

SPIRITUAL
WARFARE

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We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Background Reading: Ephesians 6:10-18

As Christians, we need to realize that we do not have to succumb to the wiles of the enemy. Satan uses evil strategies and ploys to deceive people and keep them in bondage, blinded to the truth. But the only power Satan retains in Christians' lives is that which they give him, through sinning and remaining in ignorance.

It is also essential we realize that in ourselves, we have no power to defeat the enemy. Many people try to fight the devil in their own strength - their willpower - and they fail. In Christ, however, when we are living in harmony with God's Word, we can allow God's power into our lives to defeat the enemy. It is therefore not we who deal with the devil - rather, it is God's grace working through us, energizing us and giving us the power we need.

God's grace is revealed in the two aspects of His power which work together for the benefit of His people. The first aspect of His power is demonstrated through God supplying us with the provisions we need to run the race of faith. This includes our daily physical needs, from finances, to protection, to the healing of our body. The second describes God's power at work within us so that we are able to do His will, being empowered to resist the destructive urges of the world, the flesh (the sin nature) and the devil. This power comes through the imparted Divine Nature which energizes our human nature as we submit to the Holy Spirit.

“ . The only power Satan retains in Christians' lives is that which they give him, through sinning and remaining in ignorance. . ”

The Word of God tells us that we are involved in spiritual warfare, and that our enemy today is the devil and his forces., as Ephesians 6:12 and 1 Peter 5:8 tell us:

EPHESIANS 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood (our foes are not human; however, Satan constantly uses human beings to carry out his dirty work), but against principalities (rulers or beings of the highest rank and order in Satan's kingdom), against powers (the rank immediately below the "Principalities"), against the rulers of the darkness of this world (those who carry out the instructions of the "Powers"), against spiritual wickedness in high places. (This refers to demon spirits). (E.S.B.)

1 PETER 5:8 Be sober (aware), be vigilant (watchful); because your adversary (enemy) the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking (people lacking knowledge and faith) whom he may devour (destroy)

The devil seeks to pervert and destroy all that is good. He does this because he is the personification of evil and hates both God and the crown of His creation - mankind. To help us understand something of Satan's nature and motivation, it could be said that the intensity of God's love for man is only matched by the intensity of Satan's hatred of man. For this reason he is constantly engaged in promoting deception and unbelief so that as many people as possible will be lured into hell. Indeed Satan's goal is to block God's will from being done on the earth - to gain revenge on God by keeping people in darkness and entrapping them in worldly pursuits and fleshy pleasures.

JOHN 10:10 The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy (all that he can of God's creation) . . .

This is why we must be aware and vigilant, not only for our own sakes, but also for the sake of our family, our friends and even those with whom we are not personally acquainted. The reason for this is that we are responsible, as ministers of reconciliation, to love our fellow man and to help bring him into the Kingdom.

Satan and his forces promote all forms of spiritual darkness. They scheme and plot every waking moment and because they never sleep, this means 24 hours a day. As Eve was enticed and persuaded,

so are many others at this present time, for all sorts of different reasons, e.g. the desire for self-rule, self-fulfillment and self-promotion, and an exaggerated view of one's own self-importance. On the other hand, just as Adam feared losing his wife, many people do things out of fear - fear of being rejected, fear of losing something or someone, fear of man, or just plain fear. For these and so many other numerous reasons, man succumbs to the darkness that Satan and his forces promote. At times these forces seem to add an extra dimension to the darkness that already exists, enriching with stronger evil the atmosphere that sin brings. In any atmosphere of darkness the sin nature thrives, giving power to the person who has been entangled and entrapped by accepting and even seeking this darkness for reasons based on self - what I want, what will benefit me, etc.

We as Christians are not meant to become "*entangled again with the yoke of bondage*" (Galatians 5:1). We do this by living for, or basing our decisions on, what we feel will benefit us - rather than on what God says and on what He has declared regarding the things that matter. If we focus on what God has said, we will find the right pathway on which we are to walk. Indeed this is a narrow path called the road of righteousness, and along this road is provision, comfort and light (Matthew 7:13-14). There is no darkness on this path but only the empowerment we need to live on it. We need only look to Him Who has saved us, not only from sin but from the sin nature with which we were born.

The enemy will try to entice us. When that doesn't work, he will seek to heap condemnation upon us by reminding us of all our past sins and current weaknesses. When we have sin in our lives, God will point us to Calvary and the Blood to convict us so that we would repent. Then He can forgive our sins and go on to cleanse us of all unrighteousness. He wants to replace all darkness with the Light of His Word. With this Light the Lord would want us to absorb His graces and energies so we can be at one with Him - in faith. Then we can have the mind of Christ in relation to the Word in which we have believed and trusted. With this approach, this lifestyle and this relationship, expressed on a daily basis, God can protect, guide and provide for us so that we will not become target practice for the enemy. Not only this, we can also have a two-way conversation with our Heavenly Father, knowing how to approach Him, how to talk to Him, and how to praise and worship Him - the Lover of our Soul.

