

DENNIS BURKE MINISTRIES

Insights

The Way to a New Life
MAY / JUNE 2009

RIDE OVER

the WAVES



THE POWER OF YOUR
POSITION WITH GOD

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There's no doubt about it — these are crucial times we're living in. It's a rollercoaster ride for those whose sense of security is governed by the current news cycle or the latest economic reports.

But despite the current tide of events, the Body of Christ can ride on top of the stormy waters that threatened to engulf the lives of so many in the world. Think back to the floodwaters that destroyed the earth in the days of Noah. Noah didn't ride *through* destruction; he rode *over* destruction. He was tied to a different system.

As believers, we are also tied to a different system. The political realm influences the world we live in, but politicians don't make decisions that have the power to determine the outcome of our lives. The economy may be struggling, but God has called us to live by a different economic system.

Now, it's true that many Christians are under a great deal of pressure as a result of the current state of affairs. The political and financial realms have created a lot of problems for multitudes of people, and

Christians are included in that number. But believers have a choice to make in the midst of these difficult circumstances.

They can decide to lock into God's truth.

They can refuse to let go or give up on His eternal principles, regardless of the current trends or the economic climate of the world system.

They can choose to believe that the laws of God's Word remain exactly the same, no matter what circumstances surround them.

Believers who make these right choices will find that they really can ride on top of the stormy waters that the latest fad, trend, or demonic strategy is creating in the world system.

Politics and government will never be our answer to the situations and problems we face in life. Our answer rests only in the stability of our relationship with God, in the certainty of His promises, and in our capacity to hold fast to our faith in what He has said in His Word. It always comes back to this core issue: *In what do we actually place our faith?*

The Connection Between Faith and Righteousness

Throughout the Body of Christ, Christians are involved in a righteousness revolution. They are revolting against the worldly systems and carnal ways of thinking that have insidiously crept into their minds and their lives to dictate and intimidate them.

You see, we have been called by God to *lift up*, not *adapt to*, the standards of society. We're not going to do that just by trying to live better or by trying to adhere to the same old rules we have failed to follow in the past. Living by God's system isn't about *rules*; it's about our *relationship* with Him. It's about something that happened to us in the new birth that we're still learning how to experience in our daily lives.

A key to understanding righteousness is found in Romans 1:16,17:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

Notice that the Apostle Paul says in verse 16 that the Gospel is the power of God to salvation for everyone *who believes*. That means this promise wasn't given to every Christian, because not every Christian believes. There are many Christians who are "unbelieving believers." They believe in God, and they believe the Bible is true. But they have no idea what the Bible really says, and they live their lives as if they are still in the world. This verse says that the power of the Gospel to produce the blessings of God is not for this category of people — it is only for those *who believe*.

Of course, Paul isn't talking about people who believe just anything; rather, he's referring to those who believe the promises in God's Word. Some people make up weird doctrines to believe and claim that they found them in the Bible. But the power of the Gospel to save and deliver is for *everyone who believes what God has said in His Word*.

'The Just Shall Live by Faith'

This is what trips up a lot of people. People all over the world are confused about Christians because many Christians all over the world are confused about what God says about them. For instance, they are confused about their own standing before God — a subject of huge importance.

Romans 1:17 tells us exactly how God sees us in Christ: "For in it [the Gospel] the righteousness of God is



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revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

Paul's epistle to the Romans could be called the single greatest document describing what God has done for humanity through the New Covenant — and it begins in the first chapter with that all-important statement: "The just shall live by faith." This is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4, where God was describing how His people would one day live. That day came when Jesus paid the price for sin and was raised up out of death, hell, and the grave, giving every person the right to live the way God intended for His people to live all along.

The just shall live by faith, and we are the just. What does it mean to be just? We need to go back to the simple Sunday school lesson many of us learned years ago. To be "justified" is to be made "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned. The reason this definition is so important is that too often, people live with a continual sense of weakness and condemnation because of past sins and failures in their lives.

Most Christians don't feel like they are doing a good job of following the Lord. They're convinced that they're not reading the Word enough, they're not praying enough, or they're not giving enough. Even committed Christians are quite convinced that they're not actually doing enough to qualify for God's blessings to be demonstrated in their lives in a big way. God

may heal their hangnail or headache, but they don't feel like they qualify for His greater blessings — and they're not willing to change in order to begin qualifying! Yet the real issue is this: These Christians have more faith in what they do or don't do than they have in what Jesus has already done for them.

