

Becoming Spiritually Fit: An option, or a Necessity April 2006

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.... So you also must be ready (be spiritually fit), because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Matt 24:42, 44 NIV

"This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover." Ex 12:11 NIV

I'd like to return to the theme of preparedness as I write to you this month. In a way, I hope that you are sensing the Lord's heart for His church to be ready to stand strong against whatever life and our enemy throws at us –**Jesus has purposed that His Church experience His Rulership and taste of His Victory as the world we live in grows ever more evil and hate filled.** It is also my heart for you that such "talk" doesn't dishearten you, but awaken and motivate you to pursue relationship with Him and to appropriate all that His grace has given to us in order that we might become spiritually fit. Our Master loves us and desires that we experience His goodness and grace. His heart is that we possess His Promises and Provisions.

Here in America; home to a people who live by the motto: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we have been blessed with a comfortable level of financial prosperity that has lasted for nearly 75 years. We have also been blessed with a history that has been free from enemy aggression within the confines of our countries' mainland –until close to five years ago. We have been blessed with a government that was founded upon the principles of individual rights including the freedom to worship. What an amazing country we live in, but such liberty and prosperity must be stewarded with an underlying understanding that our liberty is a gift that must be used to pursue relationship with Jesus and to expand His Rulership.

When I consider our liberty and prosperity in light of Jesus' Kingdom, I often wonder if these great blessings might have become a point of vulnerability –the very point of attack by the Enemy of our souls. How would this be so? Let me suggest the following.

Our liberty and prosperity allows us to make choices in our daily relationship with Jesus that result in no outward immediate consequences. Being with other followers of Jesus to build each other up and experience His Life flow within these relationships has become an option for us rather than an essential. Spending sufficient time reading and absorbing His Word so that our hearts and minds are saturated with eternal truth doesn't seem that important until we find ourselves facing a tough situation and our minds and hearts are fear-filled and anxious.

You see our enemy has taken what is a gift of grace and has turned it around to breed within us a life style of relative ease. Jesus' heart is that we'd use our liberty and prosperity to passionately pursue Him and to expand the good news of His Rulership throughout our circles of influence. It is only when life gets tough that the sum of our choices show up in how unlike Jesus we respond. Please hear my heart as I write to you. Jesus desires good for His church and for His church to grow up and mature –to see many, many more people be introduced to Him and to love Him. His heart is for us to be spiritually fit, to live in vital relationship with Him so that we are bold and strong; able to stand against whatever life or the enemy throws at us. And after we have stood our ground –to stand like rescue beacons that declare to our society, “this is the way, this is the way of life.” **Would you pray and ask Jesus to fully awaken us to the hour we live in and to the need of those who live close to us in our daily circles of influence.** Spiritual fitness really isn't an option, but a necessity for life in 2006.

Here is a great promise about Jesus' followers and the influence He desires for them.

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me... to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. ⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.” Isa. 61:1-4

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