
PAGES OF EMPOWERMENT

VOLUME 5:
INTIMIDATION DEFEATED
PART TWO

David McCracken

Pages of Empowerment

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MORE INFORMATION

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OUR VISION FOR PAGES OF EMPOWERMENT

- To see the local church strengthened and its commission to reach this world accelerated.
- To see this accomplished by the empowering of the individual members of that local church to become all that God has called them to be.
- To see the wounded restored, the despondent encouraged, the apathetic challenged, and those already valiant empowered to go to greater heights.
- To see every believer walking in intimacy with the King and daily reaching out to embrace the destiny that He has for them.
- To see the church make the transition from being a sheepfold into an army barracks. Not to neglect the shepherding of God's people but to have, at all times, the clear objective of that shepherding: the raising up of an army of faith-filled warriors to do the work of the kingdom.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

- As an individual devotional, reading one chapter at a time.
- As a group devotional, using the questions supplied as a basis for discussion.
- As a small book, read in one sitting, as a point of inspiration and empowerment.

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INTRODUCTION

For those of you that have already taken the journey with us, we go on now to complete the project undertaken in Volume Four.

For those of you joining us for the first time, let me explain. Due to the importance and scope of this subject, I have had to deal with it in two volumes, rather than our normal format of one subject per volume. I suggest that you read Volume Four to complete the picture that we will now share in this edition.

The dictionary definition of “Intimidate” is: “to frighten, to compel or deter by threat”. Intimidation is that which seeks to paralyse our faith, obedience and initiatives, and leave us hesitant and unproductive.

Since releasing Volume Four it has been strongly confirmed that Intimidation is a foe that the majority of Christians have to deal with in one form or another. It is, therefore, absolutely critical that we see its power broken and God’s people living free from its influence.

As with all our series, I urge you to begin by praying and asking the Holy Spirit to talk to you personally and directly. He loves you and it is His desire that you walk in total freedom, knowing an ever- increasing new authority in your lives.

Let us now continue the journey together.

CHAPTER ONE: OUR ULTIMATE WEAPON

HE BROUGHT US FORTH
BY THE WORD OF TRUTH.

JAMES 1:17-18

I will open this first chapter with some inspirational thoughts that I wrote just this morning when thinking on this subject. Although written as a poem (something I love to do), the truth is there: that warriors that conquer intimidation are not comic book superheroes, but ordinary Christian people who know who they really are in Christ.

It is only the bold of heart
Who, whilst in the battle's roar,
Keep a quiet confidence
That allows their hearts to soar.

It is not that they are foolish
Nor ignorant of Satan's ways;
It's that they have a secret,
A truth that secures their days.

They know that He who conquers all
Is both their source and shield;
With His abiding presence,
To fear they will not yield.

Intimidation will raise his voice
And shout his taunts and lies
But in His strength they're victors
No matter how evil tries.

Truth is their triumph,
His word their two-edged sword;
Their confidence is empowered
Against the Devil's horde.

It is not that they are giants
Nor warriors beyond our reach;
They simply believe their authority
In what the scriptures teach.

You too can join their ranks,
Intimidation to defeat,
As you arise in new-found faith,
With truth, each dawn to greet.

Intimidation is one of Satan's well-kept secrets. So many of God's finest warriors still sit at times and wonder why it is that certain endeavours were never possessed whilst others were. What made the difference, if the Lord commissioned them all?

As explained in Volume 4, many of those who eventually turn back from their God-given pursuit of the prize, start out in boldness and confidence. Their initial commitment to the cause is neither faint-hearted nor superficial. They have heard His voice clearly and they have set their course accordingly.

Yet, even with all of that, there comes a moment when their adversary seizes upon that which is a point of vulnerability in their life and uses it against them. He takes those unenlightened areas of either unresolved conflict or misguided perceptions and slips a blow beneath their guard. Subtly but effectively, he magnifies their humanity and the humanity of others, and blurs the truth of what it is that God has now made them to be.

Satan has always been the father of lies and deception is his greatest weapon. The tragedy is that he is often so effective. The lie can be so persuasive and the facts so powerfully presented.

However, what we must now and always remember is that whenever the "facts" that are presented conflict or seek to deny the commission that God has clearly given us, we must treat them with the contempt that they deserve. Not an irresponsible and superficial flamboyance, but a confident holding of the course that is born out of knowing the truth of what God has told us to do.

The challenge is in the discerning of these attacks when they come. How do we recognise them? If we learn to recognise them upon their arrival and deal with them decisively, they will most certainly lose their power to affect us.

John 8:32

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Intimidation can only prevail in the absence of truth. Truth exposes who he is and the falsehood of his suggestions. Truth is our ultimate weapon and the bible is our source of that truth. Facts are not necessarily the truth (see Volume 1). Facts are those human evidences that indicate a thing is so, but truth is the declared Word of God that is not subject to those facts.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

Discuss: “isolation breeds error”. In order to isolate a person from the truth, deception must first isolate them from the meaningful input of those who are men and women of truth.

