



A Measure of Grace

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Conquerors Unawares Pt. 2

By Mary Heathman

In last month's article, I presented the idea that Christians are "Conquerors Unawares." These are people who have learned as children that we have limitations and restraints, but don't yet know that in Christ we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37).

I made the point that some of those restrictions don't exist anymore, or no longer have the power to control us. Yet we don't even attempt to resist them. We often remain powerless, not because we are powerless, but because we used to be. We don't know how strong we are now, or who we have become.

So, that's the dilemma: we don't know who we are. What's the solution? How do we find out who we are?

In the children's story, *The Sword and the Stone*, a prince, raised all his life as a noble man's squire, does not know who he really is. He, like everyone

else in the kingdom, has

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waited to see who would pull out the sword that has been buried in a stone. Many have tried and failed. Our “**prince unawares**” discovers that he is the true king when he grabs the sword nobody else could budge and slips it easily out of the stone. He proves his true identity, even to himself!

I believe it is the same for us. We need to be pulling on swords. We need to be attempting the improbable, even the seemingly impossible, in order to discover who we are.

What are the “swords” in our lives?

For my purposes in the “Parable of Conquerors Unawares,” the swords are whatever is before us that invites us to take action. In every situation of our lives, there are opportunities beckoning to us. I believe that as we face these chances to grow, there are always two purposes at work: God’s and the enemy’s.

God calls us unto Himself, the place where we can become all that we were created to be, a place where there is “peace that passes all understanding”(Phil. 4:7) and an invitation to follow Him all the days of our lives. If we accept that invitation, we find ourselves in a relationship with God that gathers us into His purposes; we become a partner with Him as He loves all the world.

God’s purposes don’t guarantee an absence of difficulty; in fact, they seem to assume that we will face trials and tribulations (James 1, 1 Peter 1). As in the lyrics of the old hymn,

“God Leads Us Along,” by G. A. Young, we even sing with the understanding that God leads us through difficulties:

*Some through the waters;
Some through the flood;
Some through the fire;
But all through the Blood;
Some through great sorrow;
But God gives a song.
In the night season,
and all the day long.*

The enemy of our souls, on the other hand, is always throwing roadblocks in our path – shortcuts, promises of easier paths that will bypass the hazards of life. He is always giving us opportunities to desert God’s purposes for our lives and to trot down the “broad path that leads to destruction” (Matt. 7:13).

In the spiritual conflict between God’s purposes and the enemy’s, we know that the battle is already won. As many Christians have said, “I’ve read the last chapter and we win.”

But in the day-to-day battle over whose purposes will reign over our own lives, our choices still matter. We must decide, sometimes daily, whether we will give ourselves over to God’s purposes or make what often seems like the easier choice. It is here in these deciding moments of our lives that I am talking about “pulling on the swords in our lives.”

We need to pull carefully. Some are false swords put there by the enemy to distract us. But we must pull boldly, knowing that the Holy Spirit

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A Prayer For the Prayerless

I am often asked how to pray for someone who does not want to change. Usually that question comes from a family member of a man or woman who experiences same sex attractions and has said that she, or he, has no problem with their homosexuality.

I offer the following prayer whenever I am faced with this need, whether the person I am concerned about is dealing with homosexuality, sexual addiction, relational deficits, or any other need I may see in their life. I pray this same prayer for myself when I know that I am settling for less than what God has for me:

“Lord, God, make Yourself real to those who don’t even know they need

something more. Give them an appetite for truth, a hunger for wholeness in every part of their being, a drive to repair that which is broken, and a vision for what it means to be a person after Your own heart—a man or woman according to Your original intent. And when it is me that is settling for less than You have created me to be, interrupt my life in these same ways. Give us all the courage to receive and cooperate with Your vision for us as Your men and women.”

✠



Farewell Party for Karen Wood



Karen will be leaving the WGA staff at the end of the year. We will be hosting a farewell party for her on December 7th. Please come and join us in bidding Karen a fond farewell!

