

## ‘Spiritual Warfare’

‘A biblical approach to spiritual warfare and armor’

### Part 1 – spiritual warfare mania

Leaders and people across the nation & world are talking about demonic powers and strongholds, and how to pull these horrible, dark, controlling and manipulating influences down and off from our personal lives, nations, and cities.

The emphasis on spiritual warfare is good in the respect that it has caused us to become familiar with our adversary, the devil, and how he operates.

When we understand his mode of operation, then we can foil his attacks against us.

This is why Paul told the Corinthians, ‘...we are not ignorant of satan’s devices’ – wiles – methods – strategies: 2Cor. 2:11.

The emphasis has some negative sides when not taught properly.

This subject always captivates people’s attention & curiosity, to the point that all some think about is the devil & spiritual warfare.

We can end up unbalanced imagining the devil is behind everything, paralyzing them from functioning in any capacity of life.

There is a balance that must be presented for us to understand spiritual warfare and the biblical grounds of it.

Scriptures commands us as Christians to deal with the unseen, invisible forces against Christ and His church.

We are commanded to ‘cast out devils’ – Mark 16:17; ‘pull down strongholds’ – of the mind 2 Cor. 10:3-5.

This is part of our responsibility to the lost, the oppressed, and the demonized.

## ‘Spiritual Hostages’

There are multitudes of people in the world today who are held hostage by the devil in their minds & bodies.

1 John 3:8- *‘for this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.’*

**‘destroy’**- ‘lou’ = untying, or unloosing something.

Jesus came into this world to ‘untie’ or ‘unloose’ satan’s binding powers over us. At the cross, He unraveled satan’s power, until finally, His redemptive work was complete and our liberty was fully purchased.

Acts 10:38- “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.”

In order to free people from demonic oppression, we must learn how to recognize the work of the enemy and how to overcome his attacks

**Against the mind** – which is the primary area which he seeks to attack.

If satan is successful in planting a stronghold of deception in the mind

It is from this vantage point that he can begin to control and manipulate people.

- In addition to dealing with the devil, other major elements of Spiritual warfare has to do with taking control of your mind and crucifying the flesh.

These elements of battle are just as vital as dealing with satan.

- The truth is that satan’s attacks against us would not be nearly as successful if our flesh did not cooperate with him so well.
- If we were living lives mortified to the flesh on a daily basis–  
Col. 3:5- ‘Put to death your members, which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.’  
‘and be dead to sin’ – Rom. 6:2. We would not respond to demonic suggestions and to fleshly temptation.

‘Dead men do not respond; they are incapable of responding – thus, the power of a crucified life!’

Until we get willing to deal with our own flesh appetites, and close the door on the devil; we will never experience victory.

In such cases the devil is not the real enemy; but it’s our own carnal mind and flesh which must be submitted to the control of the holy spirit.

## ‘Spoiling Principalities and powers’

The real battle for spiritual warfare has already been won at the cross and through the Resurrection.

It is the same victorious Christ who single-handedly defeated the devil who now lives in us.

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

- We must begin with this basic understanding that Jesus already accomplished victory over satan.
- The victory is already won; nothing we can do to add to the destructive work that Jesus did to satan’s domain when he was raised from the dead.

Col. 2:15- ‘And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.’

**“Spoiled”** = ‘the act of stripping one’s garments off to the point of complete nakedness.’ It carries the meaning that Jesus thoroughly plundered the enemy.

*‘He completely stripped principalities and powers and left them utterly naked, with nothing left at their disposal with which to retaliate.’*

*‘He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.’ = **‘show’** = ‘to display or to expose something’*

*Used to denote the display of captives, weaponry and trophies that were seized during war on foreign soil.’*

The triumphing conqueror would display and expose the treasures, trophies, weaponry and captives he had seized during his military conquest.

The Holy Spirit was careful to choose this word to show what Jesus did to satan; when his resurrection was complete and the enemy was stripped bare to the core, Jesus then proceeded to publicly display and expose this defeated foe and all of his defective wares to the hosts of heaven.

*‘He made a show of them **openly**’ =*

**‘Openly’** = ‘boldness or confidence,’ it was no quiet affair in heaven.

Jesus ‘boldly & confidently’ exposed and displayed this defeated foe **for all of heaven to see.**

(satan made his rebellion public; so his defeat was made public as well)

**'Triumphing over them in it' =**

'Triumph' = technical word used to describe a general or an emperor who was returning home from a victory in the enemy's territory. The victor's triumphal parade.

Col. 2:15- teaches that Jesus' work on the cross was **finished**, He descended into the lower places in order to take the enemy apart piece by piece.

He thoroughly spoiled principalities & powers through His death & Resurrection.

*So utterly plundered, that they were stripped to bare nakedness, and Left with nothing in hand to retaliate.*

- If our understanding of spiritual warfare does not begin with this foundation, then we will eventually be deceived by other teachings that would cause us to believe Jesus was not **totally** victorious over the enemy.

### Biblical spiritual warfare

The O.T. has many references of spiritual warfare: 'the battle of Jericho', Jehoshaphat and the praisers, David & Goliath; the words **war** & **warfare** only occur five times in the N.T.

And of those five times they are never used in connection with the devil.

2Cor. 10:3-5 'deals with 'mental bondages' that must be pulled down.'

These verses are dealing with the issue of a believer taking charge of one's mind, & bringing thoughts of the mind captive to obedience to Christ.