Discuss the role the following should play in discovering the truth about ourselves: The bible, family members, church leaders, personal mentors, waiting on God in prayer with an open heart. How should these balance each other and what qualifications should be placed upon human influence upon us.

Truth will always empower us to love God more, inspire us to love people more and, consequently, have the effect of commissioning us for Christian service. Is this the effect that your relationships have upon you?

Discuss the difference between the necessity of listening to godly counsel and being a dumping ground for everyone’s personal opinion. To whom should we listen?

CHAPTER TWO: ON DEATH ROW

BUT GOD HAS CHOSEN THE
FOOLISH THINGS OF THE WORLD
TO PUT TO SHAME THE WISE, AND
GOD HAS CHOSEN THE WEAK THINGS
OF THE WORLD TO PUT TO SHAME
THE THINGS WHICH ARE MIGHTY.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:27

CHAPTER TWO: ON DEATH ROW

Margaret and I some years ago had made a visit to Nigeria to minister in one of the world's greatest ministry training colleges in Benin City.

Whilst there, we were invited to visit the local prison by the local Bible College principal. As we walked into that facility, we were struck with the harshness of the conditions and the hopelessness that they would have generated. Not like a four star Australian prison but something more in keeping with the prisons of the Apostle Paul's day. A lack of food, sanitation and allowance for human dignity made it the most despairing of places.

Nothing could have prepared us for what we then saw and heard.

In each dirty, over-crowded, damp concrete cell, we found prisoners with happy faces. When they learnt that we were visiting Christian ministers, they burst out in clapping and then proceeded to sing gospel choruses. Their victory and celebration was such that no interpretation was necessary. It was amazing!

Then they led us into death row. Here we found the most radiant of all! With a beaming smile and a joy that lit up those dark surroundings with hope, one inmate in particular stood out. I had to ask: "why is he even more joyful than the others?"

"Oh, he is about to be executed!" was the reply. His radiance was the result of his conviction that he was going to meet King Jesus personally earlier than any of the others. He was like a child waiting for Christmas morning!

I then found out how this phenomenon had happened.

Some years previous, a criminal had been flung into this hole of misery for a serious crime. After a life of poverty and disease, common to so many, he now faced the ultimate loneliness of despair for whatever was left of his life under such conditions.

Then came a visit from someone who shared the gospel with him. He accepted the Lord's forgiveness and was gloriously changed!

He immediately began to share Christ with the inmates and, one by one, led them to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

CHAPTER TWO: WHO ARE THE FEARFUL

Lives were transformed and anger and hate were conquered by love and grace. The entire atmosphere of the prison began to change as more and more experienced a genuine work of the Holy Spirit. The prison authorities were informed and they came from the government to see for themselves.

It made economic sense: less unrest meant fewer guards, which meant less cost in running the prison. They released that prisoner from his jail on the condition that he accepted the position of prison chaplain! The rest is history. He went on to establish revival in prison after prison across that nation.

Why the story?

Because his story exposes one of intimidation's most effective lies: that one's achievements in life have to be limited to one's background, heritage, education or upbringing. Intimidation tells us that the inadequate nature of such life-shaping ingredients of our past, will forever dictate the level of effectiveness we will reach.

But it is not so!

Our friend in that Nigerian prison tells us that a man without education or any material substance; a man without parental love and knowing only hurt and rejection; a man brutalised by life and scorned by all that knew him; could rise out of those ashes into newness of life and accomplish awesome things for the kingdom.

Such is the re-creative power of God's love and forgiveness. His redemptive grace knows neither limitations nor restraints other than that which we place upon it by our inability to receive it. There had to be that moment that he dared to believe, in the face of overwhelming facts to the contra, that he could be a fruitful instrument in the hand of an awesome God.

He dared to believe the truth that you and I must also embrace in 2 Cor 5:17-18. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

CHAPTER TWO: **WHO ARE THE FEARFUL**

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

Prisons are places of restriction, confinement, and contradiction. What are some of today's circumstances that would try to place us there?

Are there ways that we can prevent this taking place?

Think of Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16:23-24) and find keys from their story, and the one that I have told you, that will help open the prison door of spiritual restriction to those who find themselves in that state.

Discuss the unqualified nature of our Father's grace towards us when we genuinely reach out to Him. What would be a good human example of such grace?

When comparing your own life with that of those Nigerian prisoners, list the things that you should now be thanking God for. Consider how much potential you really have to use your life wonderfully in God's service.

