

# How to change the spiritual climate

by Ed Silvos from [Prayer Evangelism](#)

Changing the climate is not unknown to us. Our problem is that we do not believe that the same climate we have in church can and should be all over the city.

We have no problem believing that it is possible to change the spiritual climate inside a home, in a church building or even at a stadium during a crusade. Every Sunday in church we see the climate change gradually as the service proceeds. The concept of changing a spiritual climate is not foreign to us.

However, we do have a problem believing that the same climate we enjoy in church can and should be enjoyed all over the city. Yet this is promised in 1 Timothy 2:1-9, where Paul tells us that if we pray for everybody, everywhere, we will be able to live quiet and tranquil lives in all godliness and honesty. For godliness to increase in a city, ungodliness must decrease, and none of this can happen without radical improvement in the spiritual climate of the city.

For far too long, we have left control of the spiritual climate in our cities in the hands of the devil. This is evident when we look around at the mire of sin, the hostility and anger, the criminal activity and the crushing weight of hopelessness on our fellow citizens. Every week thousands in our cities get married, hoping for a bright future; and every week a similar number watch their marriages disintegrate. Satan is keeping a subzero climate in place, while the Church is rubbing sticks together, trying to spark a few fires to keep its own people from freezing.

But what if the Church in the city was able to take control of the spiritual thermostat away from the devil and set it to a comfortable 70° F? Suddenly, Satan would be on the defensive, assigning demons to frantically distribute melting ice cubes around the city in a futile attempt to bring the temperature down a few degrees.

When the pastors repented at the gates of the city in San Nicolas, Argentina (see chapter 1 of [Prayer Evangelism](#), I expected good things to come out of it; but I was not prepared for how much good came of it or for how quickly it happened. The unprecedented media acceptance, the warm welcome by secular authorities, the support from the Catholic church for our city-reaching efforts, the friendly reception during the door-to-door visitation and especially the miracles at the prayer fair were all extraordinary in the extreme. All of this took place because the spiritual climate over the city had been changed.

## The Witch That Switched

The change in climate became dramatically evident when a witch's coven became a lighthouse of prayer in less than 60 minutes. This is how it happened. During the radio broadcast designed to launch lighthouses of prayer in San Nicolas, members of the international prayer delegation went to several different homes to listen to and participate

in the radio broadcast. The visitors and their hosts had a great time as everyone was guided through a bilingual radio prayer exercise.

However, two of the international delegates, totally unaware, went to the wrong house! They knocked on the door and a very strange looking lady opened it. When they asked, in broken Spanish, if hers was a house of prayer, the woman replied affirmatively in a very spooky voice. Unsure of themselves, they went in, turned on their radios and became connected to the Church that was praying all over the city. They soon found out that they were indeed in a house of prayer-a house of prayer to Satan. Their hostess was a witch and her house home to a witch's coven.

Demons manifested in their presence but were quickly cast out. Within the hour, the witch received the Lord and was filled with the Holy Spirit. Her two daughters also received the Lord and, for the balance of the broadcast, the host and her unexpected visitors rid the house of all satanic paraphernalia. What used to be a satanic stronghold became God's outpost. Under ordinary circumstances, Satan would have had the upper hand, home field advantage, if you will-but not this time, because the spiritual climate had changed. That night the Church was in control of the city.

## Can I Be Your Son Again?

This is not an isolated case. Let me share two stories of what happened when a similar three-day launch of prayer lighthouses was held in Modesto, California. On Monday night, the night of the first radio broadcast, a couple invited their backslidden son to join them to dedicate their home as a lighthouse of prayer. The son refused, slammed the door and left, visibly upset. He spent the night someplace else, while the parents went ahead with the dedication. The next day they sanctified their home. As part of this process they were led to forgive those who had offended them. In the closing minutes of the broadcast, they were directed to lift up holy hands, without anger or dissension, and to pray for someone who needed a touch from God. They prayed for God to touch their son, wherever he was.

