

BE STRONG IN THE BATTLE

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TRANSFORMED
WORKING LIFE

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Hope –the certainty of future blessing

Faith or presumption

Hearing God speak

Renewing the mind

Working from rest

Be strong in the battle

Anointing

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of spiritual warfare has often either been ignored, or seen as only for the extreme fringe.

It is time for us to seriously address the question of practical day to day spiritual warfare. Our study will show how to deal with the spiritual realities, at a practical, and effective level - in a way that you and I can exercise, and see the results.

CHAPTER 1

IS THERE REALLY A BATTLE GOING ON?

Jesus said,

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

John 10:10

If we are going to take Jesus at face value, and believe His words, then we have already answered our question - there is a thief about.

Paul said,

“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.”

Acts 20:29

Peter said,

‘Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.’

1 Peter 5:8-9

John said,

‘We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.’

1 John 5:19

The various writes of the New Testament had no doubts about the issue - we are in Spiritual warfare.

Paul to the Ephesians: chapter 6:10-13

‘Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour 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 armour of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand'.

It is abundantly clear that Spiritual warfare was a reality for the disciples. By what logic, or reason, or authority, would we say that the situation has changed today? We are more scientific - perhaps. Yet, the reality is, evil is just as persistent today as any time in history.

The early disciples also **saw** the spiritual reality. Consider Paul dealing with the slave girl possessed of a spirit of divination:

'Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.'

Acts 16:16-18

It is worth noting that Paul was not hasty to enter into spiritual warfare, neither is he reported as looking for opposition at every turn. But when the opposition was interfering with the effective working of the ministry, then, Paul dealt with it effectively.

We have seen that Peter is recorded as saying that our enemy the devil walks about like a lion - thus identifying our enemy as none less than satan.

Now we have already seen that the devil employs various spirits to do his dirty work.

We might not like the idea of allowing that the devil is real. We might not like the idea that he is an active enemy. We would prefer that he did not exist and that there was no battle to engage. But - the reality has not changed. The devil still looks for those he can devour.

We should, therefore, consider the source of the problems we encounter. I am not saying that every problem has a spiritual root. I am not saying that every problem requires spiritual warfare. But I am saying, we should consider the possibility. For a certainty, some of the problems we encounter will be attacks from the enemy.

The clashing of spiritual cultures

We can see a clash of spiritual cultures in Acts. Here Paul is preaching in

Ephesus and the effect is reducing the trade in idols.

‘So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.

For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen.

He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said:

“Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade.

“Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.

“So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.”

And when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying,

“Great is Diana of the Ephesians!”

So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theatre with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions.’

Acts 19:20-29

In the days of the New testament, this type of thing was seen right on the surface of events - today there is still a clash of cultures, only now it hides under the surface.

Freemasonry is rife in the marketplace, together with other occult and New Age activities. We are bound to clash with these cultures. Sometimes, when things go wrong around us, it will be because of the spiritual opposition.

Therefore we should be alert and ready to use the weapons at our disposal – we shall meet those weapons in due course.

Summary:

- 1) We have been warned that there is a battle by Jesus Himself.
- 2) We have been warned by various New Testament writers that spiritual warfare is reality
- 3) We have seen that the enemy uses evil spirits.
- 4) We have seen there are other cultures at work in the marketplace.

CHAPTER 2

WHY IS THERE A BATTLE?

There has been conflict ‘in heaven’ for a long time. In fact ever since the devil set himself against God - we find this recorded in the prophecy of Isaiah

*“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!
For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north;
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’
Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.
“Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms,*

Isaiah 14:12-16

This passage is known as the ‘5 I wills of satan.’ In it we see that there is a conflict between the Lord God and this potential usurper. Satan is still trying to obtain the position outlined above. His objective is utterly thwarted in the heavenly realm, so he is restricted to trying to obtain these goals on earth. He wants dominion over the earth and the people of the earth – so that he may receive their allegiance and worship – so that he may become like God to them.

This is a continuing battle until such time as satan is finally withdrawn from the picture. We know from Revelation 20 that this time is not yet come.

We also know that the battle is fought both in the spiritual realm and in the physical realm on earth.

*“Then he said to me, “Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.
“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.’*

Daniel 10:12-13

Here an angel is coming to Daniel in answer to his prayer - but the angel is restrained by the Prince of Persia. The rest of the chapter makes it clear, there is a battle going on in the heavenly realm which closely relates to the events on earth.

