

Spiritual Warfare

April 2, 2017

- There is a Spiritual battle going on all around us, all the time between angels and demons, and much of that battle is over us.
- That battle has escalated in our midst since the beginning of this year; and it's not just us. Pastor Gerry was telling me that almost all of the Churches that he supervises are struggling tremendously, some of the Pastors even asking if they should pack it in. Health problems, marriage problems, stress, anxiety, depression and a host of other factors are playing out.
- And although we shouldn't over-spiritualize these matters, blaming every sin and problem on a demon that needs to be cast out; but in order to have victory over these struggles, we do need to understand that the battle may play out in the physical world, but everything we know is attached to another, invisible, spiritual world, and we can't afford to downplay its effect in our lives, or downplay the spiritual resources that we have at our disposal to combat these influences.

Ephesians 6:12 (NIV)

¹²For 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.

2 Corinthians 10:1-5 (NIV)

Paul's Defense of His Ministry

10 By the humility and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am “timid” when face to face with you, but “bold” toward you when away! ²I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. ³For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We 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.

- Jesus set an example by casting demons out of people and He gave authority to his followers to do the same, and they did.

Mark 5:1-17 (NIV)

Jesus Restores a Demon-Possessed Man

5 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.^[a] **2** When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. **3** This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. **4** For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. **5** Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. **7** He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” **8** For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”

9 Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” **10** And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. **12** The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” **13** He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. **15** When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. **16** Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. **17** Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

How do we do battle?

- First a word of caution. Don’t try to do anything that you have not been given the authority to do or try to use the name of Jesus as some magic formula to cast out demons.

(Example: Story of the demon possessed man at the mission).

Acts 19:13-16 New International Version (NIV)

¹³ Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." ¹⁴ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵ One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" ¹⁶ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

You have to be mature enough to realize that it's not about you. The power and authority comes from Him who is at work in you.

I know Christians who run around trying to wield this spiritual sword like a toy, telling the devil what to do. We should not address the devil directly. Anytime you talk to him, you run the risk of being led astray like Eve did in the garden.

Even the Arc Angel Michael did not rebuke the devil himself but instead said, "The Lord rebuke you". Jude 9 (NIV)

⁹ But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"^[a]

Now back to Ephesians for the right way to do battle:

Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV)

The Armor of God

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your **stand** against the devil's schemes. ¹² For 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. ¹³ 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**. ¹⁴ **Stand** firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the **word of God**.

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 Lord's people.

- How many of these features are defensive and how many are offensive? Which one is offensive? The word of God.
- Even Jesus, when he was facing satan, battled every temptation with the words, "It is written..."

Matthew 4:1-11 (NIV)

Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

⁴ Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^[a] by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'^[b]"

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'^[c]"

⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'^[d]"

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'^[e]"

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Psalm 119:11 New International Version (NIV)

¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.

So I want to give you three ways to do battle with the enemy of your soul:

1. Rely on God's power, not your own.
2. Put on the whole armor of God.
3. Draw from His word (the Sword of the Spirit).