

## State of the Church: Returning to Our First Love and Fighting for Love

**Thesis:** God is calling us to return to our first love and to fight for love.

We have a high calling together-- to think, believe, and act in a manner worthy of the good news of Jesus. When we stand firm and fight as one, without giving in to fear, it strikes fear into the heart of the enemy.

**Text:** *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God (Philippians 1:27-28).*

### 1. Purpose

- a. We want to envision you and to call you to catch the vision of what God is doing.
  - i. **Here is what God is currently doing: God is calling us to return to our first love and to fight for love.**
- b. **We want to practice the discipline of reflection**, taking time to acknowledge and appreciate what the Lord is doing in our midst (Psalm 50:23).
- c. And, **we want to respond to where the Lord is challenging us to grow and change as a congregation**. Jesus said, "...hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (Revelation 2:7).

### 2. Celebrate: What is going well or what our strengths are at Calvary:

- a. **People:** We have great people who deserve great leadership. They love God, they love each other, and they love what the Lord is doing.
- b. **Worship services:** It is a place of intimate encounter with the Lord. And recently, the Holy Spirit has been showing up and moving, especially at Ministry Time.
- c. **Finances:** We have a high percentage of people who tithe.
- d. **Building:** We have great facilities. Our facilities get used on Monday nights by a Filipino church, on Tuesday nights for community basketball and by Pastor Yefri, and on Sunday nights by Pastor Yefri. This is an expression of our kingdom nature and ministry.

- e. **Staff:** We have a great staff team that works well together; great team spirit and sacrificial service.
- f. **Elders:** We have a strong, godly, wise team of elders.
- g. **Deacons:** We have a team that works well together and serves Calvary effectively.
- h. **Children and youth ministries:** We have effective children and youth ministries which are discipling and reaching children and young people. Our leaders in these ministries are full of contagious passion, energy, and zeal. The lives of children and youth are changed through Bible Study, Wednesday night activities, VBS, Youth Camp, and other activities.
- i. **Wednesday night programs:**
  - i. Kids Club and Youth are reaching about 100 people, mostly from outside of Calvary.
  - ii. Pastor Steve's class is really touching lives.
- j. **Bible Study (for adults, children, and youth) and Equipping the Saints classes:** Gifted men and women are helping people walk with the Lord.
- k. **Kingdom / Missions:** We are touching and changing lives locally and globally. We love the body of Christ and seek to serve the Lord's kingdom purposes beyond the walls of our church. We network with pastors and ministries in our city and beyond.
- l. **Journey Groups:** I keep hearing great testimonies from the people who go to Journey Group—experiencing authenticity, feeling loved and cared for, receiving pastoral care.
- m. **Stewardship:** We are good stewards of what the Lord has entrusted to us.
- n. **Influence and impact:** We have influence and impact way beyond Calvary and Sunday mornings: MTT, Pastor Steve with PACA (Police and Clergy Alliance), coaching pastors and leaders, and speaking into different structures and ministries.
- o. **Foster and adoption:** We have really seen the Lord move in this area in our body. In just the last few years, 5 children have been fostered and adopted into our church body. The Bible is clear about caring for our widows and orphans. As Melanie Meeks shared, "We really felt the Lord saying, 'If not us, then who?'" Also, our church congregation as a whole has done a wonderful job of coming alongside us and other adoptive families with prayer, meals, babysitting, financial help for adoption expenses, etc.
- p. **Feedback from Ministry Leaders:**
  - i. People love Jesus in such a way that others are drawn to the Lord.

- ii. We minister well to people through small groups, ministry teams, and at other times.
- iii. We have an impactful Women's Ministry.
- iv. We help people to hear the Lord.
- v. We get encouraged by the testimonies of what God is doing.
- vi. Through intercession, we are touching the heart of God and standing on the wall.
- vii. Our people pray individually and corporately.
- viii. What we do, we do with excellence.
- ix. The heart of the youth to serve is amazing.
- x. Our leaders are transparent and lead with humility and servant hearts.
- xi. Our leaders communicate vision and direction effectively.
- xii. Our guest feels welcomed.
- xiii. New people continue to come and join with us in serving the Lord.
- xiv. Our new members and guests get involved quickly.
- xv. We have amazing Nursery Workers and nursery care system.
- xvi. We hear from the Lord and then we mobilize around initiatives that give us vision and purpose.
- xvii. We are a church that seeks the Lord and seeks to hear and follow after God.
- xviii. We have a longevity and faithfulness to serve others like though our Hairgrove Partnership, Freshwater, etc.

