

Spiritual Warfare: the Fight for Your Life

Number 4 in a series of messages on the unseen world

August 15 & 16, 2009

Drama: amateurs!

Intro: Throughout this series, we've been talking about the spiritual and natural realms as if these departments are segregated. But there is no indelible line of demarcation separating the two. When we think that events in the physical world always have physical causes, we fail to understand the nature of the overlapping interface. The spiritual realm influences what happens in the here and now and what we do has impact in the spiritual realm.

Most cultures in most centuries all through history have understood that compartmentalization is misguided. In fact huge problem in world missions is the tendency of animistic indigenous people groups to slip into syncretism when presented with Christianity. When they are taught a system of faith that is disconnected from the spirit realm they incorporate their prior practices because they know for certain that the spirit realm is real. If Christianity doesn't address it, they will regress to previous ways of dealing with spiritual warfare.

Living in the milieu of materialistic society, we have become just as syncretistic. Our Christianity is affected by our naturalistic mindset. We think we are too modern to believe that spirit beings can have any bearing on what happens. Our technology claims to have answers to all phenomena. So we are left with a Christianity that is devoid of a very important facet that Jesus taught and practiced, that is spiritual warfare.

1. The need for this fight. Someone is going to say, *that's not my fight. Count me out. I don't need to get involved.*

Denial and ambivalence increase vulnerability. There is a spiritual battle we cannot avoid. There's a joke about that word ambivalence. A parent was fussing at a teen and said, *do you even know what ignorance and ambivalence mean?* The teen answered, *I don't know and I don't know care!*

When it comes to spiritual warfare, remaining unaware or misinformed doesn't make you safe. [Eph 6:12 Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.](#)

In another translation, that verse begins, [We wrestle not...](#) *That's true for many people. They don't resist the enemy and get quickly pinned. In real wrestling, there is no time out. Once you enter the ring, you can't let your guard down.*

Pacifists don't like this terminology. They say: *We've still got the anti-war sticker on the VW van. I don't want any trouble. I want to go with the flow.* But if there really is a dangerous enemy and if *not resisting him* means you'll be swept away, then being *inactive* means you'll be *conquered*. You must fight or lose. You must struggle against the forces that would pull you down. Don't say, *If I ignore him he will go away.* If you neglect preparation, you'll be eaten alive. [1 Peter 5:8 - He prowls around like a roaring lion...](#)

You don't want to be ambushed, which is how lions hunt. The sneak up and pounce.

I talked about how if we were smaller, our cats would probably hunt us down, play with us and then eat us. Since they are smaller, they have to resort to sneakier methods to take us out. One of our cats wallowed in poison oak, then wandered over to the person in our family most likely to pick it up - my youngest son. The cat looked as cute as it possibly could, just like the cat in Shrek with the big eyes, until Wyatt gave in and cuddled it close. Now his face is covered with blisters on one side. Satan wants us to think his ways are cute as well. He wants to disarm us with humor - making us think perversion is funny. He wants us to get so used to immorality that it is not only tolerated, but celebrated.

To deny the reality of spiritual warfare, saying there is no place in your worldview for such an antiquated idea, is to make yourself more vulnerable. We all want to *relax and take it easy* spiritually, but *the status quo moves in a*

downward direction. To go with the flow is to go over the edge. If you give up the struggle, you'll wash away. If you don't take your stand on something solid, you'll plummet off the edge to certain death. The stakes are high. This is a prizefight and our lives are the prize. Satan is hell-bent on your destruction. That's why *we can't avoid this fight*.

2. Our stance for this fight.

Martial artists choose from among many different positions for battle, but we have only one way to stand: in Christ.

I wasn't in karate for very long, but I remember there was a lot of attention on the initial fighting position. There are many different stances. Some focus more on mobility, others on stability. Others just look intimidating. (Pose in a few.) So, what is our stance for our fight, spiritual warfare? Eph 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Our stance is in Christ. I searched the phrase: Rom 8:1 - Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Rom 8:38,39 - For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. 1 Cor 4:1 - grace given you in Christ Jesus. 2 Cor 1:21 - God makes us stand firm in Christ. 2 Cor 5:17 - if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! Gal 2:4 - we have freedom... in Christ. Eph 4:32 - in Christ God forgave you. There is nowhere else to safely stand. In scripture we read of glory, faith, joy, riches, grace and love in Christ.

So standing in Christ is the key. Why? We are dependent upon him because he has all authority (Matt 28:19). In spiritual warfare, we are only strong in the Lord and in his mighty power (Eph 6:10). T - We'll stay in Eph 6 and consider: Our defense for this fight.

