

Spiritual Warfare

Booklet #1



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Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptural references are from the *New King James Version* of the Bible.

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...for we are not ignorant of his devices. 2 Corinthians 2:11

Spiritual Warfare – Part 1 – An overview

Is spiritual warfare necessary?

We will start by letting the Bible address this specifically:

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
Ephesians 6:11-13

Many times we may consider this passage as something we have to do so the devil “doesn’t get us”. Something similar to putting on sunscreen so we don’t get a sunburn. We see it as a pro-active defense strategy for protecting ourselves from the enemy’s schemes and advances. Certainly our passage does confirm that element in verse 11 “that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”. So there is a protective or defensive element. But in verse 12 Paul says that there is wrestling going on. That has to involve the activity of both parties, otherwise it’s not wrestling, it’s a beat down.

Lest we neglect to consider the effort of engaging in warfare a necessary thing, we must realize that in Paul’s day, the loser in a Greek wrestling contest had his eyes gouged out. How much time do you think that competitor spent fine tuning his ability, mastering the sport and perfecting his techniques? Losing would

be far too costly for him to neglect proper preparation and intense participation.

Also important is to recognize who this wrestling is with. Far too often we waste much time and energy while accomplishing very little as we wrestle against people. If we view our life and the circumstances around us through the eyes of the flesh, it is pretty much inevitable that we will engage in carnal conflict with other people. But when we realize that all of life has a spiritual dimension, we will begin to understand that there are forces at work, dark forces, and they are working through people. Here's a simple illustration – if you took your child to a puppet show and suddenly, the language became vulgar and inappropriate, would you confront the puppet to make it stop? Of course not! You would go beyond the puppet to the person who was the animating force behind the puppet. Ephesians 6:12 says that we wrestle against powers, principalities and rulers of darkness. Not people. This is important – our war is not against people. Even those who are committing the most vile acts are candidates for the grace of God. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, and to destroy the works of the devil. We must make sure that we are on board with His mission and don't create a hybrid mission that involves destroying people who are resisting Him. While there are definitely times that we must take a stand against unrighteousness in a physical way, we must remember that our fight is in the heavenlies.

Paul stated that we are wrestling against these forces. That word "against" is the Greek word "pros" and signifies motion towards. Let me give you a word picture of this. Remember the story of David and Goliath? David didn't wait for the giant to approach

him. He ran towards Goliath to engage the battle. That's "pros".

So how should this example affect how we deal with spiritual warfare? It should encourage us to come out from hiding, push past fear, and engage in the battle.

I have had conversations with Christians about things related to spiritual warfare and deliverance, with quite a few of them expressing a fear of dealing with these spiritual realities. I could say the same about myself until I began to step out, just in faith believing the things Jesus said about the authority we have in His name and saw the reality of demons being subject to us in the name of Jesus. From that moment, a faith was implanted deeply in my heart that began to infiltrate every area of my life. Once you experience the authority of Jesus active through your life, you will never be the same.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Paul tells us in verse 3 that we don't war according to the flesh (which we just talked about), but this must mean that we do war some other way. Notice that verse 4 tells us that there are weapons of our warfare. A soldier isn't given a weapon as a decoration. The army doesn't say "Here's a tank. Just park that in your garage." He is in possession of that tank because he's being sent to engage the enemy, and he is expected to

use it when he makes contact with the enemy. We will talk more about this verse in a later section and deal with the weapons and their function, but for now we are establishing the reality of warfare as normal and expected in the believer's life.

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. 2 Timothy 2:3-4

This is pretty clear. You are a soldier. And while Paul doesn't go into all the details of what that means in this verse, we are not ignorant of the fact that the ultimate duty of the soldier is to fight the enemy. That's why he's trained and equipped. He lives a disciplined and focused life so at any time he is ready to be deployed and engage the enemy. But I don't want us to lose sight of the motivation we are given in this verse – the pleasure of the One who enlisted him. This is no small thing. Walking in the authority that He gave us as His people pleases Him. If nothing else moves us to pick up our weapons and fight, this should!

