

Christianity Unleashed

Slaves to Soldiers

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Marc Carrier

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Most names and locations have been changed to protect identities and maintain confidentiality.

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Introduction

I have served on the mission field in Kenya and Uganda with my family since 2012. Struggles and mistakes, punctuated by periods of encouragement, marked the early years of my ministry here. We focused on kingdom expansion, strong discipleship, and the development of indigenous leaders, and continually pressed forward in meeting these goals. Yet no matter how much progress we made, there so often seemed to be *something missing*. I was given a clue, but not total clarity, when I wrote a book about my field experiences (*Pioneering the Kingdom*), and sent it to a Facebook friend for review. His comment, essentially, was that the book had a lot going for it, but he quite pointedly asked, “Where is the Holy Spirit?”

Indeed, though I had begun my work in Africa with a sense of calling and a leading of the Holy Spirit, I somehow lost it. The goal of this book is to share how that happened, and how the Holy Spirit was restored, as I believe that in our Christian walk we are all at risk of beginning in the Spirit but falling away for various reasons. This is my testimony and I will share many stories, some from my early Christian experience in America and others from the mission field. In it, you will see that walking in the power and leading of the Holy Spirit is God’s desire for every believer, not just those “called” to ministry or missions.

Throughout the book, you will find endnotes referring to quotes from the “Ante-Nicene” church, the time period encompassing the first few hundred years after Christ’s death and resurrection. Why are these significant? Imagine a stream flowing from a clear mountain source; over time and distance, it gradually picks up debris and by the time it reaches the mouth where it empties, it is muddied—a far cry from the purity of its beginnings. The same is true of church history; the farther we get from its humble yet powerful beginnings, the more uncertainty and disagreement we experience. The Ante-Nicene period is significant because these men were the disciples of the apostles of Christ or not far removed. They understood the Scriptures at a level that we (despite our modern scholarship) likely do not, as it described their contemporary culture and was written in their language. They had a purity of Christian experience (culminating in martyrdom for many, if not most), that over time has been lost. Therefore, as you read, I urge you to refer to the quotes, as they substantiate many of the points I make and certainly concur with my field experience and the straightforward reading of the Scriptures.

This book does not just describe my journey, but invites you to experience the same transformation: to walk in the power and leading of the Holy Spirit in the way that God has meant for us all from the very beginning, but which we have, in some sense, lost along the way. This journey is not for the faint-hearted. As you will see, it demands the courage and conviction of a warrior and the perseverance of a dedicated soldier. Join me!

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Chapter 1—From Slaves to Soldiers

A proud king with a great army demands the submission of a neighboring king, whose forces are small but courageous. When an ambassador delivers the message requesting complete surrender, the king with the smaller army at once summons one of his men and commands that the soldier stab himself. Without hesitation, he complies. This is repeated with a second soldier, and yet a third. Satisfied, the king gives his response to the ambassador's demand: "Go and tell your master that I have three thousand such men; let him come."

This story from antiquity, shared in Andrew Murray's classic, *A Life of Obedience*, shows us the disposition of the type of soldier that God calls to the front lines of battle against the spiritual forces of evil. This was the spirit of the early Christians, who were willing to surrender themselves, even unto death, on behalf of their conquering King.

We imagine the apostles as just a ragtag band of twelve poor, uneducated men. They had little money, no political or institutional backing, no printed literature, and were facing extreme persecution—leading to martyrdom for most. Yet the Bible tells us that they turned the whole world upside down. Today's Christian is a descendent of this courageous group of men, yet we lack the same sense of urgency with which they pressed forward for the kingdom of God. How is it that with everything against them, they were able to succeed where we are failing?

Most Americans self-identify as Christian, but their practices tend to belie this assertion. Even more telling is that, when surveyed whether they thought that they had a personal responsibility for evangelism, a majority does not believe that they do.ⁱ

Just as in the time of the apostles, there is a battle waging between God and Satan. Yet as the battle cry goes out today, it remains largely unanswered. Today's Christian is called to engage in the battle, yet due to the subversive tactics of our enemy, many aren't even aware that we are at war. We are losing our own to the world. Research demonstrates that most of our youth are unchurched, while the majority who grow up in the church fall away anyway.ⁱⁱ It is clear that our institutions, programs, and doctrines have proven powerless to stop the attrition.