3. Our defense for this fight.

We are not defenseless! We are well equipped to protect ourselves so we can remain standing. We need not fall!

In Eph 6:13-17 we find a list of *spiritual armor*. Most of the items mentioned are defensive. Let's read this and get a picture of the protective equipment available: Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation...

As a soldier must put on the full armor, we must leave no part unprotected. Let's note these pieces of equipment one by one. The full set of armor includes the...

oBelt of truth: The belt is what holds the rest together. Surrounded by truth, we can recognize and refuse the devil's deception. Truth is the antidote for the lies of Satan. It gives us the vision to see through the devil's disguise. Jesus said the truth will set you free (Jn 8:32).

oBreastplate of righteousness: Righteousness defends us. Our *positional* righteousness is granted to us by Christ: Phil 3:9 not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. But our *practical* righteousness protects us as well. A few verses later, Paul says, *I'm not perfect, but I press on toward the goal of being completely conformed to Christ*. He doesn't want to sin because he knows sin separates us from God.

1 Tim 1:18,19 - fight the good fight holding on to faith and a good conscience. How do we fight? By chasing demons around? No, but by sticking to sound doctrine and by keeping our lives free from sin.

oShoes of the gospel of peace: The *good news* that we can have peace with God (Rom. 5:1) is *so good* that we are motivated to get moving and spread the news. Being involved in God's program keeps you on the right track.

oShield of faith: snuffs out the devil's flaming attacks. This faith is the certainty that *God will be victorious*. Roman soldiers stood shoulder to shoulder with their shields interlocking. In the same way, you need others by your side to encourage you in the faith. We're not in this alone.

oHelmet of salvation: What's going to protect your head? The certainty of being saved. This way, no doubts or discouragement can settle in our minds. 2 Cor 10:3-5 - For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. The helmet of salvation protects your thoughts.

4. Our offense for this fight.

We have been given two powerful weapons. When engaging in spiritual warfare, we use the Scriptures and prayer. 17b ...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Scripture: When the accuser attacks, you counter attack with God's Word. That's what Jesus did (Mt 4:1-11).

When he says you're a sinner and don't belong in God's family, you affirm the truth of Rom 5:8; John 1:12; 1 John 3:1 - How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are.

When he says your sin still separates you from God, you strike back with 1 John 1:9; John 5:24 - I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

When he says you haven't been good enough to earn God's love, recall Eph 2:8,9; Tit 3:5; Rom 3:21,22 - But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been revealed...This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

When he says he is going to get you, you jab back with John 10:28 - no one can snatch us out of his hand. 1 John 5:18 - the evil one cannot harm us.

The Word of God is a powerful weapon: 2 Tim 3:16,17 - it is useful for... rebuking... Ps. 119:11 - I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Prayer is also mentioned here. It is another offensive weapon. Eph 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. This kind of prayer is work. It is warfare. Col 4:12 - Epaphras... is always wrestling in prayer.

C. S. Lewis called this warfare prayer "*an act of sabotage.*" In prayer, we oppose Satan's agenda. We're on active duty behind enemy lines. It's a battleground, not a playground. God's power is available - accessible through prayer. Jesus taught us to use prayer against temptation: Matt. 6:13 - deliver us from evil. Matt. 26:41 - Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation...

There is such comfort in prayer because Jesus knows what we're going through. Heb. 2:18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Heb. 4:15,16 he has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Concl: That's how I want to close this talk - with prayer. I'll lead you in a prayer related to what we've learned. I also want to pray with you about a new venue for equipping the saints here. In the past you've heard me talk a lot about the need for ministry *particularly aimed at young adults.*

I'm excited to finally announce the beginning of something new called ROOTED, meeting on Sunday nights at 7:00. *It's not really a college group, or singles ministry, but a service aimed at younger adults.* We'll be getting back to basics: back the gym where Dayspring started. Back to the roots, to a simple style of worship and teaching. We'll be starting off with me sitting on stool with my Bible open to Romans. I hope you'll come and bring a friend. You'll be hearing more about it in the coming weeks. Our kickoff will be Sept 13.

Prayer: We want to appropriate all you've given us.

We want to equip the next generation to handle the attacks that will come. May we glorify you by communicating God's Word straight and true in a way that gets people into the Word for themselves. We ask your blessing on this new effort. May the result be that many more are *rooted in Christ*.

