

The Spiritual War

11. WAGING WAR IN THE SPIRITUAL REALMS



We are the Lord's Army on earth; we are under our commander the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus has given us authority to wage war in spiritual realms, advancing the Gospel of Christ. Satan understand the battle, he knows when the Gospel advances, he and the fallen angels loose. Therefore, the battle rages for the souls of humanity, Satan seeks to keep souls captive, in darkness, while Christ through His people chooses to free the captives.

When Jesus was in the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from the book of Isaiah, declaring the fulfillment of the following scripture (Luke 4:17-21).

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, Isaiah 61:1-2a

Jesus came to free the captives, every lost person is a captive of Satan, as the Lord's army we represent the kingdom of God, in a lost and fallen world.

No wonder the Church, the Bible and Christians are so hated in this world. This world is under Satan's authority (Luke 4:6), he does not want to give up territory. Therefore, it should surprise no warrior of the

Lord why the world hates the God¹ of the Bible, His people and His words is Satan's method, to preempt the advance of the Gospel. Since the Gospel advances through God's people, Satan goal is prevent the advance, through the war on God's people. Satan accomplishes this through strongholds, which can dominate and defeat the Lord's people.

Strongholds in the life of the believer

Israel is an example to all saints, Israel was told to go into the Promised Land, remove the idols from the land, unless they become a snare to Israel (Deuteronomy 7:1-5). This is exactly what happened, Israel began to copy the ways of the land, and their neighbors, worshipping their gods, sinning against the Lord. Their sins brought God's judgment, God judged His own people. It might have seemed like Satan won to any outside observer. However, God was purifying his people through judgment.

Israel failed for two reasons, one they did not follow the Word of God, with their heart. Second, they did not remove the strongholds from their midst, Satan was able to use the people of the land to lead people astray.

For this reason, God's people need to strive to seek and destroy strongholds in their life. Satan understands, if he can defeat God's people, they will be prevented from advancing the Gospel. They will live a life of bondage and defeat, never experiencing the victorious life. Why does this happen? Simple, because we fail to take God at His Word, it is that simple. If we live life God's way, we will have a prosperous and successful life.

⁷ "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. ⁸ "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but **you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.** For then you will make your way

¹ The identity of the Biblical God is contained in His Word the Bible. Though many in the world profess to believe in God, many peoples concept of God is a creation of their own making, as opposed to the Biblical identity of God.

prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." **Joshua 1:7-9**

Satan tries to keep strongholds in our life, so we cannot complete our assignment, advancing the Gospel. When we let strongholds, control our life, we tend to be self-focused, always being defensive, struggling to maintain, rather than conquering.

Scripture tells us more than conquerors through Jesus Christ, Jesus came to set us free from our captivity. We are to advance the Gospel through our victorious life. Once we have victory over our strongholds, we can spend our energy engaging the enemy, this is what Satan wants to prevent.

Preparing for battle

Armor of God	
	girded your waist with truth (Vs. 14)
	breastplate of righteousness, (Vs. 14)
	shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace (Vs. 15)
	taking the shield of faith (Vs. 16)
	helmet of salvation (Vs. 17)
	sword of the Spirit (Vs. 17)
	praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit (Vs. 18)

As part of the Lord's army, our commander has given us our marching orders, along with his authority, to take dominion from the enemy. The Holy Spirit in Ephesians 6 presents the equipment of our warfare. In the Spiritual war, the Lord's soldier needs to be equipped with the armor of God, not the armor of flesh.

For this reason, we need to plan and prepare for battle. Overcoming the Strongholds in our own life is training for those, who choose to advance the kingdom of God. We are now to apply the lessons we learned in defensive warfare, and apply them in offensive warfare.

Types of Warfare

In any battle, there are two sides, *offensive* and *defensive*. For example, Rome conquered territory from tribes and nations, starting from the city-state of Rome. They took territory from defending forces, which resisted Rome's advance. Rome was on the offensive, however once territory was taken and held, Rome would setup strongholds, to keep territory.

Eventually over time, other nations and groups rose up with sufficient power and strength to resist Rome. Rather than defending themselves, they went on the offensive, conquering territory from Rome. For example the Carthaginian general Hannibal (247-183 B.C.), led an army into Italy, after crossing the Mediterranean Sea, to the very gates of Rome.

The history of nations and kingdoms can be traced to offensive and defensive campaigns. Israel, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were literally claiming territory for the Kingdom of God, by advancing in the land of Canaan. Canaan was a land dominated by darkness; Israel was to displace the darkness, establishing a kingdom of Priests and Kings obeying the righteous commands of the Lord. They did not complete the task.

In the same way, we have the opportunity not only to defend ourselves from Satan *Defensive Spiritual Warfare*. We can advance

the Kingdom of God on Satan's kingdom, claiming territory he controls. This is offensive; we are taking away Satan's domain, with the authority given to us by Jesus Christ this is *Offensive Spiritual Warfare*.

