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TAKING BACK WHAT THE ENEMY HAS STOLEN

Dear Friends,

Several years ago many churches began singing a popular song which had the following lyrics:

*I went to the enemy's camp
And I took back what he stole from me
Took back what he stole from me
Took back what he stole from me
I went to the enemy's camp
And I took back what he stole from me
He's under my feet
He's under my feet
Satan is under my feet*

Church members would sing this song with great exuberance, clapping their hands and stomping their feet to emphasize their authority over the devil. My observation is that while many Christians want to sing and talk about taking back what the devil has stolen from them, some of them seem to forget that same declaration of victory each year at Christmas. I'll explain what I mean.

In Genesis 1:4-5 we see God establishing what we know as the 24-hour cycle called a day:

⁴And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

At the time of creation we did not have a calendar identifying days by years, months, weeks and numbers. Over the thousands of years of human history, various cultures developed their own calendars and there was no real standard. In fact, the calendar used today is less than 500 years old.

Since the development of our modern calendar, nations began setting aside certain days to honor special events. For example, Canada, like the United States, celebrates Thanksgiving. However, Thanksgiving in Canada is on the second Monday of October, while in the United States it is on the fourth Thursday of November. As a major holiday, the Fourth of July is unique in the United States as its citizens celebrate the nation's declaration of independence to become a new country.

While nations around the world establish specific dates to commemorate special events or people notable to the history of that country, some dates are celebrated almost

universally around the world by all nations. Most prominent of those dates are January first (the observance of the start of a new year), Easter and December 25, Christmas Day.

Christmas may well be the most celebrated day of them all. In fact, Christmas is more than just a specific day, it is a season of unique identity. People in nations all over the world begin preparing to celebrate Christmas Day weeks in advance. Beautiful decorations adorn and illuminate city streets, buildings and houses. Schools, churches and communities put on plays, concerts and special events leading up to Christmas.

Numerous radio stations throughout the United States will play only Christmas music for an entire month before Christmas. In fact, it is difficult to find stores where Christmas music is not being played. Television networks run Christmas movies and specials during the month of December; one network plays a particular Christmas movie for 24 hours straight on Christmas day. And, although they are quite old, the traditional Christmas hymns continue to stir our hearts as we sing them in celebration of our Savior's birth.

Yes, there is a lot of commercialization, shopping and busyness. But the truth is, the world really does seem to be a little better during the Christmas season.

In spite of all the celebrations, festivities and focus on Jesus, many Christians want little or nothing to do with Christmas. They claim it is a pagan holiday that has nothing to do with God and they are not going to involve themselves with worshipping devils. They refuse to decorate, give presents or participate with much of anything that has to do with Christmas. As they see it, they are honoring Jesus by not celebrating Christmas.

However, let's think about this. Yes, it is undeniably true that centuries ago various pagan festivals took place around the time of December 25th. It is also true that no one knows the exact date of Jesus' birth and that it is highly unlikely that He was born on the 25th of December. Likewise, we all know that there is a lot of secular behavior" that takes place during the Christmas season. But does this mean it is wrong to celebrate Christmas in any fashion whatsoever?

Consider again who it is that created our days. When Adam sinned, both he and Eve lost the life and nature of God. Those of us who have accepted Jesus as Savior have been restored to God's original, spiritual intent for humanity. God established the 24-hour time period as an individual day, created for humanity that existed in His image and likeness. Although the power of sin corrupted all of creation (Romans 5:12), God's plan for how days were to be used never changed: we are to use every single day of the year to honor and bless our God and Savior.

God made the days for us, His children. Satan is the one who has inspired people in different cultures to declare certain days and weeks to be used for pagan and demonic celebrations and feasts. But those days do not belong to the devil and all who follow him; those days belong to us, the children of the Most High God. Satan has attempted to "steal" days meant for blessing God; but Christians need to stand up and take back every day and every week that Satan has tried to use for his own perverted glory.

Christians complain so much about Halloween and the demonic manner in which death and witchcraft are exalted. But October 31 does not belong to the devil; that day was created for people to rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice. While neighbors

decorate their yards and houses with skeletons, zombies, graves, witches, ghosts and other death-honoring ornamentations, would it be wrong for Christians to "retake" that day by decorating their houses and yards in a manner which celebrates the life of God and our living Savior?

Every year in the United States it seems that more and more people celebrate Easter by decorating their property with plastic eggs, and inflatable rabbits. Many Christians find such a practice offensive and disgraceful to the true meaning of Easter. Would it be wrong for Believers to "take back" Easter and decorate their own property in a manner that proclaims the resurrection of Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

December 25th is a day like any other day of the year; it is a day we are to live for Jesus and be His examples here on earth. But December 25th is also very special in that it is the day set aside throughout the world to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Yes, I realize that many people decorate with Santa Claus, inflatable snowmen, elves and a red-nosed reindeer. But to me, all the bright lights, wreaths and decorated trees are not pagan; instead, it is as though people are joining in a world-wide birthday party for Jesus.

