

Exodus 1:8-14 ⁸ Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. ⁹ And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: ¹⁰ Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. ¹¹ Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹² But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. ¹³ And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: ¹⁴ And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.

General Jonathan Wainwright was the only United States General captured by the enemy during World War II. He was left in charge of Corregidor, Philippines, by his superior, General Douglas MacArthur, when MacArthur was forced to flee to Australia to organize the Allied forces' massive counterpunch that eventually defeated Japan. MacArthur's orders to Wainwright were very clear: Never surrender. Fight to the end.

Wainwright tried very hard to stick to the letter of that order. However, the massive, systematic, merciless destruction he saw around him finally forced him – against his convictions – to surrender. He, and what was left of his ragtag army, were shipped off to prisoners-of-war (POW) camps all over Asia. Thousands died while in transit. Wainwright himself ended up in a POW camp in Mongolia. The Japanese guarded him as a precious prize. After all, he was the only U.S. general they would ever capture. During those terrible years of captivity, Wainwright labored under tremendous guilt. As he saw his body deteriorate and come to depend on a cane to move around, he also saw his soul experience even greater deterioration. He felt like a total failure for having surrendered Corregidor.

In due time, Douglas MacArthur led his troops to total victory. The Empire of the Rising Sun became the Empire of the Setting Sun as MacArthur and his troops evicted the Japanese from island after island all over the Pacific. He eventually occupied Japan and took up residence in Tokyo. The once-formidable Japanese empire finally surrendered to the “fugitive from Corregidor.” When this happened, POW camps were liberated all over Asia. Because Wainwright was held in Mongolia, far away from Tokyo, his camp commandant was able to keep the truth from him for a while. Consequently, Wainwright continued to behave like a POW.

Can you picture the Japanese commandant watching Wainwright after Japan's surrender? He knew they would soon switch places, and the commandant must have trembled at the possibility of facing a captive who would become his captor. Every time he saw him, the Japanese commandant must have felt tremendous uneasiness. A fully armed, properly fed commandant, with more than adequate military force at his disposal, was afraid of the weak, emaciated, dysentery-plagued remains of a ragtag army and its limping general. Why? Because the commandant's power over them was based on a lie. Can you picture him wondering, Has he found out the truth yet? If he has, what will happen to me?

The only thing that enabled the Japanese commandant to keep up this fraud was Wainwright's ignorance of the truth. Wainwright had been liberated, but he did not know it. Neither was he aware that, like every allied POW all over Asia, he had been ordered by his commander in chief to take charge of the camp. Because Wainwright did not know the truth, he continued to submit to the commands of his captor, even though his captor no longer had power over him.

Something similar happened more than 3000 years ago in Egypt:

- Pharaoh had absolute power in his Empire and had defeated every foe within thousands of miles.
- However, he had one nagging fear – the might of the Israelites, if they ever realized their strength!
- The Israelites were shepherds with no weapons; humanly speaking they were powerless.

- Pharaoh feared, not so much the people, but the Truth which, if discovered, would empower them.
- He knew that if war broke out, he would lose; he had to avoid confrontation at all costs!
- The core of his fear was not that he would be killed or invaded, but that he would lose his captives.
- His power was based on a lie, and no one fears the truth more than a liar! (John 8:32)

Satan's greatest fear is identical to Pharaoh's:

- His uncontrollable fear is that the church will realize that it is mightier than him (1 John 4:4)
- He is afraid that the church will discover a war going on – and join it!
- When they enter the war, the Church allies itself with those who hate Satan – the angels.
- The core of Satan's fear is that the church will “depart from the land” of captivity.
- His empire will crumble faster than communism did when the church begins to realize the truth.
- The church must learn to pray with authority, not as a POW begging for crumbs of bread, but as an advancing army that knows it is destined for victory.
- The normal state of affairs between the Church and Satan is war – all-out war!
- All through the Bible we see examples of Satan enslaving God's people by hiding the truth from them, “dealing wisely with them” just as Pharaoh did with Israel. But we also see deliverance come every time God's people discover the Truth and access His power through prayer!
- It happened in Egypt with Moses, in Babylonia with Daniel, in Persia with Nehemiah, in Acts with Peter and Paul. Truth was revealed and angels were dispatched to bring the answer!

Pharaoh's Three Point Plan

- In order to break free from Satan's POW camp, we need to realize how we ended up there.
- Pharaoh knew that he did not have power, so he resorted to craftiness.