Defensive Spiritual Warfare

Defensive Spiritual Warfare, as I would define it is, the war around us, where Satan and his angels are attacking. They are on the offensive; we (the saved) are on the defense. Satan has established stronghold in our life, which we are not able to overcome or pull down. He is on the offensive, seeking, hunting, and looking for our weakness.

We are commanded to be vigilant, and resist the Devil (I Peter 5:8-9). Further, Paul commands to wear the full armor of God to stand against the wiles (methods, strategy) of the Devil (Ephesians 6:11). Both of these verses refer to defensive warfare. When the armies of Rome advanced, the first thing they would do is establish a base camp, where they camped in the night. The base camp was itself a fortress, which the legion would be able to defend against offensive attacks.

Offensive warfare does not displace Defensive warfare; they are both part of the same battle. Defensive warfare, gives us the ability to go on the offensive against Satan, without being surprised by his attacks. We are to expect his attacks, even while we are on the offensive.

The problem with Defensive warfare is too many times, Christians find themselves constantly on the defensive, never learning how to advance on Satan's territory. Satan goal is to keep us on the defensive, without an offensive. Spiritual warfare is to reverse this principle, meaning we stay defensive while learning to become offensive.

Through defensive warfare, we learn how to repulse these attacks, pulling down personal strongholds in our own life, claiming territory from Satan. From the principles of pulling down personal strongholds, we learn the principles of warfare, allowing us to take these principles for offensive purposes. God allowed Israel to battle, that they would learn warfare. God could have removed their enemies, but he used the vehicle of the nation Israel, to be His instrument of wrath and judgment.

In the same way, God does not need us to be His offensive weapon He chooses to use us, to advance the Gospel on enemy territory. He gives us the honor, of having our names associated with His Son of being His agents of Spiritual warfare.

13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. I Peter 4:13-14

Therefore, those who hold back, from the Spiritual battle, because they fear human rejection, loose the blessings of the Holy Spirit. Rejection for Christ is a sign of God's blessing, therefore the warrior in Christ needs to learn how to rejoice, at being God's servant. (Acts 5:31)

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. 13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. **Matthew 5:10-13**

This is the perspective; we need to take into Offensive Spiritual Warfare, we have the honor and privilege to advance the Kingdom of God, on enemy territory.

Offensive Spiritual Warfare

Now how do we advance the Kingdom of God on Satan's domain? First lets review, what is the battle about? The aim of the war is for the souls of humanity. Jesus came to set us free, to redeem us from our captivity. His death on the Cross did exactly that, our sins were paid for. We (the saved) are no longer under Satan's dominion, we are under the Christ's dominion. Satan goal is to prevent, the lost from being saved, as I Corinthians 4:3-4 declares.

3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,
4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. **II Corinthians 4:3-4**

Second Corinthians divides the world into two groups, one, *those who are perishing*, secondly, and those *who believe*. The "Perishing" are kept in blindness, by *the god of this age*.

Now we have authority, through Christ over Satan dominion, to remove his authority. Through Jesus Christ we have authority to set the captive free, to pull down strongholds of the enemy.

19 "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**

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. **Matthew 28:18-20**

Offensive Spiritual warfare, is going on enemy territory, pulling down strongholds, setting Satan's captives free. This is the point Paul makes in 2 Corinthians 10.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.
4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,
5 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, **2nd Corinthians 10:3-5**

Paul was a great example of taking the Gospel to areas, where it was unknown, setting captives of free, establishing churches in enemy territory. Paul was strategic, as he intentionally looked for way to bring Christ to the Gentile world. Take for example chapter 17 of Acts; here we see Paul waging war in enemy territory. He is on the offensive, going into regions controlled by Satan, establishing the Church.

The Spiritual Warfare in Acts 17

Thessalonica

In Thessalonica, Paul reasoned with the Gentiles from the scriptures, explaining the "Suffering Messiah". Notice the battle is in the minds, as people make decisions for Christ, others became opposed. Opposition arose to the Gospel; this was a satanic assault on Paul. Satan knew his territory was under assault, so he raised people up. God allowed this to happen, because Paul leaves the Church established there, and heads to Berea, waging war there.

Acts 17

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

2 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

3 explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."

4 And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

5 But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.

7 "Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king-Jesus."

8 And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.

9 So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

Berea

Paul flees Thessalonica, goes to Berea. You might think Paul is tired of running at this point, he might want to just relax and catch his breath. Not so! Paul goes right back into the war being waged. He is claiming territory from Satan. Paul like the Legions understood, the territory he stood on belonged to the Lord.

Paul uses scripture as his weapon of assault on Satan's territory. Wherever Paul arrived, he looked for an opportunity to introduce the Gospel. The Gospel of Jesus Christ set the captives free. Here again, Satan pursues Paul sending people to prevent the Gospel, from being established. We watching spiritual war in action, as Satan's territory is being assaulted by Paul.

