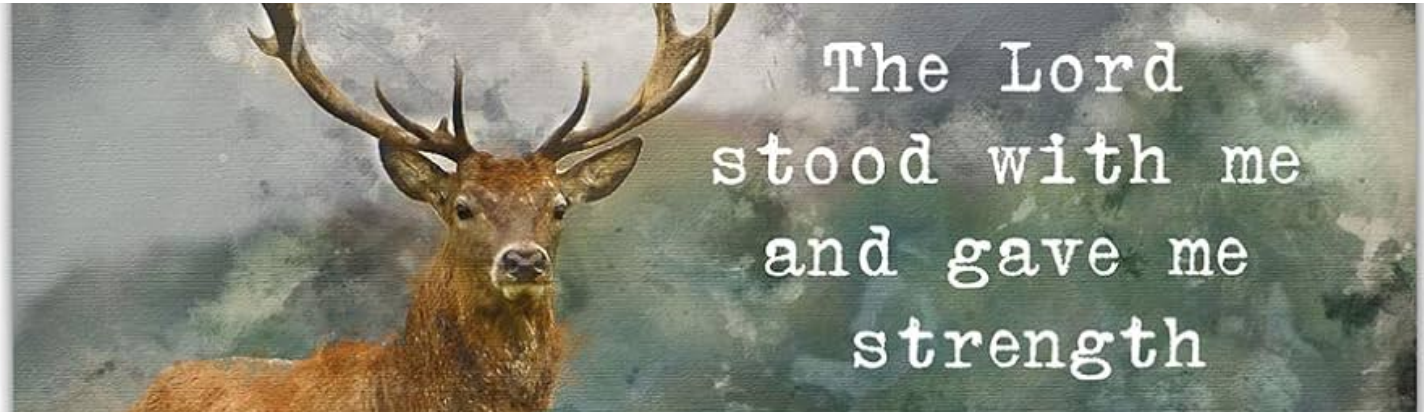


“Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me”

By Bill Johnson



Just a few short years ago America was the only super power on the planet. The Soviet Union no longer existed. Through President Ronald Reagan’s diplomacy and American might, President Mikhail Gorbachev took down the Berlin Wall signifying the end of the Cold War, or at least so it seemed for a number of years. Our trade relationship with China was just beginning and American leadership believed that when China experienced the benefits of the "American Way" (capitalism and freedom), Red China would ultimately gladly discard communism. American government and corporations basically rebuilt the Chinese society by exporting our major corporations to China and sharing economic, medicinal, scientific, military and educational know-how largely in the financial interest of American big business.

President Reagan said, “America is the last Great Hope of Freedom.” As I considered the prophetic books of Scripture, I often wondered, “Would America lose its standing (at least in my lifetime) as the only global super power in the world?” It was hard to imagine. Consider the display of sovereignty - U.S. hegemony on display as during the Gulf War (1990-91).

It has come to my mind how vital it is that we don’t succumb to despair, yielding to dark forces that erode our will to fight. Recently, I came across a practical tool in a

book called Do Not be True to Yourself by Kevin DeYoung. DeYoung writes: “The most powerful influences in your life are often the things you don’t even think about, the things you do out of habit, the things you do because you always do them - whether someone makes you do them or not.” He refers to them as the “rhythms of life:” study habits, exercise habits, social media habits, personal hygiene habits. DeYoung continues: “These may not be planks in our worldview, but they shape us just as much or even more. It’s just what we do. And, in time what we do becomes who we are. Will the local church become one of your habits in the next year? There are plenty of lukewarm Christians sitting in churches every week across this country. ... But you know where you can find passionate on fire, totally sold-out Christians? In church.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ: Get up! Begin to fight! It is a fight that you/we can win in Christ! Pick up that Bible. Read a chapter every morning. Call upon the Lord. Plead with him to enliven you from your despair. Fight the fight that God calls you to. If possible exercise even if just for a few minutes. Eat a breakfast. Get dressed.

Our life circumstances are different, of course. I am elderly but I can still do some things and you can too. Wake up to act!

Seek God to be stirred once again. Don’t neglect the basics: Get going into a daily rhythm abiding in Him with self-discipline. Don’t underestimate the importance of the local church. Don’t stop. Keep going. A day becomes a week, becomes a month, becomes six months, becomes faithfulness into victory.

I Timothy 3:12-4:8 is powerful and can be read every day to help tune you up to stand into a daily rhythm of yielding to God. He is calling out to you to regain your strength as you include church into your rhythm of life.

God will bless you as you seek Him in your everyday living - seeking first the Kingdom of God.