So those are a few New Testament considerations. These passages specifically deal with warfare in the believer's life. We will continue by considering how God has historically done things with His people and see the role of warfare in the Old Testament.

In a recent reading through the Old Testament I came to the story of Israel, the Exodus from Egypt and the land promised to them by God and I began to see it as being much more than a historical narrative, but something with an urgent relevance to the life and

usefulness of the body of Christ and each of us as members individually. I've been reading this story through a new lens, seeing it as imminently important to the life we live today.

1 Corinthians 10:11 says "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

I believe this applies to the entire Bible for there are lessons for us in everything recorded in Scripture. But if we look at the context of this verse in 1 Corinthians, it follows 10 verses that have spoken about the children of Israel after they came out of Egyptian bondage. Verse 5 says "But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness" and this very thing happened because they wouldn't go in and possess the promised land. They ran from the fight. They didn't have faith in what God had said so they wouldn't do what He said to do. The consequences were dire.

This story is now an admonition to us - an exhortation to choose a better way and a warning that there are consequences for not doing so. I believe it would be beneficial to devote some time to looking more deeply into this story to draw out lessons for us to apply to our lives. And so we begin with a bit of backstory...

When God called Abraham from the land of Ur of the Chaldees, He promised Abraham a land. The promise was given again to Isaac and then to Jacob. But in between the promise and the possession was a little thing called Egyptian bondage. When God sent Moses

to bring Israel out of Egypt, He sent him with a renewal of the promise made to their fathers:

Exodus 3:8 "So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.

When He brought them out of Egypt, they didn't go directly to the promised land. They took over a year to get there, with about 11 months spent at Mt Sinai where the law and worship instructions were given. The tabernacle and its furnishings were made, and it was during this time that God faithfully provided for the people. They saw His miracle working power at work on their behalf. They needed these experiences of His faithfulness. All they had previously known was slavery – a life dominated by others.

Eventually they came to the border of the promised land and upon sending the 12 spies to go about through the land, they returned with this report:

"We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey...." Numbers 13:27

It was just as God had said. It WAS a land flowing with milk and honey, but it was also a land of giants. Did he forget to tell them about the giants? That seems like quite a large omission (pardon the pun). But we see that this is often God's way, and this is an important point.

If we look back at Luke 1:30-33, which records the words of the angel that announced to Mary that she was chosen to bring the Messiah into the world, the angel spoke of thrones and kingdoms, however there was no mention of the cross. Once again – a glaring omission. But can you imagine how the knowledge of the crucifixion would have affected her role as mother? How it may have changed the way she raised Jesus as a boy? Who could be willing to fully give over their child to God knowing they would endure such suffering? God knows that He can't always give us all the details. Often, it's for our own good that He tells us the end game but not everything about how we're going to get there. Israel may have never even ventured out of Egypt had they known about the giants in advance. But during the journey to the land, He was preparing them for what they would face. They were well able to take possession of the land, just as Joshua and Caleb said. But the promise of God was not trustworthy enough to them, so they chose to flee rather than fight. Tragically Israel wouldn't have another chance to enter until 40 years later. That was 40 more years that the enemies of God had possession of the land that belonged to His people, because they were unwilling to fight.

Although God intended for everyone who came out of Egypt to go into the promised land, not everyone entered. In fact, sadly, most of them did not. How tragic that the rescue that was intended to bring them into a wonderful land, instead saw them wandering a wilderness. God had prepared a dwelling place for them where they could live and be satisfied, and they never enjoyed a day of it.

So here is why any of this matters to us....

Just as the Lord promised Israel a land, He has promised us (believers in Jesus) a land. Theirs was a physical possession, but ours is a spiritual possession. But just as they had adversaries to their full possession of what God had promised, so do we. And as their instruction was to overcome those enemies and possess the land, so is ours.

Many people believe that once they come to Christ for salvation, they have complete possession of all that is their inheritance as believers. But our allegiance to Christ has brought us into conflict with the kingdom of darkness, whose purpose is to rob us of the ability to live in the fullness of Christ by lulling us to sleep with complacency and laziness or by deceiving us into believing that the lack of victory in our life is normal because we see other Christians having the same experience.

