



# A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: FEBRUARY 2021 *by Lee Shipp*

## WHAT SPIRIT ARE YOU OF?

There is not a person reading this letter who would stand against Caleb. Looking back, it is easy to make the proper decisions, especially when the historical consequences are so documented and monumental. Certainly, in the light of history, we would have stood with Caleb and Joshua. We would have passionately decried the fearful spies who would cause Israel to live forty more years in the wilderness. It is preposterous to think anyone reading this today would agree with the ten spies.

The problem people have with history is the failure to learn from it. Now, consider what this means. We, looking back on history, knowing the proper outcomes, tend to think that if we had lived back then we would have made the right choices. We would have stood on the correct side of things. But that simply is not the truth. The probability is that we would have been doing what the majority of the masses were doing – that is the lesson of history.

We would not have supported Caleb. We would have been on the side of the ten spies. We would have joined the mob, decrying Moses for the difficulties his leadership had suffered us. That is the lesson of history.

We tend to look at history and think of ourselves as the being the ones who would have stood on the right side, and for the right causes. We imagine, if we had lived back then, we would have been the heroes of history. We would like to think of ourselves as taking the moral ground, however, that is not the truth. We would have eaten the apple. We would have agreed with the ten spies. After all, we do it today.

Do you honestly think this episode with the ten spies and Caleb is the only time this has occurred? Why, it has happened over and over again down through the millennia. We reject spiritual leadership when it goes against our opinions or places our life in jeopardy. Just consider the numbers of people who have sided with the fearful tactics of the evil reports of reputable men concerning the present pandemic. By these reports, and the fear of death, God has been abandoned. God's church, His eternal desire and purpose, has been forsaken by one-third of practicing Christians. History has certainly repeated itself.

So, what is it about Caleb? What made him different? The Bible says that he had another spirit with him. That he fully followed the Lord (Numbers 14:24). The spies feared for their lives. They considered it a suicide mission to invade these forces in the Promised Land. Now do not make the mistake of thinking Caleb did not care about his life, or the life of others. He did care. But he did not believe it was a suicide mission. He believed God. The ten spies believed the people of the land were stronger than they were, but Caleb believed God was stronger than the people of the land. The ten spies did not believe that God could give them success. Caleb believed that God was more than able to bring them into victory and to him, the promise of God was worth risking his life (Numbers 13).

This history repeats itself time and again, and without fail it reveals the spirit of the people, and as history reveals, the Calebs have been very few. The majority have gone with the spirit of fear. Very few have walked with a different spirit, fully following the Lord. This dilemma Caleb faced has been played over and over again every time a pastor shares the vision of God with his deacons, or the congregation, only to have the people cower and shrink back in fear. The push-back comes by the people saying, *"Our church is too small for that task. We are too poor to afford that. The land (growth) will eat us up; how can we have a big church and still be holy and true to the Word. If we minister to those kinds of people and they start coming into our church they will change our church and will end up ruining us. We are unable to do that will of God; rather, let us do this will of God and just remain in this wilderness."*

Innumerable times, new vision has been laid out, and the Spirit of the Lord was moving, however, multitudes of people cried for the past, *"Let us go back to*

*the way it was. We need to fire this pastor (Moses) and get us another pastor who will take us back to the old traditions, the feeble ways, the bondage (Egypt). We need to live where everything was controlled, and we did not have all this joy and freedom and love."* Of course, they say, *"I want the church to be free, but .... yes, I want us to have the gifts of the Spirit, but .... I don't know about all this altar stuff and people gathering up there to shout and praise, I just think they are being showy. I think we need to go back to the dull services where everybody is quiet, and we sing out of hymn books and nobody gets emotional. Now that was holy! Let us go back to the old-time prayer meetings where most slept."*

That spirit of fear in the ten spies is manifest every time someone suggests:

- I don't know about that ... let us *"go back."*
- I don't know about spending money to build an office building and living in the promises of God, let us *"go back."*
- I don't know why we have to hire more pastors for the church, why do we need that? Let us *"go back."*
- I don't know why we need to be bigger, we will lose things, we will not be the same church, let us *"go back."*
- I don't know about all our missions, let us *"go back."*
- I don't know about community outreaches, let us *"go back."*
- What if smelly people come to church? Let us *"go back."*
- What if sinners come to church? Let us *"go back."*
- If people from off the streets come here then the upstanding people of the community will not come, let us *"go back."*
- I don't know about having multiple races worshipping together. I think whites need to have their own churches, and blacks need to have their churches, and Hispanics need to have their churches, let us *"go back."*

## "WHAT WE PRAISE DETERMINES THE ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDING OUR LIVES."

Oh, how I hate this spirit! This evil god-hating spirit. This spirit that has no great and mighty God who does wonders! Away from me you ten spies! Give me the Calebs. Caleb and his seed inherited the promise. Beloved, walk with the Calebs. Beloved, receive the Spirit of the Lord so you can be a Caleb. Don't curse your generation with your spirit of fear and unbelief, but have faith and the Spirit of love, power, and a sound mind; then go walk with God into the promises.

