

A HOSTILE PULPIT

written by Salome De Klerk

"I'm at breaking point." These were the words uttered through the tear-filled eyes of a dear friend of mine, clenching a cold cup of coffee in her hands. She needed to talk. The intensity of her words and emotions shifted my neatly packaged agenda for the morning, and I gently placed my uncapped pen back into the fold of my opened diary and asked her to explain.

She said that she had recently taken up a position as a lead nurse in one of our facilities and the weightiness of the responsibility and hostility of the work environment had left her in turmoil. One thing I knew she had going for her, though, was that she was a believer. In my experience, this makes all the difference in the world.

It's pivotal to understand from the start that we have a calling within a calling. Within her job description (as with ours), she has specific objectives to achieve, but as believers we have an additional calling to be light to those around us. This should empower us to process our work experiences and achieve our specific objectives differently.

Within the same working environment, believers and non-believers experience the same work pressures. But the believer's ability to flourish despite the pressures should be our reality. We are empowered to do so, as taught in 2 Peter 1:3, for we are promised that by His divine power we have received everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His glory and excellence. Because work takes up a huge percentage of our living, we should be able to place a great expectance on the Holy Spirit for the empowerment needed to do our work in ways honouring to God.

It has been said before that every person lives out what they truly believe. As followers of Jesus, we must ask what we believe about being empowered in work environments, which are sometimes hostile to the pulpits of service from which we live out His kingdom? If left unanswered, we run the risk of our beliefs being shaped by the internal and external conflicts in those hostile working environments and not by His empowerment. I love the statement TD Jakes makes: "If God's people will take God to work and keep their identity intact, the enemy will lose ground".

But is this not easier said than done? Perhaps, but this is exactly the point. In order to live out our beliefs in the work place, we have to learn to "fight" spiritual battles to live out our theology. We sow our spiritual seed, as was illustrated in Matthew 13:1-9, and there will be a battle for what happens to it. Any other view is potentially dangerous and naïve. However, we must recognise that our very hostile working environments are the pulpits given to every believer by God.

My friend and I prayed and reminded ourselves that the battle is raging all around us and that only by holding on to God can we stay undefeated. I pray this: may we begin to be outrageously expectant of His empowerment. My encouragement to my friend then, and to us now, is that your pulpit matters more than you will ever know, this side of heaven.