

INCARNATIONAL INFILTRATION

by Rev. C. R. Biggs

During wartime, one strategy is to infiltrate, to get inside the enemy's gates, so that the opposition can be defeated from within his own territory. This is exactly what our God, the Divine Warrior does in his gospel warfare against Satan the deceiver and enemy of our souls.

When we think of Paul's letter to the Philippian Christians, we rightly think of such things as rejoicing in Christ and how we ought to live our lives in Him. Additionally, we should also notice the letter's focus in chapter one on how the gospel infiltrates the enemy's territory. Before we read our passage from Philippians 1, let us be reminded that Paul was a prisoner in Caesar's dungeon in his household, the Praetorium in Rome. He is in chains and possibly facing death soon. He is writing the letter of rejoicing in Christ to Christians who live in the Roman Colony of Philippi, a retirement community for former faithful Roman officers and soldiers. This is important to keep in mind.

Paul takes up his pen to encourage the Philippian Christians to know their union with Christ and with each other (2:1-5); to be reminded that they are to pray and praise God for his kindness and mercy (4:4-7); to think on certain things because of Christ, knowing his peace, and to know how we can be content in Christ Jesus because he supplies all of our needs according to his riches in glory (4:8-19). He also tells these Christians who live in this Roman Colony that they are now ultimately citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven (3:20-21). Because of this new identity and citizenship, regardless of their privilege at one time of being Roman citizens, or citizens of the kingdom of man, they are now highly privileged members of the Kingdom of Heaven and await a greater inheritance because of their service in Christ's militant army.

The hope Paul writes to this Colony of Heaven, who still lives within a colony of Rome, is that the gospel has infiltrated not only Philippi, the retirement home for faithful soldiers of Rome, but the gospel has even infiltrated the great House of Caesar himself! Paul is in chains faced with possible death, and yet in his weakness the gospel is infiltrating the enemy's territory! The gospel of the LORD Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven, has infiltrated lord Caesar's house, the king of Rome. In other words, we have the very strategic invasion and onslaught of the Kingdom of God, militantly storming the enemy's gates with the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Notice what Paul writes to the Philippians:

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of

the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.

What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:12-21).

The LORD Christ has made himself known not merely in the dark dungeon of Caesar's Palace, but He has made himself known to the dark of hearts of great and mighty warriors of Caesar who now loyally serve the LORD Christ in the same way they formerly served lord Caesar (vv. 12-14). The palace guards were especially faithful, tried and true warriors of Caesar, who were selected personally by Caesar himself to watch his house. These were the men he entrusted with his very life. These men were those who had been especially faithful to Caesar in their adoration and worship of him. They were fully devoted and loyal to him.

Yet now, with the coming of the gospel through Paul, a man chained by Caesar because of *his* LORD, these loyal men and guards of Caesar are changing their loyalty to the only one whose Name is above every name (2:8-11). These men who had once professed, "Caesar is Lord", and bowed their knee to him in service, are now proclaiming the Name above every name, saying, "Jesus is LORD", and bowing their knee to the Living God! Paul, who seems to be a very weak servant and ambassador for Jesus because of His chains, is actually showing forth the great strength of God in weakness. In fact this was Paul the servant of the One who considered equality with God not something to be grasped at, but made himself nothing, coming as a human servant and becoming obedient unto the weakness of death so that He might be raised to great power as Lord over all.

This instructs us today as well. Wherever you have been placed as a servant of Christ, you are there to infiltrate the darkness by living as the children of light. You are to be a light to the world (Matt. 5:14), knowing that Christ is recapturing hearts through you. He will give you strength to withstand the persecution, pain, and even possible death, by knowing that by our life and

deeds we make Christ known. It may be through our weakness, affliction and in our humility (and it probably will be), but Christ will be preached through us because he is faithful to his Word! We want to ask God to help us to be able to say as well: "For me, to live is Christ, to die is gain."

Can you say this? This is a hard concept for those of us who are so busy living for ourselves. God uses our weaknesses to perfect his strength and make him known to sinners. Be encouraged! No matter the difficulty you are facing, whether it is persecution from unbelievers or literal death threats, stand firm in the Lord Christ and his victory. It is his gospel you are proclaiming, it is Him you want others to know! We were once part of the blind and obedient servants of the evil one. But God, who is rich and mercy set us free, saved us by grace, and filled us with His abundant life. If you are in a difficult marriage with an unbelieving spouse, or in godless workplace where every one is out to get ahead of you and they especially despise you because of your beliefs, Rejoice because of the power of the gospel, and that you are in an extremely strategic position as a soldier of the Living Christ.

Remember that God has always used infiltration in order to make soldiers of the cross "wise as serpents" and "gentle as doves". The reason for this mission of assault was to make Christ known through his people and the preaching of the gospel. When Jesus sent his disciples out to preach the Kingdom of Heaven, he sent them on a strategic infiltration of the enemy's territory.

And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. Acquire no gold nor silver nor copper for your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics nor sandals nor a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not

be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Through the power of Christ in their weakness (Matt. 10:17-19), the disciples were going forth to infiltrate the enemy's territory. They went forward with the preaching of the gospel despite the opposition from the enemy because the most important territory to be infiltrated by Jesus is the human heart. Christ sends forth the declaration and proclamation of His Gospel in order that by His Spirit men's hearts might be infiltrated by God's precious grace and be captured in order to serve him faithfully (Matt. 6:24; 2 Cor. 4:1-6; Eph. 2:5-8).

In the letter of Philippians, Paul tells the Christians at Philippi to rejoice because of Christ's great faithfulness in making the gospel known whether through sincere hearts, or those trying to hurt Paul (Phil 1:14-16). Regardless, Paul says Christ is preached and in this he rejoices! Why? Because he knows the awesome and unbelievable power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for those who are in bondage to sin, death and the devil. He knows that this gospel will powerfully deliver and redeem those who believe even when it comes from a man in chains.

Although God has many times infiltrated Satan's strongholds with the gospel, the greatest infiltration of the Living God was the ***incarnational infiltration*** spoken of in Hebrews 2:10-18. Jesus Christ became flesh, a little lower than the angels, so that he might destroy he who held the power of death, who is the devil! Jesus infiltrated the stronghold of Satan and overcame all of his temptations and snares, including the cross. In fact, through the bloody and heinous cross, Christ became weak so that those who believe upon him might be delivered and stand strong and firm in him! Through Christ's death on behalf of sinners and through his glorious resurrection, Christ opened up the way for the greatest march against Satan's kingdom.

Christ in his resurrection led captives captive and was seated far above every diabolical and demonic principality and power, not only in the present age, but also in the Age to come (Eph. 1:20-23; 4:8-10; Col. 2:8-15; cf. Rev. 20:1-11). Christ took the supreme throne as the God-Man, and on the Day of Pentecost, Christ sent forth His Spirit to deliver captive hearts and brutally assault the kingdom of Satan (the City of Man) with the good news of His redemption. The infiltration and the assault on Satan's kingdom continues as the Church Militant continues her march, standing firm in the full armor of God, knowing that our enemy's time is short as we walk as children of light (Eph. 5:6-14), and await the day when we shall crush Satan once and for all under our feet!

The Apostle Paul ends the Book of Romans with these precious words that remind us that the enemy has been successfully infiltrated and the result is that he has lost the battle that began in the Garden of Eden because of Christ's glorious victory over him!

For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you (Romans 16:19-20).

As the Church Militant we proclaim together that we look forward to the Day of Christ, when the God of peace will crush Satan under the glorified human feet of the Church Triumphant!