The human spirit yearns for the purpose, adventure, and fulfillment evident in the life of the early church—men who abandoned all to follow Christ. Having nothing, they possessed

everything. Hear their own testimony of a life of sacrifice and adventure:

Even as things are, if your thought is to spend this period of existence in enjoyments, how are you so ungrateful as to consider insufficient, as not thankfully to recognize the many and exquisite pleasures God has bestowed upon you? For what is more delightful than to have God the Father and our Lord at peace with us, than revelation of the truth, than confession of our errors, than pardon of the innumerable sins of our past life? What greater pleasure than distaste of pleasure itself, contempt of all that the world offers, true liberty, a pure conscience, a contented life, and freedom from all fear of death? What is nobler than to tread underfoot the gods of the nations—to expel evil spirits—to perform healings—to seek divine revelations—to live to God? These are the pleasures, these are the entertainments worthy of Christian men—holy, everlasting, free. Consider these as your circus games, fix your eyes on the courses of the world, the changing seasons, reckon up the periods of time, long for the goal of the final consummation, defend the assemblies of the churches, be startled at God's signal, be roused up at the angel's trumpet, glory in the hands of martyrdom. (Tertullian, *ANF* v. 3, 91. c. 197 AD)

We can regain what has been lost if we simply return to what we read about in the New Testament: spectacular conversions, amazing healings, demons fleeing at the dreaded name of Jesus, and awesome miracles testifying to the reality of a risen Lord. If we embrace this call, we will find the true joy of serving Christ, who is worthy of every sacrifice. Such service goes beyond the call of duty and reflects a desire to give our all for the Lord who has given us His all.

There is a war raging: God versus Satan, the kingdom of God diametrically opposed to the kingdom of darkness whose shadow falls across the entire world. Satan has amassed an army for the final battle against God, and it is time for us to join in the fight against him. Thus far, he has the fallen angels and all the demons on his side.ⁱⁱⁱ His goal is, and always has been, to increase his force by turning as many humans as possible against their Creator.

All the way back to the Fall, man's predisposition to sin manifested itself. The result for Adam and Eve, and for all of us, was rebellion against God and bondage to Satan and sin (Romans 6:16). Though man was originally given dominion of the world (Genesis 1:26-28), God's arch-enemy deceived him. In a move that man could never have foreseen, Satan thus became the *de facto* ruler of this world and we became his slaves (Luke 4:6).

Of course, God was not oblivious to Satan's plans. He sent His Son, Jesus, to deliver us from our enslavement to Satan, sin, and the world, and to transfer us into His kingdom instead (Colossians 1:13-

14). What our modern gospel may fail to communicate is that our freedom from captivity was not meant to simply spare us from our deserved punishment. No—it was meant to free us from Satan’s power and compel us to fight against the enemy. We are not just citizens of a new kingdom, but enlisted soldiers. Once saved, we are intended to engage against all the powers of darkness. Instead, our shrewd foe has simply changed his tactics and successfully lulled us into complacency, so that most are completely unaware of his methods and plans.

Satan’s work is two-fold. First, knowing that by default man is on his side, he wants to keep him from defecting and finding freedom (through salvation). Failing this, our enemy works all the more feverishly to prevent man from gathering more of Satan’s own troops against him to undermine his chances for victory. Just one soul changing allegiance from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, and actively engaging in gathering more souls through ongoing discipleship, is an undeniable threat to Satan.

Once “saved,” most Christians accept their perceived freedom, but many are oblivious to Satan’s persistence in his effort to render them entirely ineffective and unproductive for the advancement of God’s kingdom. Through an impressive variety of means (some defined by Jesus in Matthew 13:20-22 as affliction, persecution, worry, and the deceitfulness of wealth), the enemy succeeds in keeping these unproductive believers on a tight leash, where they are ultimately unable to fight their way to the front lines of the battle. Instead of seeking to bring the message of freedom to the lost around them, they are distracted by the worries and cares of the world.

Jesus said the harvest is ready, but the laborers are few (Luke 10:2). Where are they? Multitudes are deceived by the wiles of the enemy, very often strongholds that are developed right within their own religious factions. Unlike the early Christians who accepted the call to count the cost and surrender everything for their Lord, today our ranks are filled with people who think it’s enough to attend regular meetings and live a “good” life. They are seldom told there is a war going on, let alone trained and sent to fight in it.