Where was he? He was in bed with a woman who was not his wife, committing adultery-not the most spiritually conducive environment, I should say. Nevertheless, he felt God's touch in that place. He apologized to the lady for his sudden loss of focus, got dressed in a hurry and called home, begging permission to go back. He rededicated his life to the Lord, and the next day he joined his parents in prayer walking their neighborhood!

The following is another extraordinary testimony from that week. On Tuesday evening, Doug was in his apartment waiting for the radio broadcast to begin. The topic of the broadcast was sanctification of the home, and he was looking forward to it. Several years earlier Doug had married a woman who had a child, a boy, from a previous marriage. Doug adopted the boy as his son and, later, God blessed the married couple with a boy and two daughters of their own. Unfortunately, the marriage ended in divorce, and when it did, Doug renounced the adoption, which devastated the young man. They had not seen each other in the 11 years since.

Five minutes into the broadcast, Doug's ex-son knocked on the door, burst into the apartment and poured out a litany of pain caused by failure after failure. Doug easily led

him to the Lord but then realized that the young man would not have been in such a condition had he not rejected him. Immediately, Doug begged his forgiveness. The ex-son forgave him and then, in a trembling voice, he asked, "Could you ever forgive me for what I did to your daughters?" This was a most difficult issue because when Doug rejected him, the young man had abused them out of spite. Moved, Doug told him that he did forgive him, and both fell into a warm embrace, tears running down their cheeks. In this tender setting the young man asked, "Doug, can I become your son again?" Doug assented and right there, in prayer, he readopted the young man. Afterwards, they prayed together for Doug's natural son to receive the Lord. The following Monday, Doug's natural son asked to go with him to an evangelistic meeting, where he publicly received the Lord!

Each of these cases represents an extraordinary outpouring of the power of God, something we seldom see in our neopagan, postmodern world. The reason for these breakthroughs is that the spiritual climate over the city had changed. When the spiritual climate changes for the better, so does everybody and everything in the city.

At what point in time did the climate radically change? It happened on Wednesday evening, right after the city had been prayer walked.

## I'll Meet You at the Prayer Fair

In San Nicolas, where this weeklong process was pioneered, we met Wednesday morning with the pastors to strategize, and the Lord specifically instructed us not to engage any demons that evening but to concentrate exclusively on speaking peace to every home we walked by. By the end of the evening the entire city had been silently prayer walked, every home quietly blessed and an invitation surreptitiously placed under every door, inviting people to a prayer fair the following Saturday. On Thursday and Friday, pastors and intercessors spent the days in prayer and fasting. On Saturday morning, every home in town was visited with tremendous results.

We knocked on doors and asked, "Do you know that today is the favorable year of the Lord?" Most people pleaded ignorance. When asked if they knew what this meant, none of them had the slightest idea. We told them that "favorable" meant that God wanted to do them a favor. When asked if they needed a favor, most of them said yes. They were then shown a half-page ad in the local newspaper featuring an invitation to the prayer fair. The ad included a coupon good for free admission and unlimited prayers! Everybody received this with pleasure.

At 3 P.M. people began to converge on the prayer fair. Quite a few carried our coupons, and when they stopped at the information counter for directions, the dialogue went something like this:

Inquirer: (showing the coupon) "Where do I go first?"

Believer: "It depends on your problem. What is it?"

Inquirer: "My wife left me."

Believer: (turning toward a billboard) "Let's see. Here it is! Family problems is aisle 5. The ushers (undercover intercessors) will lead you there."

Once they got to aisle 5 or 2 or 3, depending on their need, intercessors and pastors prayed for them. God touched inquirers all over the park, and as soon as they felt His power, they wanted to know more about Jesus. Many received the Lord right then and there.

In retrospect, this kind of looks like a sure thing; but when we were preparing for it, lacking prior experience and the solid biblical foundation we have now, we were not so certain. I remember wondering on Thursday and Friday if anyone would come to the prayer fair. My worry was in vain. On Saturday crowds eagerly came to the park and miracles took place. The spiritual climate was so good that everyone, it seemed, was able to lead someone to the Lord.