Another example:

‘Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” So Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.” Job 1:6-7

Job was not aware of the challenge between God and Satan, and Job had no power over the works of Satan. Yet he proved faithful throughout a considerable period of very troubled times and God brought his vindication in the end.

We are in a different period of time than Job. In his day the Holy Spirit did not indwell man. Now we have the Holy Spirit living within us. We can develop the ability to hear the voice of the Spirit. Jesus expects us to be able to hear His instructions through the Spirit. (See ‘Hearing God Speak’ in this series.). So, unlike Job, we are able to enter into spiritual warfare. Jesus said *‘Behold I give you authority to trample on serpents, and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.’* Luke 10:19

The clash with Babylon

The system that ‘rules’ the earth is described as ‘Babylon.’ In Revelation 17 we find reference to a harlot, called mystery Babylon, and in Revelation 18, a city called Babylon. We find that Babylon has ruled over the Kings of the earth and that the traders and business people are closely involved.

Babylon was founded in rebellion. Nimrod (his name means rebellion) was the first to set up a kingdom after the flood, beginning from Babel he ruled a number of cities. His viewpoint was that man does not need God. So his kingdom was set up in the human strength.

After the death of Nimrod he was deified by his wife and the people. Nimrod became a God. His wife took on the same status and so did their son. Inevitably, where man is exalted to the status of God, all sorts of demons, evil spirits, principalities and powers find good soil in which to plant, develop and grow their works of evil.

This system still rules today. That is why there is so much New Age, Occult practice, Freemasonry and so on in today's business practice.

That is why God's people are urged to 'come out of Babylon.' (Revelation 18:4) This is not a call to leave the marketplace – on the contrary we are called to be salt and light in dark places. It is a call to have nothing to do with the methods of the world, which are rooted in man's self sufficiency and are good soil for the manifestation of all sorts of evil.

(For a more detailed discussion see 'No one can serve two masters' in this series)

We have help

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”

John 16:13

The Holy Spirit will help and guide us if we allow Him and if we hear the things that He brings to us from Jesus Himself. So that we can live increasingly free from the influences of evil.

Jesus has given us authority over all the works of the enemy.

“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”

Luke 10:19

... so that we do not have to suffer loss each time the enemy sets out to rob and destroy.

Part of the purpose of the church is found right here. We are to demonstrate to satan that he is not the real ruler of this world:

“to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places

Ephesians 3:10

Later in the same letter Paul spells out that we battle against these principalities and powers. (Chapter 6:11-12)

The battle will continue until Jesus comes. This is the way it is. We might like to have things differently. We might prefer a quiet and unadventurous life. Sometimes we can be tempted to think, 'If I don't bother the devil, he won't bother me.'

However, this attitude does not agree with the words of Jesus - and we miss part of our destiny. We are here to show satan he is not in charge, until Jesus returns and the devil is dealt with according to scripture.

CHAPTER 3

ARE WE EQUIPPED TO FIGHT?

Yes - it is an absolute certainty - **we are told that He who is in us is greater-**

'By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. I John 4:2-4

We are told that the Spirit within us is mighty:

'that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 1:17-23

.. and that God's love for us is immense:

'For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would

grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.'

Ephesians 3:14-21

Paul tells the Ephesians to expect to be greatly empowered - later in the letter he will tell them to stand firm against all the wiles of the devil, in the full armour of God.

We are told to expect to do greater works than Jesus

"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.'

John 14:12

Whilst this may not yet be our experience, we should look forward with expectation - to increasing manifestation of God's power through us.

We are told that the principalities and powers have been disarmed already: In the letter to the Colossians we find:

The principalities and powers were created by Jesus - 1:16

Jesus is the head thereof - 2:10

He has disarmed them already - 2:15

'Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.'

Colossians 2:15

The whole armour of God:

In Ephesians 6 we find Paul instructing them about the spiritual armour that is available:

1) *Gird your waist with truth.* - verse 14.

Without truth we will be unable to stand. The analogy to girding your waist is rather like making sure your trousers or skirt is held up by a good strong belt. I have found the following prayer very helpful - 'Holy Spirit I read in the word that you will lead me into all truth - I ask you to do that - lead me into all truth.'

This is one of my frequent prayers. I strongly recommend it.

Another way of saying it would be this - truth is the only solid ground - all other ground is sinking sand - i.e. it will let you down in the end.