**3. Application:**

- a. What would you add to these lists?
- b. What is going well at Calvary?
- c. What are our strengths at Calvary?
- d. **Let's take some time to express our gratitude to the Lord.**
  - i. *He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God (Psalm 50:23 NIV).*
  - ii. Expressing thanks and gratitude does 2 things according to this verse:
    1. It honors the Lord.
    2. It prepares the way for the Lord to do more in our midst.
- e. *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them*

*that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God (Philippians 1:27-28).*

- i. Let's conduct our lives in a manner befitting the reality of the good news of Jesus.
- ii. Let's stand our ground and fight as one together **in faith** for what the Lord is doing among us and through us.
- iii. And, let's fight without fear, which God uses to strike fear into the heart of the enemy who opposes us.

## Part 2:

### 1. Quick review of last week's message

- a. We want to envision you and to call you to catch the vision of what God is doing. **Here is what God is currently doing: God is calling us to return to our first love and to fight for love.**
- b. **Last week, we practiced the discipline of reflection**, taking time to acknowledge and appreciate what the Lord is doing in our midst (Psalm 50:23). **We talked about what is going well and what our strengths are at Calvary.**
- c. Today, **we want to respond to where the Lord is challenging us to grow and change as a congregation.** Jesus said, "...hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (Revelation 2:7).

### 2. Transition:

- a. We need to know the good things that are going on and we need to celebrate.
  - i. Along with the idea of celebrating: I want you to know that I feel loved and supported as your pastor.
  - ii. I am grateful for the prayers and care which you lavish on me.
- b. We not only have some things to celebrate; we also face some challenges.

### 3. Challenges:

- a. **We have a need for more laborers.**
  - i. As instructed by the Lord Jesus, we need to pray for many more laborers for the harvest fields which the Lord has placed before us (Matthew 9:37-38).
    1. *Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:35-38).*
  - ii. We want to help people find their place in the net. And, we want to raise up people into their callings, ministries, and works of service (Ephesians 4:11-13).
  - iii. We still have a calling to be a house of prayer that is filled with worship team members, musicians, singers, and intercessors (Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13).

- b. A few people are on the sidelines and need to get back into the game.
  - i. Each one of us is created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10).
- c. A few people are burned out.
  - i. God wants us to function from the unending springs of living water that bubble up from within (John 7:37-38 NIV) and to live out of his unforced rhythms of grace (Matthew 11:28-30 MSG).
- d. A few people are not working on their personal transformation issues.
  - i. When that happens, we become targets for the enemy to conform us to this world and to build strongholds in our lives that hinder the work of the Lord (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6).
- e. We have experienced a lack of funding.
  - i. For various reasons, our giving is way down this year. **We are praying for provision for the vision which God has given to us.**
  - ii. **May we as a congregation bring the whole tithe into the storehouse.**
  - iii. *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. 11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty. 12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty (Malachi 3:10-12).*
- f. **A few people are deciding to look elsewhere for what they long for, when the Lord is inviting them and calling them to build here.**
  - i. I have met with a few people over the past several years who long for this ministry or that group at Calvary.
  - ii. When we finally had the chance to talk, it was clear that the Lord was putting a burden on them, or was using their longing, **to call them to start something or to build something here at Calvary.**
  - iii. ***That is a hard place and a challenging place; let's recognize that reality. Often, instead of working to build here, it seems easier to go elsewhere to get what we need.***
  - iv. Note: **When you hear people who have a burden or longing for some ministry or change at Calvary (which sometimes manifests as a disappointment or complaint), encourage them to come see me or one of the team.**
    - 1. I want to help people discern what the Lord is saying.

2. I want to affirm, bless, and release people to what the Lord is doing in their lives.
  3. I want to help people find their place in the net and to help us change as a church.
- g. **We are in the midst of a changing culture and ministry context.**
- i. The cultural challenges and ministry context demand that get wisdom from the Lord to know how to adjust in order to reach our culture and community around us more effectively.
  - ii. The good news is that the church flourishes in the midst of divergent cultures. (See the book of Acts.)
  - iii. That is why we are using Alpha and want to start other ministries as a way to impact culture and our ministry context. I would like to see us do marriage conferences, family conferences, ESL, and other ways to reach our culture.
- h. **We need a multi-generational vision.**
- i. God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
  - ii. We need the heart of the fathers and mothers turned to the children, and the children turned to the fathers and mothers.
  - iii. Note: Recently it has been so encouraging to see the youth sitting on the first 2 rows of the worship service.
- i. **We need to change our church culture.**
- i. In the past, our church has been staff led.
  - ii. **Now, we need people to hear the calling of the Lord, to step up in agreement, and to take ownership in some key areas. That is a significant culture change for Calvary.**
4. **Today, I want to issue a battle cry.**
- a. **We want to call the troops to the war we fight and the battle in which we live.**
  - b. **Margaret made an interesting statement recently.** "When Jeff said he was Joshua to Steve, **that meant that we will face one battle after another.** We are in a season of Joshua taking the land."
  - c. **I am praying that we will have the spirit of Joshua and Caleb.**