“... if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Ephesians 4:21-24

Personal Note from the President



Recently, Jan and I attended a Bill Gaither concert in Shipshewana. It brought back many memories of when I first became a Christian. Tears would come as I heard old time hymns and contemporary Bill Gaither songs, Doug Oldham, Henry and Hazel Slaughter. On Saturday nights I would listen to WUGN, Midland as they would air a sermon of the week. I was moved and awakened on Saturday nights, and that would help going into Sunday. I would be stirred in my spirit; drawn to God. I didn't really understand it but I was saved and I knew it. This is a very short version. The battle for my will and my future was on. God had my attention back then and it never ended. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."

I had a lot to learn. But, God had my attention. Over the next number of years, I taught in four different public school systems. I left teaching briefly in 1976 to try my hand working in my father's car dealership in my hometown of Portland. After about three months working with my Dad, he kindly but tersely said to me that I better go look for something else as my heart wasn't in it. That hurt, but he was right.

By the grace of God, I was able to meet up with Superintendent Bill Eckstrom at Lakewood Public Schools. He hired me as a full-time substitute as the school year (1976-77) had already started. It was a 35-minute drive to Lakewood and then ultimately to Woodland where the following year I was hired as a second-grade teacher.

During the prior summer I had picked up a book on "How to Study the Bible" by Tim LaHaye. In the book, it laid out a year of Bible passages to memorize. I wrote one by one the Bible verses on index cards and began to memorize them. I would memorize three a week and recite them over and

over as I drove to Woodland and back throughout the school year.

I only taught in Woodland for one year. It was a great year and the parents gave me a plaque with the kids' names on it that named me *Teacher of the Year*. I had an opportunity to take a teaching position in Jan's hometown, Fremont, MI where I taught between 1978-1988. I continued feeding from the scripture memory cards, doing daily devotions, being nurtured by Christian radio and by becoming a member and faithfully attending a local church. In addition, I began to do daily exercise because I was noticing that I fatigued too early in the evening. I tried jogging and found that I had energy throughout the day.

During the last 11 years of my teaching career I sensed a call on my life, but I wasn't certain what it was. During the summers I earned a Masters of Religious Education (M.R.E.) In 1985 the call came, it was to get involved in a fledgling anti-pornography organization. The rest is history. At the heart of my calling were several Scripture passages that were embedded in my spiritual life. Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 1:15-16; Romans 6:13; Romans 6:16. If you look them up, you will see that they are verses that have to do with the fight for personal holiness.

I say all of this to say: I learned rhythms of life. They are just good old-fashioned standards of many who came before us. Rise up. Do devotions. Pray. Exercise. Be careful of your diet. Do what God gives you to do. Do your best as unto the Lord. Find a church. Find a way to make it work for you and serve. Learn to forbear. When knocked down by disappointment or by hurt, get back up again.

We often ask in these difficult times, "but, what can I do?" We all need to do what we can. **Nothing is more important than getting your act together! Will we?**

As we begin another year, I just want to thank all of you for giving attention to this newsletter and our messaging. These passing days are dangerous and troubling on so many, many fronts.

Our newsletters try to give you some idea of the spiritual warfare that we are facing. It often seems we are only scratching the surface. But at least we are scratching the surface! We are doing what we believe God wants us to do.

The fight for America's freedom and for our constitution is up for grabs. We are aggressively targeted by enemies within and without and, as Abraham Lincoln said long ago, "If our nation, is lost, it won't be because of enemies without but because of enemies within."

Perhaps the most significant thing that I will say all year long is what I have written on page 1 of this newsletter and reminded us of on page 2!

Update on Lisa:

Thank you for your prayers regarding Lisa's surgery to replace her kidney. Now, we invite you to join us in praising God!

The surgery went well, both for Lisa and the donor. It is still very early in the recovery and healing process. Healing is long, trying and tiring. Please keep them very much in your prayers.

Financial update:

Many of our readers have already received our appeal letter. Just a reminder, as we step into this new year, please give prayerful consideration to how our Lord would move you to stand with us and share with us. By God's grace we will continue to work faithfully, speaking into the issues at hand and pointing to Christ, the true Ruler. We expect 2024 to be fraught with increasing tensions and hardships – both in standing as a ministry and financially. Be sure to shore yourselves up spiritually, even as we will also be doing. That God may be glorified!

Watch Where the Camera is Pointing

By Chris Johnson



As war grinds on in Ukraine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict blazes afresh, another war is taking place on United States' soil. Rather than bullets and bombs, the weapons of this conflict are headlines, hot takes, and heart-rending stories. Proverbs 18:17 says, *"The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him,"* but Proverbs doesn't drive web traffic or post engagement, and they certainly don't send money.