CHAPTER THREE: NEW POTENTIAL

MY SPEECH AND MY PREACHING
WERE NOT WITH PERSUASIVE
WORDS OF HUMAN WISDOM,
BUT IN DEMONSTRATION OF
THE SPIRIT AND OF POWER.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:4

CHAPTER THREE: NEW POTENTIAL

“New creations.” What an incredible thing that really is. The very word used in 1 Corinthians 5:17 “a new creation” tells us so much. It is the Greek word that means “original formation” as in a building or a creation of that which had not previously existed.

Awesome! God doesn’t just patch us up a little and then grant us sufficient grace to muddle through life, but offers us an entirely new life altogether. He offers us new potential, new hopes, new capacities, new levels of achievement, new courage and faith. He even offers us the potential to be involved in positions for which we have no human qualifications whatsoever!

Consider two of the new testament's greatest apostles: Paul and Peter. What a contrast they were.

Paul was a man of great education and intellectual pursuits. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, one skilled in the public arena and well versed in the ways of higher learning. Today, he would have enough degrees to fill two business cards!

Now consider Peter. He was a lowly fisherman without education or any of the training or background enjoyed by Paul. His life was one of hard, physical existence where life’s success was measured in how well you could sail a boat and cast a net. His leadership training was zero, his study and learning the same. His understanding of how to present himself or speak in public was non-existent.

Yet God used them equally. They both became apostles of great faith and influence.

The reality of Peter’s life is a great source of hope for all those who have believed intimidation’s lie that one’s natural background and attributes has to determine one’s future usefulness in God’s service.

It is also a great declaration of God’s persevering grace with a man that had been ruled by impetuous negative passions and a notable lack of personal discipline. What a transformation!

The truth is that natural things cannot limit us from a supernatural task.

CHAPTER THREE: **NEW POTENTIAL**

In this era of a thirst for knowledge, we have to be particularly vigilant that such a quest does not replace our reliance on the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit to do the works of Jesus through us.

Knowledge itself is not our foe (I stress that!). Many of those whose calling is more that of a Paul than a Peter will see their degrees put to good use if the Lord has authorised their pursuit. But let us not forget that the majority of revivals have been brought through unlearned men and women who simply had a thirst for God and a burden for their generation. The greater the degree of our desperate need for the Holy Spirit, the more He is able to flow through us freely.

Today, by God's grace, I teach leaders, many who have much greater knowledge and more numerous degrees than myself. When it is all said and done what we need to be hearing is the heartbeat of God revealed. It is the Spirit that brings us life.

I am mindful of scriptures like the following:

1 Corinthians 2:3-5

"I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

1 Corinthians 1:27-29

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen.

So, next time intimidation comes to limit you by his lying suggestions, remind him of the above and that such scriptures loudly declare that you are uniquely and wonderfully qualified to do all that God now calls you to do.

And if still daunted by the task and your qualifications for it, remember: amateurs built the ark. Professionals built the titanic!

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

What a wonderful thing diversity really is! Everything God has created declares His love for variety. Discuss some illustrations from life and nature that are illustrations of God's love for diversity.

Think of some leaders whose lives truly inspire you. Discuss the diversity of their callings and their background qualifications for what God eventually made them to be.

As God's ability to transform a person's life and make them fruitful is limitless, why is it that so many do not fulfil the calling that God has placed upon their lives?

To pursue knowledge at the expense of spirituality is to place one's confidence in human endeavour. To ignore God's commands for us to be diligent and to pursue excellence and understanding is negligence to our calling. Discuss the balance in this.

CHAPTER FOUR: FALSE HUMILITY

OUR SOUL HAS ESCAPED AS A BIRD
FROM THE SNARE OF THE
FOWLERS; THE SNARE IS BROKEN,
AND WE HAVE ESCAPED.

PSALM 124:7

CHAPTER FOUR: FALSE HUMILITY

What an amazing encounter!

It was one of those occasions when God virtually thundered into my spirit with the words of Jeremiah 1:5-9.

“...I ordained you a prophet to the nations.
...Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’
For you shall go to all to whom I send you...
...Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.”

I was thrilled at that which God had said to me. Margaret and I had started pastoring at the age of 25 and this was some three or four years later. For some years, the Lord had used me in prophesy and it had been confirmed by my oversight at the time. But this was different. This was a calling, not to prophesy, but to be a prophet.

In Joseph-like enthusiasm I went to tell my senior brethren of that which God had said. Their response was devastating! One awe-some man of God, that we all esteemed immensely, told me that it was nothing more than the rising up of ugly pride and arrogance of spirit! He called Margaret aside and begged her to make sure I never again would believe such illusions of grandeur.

I went home that day with his words ringing in my heart. When finally I was alone, I broke and wept in my repentance. How could I have thought such arrogant thoughts? I eventually arose and determined that never again would I be guilty of such a thing.

Over the following five years God would again and again try to draw my attention to that which was His calling upon my life. And, again and again, I would hit my knees in repentance at the return of those “prideful thoughts”.