OUR WEAPONRY

Our weaponry for this spiritual warfare is the armour of God and the sword of the Spirit.

EPHESIANS 6:10 *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. (This power is always available to us through the energies and graces of the Divine Nature as we seek, find and embrace, by faith, His will, His ways.)*

Therefore:

EPHESIANS 6:11 *Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles (schemes) of the devil.*

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4 *(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (physical or natural), but mighty (powerful) through God to the pulling down of strongholds;)*

EPHESIANS 6:13 *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day (of danger, temptation or trouble), and having done all, to stand.*

EPHESIANS 6:14 *Stand therefore (hold your ground in faith), having your loins (waist) girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*

EPHESIANS 6:15 *And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace (by living in it);*

EPHESIANS 6:16 *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts (of unbelief, persecution, condemnation, etc.) of the wicked (evil one).*

EPHESIANS 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation (the mind is protected through being renewed), and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God

To “***put on the whole armour of God,***” simply explained, is to be protected from “*the wiles of the devil*” or even his full frontal attacks. We must also “*stand*” and “*be strong . . . in the power of His might.*” This means we must seek God’s Word of Truth (Light) so as to embrace it and digest it - with the help of the Holy Spirit. When this Word is assimilated into us, it becomes God in us. Then the enemy can come at us four ways but will flee four times seven ways because the holy Light will repel darkness and its source. As oil and water cannot mix, neither can light and darkness. And if we are in the Light, and living according to it, then nothing can harm us in this area of Light. For us to be bathed in this heavenly Light we must have as the proper object of our faith, Christ and Him crucified, the Atonement and us in Him. In this we will know that when our sin is put under the Blood, we cannot be accused or penalized for we have on His cloak of righteousness. Then when we walk according to the direction given by our Saviour, by “*the power of His might,*” we will truly have “*our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace*” (peace with God) . With this new lifestyle we will, with the help of the Holy Spirit, digest His Word daily, and this will produce faith in our lives. As a result, we will pray prayers of faith that would cause a shield to be placed around us to protect us from all the “*fiery darts of the wicked,*” the one who promotes darkness.

HOW ARE PEOPLE PREVENTED FROM BELIEVING ON THE GOSPEL ?

We have learned previously that the Word of God tells us that every man has been given “*the measure of faith*” (or access to “*the measure of faith*”) to believe there is a God (Romans 12:3). **Note:** This scripture also applies to the saved who are given access to “*the measure of faith*” required for service and obedience.

This “*measure of faith*” for the heathen is really an inward moral light, contained in the conscience, which gives man the ability to acknowledge a Creator. Sin has not extinguished this gift and man’s natural inclination is to seek out his Creator. Sin will stifle this inward motivation, however, and man can, through his own

choosing, simply block off to the existence of a Creator. If man denies this part of himself, he will do himself damage, for only through being open to this light can he discover God. The measure of faith is a measure of awareness of God supplied by God's grace. Man is therefore responsible for seeking truth, but he will not discover truth on his own terms, only on God's terms!

Man, however, seeks to self-rule, and often fears and so rejects the very Light that would set him free (John 3:19-20). Therefore man, with his inherent sin nature, deserves darkness. If he opens up to the truth, and seeks, he will find. But he is also operating in the context of the spirit realm, where forces of good and evil are waging war for his soul.

The Word tells us that the god of this world blinds people from the truth, and keeps them in darkness. This is another factor which operates to prevent people from believing on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:3 But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them who are lost:

EPHESIANS 4:18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

2 CORINTHIANS 4:4 In whom the god of this world (Satan) has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Satan seeks to keep people in darkness by means of his forces of evil. Through spiritual forces of unbelief, the god of this world blinds and deceives the world's masses, cheating them out of their rightful inheritance in Christ.

Unbelief is one of the strongest weapons the devil uses to keep people out of the Kingdom of God. With unbelief blinding people's minds, he endeavours to keep the door to the Gospel shut. Unbelief in a person's life can tell that person that he or she is in the light, when in reality, they are in spiritual darkness. Unbelief in itself is simply not believing on and in the Word of God in any area. The

critical aspect will always be, of course, not believing on the Word of God as it pertains to salvation (John 3:18, 36). It is this kind of unbelief which consigns vast masses of people to hell.

Many, many people believe with human reasoning that because they live good lives and don't harm anyone, their good far outweighs their bad, and on this basis, they will be entitled to enter heaven. Satan delights in this deceptive philosophy. Because of unbelief, such people avoid the Gospel that would tell them the reality of their position - that Jesus has indeed paid the price to release them from their spiritual prison. They need to understand that it is impossible for people to enter heaven by self-effort. If this had been the case, it would not have been necessary for God to give His only begotten Son as the sacrifice for sin.