1. HE DECEIVED THEM.

- The Israelites were never really slaves of Pharaoh, but he convinced them otherwise.
- He “deal wisely with them” – a delicate way of saying that he cheated them!
- Joseph's generation – those that had first-hand information of their real status – had died.
- Pharaoh never wielded a weapon, he simply hid the truth from them (ignorance is powerful!).
- Are we “unsure” which promises are for today, thinking some were only for the Apostles?
- Have we devised “respectable” ways to explain our supernatural anemia and moral feebleness?
- Some people have a theology of powerlessness, designed to explain why God will not do what He has said in His Word that He will do (i.e. “Thou shalt be saved and thy house”).
- Our prayers seem to be written by lawyers who qualify every sentence to provide God with a way out in case no answer comes.
- We implement decisions based on risk management principles, we teach about miracles but have never seen one, we learn about revivals but never experience one, we study about prayer but it seldom radically changes things around us, we hear about a victorious Christ before whom every knee must bow and meanwhile watch the enemy move boldly all over the place.
- We have turned the battlefield we were supposed to occupy victoriously into a massive POW camp; we have become content with surviving rather than overcoming. We have believed the lie that we are not to engage the enemy! We have been deceived!

2. HE DOMINATED THEM.

- Deception always breeds domination; the Egyptians appointed taskmasters to overwhelm the Israelites with abuse designed to obliterate the possibility of escape in their minds.
- Today Satan heaps all kinds of mischief upon the church – immorality, infighting, divorce, rebellious children, spiritual powerlessness. He wants us to forget that we are to be soldiers!
- He afflicts us with hard labor so that we become bitter, so preoccupied with our own misery that we lose sight of the reason we are on earth.
- He does this by causing us to confuse trials (which come from God) with the burdens that Satan imposes on us. With a POW mentality, we accept that he has a right to abuse us!

- Because we believe that God has all power, we think that God approves of this abuse! We find ourselves thanking God for “trials” that are really burdens imposed on us by Satan!
 - Trials bring with them the necessary grace to endure, while burdens are meant to destroy. It is crucial that we be able to distinguish one from the other!
 - Because on the surface they are somewhat similar, Satan is able to take advantage of us (i.e. in Corinth, Paul discerned Satan’s desire to destroy a repentant sinner by excessive sorrow).
 - A trial is like undergoing surgery in the best hospital, while a burden is like being stabbed by a mugger in a dark alley. There are some superficial similarities: in both cases a foreign object cuts our flesh, bleeding occurs and there is potential for infection. But what is the basic difference between the two? INTENT! A surgeon brings strength; a mugger takes advantage!
 - When burdens appear, don’t welcome them but resist and reject them. Trying to find value in burdens is like banging your head against the wall to find out how good it feels when you stop!
 - When Christians submit to the mindset of a POW, bitterness cannot be far away. This kind of situation is so biblically abnormal that anger immediately develops (often subconsciously).
 - Israel built cities of storage (treasure cities) for Pharaoh, helping him to strengthen his position! We come up with man-made theological explanations for what cannot be Biblically explained!
 - The most damaging weapons in Satan’s arsenal have been developed by Christian slave labor!
 - The gospel has ceased to be good news and has become merely good advice!
 - Overcoming has been replaced by coping! We are happy to simply survive rather than escape!
3. HE BEGAN TO DESTROY THEM.
- Pharaoh ordered all Israelite baby boys destroyed (Exodus 1:16, 1:22).
 - The genius of his scheme was that it combined death with life, and abuse with false mercy.
 - If all the babies would have been killed, Israel would have never tolerated it.
 - By giving them something (daughters), Pharaoh appeared gracious, like a POW commandant who allows starving prisoners to celebrate Christmas with care packages sent from home.
 - Pharaoh’s ultimate objective was to destroy their fruitfulness. Why were only baby boys killed? Because when boys grew up, they became soldiers!
 - Satan’s strategy has been to remove every reference to spiritual warfare from our vocabulary.
 - Do we emphasize God’s promises of our future life in Heaven, but ignore His provision of armor, gifts and weapons for spiritual warfare here on earth? These are vital to our success!

General Patton, the colorful U.S. commander during World War II, once welcomed a batch of new recruits with these words: “Welcome to Europe and to the war. I am sure some high-ranking jerk back in the States has told you that the secret to winning the war is to die for your country. That is not so! The secret to winning the war is to make the enemy die for HIS country!”

- The same principle holds true today. It is all right to lose graciously – once or twice! But if the gospel is to be taken to the ends of the earth, we better begin to WIN graciously!
- Pharaoh had created conditions of total chaos and despair for Israel. The people had been transformed from a privileged nation within the Egyptian empire into a nameless mass of slaves saddled with the most demanding task and headed for extermination.
- Hopelessness was setting in. There was only one thing that could prevent their annihilation!

The Power of Prayer:

- Backed into a corner, Israel discovered the power of prayer!
- ***Exodus 2:23-25*** ²³ *And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. ²⁴ And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.*
- Prayer turned deception, domination and destruction into divine deliverance!
- Pharaoh’s power was broken, God’s power was released, and two million slaves were set free!

