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Deception And Persecution In The Church

Dave Roberson

When it comes to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, when something is really of God, the awareness of that direction will sink deeper and deeper into my spirit as time goes by. And, when we add prayer (especially in tongues), then it becomes increasingly difficult to walk in the wrong direction, much less to exist in a place that is out of His will.

And, when it comes to things that affect you, as my partner, I usually let things settle deep into my spirit so that I will know it is God moving on me and not just another good idea, because, more than anything else, I want you to be blessed.

Please believe me when I say there is a new wave of persecution beginning against the people of the former USSR. God is lining everything up once again for a massive move towards the salvation of Russian souls and for the establishing of the church that is now there. He wants to build on such a foundation of truth that, even through the persecution, she will survive and increase (instead of decrease) in numbers and strength.

As much as I hate to admit this, I used to believe it was the prayers of the saints in America that were responsible for the great revival that has visited Russia for the last four years. But now, since I have been there several times and learned of their spiritual heritage, I know better.

Currently, the mainstream of Christianity in America does not seem to have enough determination to stand up against the devil long enough to keep themselves from falling out of prayer. Any more, a great substitute for prayer has seemed to be a strong church government. In other words, many churches are trying to inject spiritual attributes into people by using the natural means of organization.

Thank God for church government and the employment of programs to help take care of the congregation. But, this should not be at the price of prayer; you cannot substitute either one with the purpose of the other. As we have already seen, the lack of prayer on the part of the Body of Christ, as a whole, has resulted in the removal of prayer from our schools and legalization of abortion and homosexuality.

But, as far as Russia is concerned, God is now answering the prayers of the people of the former USSR who learned how to pray during the great persecution launched against the church when Lenin and Stalin exterminated masses of believers who resisted the takeover of Communism and Atheism. Many families and grey-haired mothers went to their deaths clutching crosses in their hands, believing that one day revival would once again visit their land.

God has heard those prayers and a great harvest of souls has taken place, especially in the first half of the last four years. God heard and answered the prayers of those who had made intercession for their families and country while giving their own lives.

But now that the initial wave of revival has subsided, Satan has lined up an attack in the form of more persecution that will once again drive the Russian people back to their knees and the result will be another great wave of revival and salvations.

It humbles me that you and I are privileged to be a part of these happenings. As partners together for the lost, when we have the spiritual insight to link up with God concerning the lost and then flow with Him, He will open up the windows of Heaven and pour out a blessing that there will not be room enough to contain.

This is especially true where God is answering prayers of a people on a national level who are under such persecution and once again suffering for their faith. When we flow with God's heart for these people, there will be outpourings into our businesses, our families, and unexpected miracles will come from sources we don't even know exist. God can do these things because nothing is too hard for Him - HE IS GOD!

I just had a meeting with Rick Renner and, by the time you get this letter, I will have had another one at the end of January. Everything God has told me to do in Russia, I am doing based out of Riga, Latvia, of the former Soviet Union, with Rick Renner. Unlike Brazil, where we have our own offices, in Russia I am joining with Rick and Denise to reach as many people as possible.

The last time I went to the former Soviet Union, I was blessed beyond words when Rick asked me to preach in a revival that went on to begin the church he now pastors in Riga, Latvia. When I go in April, in addition to ministering to the 1,000 member church, Rick is going to invite his television viewing audience to a massive miracle crusade in Riga and, once again, I am blessed to be able to preach in this crusade. Rick's television ministry is currently reaching a potential viewing audience of 155,000,000 in the former USSR. We have no idea how many will be there, but Rick will film it to be aired on his program being broadcast throughout Russia.

We need to pray earnestly and fervently that the window in time that God has opened for the Russian people stay open long enough for Him to harvest as many lost souls as possible. My desire is that this harvest take place before the nation closes again to the Gospel and Russia continues down the path on her collision course with Israel according to Biblical prophecy.

So, as my partner, I do not mind telling you that God is going to bless each of us who is willing to get involved with Him as He continues to pour out His Spirit on those hungry lost souls. This time, perhaps as never before if we are not caught unawares as to what God is doing, we can flow in His will with Him. I cannot begin to encourage you enough concerning the blessings that can follow us, as partners, by responding to God now.

