



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRAYER CLOSET MINISTRIES, INC.

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VOLUME V

MARCH, 2002

ISSUE 2

WARFARE PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

Satan never feared attacking Jesus Christ. The Word of God declares, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (**Matthew 4:1**). Satan threw the full weight of his temptations into Christ's face. He openly came against Jesus with his deceptive schemes. Even after Jesus defeated him in the wilderness, these ominous words are recorded, "Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time" (**Luke 4:1-13**). Satan left Jesus alone on this occasion but would return when the opportunity presented itself. He would once again attack Christ with his deception and temptations.

The church is the body of Jesus Christ. The church represents Jesus Christ in this world. We are to carry on the work of Jesus in this day. If Satan came against and opposed Jesus, shouldn't we expect the same treatment? Jesus told His disciples, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master" (**Matthew 10:24**). In other words, the disciples could expect the same treatment that Jesus received and even more. Since Jesus was tempted, opposed, and attacked by Satan, the church must expect and be prepared for the same treatment. If he was not afraid of tempting and opposing Christ, he will not hesitate to do the same to the church of Jesus Christ.

We cannot ignore the reality of Satan and his determination to hinder and oppose the church. The Bible describes him in this way, "Be sober, be

vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (**1 Peter 5:8**). He is our adversary and he is seeking to devour or destroy whatever he can.

This does apply to individual believers. Yet, we must also understand that he attacks and opposes churches, bodies of believers. He does not limit his deceptive and destructive work to individuals. He is determined to hinder and oppose churches. Churches must face his deceptive and destructive work.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* is devoted to warfare prayer in the church. It will focus on how to pray for the spiritual protection of your church. It will also offer insight and encouragement to pray against the attacks of the enemy against the church. The purpose of this newsletter is to encourage you and equip you to practice warfare prayer in behalf of your church.

Praying For A Spirit Of Holiness In The Church

The Bible declares in **Ephesians 4:27**, "Nor give place to the devil." This is a short verse with significant meaning. The phrase "give place" refers to a foothold. It refers to giving the devil a foothold in your life. It is offering Satan an opportunity to work in your life.

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How do you give the devil a foothold in your life? It is by failing to acknowledge and deal with unconfessed sin. Where sin is not dealt with, the devil has an opportunity to work. Where there is a lot of garbage, you're going to have rats. Just as garbage attracts rats, unconfessed sin attracts Satan and his forces. It provides with a place to carry out his work in your life and in the lives of others.

When a believer does not deal with sin, it not only gives Satan an opportunity to work in that believer's life, but also in the church. An opportunity to work in a believer's life becomes an open door for Satan in the church. I have often wanted to ask people, "Who did you bring to church this morning?" When you grant the devil a foothold in your life, you provide him an opportunity to work in the church.

For this reason, you must plead for a spirit of holiness in your church. Holiness is a powerful protection against the schemes of the enemy. The devil cannot gain any ground unless it is yielded to him. Too many times people want to focus on the devil and his schemes. Yet, your primary focus must be on your responsibility to pursue holiness—holiness that pleases God and that protects us from the schemes of the enemy.

The following Scripture prayers are offered to help you pray for a spirit of holiness in your church. You can use these or develop your own from them. The crucial issue is to plead for the church to pursue holiness with all its strength.

Holy Spirit, teach the believers of _____ about the holiness of our God. Grant us a fresh vision of this holiness (**Isaiah 6:3, 57:15**).

Holy Spirit, You are the Spirit of holiness. I cry out to You to transform _____ Church. By Your grace and power, make us holy (**1 Peter 1:14-15**).

Holy Spirit, I plead that You would grant the believers of _____ Church a fresh longing and thirsting for holiness. I ask that the believers of this church will pursue holiness with all their strength (**Hebrews 12:14**).

Holy Spirit, release Your deep and abiding conviction in the lives of the believers of _____ Church. Let Your conviction be deep and sharp, leading us to confession and repentance. Cause us to be diligent and earnest in our dealing with sin (**John 16:7-11; 1 John 1:9**).

Holy Spirit, grant the believers of _____ Church a hatred of sin. Deliver us from being complacent about sin in any form. Teach us to abhor what is sinful. Release within us a sensitivity to sin and a hatred of that sin (**Proverbs 6:16**).

Holy Spirit, create within the believers of _____ Church a hunger for the Word of God. Deepen our understanding of its truth; help us to yield our lives more and more to its truth (**James 1:22-25**).

Holy Spirit, give the believers of _____ Church fresh resolve and strength to overcome the temptations of Satan. Reveal to each believer the way of escape that the Father provides from the temptations of our enemy, the devil (**1 Corinthians 10:13**).