When that historic week was over, I asked the Lord to show me the biblical basis for the dramatic change in spiritual climate we had experienced. He led me to the Gospel of Luke, which I read several times in one sitting. I noticed that Luke documents two different kinds of climate during the time of Jesus' ministry. The first 9 chapters of Luke portray a hostile climate in the land; the last 15 show a largely favorable spiritual climate. This change in climate and the reasons behind it are very important for the subject at hand.

## Hostile Climate

Early in Jesus' ministry the climate in Galilee and Judea was so unfavorable that in Luke 9:41 Jesus sounded markedly like someone who felt like quitting. He said to His disciples, "O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you, and put up with you?" Obviously, Jesus was quite frustrated and unhappy with them.

By the next chapter, however, He felt entirely different: "He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit" (Luke 10:21), and He began to praise God for what His disciples had done.

If we examine carefully these two phases in Jesus' earthly ministry, we will find the key to changing the spiritual climate over our cities. First we will see how the spiritual climate became progressively worse to the point of being almost unbearable for our Lord.

## A Challenge Issued by God

When Jesus emerged from the baptismal waters, the Father declared, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22, NKJV). This statement was obviously not intended for the benefit of Jesus, since He knew very well who He was and what His Father thought of Him. Nor was it meant for John the Baptist who, a moment earlier, had made a declaration to that effect. Since there is no evidence that the crowd heard the voice from heaven, it is possible that this declaration was intended for the devil himself. By saying, "In You I am well pleased," God was making known to the devil that a sinless human being had invaded his kingdom of sin.

This posed a serious threat to Satan, whose rulership was empowered by sin. God reminded the devil that he had no leverage against Jesus because of His holy nature. Satan's kingdom had been invaded, and God's statement-the equivalent of "Go ahead, Satan, make My day"-was the opening bell for the match of the ages.

In response to God's challenge, the devil came to the fore and for 40 days tried to draw Jesus into his control through temptations to sin. Once defeated, the devil "departed from Him until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13). Traditionally, we have identified the next opportune time to be when Jesus was in brutal anguish at the Garden of Gethsemane or on the following day when He was hanging on the cross. However, I believe that the devil did not wait that long to come back at his foe; in fact, he was waiting in ambush right around the corner.

## Friends and Neighbors Are Turned Against Him

Jesus returned in the power of the Holy Spirit to His home region of Galilee, and His fame began to spread. While in the town of Nazareth, He taught an audience of friends and neighbors in the synagogue; "and all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips" (Luke 4:22). In human terms, nothing could have been more positive and affirming.

Suddenly, "all in the synagogue were filled with rage . . . and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff" (vv. 28,29). For a hometown crowd to take such a sudden turn from adulation and praise to unrestrained violence against one of their own is, in the natural world, psychologically and sociologically improbable in the extreme. Jesus' teaching that day was hardly incendiary. I can only attribute these happenings to the supernatural intervention of evil. In other words, this was Satan's next opportune moment, which he seized and turned Jesus' friends and neighbors against Him. As a result, the most sociable man ever to walk on the earth left town knowing He had been rejected by the people He grew up with.

But Satan was not through. From there, Jesus went down to the city of Capernaum, where He taught on the Sabbath in the local synagogue. It was there that He came up against a very aggressive demon-a very disrespectful, Rambo-class demon who challenged Jesus publicly (see Luke 4:34). Jesus cast him out. That same evening, Satan dropped his pistol and took up a machine gun, unleashing many demons, who also were disrespectfully loud and in Jesus' face (see v. 41).

## The Pharisees and Scribes Turn Against Jesus

The religious leaders of the nation came out to hear Him preach and, reasoning in their hearts, began speaking out against Him: "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies?" (v. 21). Soon the scribes and the Pharisees attempted to drive a wedge between Jesus and His disciples with their slanderous grumbling.

After Jesus rebuked them, they began to watch Him closely, not to find the truth but "in order that they might find reason to accuse Him" (Luke 6:7). After they were embarrassed

in a Sabbath confrontation, the religious leaders became "filled with rage," and they began plotting against Him (v. 11). Theirs was a murderous rage, similar to that experienced by the rioters in Nazareth and undoubtedly satanic in nature.