- Without prayer, Exodus would have been a two-chapter book. But because of prayer, thirty-eight chapters had to be added to report on God's answer!
- Israel had no army, economic power, or social status to help them. Their only weapon was prayer!
- The early disciples were third-class citizens (Rome – Israel – Galilee), unlearned and ignorant men. Their only weapon was prayer!
- The difference between prayer as we usually conceive it and the kind the Early Church practiced is as vast as the difference between swimming in the bathtub as opposed to the open ocean!

The Principles of Prayer:

- What is the secret of effective prayer? The use of spiritual AUTHORITY entrusted to the believer!
1. Prayer is something that happens on THIS SIDE of Heaven only. It is something for which man is expected to take the initiative. Man pleads, God gives. Man knocks, God opens. Man asks, God answers. The initiative rests with man (Matthew 7:7-11).
 2. Prayer operates in the realm of God's self-imposed limitations. These are the areas where God, for reasons unknown to us, chose to limit His options and, consequently, His freedom of action. One of those areas is preaching the gospel, which God determined should only be done by man. Another area where God established restrictions is prayer. He determined that certain things will happen only in answer to prayer (James 4:2, Ephesians 6:18-19). Prayer is crucial and central!
- But Satan is a sore loser! Even though Jesus won the victory at Calvary, Satan has no intention of "vacating the property" willingly!
 - That is why we have the Holy Ghost, the earnest of our inheritance. On Pentecost, the disciples were giving the "badge" that certified them as "deputies of the court" with the power of eviction!
 - When the enemy resists, the Judge is morally and legally free to confront him directly!
 - When a legal paper is served, the court deputy doesn't even have to raise his voice!
 - The key is not the power he possesses but the authority he has!
 - ***Luke 10:19*** Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.
 - What the first Adam lost through disobedience, the last Adam (Jesus) recovered through obedience (Romans 15:9, Philippians 2:8).
 - Now the church must REPOSSESS it through prayer and witness.
 - IT IS ONLY THE ELEMENT OF AUTHORITY THAT MAKES PRAYER A DYNAMIC ENTERPRISE!
 - God's Power is the engine of prayer, but Man's Authority is the steering wheel. The engine makes more noise and has more raw power, but the steering wheel determines where the car goes!

Eventually, an allied airplane landed near the POW camp where General Wainwright was imprisoned. An American officer walked up to the fence, saluted and announced: "General, Japan has surrendered." Armed with that piece of truth, Wainwright limped all the way to the commandant's office. He opened the door and, without even raising his voice, asserted, "My commander in chief has defeated your commander in chief. I am in control now. You must surrender." Without firing a single shot, the emaciated, physically handicapped POW took over the camp from the well-fed, heavily armed commandant.

How was he able to do it? Because the truth had set him free! He also knew how to use authority to control power. The Japanese commandant's fear had finally materialized. His captives found out that they were mightier and decided to leave the land of captivity. Like Pharaoh of old, he eventually surrendered.

- This is the kind of authority in prayer that is required to reach our cities! Spiritual warfare that does not result in setting the captives free is not warfare, but merely a military parade. In a parade, you show your weapons but don't fire them. In warfare, you load, aim and fire! You engage the enemy!

When General Wainwright was flown to Japan in time for the surrender ceremony, he dreaded the moment he would face General MacArthur. In spite of having been liberated, he was still full of shame. He still felt like a failure. He was afraid of facing his commander. As MacArthur walked by, Wainwright could not resist the impulse to hide in a corner. MacArthur spotted him and called out to him. Wainwright obeyed, and as he faced MacArthur, he completely broke down. A flood of tears overwhelmed him. He stood before his commander in self-inflicted shame. He had failed him. He had surrendered Corregidor.

MacArthur reached out to him, embraced him and simply said, "It is okay. You fought well." At the surrender ceremony that followed shortly afterward, every general, admiral and brigadier assigned to the Pacific theater of operations was jockeying for position to stand next to MacArthur. In his classic style, MacArthur put all of them behind him as he sat at the table with Hiroshito's representatives. Only two generals were allowed to stand by him. To his left was the British General Percivale, who had surrendered Singapore at the beginning of the war. To his right was General Wainwright, who had surrendered Corregidor. As he put his signature on the document that certified Japan's unconditional surrender, MacArthur handed a pen to each one of them. By so doing, he was saying, "You did your best. Don't be too hard on yourselves. We have won."

- Perhaps you feel as Wainwright did because of a past failure. Maybe you are still living in a POW camp. The enemy has lied to you and has deprived you of everything. Maybe you have lost your command; you have surrendered.
- Since then you have been punishing yourself, living in a long night of hopelessness and despair.
- Look up to your Supreme Commander. He is saying, "You may have surrendered a flag or two, but the war has been won! On the final day, you are going to stand next to Me in total victory!"
- Until then, pick yourself up and charge against the strongholds of the enemy. Serve eviction notices and radio for help. Tell the enemy that "my Commander in Chief has defeated your Commander in Chief." You are in charge now. Go and begin to set the captives free!