Standing Against The Attacks Of Satan

The Bible reveals that Satan schemes against the church, "Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (**2 Corinthians 2:11**). The word "devices" in this text refers to schemes. The devil has plans on how to attack the church. We cannot be ignorant of these schemes. Our battle is not with flesh and blood; it is with Satan and the evil spirits who carry out his schemes, "For we do not wrestle with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places" (**Ephesians 6:12**). We must stand against his attacks with prayer.

The following are some common schemes of the enemy against the church. You are also

provided with help on how to pray against these attacks.

Scheme 1: Intimidation

Satan desires to intimidate your church into silence. He does not want believers sharing the good news about Jesus Christ. He longs for your church to shrink from declaring the gospel of Jesus to the lost around them. Because of this, he will use intimidation to silence the church. He will use the hardness of people, threats, and the fear of losing favor with others. He will exaggerate the fear of failure to silence the church. He will labor to keep believers from sharing the good news.

- *Plead that the believers will develop a greater intimacy with Jesus (Acts 4:13). Boldness for Jesus flows out of intimacy with Jesus.*
- *Pray that the believers will seek the filling of the Spirit (John 4:31). The power of the Holy Spirit will strengthen a believer and help him or her share the good news with boldness.*
- *Ask God to grant the believers opportunities to share the faith (John 4:1-26). Pray that the believers will have "divine appointments" with the lost.*
- *Pray that God would remove from the believers any fear and replace it with a spirit of love, power, and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).*

Scheme 2: Negative Attitudes

Satan loves to sow negative attitudes into the minds and hearts of believers, especially those in leadership positions. He uses these negative attitudes to oppose the work of God in the church. Satan's primary tool for doing this is tradition. He sows these negative attitudes among believers so that they will be unwilling to change and unwilling to attempt anything for the Lord.

- *Pray that the believers of your church will grow in their faith in God (Luke 17:5). These negative attitudes often flow from a lack of faith in God. Satan uses this lack of faith to make them unwilling to change or attempt anything for Jesus Christ.*
- *Ask the Holy Spirit to eradicate these negative*

attitudes (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Pray that He would do whatever it takes to destroy these strongholds.

- *Plead with God to release a vision in the people of what God can do (Ephesians 3:20-21). Ask the Spirit to expand their understanding of God and His ability.*
- *Pray that the people would quit depending on themselves and will rely on God (John 15:5). As long as believers focus on themselves and their resources, things will look impossible. Pray that the believers will not trust in the flesh but will focus on God and rely on Him.*
- *Ask God to move the believers out of their comfort zone (Mark 8:34). Pray that the believers will die to themselves and be willing to do whatever God wills.*
- *Plead with God to raise up leaders who are not bound by tradition (Matthew 26:39). Pray that God will raise up believers whose desire and prayer is "Not my will but Yours be done."*
- *Ask that believers with negative attitudes will lose favor and influence among the people (James 4:6). Our primary prayer should be for repentance. However, if believers, especially if they are leaders, continue with a negative attitude, you can pray for them to lose favor and influence. Perhaps the loss of favor and influence will bring repentance. I realize that this may sound harsh, but as long as people have negative attitudes, they are an instrument of the devil and will be able to influence others to have the same attitude. Ask God to have mercy on them and to hinder them from being able to influence others with their negativity.*

Scheme 3: Broken Relationships

Satan will use broken relationships among believers to hinder and oppose the church. Broken relationships often produce anger, malice, unforgiveness, bitterness, pettiness, and evil words. These things grieve the Holy Spirit and allow Satan to get entrenched in a church (Ephesians 4:27, 30-32).

- *Pray that the fruit of the Spirit will be manifested and cultivated in the believers of your church (Galatians 5:22-23). The fruit*

of the Spirit will help believers build strong, godly relationships.

- *Plead that God would deal with the pride of the believers and produce in humility in them (Proverbs 13:10).* Pride is the source of conflict between believers. It is the basis of broken relationships. Ask God to break this pride and produce a spirit of humility in all the believers.
- *Ask the Holy Spirit to deepen the love that believers have for one another (Romans 5:5).* Pray that He will fill and overflow the hearts of all the believers with love for one another.
- *Cry out to God to cause the believers of your church to be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving toward one another (Ephesians 4:32).* This is God's will for believers. Plead this truth before Him with all your might. Ask Him to remove anything that would hinder this.
- *Plead with the Spirit to create a longing in the hearts of believers for reconciliation (Matthew 5:23-24).* Pray that the believers will have the desire and the commitment to reconcile when or if there are broken relationships. Plead that He would grant repentance to all that are involved.
- *Pray that the believers of your church will be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9).* Ask that the believers of your church will love peace and will pursue it with all their strength. Pray that they will be peacemakers not "peacebreakers".

Scheme 4: Apathy (Spiritual Laziness)

A church that is apathetic is no threat to Satan and his devious plans. Spiritual laziness renders a church ineffective for the kingdom of God. For this reason, Satan will work to create a spirit of spiritual laziness in a church. He longs for the church to be characterized by worldliness.