My own view of doctrine (that is one's understanding of truth) is that it is under constant review. By that I mean, what I believe must stand the challenge of whatever doctrinal challenge is thrown at me - if it does not, then my doctrine must be changed. In this way I am open to new and increased revelation, and, I am, hopefully, not found defending erroneous interpretation or fixed positions, which cannot be substantiated from a full and proper understanding of the whole bible.

2) *Put on the breastplate of righteousness - verse 14*

Righteousness is being that which is just and right. We are made righteous by God's free gift when we believe.

'For if by the one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.'

Romans 5:17

Therefore we should stand up in the righteousness that God has imputed to us. We will find it very hard to do that if we are not seeking to lead holy lives. This is why the writers of the New Testament are so keen to implore us to lay aside every sin which would easily entangle us. So that we can stand.

3) *Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace - verse 15*

In our daily walk we should be ready with the gospel of peace. Preparation is readiness. Peace is undisturbed, untroubled wellbeing. We know that we are in Christ and we know that He has won the victory - therefore whatever happens, we can go forward in peace. The enemy would like us to lose that peace - then he can 'catch us off guard' so to speak.

4) *Take the shield of faith*

This shield is faith in the sense of trust. Take your trust in all that the Lord is, and in all that He has done, and all that He promises to do, and hold it high to quench the fiery accusations of the enemy.

5) *Take the helmet of salvation - verse 17*

Wear a protective hat. In this case surround your mind with the helmet of salvation. (literally - salvation means deliverance from danger - this verse is not talking about our original salvation, but rather the ongoing deliverance

from danger in life.) Watch what thoughts you allow to come into your mind. We are urged by Paul to take as a prisoner of war every thought which is not in obedience to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

All of your own flesh, the worldly system and satan want to get your thought life away from obedience to Christ. This is war in itself. Be strong and active.

Another prayer I find helpful. 'Holy Spirit make me really sharp to renew my mind very quickly.'
(See 'Renewing the mind' in this series)

6) *And the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God - verse 17*

This is not a reference to always carrying a bible with you. It is the Greek word '*rhema*' that has been translated 'word.' '*Rhema*' is a little phrase or saying that is proceeding from the mouth of God now. (For a full discussion of this and comparison with '*logos*'- see 'Faith or Presumption' in this series.)

The sword of the Spirit is, the specific thing that the Lord says to you, in a time if need, or, for a specific purpose.

When a '*rhema*' word comes from God it has all the power of heaven behind it.

(The Greek word for sword used in Ephesians 6 is '*machaira*,' which means a dagger or cutting knife. In Revelation 19:15 and 21 we find another sword - '*rhomphia*' - a sabre [being used metaphorically].)

So we see that this sword of the Spirit is a small but very effective weapon - suitable for in-fighting. A '*rhema*' is a little phrase or saying coming from the mouth of God now.

Yes, we certainly are equipped for the battle.

CHAPTER 4

HOW DO WE ENTER THE FIGHT?

It is one thing to know that you are equipped - it is another thing to know how to use the equipment you have.

In this chapter we want to discuss the main methods of engaging in the battle.

Before we do, we must remind ourselves of our position:

We stand in truth, righteous, ready, trusting, with a renewed mind, and with the ability to hear the specific word of God.

To stand in this position, it will be very helpful know the revealed word of God thoroughly, and we will need to be those who are seeking to live holy lives.

The attitude of praise

Praise is a very powerful weapon. Praise can sometimes win the victory without any other action. We can be constantly in an attitude of praise, then that is an attitude of victory.

'And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,'

Ephesians 5:18-20

Here Paul is urging the Ephesians into an attitude of praise, welling up from within, before he talks to them about spiritual warfare.

It is worth taking a quick check list of preparation from Ephesians:

(These are the things that Paul puts in place before he talks about spiritual warfare. These are the sound foundations necessary for our success.)

Know that your redemption is in Christ and is sealed with a guarantee. (1:7 and 1:13)

Know that there is exceeding greatness of power and might available. (1:15-19)

Jesus is far above every other name. (1:20-22)

We are alive through faith and by grace. (2:1-5)

We are raised up with Jesus and seated with Him (2:6)

You have a particular calling (2:10)

We are near, we have peace. (2:11-18)

We are on a certain foundation (2:19-22)

The church is to show God's manifest wisdom to principalities and powers (3:1-13)

This was a mystery* – now Paul prays for our enlightenment (3:14-17)

Walk in unity. (4:1-6)

God's gift of foundational ministers – Apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor teachers to equip the saints. (4:7-16)

Walk in newness put off the old. (4:17-24)

Do not grieve the Spirit (4:25-32)

Walk in love (5: 1-7)

Walk in light (5: 8-14)

Walk in wisdom (5:15-21) This is praise, thanksgiving and submitting to one another.