## CHECK YOUR SPIRIT BY YOUR MOUTH

So what spirit are you of? It is not manifested by your doctrinal statement; rather, it is revealed by the way you talk. All spiritual power is in our confession. Confession is simply the truth of what you actually agree with. Your theology can agree with the Bible, but your confession can be altogether different. The Pharisees had a proper understanding of the Bible, but they confessed something totally different and stood against God.

For those who are not willing to put away their fear of death for the sake of their own lives and fully follow God, I ask you, *"Do you know why your children are not going to serve God? Do you know why your children are not going to thrive in the church? Do you know why you will constantly live from one offense to another, never getting anywhere with God? It is not by how you sing and dance in Church. It is because of how you talk at home, your private confessions! It is the way you talk about people, the pastors, the leaders of your communities, the leaders of ministries. It is the cynical and abusive nature you manifest by your confession and how you do not trust anyone. Neither you nor your seed will enter the promise of God."*

## YOUR MOUTH IS SPIRITUAL

And make no mistake about it, this is a spiritual thing. It was not men talking or complaining, it was spiritual. In his Epistle, James assures us of the power of our words to destroy. *"... the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be"* (James 3:8-10).

James tells us that the tongue has the power to change the course of nature,

just like those ten spies. Your tongue, your confession, can turn the course of nature in your church and family. Jesus was on a course to bring deliverance and healing into His hometown. He came to bless; however, some people began to open their mouth and make confessions. They sowed unbelief about Jesus and totally changed the outcome of that day. Instead of blessings, healings, and deliverances, they brought about curses and pains, even denying their children the opportunity of reaping the blessings of God. They shut Jesus down.

The way we speak of others reveals OUR SPIRIT AND PRAISE. Therefore, one aspect of spiritual warfare is the battle as to what spirit is going to rule you. James did not say that Satan armed men with FLAMING SWORDS but FLAMING TONGUES – set to destroy and devour men made in the image of God and thereby change the course of nature.

How many parents have destroyed the work of God (changed the course of nature) in their children after a powerful retreat, or revival meeting? How many mothers have sucked the joy out their children by demonstrating a critical spirit? The tongue is set on fire of hell and speaks out of a sensual wisdom used to bring SUSPICION, FEAR, BONDAGE, AND DIVISION!

No tongue is more set on fire of hell than the religious tongue. How destructive are the words of those who hurl condemnation, curse men, weaken the faith of others, and infect believers with despair? And it is all done under the assumption that they are doing the will of God, considering themselves to be right and justified in their conduct. They do not speak words of grace, which we are commanded to speak. They do not comfort which is the way the Holy Ghost speaks.

Multitudes claiming to speak in the Name of Jesus, and for God, spend more time cursing rather than blessing. They damage everything in the name of Jesus. They are proud of their boldness for Christ, not realizing the harm they have done. They are convinced they are wise in what they do, but they are set on fire of hell! Their wisdom is from below, not above! They damage. They separate friends. They divide and destroy families. They are esteemed in the body but are abusive and brutal as Paul and Peter both called them.

They are not nobodies – they are pastors, counselors, gray haired patriarchs. They are active on social media, lashing out, for all of the world to see, their destructive confessions. What is so sad, they think they are defending the cause of Christ and honoring God, but they are devastating the generation, and preventing them from receiving the promise of God.

James makes it very clear; our words come from a spirit and produce an atmosphere. Like the people's response to Jesus in His hometown, the spirit of our words can send Jesus away, causing many to miss all the good God would have done. Like the ten spies, our words can sow fear and unbelief in multitudes bringing harm to so many. Or, like Caleb, we can have another spirit whereby our words can bring blessings.

## YOUR WORDS ATTRACT SPIRITUAL ENTITIES

Our words produce a spiritual atmosphere where either God works, or Satan does. What spirit do you want operating in your life, family and church? What spirit will you unleash from your mouth? Your tongue is set on fire of hell or it is set on fire of the Holy Ghost, but it cannot be set on fire of hell and the Holy Spirit.

Your words have the power to CREATE ATMOSPHERE. Ephesians teaches us that this world is influenced by a host of other worldly beings who rule THE ATMOSPHERE. Aliens are everywhere and walk among us. There is a sinister force, some evil power, some wicked intelligence seeking to work among us. Something beyond earth is among us and you can feel it. Sometimes you can sense it, you could cut the atmosphere with a knife. Something is behind the people ... it is tangible ... you can smell it.

What we praise determines the atmosphere surrounding our lives. Be certain that we are always praising! It is our creative make-up. We are either praising God or Satan.