Just as Satan has a two-fold plan of attack, the purposes of *Christianity Unleashed* are also two-fold. The first goal is to expose the enemy’s program and *unleash* those who are bound in slavery to Satan; the second goal is to train, mobilize, and *unleash* a flood of front-line soldiers for the battle to plunder the kingdom of darkness. Every saint can be prepared and equipped to engage in the battle in the same way, with the same spirit, and with the same tools as the early Christians. God wants soldiers who are willing to give all in their

service to Him—not just out of duty, but with sincere devotion and love for Him.

The battle against the kingdom of darkness is, of course, a spiritual battle fought with spiritual weapons (Ephesians 6:10-18). Yet the determination, sacrifice, and honor of a hero are still demanded of those who engage in front-line warfare. Far from being a life of duty and drudgery, we experience vibrant purpose, exciting adventure, and deep fulfillment as we step forward into the abundant Christian life that we see in the book of Acts. Join me in becoming a front-line soldier for the kingdom of God, walking not in wise and persuasive words, but in demonstrations of the Holy Spirit and of power (1 Corinthians 2:4). In the next chapter, I'll share how that transition happened for me, in hopes that you also will look more deeply at what God has done, and can do, in your own life.

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Chapter 5—Divine Healing in the King’s Name

“Get up and walk!” I exclaimed, propelled by the excitement of seeing the woman’s paralyzed leg move under her own power. Titus helped her to her feet and braced her by her arm as she walked for the first time in years.

I had learned about Stephanie through her daughter, Lydia, who was a waitress at our favorite restaurant in town. Upon Lydia’s return to work from an extended absence, I asked her where she had been. She told me that she had been forced to take leave from work in order to stay at home and help her invalid mother. I inquired about her condition and she shared that Stephanie had suffered a stroke years back, rendering the entire left side of her body completely paralyzed. I asked if I could visit one day to pray for her healing. Lydia was thrilled, though I think she assumed the missionary would simply be a potential sponsor for further treatment.

A week later I visited Stephanie with a couple of our Spirit-filled brethren. We prayed, and she noted that all her pain went away. Then, after more prayer, she twitched her leg upwards just once and was able to physically twitch several fingers. When we followed up with her later, she reported that after that day, her anxiety and restlessness had also gone, allowing her restful sleep for the first time in a long time. These were not “pick up your mat and walk” reports, but we were pleased with measurable progress. The idea of healing by the authority of Jesus, as an expectation for all believers, was somewhat new to us, so even these small improvements following prayer were a real boost to our faith, and we promised her we would return.

On our follow-up visit, we gathered around Stephanie, opened with a couple of songs, and invited the Holy Spirit to do His work. On our previous visit, I had noted a bracelet that might be an invitation for something unclean. Upon my request, she removed it and I prayed against any unclean spirits. I then stepped up to pray against her paralysis, but after three honest tries, I backed down, defeated. Titus took over, and he wasn’t going to give up so easily. He persevered in prayer for several minutes. And, suddenly, Stephanie was able to lift her leg—again, and again. We were amazed. God had done it!

That is when I told her to get up and walk. Completely under her own power, she walked around the room with Titus’s support. She continues to gain strength and walk further and further to this day.

I still had many questions about divine healing at this point, and I was making many mistakes. However, God continued to show up in power to build my faith and experience sufficiently to press forward. I am so thankful that He did not give up on me.

It is my hope that through these stories, examples, and teachings, you can get a jump-start on what has taken me far too long to learn. Although you may not yet understand the significance of healing as a weapon in your arsenal against all the work of the enemy, it is certainly a means by which God shows forth His glory, persuades people of His presence, and frees people from their physical bondage.

One thing I have learned is that, when it comes to healing, our faith works along with God's power. As Jesus said, "According to your faith will it be done to you" (Matthew 9:29). We must believe what we do not see if we have any expectation of success in healing. And though at the time of my meeting with Stephanie I was still new to the inner workings of healing, God had certainly built my faith over my many years as a Christian, particularly to have confidence in Him for healing power. Without this foundation, I'm sure things would have progressed much more slowly for me.

My first experience with divine healing was in 2001. I was in a labor and delivery room with my wife and family members. I had just hung up the phone after receiving a grim report from a medical professional from the University hospital after a day of testing and evaluation on my newborn son. Jonah had a congenital diaphragmatic hernia—a hole in his diaphragm which had allowed his abdominal organs to be pushed into his lung cavity. That much we had already learned just a short time after his birth. But according to these updated reports, it got worse—a lot worse. His spleen was missing. His left kidney was not there. His entire small intestines were in his lung cavity and though he was full term, his lungs were under-developed. His heart was pushed to the right side of his body. His heart valves were not functioning properly and blood would not divert to the lungs but continued to flow to the umbilical cord. *Oh dear; this is serious*, I thought to myself.

