

190. The Email

By Arland Steen

Opening

The inspiration for this message is from an email I received last Wednesday morning. Most of you know I had a church prior to this one and it was medium-size. There are a number of people from that church who have moved to other states but got their spiritual life started to varying degrees with this other church I had. I received an email from one of these families who are now in Tennessee.

I call these families part of my Continuing Pastoral Relationship group (CPR). They themselves define whether they are in this group or not. It's because they feel a connection with a guy who used to be their pastor and it has persisted for years. So, a few years ago it dawned on me that there is still a real, live connection with them and they pull on me, so I invited them into this group. The purpose is just to have dialogue with them as needed, pray for them and keep current with their lives. They are special to me as well.

Supreme Scripture

Matthew 11:12 (New King James): *¹² And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.*

(New International Version): *"From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it."*

The Email I Received

Wednesday, 07/17/19, 9:18 AM:

I wanted to update you on J. and me. J. did 10 days of radiation and then had a biopsy done on his liver. He then had an appointment for this past Monday, the 15th, to see the oncologist for the results. "Ironically" the 15th was also the day I was scheduled to have another CT scan and see my doctor for results. I started my day at 7:40 with the scan, saw my doctor at 11:00, and then J's appointment was at 2:00.

My scan was not the report I'd prayed for. The lymph nodes, especially one, had grown more and the doctor said we did not need to sit on this any longer. He wanted to try a new drug in combo with the drug I've always taken, but it is a harder drug with much worse possibility for side effects. I told him J. would be starting chemo and the possibility for side effects for him would be an issue too and I wanted to be sure I was feeling good to care for him. So, the doctor said we'd go with the drug I've done, which has much-less side effects that affect your normal routine. He said I could wait until September, but not as long as December. I approached this much like an airplane oxygen mask... the caregiver uses the mask first, not selfishly but in order to care for someone else. So, I told him let's do it now and I'll make it work around J's treatments. He also wants a PET scan. That's scheduled for the 29th and then I start treatment the next day. I also stand on the scripture that says we can drink (or be infused) with poison and it will not harm us!

We get to J's appointment at 2:00. The biopsy calls this "urinary tract cancer" and not just bladder cancer. She said she's seen this a few times where the cancer is somewhere in the entire urinary region but "hiding." God exposes the hidden things! J. will be starting chemo this coming Monday on the 22nd, Monday the 29th, skip a week and then do another cycle, followed by another scan. So, he and I will both have appointments on the 29th. I start at 6:00 a.m. and the PET scan will take until about 8:30. [A PET scan is a Positron Emission Tomography – imaging testing that helps reveal how your tissues and organs are functioning]. I will come straight home and take J. to

Vanderbilt for his 2nd treatment. Then the following day I will start chemo. It's a lot to handle but I know the Holy Spirit gives me everything I need to do it. The enemy has aimed his darts at both of us, BUT GOD...!

I am aware that fear and this attack on all sides is coming against us. J. has so many symptoms attacking him. Last night I kept waking up, laying my hands on him and praying. **Then the Holy Spirit woke me about 5:00 and reminded me** that you told me the audio of the Johnson's testimony was now available. With daily treatments of radiation, etc., I'd gotten so busy and distracted, honestly, it slipped my mind. So, this morning I listened. It was so powerful. Linda's words on fear and faith moved me so; please thank her for me. I strive to be as strong a warrior for J. as she has been for Jim [we are family and the family ministers to one another].

But YOUR message after, that's what just got me! I about fell off my chair. YEARS ago, after I was first diagnosed, one day as I was reading my Bible, this scripture just jumped off the page at me and I didn't understand or know why. I'd never really paid attention to this scripture before even though I'd read through the entire Bible. It was Matthew 11:12 from the NIV: "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it." I looked it up in other translations but this one resonated with me most. I prayed and prayed and stayed on this for days asking the Lord exactly what He was trying to teach me from this verse.

As I continued to read on in my Bible, I began to take notice of "contending" for the faith, how God would tell people He "had given" them victory but they "still had to go fight" and "forcefully lay hold of the promise." I would note in my Bible examples of "forceful men lay hold of it." He also gave me this term "victory before the battle." Because if we believe we have victory before the battle, we fight from faith and not from fear.