From God's point of view, He sees us just as if we'd never sinned. That's great information, but it has to become revelation in our hearts so that it affects our spiritual walk, our prayer life, and our fellowship with God, as well as the way we speak and act at home and in the workplace.

The Holy Spirit's Role: To Reveal Righteousness

Consider what your life would be like today if you had never sinned, rebelled, or missed the mark — not even once — in your entire life. Of course, we know that isn't possible, but what if it were true? What would your life look like?

For one thing, you wouldn't be carrying around all the baggage from past mistakes, wounds, sins, and offenses. For another, you'd be continually experiencing the blessings of God in every realm of your life. But here's what you have to understand: What I just described is the very work that the Holy Spirit is actually doing right now in your life! He's bringing peace, help, and prosperity into your life so that you will look like you have never sinned and you will begin to think, speak and act as if people had never violated or hurt you in the past.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal righteousness. In other words, He wants to bring complete restoration and wholeness to your life to show others what a person's life would look like if he or she had never sinned.

God desires that, as people get to know you, they would recognize the confidence with which you approach Him. They'd see that you're not chasing after a distant God; rather, you walk hand in hand with the Father. You enjoy sweet, intimate

fellowship with Him, free of barriers and unhindered by hang-ups. This is the goal of the Holy Spirit as He unceasingly works in your life to reveal righteousness.

Robbed No Longer

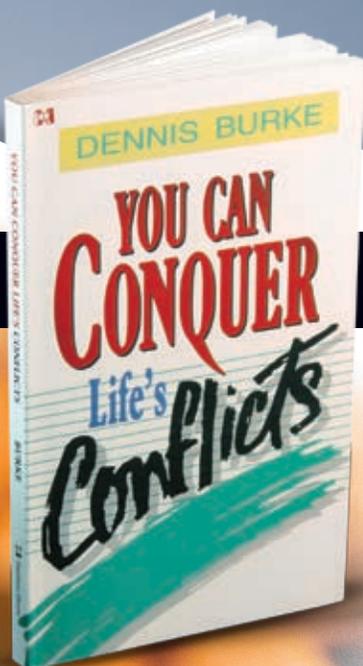
Once you grasp the truth that you have been made the righteousness of God in Christ, you won't feel compelled to drag out all your past sins and problems before God again and again, telling Him, "Lord, I know You want to use me, but I've just been so weak. I've been so pathetic. I've been so down and depressed, and life has been so hard." God doesn't need constant dissertations on how goofed up you've been. He simply says to you, *"The just shall live by faith."*

You are the just, and God sees you as if you had never sinned, from the day you were born until this moment. He sees you upright and pure because of the blood of Jesus Christ. He doesn't see you in the light of your weaknesses and failures. He sees you in the light of Jesus' strength.

Jesus has truly done what He said He would do. He has come to live in you through the Person of the Holy Spirit. He has come to empower you to be everything He has designed you to be so you don't miss one single blessing He died for you to enjoy.

For too long, we have allowed the enemy of our souls to rob us by convincing us that we don't qualify for God's acceptance and blessings. That's why I'm asking the Holy Spirit to help us get this truth firmly settled in our hearts. There is a revolution of righteousness afoot in the Body of Christ, but it must begin with our understanding that we already have been made righteous in Christ.

We have been delivered from shame, guilt, blame, and the need to perform in order to receive from God. No longer do we have to strive to "do enough" in order to gain His acceptance, for we already are accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6). Instead, we can allow the Holy Spirit to reveal God's righteousness to the world through our lives as we learn to live in freedom and wholeness — just as if we had never sinned.



What would **Joshua** do?

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Just as Joshua, through his courage and faith in God's Word, saw victory after victory as he led the children of Israel into their promised land, so we also can have constant victory in every area of our lives.



in the **strength** that you have!

BY VIKKI BURKE

The champions recorded in the Bible experienced great difficulty, even impossible situations, yet they prevailed in the most difficult of times. These were ordinary men and women who, during hard times, triumphed over every obstacle when they obeyed the Lord's instructions.