With America's reputation as the "leader of the free world," less prosperous nations have realized something which many Americans have not yet: American compassion is a powerful weapon. When trouble brews in our allies' homelands, one of the first tactical maneuvers is for their leaders to book very public meetings with US officials and media appearances on friendly talk shows, then with the support of their cable-watching constituents, Congress gets out the checkbook.

Meanwhile, their enemies run subversion campaigns on social media and on lesser-known, sympathetic news sites and channels. These are running the same play; if there's not a consensus among American voters on who to support in a conflict, American politicians are much less likely to vote to give their enemies money.

This is seen most frequently by Ukrainian Prime Minister and former actor, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who on occasion, flies over to ask for support in pushing back their Russian aggressors. Never clean shaven, always dressed as if he just emerged from a bunker in combat boots and a crew neck sweatshirt, but always with a fresh haircut, this head of state is often seen with movie stars and celebrities, keeping his cause in front of the camera and raising awareness of the conflict.

This is not to comment on US' support of

any side in any conflict, simply to observe how the game is played.

Each news agency with their own ideological bias diverts their audience's attention away from those events which detract from their goals, while focusing their attention on those events which prove their point. The trick becomes simpler as their audiences self-select to consume those sources which confirm their own biases and the audiences harden as detractors are painted as either evil or stupid.

And this is by no means limited to international news. The long-range compassion "arms race" has a close quarters parallel back home: guilt. This was the weapon used by Black Lives Matter and by those pushing the Covid shot; it's used by legacy media whenever they bring out the "racist" or "white supremacy" labels. Do you remember when there was concern that Covid was a biological attack by China? The news media's response was: "that's racism." Guilt is the first tactic to be used when discussing the immigration crisis, or LGBTQ, or abortion "rights." *How could you, a thriving citizen of the most prosperous country in the world, deny happiness or prosperity to this poor, unfortunate [fill-in-the-blank]?*

As we look ahead to the presidential election, you can already see how it's going to play out. If Donald Trump can be convicted of anything at all, his supporters will be guilty of supporting a convict. Conservatives are already labeled 'guilty of treason' just for asking questions about election integrity. Once you've explained your reasoning, you'll simply be guilty of 'hate.'

So, how do we as Christians handle this emotional manipulation when we are commanded to have compassion and we know we are truly guilty of so much ourselves?

When we see another nation in need and the media takes up their cause showing footage which tugs at the heartstrings, featuring witnesses or family members affected by atrocities or natural disasters, it is a good impulse to want to help them. And so when the bill is introduced to send tens of millions of dollars in a relief package, kind-hearted Americans want to cheer. But this is where the principle in Proverbs 18:17, above, comes

in. We're affected when we hear a sad story and want to help, so we never ask "where is this money coming from?" or "what would that money be used for?"

Inevitably of course, with government spending, the answers are, "it's our neighbors' money," and "it was supposed to have gone to help our neighbors." The media never shows footage of the poorest counties in America. Why? Because they're white, and don't fit their narrative of victimhood. When was the last time you heard about East Palestine for example - not the one in the Middle East, the one in Ohio? Have you ever? Do you think that's because the environmental disaster just went away? We have disasters here to deal with, yet our increasingly valueless dollars are far more often flown overseas, while local disasters get little response.

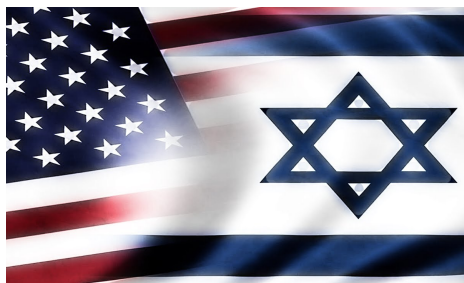
And much the same goes for the feelings of guilt ginned up by the media to excuse every failing policy which makes America a less pleasant and more dangerous place to live. When we allow unchecked immigration, we make our neighbors less safe. When we allow abortions to mothers' who don't feel they can handle the responsibility of a child, we allow them to place that bloodguilt on themselves *and* take an innocent life. When "compassion" requires us to let a prepubescent child permanently disfigure themselves as they try to be their true "self," we are strapping them with a life of confusion and regret. We find, when we stop allowing our media and entertainment to do our thinking for us, that this "compassion" is not compassion at all.

The world the media shows us is one where everyone is a victim and it's Americans' responsibility, if not their obligation, to make it right. But just because the camera is pointed in a certain direction, does not mean that's the direction our tax dollars or our social energy needs to go.

As we head into 2024, as we've written elsewhere in these pages, let God's Word guide our compassion and our love, not the media, and may we live in a way that shows our gratitude to God for overcoming those things we are truly guilty of.