- *Plead that the Spirit will convict believers concerning worldliness. Pray that they will desire to deal with this (1 John 2:15-17).* Worldliness is a leading cause of spiritual laziness. Pray that the Spirit will grant deep

and abiding conviction concerning this. Ask that the believers will repent of this sin.

- *Pray that the believers will make their relationship to God and His church the priority of their lives (Matthew 6:33).* Plead that believers will seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Ask that this would be the primary pursuit and delight of their lives.
- *Cry out to God to create in the believers a hungering and thirsting for Him (Psalm 42:1-2).* This is the will of God for believers. Plead for this with earnestness and intensity.
- *Ask the Holy Spirit to stir believers to seek God with all their being (Galatians 4:6).* The Spirit of God is the Spirit of prayer. Plead that He will move the people to seek God with all their strength. Ask Him to release a spirit of prayer in the midst of the church.

Scheme 5: False Doctrine

Satan is a liar and a deceiver. He longs to lead believers into false doctrine. He does this so that he can weaken and destroy the faith of believers. He also uses false doctrine to wound and oppose the church. It is one of his effective tools in causing splits in the church.

- *Pray that the believers will love the truth of God's Word and will be growing in their understanding of it (1 Peter 2:2).* Plead that the believers will read, study, memorize, meditate on, and obey the Word of God. Ask the Spirit to guide all the believers in the truth.
- *Pray that the leaders of the church will be grounded in the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-4:2).* Ask God to grant your leaders understanding in the Word of God. Pray that He would help them to declare and defend the truth of the Word.
- *Ask the Holy Spirit to grant the church discernment (1 John 2:27).* The Holy Spirit is the One who will enable believers to discern truth from error. Ask that the

believers will be sensitive to His leadings in this area.

- *Pray for a spirit of patience and gentleness among the believers (Colossians 3:12-14).* There are essential doctrines that Christians must believe and defend. Our unity rests on these core issues of the faith. However, there are a variety of issues that believers can have differences of opinion on and still have fellowship with and work with each other. Pray that believers will be patient and gentle with each other concerning these differences of opinion. Plead that all the believers will focus on the essentials of the faith. Pray that Satan will not use these differences of opinion concerning non-essential matters to divide the church.
- *Plead that the believers, including the leadership would not be tossed back and forth between every wind of doctrine that blows in (Ephesians 4:14).*
- *Plead that the spiritual leadership of your church would speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15-16).*

Scheme 6: Confusion and Division

The Word of God declares that there is demonic wisdom as well as divine wisdom. This demonic wisdom is described in **James 4**, "But if you have bitter envying and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic" (**5:14-15**). Demonic wisdom produces bitter envying, self-seeking, and confusion. It multiplies sin in a situation. This is what Satan longs to create in churches. If he can release these things in a church, he can hinder and cripple it. He is looking for an individual or individuals that he can use to cause confusion and division. He will use any situation that he can to produce confusion and division.

- *Plead that the believers will not listen to rumors but will seek for the truth (Proverbs 12:22).* Rumor and lies have no power if no one listens to them. They cannot do damage if they are dismissed and rejected. It is only as people receive and spread these things that there is

confusion and division. Pray that the believers will not listen to rumors and lies. Plead that they will seek the truth in every situation.

- *Pray that those who cause confusion and division will be exposed and avoided (Romans 16:17).* Ask God to expose those who cause confusion and division. Plead that people will see them for what they really are. Pray that they will lose favor and influence with everyone.
- *Ask God to grant a spirit of brokenness to the believers of your church (Isaiah 57:15).* Plead that God would break and destroy the pride of the people. Call on Him to remove the pride that will cause confusion and division to blossom.
- *Plead for God to grant a spirit of repentance to the believers (Proverbs 28:13).* Ask God to grant the believers a willingness to change—to give up old attitudes, prejudices, grudges, and memories. Pray that the Holy Spirit will enable the believers to turn from anything that would give ground to confusion and division.
- *Pray that the believers will be diligent to seek the Lord (Psalm 42:1-2).* When believers are in love with God and seeking Him, it does not leave time or room for confusion or division. When the church is pursuing God, it has neither time nor desire to focus on personalities and personal agendas.
- *Ask that the will of God would be the priority in the church (Matthew 6:33).* Plead that knowing and doing the will of God would be preeminent in the church. Pray that this will be the overwhelming desire and pursuit of all the believers.

Going On The Offensive

In the preceding sections, we have been discovering how to protect and defend your church. This is crucial for the health and the growth of the church. Yet, another crucial part of the church's spiritual warfare is going on the offensive. Through prayer, you must attack the strongholds of the devil. It is not enough to defend and protect the church. You must go on the offensive against the enemy.