Get it right at home – marriage. (5:22-33)

Get it right with children and parents (6:1-4)

Get it right with masters and servants (6:5-9)

Now we are ready for Paul to talk about spiritual warfare!

The battle and the armour (6:10-20)

Then Paul signs off with a greeting. (6:21-24)

There is a wonderful example of praise from the Old Testament

– it is found in 2 Chronicles chapter 20. Here Jehosaphat and Judah are being attacked by three enemies. Jehosaphat turns to the Lord for help. The word of the Lord for this situation comes through Jahaziel –

'And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's.

'Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel.

'You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do

not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you.”
2 Chronicles 20:15-17

In verse 21 we find the men of Judah sending out the singers and the dancers in front of the army – why – there was no need to fight. God had declared His strategy for this situation. All the men of Judah did was celebrate the victory. And what a victory it was! The enemies had turned upon each other – not one was left alive.

We have looked at this to demonstrate the power and the wisdom of praise. In this case the praise was a result of knowing God’s strategy. In principle we know God’s strategy now. In Jesus the whole battle has been won – therefore we can adopt an attitude of praise. From this position of praise we can seek God’s strategy for each occasion so that the victory is enforced in every area of life.

There are two principal methods of ‘everyday’ warfare:

1) The sword of the Spirit

We find the sword of the spirit mentioned in Ephesians 6. It is essential that we understand what this sword is - because swords are sharp cutting instruments which need to be handled well. In addition to that, there is a lot of confusion about the sword of the Spirit.

Here the sword is described as the word of God - this has led some to think that the bible is the sword of the Spirit. This is a mis-understanding. As we have seen, the Greek word is ‘*rhema*,’ and ‘*rhema*’ means little phrase or saying. The ‘*rhema*’ is not the scripture. (The scripture is, in Greek, the ‘*graphe*’ – literally, the writings)

So how does one use the ‘*rhema*’ - the sword or cutting knife. In this context it is a specific phrase spoken to us by the Lord in our moment of need. Another way of saying it is this - the Lord is in charge of the battle, He knows the exact strategy, His quickened word to you is the exact weapon for this moment - wield it with your mouth and the enemy will be destroyed.

We use the sword by agreeing with, expressing, and fulfilling, the specific instruction of God. It is always totally effective because - when the Lord gives you something specific, it has all the power of heaven behind it, to bring it to pass.

It should be noted that this sword is a close combat weapon (defensive)

rather than a weapon one would use for an offensive. This is because the Lord already has all the territory and owns everything. We have to defend our position against the enemy.

(There is a more detailed discussion of the *'rhema'* in 'Faith or presumption' in this series.)

Examples:

A battle lost:

One day someone asked me in a telephone call to liquidate his company. The Spirit said to me 'You will not get paid.' Instead of wielding the sword by refusing the job, I insisted that the man write and confirm that he would pay the bill. He did write. He never paid the bill. I tried very hard to collect the debt until I remembered that the Spirit said, 'You will not be paid.'

A battle won:

On another occasion the Spirit warned me that satan was trying to rob away part of my business. I wielded the sword by taking authority over the works of satan and forbidding him from this robbery. The next a letter arrived from my customer – he could get a significantly better price somewhere else. However, this was not a natural problem, but a spiritual one. The victory had already been established. I wrote back releasing my customer to go elsewhere if he wanted, but assuring him of continuing good service if he stayed with me. The business continued for many years until the man retired.

The sword of the Spirit is totally effective because the power of God is behind it.

2) The power of persistent pressure.

Here we need to consider a parable that Jesus gave for the very purpose that we would speak out loud and not give up.

“Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,

saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man.

“Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’

“And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man,

‘yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’”

Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said.

“And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him,

though He bears long with them?