On the surface their anger may appear to be simply a negative human reaction. However, its satanic origins were exposed by Jesus when, shortly afterwards, He indicted the Pharisees and scribes as murderous on account of their direct connection to the devil: "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). This indictment did not make Him any more popular with the religious authorities.

So it was that in a short time the devil had lined up against Him a multitude of demons, His friends and neighbors and the religious establishment. Things would soon get worse.

## John the Baptist Is Neutralized

Jesus described His cousin John the Baptist as the greatest man to be born of a woman (see Matt. 11:11). Their mothers had been friends and faith pals while bringing to term supernatural pregnancies. John grew up to become Jesus' front man, who prepared the people for His coming. In a sea of humanity totally blinded to Jesus' message, John represented the only lighthouse of hope, albeit a very bright one.

However, in Luke 7 the spiritual climate had become increasingly hostile, and John had been imprisoned by Herod for speaking out against the ruler's public sinfulness. Confined and awaiting his inevitable execution, John began to have doubts. So John sent his disciples to inquire of his cousin, "Are you the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?" (Luke 7:19).

I suspect this must have been a most difficult moment for Jesus, for John had also been affected by the Satan-controlled climate.

## Nature Is Manipulated Against Jesus

In Luke 8:22-24, the boat in which Jesus and His disciples were sailing was buffeted and nearly sunk by a sudden severe storm. The disciples, most of whom were experienced sailors and fishermen, literally cried out in fear-not a very manly reaction, I grant you. Surely they had seen and experienced their share of fierce storms, but these brave men now found themselves fresh out of courage. I submit to you that the reason for this is that this was a most unusual storm-a storm unleashed, or at least manipulated, by the devil himself.

When the disciples woke Jesus, "He rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm" (v. 24). There is no need for the Creator to have to rebuke His creation; rebuking is what Jesus did when He confronted demons. Under natural circumstances, all the Creator would need to do is to tell the wind to subside and the waves to calm down. The fact that He had to rebuke them gives us ample room to speculate that supernatural evil was behind such a fierce storm.

## Foreigners Turn Against Jesus

In the region of the Gerasenes, Jesus confronted not one or a few demons but a legion that had terrorized the area while in possession of a local man. Jesus cast them out, set the man free and delivered the region from a serious public menace (Luke 8:26-33). What happened next does not make much sense in the natural realm, which is why we need to seek answers in the supernatural.

Logically, we might expect that in view of their deliverance from this terror, the locals should have asked Jesus to stay around, if for no other reason than to keep them safe in case the demons returned. They should have expressed their gratitude to Jesus. Instead, "they were gripped with great fear" and "asked Him to depart" (v. 37). Once again, the natural did not come naturally; most likely this abnormal response was also the result of supernatural evil.

I trust that you now see that Jesus operated in a very hostile climate run by the devil himself. But the worst was yet to come: His disciples joined the opposition, too.

## The Disciples Sabotage Jesus' Mission

Finally, Jesus' own disciples turned against Him, though perhaps unwittingly. First, the Twelve expressed mild contempt for the crowds whom Jesus loved so much, saying, "Send the multitude away" (Luke 9:12). Then Jesus forbade the Twelve to preach, apparently because they were not willing to deny themselves and humbly follow Him (see Luke 9:21-26), and Peter was rebuked as a mouthpiece for the devil himself (see Matt. 16:23).

Soon after, at the scene of the Transfiguration, Peter, James and John were rebuked by God the Father because of their self-centeredness (see Luke 9:32-36). Meanwhile, the other nine disciples were being defeated by a single demon in the village below (see v. 40). Amazingly, after this series of discouraging events, the disciples got into an argument as to who among them might be the greatest (see v. 46)!

Finally, after Jesus chastised His disciples for hindering someone who was doing what they seemed to be incapable of doing—that is, casting out demons (see Luke 9:50)—James and John offered to command that fire from heaven be sent to consume a village of Samaritans who had turned them away (see v. 54). So Jesus passed a most severe judgment: "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of" (v. 55). In other words, the disciples were under the control of Satan rather than of God.