During this time, I was acutely aware of the fact that my humility had to be re-established in the eyes of those I esteemed. So, whenever I would feel to contribute something from the Lord, I would preface it with a lengthy apologetic plea that no one would misunderstand and think it prideful.

CHAPTER FOUR: **FALSE HUMILITY**

Five years of second-guessing every time God would speak a commissioning word into my spirit; five years of having to prove that I was not proud of spirit; five years of not accepting as valid those times when God put prophetic initiatives into my spirit. These things became deeply etched into my DNA.

The rest of my ministerial life seemed to be well blessed of the Lord but the call to being a prophet was silenced.

My imprisonment was ended when I met a senior minister in USA that informed me of my true calling and God graciously confirmed it. Meanwhile, the churches in New Zealand had been progressively receiving the subject of the prophetic calling more positively and it was time for God to bring a fresh word of commissioning to me. Finally, I began to flow in that office in a more obedient manner.

However, the need to prove one's humility stayed with me. The apologetic preamble to sharing prophetic initiatives with other ministers continued. But the worst of it was that times of disobedience occurred where that which God put in my heart to do was never carried out. I was forever second-guessing my own motivation.

The power that I had given intimidation to use against me was huge. It crippled the development and release of the calling that God had for me.

Then came the time in Colorado Springs where I was meeting with other prophetic ministries. Intimidation was exposed and his hold over me broken. There was neither eyeball-rolling manifestations nor coughing into a bag, just the revelation to my spirit of the truth. Seeing it for the first time for what it really was completely destroyed its power. Truth will do that.

Intimidation depends upon deception. He needs you to first believe his lies and treat as valid his accusations and anxieties that he brings against you. The truth sets you free from all of that.

Please read again the chapter from Volume 4, 'That Critical Question'. If your motivation is uncomplicated and pure in its intention to serve God and is selfless in its desire to serve others, then settle the issue. Embrace your calling.

CHAPTER FOUR: **THE STING OF FAILURE**

True humility is neither reluctant nor disobedient. False humility is both. False humility hides behind the “I am just a worm” declaration and sees a denial of one’s call to significance as a noble virtue. It is not.

True humility is reflected in faith-filled obedience.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

Words are creative and have incredible power in people’s lives. Discuss times when the words of others have had great impact upon you, positively and negatively.

Do you see any existing limitations in your life that are the fruit of negative words in times past?

Those words have been like a grappling hook in your mind, which have allowed intimidation to access your thinking. It is now time to cast off the hooks and in so doing reject their influence. Have someone agree with you in prayer to that end.

You now need to fill that area of your mind with the truth. In consultation with spiritually mature people that know you well, establish the truth about those areas of your life and potential. Now write it down and declare it daily for a while. If in a discussion group, do it right now.

Thank God daily for the wonder of how He has made you and the privilege it is to be called to serve Him. As a group, have a time of prayer in which the sole objective is to thank the Lord and express gratitude for His desire to use your life effectively.

CHAPTER FIVE: TEARING APART THE LION

YOU SHALL TREAD UPON THE LION
AND THE COBRA. THE YOUNG LION
AND THE SERPENT YOU SHALL
TRAMPLE UNDER FOOT.

PSALM 91:13

CHAPTER FIVE: **TEARING APART THE LION**

It was a beautifully sunny day in Tasmania and Margaret and I were out walking during a few days break from our ministry schedule. The whole scene was so perfect, and I was enjoying it with the love of my life. Life was incredibly good.

But there was a growing cloud. Unbeknown to Margaret, I was battling an old foe, a persistent shadow that was prevailing increasingly.

After some years of freedom from angina, the pains in my chest had returned and were now consistent whenever I had to climb a hill or otherwise exert myself.

I shared how I was feeling with Margaret and her concerns were fuelled as day by day I found the condition growing worse.

This led to an angiogram and consultation with the heart specialist. His prognosis was not good. All of my major arteries and most of my subsidiary arteries were multiply blocked. He shared how angioplasty would probably kill me. He went on to say that a multiple bypass would be kept only as a last resort as it would be dangerous and my condition did not favour it. The question being: "What would we bypass from or to?"

He went on to inform Margaret and I that I was not to exert myself or to get under pressure. My lifestyle would have to become a lot more passive and non-challenging. I was not to lift a suitcase or get too excited. His voice became blurred, as all I could hear was my adversary declaring: "Take what is left of your miserably short little life and go sit in a rocking chair!"

Fortunately the Holy Spirit had clearly spoken to me as we drove into the car park. I can still hear His words: "Bind the power of the words you are about to hear!" We immediately complied and did exactly that. Otherwise it would have had a shattering effect.