I asked the woman on the other end of the line what his chances were. She said, in her opinion, he could not survive in his condition. I relayed the information immediately to the eagerly listening family who had gathered in the room with me (all but the terminal report). Though many family members responded with tears, Cindy and I felt oddly at peace—even confident. Some recent events in our lives gave us great faith in God's presence in this situation. Not the promise of a perfect outcome, but simply a promise of His perfect presence.

Shortly after, our pastor entered the room. We gave him the news, and he responded, "I've seen God work in things like this before." Under her breath, but audible enough for Cindy to catch, a crying family member muttered, "But He won't."

Months prior, as we had eagerly anticipated the birth of our second child, Cindy noted the development of a hernia, a condition

Chapter 7—Direct Warfare: Expelling Demons

Malaria. Just malaria. *We can do this*, I thought to myself. I was walking with our mission's strongest front-line warriors. The blind see, the mute speak, the lame walk. What is malaria to God?

We were visiting a small village on the shores of Lake Victoria in Eastern Uganda. This was a return trip for me, and I had brought our guys with me to pray for three tough cases in particular. Yet I was amazed to discover that several people I had prayed for previously who had not been immediately healed were showing definite improvement. The most exciting news was that the mute boy who had not responded to prayer was now speaking!

I intended to pray for a boy with a swollen leg, but his father greeted us with the report that the boy's mother was in bed, severely ill with malaria. We immediately offered to pray for her, confident of God's ability to heal her. Entering the small mud hut, I rolled back the mosquito net to see a woman, not of sound mind, sweating yet shivering, all wrapped in covers. *Oh dear*, I thought nervously, *this is a serious case*. I gently touched her on the shoulder and commanded the malaria to go in the name of Jesus. Rather unexpectedly, the quiet atmosphere was instantly shattered. She began violently shaking her head back and forth, and I jumped into battle mode. A demon! I commanded the unclean spirit to go. The next several moments felt like the longest minutes of my life, as I saw no response whatsoever. The brothers behind me continued to support me in prayer, but my attention remained fixed on the writhing woman. Once again, I authoritatively told the spirit to leave. After what seemed like an eternity, the woman calmed. However, upon questioning, she indicated that she could still sense a presence. I continued to pray until she proclaimed freedom. As I then prayed for healing of specific symptoms, she rapidly regained strength and was able to sit up and speak. Her color returned and her fever abated. However, she still felt something in her chest. One more round of prayers and she was completely free, asking for food and drink for the first time in days.

This was not my first experience expelling demons, nor would it be my last. Though coupled with healing as a sign that Jesus said would accompany those who believe (Mark 16:17-18), I never considered that demons might be particularly prevalent or that this type of spiritual warfare would be common. Yet now I felt as if we had opened "Pandora's box." We were consistently encountering more and more demons as we performed healings and shared the gospel of the kingdom.

It is clear in the Scriptures that expelling demons was a routine part of the ministry of Jesus and the early disciples. The history of the first few hundred years of the church also reveals that this was part of normal Christianity.^{xxiii} In fact, writings indicate that exorcisms were practiced by average, everyday believers.^{xxiv} So what happened to all those demons, and why do Christians rarely see them today?

Since my goal is to mobilize the saints for spiritual battle, I believe that the practical is much more useful than the theoretical. However, some background may be helpful as you step out to engage on the front lines, particularly with such an obscure subject.

The early church believed that demons were the spirits of the Nephilim; that is, the mixed offspring of the angels that took human wives.^{xxv,xxvi} There is some suggestion of this in Genesis 6:1-4, but it is also documented in the Book of Enoch, a writing widely accepted by the early church that is actually quoted by Jude in the New Testament (Jude 1:14-15). The Book of Enoch tells us that the rebellious angels were banished from Heaven while the immortal spirits of their mortal children were condemned to roam the earth until the final judgment. These bodiless spirits, which we call demons, are now basically parasites looking for hosts.

Whether you believe this particular account or not matters little. However, it is impossible to do the works that Jesus commanded and expected of us if we aren't willing to acknowledge the reality of demons and recognize their work. Regardless of where they come from or what we may call them, they are real. They are the enemy against whom we are called to fight.

