

Spiritual Warfare through Obedience and Prayer

To the Foe

- 1 To the foe my word is always, "No,"
To the Father it is "Yes,"
That His plan and all His counsel
Be accomplished with success;
When Thine orders I'm obeying,
Grant me, Lord, authority
To fulfill Thy plan eternal
Thru the Spirit's power in me.
- 2 To the foe my word is always, "No,"
To the Father it is, "Yes";
'Tis my attitude eternal;
May the Lord protect and bless,
Lest while walking in obedience
Satan undermine the way;
When I'm list'ning to Thine orders,
Grant me mercy, Lord, I pray.
- 3 To the foe my word is always, "No,"
To the Father it is, "Yes";
I completely would obey Him,
Though deep suff'ring may oppress.
If the Lord will save and keep me,
As I forward press with Him,
Then no trials shall prevent me,
Nor will opposition grim. (*Hymns*, #880)

Teach Us to Pray

- 1 Teach us to pray that we may cause
The enemy to flee,
That we his evil pow'r may bind,
His prisoners to free.
- 2 Teach us to pray and firmly stand
Upon the battleground,
To fight and break the stronghold down,
The enemy confound.
- 3 Teach us to pray and use Thy rod
In strong, prevailing prayer,
Beneath Thy blood to shake the earth
And powers of the air.
- 4 By prayer and faith, O may we learn
To labor, Lord, with Thee,
To know the victory is ours
And Thine authority. (*Hymns*, #767)

Vital Aspects of Overcoming—Obedience and Prayer

The above two hymns respectively address two vital aspects related to spiritual warfare—obedience and prayer. Obedience is the theme of the first hymn, written by Margaret E. Barber. The author of the second hymn, Watchman Nee, focuses his attention on our need for God's training in order to pray in faith and harmony with God's purpose for the defeat His enemy. These two issues—obedience and prayer, expressed respectively in the above hymns—are crucial in the practical application of man's cooperation with God in order to fulfill man's designated purpose of expressing God in His image and representing God in His dominion. The two hymn writers were closely associated with one another in their mutual serving of the Lord in the early twentieth century in China. They were faithful servants learning to match the Lord in His overcoming strength through prayer and the word of God.

Obedience

Each stanza of Miss Barber's hymn begins with the same assertion: "To the foe my word is always, 'No,' / To the Father it is 'Yes.'" For the sake of fighting for God's interests, the writer's aspiration to obey is affirmed in each stanza. The first stanza simply petitions, "When Thine orders I'm obeying, / Grant me, Lord, authority / To fulfill Thy plan eternal / Thru the Spirit's power in me." The goal of her request is the fulfilling of God's eternal plan through the Spirit's strengthening power. To carry out the purpose of God, we need to obey in simplicity the instructions of the Father in His word, and for our consistent obedience in this pursuit, we need the Father to endow us with His authority over all contrary events, persons, and things.

The second attestation to obedience declares that saying "No" to the enemy and "Yes" to the Father is "my attitude eternal." Even though the writer declares that obedience to the Father is her eternal attitude, she also recognizes her own frailty and vacillating ways. Therefore, her appeal to the Father is for protection and blessing to be delivered from the enemy's temptations and interference, lest "while walking in obedience / Satan undermine the way." We need to be always on the alert to be under the care of the Lord's protection and covering. We must be watchful and keenly aware of the enemy's subtleties and of

our weaknesses so that we ever seek the Father's abiding protection and merciful blessing to guard us from the diverse inducements to sin and to deviation from the path of obedience.

In stanza 3 the resolve to obey the Father is repeated with a deepening awareness that there is often an arduous price to be paid in our struggle to obey: "I completely would obey Him, / Though deep suff'ring may oppress. / If the Lord will save and keep me, / As I forward press with Him, / Then no trials shall prevent me, / Nor will opposition grim." At times the battle is severe and the suffering deep. In all of our living and walking according to the Father's will, we must realize that we ever need the Lord to save and keep us. By His keeping grace, we would never turn aside from the path that we have chosen. Whatever the cost, however dear the price, we would ever declare, "To the foe my word is always, 'No,' to the Father it is, 'Yes.'"

