

Faith, Family, and Freedom - the Cultural Mandate

"Spiritual Freedom"

John 8:32,33,36 ESV

Awakening isn't coming. It's *here*. Spiritual awakening is *happening* - Faith - Family - Freedom. John Eldridge said, "*We were born into a world at war.*" We need to understand that not only are there natural wars that are occurring across the face of the earth and across the globe, but there is also a spiritual war that we are living in whether we realize it or not. And we need to understand this - if we don't have a category in our life for spiritual warfare and in the dark side of what we experience, then we're already losing the battle - we're already behind the curve. It's amazing how many Christians believe that Satan was just a myth or a legend that gives us a cute picture of a man in a red suit with a pitchfork and horns who runs around scaring kids and hiding under the bed at night.

We have so diminished the potential darkness and capacity that the enemy carries that we can be lulled into a sense of false security and safety. One of the greatest tools the enemy has is to convince us that he's not real, because if he's not real, then we can never take out a target we can't see. So the enemy's greatest tool against us is to hide - to be hidden in plain sight - to be right in front of us and we're not even aware. He's an opportunist and a street fighter and he likes to leverage us when we're down or when our guard is down.

The spiritual war is real and it's happening right here. Some of the thoughts that are hitting us right now are not our own thoughts. They are intrusive thoughts from the enemy who is trying to derail us. The last thing he wants is for us to hear anything about personal spiritual freedom and liberty.

John 8:31-32, 36 ESV - The Truth Will Set You Free

"So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' ... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

"To know" means *to know by experience* or *to have intimate knowledge of*. This is where we want to live. We want to live *free*. We want to *understand* what Jesus purchased on the cross. He purchased our forgiveness, mercy, grace - *everything*. When we understand that, when we know *the truth*, that *Truth* has the power to set us *free*.

"Don't look for a demon around every corner, but never ignore the obvious." - Dr. Rice Brooks

We *do* need to understand our enemy and what we might be going through right now. We don't look for a demon around every corner but there *is* a spiritual war for the control of our soul. The enemy is after our *soul*. He's after our *heart*. If he can get us to lose heart, then he can control us. He's not able to *possess* us if we're a follower of Jesus - we're storm-proofed on that level - but he *can oppress* us. Don't get that mixed up. Depending on the culture we came from or the spiritual DNA that's in our background, we might think in terms that a demon can actually possess a believer, but that's not possible.

Now, we *can* be oppressed. We can be *influenced*. We can even be *directed*, but we can't be *possessed* because light and dark cannot occupy the same space. It's not even possible. But if you've ever been under serious spiritual attack, it sometimes feels like we're being controlled. And that's his goal - to *control* us. He can't take our soul. He can't steal our heart, but he'll do everything in his power to control it or to manipulate it, and that's his m.o. It's an assault of the heart, and it can often manifest in the natural realm around us. Sometimes when things break, they just break - but sometimes things break in the weirdest timing.

It's amazing how the enemy can manipulate things in the natural in the timing of things that happen. God is a God of timing, sequence, and order. We must understand the enemy loves to play on that and he will manipulate things to get our attention. John 10:10 says, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I [Jesus] came that they may have life and have it abundantly."* The first part of this verse is a reference to the enemy of our soul - Satan himself - the thief - the enemy. Satan comes only to steal, kill, and destroy *everything* - everything that is near to us, anything that is dear to us, or anything that we treasure.

Scripture tells us that we're the apple of God's eye, so he's after us, too. He can't take our life, but he'll do everything to kill the life out of us and steal life away from us.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 says, *"For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh."* That's a great reminder to have when we're in conflict with another individual. We need to always understand there's something on the other side. It might not be that person that is your enemy - 99 out of 100 times it's *not*. There's *something* behind it - something behind *them*.

Though we walk in the flesh, we don't war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We have been given spiritual weapons which will do a lot more damage in the long run than a bullet. There are two realities that are running along parallel tracks. We have to understand what's going on here. There's the natural world and the spiritual world. One often reflects the other. When we get a series of storms and rain, that reminds us of the rain of the Holy Spirit. And we can begin to pray that way. Rain reminds us to re-invite and invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit over our land, just as the water comes over the land and brings up new life, so when the rain of the Spirit comes, it waters the soil of our hearts and brings new life.

Hebrews 11:3 ESV

"By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."

Remember how he spoke the created order into existence. Let there be what? Light. *Let there be...let there be...let there be*. And he created all things with the word out of his mouth. That suggests there's something very powerful with words from our own mouth as well. We understand the universe was created by the Word of God so that what is seen is not made out of things that are visible - the God who calls those things that be not as though they are. That's the power of his Word going forth.

So God created something that is physical and tangible - the earth we stand on - matter that we can see. But there's *another* realm - another *reality* at work - which is actually a greater reality than the one we're in right now. It's the *spiritual realm* - more real than the physical realm that we're sitting in right now. Our physical world is a pale reflection of it. And in that spiritual reality everything gets put in proper perspective. It tells us that the God who sees the end from the beginning has our heart and already knows that we're going to be with him. It makes what's happening here so much less impactful in terms of the negative, dark, and demonic. The unseen spiritual world is the real world, and we should lock that in and write that down.