I was watching a documentary on the Discovery Channel the other day and, what was so amazing to

me, was that, even though I do not think it was a Christian documentary, it was about Christian martyrs and the persecution of the early church.

The documentary told how the early church in the first few hundred years of their existence, conquered Rome and became the state church through what historians call the Nicene Creed. I could tell that even the narrator was amazed how that persecution in its most hideous form could not thwart the mission of the early church. They preached the Gospel in its purity throughout the regions of the Roman empire.

At first I was amazed and I marvelled at the strength of the early church because I knew I was watching a documentary of Satan's first attempt to destroy the early church from the face of the earth before it could become established. But then I realized born-again believers were something brand new to him. Satan did not quite know how to handle them, so he thought he could destroy them through persecution.

The seat of Satan rested in Rome where he began a systematic extermination of born-again believers. They were burned at the stake, covered with wax and torched for the entertainment of nobles as they ate their meals. The nobles looked on with amusement while the martyrs burned in their gardens providing them with something unusual for the evening. They were sported in arenas, fighting against wild beasts, and subjected to every slow method of torture until they died. Martyrs were cooked alive on grills, all the flesh torn off their bones by steel rakes, and sawed in two while still alive. Their tormentors twisted rope tourniquets around their limbs until the circulation was cut off, then released them just to hear them scream before they died.

Yet with all of this horror, Satan could not defeat them. Christianity continued to spread. It took Satan a couple of hundred years to figure out there was something about these born-again believers that persecution could not destroy. If he was going to defeat them, he realized he was going to have to change his tactics.

So he switched his tactics and, where persecution failed, riches, glory, and honor did not. Although historians look upon the merger of church and state as a major victory for Christianity, it was not. It was a means Satan used to subject the church to another form of temptation. Finally, it dawned on me that this was a tactical maneuver by Satan to introduce the early church to wealth and a social system of power and self-exaltation. And, where persecution failed, the introduction of the church to wealth and power did not. In the centuries to follow, the church began her descent into the dark ages. The church became wealthy and spiritually dead. The fires of revival had gone out.

One of the worst spirits that can enter a church is thinking that the personal operation of our faith to collect and amass things to ourselves is more important than the preaching of the Gospel to the lost. Verses about God's willingness to bless us and meet our needs have been turned into a teaching that we should pursue these things almost at the exclusion of everything else.

Thank God for His promises to abundantly meet our needs. But, when we esteem adding gold to our gold and cars to our cars a more important way of using our faith than ministering to the lost and suffering, THEN I BELIEVE OUR FAITH IS OUT OF BALANCE.

This is why Jesus said in Matthew 6:31-33: *"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

The mainstream of Christianity in America today is looking at a move of God in Russia that is obviously one of the most supernatural and phenomenal moves to come along in our century.

In America, most of us give our tithes, as well as, our offerings to the local church which, in turn, ministers to the local body. However, the problem is, as far as knowledge is concerned, the whole of America has been exposed to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and has had many opportunities to accept or reject Him as their Savior.

You can ask almost anyone in America, "Who is the Son of God?" and they can tell you. You can ask, "Who died for your sins?" and they can tell you. This includes people in the bars, in the gutters, in the Cabinet, in the White House, etc. On the cable networks, on any given day at any given time, you can find a preacher who is telling us Americans how to be saved.

So, in reality, the church has done a pretty good job in bringing the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ to almost every household in America, through the media and through the personal efforts of evangelism.

If America only knew that the standard of living she has enjoyed for so long is the direct result of the freedom she has given to the church to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, then the legislators would leave our freedoms alone. If anything, they should and would protect and promote it. Are we going to realize that the prosperity God has brought to us is a direct result of the church in America reaching out for the lost?

Or, like the early church in Rome, are we now going to use our wealth to amass more wealth to ourselves, to fellowship with other believers who are buying bigger cars, getting thicker carpets in our churches, plating our showerheads with gold, quoting, "I am a King's kid and have a right to the best!"