The closing verses of this sad chapter show Jesus unable to recruit new, committed disciples (see Luke 9:57-62). There is no question that the spiritual climate was absolutely hostile. Jesus, like the Church today, had won every battle; but He was in danger of losing the war. We will look further at the disciples' inefficiency in chapter 7, but it is no wonder that Jesus voiced his frustration with His disciples, calling them "unbelieving and perverted" (v. 42). Obviously, the climate could not have been worse if this was the best He could say about His closest associates.

Then something happened that radically turned the tide in Jesus' favor.

## Favorable Climate

A most dramatic change in the spiritual climate is recorded in Luke 10. However, let us first look at the ensuing events that took place in this improved climate, and we will come back to Luke 10 later.

## The Disciples Ask to Learn How to Pray

"Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Jesus had repeatedly exhorted His disciples to listen and to learn. Even the Father had to rebuke Peter, James and John, telling them to stop talking and to listen to Jesus instead. The fact that these same "hearing-impaired" men came asking to be taught is indicative of a definite change for the better.

## Demonic Activity Virtually Disappears

In the first nine chapters of Luke, we see very aggressive demons rearing their ugly heads all over and in large numbers. However, for the balance of Luke-the next 14 chapters-only two demons are mentioned, and neither of them is the aggressive Rambo type. In fact, both demons are so proper, they seem to have graduated from prep school! One is a dumb demon who went away without a peep (see Luke 11:14). The other is a demon who had tormented a woman for 18 years, but Jesus healed her without even addressing the demon (see Luke 13:12).

The virtual absence of demonic activity in the last 14 chapters of Luke is definite proof that the spiritual winds had shifted and that the new climate was not hospitable for demonic activity.

## The Multitudes Begin to Increase Until Everybody Is on Board

"The multitudes marveled. The crowds were increasing" (Luke 11:14,29). Unlike the time when friends, neighbors and foreigners turned against Him, multitudes were instead flocking to Jesus-so much so that He declared, "Everybody is forcing their way into the kingdom of God" (see Luke 16:16). Now that is 100% responsiveness!

## Jesus Takes the Offensive

Rather than waiting for the religious leaders to attempt to trap Him with their devious questions, Jesus took the initiative and exposed the leaders of the establishment as frauds (see Luke 11:35-52).

He publicly called them hypocrites: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1).

He humiliated them (see Luke 13:17).

His enemies, once so sure of themselves, suddenly realized they were powerless to harm Him as they had planned to when the climate was in their favor. Now they wished that Herod would do something to take care of their problem. But Jesus challenged them and



Herod publicly: "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal'" (Luke 13:32). Jesus was telling the Pharisees, "There is nothing that either you or Herod can do to Me. I will fulfill My mission."

The Pharisees, always a very outspoken and opinionated bunch, were now silenced: "They were watching Him closely. . . . But they kept silent. . . . They could make no reply" (Luke 14:1,4,6). They were reduced to grumbling and scoffing (see Luke 15:2; 16:14), very inane and impotent actions for a proud group that had been, until recently, making plans to kill Jesus.

## Jesus' Army Is on the March and Adding New Recruits

His disciples came to Him and asked for their faith to be increased, a very healthy request (see Luke 17:5). Whereas in the past they would argue or ignore Jesus, now when confronted with an assignment, they ask for tools (faith) to carry it out.

About this time, Jesus added children to His army, calling them role models for His followers:

And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He might touch them. . . . Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all" (Luke 18:15-17).

Later at Jericho, a poor blind man was healed, and an entire town was won over:

And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he regained his sight, and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God (Luke 18:42,43).

## A Most Decisive Chapter

In Luke 19, Satan suffered a major setback when Jesus won over one of his best players, Zaccheus, a chief tax collector and a man so despised that he was considered beyond redemption by his fellow citizens (see Luke 19:2-9). With the devil's game plan now in tatters, Jesus began running up the score.

Multitudes flocked to Him from all over and, having become His disciples, they took an active role in His mission:

The whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, saying, "BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (vv. 37,38).

When the religious leaders complained that the crowds were too enthusiastic, Jesus underlined the inevitability of His victory: "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!" (v. 40).