The Scriptures identify Satan as a tempter, liar, adversary, and accuser. He is described as a lion seeking to devour (1 Peter 5:8). Both the fallen angels and the demons have, throughout human history, been understood to fight on the side of Satan in the cosmic battle that has continually been waged against God and His allies. The primary work of demons seems to be to afflict people with sickness, disease, suffering, and mental illness. When Jesus cast out demons, it was most often in association with some type of sickness or disorder (for example, Matthew 17:14-18, Mark 5:1-15), and when the demon left, healing was the result. That is why there is often a direct link between sickness and demons, though not all such afflictions are demons.

While in the US for several weeks (my first visit in over five years), I had the opportunity to talk to a middle-aged, Christian homeschool Mom. She poured out her heart about the difficulties in her home. Her husband had discontinued his medications for a psychological condition, bringing much conflict and instability into the home. Though I never welcome this situation (that is, lending an ear for a

Chapter 13—Marching in Step with the King

Every soldier goes through “basic training” and is then sent out to the front lines where ever he will serve. He is expected to follow orders and remain under authority; otherwise, he will find himself released from his duty, often dishonorably. As soldiers of Christ fighting against the domain of darkness, the expectation for us is the same. Our basic training includes the “elementary teachings of the faith” which we have already identified from Hebrews 6: repentance and faith, baptism and the laying on of hands (for receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit), the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

Once we master these essentials we are ready to press on to maturity; that is, we acquire experience on the front lines and strive to fulfill the commands of our King, Jesus. Yet it is only as we walk under His authority and in obedience to His words that we remain in honorable service. Many are those who have begun well but have then been deceived by the enemy, either in their personal Christian walk or in their work for the Lord. The apostle Paul challenged the Galatians that, having begun by the Spirit, they were in danger of trying to become perfect through works of the flesh. We can run the same risk if we don't stay in close communion with Christ through prayer and fasting and purpose to respond to all that He reveals to us.

Just as Simon the Sorcerer wanted to buy the gift that the apostles possessed for selfish motives, or like the seven sons of Sceva tried to leverage the name of Jesus to cast out demons, operating in the power of the Holy Spirit can likewise be a temptation for us. We must always remember that it is God's power, not ours, and that we are to serve Him in humility according to His leading, not for the fulfillment of personal motivations.^{xxxv}

When Jesus sent out the seventy, they returned with joy, reporting to their Master, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.” Jesus commended them, but left them with a warning as well: “Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven” (Luke 10:17, 20). We are called as soldiers to engage in the battle, and we do so by the power of the Holy Spirit. However, we cannot neglect our primary duty: to maintain fellowship with Christ through the same indwelling Spirit and keep our minds set on things above.

That is why, in this chapter, I thought it of utmost importance to look a little more deeply at the Christian walk: the concept of being not only filled with, but led by, the Holy Spirit, and how to maintain fellowship with God through obedience. I don't want any of you to run the risk of losing all that you have gained thus far.

Hopefully you are somewhat familiar with the Old Testament account of the Israelites' enslavement in Egypt, and how God miraculously freed them from the hand of Pharaoh. In a journey to the Promised Land that should have taken days, the Israelites instead spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness. Why? The short answer is, they were disobedient to their God and quickly forgot how He had worked in power to redeem them from their years of bondage.

We are told three times in the New Testament that their story serves as an example for us Christians (see 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, Hebrews 3:16-4:1, and Jude v. 5). Let's look at just one of those passages and see how it relates to the subject at hand:

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "The PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO play." Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Corinthians 10:1-11)

This example perfectly describes the Christian experience. Let's look first at the obvious parallels. Just as the Israelites were enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt, we were enslaved to Satan, sin, and the world. The Israelites were delivered from death through the blood of the Passover lamb; we were delivered from the law of sin and death through the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Just as they were set free by a deliverer, Moses, we were delivered by Christ. They passed to freedom through the baptism of the sea; we also go from death to life, being born again in water baptism. Just as they ate and drank the spiritual food which is Christ, we also partake in the body and blood of Christ as our spiritual food in the observance of communion. The Israelites were sojourners eagerly awaiting their promised rest, instructed not to store up excess nor call the wilderness home. We, too, are sojourners commanded not to store up treasures on earth, but rather commanded to trust God for our daily bread.