The deception comes in when believers begin to place a higher importance on the increase of their personal wealth than the lost souls of men. So, every time more money comes in, they use it to add another area of pleasure to their lives instead of first seeing to the lost souls of men.

Let's talk about God's first priority, the lost souls of men. We did not shed our blood for the lost, Jesus did. If our priorities are going to be the same as God's, then the first thing that we should protect is our giving – Jesus gave His all. God does not care if we have all these things, but not at the exclusion of the Gospel to the lost.

So, here we are, belonging to a great nation where the devil is trying to neutralize mainline Christianity with wealth, trying to get us to protect areas of abundance and pleasure at the cost of the lost. This is why many Christians looked the other way at election time and voted economically,

instead of morally, and put in a president who seems to be fighting for gay rights and the legalization of abortion. But, thank God, He has a covenant with us, as individuals, and what happens to the flow of mainstream Christianity does not determine what is going to happen to us.

Russia went through a time of prosperity and, like the early church in Rome, the loyalty of the born-again church in Russia was severely tried by riches until the time of Lenin and Stalin. When it comes to pleasure, the flesh nature looks for a way in. But, when it comes to persecution, the flesh nature looks for a way out.

Now, because of the wealth in America, the loyalty of the church is being severely tried because of the great temptation of our flesh nature to pursue pleasure.

At the same time, the church in Russia has entered into a time of persecution and again, when it comes to persecution, the flesh nature looks for a way out. The same way that the early church of Rome experienced great revival and flourished during the time of the martyrs, the former Soviet Union is about to see its finest hour of revival and awakening as God fulfills His obligation to the untold millions of martyrs who died believing God for the salvation of their sons and daughters ... martyrs who gave their lives under the persecution of Lenin and Stalin.

The first priority of God's blessings is to win the lost and, to us believers who understand this, we also understand that Jesus died for ALL the lost in the WHOLE world.

Christianity in America is on a collision course with the deceitfulness of riches and, once Satan is successful in switching the loyalty of the church from God to unrighteous mammon, then the prosperity of America will fail and send it into a tailspin of deprivation, starvation, and persecution. When this happens, persecution will once again cause the church to cry out. Remember, when it comes to adversity, the flesh looks for a way out. But, when it comes to pleasure, it looks for a way in.

It is too bad mainstream Christianity does not know enough about mortification (dying to self) and walking in the Spirit to continue to win the lost while we still have two chickens in the pot and two cars in the garage. It is too bad we do not understand enough about mortification so that, even though we have tasted the "good life", we are able to lift our hands and worship God that our number one priority is giving to see the lost souls of men won to Jesus Christ.

I am so thankful that God is so kind and full of grace that He is always providing opportunities for us to be blessed. The problem with many of us, though, is that we are so carnal that we miss the hour of His visitation.

God loves to see us prosper! But, comparatively speaking, most of us live in such plenty that we esteem it a fearful crisis when the level of our prosperity is threatened, not whether or not we can get enough food to stay alive or clothing to stay warm. So we cry out -to God as the standard of our living is being threatened and, because He is the God of all abundance, He hears us and opens new avenues of giving. This is what this letter concerning Russia is all about.

I knew in my heart that I had better share this with you because God is moving on the behalf of people's needs in America by giving- the opportunity to meet the needs of the people of the former Soviet Union. Their most important need is to be saved.

It is my earnest prayer -that we are not so carnal as to miss God's hour of visitation when He is presenting us with a need in order that He may meet our needs. Matthew 18:11-14 says: "*For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of -the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not -the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.*"

Because the ninety and nine sheep were already saved, what Jesus was doing was showing His order of priority. This is why the 11th verse says that He came to save that which. is lost. So Jesus considered the first priority of His ministry to be the saving of the lost and it is still that way today.

So, if this is the case, then the highest priority for our giving should be what Jesus considers most important and what He considers the Most Important ... is the lost. **SO, I MUST BE VERY CAREFUL THAT MY GIVING DOES NOT JUST STAY HOME WITH THE NINETY AND NINE**, but that my giving also goes with Jesus -to seek out and save those who are lost. I invite you to open your heart before the Lord in asking Him, "Lord, what would you have me do?"