Jesus then scored a dramatic touchdown when he expelled the merchants and moneychangers from the Temple (see vv. 45,46). He converted the extra point when, subsequently, He was able to teach daily in the Temple in spite of the religious leaders' hatred (see v. 47). This is very significant because the Temple was the citadel of the religious leaders. Jesus took it over and transformed the place into His pulpit.

The multitudes, so despised by the religious establishment, became His shield and made it impossible for the chief priests and scribes to even attempt to do harm to Jesus: "And they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging upon His words" (v. 48).

## A Clear Path to Victory

In the ensuing days, Jesus' opposition vanished as His enemies were discredited and they turned tail. By then the spiritual climate had become the polar opposite of the discouraging days of chapter 9.

Jesus chose not to answer the questions of the opposition anymore (see Luke 20:1-8). The religious leaders, who once held such power over the people, became afraid of the multitudes surrounding Jesus, a fact that forced them to send spies since they dared not come near Him. The spies' mission? To get near to Jesus and catch Him in a subversive statement that would allow them to deliver Him up to the authority of the Roman governor (see v. 20).

But the spies failed and became silenced (see v. 26). Eventually, they lost their courage:

And some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." For they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything (Luke 20:39,40).

Jesus took total control of the situation, confidently stating, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Luke 21:33). As there was no significant opposition at hand, with the full backing of the multitudes Jesus took over his opponents' turf: "During the day He was teaching in the temple. . . . And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him" (vv. 37,38).

## Satan Loses Control

Satan finally came into the open because his minions were powerless before the common folk who so enthusiastically and in such large numbers rallied around Jesus. You know a football team is in trouble when its overweight coach benches the quarterback, borrows his jersey and enters the field to try to execute a crucial fourth-down play. This is exactly what happened when Satan made his move to enter Judas (see Luke 22:3).

At first Judas proved to be very helpful as he knew where Jesus prayed alone at night and offered to betray Him to the chief priests (see v. 4). Satan might have said to himself, I had it all wrong. I've been using demons, religious leaders, nature, and I got nowhere. The moment I laid my hands on one of His disciples, I was already inside Jesus' 20-yard line! Motivated by his first taste of success in some time, Satan demanded permission to draft another player, Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat" (Luke 22:31).

What Satan didn't notice was that Jesus first faked to His right, then swung to His left and was set to throw a Hail Mary pass that would devastate the devil and his demonic empire. Only a few weeks later, on the Day of Pentecost, Simon Peter would kneel down, grab the handles of the gates of hell, pull them open and announce into the very pit of hell, "The first 3,000 captives in line, come on out!" When this happened, Satan could only watch in total disbelief as Peter led the first of many liberating raids against his mortally wounded kingdom.

In the meantime, Jesus would become the ultimate Lamb by surrendering Himself, choosing not to retaliate but to bless instead, all of which led to total victory in Luke 23. There He turned Satan's wolves into His lambs: He led the thief to salvation and the centurion to faith, and the multitudes went away beating their breasts, realizing they had been party to a major mistake. This set the stage for the mass conversions that began on the Day of Pentecost.

I trust that you see in this quick survey of the Gospel of Luke two very different spiritual climates: an increasingly hostile climate in the first nine chapters and an absolutely favorable one in the final chapters.

## How and When the Climate Changed

At what point in time did the spiritual climate change? It happened in Luke 10, when the same demonic powers who had buffeted Jesus and defeated several of His disciples suddenly lost the upper hand and eventually surrendered. Jesus had sent 70 of His disciples out, two by two, to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom in every city where He planned to visit:

And the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name" (Luke 10:17).

Jesus explained the reason behind this turn of events for the better: "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning" (v. 18). In other words, Satan himself had suffered a major defeat.

Now that we know when the climate changed, let us see how it was changed. What was it that produced this dramatic transformation? The key moment was when the Seventy, unlike the Twelve, agreed to mix in a friendly and conciliatory manner with the same people the devil was using against Jesus—"the wolves," as Jesus called them (Luke 10:3). The change happened precisely when the disciples spoke peace over those who were poised to harm them. This action would then lead to reconciliation and fellowship (see vv. 5,7). At that

precise moment, Satan's human army was neutralized, and they eventually defected when the kingdom of God came near to them.