“I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” Luke 18:1-8

Some explanation will assist used in understanding exactly what Jesus is saying in this parable. (A parable is a story which is parallel to the truth)

First, we are told that we should always pray. We can easily mis-understand at this point. The word pray in the Greek is *‘proseuchomai,’* and it means ‘to speak out loud towards.’ We tend to think of prayer as a religious activity. The Greeks did not have a word for that. This word means ‘speak out loud towards.’ It does not specifically mean to God. Indeed in this context it is absolutely clear that the woman was speaking out loud towards the unrighteous judge.

Second, we are told ‘so that we will not give up’ If we were to look to the original language we would find a much stronger expression. That expression would be ‘so as not to turn coward.’

Now let’s meet the characters in the parable:

The woman is a widow. She could easily be representing the church, in the sense that the church does not have her husband here on earth. He is in heaven.

The unrighteous judge. Clearly this is someone in authority and someone without righteousness. He cannot represent the Lord. So he must represent another power. Also we know he does not represent a human power because of verse 4.

Therefore we can identify the unrighteous judge as either, the devil, or one of his minions. Jesus described him as ‘the ruler of this world.’

Now the action:

The widow is losing out in some way. So she goes to the unrighteous judge and demands her rights. She keeps at it and keeps at it. The unrighteous judge is very reluctant. He utterly refuses, at first. Eventually he gives in - ‘lest this woman weary me.’

Again a look at the Greek will give a better understanding. The Greek for ‘weary me’ is *‘hupopiazo.’* It is used in only one other place in the scripture:

‘No, I beat (literally: beat black and blue) my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.’
1 Corinthians 9:27

The word *'hupopiazō'* literally means to 'beat black and blue.'

The woman was persistently demanding her rights from the unrighteous judge – her persistence won through, because of the effect of beating him black and blue.

The unjust judge makes a comment at the end. 'God shall not avenge his own elect who cry to Him.' Jesus replies, 'I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.'

From this we can see that whilst the widow was demanding her rights from the unrighteous judge she was also crying out to God. We need to take note and do both these things.

Experiencing the power of resistance.

We have been involved in an unrighteous court case against us by an unbelieving client in the retail business. The case involved a claim for millions of pounds. We resisted and resisted and acted like the persistent widow. We gathered others around us to stand with us. Eventually the case collapsed.

Conclusion:

When we persistently demand our rights from the devil, he will eventually release and restore. This is an area for us to become more pro-active.

A lot of what seem to be minor, or sometimes major, irritations are the works of the enemy - often perpetrated through other humans. We should become pro-active in spiritual warfare against these things instead of ascribing natural causes on every occasion, and doing nothing.

So we enter the battle with praise in our hearts and on our lips and we fight in either or both of the above ways with the sword of the Spirit and the power of persistent prayer.

Go and do likewise....

* The mystery

It was given to Paul to reveal 'the mystery' kept secret since the world began. (Romans 16:25)

The mystery - '*Christ in you the hope of glory.*' Colossians 1:27.

It had not been revealed beforehand that God, in the form of the Holy Spirit, would actually indwell humans – potentially giving them the same powers as Jesus. In Ephesians chapters 1 and 3 we find Paul praying for believers that we would receive revelation so that the eyes of our understanding may be opened to the immense power and love at our disposal as we walk in the Spirit.

CHAPTER 5

WILL WE WIN?

In Colossians chapter 2 we find that Jesus has already won!

‘Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.’
Colossians 2:15

We know that Jesus is now in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father, and that is where we are also:

‘But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.’
Ephesians 2:4-7

So it is not a question: ‘Will we win?’ Rather the question should be: ‘How will we enforce the victory, is that already ours, on this earth now?’

The grace of God has already provided the victory – and it is His manifold wisdom that uses His church to demonstrate that victory to principalities and powers.

In a previous chapter we saw that we are equipped. It is good to know that you are well equipped, and, that you know how to use the equipment - but we still need a game plan, a strategy.

The question of strategy is vital.

One strategy laid down for us in scripture is this:

‘resist the devil and he will flee from you.’

We saw in the parable of the widow in the last chapter, how her persistence in demanding her rights from the devil won through.

Peter tells us something very similar:

'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.'

1 Peter 5:8-11

So one strategy is laid out for us already. Stand very firm, resisting the devil, and he will flee. Then, after a little while, God, Himself will bring in all those good attributes we see in verse 10. We should apply this strategy and keep attentive in the Spirit for more.

Let's look at another aspect of strategy:

'Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word (rhema) that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Matthew 4:3-4

Here we see Jesus using a '*rhema*' word to defeat the temptation of the evil one - as he does for the rest of the temptation in the wilderness.