Prayer

We need to become keenly aware of our foe's schemes (cf. 2 Cor. 2:11) in order to counter all his usurping purposes. But even more, in this great effort we need to learn to rely on prayer. In spiritual warfare we need to know that prayer is the most crucial weapon in defeating the enemy. The second hymn, by Watchman Nee, recognizes this need in the request: "Teach us to pray."

Stanza 1 begins with a plea, saying, "Teach us to pray that we may cause / The enemy to flee, / That we his evil pow'r may bind, / His prisoners to free." The power to bind Satan and to loose his prisoners from the satanic deception is primarily in the prayer of the saints. God's establishment of His kingdom on earth depends on cooperating prayers. When we are in contact with God through prayer, His desire is transmitted into us, and we pray according to His will. Thus, through the cooperation of His chosen people, the will of God can be executed from the heavens, and God's authority will be restored to the earth. God must have a group of His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people, a corporate entity, standing one with Him for His will to be done on earth. This is the prayer ministry of the church. Lord, teach us to pray!

Stanza 2 says, "Teach us to pray and firmly stand / Upon the battleground, / To fight and break the stronghold down, / The enemy confound." The weapons of our warfare, including the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, are wielded on the battleground through prayer and petition (Eph. 6:17-18). These weapons are powerful before God for the overthrowing of strongholds, particularly the strongholds in our reasonings that rise up against the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 10:4-5). Through prayer the enemy is confounded, and his schemes are brought to naught.

In stanza 3 Watchman Nee continues, "Teach us to pray and use Thy rod / In strong, prevailing prayer / Beneath Thy blood to shake the earth / And powers of the air." *Rod* refers to authority. Moses used his rod in his conflict with Pharaoh in Egypt, overcoming all the obstacles set up by Pharaoh (Exo. 4:17). Aaron's rod budded as the sign that Aaron had been chosen as His authority (Num. 17:8). And the Lord and His overcomers will shepherd the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:27). These events show that the rod is a sign of authority. In this hymn, this authority is for shaking both earth and heaven for the removal of anything that can be shaken (cf. Heb. 12:26-27). Beneath the Lord's precious blood, we must learn to pray strong, unrelenting, and determined prayers in order to defeat God's enemy and to bring God's kingdom to the earth. For such prayers, we must learn to intercede according to the divine revelation and vision imparted into us through our fellowship with God: "Lord, teach us to pray!"

Stanza 4 concludes the hymn, saying, "By prayer and faith, O may we learn / To labor, Lord, with Thee, / To know the victory is ours / And Thine authority." In resurrection the Lord Jesus stood before His disciples prior to His ascension and said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). In His ascension Christ was inaugurated into His place of authority as Lord over all in the universe. Ephesians 2:6 says that God "raised us up together with Him and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." We need to see not only that He has won the victory but that we also have been joined to Him. His victory is our victory. He has resurrected from the dead and ascended to the highest place in the heavenly realm. God has seated Him "far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come" (1:21). God has subjected all things under His feet and "gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all" (vv. 22-23). His power, His victory, His authority is to the church! We have been seated with Him in the heavenlies. We need to know that the victory is ours. We need to pray from a position in the heavenly realm in oneness with the ascended and exalted Christ. This is our labor in Him.

In our natural state we are powerless to live in absolute obedience, and we are utterly unqualified to stand for God as His representative in spiritual warfare. But when we are filled with God, we can function on His behalf. In order to be filled with God, we should persevere in prayer. The significance of prayer is primarily to contact God to be filled with Him. When we allow God to fill us with Himself, God's enemies will be scattered, His kingdom will be established, and His good pleasure will be fulfilled on earth through our cooperating prayers. Lord, teach us to pray!

by Gary Kaiser