However, upon reaching home and going into my study, the full weight of it hit me and intimidation's lying comments came like a flood: "You'll never be able to preach with real energy again", "You won't be able to travel now",

CHAPTER FIVE: TEARING APART THE LION

“Those dreams of yours are history now”, “You’ll have to rely on Margaret for even the basics, what a wimp of a man you will become”, “How is Margaret going to cope being a widow?”

I sunk to my knees and cried out to the Lord for a word. And, in His predictable faithfulness, He gave me one: “Samson!”

Samson! I didn’t even like the man!

But that voice was persistent and so I grabbed my bible in order to look for Judges. It immediately fell open to the exact passage that God wanted to show me and what happened in the next few minutes completely cancelled the power of intimidation’s accusing lies.

The passage that the bible fell open to was Judges 14:5.

Now to his surprise (utter shock!) a young lion came roaring against him (to devour him).

I told the Lord that that was exactly how I felt! He then directed me to read the next verse: And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand.

I don’t know how to explain it exactly but all I know is that in that moment I knew that God was in charge and that this thing could not kill me. God had a purpose in it and as I discovered that purpose it would destroy the enemies intentions against me at that time.

All anxiety went and a surge of excitement replaced it as I knew God wanted me to take authority over this hellish attack.

The principles that I have had to learn from that moment on have not only empowered my own life but have inspired literally thousands of others. What the devil sent as a weapon to destroy me became a triumph of God’s grace.

CHAPTER FIVE: **TEARING APART THE LION**

Now, some six years later (at the time of writing), I still have an acute sense of dependence upon the Lord's daily sustaining grace (and may it remain with me forever).

However, I am not sitting in a rocking chair and I am enjoying the most fruitful years of my entire life, travelling the world and ministering with divine health!

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

Doctors are our friends in this battle against sickness. I firmly believe in asking for and obeying their advice in the absence of a clear word from God to the contra. Discuss the balance between irresponsibly disregarding medical advice and walking "in faith".

Make a list of those who have significant physical challenges and yet have maintained a faith-filled heart and a lifestyle that honours God. What is it about them that communicates to you that they have not been intimidated by that physical condition.

Discuss the need to be sensitive to those who have just found out that they have a serious medical challenge. What is the balance between wanting to "take a faith stand" with them and the damage that can be done with superficial and insensitive remarks that show no identification with the very real trauma that person is going through?

CHAPTER SIX: UNRESOLVED CONFLICT

LET NOT THE SUN GO DOWN
ON YOUR WRATH.

EPHESIANS 4:26

CHAPTER SIX: UNRESOLVED CONFLICT

Each yawn-filled day was blissfully free of emotional or spiritual challenge. Contentment had a nice ring to it and it was if there really wasn't a care in the world.

Then that preacher came.

His words deeply stirred her heart and she knew a resurgence of desire to be used by God. Reaching her home, she denied the television its normal lordship and got aside to pray. Day after day, the desire increased until she found herself one day coming to a place of unconditional surrender.

Excitement surged through her as her heart began to fill with new vision and purpose. There were lands to be possessed and she was the one for the job! She crossed the line and gave her future into God's hands.

As she began to prayerfully make plans and form strategy, it appeared as if nothing could stop her entering this new day of fruitfulness.

Then came those thoughts.

Her memory began to stir and the pain of that day of injustice so long ago clouded through her mind once again. She was initially surprised at the degree of anger she felt but justified it with the thought that she had been the one wronged and the other party had never sought her forgiveness.

The following day, as she began to pray, the thoughts were there again. She endeavoured to push them aside but couldn't help thinking if anyone had brought that offending Christian to justice yet and demanded repentance. "Someone ought to make that person pay for all that havoc I have had to endure". "Sure, they are a Christian but the church should judge people like that, not just accept them."

The anger deepened.

The following day praying about the vision was pushed aside by the now highly persistent barrage of thoughts concerning her perceived injustice.

CHAPTER SIX: UNRESOLVED CONFLICT

“Gertrude” (not a real person) was experiencing one of intimidation’s favourite scenarios. He swept in for the kill, quickly fuelling her fire and filling her mind with a dozen good reasons why her anger was understandable. He reasoned “God had righteous indignation, so why shouldn’t you also experience it?”

Twenty years later she is now living in the isolation caused by her anger and bitterness. No longer any thoughts of serving God but rather a deep resentment towards Him for allowing such misery into her life.

What had happened?

Here was a heart that held unresolved conflict.

Whilst she was floating along in life, no threat to Satan’s kingdom, her adversary ensured that those painful memories were conveniently tucked away in storage. Tucked away but unresolved.

Then came her fresh spiritual awakening and Satan saw her potential against him. It was time to bring those memories back into play.

Friends, intimidation has a myriad of different methods. One of his most successful is unresolved conflict: the rekindling of resentment at a perceived wrong committed. So many have been taken out of the race that way.

You enter a vicious spiral of anger at the individual and self-anger at your own condition. You don’t like what you have become and yet there is that reluctance to let go of yesterday.