*Joshua 14:6-12 Now the men of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. 7 I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, 8 but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly. 9 So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.' 10 "Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel*

*moved about in the desert. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! 11 I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. 12 Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said" (Joshua 14:6-12).*

**d. Joshua Rushing taught us something significant in staff meeting recently:**

- i. When Joshua delegated the land to the 12 tribes, Dan didn't like their assignment. They were put right next to the enemy. Dan left their land and took their tribe up north. They didn't take their original inheritance, because it would be a fight.
- ii. In some lists about the end times, the tribe of Dan is left out of some lists about the end times. Maybe it was because they didn't want to be in the place God put them because there would be fighting involved.
- iii. **What if:** Maybe God has put us, Calvary, in a particular place. Maybe not every church can fight the battles God has called us to fight. We can say "no, we don't want that." But, if we say "no," we will lose out on our future and inheritance. Or, we can say "yes" both for now and for our future.
- iv. **What we are fighting for is more than just fighting for our lives and current blessings.**
  1. These blessings and prophetic words are not just to benefit us as adults.
  2. Rather, we are contending for our children and our children's children. We are here to impact future generations.

**e. Here are some things we have observed as your staff:**

- i. Health issues among old and young bring weariness, pain, and exhaustion.
- ii. **We have noticed a weariness and even a "retirement" mentality among a few people. "I have already paid my dues and done my bit for God and country."**
  1. There is no retirement in the kingdom of God.
  2. You are still needed in the battle and are still needed as a part of the body.
  3. We want to battle for you to have refreshing.
  4. And, we want you to battle for others and to give away what the Lord has given to you.
  5. *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the*

one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 **Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.** 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Galatians 6:7-10).

- iii. **We want to appeal to you to communicate with us how we can come alongside you.**
  1. What do you need to share with us?
  2. What are you not sharing with us?
5. **So, our current reality is that season is a season of warfare and testing.**
  - a. We want to encourage you: we see you as warriors.
  - b. We are in a battle. **Let's rally to fight for each other.**

**Nehemiah 4:1** When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, 2 and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble--burned as they are?" 3 Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building--if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!" 4 **Hear us, O our God,** for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. 5 Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders. 6 **So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.** 7 But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. 8 They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. 9 **But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.** 10 **Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall."** 11 Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work." 12 Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us." 13 **Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows.** 14 After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, **"Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."** 15 When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, **each to his own work.** 16 From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah 17 who were building the wall. Those who carried

materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, 18 and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me. 19 Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. 20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!" (Nehemiah 4:1-20).

**6. We believe that you will respond to this time of casting vision.**

- a. **Here is the picture of where we are and where we are going.**
  - i. God is calling us to return to our first love and to fight for love.
  - ii. We are returning to our first love.
  - iii. And the Lord is calling us to stand, fight, and battle for what God has said, is doing, and has called us to be and do.
- b. **Where are you are in this picture?**
  - i. Let's rally to fight for one another and for the Lord's purposes for Calvary, for the Lord's sake, for our sake, and for the sake of the next generations.
  - ii. Let's love God and others well.
- c. **I want to challenge you:**
  - i. Get in the game and stay in the game; don't go to the sidelines.
    1. I want to call you to new levels of service and participation.
    2. For those who are already serving: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
    3. If you are hearing judgment or condemnation, that is not the Lord.
      - a. If you are hearing a challenge, that is good.
      - b. I am simply asking you to listen to what the Lord is saying to you in this hour.
  - ii. Keep your fire red hot. We don't want you to burn out, break down, or blow up.
  - iii. Keep transformation alive and keep working on your stuff.
    1. Don't quit. Don't give up.
    2. Keep moving forward with the Lord.
    3. Remember: if you don't quit, you win.
  - iv. Cast vision (clear, authentic, and passionate) and help others find their place at Calvary and in the kingdom of God.