The church we attended when I was diagnosed was supposedly non-denominational, but it was Baptist-light. No faith for healing. Everything was "if it be Thy will..." The pastor could not truly pray for me in faith that it was certainly God's will for healing. **I knew I needed a different church.** So, I prayed about where to go. Soon after I "accidentally" parked next to/met a gentleman at Sonic who just happened to be a pastor of a small non-denominational church. One visit and I knew I was in a RHEMA faith-based environment. The 2nd time I attended a pastor spoke from Uganda. He started his sermon with Matthew 11:12 and I about fell out of my chair. Never heard anyone preach on it. Afterward, I spoke with him. We became great friends and he has been a mentor for at least 14 years. Every year when he came to the states, we would spend time together. We have sown much into his church. Makumbi is amazing.

So, this morning when I began to listen to you, the first scripture you preached on was Matthew 11:12! I knew God was reminding me and strengthening me in what I KNOW and what the enemy wants me to forget, doubt, and question. Thank you! Thank you for not only being the man of God who first began to teach me the Word, but for continuing to be my pastor and mentor. It was so good to hear your voice preaching again. I will be listening regularly and back under your great teaching once again. We can never get too much of the Word from great men of God.

Sorry this is such a long message but I wanted to connect the dots on this. Even though I'm aware of the attacks with fear, in a bizarre way we're both peaceful in the midst. **We continue to live/act normally.** Both of us are exercising no matter what. Every time we get up and do something it feels like an act of faith. No fetal positions of defeat! **I've got praise & worship going to run the enemy off.** Much love to you, Barbara and Sharon. M.M.

Review of Past Scriptures

Mark 11:24 (New King James): ²⁴ *Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.*

1 Timothy 6:12 (New King James): ¹² *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life,*

Jude 3,4 (New King James): ³ *While I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints, ⁴for certain men have crept in unnoticed who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness,*

Important Points

First, the thought of being violent or forceful is the common thread that ties these scriptures together.

in what the Lord has been showing us. It has its roots in ancient Israel taking possession of their “promised land.” It didn’t, as Dad Hagin would say, “The blessings of God aren’t going to fall on you like ripe cherries off a tree.” Your blessings, although purchased by Christ, still have to be contended for.

We’ve been favored to know Mark 11:24, but we must act on it. God told them about the good of the land and the fruit and the goodness but He didn’t mention the giants or the walled cities. Why not? Because to Him they weren’t a problem. They had to lay hold of the promised land and take it by force. So, do we also today.

What are we to believe in Mark 11:24? That’s it’s all up to God? No, believe that you “receive” (the same word translated “take”). You believe that you can take it. Do you see the similarity?

- Lay hold in 1 Timothy 6
- Take it by force in Matthew 11
- Believe you receive in Mark 11

Why do you need to be forceful about this? You’re not trying to rend something from God. If He hadn’t given it to you, you would never have received it anyway. He’s not the issue. There’s an enemy that is. He tries to wear you down. You have to cast down imaginations.

Ingrown Toenail Testimony

I was the youth pastor of a community church in Baxter Springs, Kansas in 1978. The pastor, a deacon, the former youth pastor and I traveled to Neosho, MO to visit a church for business on Friday, February 10, 1978.

On the spur of the moment they decided they wanted to play basketball. They all had appropriate shoes to wear but I didn’t. One of them found a pair of tennis shoes for me to wear but they were 1.5 inches too small for me. I really didn’t want to play in them but peer pressure prevailed and I played.

Boy, did I pay the price. The next morning my two big toes were swollen like lemons. Ingrown toenails are a common condition in which the corner or side of a toenail grows into the soft flesh. The result is pain, redness, swelling and, sometimes, an infection. I had them all.

Two days later it was Sunday but it was simply not possible for me to wear dress shoes so I wore some loose socks and went to church in galoshes – a type of rubber boot that is slipped over shoes

to keep them from getting muddy or wet. There had been a lot of snow on the ground since January 16th so I had a pair. But my feet hurt so that I could not attend church that night. My feet continued to hurt until I left that church in May 1978.

Mark 11 tells the story of Jesus speaking to a fig tree. I began to speak to my toenails. I told them to grow correctly. I bound swelling and redness and infection. I did this for months.

We moved to Claremore as I took a position as an assistant pastor in a church and to attend 2nd year at RBTC. Every time somebody stepped on my feet in a crowded room such as the RBTC lobby or a classroom they stepped on one of my large toes!