To understand how this works, it is crucial to realize that the devil cannot hurt us with just one move; instead, he needs two moves. Satan's first move is to cause someone to hurt us badly enough that we let the sun set on our resulting anger. When we do this, we give room to the devil (see Eph. 4:27). Then he promptly moves in, walking right into our own camp, with full capability to harm us, because we have given him the opportunity to do so. Our refusal to forgive constitutes a curse of sorts, as illustrated in the parable of the two debtors in Matthew 18:22-35. In this story both the offender and the offended were turned over to the torturers (the devil and his demons). Evidently, the devil knows how to deliver this one-two punch to gain jurisdiction over us. This is the bad news. Now let us hear the good news.

## How Satan Falls

If unresolved anger gives jurisdiction to the devil, then blessing those he uses to make us angry should void such jurisdiction. By speaking peace over every city, the Seventy voided the jurisdiction the devil had in a vast region. Without authority on which to stand, the devil had nowhere to go but down, as reported by Jesus: "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning" (Luke 10:18).

The fall of Satan was precipitated by Jesus' sending the Seventy "to every city and place where He Himself was going to come" (Luke 10:1). Jesus' move was an enveloping strategy designed to cover a whole area with its myriad of towns and villages and not just one or two houses. This strategy was replicated in San Nicolas on Wednesday evening of our weeklong thrust, when peace was spoken over every home in town, every sidewalk was prayer walked and every neighborhood had a canopy of prayer raised over it. By reversing the process through which the devil had obtained jurisdiction, we caused him to fall and his army to flee or capitulate. When the commanding general surrenders or flees, the privates follow suit immediately: "Lord, even the demons are subject to us" (Luke 10:17).

When we did this, blessing an entire city in one night, I sensed that something powerful had happened; but I did not understand exactly what it was, much less the extent to which it happened. It was like the first subtle change in temperature or a slight shift in the wind, small but noticeable, that precedes greater changes in the weather. That week we saw the Church in San Nicolas gain the upper hand in its struggle against the forces of evil. This was clearly in evidence for the first time on Saturday when every home in town was visited and so many came to the prayer fair. The change in climate was confirmed by the natural way in which the power of God flowed at the prayer fair prayer stations and by how readily people received the Lord.

## Satan Crushed by the God of Peace

I asked the Lord why this victory over darkness looked and felt so easy, and He directed me to Romans 16:20 (emphasis added): "And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." This verse opened my eyes to a monumental mistake we had been making in spiritual warfare: We rated war higher than peace. It is not the God of war but the God of

peace who crushes Satan, and He does it under our feet, hence the need for us to walk in peace.

Jesus has defeated the devil already. He did that at Calvary. Now we are to march on the ground where Satan lies defeated by the blood shed at the Cross; and as we walk in peace, we step on the fallen foe and God crushes his head under our feet. This is exactly what happened on Wednesday evening as we prayer walked the city of San Nicolas in peace. To put this in a wider biblical context, let us take a look at Ephesians, the book par excellence on city reaching.

In his letter to the Church in Ephesus, Paul does not introduce the principles of spiritual warfare against the devil and the forces of darkness until he has first taught the Church how to make peace in six major categories that represent divisions, or gaps, affecting groups of people in society. Paul commands us to bridge these six gaps-the ethnic gap, the denominational gap, the ministerial gap, the gender gap, the age gap and the wealth gap-before any warfare against the devil is to be initiated. We will take a closer look at these gaps and how to bridge them in chapter 5; but it is important that we understand Paul's prescription for city reaching: Make peace in the city before making war in the heavenlies.

This is reinforced by his preface to spiritual warfare, in which he instructs us to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10, NKJV, emphasis added). These are two different sets of instructions as indicated by the conjunction. Each phrase identifies the key component of a powerful two-part formula. The first is defensive; the second is offensive. More importantly, the latter should not be initiated until the former has been fully executed.