Jesus strategy is an example for us to follow.

We can also learn from the example of the Israelites entering the promised land:

Circumcision.

First strategy: Circumcise all the males. (Joshua 5:2) - this is the strategy of the Lord.

Whilst the example is of physical circumcision we are called to have circumcised hearts. This is a pre-requisite for successfully taking the promised land ahead of us.

Our covenant is a love covenant in grace which becomes fully effective in circumcised hearts. (A circumcised heart is one which is fully in love with,

and submitted to, Jesus and not driven by fleshly lusts.)

Jehrico

Second strategy: March round the city for seven days and so on. (Joshua 6:2-5) - success - this is the strategy of the Lord.

This must be the most unusual war strategy the world has ever seen!

Ai

Third strategy (a): Only send a few. (Joshua 7:3) - failure - this is the strategy of man and it leads to defeat.

Third strategy (b): Stretch out your spear..... (Joshua 8:18) - success - this is the strategy of the Lord and it succeeds.

Note that the Lord was not consulted until after the first failure.

Gibeonites

Fourth strategy: The Gibeonites come to make an agreement (Joshua 9:15) – Joshua agrees with them - disaster - this is the strategy of man. The Lord was not consulted (verse 14)

Joshua and the people went on to fight many more battles because the Lord had said they would receive the land bit by bit.... and then they had to fight every inch of the way. God was with them when they sought His strategy and they conquered. When they relied on their own strategy, they failed.

You can see a principle at work - the Lord is the Commander of the Army - He must be consulted. (See Joshua 5:15)

It is the same for us. If you want to win spiritual battles you need the spiritual strategy which comes from the Commander of the Army of God.

Will we win?

Yes, if we take our instructions from the head. A physical body which does not take instructions from the head is described as spastic – that is uncoordinated and therefore ineffective. We do not need to be like that – so long as we are submitting to our head – Jesus. – then actually we will realise we have won already - for Jesus has won the victory! All we are doing is appropriating the victory Jesus has already won.

CHAPTER 6

WHAT IS THE OUTCOME?

God the Father is looking for a particular outcome – it is expressed by Paul in his letter to the Colossians:

‘He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

*And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, **that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.***

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell’

Colossians 1:13-19

The Father is looking to see His Son, Jesus receive all pre-eminence in everything.

Our lives should also follow this pattern. Does Jesus have pre-eminence in my life and in your life? In everything? At work? In the home?

The key to Jesus pre-eminence

The key to Jesus becoming pre-eminent is very simple. We are urged to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind – Jesus said, ‘this is the first and great commandment.’ (Matthew 22:34-38)

Love is an active state. Jesus is telling His disciples this active state starts in the mind.

Let us follow the scriptural logic:

Love the Lord with all your heart. The word heart is frequently used in the bible to represent the spirit of man and the soul of man together. Thus the scripture tells us that out of the heart come both good and bad, and that the heart is divided.

So our first view, love the Lord with all your heart, is a big picture. Now, we know that we become one spirit with God when we are saved. (1 Corinthians 6:17) We know therefore, that the Holy Spirit comes to indwell our human spirit. So, our human spirit is now in perfect communion with God – there is no question, our human spirit united to the Holy Spirit, loves Jesus. (At this level we do not need anyone to teach us – but in the realm of the soul it is different.)

So the instruction of Jesus takes a close up view – He now focuses on the soul. Love the Lord your God with all your soul. The soul represents the major parts of our personality – our will, our mind and our emotions. We are urged to work out the salvation of our souls with fear and trembling. So our soul is not automatically in love with Jesus.

The instruction of Jesus takes an even more close up view. The soul is made up of the mind, the will and the emotions. Jesus is focussing our attention on the mind. This is where your love relationship with Jesus will be apparent. It is here that you can develop that relationship.

Ask, ‘Holy Spirit fill me with more love for Jesus.’ Start expressing that love (even without feelings). Persevere and you will find your love for Jesus increasing and increasing and increasing.

Now you become secure and a strong force

The result of ever increasing love for Jesus is ever increasing security. From a position of security you become more spiritually powerful. You become more and more able to stand against the devil and all his wiles, schemes, plots, lies and attacks.