Finally, on Friday, March 10, 1979 I had an appointment with Dr. Lloyd Huneryager in Collinsville so he could remove the toenail on my big left toe. I needed relief from the pain and wanted to believe God for it to grow back correctly. It healed up from the colors of the rainbow over the next few weeks.

In June I took a job with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and had a lot of walking to do going door to door on every business in a small town (Vinita, Ketchum, Big Cabin, Bartlesville, Muskogee, Haskell, Checotah, Pryor, Ada, Seminole, Wewoka, Holdenville, Hugo, Durant, Oklahoma City and Tulsa).

In the summer of 1979 (July 14) Dr. Huneryager removed the toenail again. I asked him if anything else could be done. He said he could remove the nail bed so the toenail would not grow back but I would have a little nub instead. That wasn't appealing to me at all, so I really got serious about meditating the Word and speaking to my toenail.

The pain continued so on December 8, 1979 I went to another doctor thinking maybe he could do something different. Dr. A. L. Gerner of Broken Arrow surgically removed my toenail off my left big toe again. I was in bed the rest of the day as well as the next 4 days to recuperate from the surgery.

I left my job with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and began working for friends that started a church and Bible school in the fall of 1980. My toes still hurt although there were times where it subsided, especially if I didn't have someone step on them.

But I again visited Dr. A.L. Gerner on September 2, 1980 and he performed minor surgery again on my left big toe. He cauterized it and said that should take care of it. I had a follow-up visit on September 5, 1980 and Dr. Gerner re-banded my foot. The next day I purchased some Hush Puppies for comfort at Woodland Hills Mall.

I began my stint as director of a Bible school in Tulsa. I was there from September 1980 through July 1981. I moved to California in August 1981 to plant a church. I got that started in September and my foot still hurt through March 1983.

It was during this time that I got really serious about building healing into my life and resisting this pain in my toe. You mean it took this long? Yes, because life goes on and you can learn to live with pain.

We had been very close with a female minister and she was about to launch a series of meetings in four major cities across the U.S. – Los Angeles, Houston, Minneapolis and Washington D.C. I was asked to do all the footwork for the initial meeting in Los Angeles. I secured the Los Angeles Convention Center, booked floors of rooms at a nearby Holiday Inn, coordinated the travel for ten

guest speakers and was prepared to and did work almost 20 hours a day for the week of meetings. Yet I had one huge question: How would I be able to do this and stand on my feet in dress shoes all that time? I didn't have an answer; I just knew I had been building healing into my life during all of 1982. About the 2nd day of the meeting after handling everything I simply noticed my left toe wasn't hurting. I took off my shoe and saw an amazing thing – a perfectly healed toe!!

[Pastor Arland wore sandals to church this morning and removed them revealing perfectly normal toes and nails. He later said he'd give 5 years of believing God for healing for 38 years of healthy toes and nails any day.]

(February 10, 1978 to April 5, 1983 is 1,879 days or a little over 5 years.)

Second, once you've had a chance to listen to God's authoritative Word and grow, God usually points you back to what you've learned instead of rushing in and taking care of you like a baby.

Remember what M. said in her email:

Then the Holy Spirit woke me about 5:00 and reminded me that you told me the audio of the Johnson's testimony was now available. With daily treatments of radiation, etc., I'd gotten so busy and distracted, honestly, it slipped my mind. So, this morning I listened. It was so powerful. Linda's words on fear and faith moved me so; please thank her for me. I strive to be as strong a warrior for J. as she has been for Jim.

Hebrews 2:1 (NKJ): *Therefore, we must give the more earnest heed [all the more careful attention] to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.*

There is a striking similarity between spiritual development and physical development. The Bible speaks of at least three stages in spiritual development which correspond to three stages in physical development.

- **Babyhood**
1 Peter 2:2 (NKJ): *As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.*
Characteristics of babyhood:
 - Innocence
 - Ignorance
 - Irritability
- **Childhood**
Ephesians 4:14 (NKJ): *That we should no longer be children.*
Characteristics of childhood:
 - Unsteadiness
 - Curiosity
 - Talkativeness
- **Adulthood**
Colossians 1:9 (NKJ): *We ... ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*
Characteristics of adulthood:
 - Esteems earthly things lightly (Moses)
 - Unmoved by persecution or praise (Paul)
 - Ability to recognize God at work (Joseph)