## Other resources on how to fight in prayer and how to do warfare when you are going through difficulties

### Suggestions for what to do when you are under attack from the enemy:

1. Remember: The Lord is with you, according to Psalm 23, even in dark and difficult times, even preparing a table for you in the midst of your enemies. And according to Matthew 28:20, he never leaves you. I find comfort, strength, hope, and grace from the Lord's presence.
  - a. Usually, the Lord is speaking to you before the warfare begins or during the warfare, preparing you and even helping you (Joshua 1:1-13).
  - b. And, remember that you are here for others, too. When I go through difficulties, I remember to pray for others (Hebrews 4:16). When you intercede for the sake of others, you are making a difference for them.
2. When I face difficult, dark, and painful times, or when I am under attack, I ask the Lord to fight for me.
  - a. There are numbers of scriptures that talk about the Lord rising up to fight on our behalf (Like Psalm 45:3-5).
  - b. I pray those out loud and often.
  - c. I also pray for the Lord to be a shield about me, a wall of fire around me, and my strong tower. (Again, there are many such passages.)
3. And, I ask others to join me in the fight.
  - a. I don't fight alone.
  - b. I recognize in dark and difficult times that I need the prayers and help of others. So, I enlist them, inform them, and keep them up to date on what is happening.
  - c. Corollary: I recognize that sometimes, I don't have the focus or strength to fight for myself, especially in certain demanding circumstances (like taking care of others, etc.). That is when having others fighting for me is so important.
4. I press into community and relationships, into intentionally walking in the light (transformation conversations) and saying what is so for me.
  - a. I find that sharing leads to my transformation, even in dark and difficult times.
5. Sometimes, I add fasting to my prayer and warfare.

**Suggestion for what to do when someone is under attack from others at work, school, etc.:**

1. Lord, you are our deliverer, savior, protector, and champion. I ask you to deliver my friend and his team from this attack in the name of Jesus. And, I ask you to equip and anoint my friend to fight the good fight, and having done all, to stand.
2. Lord, please forgive the person who is doing this to my friend, to his team, and to others. Please forgive him/ her, for he/ she doesn't know what he/ she is doing.
3. Lord, I ask you to cut off the supply lines of the enemy which is feeding his/ her demonic, oppressive activity. I ask you to cut off the lies of the enemy, the deception of the enemy, and to rescue him/ her. I ask you to bring confusion to the enemy's camp and to cause the enemy to be snared in his own snares. In Jesus' name I cut off the supply lines of the enemy which are feeding this person. I cut off the lies and deception. I cut off the spirit of control and whatever else is going on in the name of Jesus.
4. Lord, I ask you to forgive and to change the system at the church, workplace, or school that is tolerating this evil. Please cause champions of righteousness to arise.
5. Lord, I ask you to give this person time to repent. I ask you for the gift of repentance. If he/ she doesn't repent, I ask you to remove that person from his/ her position of authority and influence in the name of Jesus.
6. Lord, I also ask you to cut off the unholy ties and manipulation which she has over others, which is blinding them to truth, justice, and humility. I command the eyes of those who are being controlled and manipulated to open in the name of Jesus, and for them to see what really is.
7. Lord, I ask you to make the enemy pay dearly for attacking my friend and his team. I ask you to make the enemy repay 7 times what he has stolen from from friend, in the name of Jesus.
8. Lord, I ask you to restore my friend's reputation in the name of Jesus. Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds. You are the one to vindicate my friend and his team.
9. Lord, let what is being done the dark be exposed by the light of your glory, truth, and righteousness. Cause the light of the Lord to shine in the darkness and to conquer darkness and evil intent in the name of Jesus.
10. Lord, raise up godly people who will speak wisdom and will turn the tide, like you did in Acts 19 in Ephesus.
11. Lord Jesus, gird your sword on your side, O Mighty Warrior, and ride forth victoriously on behalf of truth, justice, and righteousness. Fight for my friend. Fight for his team. Deliver them from this attack of the enemy in the name of Jesus. Destroy the spiritual forces behind this attack. Demonstrate your power to save, heal, and deliver, in the name of Jesus.