Now the enemy starts to loose ground

From a position of security you are well able to stand against all sorts of evil. In the workplace your security is no longer found in your job - but in Jesus, with whom you have a very close love relationship. So now you can stand against the unrighteous practices in the workplace without fear. Jesus has become Jehovah Jireh - that is my provider, in such reality that the fear of losing one’s job is removed.

In the area of personal holiness, some wrong or inadequate attitudes will just fall away, as your love relationship changes your soul. Your will becomes more aligned to His will, your emotions become aligned to Him. You are being changed more and more into His likeness. (1 John 3:2)

In the realm of spiritual warfare – where once you felt totally inadequate and powerless, and maybe frightened – now you start to feel strong. If Jesus is in Me, and He loves me, then scripture can become more potent:

‘He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.’ 1 John 4:4

Now, because there is a vibrant love relationship with Jesus – you know the truth of this scripture. Knowing the truth enables you to make a stand. Now, a battle against any evil, whether it is an evil spirit, a principality or anything which raises up its name against Jesus and His saints, can be met from a position of strength. ‘He who is in me is greater’ – therefore the battle is already won. It becomes a matter of enforcing the victory – and for that we seek and receive strategy from Jesus, brought to us by the Holy Spirit. (John 15:13)

The outcome

More and more pre-eminence for Jesus in our lives and around us.

This then is the point of spiritual warfare:

‘to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,’

Ephesians 3:10-11

APPENDIX

ENLISTING EXTRA RESOURCES

So far we have been establishing some of the fundamental aspects of day to day spiritual warfare. Sometimes we will find that the forces arranged against us seem overwhelming. Sometimes we can be caught ‘on the hop,’ because we have not seen something coming. The Lord has planned for us to act together as one body rather than alone.

There will be many times when we are well able to stand in the circumstances we face without the help of brothers and sisters – day to day things which although they often seem to be small, are nevertheless a part of spiritual warfare. Sometimes we can’t.

There are two major aspects of getting others help.

1) Intercessors

Many people in ICCC have heard the Lord say, ‘appoint an intercessor, particularly for your business.’

In my own experience, I heard this spoken of in ICCC many times and ignored it. Until one day it came up again in a local group meeting. I publicly repented and asked the Lord to appoint an intercessor for me. Within three days I was approached by a lady, who knew nothing of this, and she asked to be intercessor for Marion and me.

Now, as we minister in all sorts of places in various nations, we are finding the input of our intercessor invaluable.

In business her insight can be quite fundamental. On one occasion I was considering charging interest to one of my clients whose payment is long overdue. My thinking was simple. ‘This chap is in love with money, if I charge interest he will pay because he won’t want to see his debt increasing.’ Within perhaps half an hour of my beginning to think like this, my intercessor was on the ‘phone.

‘Peter, does this verse mean anything to you?’

‘Take no usury or interest from him, but fear your God, that your brother may live with you.’
Leviticus 25:36.

As one who is used to teach others, it is very important that I live in the truth of the word myself. The Lord used my intercessor, in quite a dramatic way, to make sure that I didn’t make a mistake.

A retailer’s testimony.

Tim Simpson owns a retail shop. He was meeting together with his two prayer partners. They felt the Lord was saying ‘do not advertise this autumn.’ This was quite radical, Tim was accustomed to advertising every season. Obedient to the leading of the Spirit he did not advertise for that autumn season – that would cover sales in October, November and December in England.

Tim’s report on the result goes like this:

- October’s sales – the best full mark up sales for 5 years.
- November’s sales - the best for 7 years.
- December’s sales – the best in the whole history of the shop.

This was the result of the Lord’s strategy for that particular season.

Please ask the Lord – should I be seeking You for an intercessor(s).

2) Standing together - the power of agreement

The scripture tells us:

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.

“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”
Matthew 18:19-20

One aspect which can be overlooked is this – the scripture is talking about agreeing together in the Spirit. The presence of Jesus is vital. It is not just a question of agreement – but rather agreement together that this particular matter or action is what the Lord is saying.

When it comes to doing spiritual warfare, two together are more powerful than one. A husband and wife together are a powerful spiritual force. A group of spirit filled Christians, gathered in unity, are a powerful force – even to the pulling down of strongholds and principalities.

3) Local Groups

Sharing and standing together and praying together in a local ICCC group, house group, cell group can be very helpful if there is unity in the group and a good understanding of spiritual warfare.

At our ICCC group in the South of England we often pray for each other and we have seen the hand of God move again and again.

