved by good desire then I believe that our prayer, which can start in an externalized way but after a time has to become intrinsic, will be effective.

We can pretend to pray for our missionary friends but our heart is not really in it although sometimes God gives us a heart to do so. But when we talk about integrating prayer, when prayer becomes integral to work, when the gifts that God has given us become integral to the mobilisation of the saints for the engagement of the spheres then our motivation to pray and our motivation for intimacy becomes much stronger and much more real and much less ideal and much less extrinsic or removed. That enables us to align these things together. There are a lot of extrinsic, elemental things and God is judging them – it's not just me saying that but God is

doing it. Just be content with that travail - there is a transition, tension. What's coming into focus is your work – right now your work doesn't seem to be very important because of the way we have been trained or taught to see. Your work is absolutely critical, your life work, the way you work to change atmospheres that is critical to the occupation of the Body of Christ. Your good desire aligns with that, your prayer aligns with that and hopefully more ministry gifts will align with that and hopefully gathering will align with that and that is a good thing. Hallelujah!

James Thwaites