Your anger then brings with it an alienation from the Holy Spirit’s influence and leaves you vulnerable to intimidation’s ongoing voice: “with anger like this, you can never serve God”. “Look at what you have become!” In order to live with it, you further vilify the perceived offender. The spiral worsens.

We need to see that our own lack of forgiveness is as great a sin as that which we perceive as the wrong against us.

CHAPTER SIX: UNRESOLVED CONFLICT

Both are an ungodly denial of the Holy Spirit's lordship within us. Bitterness is doing its defiling work and you need to seek God's forgiveness and grant unconditional forgiveness to the perceived offender.

Friend, please listen to me. If you are to move forward and be that fruitful one that God has called you to be, you have to take your grievance to the cross and leave it there.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

You will have noticed that I have used the word "perceived" on several occasions in this chapter. The reason for that is that, when examined biblically, it is often found that the "injustice" was either a total misunderstanding or someone actually telling us a truth that we did not want to hear. Discuss times when you have seen this happen.

It has been said "attack is the best method of defence". It is also true in the negative. Discuss: "reaction is distraction, it swings the spotlight from the one being counselled to the one endeavouring to bring counsel to bear." In other words, in order to stifle one's confrontation of your own wrongdoing, you seek to intimidate them by your own accusation or attitude.

Intimidation needs a platform. Unresolved conflict gives that platform to him. That is why the scripture is clear "let not the sun go down on your wrath". (Ephesians 4:26) Discuss ways in which you can handle conflict in a godly manner without taking it into tomorrow.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SMALL PLACE BUT BIG GOD

THE LORD WILL WORK FOR US.
FOR NOTHING RESTRAINS
THE LORD FROM SAVING
BY MANY OR BY FEW.

1 SAMUEL 14:6

Many years ago, when I was starting out in the ministry as a young man, I had a wonderful experience of the greatness of the Lord, regardless of natural limitations.

I had heard of a pastor that had, some three or four years before, gone to a remote town to plant a local church. What had made it a discussion point was the smallness of the population in that “town” and its surrounding districts. The total of the whole area was only about 300 people!

The lack of population was due to it being a farming district, but also to the fact that much of the year it was freezing cold and an extremely harsh environment in which to live. We all thought it was kind of sad that a person with considerable potential would bury himself in such a place.

Some years went by and then came the telephone call. Here he was, asking me to come and to minister for him on a Sunday. Immediately I had this mental picture of 3 or 4 frozen people sitting around a fire, desperately trying to keep warm while I spoke to them through chattering teeth! The word “NO” was quickly coming from my mind to my lips!

But then the Holy Spirit broke through and said “Do it!” So, instead, the words came out “yes, I would love to come and minister for you”. What was I saying?! His next words were almost comical “Are you prepared for a heavy preaching schedule on the Sunday?” I thought “How heavy can it be, ministering to half a dozen people around a fire?” So, I assured him that he could arrange any schedule he wished to and that would be fine.

The day came and so, on the night before, I flew down to the nearest town that had an airport. We then travelled in the dark for some considerable time and I finally got to bed with his instruction that we “would have to get an early start in the morning”.

In the morning, we travelled a few minutes into “town” (a handful of buildings) and, to my amazement, drew up in front of a beautiful new church building! Inside I found over 200 people singing and worshipping with great enthusiasm. I couldn’t believe my eyes! (In those days, we had no mega churches and you were considered doing well if you had over 70 people.)

At the close of the message, I started to pray for people only to be stopped by the pastor, who said, “you don’t have time for that, grab your bible and let’s go!” Go! Go where?

As we went through a door to the back car park of the church, my eyeballs nearly popped out. It was a helicopter! We launched, and this pastor-come-pilot flew me to another desolate destination where I found another church of 70-80 people. At the close of that service, the same thing happened and we were off again to yet another destination and another 30-40 people. (It is now so long ago, the exact numbers and details are hazy and I am legendary for my lack of memory. However, the essence of this story is absolutely true!)

It was an awesome example of a man that had heard clearly from God and had not been intimidated by the facts and the environment to which God had sent him.

In 1 Samuel 14 we have another story of two men who chose not to allow the size of the task to intimidate them.

Israel was in defeat and had adopted a survival attitude due to the Philistine raiders that attacked them constantly. Only two men, out of all Israel, broke the power of intimidation and decided to do the unthinkable: they decided to attack the entire Philistine army by themselves!

Jonathon and his armour-bearer were just two men against thousands of well-armed troops. It all looked so impossible. But Jonathon was a man of faith and knew that when obeying the will of God, the human statistics were irrelevant. Jonathon was not ignoring the reality of the challenge but was not over-awed by it either. He was over-awed by His God, who was greater than that challenge.

