

LEGAL PROTECTION

by Francis Frangipane

FAITH IS MORE THAN DOCTRINES

Approximately two thousand years ago a decree was issued from the judgment seat of God. It provided "legal" protection for the church against the devil. Indeed, when Jesus died for our sins, the "ruler of this world" was judged. Our debts were nailed to Christ's cross and canceled; principalities and powers were disarmed (John 16:11; Col. 2:13-15). Because of Jesus, we have a legal right not only to be protected from our enemy but to triumph over him.

It does not matter what nation you come from, the sacrifice of Christ was so complete and the judicial decision from God against Satan so decisive that divine protection, enough to cover even the entire church in a city, has been granted (see Rev. 3:10).

Christ's death is the lawful platform upon which the church rises to do spiritual warfare; His Word is the eternal sword we raise against wickedness. Having said that, we must also acknowledge that the church has only rarely walked in such victory since the first century. Why? The answer is this: To attain the protection of Christ, the church must embrace the intercession of Christ. We must become a house of prayer.

Indeed, church history began with its leadership devoted to the Word of God and to prayer (Acts 2:42; 6:4). Every day the leaders gathered to pray and minister to the Lord (Acts 3:1). In this clarity of vision and simplicity of purpose, the church of Jesus Christ never had greater power or capacity to make true disciples. These men and women revealed the purity of the kingdom of God.

Today, however, our qualifications for church leadership include almost everything but devotion to God's Word and prayer. Leaders are expected to be organizers, counselors, and individuals with winning personalities whose charms alone can draw people.

In Luke 18, Jesus challenges our modern traditions. He asks, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (v. 8) His

question is a warning to Christians who would limit the power of God at the end of the age. Jesus is calling us to resist the downward pull of our traditions; He is asking us as individuals, "Will I find faith in you?" Before we respond, let us note that Jesus associates "faith" with "day and night prayer" (Luke 18:7). He is not asking, "Will I find correct doctrines in you?"

The Lord's question does not so much concern itself with right knowledge as with right faith. What we believe is important, but how we believe is vital in securing the help of God.

Indeed, procuring the supernatural help of God is exactly the point of Jesus' parable in Luke 18. His intent was to show that "at all times" we "ought to pray and not to lose heart" (Luke 18:1). To illustrate the quality of faith He seeks, He followed His admonition with a parable about a certain widow who petitioned a hardened judge for "legal protection" (v. 3). Although the judge was initially unwilling, yet by her "continually coming" (v. 5) she gained what was legally hers.

Jesus concluded by saying if an unrighteous judge will respond to a widow's persistence, shall not God avenge quickly "His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?" Jesus said, "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily" (see Luke 18:1-8).

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S DELAYS

Our Heavenly Judge will not delay long over His elect, but He will delay. In fact, God's definition of "speedily" and ours are not always synonymous. The Lord incorporates delays into His overall plan: Delays work perseverance in us. So crucial is endurance to our character development that God is willing to delay even important answers to prayer to facilitate our transformation.

Thus, we should not interpret divine delays as signs of divine reluctance. Delays are tools to perfect our faith. Christ is looking to find a tenacity in our faith that prevails in spite of delays and setbacks. He seeks to create a perseverance within us that outlasts the test of time, a resolve that actually grows stronger during delays.

When the Father sees this quality of persistence in our faith, it so touches His heart that He grants "legal protection" to His people.

DESPERATION PRODUCES CHANGE

It is significant that Jesus compared His elect to a widow harassed by an enemy. The image is actually liberating, for we tend to conceptualize the heroes of the faith as David or Joshua types-- individuals whose successes obscure their humble beginnings. But each of God's servants has, like the widow, a former life that is brimming with excuses and occasions to waver.

Look at the widow: She has legitimate reasons to quit, but instead she prevails. Indeed, she refuses to exempt herself from her high potential simply because of her low estate. She makes no apologies for her lack of finances, knowledge or charm. Giving herself no reason to fail, she unashamedly plants her case before the judge where she pleads for and receives what is hers: legal protection from her opponent. How did a common widow gain such strength of character? We can imagine that there must have been a time when, under the relentless pressure of her adversary, she became desperate, and desperation worked to her advantage. Desperation is God's hammer: It demolishes the stronghold of fear and shatters the chains of our excuses. When desperation exceeds our fears, progress begins.

Today, the force prodding many Christians toward greater unity and prayer has not been the sweetness of fellowship; more often it has been the assault of the enemy. We are in desperate times. When it comes to touching God's heart, other than for a few essential truths, unity of desperation is more crucial than unity of doctrine.

GOD'S ELECT

Our nation is suffering from a deep social and moral collapse. If we have ever needed God's anointing, it is now--but where are God's elect? Where are the people whom Daniel says "know their God" and "will display strength and take action"? (Dan. 11:32)

Is there no one divinely empowered who can fell the Goliaths of our age? Perhaps we are looking in the wrong places. Perhaps, we need only to look in our bathroom mirror. If you believe in Jesus and are desperate for God, you qualify as one of God's elect. Remember, in the above parable the widow typifies Christ's chosen.

We have erroneously held that God's chosen will never be assaulted by the adversary, much less driven to desperation and "day and night" prayer. But, this desperation is often the very crucible in which the elect of God are forged. Jesus portrays this characteristic metaphorically in the picture of the widow; He reveals the means through which His elect prevail in battle at the end of the age.

When all is said and done, it is also possible that this widow may not have been a singular person but a corporate people--a "widow church"--united in Christ in a singular, desperate prayer for protection against her adversary. We need the "legal protection" that a national revival provides. But it will not come without unceasing prayer. You ask, "Where was the prayer behind the charismatic renewal?" The Lord spoke to my heart that the charismatic renewal was His answer to the cries of a million praying mothers--women who refused to surrender their children to drugs and the devil.

It is our turn to pray. We are the widow who cannot give herself a reason for failure; God will answer our day and night cry. Let us position ourselves at His throne on behalf of our cities and nations. Certainly, as we persevere in faith, the Lord will grant us legal protection from our enemy.

Heavenly Father, forgive us for our lack of prayer and for giving ourselves excuses to fail. Lord, we thank You for making us desperate. Help us now to prevail, to attain the "legal protection" You have provided us against our adversary. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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