The Holy One of Israel

By Steve Huston



One can hardly discuss with honesty and clarity the happenings of contemporary or Biblical Israel without 1. Recognizing the pogroms which are part and parcel of her entire existence and, even with these continual attempts to wipe out the Jews, 2. Due to Israel's continued existence, no one can objectively deny that what the psalmist declared in the 121st chapter is true: "*Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*" It is spiritual warfare and the Holy One of Israel – this covenant-keeping God – does allow His people to endure extreme persecution for His own purposes of grace to both Jew and Gentile, but, by His sovereign hand, never extinction. His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will not allow this – regardless of how things look.

Since the terrorist group Hamas launched its unprovoked, surprise attack on Israel (10/7/2023), brutally murdering 1,200 civilians, raping women, beheading babies, and carrying off more than 200 hostages, all the world has had their eyes on the little nation of Israel and, oddly enough, emotions are running on steroids, either for or against God's chosen people. College campuses, both students and professors, are rife with opposition to Israel, blaming them for the attack, and even calling for "Holocaust 2.0." The anti-Israel protest crowds aren't calling for a two-state solution where Palestinians and Jews live in harmony with one another; they're calling for a "final solution," one that is completely free of Jews. Their dream is for the land of Israel to become an Islamic state.

What of the western world? What of Israel's allies, particularly the United States? On one hand the Biden administration stands in support with Israel while with the other hand hamstringing our greatest ally. "*Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said on Dec.*

18 that he had urged his Israeli counterparts to limit their military operations in the Gaza Strip and start taking a 'more surgical' approach when striking the Hamas terrorist group. The U.S. secretary of defense arrived in Israel on Dec. 18 and met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant to discuss the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict. At a press conference, Mr. Austin said he shared advice with the Israeli side about preventing the current conflict from expanding beyond the Gaza Strip and transitioning to a lower intensity of operations within the Gaza Strip." (Epoch Times 12/19) Add to this the years of practice that the U.N. has had in "voting routine resolutions of condemnation against Israel, long before the current land war in Gaza, (The Federalist 12/18)," and one wonders, from an international viewpoint, if Israel stands a chance.

With suspected existence of Hamas cells scattered throughout Europe and the US and reports of the same, who can doubt that the leaders of these countries would like to see Israel defeat and destroy this enemy. At the same time, there are large factions within these western populations who are Marxist influenced and sympathize with the Palestinians. There is no denying that there are innocent Palestinian civilians who deserve both our sympathy and protection. Yet, it is Hamas who is to blame, not Israel. It is Hamas who continue to "*use Palestinians as human shields to protect its network of underground tunnels and its above-ground facilities, often hidden inside schools, mosques, and hospitals.*"

The Federalist points out that "*Extending legal protections to Hamas only multiplies its incentive to continue violating the basic principles of humane combat.*" Ending with this common-sense truth: "*Harm to Palestinians is tragic, but it is a tragedy authored by Hamas in violation of the civilized rules of war. Leaving Hamas in power may open the door to greater tragedies – and not only in Gaza.*"

Now, add to all the above "the brewing Lebanon deal" that the Center for Security Policy exposes, calling it "an offer Israel cannot but refuse," leaving any sane mind to think that Netanyahu must be wondering

if the US is really an ally or just paying lip service. Under this proposed plan by the US and France, "*Hizballah is rewarded – and its resistance validated and continued existence as an armed militia legitimized – by a full Israeli withdrawal*" in several areas and "*other disputed parcels.*" This deal "*must be understood in effect as part of a larger effort to appease Iran on substance and strategy while giving Israel hollow tactical scraps.*"

Recognizing that we hear lots of talk, it would behoove us to keep in mind the words of Al Mohler from his *The Briefing* (12/18): "*We really don't know what's being said, for instance, in private between the American and the Israeli military, between the American president and the Israeli Prime Minister. What we know is what both sides, at least to some extent, want us to know.*"

With that in mind, I'll redirect our thoughts to that which we can know without a doubt. We may not know how long it will take or exactly how it will unfold – **BUT** – once it is unfolded, we will have seen Satan's fury unleashed and all the powers of Hell come against God's people and specifically Jerusalem. All may seem lost but the answer given in Psalm 2 to the question: "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?" will be established forever. Israel's long-awaited king, KING JESUS, will destroy the forces of evil and stand victoriously on holy Zion! Before that time, will you take heed to the warning given in that same psalm? Will you "Kiss the Son" (love Him with all that you are)? Regardless of earthly situations – by God's grace and power – stand boldly and walk faithfully, trusting in God's perfect timing and submitting to His perfect will.

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