Friends, we have to come to a place of simplicity of trust in which we do not allow the human realities to intimidate us from obeying a clear word from God. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to give us a fresh revelation of the greatness of the God we serve and the defeated nature of our opposition.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

Think of examples similar to the one that I have shared where people's accomplishments have been extraordinary in the light of the apparent potential when they first obeyed their commission. Discuss what are the common elements that can instruct us in our own desire to become men and women of faith and obedience.

Discuss the word "all" in Matthew 19:26.

With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

Biblically, what are the qualifications to this word?

Discuss these statements:

"The greater the impossibility, the greater the opportunity to experience God's miraculous."

"If God wants us to experience the miraculous, He must place us into situations that demand it."

Always remember that God is our Father. He may stretch us and challenge us to growth in faith, but He will never betray the trust we place in Him as we obey His clear commands.

CHAPTER EIGHT: ACCUSATION DEFEATED

FOR THE ACCUSER OF
OUR BRETHREN, WHO ACCUSED
THEM BEFORE OUR GOD DAY
AND NIGHT, HAS BEEN
CAST DOWN!

REVELATION 12:10

CHAPTER SEVEN: ACCUSATION DEFEATED

As the accuser of the brethren, he hurls his lies and accusations as thoughts to our minds.

“What if I should fail?”

“Maybe I should allow some manoeuvring room just in case.”

“We cannot afford to risk disappointment, so let us keep the goals more general.”

“What if God doesn’t come through, I’m going to look stupid.”

“The lower the expectation, the lower the potential for failure.”

“It’s better to set lower goals and over-achieve.”

That’s a subtle one!

Lying accusations and suggestions from the father of lies, sent to intimidate you from making strong decisive faith goals! Satan knows the power of unqualified faith and he desperately doesn’t want you to step into that realm as he knows that it has the potential to release God’s miraculous. He knows only too well Matthew 17:20

“If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed... Nothing shall be impossible to you...”

Contrast that scripture with James 1:5-8.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

So, not all of God’s promises are telling us what He will do for us. This one promises that such an individual will not receive from the Lord. Why? What does it really mean to be “double-minded”?

I believe that the simple essence of it is that we end up qualifying what God simply said, “Do!” We qualify it with some good logic and reason because we have been intimidated from making it decisive, definite and an act of simple faith.

Let me tell you of a time in Nehemiah’s life (a prophet in the old testament) when intimidation came knocking on his door. We find the story in Nehemiah 2:17-20 and it goes like this.

God's city, Jerusalem lay desolate and its once proud walls were in ruins. Nehemiah is grieving over that which he sees as a reproach upon God and His people. He speaks to the King of Babylon (the nation that had taken God's people captive) and, in gaining his favour, received permission to go and rebuild the walls of his beloved city. He then rallies some help and the work begins.

Then his enemies hear about it. Here is their response: When Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?" i.e. "The King hasn't told you to do this... This isn't an act of obedience, this is an act of your own self-will. Wait until the King hears what you are really up to!" Laughing, scoffing, ridiculing, intimidating!

These same ones then devised a plan to infiltrate God's people and strike them with the sword, causing the work to cease. Intimidation had most certainly arrived!

But Nehemiah had an answer. He had the truth! He was secure in the knowledge of that truth and who it was that had commissioned him. This is how he answered: "So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem." Nehemiah 2:20.

Intimidation (accusation) was defeated with the authority of a man who knew the truth. And, because God revealed the enemy's plans to Nehemiah, he caused the people to go on to a war footing as well as a work footing, resulting in total success and a defeat of Satan's intentions.

If we are ever to successfully confront and defeat this prince power against the church, we must do so with the one weapon he is powerless against: the truth! Even the son of God, Jesus, had to use the same weapon against the same adversary. When Satan came to intimidate Him in the wilderness temptations, Jesus wielded that sword again and again. "It is written!", "It is written!", "It is written!" He knew that the highest court of appeal, the one indisputable authority that every knee must bow to, is the word of God declared from a heart of faith.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

What are some personal insights you received from the story of Nehemiah's response to his enemies? How are those insights relevant to you on a daily basis?

Discuss how the persuasiveness of circumstances and the voices of others can undermine your decision to obey a simple but definite word from God.

Discuss illustrations from life that demonstrate a "double-mindedness" of thinking. How can we avoid this?

"Let him ask in faith". The word faith is the Greek word for "a strong conviction that a thing is so". Discuss how one must learn to settle their conviction of what God has told them to do in order not to be vulnerable to hearing the devil's persuasive alternatives.

Discuss ways in which one can effectively store up a knowledge of key scripture verses so as to have them ready to quote as an "It is written!" What things have helped you memorise such verses? How can you improve that knowledge in the future?

CHAPTER NINE: WE SHALL DO VALIANTLY

YOUR PEOPLE SHALL BE
WILLING VOLUNTEERS
IN THE DAY OF YOUR POWER!