From the beginning, the atmosphere of God's presence was one of love, grace, and mercy. Beginning in the garden, God announced to the rebels a message of hope. At the birth of Jesus, the announcement of the angels was peace on earth, good will towards man ... unto you is born a Savior. The declaration of the Spirit of God is one of liberty, "... it is for freedom that Christ has set us free ..." (Galatians 5). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit testifies, "*The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*" (Romans 14:17).

The spirit that is with you is the spirit that is seeking to affect your atmosphere. Therefore, the great conflict you are engaged in is what spirit will rule you. For be certain, the spirit you allow to rule you will be the same spirit that dictates the atmosphere. As the book of James' reveals, the evil workings of hell are enticing you to create an oppressive atmosphere, seeking to use your mouth to curse people, to speak cutting and calloused remarks about others. This sinister spirit will convince you that you are doing the will of God, but God

is not fooled. The Lord knows that you cannot curse men made in the image of God and then bless God.

Satan is trying to get you to make Christ look deformed and weak. He wants you to publicly express negativity all the time on social media and thus make Christ look very unattractive. He wants to use you to sow fear and suspicion into everything. Satan would love for you to become "*that person*" where everyone around you has to walk on eggshells for fear of offending you, and then suffering your so-called righteous indignation.

Multitudes have turned away from Christ by the ugliness they have been exposed to. How many have come to repentance by the critical spirit displayed by religious critics on social media? The truth is, hardly anybody listens to them or wants to be around them. Nobody is being converted to Christ by their speech. They do not bring people to church. They are not leading their children to Christ, but away from Christ.

But there is an altogether different atmosphere we can enter into. We can invite the Lord to us. We can live in His presence. Like Paul demonstrated to the immoral and immature community of believers in Corinth. There was so much there that Paul could have attacked and cursed. Instead, he labored in love to bring them into the truth. He did not expose them to others but recovered them and the testimony of God among them. What a glorious ministry Paul demonstrated. They even hated him. He had every right to curse this church and people, but instead he loved them even more. Paul shows us that God can rule over the situation, converting it into something glorious by expressing truth, love, grace, and the help of the Holy Ghost.

## THE CHURCH IS TO PRODUCE A HEAVENLY ATMOSPHERE

The church is to produce a heavenly atmosphere. One where the Holy Spirit has liberty to move and glorify Jesus by working miracles. Satan cannot stand up against the spiritual weapons of God which are mighty through the Holy Ghost; therefore, the chief occupation of the church is to praise and magnify the Lord. Satan would love to make our church services like a funeral: sober, sad, quiet. He would then love to convince many that this depressing atmosphere is holy, noble, and reverent. No, it is not holy, noble, and reverent – it is dead! The church is to be full of life, vibrancy, and power.

According to James, praise is about how we talk about one another. It is about how we bestow blessings upon one another. I by no means insinuate that we are to bid god-speed to anyone who is against Christ. But we are to love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us. We are to bless those who curse us.

If we lose this ability to praise, then we will lose the manifest presence of God and attract the manifest presence of evil, a church full of gossip, slander, and despair. The wicked will be attracted to that atmosphere and will come and take over the church, making it a funeral. Satan will then declare the victory by pointing to that church and saying, "*So this is the church of God? This is the way God's children behave. Why would you devote your life to this?*"

Satan is banking on us to allow our moods and unbelief to overpower our ability to praise and magnify God in the most difficult times of life. Satan has worked very hard to bring you to the point of despair; therefore, despair is what he is counting on from you. But when you respond with praise and hope in God, all of Satan's efforts are crushed in a moment's time.

Take control of your atmosphere. Because of our lot in life, the hard knocks we have suffered, it is natural to be depressed – this is what is expected. Satan is counting on us to respond in the carnal attitude of murmuring despair. However, this attitude will only draw more oppression to our life, thus falling prey to every strategy of Satan. But, if instead we were to praise God, and cry out for His intervention, the atmosphere would change; darkness would be driven out and our God would come mightily to deliver us.

An increase in depression, bondages, and continual conflict with the enemy can be attributed to a believer's lack of praise! The lack of peaceful rest is not the failure of God, but the failure of God's people to attract His help in the time of battle. Praise has nothing to do with feelings; it has everything to do with faith. But be assured, when God inhabits our praise every emotion will be stirred to ecstatic fullness: joy, peace, and gladness! Singing in the Holy Ghost possesses the power to drive out demons and tear down walls and overcome armies.

So what spirit are you of? Are you praising your way forward, marching into the promises of God and defying every obstacle set against you? Are you edifying others to faith, provoking them to love and good works? The Holy Spirit is your gift of life and companionship. He is with you to set your tongue on fire with the blessings of God. Turn your speech over to Him. Let Him direct your heart and praise unto the Lord. And with all of your might take what He has promised.

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