1 Tim. 1:18- remember the prophecies spoken over him, so that 'he might war a good warfare.'

These words were to admonish Timothy to 'stay in the fight of faith and to be faithful to the call of God on his life.

2Tim. 2:4- '**warreth**' 'no man that warreth entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who has chosen him to be a good soldier.'

Paul is exhorting Timothy to keep his life clear of clutter, to be **single-minded & stay committed to the call of god on his life regardless of the cost.**

James 4:1- 'describes the 'flesh'. Fighting the spiritual warfare is primarily about fighting fleshly lust that comes to destroy spiritual growth.

1Peter 2:11- "'fleshly lusts which war against the soul.'

The flesh's attempt to conquer and subdue the mind.

From this five mentioning's of 'war & warring' it is clear that the Primary spiritual warfare is that of conquering the flesh and taking Charge of one's mind.

Yes, the devil attacks the mind, & attempts to energize the flesh to **work against us, but if the mind and the flesh are kept under the control of the holy spirit, then the majority of spiritual warfare will have already been settled!!!!**

### Where the battle really is

The devil (demon spirits) can only work when they can find an open door into a person's mind.

When we have areas that the enemy could use, the Holy Spirit is always attempting to lead us to repent & change before the devil can build up strongholds to work from.

It's when we continually ignore the Spirits promptings, dealings, conviction, and we willfully allow sin – weaknesses to remain as gaping holes in the armor that satan gains the advantage over us.

### Flesh tendencies-

- Blame personal failure on someone else- since the fall in the garden. Gen. 3:12.
- Blaming the devil & demonic attacks for your own personal moral failure. - we ultimately are responsible.

### Spiritual warfare: A mental condition

Spiritual warfare is not a momentary gust of emotion to frighten the devil away.

Real warfare is a mental condition and life-long commitment; it is not so much an action as it is a determined and committed attitude of the mind being a lifestyle.

1Cor. 12:7-9 Paul being attacked by demonic forces in his ministry, prayed three times asking the Lord to remove the 'messenger of satan' sent to 'buffet him'.

Yet, God's response was not to remove the 'buffeting' but to give a promise that 'My grace is sufficient for you.' v.9.

Paul may have made an unrealistic request of God:

As long as Paul was being effective for the K. O. G. he was going to be opposed by the enemy.

Though his outward circumstances were a constant challenge, the horrible community hatred toward him everywhere he went, and the governments of the day stood against him to block the gospel message, he was never destroyed by any of these outward attacks.

Paul never said, 'the devil/demons/witches trapped me and made me fail.'

Many of the tragedies occurring in Christians lives are because of bitterness, anger, wrath, or pure laziness to do the will of God.

It is usually because of some omission on a believers' part.

- Paul's personal consecration to the Lord was his greatest defense against the enemy. The personal holiness paralyzed the devil's ability to make him fail morally; 'there was nothing in Paul the devil could use to destroy him.'  
Because he lived a crucified life, he was dead to sin; nothing in him cooperated with the devil's devices and temptations.

- John 14:30- Jesus words:

'I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in me.'

1. The prospect Christ had of an approaching conflict, not only with men, but with the powers of darkness. The devil had set upon Him with his temptations (Matt. 4), had offered Him the kingdoms of this world.

Then the devil departed from Him for a season; "but now," says Christ, "I see him rallying again, preparing to make a furious onset, and so to gain by terrors that which he could not gain by allurements;" to frighten from His undertaking, when he could not entice Him from it. **Note**, the foresight of a temptation gives us great advantage in our resistance of it; for, being fore-warned, we should be fore-armed. While we are here, we may see satan continually coming against us, and ought therefore to be always upon our guard.

2. The assurance He had of good success in the conflict: he hath nothing in Me, ouk echei ouden-- he hath nothing at all.

(1.) There was no guilt in Christ to give authority to the prince of this world in his terrors. The devil is said to have the power of death Heb 2:14; the Jews called him the angel of death, as an executioner. Now Christ having done no evil, satan had no legal power against Him, and therefore, though he prevailed to crucify Him, he could not prevail to terrify Him; though he hurried Him to death, yet not to despair. When satan comes to disquiet us, he has something in us to perplex us with, for we

have all sinned; but, when he would disturb Christ, he found no occasion against Him.

(2.) There was no corruption in Christ, to give advantage to the prince of this world in his temptations. He could not crush his undertaking by drawing Him to sin, because there was nothing sinful in Him, nothing irregular for his temptations to fasten upon, no tinder for him to strike fire into; such was the spotless purity of His nature that He was above the possibility of sinning. The more satan's interest in us is crushed and decays, the more comfortably may we expect sufferings and death.  
(from Matthew Henry's commentary)

- Romans 6: 11-14; 1Cor. 15:31; Phil. 1:21.

Most attacks would be totally avoided if sin & wrong attitudes were not permitted to have a place in us.

### Warnings about spiritual warfare

People tend to flock to teachings about spiritual warfare because they are looking for simple solutions to difficult – lifelong problems.

Most Christians are not willing to live the crucified, sanctified, consecrated life; so they look for other solutions to their problems.

The Word of God requires one to live a crucified life; it demands one to repent from wrong attitudes & thought life; and insists that one seek to conform to the image of Jesus Christ.

The thought of an instant cure is alluring to the uncommitted and spiritually immature who are looking for a quick fix to change their deeply rooted, habitual, and often self-imposed problems.

We must have the mindset that Paul had:

**Phil. 1:21** “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”