**New Hope Sermon 9 15 21 Push Back the Darkness** 

**Introduction:**

In my prayers this week the Lord brought the recurrent theme: Push Back The Darkness. I was thinking of all the ways our community (and families) have been experiencing the oppression of the Evil One. How do we as Christians deal with all the evil around us? God’s word is to push back the darkness. This is God’s theme, so think with me about its implications as we look forward to God’s break-throughs in the Spirit.

Three thoughts come from the book I just read from Lois Timothy’s Dad – Lois is a new PsyD student from Singapore at Wheaton. The book is entitled *The Efficacy of Prayer*. Let me start with a story he includes:

“Once upon a time, a man in his dream came near a small church while traveling to a far away place. On the roof of the church he saw an evil spirit (follower of the devil) fast asleep. As he went farther along his way, he noticed a group of evil spirits surrounding a small house, all wide awake. He asked one of those evil spirits, ‘What is going on!” One of them said. ‘You know, the people in that church either fight or sleep; therefore, one spirit is enough to take care of them, but here we have a man and a woman who always commune with God in one accord giving us so much trouble. Therefore, many of us are here to disturb their unity.’” (Isaiah Timothy, *The Efficacy of Prayer*, Authentic, 2011, pp. 67-68).

This is the third of three key principles from Dr. Timothy’s book – thoughts that directly pertain to the efficacy of prayer in pushing back the darkness as God has command us to do.

Principle one: The power of faith

Principle two: Coming boldly into the throne-room of grace

Principle three: Praying in unity

**First, the power of faith.** In Mark 11:22-24 Jesus said to the disciples, “‘Have faith in God. 23I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, ‘May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart. 24I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you’ve received it, it will be yours’” (NLT). This is one of several promises Christ gave his disciples at the Last Supper. These promises set the direction and the standard for how we pray.

* John 15: 7-8: “7But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! 8When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.” NLT
* John 15:16: “6You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name.” NLT
* John 16:24: “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” (NIV).

These promises are all true but James added the condition of confident faith: “5If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.” We will only be able to push back the power of darkness, beloved, when we are praying and acting in the authority of Jesus, with the faith His Spirit gives us. The Spirit is the One who can banish our doubts and give us confidence to ask in Jesus’s name and authority, believing what His Word says and waiting expectantly for the promise to be realized.

Confident faith in Christ’s victory and promises is a necessity in prayers that push back the powers of evil.

**Second, come boldly into the throne room of grace.**

Isaiah Timothy says, “Throne of God signifies the authority and the power of God (Lk.22: 69, I Pet. 3:2). It is also a place of God’s justice and glory . . .The throne of God, where mercy and truth dwelled together, has now become the throne of grace because of the finished work of Christ on the cross in which he accomplished the demands of truth . . .God’s grace manifests in our insufficiency as an all-sufficient grace. . . God’s grace is strengthening grace. . .[and] sustaining grace . . .When we perceive that our Savior, Jesus Christ, is seated on the throne, it gives us enormous strength to approach the throne boldly”(pp. 53, 54, 57, 58, 54).

The author of Hebrews tells us:  
“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Heb.+4%3A14-16&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30029a)] Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Heb. 4:14-16

Christ Himself has opened the way for us to come confidently to the throne room of grace and lay hold of His authority and power. He nailed principalities and powers to the cross and rose triumphing over them (Col. 2:14-15). So His victory is eternal and secure. As John the beloved disciple says: 8 “When people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil.”(I Jn.3:8). That’s our assurance. And that’s the word of authority we use to push back all the lies, the sickness, the infirmities, the pride, the accusations, the foreboding, the destructive schemes of the devil – in Christ’s authority and power alone.

**Third,** l**ay hold of our corporate power as we pray together**

There is ample testimony of prayer warriors throughout history who were individual intercessors – Rees Howells, George Mueller, and Andrew Murray are a few of the names from the earlier centuries in the West. That is part of my calling, too. But I have shared my word from God in intercession because I believe it will make a difference if a number of us agree together when we push back the devil.

Going back to Timothy’s story: The evil spirits recognized the power of united prayer from just a husband and wife and so they had many spirits surrounding their home to cause friction between them. How much more this friction is multiplied in larger family systems, or a church, or among missionaries or an NGO.

But Jesus tells us there is power in corporate prayer to push back against the spirits’ pressure to divide and overwhelm believers: “I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. 20For where two or three gather together as my followers,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mt.18%3A19-20+&version=NLT#fen-NLT-23722a)] I am there among them” (Mt. 18: 19-20. NLT) *The Passion Translation* amplifies these verses as: ”19Again, I give you an eternal truth: If two of you agree to ask God for something in a symphony of prayer,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mt.18%3A19-20+&version=TPT#fen-TPT-5222a)] my heavenly Father will do it for you. 20For wherever two or three come together in honor of my name,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mt.18%3A19-20+&version=TPT#fen-TPT-5223b)] I am right there with them!” Passion

As Isaiah Timothy emphasizes Jesus’ prayers for believers’ corporate unity [in spirit, in action and in prayer], he adds: “If we fail to act corporately in unity, we are missing a great privilege of praying together and not able to avail the power and authority available in corporate prayer that comes from the unity of the Spirit “(p. 79).

Beloved, spiritual battles are all around us. There are evil forces seeking to hinder, or destroy God’ purposes in the world generally and the realization of His kingdom purposes through believers. This is a daily reality, but for several weeks the forces of evil seem to be particularly powerful against a number in our community. So, let us together Push Back the Darkness in the world and claim God’s kingdom reign in and through believers’ lives – for His glories sake. Amen. Dr. M.L. Codman-Wilson

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