Instead of complaining about the secularization of Christmas or the way that time of year was used by pagans for their own celebration, Christians might want to consider taking back what the devil has tried to steal by celebrating the birth of our precious Savior with great exuberance. Christmas Day and the entire Christmas season is the perfect time to be bold about who Jesus is and what He came to earth to accomplish.

God is the One who created trees for the benefit of His children. Scripture even presents the imagery of trees giving God praise:

Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because He cometh to judge the earth. (I Chronicles 16:33)

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. (Isaiah 55:12)

Pagans are the ones who perverted the use of trees, decorating them for their godless feasts and carving them into idols. Is it wrong to "take back" God's creation and decorate it for the purpose of celebrating the birth of the Eternal Redeemer of mankind? Also, many Christians are highly opposed to giving presents at Christmas because they say it further emphasizes the pagan and secular nature of the day. But if Christmas is the day we honor the birth of Jesus, is it really a pagan practice to give gifts as a reminder of the gift God gave to the world: His Son Jesus?

It is true that there is nothing in scripture where God has instructed Christians to celebrate the birth of Jesus. But there is also nothing in the Bible where God has instructed us to celebrate President's Day, Memorial Day, Father's Day, Mother's Day, Veteran's Day, Independence Day or Thanksgiving. Yet Christians do not seem troubled when it comes to celebrating those days and honoring other people and their accomplishments. Is it not therefore something of a contradiction when Christians become disturbed - sometimes even contentiously - pertaining to the joyful celebration and recognition of the birth of God's Son? After all, if we're going to honor the notable

works of people, should we not be equally willing to honor the eternal work of our Lord and Savior?

Some of my fondest childhood memories with my family involve Christmas. Some of the happiest times I have ever experienced center around Christmas. I refuse to allow what pagans did, or do now, to steal from me anything related to the recognition, honor and celebration of the birth of the One who shed His blood and died on the cross to pay the price for my sin. I am going to enjoy the decorations, beautiful lights, family gatherings, and our church Christmas party this Christmas season, in recognition of the birth of my Savior, Jesus Christ.

I sincerely hope that what I'm sharing in this letter doesn't offend any of you, for that is not my desire. What I am trying to do is point out how subtle the devil's lies can be and how easy it can be for Christians to unwittingly yield ground to him. God created days for us to use according to His purpose. Satan worshipers, cults, counterfeit religions and pagan groups may declare that a certain day of the year is for honoring their beliefs and false gods, but that is a lie. To borrow from Psalm 118:24, every day is a day the Lord has made for His children; we are to rejoice and be glad in them.

Be encouraged to enjoy this and every Christmas season. Do not allow yourself to feel condemned or shackled with guilt because you want to partake in the festivities that surround the recognition of the birth of Jesus. Drive through your neighborhoods and take time to enjoy the beautiful lights and decorations, all the while remembering that if it weren't for Jesus, we would not have a Christmas to celebrate.

Likewise, do not feel that I am criticizing you if you do not want to celebrate Christmas, for that is your choice. But give thought to what I have written and extend grace to other Christians who choose to participate in Christmas festivities.

Regardless of whether you do or do not observe December 25th as the birth of Jesus, my prayer is that you will have the greatest Christmas season ever!

Merry Christmas, and may the joy of the Lord fill your life!

Jim

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SPRING PRAYER AND POWER CONFERENCE

Don't forget that the Spring Prayer and Power Conference is Sunday, March 22 through Friday, March 27. Yes, it is only November, but March will be here very soon. I have already been contacted by many people in the U.S and other countries such as Nigeria, Dubai, Ireland, Canada, Kenya, and others who have expressed their plans to attend. As of now, Pastor Dave Roberson, Gary Carpenter and Pastor Bronc Flint will be ministering. Jamie Legault will again lead worship for the morning services.

Our two primary host hotels for the conference are the Country Inn and Suites along with the Holiday Inn. Please visit our web site for more information about those hotels and other hotels in the area.

Keep in mind that our ministry does not have sleeping rooms or dormitories, neither will we be preparing meals before or after any of the services. You will be responsible for the expenses of your travel, hotel and meals.

Please visit our web site, www.jmmgrace.com, for more conference information.

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Just a few weeks ago, Gary Carpenter and I ministered at the 2014 Canada Power and Truth Conference. This conference was held at Freedom Family Church in Oshawa, Ontario (Alain Legault, Pastor). All of the sermons and offering exhortations are available at our web site, www.jmmgrace.com. They may also be posted at these web sites:

Freedom Family Church, www.freedomfamilychurch.ca

Gary Carpenter Ministries, www.garycarpenter.org

Prior to the start of the conference I ministered twice in St. Thomas, Ontario. Those sermons are also available under the Canada Power and Truth Conference.

If you are unable to access any of the web sites listed and would like to receive an MP3 CD of all the sermons and offering exhortations, please use the form below.



_____ Please send me the MP3 CD of the 2014 Canada Power and Truth Conference.

[PLEASE PRINT] Name _____

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My love gift is: \$ _____ (Make checks payable to "Jim Martin Ministries.")

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