## Don't Just Put on the Armor-Put on the Full Armor

To be strong in the Lord, in the context of the whole epistle, means the bridging of these six gaps, since in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile (ethnic gap), neither Paul nor Cephas nor Apollos (denominational and ministerial gaps), neither male nor female (gender gap), and both parents and children and masters and slaves (age and wealth gaps) have the same Father and Lord in heaven, in whom there is no partiality (see Rom. 10:12; 1 Cor. 3:21,22; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 6:9).

Having taken care of this most important defensive maneuver, now Paul points to the enemy and highlights the need to be strong in the power of the Lord's might to carry out the offensive dimension:

Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God (Eph. 6:11-13).

It is important to notice that twice in this passage Paul indicates the need to put on the full armor of God. We will soon see why.

First comes the belt of truth. We put this on when the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, convicted us of our spiritual poverty, convinced us of our sin and revealed to us the wonderful salvation available in Christ.

This is followed by the breastplate of righteousness, which is Christ's righteousness and refers to us appropriating it by faith in His atoning death. We put this on the day we were saved.

The third piece of armor is key to the subject at hand: "having shod [our] feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15). For the sake of easier visualization I will describe this as "putting on the sandals of the gospel of peace." When we put on our shoes or sandals, it's because we are about to walk. That is why we never wear shoes to bed. Therefore, the instruction to put this piece of armor on implies that we are to walk-and not just to walk, but to walk in peace. I submit that this is designed to see Satan crushed under our feet (see Rom. 16:20).

So how do we walk in peace? By speaking peace over those who have cursed us. This is a countermove against the devil, who used to have us under his feet. Now we are able to bring him under our feet to watch him be crushed, and we do this by removing every jurisdiction given to him through anger (see Eph. 4:26,27). This is what happened in Luke 10 when the Seventy went out to every town and village. This is also what we saw first in San Nicolas and later in scores of cities all over the world.

The fall of Satan and his removal from our immediate sphere is confirmed by the use of the next weapon, the shield of faith, with which "you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one" (Eph. 6:16). We can categorically conclude that the devil has left the premises and is no longer nearby because of the weapon he is using at this point: missiles. Missiles are never fired at close range but always from a distance. What is the implication of this? That the devil has left the area and is reduced to firing at us from afar. When did he flee? When we walked in peace, voiding jurisdictions granted to him through anger inside our sphere of influence.

## Is It Possible to Kick the Devil Out of Town?

James touches on this subject when he assures us that the devil "will flee" from us (Jas. 4:7). The anger component necessary for the devil to obtain jurisdiction over us is also identified by James when he makes reference to fights and quarrels among Christians (see Jas. 4:2). Having identified the cause-and-effect relationship between fights or quarrels and satanic proximity, James then tells us that it is possible to remove the devil from our proximity. I submit to you that this means it is possible to kick the devil out of town, literally.

James is not showing how one person can make the devil flee from him or her but how a body of believers-and, consequently, the area where they live-can be rid of him. He addresses the epistle not to an individual but "to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad" (Jas. 1:1). Nearly all of chapter 4 is written in the plural form. Therefore, when James says "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7, emphasis added), he means from all of you (plural). The implication is unavoidable: It is possible to remove the devil

from our homes, our neighborhoods, our cities and our states. By removing I mean to take away from Satan the upper hand he has enjoyed for so long in the spirit world, so that the Church has the advantage instead. We have seen this happen in cities, and now we are beginning to see it take place in regions and in nations, as in the case of Singapore, the Philippines and others.

I submit to you that one of the greatest mistakes made in spiritual warfare literature and in practice has been to overlook the power of walking in peace-a weapon truly capable of removing the devil from our midst. What we have foolishly chosen instead is hand-to-hand combat. Any commando will tell you that hand-to-hand combat is the most dangerous way to fight a war. This is why it is crucial that we make our ultimate objective changing the spiritual climate and not just haphazardly praying for our neighbors.

Now that the concept of prayer evangelism is fast becoming mainstream and lighthouses of prayer are springing up everywhere, nothing would please the devil more than the Church failing to discover that the secret to victory resides in changing the spiritual climate over entire regions to force him to flee. It is possible for the Church to take control of the spiritual climate, but it requires a concerted, enveloping movement like the one described above.