

MOVING IN THE OPPOSITE SPIRIT

By John Gagliardi

As I watch the TV news and read the daily newspapers, it is very hard at the moment not to be carried along in a general tide of negativity, fear and depression. Banks are closing, companies are failing, unemployment rates are soaring, while governments and economists alike seem to spend most of their time tossing hot potatoes back and forth to each other.

There seems little point trying to work out how we got into this sorry state, but a quote by Charles W. Tobey goes some way to explaining it: "The things that are wrong with society today are the sum total of all the things that are wrong with us as individuals". We can't blame the government, and we can't blame our neighbour – we are now living with the consequences of the choices we - as a secular, wealth and celebrity exalting and God-denying society - have made.

As Walt Kelly's cartoon character Pogo once so accurately philosophized: 'We have seen the enemy, and he is us!' So having worked out where we are and why we are here, the question remains – what do we do about it? If the enemy is indeed "us", what is the answer?

For Bible-believing Christians, the answer, I believe, is both simple and profound – we just have to move in the "**opposite spirit**" to the world around us. It doesn't mean at all that we should be like ostriches and bury our heads in the sand – but we do not need to accept as OUR truth the daily dose of disaster and doom fed to us by the media.

By moving in the opposite spirit, we walk in faith, not fear; we walk in victory, not defeat; in generosity not greed; in peace, not anxiety; in love, not anger; in integrity, not dishonesty; in joy, not in depression. We serve instead of wanting to lead, and we give instead of wanting to receive. We bring light into darkness, and righteousness into depravity and corruption.

Like Caleb, we have to have a "different spirit" (Numbers 14: 24) and move contrary to the spirit of the times – Satan may be, according to 2 Corinthians 4:4, the "god of this world" who has blinded the minds of unbelievers to the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, but ultimately he is a defeated foe.

He may also be called the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2) and the "ruler of this world" (John 12; 31), but greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world (1 John 4: 4) and the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness (Psalm 24: 1). "The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and all its fullness" (Psalm 89: 11).

As we learn to move in the opposite spirit, we learn that the "roaring lion" that is Satan, that stalks around us looking for someone to devour and scaring some of us silly, is in fact a lying coward whom we can "resist, steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5: 8 and 9) and who will turn tail and run if we resist him and instead depend on and submit ourselves to the Lord God Almighty (James 4: 7).

The "global economic crisis" is a "roaring lion"; the "coming world recession" is a roaring lion; they only have power over us to the extent that we choose to give them that power. If we submit to the world system, then we deserve to be devoured by that demonic feline fiend. If instead we move in the opposite spirit, and we submit to God, we will have the victory. If we commit our works – all our activities on a daily basis – to God, the Bible tells us that our plans will succeed (Proverbs 16: 3).

One of the first people to use the term "opposite spirit", according to my research, was YWAM founder Loren Cunningham who wrote over a decade ago in his book, *The Call to Serve*, that to impact our culture, we have to take authority and "occupy".

"He says to occupy until He comes. To occupy means to take leadership. It's not huddling together on some mountaintop wearing white robes, waiting for the end. When an occupation army moves into a nation they take authority in the economy, the military, the media and the schools. Jesus is telling us to take authority.

"How do we do it? Not by force. We are to do it by becoming His slaves. It's the **opposite way** the world conquers. We are to take leadership through serving - as slaves, as the meek, as the humble.

"We have been so split in our thinking as Christians that we have been confused and have confused the world watching us. There are only two kingdoms and they are at war. We need to win for the kingdom of light by moving into these seven areas of influence (*the home; the church; schools; government and politics; the media; arts, entertainment and sports; and commerce, science and technology*) in the **opposite way** that Satan is working.

"Where he is spreading hate we must show love. Where greed prevails we must outdo everyone in our giving. Where intolerance is winning we need to show loyalty and forgiveness. God's Spirit enters into this world through His people, **moving in the opposite spirit** to wrest the power from the god of this world and give it to Jesus, who is King of kings and Lord of lords."

City Harvest Church's Rev Kong Hee brought a strong message on moving in the opposite spirit some years ago, pointing out that our mandate in the marketplace was to bring light into darkness.

He said: "The modern marketplace is largely characterised by fear and greed, two forces that are antithetical to the Spirit of God and His ways. The Bible tells us that perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4: 18) while generosity and a spirit of giving overcome covetousness and that grasping, 'look out for number one' attitude.

"For a Christian, our attitude really does determine our altitude – if we want to soar with the eagles, then we cannot allow ourselves to grub around in the filth and corruption with the worms. We are called to be eagles, not worms. We are called to the heavenly places, and to be above only, and not beneath (Deuteronomy 28: 13).

"The Lord will command the blessing on you, in your storehouses, and in all to which you set your hand (Deuteronomy 28: 6) and He will supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Philippians 4: 19).

"We walk in faith, not fear – we walk in the **opposite spirit** to the world! We are to be the salt and the light to those around us (Matthew 5: 13 and 14), to be hope to the hopeless and life to the spiritually dead.

"By moving spiritually in the **opposite spirit** to the world, it does not mean that we remove ourselves from it like medieval monks, affecting a "sackcloth and ashes" mentality – in fact, just the opposite. We are to engage our culture at every level, even the "pop" culture of today, to lead by example, and make the marketplace our mission field."

The bottom line is that we belong to a Kingdom that cannot be shaken. We are here for such a time as this – now is the right time to arise and shine (Isaiah 60: 1) and let our lights 'shine before men" (Matthew 5: 16), for God has promised: "Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God, and the one who does not serve Him" (Malachi 3: 18).

As with everything in life, we have a choice – we can choose to live a life of defeat and hopeless, buffeted and blown about by every wind of chance and at the mercy of the "god of this world"; or we can choose to throw ourselves body and soul on the mercy of a faithful and compassionate God, a God Who loves us and always sustains us, a God through Whom we can do "all things" (Philippians 4: 13) and Who promises us He will never leave us nor forsake us so that we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13: 5 and 6).

I cannot put it any more clearly or powerfully than Moses did thousands of years ago in Deuteronomy 30: 15, 16 and 19 -

See, I have set before you today, life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessings and cursing; therefore CHOOSE LIFE that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life ...