More Meat (unused ideas and verses)

The breastplate protects your heart and your guts. In biblical terminology, your heart is *the home for your deepest thoughts* and your guts are *the place of emotions*. These are *the targets* for Satan's attacks.

Satan is called the accuser: try to serve God and he will suggest you're unworthy. Whatever the circumstances, he wants our eyes off of Jesus.

When people begin to talk or write about spiritual warfare, they often wallow in speculation. We are going to avoid that, leaning away from the ideas of men and looking to the word of God. Rather than basing our belief on the latest book on angels, we must turn to Scripture to learn how to engage in warfare prayer.

In prayer, we look to God for strength. And we find that [2 Pet. 2:9 the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials...](#)

The approach can be subtle, but we are definitely under attack. Our very lives are threatened. I'm not talking about a flesh and blood battle, but spiritual warfare. Some people, when they hear this phrase, picture angels and demons battling either long ago or far away. But the fight happens here because we are the prize. It is a fight for our lives.

Prayer is not just a means of asking for help; it expresses our awareness that God is worthy of worship and obedience. A testimony: *"Instead of relying on my own strength, I ask God to help me to stay focused on Him. I read the Bible every morning to start my day thinking about things that are pure and holy. When a lustful thought enters my mind, I stop whatever I am doing and pray. I claim the promise of victory over sin through Jesus Christ. My moments of temptation become moments of praise and adoration."*

[Lk 22:46 – Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.](#)

[Rom 3:23,24](#) Sure, [all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God](#), but they can be [justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus](#).

[Matt 28:19](#) – Jesus has [all authority](#)

[Heb 4:12](#) - the word is a sharp sword.

It is all about Jesus! [Rom 13:14](#) - [put on the Lord Jesus Christ!!!!](#)

[Eph 6](#) No mystical phrases or cryptic formulas.

Pray for the gift of discernment. Told to test spirits (1 John 4:1). An issue in counseling: how can we differentiate between problems originating in the spiritual, psychological, or physiological areas. Satan will take advantage of any weakness, even what he didn't cause.

Matt. 13:19 – When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. He blinds “the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ...” (2 Cor. 4:4).

Eph. 2:2 mentions “those who were walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now, working in the sons of disobedience.”

Satan especially hates the truth about himself; that's why he works incognito: 1 Cor 11:14 – disguises himself as an angel of light. Masquerades in innocent garb to deceive the gullible: Gen 3:1-6 - Came to deceive, immediately suggesting that Eve should doubt God's word. Then caused her to doubt God's goodness. “You're being deprived! God's holding out on you.” Calls attention to what we don't have. Produces discontent.

Tribulation: 2 Thess. 2:3,4,9 – the man of lawlessness will rule with the power of Satan, “deceiving with all power, signs and falls wonders.” The same is said of the beast in Rev. 13:13 – he deceives with great signs.

Satan is called the accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10). Even the word devil means slanderer. He seeks to tear people down, making them paranoid, causing them to act defeated. You can't do anything right. You are a failure. You call yourself a Christian?

He seeks to control the world and everyone in it. He wants to take over and he's doing pretty well. [John 12:31 & 14:30](#) refer to Satan as [the ruler of this world](#). [1 John 5:19](#) – [the](#)

[whole world lies in the power of the evil one](#). Verified daily in news.

He opposes ministry – [1 Thess. 2:18 – For we wanted to come to you – I, Paul, more than once – and yet Satan thwarted us](#).

His objective is to oppose God's plan of redeeming lost people.

Spirit beings really do exist. Don't make one of two mistakes; on the one hand, get so fascinated with the occult that it becomes your focus and attribute everything to demons. Or, on the other hand, don't make the mistake of neglecting it or rejecting it and say, I don't believe in spiritual warfare.

[1 Tim 4:1,2 – in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons...](#)

John Piper – “*Could it be that many of our problems with prayer and much of our weakness in prayer come from the fact that we are not all on active duty, and yet we still try to use the transmitter? We have taken a war-time walkie talkie and tried to turn it into a civilian intercom to call the servants for another cushion in the den.*”

All this is very basic. Scripture and prayer. What about storming the stronghold, strategic advances against geographical principalities, and generational issues. The biblical basis for all that is pretty sketchy. But the word is clear on these essentials. Prayer and the word.

_____’s Godly Armor

I pray that _____ will take up Your whole armor, God, that he may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand, I pray that he will stand therefore, having girded his waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod his feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which he will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. I pray also that _____ will take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.

Ephesians 6:13-18

_____’s Godly Armor

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Ephesians 6:13-18