Whether they encountered sickness, poverty, weakness, imprisonment, or hunger, God's power was strong on their behalf — that is, as long as they obeyed Him. But if they ever turned away from the Lord, they opened the door for serious trouble.

On one occasion after Israel turned to other gods, they suffered seven years of terrorism at the hands of the Midianites (see Judges chapter 6). The Midianites' intense cruelty forced Israel to retreat to the mountains and hide in caves. Year after year, the Israelites would plant and cultivate their crops — but just before harvest time, the Midianites would arrive in such overwhelming numbers that it looked like an invasion of locusts had swept over the land.

The invading forces would camp in the fields, destroying the crops and reducing Israel to severe poverty and despair. These outlaws didn't raid Israel's camp to bring back food to feed their own families. They destroyed Israel's crops so the people would starve. The Midianites intimidated, violated, and brutalized the people of God.

But God had not forsaken His people. Even though their own disobedience had opened the door to suffering at the hands of their enemies, God still had a plan to deliver them. That deliverance would come through a most unlikely source — a young man from the tribe of Manasseh named Gideon.

The divine call came to Gideon after one of the Midianites' assaults on Israel's land. He was busy scraping together some leftover wheat to hide in a wine press, out of view from the Midianites, when suddenly he heard a voice say, "...The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour" (Judges 6:12 *KJV*).

At the sound of this voice, Gideon froze. Could it be the voice of a sneering Midianite who had returned to kill him? Perhaps it was Gideon's neighbor who had seen him gathering food and had come to steal the wheat for his own family.

Then Gideon looked up and saw that it was an angel of the Lord who had spoken. "Sir," Gideon replied, "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about?..." (Judges 6:13).

Gideon's immediate response to the angel revealed his own

lack of strong faith. Instead of recognizing that the Lord had sent an angel in answer to Israel's cries, Gideon immediately began accusing God, asking, "Why has this happened to us?" and "Where are the miracles?"

The Lord had already sent a prophet to warn the Israelites. However, they had refused to listen or obey the Lord (v. 10) — and as a result, they were now being oppressed by their enemies. Yet rather than take responsibility for Israel's rebellion, Gideon blamed God for the problems he and his people were suffering.

Gideon complained, "...Where are all the miracles...?" He was so focused on and overwhelmed by the problems his people faced that he didn't even recognize the fact that the miracle they'd been crying out for was standing right in front of him! This is what happens to those who trust in man and refuse to obey the Lord. As Jeremiah 17:5, 6 (*NKJV*) says, "Thus says the Lord: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes....'"

What a tragedy! God was faithful to send the answer that Gideon and the rest of the Israelites needed. Yet Gideon was so busy complaining and trying to provide for himself that he didn't even see when good came!

However, the angel completely ignored Gideon's accusations and went on to say, "...Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you!" (v. 14). What a remarkable statement! Notice the angel didn't say the Israelites would be rescued after their strength increased. He said, "Go with the strength you have." Evidently, whatever strength Gideon possessed was all he needed. In himself, Gideon was weak — but God never expected him to fight in his own strength.

Like so many others have done through the ages when



in the **strength**
that you have!

**WHO EVER
HEARD OF
SOLDIERS USING
CLAY POTS ... TO
FIGHT AGAINST
...TERRORISTS?**

**"...NOT BY
MIGHT NOR BY
POWER, BUT BY
MY SPIRIT, SAYS
THE LORD...."**

presented with their divine assignment, Gideon argued with God. "But Lord," Gideon replied, "how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!" (v. 15). Gideon was persuaded that his family was weak and insignificant. And if his family wasn't pitiful enough, Gideon claimed to be the weakest of them all!