JOHN 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten (the one and only) Son that whoever believes in Him (Jesus) shall not perish, but have (with God) everlasting life (through an action of faith in accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour).

1 TIMOTHY 2:4 (God) Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

2 PETER 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His Promise, as some men count slackness (if it seems as though God delays the fulfillment of His Promises, it is for the purpose of getting more people into the Kingdom of God); but is longsuffering to us-ward (God suffers long with man, attempting to bring him to a place of Repentance), not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance. (The dispensation of the Cross has been the longest of all, and it is that because God keeps calling after sinners to be saved. He has made a way through the Cross for all to be saved. Most, however, refuse His Way.) (E.S.B.)

As we can see, it is the Lord's will that all be saved. As Christians, it is then our responsibility to help those who are in spiritual darkness by immobilizing the enemy on their behalf. This can be done, as we have said, through believing for the Anointing to

accompany the words which are preached, shared or read. To stand under this Anointing we need to be prepared, focused, and consecrated, having repented of sin and yielded to God so that His grace can work on our behalf. Another way the enemy can be immobilized is through the power of the prayer of binding and loosing.

THE POWER OF BINDING AND LOOSING

Because we fight a spiritual war, Jesus has given us not only the armour of God and the sword of the Spirit, but additional spiritual weapons to use in this fight, as we see in Matthew 16:19:

MATTHEW 16:19 And I will give unto you (Christians) the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever (evil influence) you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven (by God's power): and whatsoever (evil influence) you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (by God's power).

“The keys of the Kingdom of Heaven” can not only help release Christians from the spiritual prisons found in their minds, we can also use them in many situations to bind and loose the enemy. Ephesians 6:12 tells us what is to be bound and what is to be loosed:

EPHESIANS 6:12 For we wrestle not (our conflict is not) against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood”

We cannot bind flesh and blood, but we are able, by making proper demands on heaven, and using the Name of Jesus, to release the binding power of God on our enemy (the devil and his forces). When the right conditions are met, this binding power causes whatever evil force is being bound to be rendered ineffective and unable to operate - and so unable to exert any influence on the person who is the object of the prayer. The evil force then usually remains bound until the person concerned sins again in action or thought, e.g.

through lust, pride, unbelief, adultery, etc., thus giving it legal right to operate.

Through our authority in Christ and as directed by the Spirit concerning this type of prayer, we can thus arrest or immobilize the enemy and help stop him interfering in people's lives. We can do this by binding evil principalities, evil powers, evil rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places. We can pray a prayer to bind these forces of darkness so that people can hear the truth of the Gospel, and then make decisions unhindered by the enemy's influence in those areas in which the evil forces were operating.

Remember, however, that it is God's power which does the binding, and it is God's power which does the loosing. Also, when we are involved in this form of spiritual warfare, we are to deal directly with God, not the devil. This is a great safeguard so that we do not become too "devil-oriented" or else lose proper perspective about our position in all of this. Remember that we ourselves have no power to arrest the enemy - only God can do this. Furthermore, any action of binding and loosing can only be done under God's direction, and in His timing and wisdom. This is essential. For instance, you would be ineffective in trying to bind a spirit of adultery in a person's life if that person willed to continue (through thought or deed) in that sin. Each person has the freedom to choose between life and death, sin and obedience. If they will to continue in sin, any action of binding and loosing is rendered useless, for they are giving the enemy legal access to their lives. To take another example, we should never try to loose an evil spirit without first consulting with God. Scripture clearly tells us that if this is done unwisely, the end result may be worse than the initial problem.

MATTHEW 12:43 When the unclean spirit (demon) is gone out of a man, he (the evil spirit) walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none.

MATTHEW 12:44 Then he says, "I will return into my house from whence I came out;" and when he is come, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished (put in order).

MATTHEW 12:45 Then goes he, and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they

enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first . . .

We see the principle of the house being “*empty, swept, and garnished*” and so accessible again to the enemy. The problem is that the person concerned has not bothered to continue to seek the light of God’s truth in that area. The vacuum created by the deliverance is thus not filled by God’s light (the truth of the Word), and when the evil spirit seeks re-entry, bringing other more evil spirits with it, the door is open. The person is then worse off than he was prior to the deliverance.

So in spiritual warfare, we can see it is essential that we seek God’s leading in every step we take. Our own thinking and reasoning in these matters will not suffice, for only God knows the heart of man and the circumstances of his bondage. We are therefore not to rely on our own understanding but to seek the Lord and His direction at all times (Proverbs 3:5-6).