PSALM 110:3

Consider with me Psalm 108:13.

Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our enemies.

There are three distinct statements here that indicate exactly how God meant it to work.

Firstly we have the statement: “Through God”.

The true partner with God understands that the empowerment for successful living and achievement in life comes from only one source: “through God”!

Empowerment for successful living does not come from finances: they are fragile and can fail. It does not come from degrees: they are limited to man’s own achievement. It does not come from people: their influence is limited and can vary. Our empowerment comes from the Lord.

To be men and women of true faith, we must see our total and absolute dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit. We are called to live a life supernaturally empowered and directed. Otherwise, we slide into dead formalism, powerless religion, and the utter frustration of mere human endeavour.

We have to come back to being a people who have a hunger to have intimacy with God’s heart and a daily receiving from His grace via the Holy Spirit’s activity in our lives.

Our partnership with God is not one among equals: it is between an omnipotent God of all power and His created servants who, when walking in obedience to Him, are able to draw from His miraculous. A miraculous that now resides within them in the person of the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit’s grace, we have absolutely zero potential of obeying God’s ultimate intention for our lives.

Now we come to consider the second of the three statements in Psalm 108:13. We shall do valiantly.

This is our co-operation with the purposes of God.

In order to obey Him, we must walk as men and women of initiative, boldness, courage, faith and action. Obedience and action are inseparable: obedience is not a mental assent, but a response that brings into being the objective God has requested. It is an attitude of ownership of that which God has given us to do. “We shall do valiantly”.

But how is it that we are to “do valiantly”?

Prayer and spiritual warfare is the secret of our power and dominion. It is in the spiritual realm that we must do valiantly if we are to ever to see the breakthroughs that we so desperately need in our families, businesses, churches and nation.

But dynamic, Holy Ghost prayer and diligent hard work are not two opposites. They work together as we saw in the story of Nehemiah: with one hand they worked and with the other they held their sword, ready for battle. Today, the tragic lack of souls being won, the lack of dedicated cell leaders, the failed opportunities of Christian business endeavours, the lack of Christian influence in school boards and the community in general, all speak to us of a lack of willingness to take responsibility and get involved in good old-fashioned hard work.

We are not to be of one extreme or the other; true dependence upon the Holy Ghost and intimacy with the Father will always result in obedience and paying the price to be a diligent and hard-working steward.

Now the third statement in that verse: “It is He who shall tread down our enemies.” Here is the supernatural, God factor; the miraculous breakthrough that He alone can bring, the power of God’s intervention, doing what no man could ever do.

Oh! How God wants to be seen for who He really is in the church of the western world! He is a miracle-working supernatural God that so desires to express that through your life and mine. Again and again, over the many decades I have seen the most humanly impossible things taking place, as He got involved.

With finances, health, relationships, projects, His supernatural has flowed and accomplished that which no man could do. Often out of sheer grace as a Father, but most often in a response to the honouring of a biblical principle or an act of obedience.

It is my prayer for you that intimidation will no longer hold you back from coming “boldly before His throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16) to be empowered for His service. The potential of His supernatural power in partnership with your diligent obedience really is quite awesome. I am thrilled for you as you now increasingly discover that!

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

What are some of the ways that we can better cultivate an awareness of the Holy Spirit’s miraculous grace, available within us? Do you see Him as a person with whom you can communicate?

It is so easy to fall into independence from the Holy Spirit. What are some of the activities of life into which the majority of Christians fail to invite His help? Discuss how the outcome of these activities would be changed if His involvement were greater.

Looking back on your own life, can you see opportunities lost due to an over-emphasis on “God will do it”? What part did insecurity (one of intimidation’s devices) play in restricting your obedience and initiatives? How do you see you would handle it differently in the future?

Discuss Psalm 110:3.

“Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power.”

What areas of change are necessary for you and I to become God-empowered ones, successfully living out our partnership with God?

Share some stories together of how God came through miraculously for you or a friend, in clear response to your acts own acts of obedience.

One more time I would remind you of our closing statement in each volume...

THE BATTLE IS HIS

What an amazing, faithful God we serve.

**Just to think that He not only is powerfully able to bring
His miraculous interventions on our behalf, but that He wants to!**

**It is my prayer for you that you will increasingly know the
wonderful work of the Holy Spirit leading you, guiding you,
and empowering you.**

**He has promised to do so as we walk in simple obedience
to the will of God in our lives.**

You have been called to partnership with the Creator of the Universe.

**No wonder intimidation tries so hard to keep you from
understanding that.**

**It fills him with terror! But he is defeated and you are
victorious as you walk in the truth.**

May the Lord richly bless you and those you love.

**Together in His service,
David.**

DAVID McCRACKEN MINISTRIES

For more details on training or resources, please visit our website:

www.davidmccracken.org