Isaiah 14:11-16 NIV84 (The Fall of Lucifer) *"All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you. How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit. Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: 'Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble?'"*

This was the fall of Lucifer who tried to exalt himself over God and was cast down to the earth. The enemy of our soul is not a person in the natural, but he is a created being who once was in the presence of God.

The Characteristics and Nature of Satan

John 8:43-44 ESV

“Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Don't ever get into a negotiation with the devil! There's no truth there. We have to be careful because a lot of times it'll sound like we're having a conversation in our own mind as we begin to negotiate the things that are happening around us. Be careful. Be wise. Be discerning, because it could very well be the enemy. He says he was a murderer - that there's no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own nature and character. So why would we want to have a conversation with the devil, for he is a liar and the father of lies, manipulation, and deception, and we must refuse to negotiate with demonic entities or Satan, or with their objectives.

1 Corinthians 16:13 ESV

“Be watchful. Stand firm in the faith. Act like men [or women, whichever fits]. Be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”

Don't negotiate with: Sin - Time wasters, Fatigue, Temptation, Social media trends, Demons, Stress & Anxiety, The flesh, The need to be liked or accepted, Past trauma or triggers, Fear, Weakness, Time wasters, Disappointment, Boredom, Critics, Dark spirits, Depression, Procrastination, Lust, The need for likes and clicks, Pain, Worldly compromise, or Anger.

Jesus purchased our Spiritual Freedom with his blood on the cross and the receipt of that purchase is the Resurrection, and as a deposit, he has given us the Holy Spirit as a guarantee.

Ephesians 1:13-14 ESV

“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

Matthew 12:43-45 ESV - Return of an Unclean Spirit

"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation."

What do we do after we are set free? What do we do, or how do we maintain our spiritual freedom? What happens if we *don't* maintain our freedom? When we take something out, we need to put something back in to replace or to fill it. And when something is removed out of our life that is dark, evil, malevolent, demonic, then that needs to be replaced with the things of God - with the "Truth that sets us free."

Jesus said in John 14:6, *"I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life. And no one comes to the Father except through or by me."* Truth is not a concept. Truth is a Person. He says, *"You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. Whom the son sets free is truly free - the Son is truth, and truth is the Son."* We're not talking about truth as an idea or a statement. We're talking about The Truth that is a Person that sets us free. A lot of times we want a power encounter when what we need is a Truth encounter - an encounter with Jesus Christ himself because he is the truth. The enemy tries to come back if there has not been the replacement of the Holy Spirit.

We can't have light and dark in the same space. When we invite the Holy Spirit to fill those empty places that have been swept and cleaned up, we say, *"Lord, fill me with Your light, Your life, and Your presence, that there will be no way that any darkness can exist there in the same space. Come and fill me with all that You are. Fill me with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Fill me with who You are and I will go and preach and share and declare your goodness because whom the Son sets free is free indeed."*

And when we're *free*, we're filled. But we don't want to get free and not get filled. What would be the point of someone praying over us to release something, and it's released, but we don't do anything else afterwards? It's not a *one-and-done*. We need to understand that this walk with God is called *"a faith"* and it is *"a walk."* It's something we will do for the rest of our lives. When the enemy is uprooted out of our life, it's like pulling up an old stump. There's still residue. There's a big hole. And that hole has to be filled. And the only thing that will fit in the God-shaped vacuum inside of us is God himself. There's a God-shaped vacuum in every person. And the only thing that will fill it is *God himself!*

Now, we have a responsibility. Here's why people struggle with freedom in the natural and the spiritual. The more free we are, the more responsibility we have. We talk about being a nation built on freedom and the idea of liberty. Well, some people don't *like* that because it's a lot easier to be *told* what to do. *"You'll own nothing, but you'll be happy.!"* We don't call that freedom, do we? Some people will take that over the responsibility of freedom, because freedom has to be *maintained*. It has to be *cultivated*. It has to be *preserved*. And it's the same way in the spirit. You prayed and you got a breakthrough were set free - God uprooted a stronghold out of your life, but you treated it like a one-and-done. You didn't *mean* to do it. You weren't trying to be neglectful, but you were free, and you felt good.

So, we just run off to the races and here we go. We're back into that old life. We didn't maintain our freedom. We didn't backfill the space with his presence and worship, with prayer and study of his Word, with discipleship and growth, sitting at the feet of Jesus. And what happened? It all came raging back, did it not? In the way the Bible puts it, *"it comes back seven times worse."* *Why?* - because we didn't maintain it and we didn't accept the responsibility of freedom.

Prayer

Father, we honor you. Thank you for your Word. By faith we now accept responsibility for our freedom. We will co-operate with You. We will co-labor with You to fill those spaces where things have been uprooted out of our life by Your grace, mercy, power, and Truth. Lord, by faith, we're now going to do our work. We're going to work on our end of these things to begin to backfill them by studying Your Word, with being in community in the Church and Bride of Christ, and with participating in worship - not being a spectator but a participator in worship - entering in, pressing in, believing, praying, and by seeking Your face in other things that You call us to do. We love You. In Jesus' name. Amen