## Actions for Dealing with Spiritual Warfare and Raising Altars to the Lord

### 1. Raise an altar to the Lord

- a. An altar in the Old Testament is a structure or place of sacrifice to God. The Greek word used in the New Testament for altar translates “place of sacrifice.” Believers are called “to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship” (Romans 12:1 NASB).
- b. In the Old Testament, people raised altars to the Lord where they encountered God or where the Lord told them to establish altars.
- c. In dealing with altars in the Old Testament, God called his people to **repent**, to change their minds and way of living. He called on his people to **renounce** the contracts and covenants made at unholy altars and to destroy altars raised up in false worship. To **raze** something is to completely and utterly destroy it. The Lord calls us to **reclaim and restore people and the land** for the purposes of the Living God and for the presence of God. We ask the Lord to break the power of evil and to set us free from evil influence. Then, we **raise up** new altars of devotion to Christ, places of memorial, where we commit again to following the Lord and his ways for our lives, our families, and our communities. (See Judges 6:1-31.)
  - i. Repent
  - ii. Renounce
  - iii. Raze: tear down; destroy
  - iv. Reclaim and restore; sanctify and cleanse
  - v. Raise up and erect godly altars
    1. We raise up altars of devotion to Christ, places of memorial, where we commit again to following the Lord and his ways for our lives, our families, and our communities.

### 2. Consecrate

- a. To consecrate is to set something or someone apart as belonging to God or for the service of God, and whatever is set apart is considered as holy (separated) unto God.
- b. We consecrate the entrance, building, and grounds.
- c. We consecrate the people.
- d. We rededicate them to the Lord.
- e. We declare they are holy, separated unto the Lord.
- f. Examples: Exodus 19:10-- consecrate the people; 28:41-- consecrate Aaron and his sons as priests; 44:1-46-- consecrate Aaron, the altar, the offerings, the Tent of Meeting, etc.; Joshua 3:5-- consecrate yourselves

3. **Declare** (Psalm 149:1-9)
  - a. We make Scriptural declarations.
  - b. We make prophetic declarations.
  - c. We read prophetic promises and remind the Lord of what he has said.
  - d. *Praise-filled warriors will enforce the judgment-doom decreed against their enemies. This is the glorious honor he gives to all his godly lovers. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! (Psalm 149:9 Passion Translation).*
  
4. **Restore** (Joel 2:12-27)
  - a. We pray specifically about the restoration of what has been lost and stolen.
    - i. Restoration of provision
    - ii. Restoration of people / harvest
    - iii. Restoration of power
    - iv. Restoration of impact
    - v. Restoration of influence
  - b. The Lord is able to restore in a finite period of time what has been lost or stolen over a longer period of time or a lifetime (Joel 2:25-27).
  
5. **Fight** (1 Timothy 6:12; James 4:7)
  - a. We bind and loose (Matthew 16:19).
  - b. We come against what the enemy is doing; we say “no” to it and yes to the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:10).
  - c. We declare to the enemy what the Lord has told us to decree.
  - d. We bless what the Lord is doing (Psalm 72:15).
  - e. We call on Jesus to fight for us (Psalm 45:3-5).
  - f. We resist the work of the enemy and bless the work of the Lord (James 4:7-8; 1 Peter 5:8-10).
  - g. We advance against the gates of the enemy and join the Lord in setting captives free from darkness and the power of the enemy (Matthew 16:18; Luke 4:18; 9:1-2; Acts 26:15-18; Colossians 1:13).
  - h. We move in the authority and at the command of the Lord as the Lord directs us against those opposing the gospel. (See Acts 13:6-12, dealing with Elymas the Sorcerer.)
    - i. Paul reacts sharply, declaring God's judgment on [Elymas] in the form of temporary blindness (which he himself had suffered, of course, in chapter 9; did Paul hope that in Elymas's case, as in his own, this would lead to repentance and to embracing the gospel?). The result is that the governor believed the gospel. Luke says that he was astonished at the 'teaching of the Lord'; this clearly doesn't just mean the theological content of what was being said, but the power which it conveyed. One obvious lesson from all this is that when a new work of God is going ahead, you can expect opposition, difficulty, problems and confrontation. That is normal. How God will help you through

(and how long he will take about it!) is another matter. That he will, if we continue in prayer, faith, and trust, is a given (NT Wright, *New Testament for Everyone— Acts for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 13-28*).

ii. **Remember: We operate in delegated authority. We have power and authority to do what the Lord has authorized us to do. We are not here to carry out our own will and desires, but the will of the One who sends us.**

i. **We pray for and bless those who curse us.**

i. *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:43-45 NKJV).*

ii. **Pray for those who have been used to loose witchcraft against us.**

1. **Declare: "Every curse you have spoken which has come back to destroy your life is broken in the name of Jesus."**

6. **Celebrate** (Romans 14:17; to celebrate is to rejoice, be glad, throw a party, etc.)

- a. We celebrate the Lord.
- b. We celebrate what the Lord is doing.
- c. We celebrate what the Lord is going to do.