10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.
 11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.
 12 Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.
 13 But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds.
 14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there.

Athens

Paul is sent from Berea to Athens, there he waits for Silas and Timothy. Paul however, could not just wait; he knew he was in enemy territory, so he began to wage war. First Paul takes the Gospel to the synagogue, again using scripture as his assault weapon. The war was in the minds of the people, as Paul *reasoned* (vs.17), Paul was not worried about offending people, he was taking the authority, he had in Christ.

Paul looked for a place, of assault, he choose two, the *synagogue* and the *marketplace*, he daily waged war, while waiting for Silas and Timothy. Because of daily waging war, Paul met people there at least that are how it seemed on the outside. Spiritually, God sent people, who took Paul to the Areopagus, there Paul introduced to the philosophers Jesus Christ. Paul was prepared to present the Gospel to whichever group he was placed. Paul allowed the Spirit of God to direct his life. He was not worried the circumstances, he knew his mission was to advance the Gospel.

Paul was not worried about offending his new friends in Athens; he introduced Christ to them, by looking for a bridge of commonality. He saw this bridge in the altar to the "UNKNOWN GOD". Some mocked the message (Vs.32), others believed. That is the nature of Spiritual warfare, because it is a battle for souls, some will believe others will not. We are just required to be obedient to the command of Christ, by advancing the Gospel.

15 So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.



16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.

17 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.

18 Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak?"

20 "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean."

21 For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;

23 "for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE

UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:

24 "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

25 "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

26 "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,

27 "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

28 "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

29 "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

30 "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

31 "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter."

33 So Paul departed from among them.

34 However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them. Acts 17:1-34

From Acts 17, we can see Paul in action, Paul did not just talk the talk, he was a doer, who waged war until his last day in Rome. There he was executed for the sake of the Gospel.

Waging Offensive Spiritual Warfare

There are quite a number of ways offensive warfare can be waged; the first thing is to pray about being on the offensive. God wants us to not just be defensive, but to take territory from the enemy. So we need to seek Him, and ask God where we are needed. Like Isaiah, who heard God ask, whom shall I send? He immediately replied, "Here am I! Send me". Isaiah wanted to be used by God, he was willing to face the hardships. God even told him the people would not listen to him, it did not matter Isaiah wanted to be on the Lord's side.

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." 9 And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' ...11 Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered: "Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, The land is utterly desolate, **Isaiah 6:8-9,11**

Preparing for service

When a new soldier joined the Roman army, he was not immediately a legionnaire; he first had to train intensively for six-month, day and night to bring him to the level of a legion. The same goes with the Gospel, we have to be willing to invest time and energy to be effective with the Word of God.

Notice in Athens, Paul reasoned from the scriptures, because Paul knew the Word of God, he was able to wage war with. Paul was prepared to give an answer for his faith. To be effective for the kingdom, we need to heed the words of Peter.

In I Peter, Peter uses two words, which are translated *defense* and *reason*. The Greek word for defense is **ἀπολογία** *Apologia*, meaning answer or defense. The other word reason, comes from the Greek word **λογος** *Logos*, meaning word or command. From this word we get our word logic.

14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; I Peter 3:14-15

Our faith in Christ is not blind faith, but reasoned faith, based on logic. We need to prepare to answer those around us, for the reason we believe. Ask yourself these questions,



- Why do you believe Jesus is the Son of God?
- Why do you believe the Bible is true?
- Why do you believe Jesus is God?
- How do you know what happens after you die?

Were you able to give reasoned arguments for your faith? If not, this is an area you need to begin with.

Specialized Warfare

Special Ops, US Army

When a new recruit would join the legions, he would learn to use the armor of the legions, many times he would specialize learning about one aspect of warfare, more than others. In today's military, they call them

Special Op, short for Special Operations. These are soldiers prepared for special service or operations. We have the same in the spiritual realms, a missionary, an evangelist, an apologist, a

youth pastor, youth worker and more. Someone whose goal is to reach a specific group or target with the Gospel is a spiritual, "Special Ops".

Specialized training is often times necessary to reach specific groups of people. Cults for example, capture people using arguments which may seem biblical, but they are false. Many times these groups present, "another Jesus" or a false gospel. So training in reaching Muslims, is necessary to tear down the strongholds.

The same goes with Atheism and other strongholds, the more experience the soldiers of the Lord acquire the more effective their presentation of the Gospel.



Prayer Warfare

Another area of spiritual warfare, often overlooked is the power of offensive prayer warfare. We are not limited by physical terrain, in our service to the Lord. Daniel was a prayer warrior, even in his old age. Daniel was in his eighties when he was thrown into the den of lions (Daniel 6).

Whatever our circumstance, we can always wage prayer warfare on enemy strongholds. We can target our prayers, like Daniel, who prayed for his nation, in opposition to the rulers of pagan Persia.

Prayer target _____

Strongholds opposed? _____

What to pray for? _____

Who is involved? _____

How is the advance of the kingdom involved? _____