But God doesn't look at what we don't have; He looks at what we do have. Gideon didn't see himself as a mighty man of valor — but from God's perspective, he was! The Lord knew that as He worked with Gideon, the young man's strength would be without equal. So He said to Gideon, "...I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man" (v. 16). Gideon's small strength united with God's matchless ability would empower him to

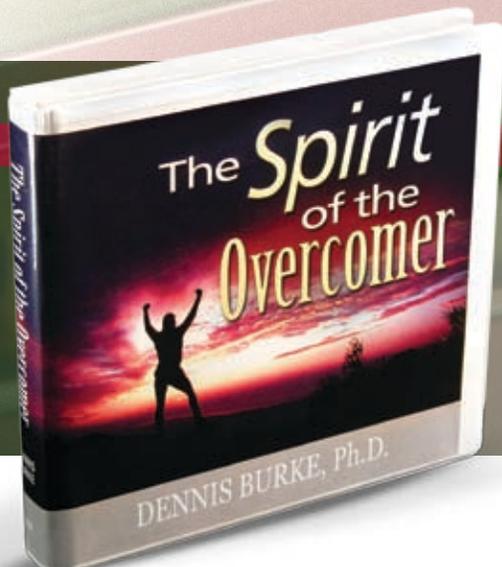
defeat an entire nation as though it were a one-man army!

That's the power available to us when we bind ourselves to God. The prophet Isaiah spoke of the availability of this strength: "But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31 *NKJV*).

The word "wait" means to bind together by twisting. When we wrap ourselves around the Lord, His Word, and His Spirit, we take on His strength — a strength that is unmatched by any other.

Gideon spoke only about his weakness, but the angel spoke only about his strength. We can learn an important lesson from this account of Gideon's life: God wants us to look at every situation we face from His perspective and not our own. As Jesus said to Peter, "...You stand right in My way when you look at things from man's perspective and not God's" (Matthew 16:23 *BCJ*).

It was a difference in perspective that caused the ten spies



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Believers must understand that their decisions to obey God's Word make the difference between what God is able to do and what He will do. You can learn to set your heart like you set a thermostat. The setting you choose in your heart will begin to direct your thinking and your faith straight to that place. You can feed your inner man with the attitude that will cause you to rise up and overcome! Your inner attitude can become mighty in the power of God.

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to return to Moses with an evil report that melted the hearts of the people, while Joshua and Caleb declared in faith, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30 *NKJV*). The ten spies saw themselves as grasshoppers to be trampled under the enemy's feet. Joshua and Caleb saw themselves well able to do what God had promised they could do. Notice that all the spies saw the same giants, but two of them viewed those

over to the Midianites' camp and listen to what they were saying.

"Gideon crept up just as a man was telling his companion about a dream. The man said, 'I had this dream, and in my dream a loaf of barley bread came tumbling down into the Midianite camp. It hit a tent, turned it over, and knocked it flat!' His companion answered, 'Your dream can mean only one thing — God has given Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite, victory over Midian and all its allies!'" (Judges 7:13, 14).

If only God's people could do what Gideon did — sneak into their enemies' camp and listen to what they say about the power of our God! For instance, consider the time the city of Jericho heard that the Red Sea had opened as a walkway for God's people but had destroyed all those

who were pursuing them. The people of Jericho said: "We heard it and our hearts sank. We all had the wind knocked out of us. And all because of you, you and God, your God, God of the heavens above and God of the earth below" (Joshua 2:12 *Message*).

When will God's people realize that the kingdom of darkness trembles at the thought of what their God can do?

The information Gideon received from that scouting trip encouraged him to immediately return to camp and prepare his men for battle. However, this wouldn't be a typical battle using conventional weapons. Gideon's army consisted of only 300 men armed with clay pots and horns!

Who ever heard of soldiers using clay pots and horns to fight against a mob of terrorists? But the battles fought by God's people are "...not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6). God used what little strength these 300 men possessed and some harmless clay lanterns and horns to cause the enemy forces to fight against

GIVE GOD SOMETHING TO WORK WITH BY DECLARING, "...LET THE WEAK SAY, I AM STRONG" (JOEL 3:10)! THEN BEGIN TO DO WHATEVER YOU CAN TO MOVE TOWARD THAT GOAL, AND GOD WILL BLESS ALL THAT YOU SET YOUR HAND TO.

giants from a very different perspective than the other ten.

Perspective is everything in the Kingdom of God. Recently I saw this principle hold true in the case of a friend who was going to be interviewed by a primetime investigative reporter. As I prayed about this interview, the Lord prompted me to tell him, "Be strong and very courageous, and no one will be able to stand against you."