As we have learned, when we go to share the Gospel with someone, we need to prepare the way so that the light of truth may shine unhindered. We do this by allowing the binding power of God to block the enemy’s influence. The prayer of binding can thus be identified as a form of intercession on behalf of another. We can, according to the Lord’s leading, bind, for instance, spirits of unbelief, fear, pride, confusion, religion, intellectualism, etc., from operating. Through prayer we can also spiritually cover the person’s mind with the Blood of Jesus. This, if effective (because there are many other variables), can also help stop, or limit in some way, outside interference from the enemy. By doing these things, we may give the person concerned, for a short time at least, better opportunity to hear the truth by hindering, to some degree, the negative influence of the enemy from operating.

Of course we are limited in that the person’s will can allow the enemy which we have bound to become unbound, and thus free to influence them again.

Usually the binding lasts only for a short period because of people’s habitual thinking in which they give legal ground for the spirit to operate, in fact desiring the darkness to return. When sin is so entrenched in people’s lives, it can be hard to gain a little ground for them. But we must try again and again until the Lord says to

leave them for a season. The governing directives must come from the Lord in this type of warfare - and warfare it is! We are meant to be soldiers of the Cross, with weaponry mighty in Christ to the pulling down of strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). This is the promise of God's Word as we stand by faith on the battlefield, fighting for the souls of the unsaved and unlearned.

As Christians, however, we must always respect the right of the individual to choose, even if it is the path of destruction - for this is love! God created the human race and made us free-willed agents. He will never force anyone to accept His grace, and we too cannot try to force or control others, always giving them, according to the requirements of God's love, the right to choose. This indeed is one of the fundamental principles of the Gospel.

So let us approach our witnessing with all this in mind, being careful to pray in advance according to the Lord's direction, using whatever weapons of spiritual warfare are appropriate. Let us not then "bulldoze" people with the Gospel, but rather present it in all wisdom, love and faith. Of course, as stated, we should also prepare ourselves to be a vessel fit and ready for the Master's use. In this we will be able to handle, with holy hands, His holy Anointing so that our words in sharing the Gospel will not be enticing words of persuasion but words, under this Anointing, weighted with heaven's influence. We are not to try and convince people with enticing words to enter the Kingdom, but to act as holy postmen, delivering the message of salvation with the right words and in God's timing, so that the Holy Spirit can bring His conviction power to bear. In this, if they would but open up to God's love, Jesus would be revealed to them, the Saviour who suffered vicarious punishment on their behalf.

The sinner will not fully understand as they read or hear about Calvary. But with our words and the Anointing of the Holy Spirit, they may come to accept the wonderful truth that Jesus died for their sin so that they could be raised with Him in newness of life. The Anointing of the Holy Spirit will anesthetize the darkness, pushing it back for a moment, so that an "open hearted" man or woman can feel the love behind the message of the Gospel. And that love is the man Jesus who has been raised from the dead, and beckons them into His Father's Kingdom. Our responsibility is to be readied vessels - to do and say what is needed, with the right timing. We are responsible to be accounted worthy to have our words anointed, in other words to

be a vessel fit to bring this special Anointing to rescue this man or woman from their plight, in fact from their destiny in hell - everlasting darkness and despair.

PROMISES OF PROTECTION AND VICTORY

The Lord promises that as we walk by faith in His Word, in the power of the Spirit (resurrection power), and obey all that He commands, our enemies will flee from us in terror. As we do our part, the Lord will fight on our behalf and through this, we can indeed be victorious in Christ.

DEUTERONOMY 28:1 And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord your God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command you this day, that the Lord your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth:

***JAMES 4:7* Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil (in faith), and he will flee from you (in terror because of God's power at work in you).**

DEUTERONOMY 28:7 The Lord shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be smitten (defeated) before your face: they shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways.

It is God Who fights the enemy for us as we allow Him to do so - for we cannot do anything to defeat the enemy without God and His grace at work in us. He has ordained that He needs permission, through our prayers and our faith, to act on our behalf. We do not deal with the devil directly, for we, by ourselves, do not have the strength or the power. We must allow God to deal with him as we use the Word against him, standing in faith in the power of the Divine Nature.

As we call upon the Name of the Lord - by putting our trust in Him and His grace, and turning our backs on sin (through repentance if needed) - the victory shall indeed be ours.

ISAIAH 54:17 “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgement you shall condemn (show to be in the wrong). This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me,” says the Lord.

JOSHUA 1:5 There shall not any man (today our enemy is Satan) be able to stand before you all the days of your life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you.

From this position of strength that relationship brings, we will be able to help bring people into the knowledge of the Gospel of life, so they can receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour and be released from their spiritual prisons. This is the foundation of our ministry of reconciliation. It is also the primary responsibility of our earthly life - not leaning on or trusting in the flesh, our own willpower or circumstances, only God, His Word, His will and His grace. Amen.

May you have the victory in Christ. Amen!

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