Date: Sunday, December 7th

Time: 3:00-7:00 PM

Place: The WGA offices, 1532 Emerson St, Denver
Call 303-863-7757 if you need directions!

WGA has invited Sy Rogers to present at two seminars this Spring!

Where Grace Abounds has invited Sy Rogers to speak at two events in the spring of 2004. Regarded as a gifted international communicator, award-winning talk show host, recording artist and pastor, Sy has served for over two decades in ministry, and 17 years as a pastoral care specialist regarding sexuality. Mark you calendars and watch for more information. Plan to join us!



Sexuality and the Church 2004

The morning of April 2nd

This event is structured for people who wish to learn more about how to minister to those struggling with sexual and relational issues. Make it a point to invite your pastor!

WGA Seminar

Friday evening, April 2nd and Saturday April 3rd

This seminar will address issues of sexuality and relational brokenness and is open to anyone!

Family & Friends Retreat June 25th-27th, 2004

WGA will be hosting a retreat for family and friends in the spring. Mark the date on your calendars. More information will be available soon. If you are interested in attending, please contact the WGA office at 303-863-7757 or email us at wwga@aol.com.

Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Patrick Maschka

Wait for the Lord (Psalm 27:14)

Waiting is generally not tolerated in our present American society. There are so many modern conveniences that promise to eliminate waiting, adding to our increasingly demanding impatience. Microwave ovens heat our food in seconds, FAX machines send documents like the mail system never could, and computers have put instant information at our fingertips on the World Wide Web. The days and hours of the past are the minutes and seconds of the present, and we have learned to want and get things in a hurry.

Patience is an inescapable discipline of the healing process. No matter how much the world speeds up, God does not change (see Malachi 6:6). His deliberate, careful work on our souls may take a very long time indeed compared to the rate of service we usually expect. We must wait. This is so difficult! I can recall recent times when I could not tolerate emotional discomfort for even a few hours before feeling that I must find a solution to my trouble, or at least relief from anxiety. At such times, it appears I can find no consolation, and God seems so distant and un

involved. Reminding myself of the truth that God is always with me and never changes sometimes only makes me more impatient and uncomfortable, triggering thoughts like, "If you're so ready and able to help, then do something!"

I do not have a specific method to offer for becoming a more patient person.



There are constant challenges to building patience in 21st-century life on earth. In *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau wrote, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step

to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." While this famous excerpt is known as a motto for non-conformists, it can also be applied to us as believers listening to the rhythm that the Lord sets for our lives. If we are "joyful in hope, patient in affliction, [and] faithful in prayer" (Rom 12:12), we can "be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord" (Psalm 27:14).



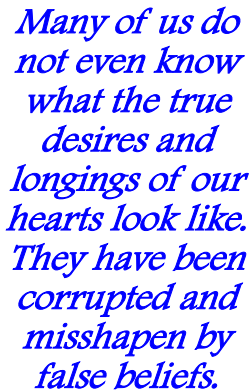
is there to guide us into all truth (John 16:13), and that He can be trusted to have our very best interests at heart (Jer. 29:11).

Approach Swords Carefully

We must do our homework. It isn't readily apparent to us which swords (opportunities) are gifts from God and which are just masquerading as such.

The required homework, not surprisingly, is what we have always been told Christians should be doing: seek the truth constantly, study the word, pray for discernment, seek wise counsel, confess our mistakes, and spend enough time in God's presence to be formed into His likeness.

Another familiar concept is also part of our homework: putting off the old and putting on the new (Eph. 4:22-24). May of us do not even know what the true desires and longings of our hearts look like. They have been corrupted and misshapen by false beliefs. False beliefs must be rooted out and the truth about ourselves allowed to renew our minds. This part of our homework is a group project; it is in healthy community that we help one another discover the God-planted desires of our hearts.



Many of us do not even know what the true desires and longings of our hearts look like. They have been corrupted and misshapen by false beliefs.

If we have been formed by the Truth and have allowed God to show us the desires of our hearts, we will be able to tell the difference between the true swords and the false.