Can I just assure you that it is not normal? And for those of us that have been too passive, lazy or afraid to engage the enemy, being content to live a life with no risks and no victory – this is not what you were made for. Rest assured that we will suffer loss by our failure to fight, and often this loss extends beyond our own lives and into future generations.

The Lord wanted to bring Israel right into the promised land. They were hindered not by God, but by their own stubborn refusal to obey in the face of fear and obstacles. They were afraid to fight an enemy who seemed stronger than them. But there were consequences for this:

Numbers 14:33 'And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness.

Their refusal to go into the promised land affected others. Their children, who should have grown up in the promised land, instead grew up wandering the wilderness because of the older generation's unbelief. Your refusal to fight every enemy and receive every benefit of God affects more than just you.

The very children they thought they were protecting, they were in fact punishing. And here's the tragic thing – it was all unnecessary. The people who were living in the promised land, those enemies that they had to fight and dispossess, were terrified of them.

Deuteronomy 2:25 'This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the nations under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you, and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you.'

Joshua 2:24 And they said to Joshua, "Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us."

Joshua 2:8-11 Now before they lay down, she (Rahab) came up to them on the roof, and said to the men: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the

Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

And all of this was before they had ever had a single victory on the other side of the Jordan.

The enemy is more aware of who we are than we are. He trembles at a people rising up to take hold of the promises of God because all of the resources of heaven are committed to the aid of such a people. Hell knows this. Would to God that we did too.

When we consider Old Testament stories as types and shadows, we clearly see that the deliverance from Egypt is a type and shadow of salvation. But if the promised land was meant to be a type of heaven, there would be no enemies to fight. There won't be any fighting or struggles in heaven. The promised land is a type of the believer's life in this earth. Milk and honey. Also giants.

So okay....now we see an Old Testament picture of a New Testament reality. There are things we need to possess. So what is the New Testament equivalent to the Old Testament promised land? Let me just list a few of them:

- Abundant life
 - *John 10:10b I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

- Every spiritual blessing
 - *Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*
- Partaking in the divine nature
 - *2 Peter 1:3-4 His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*
- A life of greater works
 - *John 14:12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.*

And these works are:

- *Acts 10:38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*
- *Luke 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has*

anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

- *Matthew 10:8 "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."*

If I had to summarize all of this in one sentence, it might be this – the promised land is living a life of intimate fellowship with God that results in supernatural ministry to those around us. Can you say that you live in the consistent reality of this? If your answer is no, then why is that? It's because we have an enemy actively opposing our possession of this as a living reality. He has a vested interested in keeping us from these things. The works of darkness are threatened by those who live as sons of the kingdom.

We must remember that all of these are things the devil has no right to (because they have been given to us by God as inheritance), yet he will go after it and see if we resist. Remember in Jude when it says that the devil contended with Michael the archangel over the body of Moses? The devil didn't have any right to the body of Moses, but he made a play for it just in case Michael wasn't on his game. Imagine all the idolatry that could have been stirred up if the devil was able to get possession of Moses's body and return it to Israel as some kind of sacred object. He's hoping that when he comes and tells us that we can't REALLY have

the things that Scripture tells us are ours, that we will simply back down and stop pressing in for them.

The enemy is contesting our possession of this spiritual life, but we must contend for it.

We must contend. I like that word. It sounds like a warrior word. It means to endeavour with strenuous zeal, to strive to obtain something.

If you aren't going to stand and resist the enemy, you will live a mediocre life. You will be led by your carnal mind as you are influenced by the unspiritual around you who have no idea of spiritual realities. And you will live like mere men.

Joshua 10:24-25 So it was, when they brought out those kings to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the captains of the men of war who went with him, "Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings." And they drew near and put their feet on their necks. Then Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage, for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight."

There is no victory over an enemy you do not fight. It's time to put your foot on the enemy's neck.