



Ground Zero

How to maintain our faith in a world that is evil.

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Scripture

Ephesians 5:8-9

- For you were *once* **darkness**, but *now* you are **light** in the Lord.
- **Live** *as children of light* for the **fruit** of the light consists in all . . .
 - goodness,
 - righteousness, and
 - truth.

2

Scripture

Ephesians 5:13-14

- *But everything exposed by the **light (truth)** becomes visible, for it is **light (truth)** that makes everything visible.*
- This is why it is said:
 - "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and
 - **Christ** will shine on you."

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Scripture

Ephesians 5:15-16

- Be **very careful**, then, how you live —
 - not as unwise
 - but as **wise**,
 - making the most of every opportunity,
 - {Why} because the **days are evil**.

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Scripture

Ephesians 5:18

- Therefore do not be **foolish**, but understand what the **Lord's will** is.
 - ▶ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to **debauchery** (sensual indulgences).
 - ▶ Instead, be **filled** with the Spirit.

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Scripture

Ephesians 5:19-20

- Speak to **one another** with . . .
 - psalms,
 - hymns, and
 - spiritual songs.
- Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.
- Always **giving thanks** to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Introduction

- On September 8th, 2001, Ekklesia had our first **Prophetic Conference**.
- We had over 150 in attendance and we spent most of the time praising God, interceding for God's Kingdom come, and basking in His presence.
- That following **Tuesday** morning, the ladies of Ekklesia (who wanted more) came to our house for a special time of additional prayer.
- However, before the meeting could even start, **shocking reports** came on TV about an airliner hitting one of the Twin Towers in NYC.

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Introduction

- What happened next was **shocking**.
- This wasn't an accident but a major concerted **terroristic attack**—
 - not only on the **Twin Towers** in NYC, but
 - also on the **Pentagon**, and
 - perhaps a pending attack on the **Capital** building in Washington, DC.
- While the ladies did have their **prayer meeting**, it became obvious to us all that something had changed, which would effect our country for a long-time.

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Humbling Facts

- The 9/11 attacks **killed 2,996 people**, 400 of which were emergency personnel such as firefighters and policemen.
- The number of people **injured** was over 6,000.
- Aside from the two planes that were flown into both Trade Center buildings, a **third plane** hit the Pentagon, and a **fourth plane** was crashed into a field in Pennsylvania, near Shanksville.
- The plan included 19 men who were part of the radical Islamic group called **al-Qaeda**—led and founded by **Osama Bin Laden**.
- The entire plot was organized by **Bin Laden** himself.

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Humbling Facts

- At least **200 people** jumped from the towers during the attack, which lasted less than 10 seconds.
- Rather than suicide, these deaths were ruled as **homicides** at the hands of the terrorists.

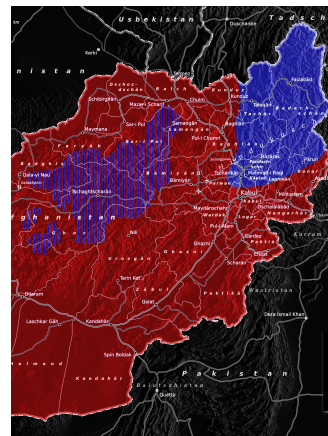
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Humbling Facts

- It is estimated that the attack caused a minimum of **\$10 billion** in infrastructure and property damage.
- The cost of the cleanup was **\$750 million dollars**.
- After the attacks, it took **firefighters 100 days** to extinguish all the fires in and around Ground Zero.
- **Cleanup** for the 1.8 million tons of debris took **3.1 million hours** and was finally finished on May 30, 2002.
- The **9/11 attack** has been the largest loss of life in a foreign attack on American soil – higher than even **Pearl Harbor**.

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War in Afghanistan

- The **War in Afghanistan** started on October 7, 2001, in response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States.
- President Bush demanded that the **Taliban**, Afghanistan's ruling party, **extradite** Osama bin Laden.
- The Taliban **refused**, citing lack of evidence.
- The United States responded by launching **Operation Enduring Freedom** and invaded Afghanistan.

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War in Afghanistan

- As of April, 2021, the human cost of the **War in Afghanistan** has been,
 - 2,448 Service Members
 - 3,846 U.S. Contractors
 - 1,144 Members of NATO
 - 444 Aid Workers and 72 Journalists
 - 51,191 Taliban and other opposition fighters.
- Financial cost, estimated to be over **\$2 Trillion**.

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Pullout of Afghanistan

- On August 30th, 2021, the last American Service members pulled out of Afghanistan.
- But not before the U.S. government allowed the **Taliban** to take control of the country in a highly botched pullout where . . .
 - not only are some **Americans** still stranded,
 - but the **Taliban** has now in their possession in what is estimated to be **\$88 billion** in arms, trucks, helicopters, and munitions.

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Pullout of Afghanistan

- While the United States involvement in Iraq and in Afghanistan for the past 20 years has helped in our war against **Islamic Terrorism**, the world is still a dangerous place.
- In fact, there is **good** and **evil everywhere**—even in our own country and our own city—if not our own neighborhoods or families.
- So then, how do we as **believers** protect ourselves against evil and how can our **faith** make a difference for good in the midst of our own **Ground Zeros**?