Approach Swords Boldly

If we are living in the careful context described in the preceding paragraphs, then we can live our lives boldly. A favorite saying, picked up from a card I was reading at Starbucks, says: "Live Life Out Loud!" No longer skulking in the background, unaware of who we really are, we can approach the opportunities before us with confidence, and maybe a little "fear and trembling" (2 Cor. 7:15). We can move ahead in life with a healthy respect for God and our own penchant for sin, but also with an irrepressible buoyancy that comes from walking with God in truth and grace.

What would that look like?

1. Commitment: We have set our wills unflinchingly toward God. Like the prophet Isaiah, in 50:7, we say: "Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame."
2. Purposeful Action: Dallas Willard

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once said that in order to know God, one of the things we must do is to “*constantly undertake for God those good and holy things that we cannot accomplish in our own strength.*” People who are boldly approaching the opportunities presented to them will (in the context of prayer and submission to God’s will) grab hold of the seemingly impossible, the improbable, and tackle it in the strength of the Lord.

3. Humility: We cannot attempt the impossible and improbable without running smack into our own limitations, fears, and resistances. The bold followers of God will tremble as much as anyone else in the face of such evidence of their own inadequacy, but they will quickly remember that it is in just such weakness that the Lord will show Himself strong (2 Cor. 12:10). A boldness tempered by our knowledge of our own weakness without him brings about humility in our lives.
4. Tenacity: Dallas Willard also said that one of the most important elements of knowing God is to “*Stay after it! Never, never, never give up.*” In order to live a life of boldly undertaking good and holy things for God, we must do what David Wilkerson once said was “the most important thing a Christian ever does—what he does right after he falls flat on his face.” Choosing to get up, again and again, knowing that this Christian walk is the only game in town worth playing, and that there is no such thing as living it out on

the bench. So, we allow God and our brothers and sisters to dust us off, set us right, and we get right back in the game!

5. Life in Community: Life lived boldly for God will always be in the context of a community of faith that is actively doing the same thing. The importance of this was brought home to me when I was attending my first Bible Study in my first year as a Christian. It was a study of Colossians. I remember thinking about the early Christians as I drove home; the thought struck me, “Oh man, ***they do everything together!***” This wasn’t good news to me at the time, but in submission to it as the standard for ministry, I have found it to be the place of peace and strength: life in Christ and in community with others whose main desire in life is to follow Him.

Well, I am out of space and still haven’t told of the specific swords in my own life. I guess I will leave for that for another time. In the meantime, I hope you will pray for me and the leadership of WGA as we move boldly, with fear and trembling, into those things that He has for us to do. I will pray the same for you.



OCTOBER

Thursday Night Group

October 2nd - 49 people
 October 9th - 53 people
 October 16th - 50 people
 October 23rd - 55 people
 October 30th - 51 people
 Orientation meeting - 8 new people

Discipleship Counseling and Mentoring

The WGA staff provided about 12 hours of discipleship counseling and mentoring each week during October.

October 1st, 29th - Mary Heathman spoke at the Aurora campus of Colorado Community Church.

"Mending a Relationally Broken Society" is the title of her talk.

October 14th - We began an 8 week teaching series on sexuality and the Next Level Church.

October 5th - Participated in the Missions Service at First Denver Friends Church.

October 28th - Spoke at New Heights Center, a local church.

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 14th - Going away reception for Karen Wood, who is leaving the WGA staff. See announcement inside for more information.

February 12 - 14th - Christian Ministries Convention, WGA booth and speaking.

April 2nd - Sexuality and the Church 2004, stay tuned for more details!

April 2 - 3 - WGA seminar with special speaker Sy Rogers. Stay tuned for more details!

April 22-24 - Restoring the Glory Conference at First Presbyterian in Boulder.

June 25 - 27 - Family & Friends Retreat More information coming soon!

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Purpose Statement

Where Grace Abounds exists to guide and support men and women who seek to understand sexuality and relationship, and to inspire all people to know and personally appropriate God's plan for their sexuality and relationships.



A Measure of Grace
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