



The Flame

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from GCCN Prayer Ministries

Change is Coming: Part 2 – Forces Around Us

The day was September 16, 1975. The place was the government station just beyond the village of Poroma, Nembi Valley, Southern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea.

With the end of WW II, Papua New Guinea (PNG) was placed by the United Nations under the mandated authority of Australia, a member of the British Commonwealth. Their task was to prepare PNG for the inevitable day of independence.

Celebrating independence 500 miles back in the bush country, however, was a bit problematic. Few, in any of the local tribes had any idea what it was. On the 16th, people came prepared to collect theirs and carry it back to their villages.

One of the activities planned by government officials was a 30-foot greased pole with cash at the top. The feat became contentious, and before anyone could have seen it coming, a tribal battle broke out, complete with machetes and spears and flying arrows.

Missionaries ran for the jeep, I hit the gas, and two government officers (kiaps) jumped on the running boards. They claimed they did it for our protection, but I could see the terror in those wide, unblinking eyes.

To be sure, we cannot control the forces around us. Sometime our situations are subject to agendas, or even whims, of others. Maybe that's always been the case, but it certainly is now.

In the moral, ethical, and political environment of our day, a battle is being waged. In the tribal battle, we missionaries were not the targets, but in the spiritual war being waged today, the Christian community is wearing the bullseye, especially the conservative "evangelicals."

The temptation is to reach for the natural weapons at our disposal. Social media invites us to vent. Platitudes become banners, and even spiritual expressions can take on the texture of slogans. And political action holds its own natural appeal.

But while all of these have their places and varying degrees of usefulness, in the end this is a battle in which human or fleshly weapons are impotent (2 Corinthians 10:4). Rather, "we use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down strongholds" (New Living Trans.).

While we need the armor of Ephesians 6:13-17, in verse 18 Paul adds one indispensable component: "And pray".

Prayer is the expression and extension of our relationship with God. While His armor equips us, power to wage the battle is generated by prayer.

Taking Your Next Step

More and more our prayer lives need to incorporate a deepening sense of urgency for God to prepare us for the unfamiliar road ahead. We can no longer talk about "if" we face suffering, but rather "when." Ask the Lord to replace the natural tendencies to reach merely for social, cultural or political weapons. Put on your spiritual armor. And pray!