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Sally's Pregnancy

- When **Sally** was pregnant with the **Triplets**, her **pregnancy** was considered a high risk pregnancy.
- The **odds** were high that the **babies** would be born premature and we could even lose one or all the babies.
- The verse that we hung on to; which gave us both **great encouragement** was Psalm 20:7.
- **Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.**

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Sally's Pregnancy

- On **July 1st, 1986**, Sally gave birth to three beautiful triplet girls.
- **Christopher** never knew what hit him.
- Sally delivered the girls at 37 weeks, which is almost full-term and didn't require a **c-section**.
- The babies were all over 5 pounds and both **mom** and the **babies** got to go home together.
- While we had **17 medical staff** in the delivery room, the **one** that was invisible showed himself very **faithful**.

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God's Faithfulness . . .

- One year after the **Triplets** were born, we moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana to start our training for ministry.
- We were looking forward to gaining both experience in ministry and learning as well.
- However, all that **vanished** before our eyes and we had no where to go—as one of the most visible ministries in our country fell due to a scandal.
- Nevertheless, we **prayed** and like before—we put our trust in the Lord.
- Not only did **He** hear our cry for help, but **he** also put in us a **new vision** for church ministry.

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God's Faithfulness . . .

- The **essence** of this ministry was that **"the gates of hell will not prevail,"** against any church that is a **biblically functioning community**.
- It was this **vision**, which also became the **foundation** for us starting Ekklesia.
- So then, why is this **important**?
- Because, as the Apostle James says, **The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.** (James 5:16)

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Salt of the Earth

- When Jesus spoke at the **Sermon on the Mount** (Matthew 5:13 NIV), he said, to his disciples.
 - You are the **salt of the earth**.
 - But if the **salt** loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?
 - It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.
- In other words, to keep the **world** from becoming completely corrupt, there is a **need** for a **group** of godly people
 - **who live for God** and
 - **walk** before Him blamelessly.

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Light of the World

- Jesus also said at the **Sermon on the Mount** (Matthew 5:14-16 NIV);
 - You are the **light of the world**.
 - A **city on a hill cannot** be hidden.
- Furthermore, Jesus said,
 - Neither do people **light a lamp** and put it under a bowl.
 - Instead they put it on its **stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house**.
- In the same way, let your **light shine** before men, that they may see your **good deeds** and praise your Father in heaven.

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A Witness of God's Glory

- The church of Jesus Christ has a responsibility to be a **positive, inspirational, and prophetic influence** in our society.
- But how can we be a **positive influence** in our society, (which makes a difference), if we are **careless** in the way . . .
 - we **walk out our faith**, and
 - how we **live** in the body of Christ and in the world.
- This is why the Apostle Paul says, **“be very careful then in how you live not as unwise but wise.”**
- Why? Because the **days are evil**.

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Sow to the Spirit

- So no matter what eschatological views you may have,
 - we are to **make the most** of all opportunities and
 - **sow to the Spirit**.
- Without the **Holy Spirit** empowering us we can do nothing.
- As we have read here in Ephesians, it is the **Lord's will** that we be filled with the Spirit.
- But how can we be filled with **God's Spirit** when we spend more time indulging in the **desires** of our selfish ego?

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City on a Hill

- In Ephesians, Paul tells us how to be **filled**.
 - Speaking to **one another with words**—from sources of divine inspiration and edification (i.e. the Bible and worship material).
 - Singing and making music in our **hearts** to the Lord.
 - Giving **thanks** to God in everything.
- When we **walk in this truth** the result or fruit will be all . . .
 - goodness,
 - righteousness, and
 - [more] **truth** and **revelation** to what pleases the Lord.

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City on a Hill

- If you haven't noticed yet, our **country** needs us.
- The **city on the hill**, which can also light the way for all *truth seekers*, is the church of Jesus Christ.
- If we are **walking** in the truth,
 - **God's presence** will be evident, and
 - our **prayers** will be effectual.
- We can **make a difference**, if we're **careful** to make the most of every opportunity to use our **faith** for good.

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Prayer Changes Things . . .

- In his letter to **Timothy**, the Apostle Paul gives the following instruction. (1 Timothy 2:1-4 NIV)
- *I **urge**, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for **everyone** —*
 - *for **kings** and all those in authority,*
 - *[so] that we may **live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.***

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Prayer Changes Things . . .

- *This is **good**, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*
- *In other words, a **biblical functioning community** doesn't have to be at the mercy of kings, authorities, politicians, or terrorists.*
- Instead, we can **dwell** in peace and be about our Father's business—**making disciples** of all nations.
- As Scripture says, ***The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.*** (Proverbs 21:1 NIV)

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In Summary . . .

- The **world** in which we live is an evil and chaotic place.
- We therefore must be very **careful** on how we live and how we can build each other up in the body of Christ.
- If we cooperate with God's will, we will be **filled** with the Spirit and the **fruits** of the Spirit in us—will be a **powerful witness** in the world.
- Moreover, our **prayers** will be effectual enabling us to **influence** the decision of kings, rulers, and authorities according to God's will.
- Therefore, let us not put our **trust** in people who can fail us, but in the **Lord** who watches over his word to perform it and promises to be with us always—even to the end of the age.

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Conclusion:

God has said, *“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”*

So **we** say with **confidence**, *“The **Lord** is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can **man** do to me?”*

(Hebrews 13:5–6 NIV)

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