When I told my friend what the Lord said, he immediately answered, "Oh, I'm not afraid." But up to that point, no one had mentioned fear — except him!

The Lord wanted to empower my friend with the same supernatural strength and courage that enabled Joshua to defeat 31 nations. Although this man might disagree, I believe his response revealed that fear, not faith, governed his heart. As Jesus said, "... For whatever is in your heart determines what you say" (Matthew 12:34).

After Gideon finally accepted the assignment, the Lord told him to sneak

upcoming meetings



May 3

Russellville Christian Center
Russellville, AR 72811
479-968-7965

May 10

Living Word Christian Center
Forest Park, IL 60130
708-697-5000

May 15-19

Victory Life Centre
Western Australia 6017 | 61 8 92027111

May 22-24

Parkway Church
Kambah, ACT Australia | 02 6296 7701

May 31

Word of Faith Intl Christian Center
Round Rock, TX 78681 | 512-341-8957

Jun. 7

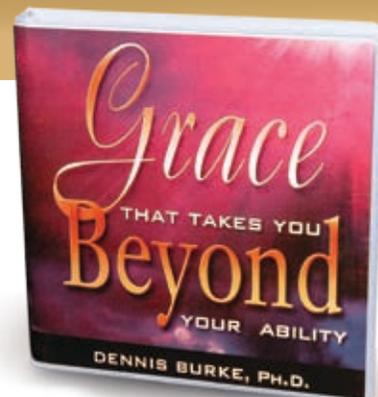
Agape Church
Wentzville, MO 63385 | 636-327-5632

Jun. 13-15

Life Changers Christian Center
Lancaster, CA 93535 | 661-942-3238

Jun. 19-21

Oasis of Faith Christian Center
Hesperia, CA 92345 | 760-948-0725

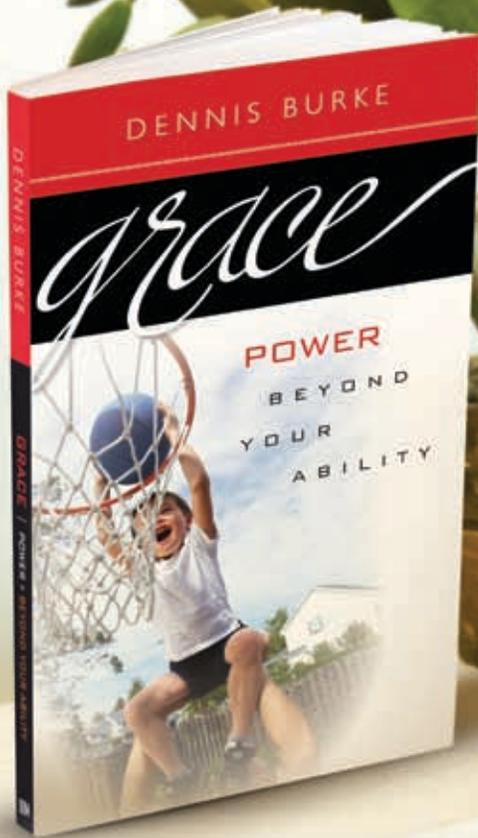


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one another. Those who were not killed fled for their lives. Clearly God isn't looking for super strength, a multitude of people, or the perfect weapon to fulfill His purposes. He is looking for individuals like you and me who are willing to do whatever He asks despite our weaknesses — knowing that our weaknesses only give the Anointed One an opportunity to work through us (2 Corinthians 12:9).

God's power will be activated in your life when you always say what He says about you instead of saying what you have or can do in the natural. So the next time you lack the needed strength to complete an assignment the Lord has given you, keep in mind that He is unable to bless what you don't do (Deuteronomy 28:8). Give God something to work with by declaring, "...Let the weak say, I am strong" (Joel 3:10)! Then begin to do whatever you can to move toward that goal, and God will bless all that you set your hand to. As you step out in obedience and trust, you will rise up in His strength, defeating the enemies that have tormented you for so long.

Remember, it's all about perspective. Your part is to renew your mind with God's Word so you can begin to see yourself through His eyes. Then you'll come to realize that, no matter what challenge you face or how big the assignment God gives you, you are a mighty man or woman of valor, strengthened with His power and well able to complete the task!

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