

Demystifying Spiritual Warfare

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: Battle Ready

Text: Ephesians 6:10-18, 1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Timothy 2:3-4

Without a doubt we are involved in a spiritual battle. It is important to always keep in front of us that our battle is not AGAINST flesh and blood but FOR people and against the enemy of our souls - the devil, the serpent, the dragon and other fallen angels and demons.

Ephesians 6:12

It is important that we have principles of spiritual warfare that are Biblically sound and practical to our walk. Too often the teachings and books on spiritual warfare present superstitious ideas and are often spooky and frankly, weird. Spiritual warfare is not like a witchcraft novel, it is a life and death struggle for the souls of men and women lived out in real time not in the imagination.

From the time Satan rebelled in Heaven, to the garden of Eden, until today, the world has been in the throws of a spiritual battle. It is important that we understand the stakes involved. This is a battle with eternal consequences. This is why God sent His Son, Jesus into the world.

1 John 3:8 Jesus was sent to destroy the works of the devil. The word 'destroy' means to untie and to set loose. Jesus came to untie and to set people free from Satan's power. He came to break every chain that enslaves and holds people captive, and to give us liberty. **John 8:36, Isaiah 61:1-3**

Setting people free from sin and Satan's power was a primary concern of Jesus and it should be for us. Jesus called us to make disciples, but we cannot do that if they are still bound up in sin, shame, hurt, fear, and pain. In order to free people from demonic oppression we must be free. We must learn how to recognize the work of the enemy and how to overcome his attacks against the mind. The mind is the primary area which our enemy seeks to attack.

While it is important to deal with the devil, we must walk in balance concerning the other areas of spiritual warfare. We must take control of our own mind and crucify our flesh. The devil's attacks on our lives would not work if our flesh did not cooperate with them. If we were living lives that were crucified to sin as we are commanded to in scripture, we would not respond to demonic suggestions and fleshly temptation.

Romans 6:1-8, Colossians 3:3-6, Galatians 2:20-21, Galatians 5:24-25, Luke 9:23

Dead men do not respond; they are incapable of responding. To live is Christ, to die is gain - that is the power of a crucified life! Living the crucified life is a key component of spiritual warfare and to not include this would present an unrealistic view and leave us unprepared to do our part. We can yell at, command, pull down and bind the enemy all we want but if we have willingly given the devil permission and access to an area of our mind and life and have left it unguarded and unchecked, and we are not willing to deal with it by closing the door then we have opened ourselves up for attack. Many times, our real enemy is not only the devil but our own will, mind and desires of the flesh. We must submit those to the leadership and control of the Holy Spirit if we want to repel these attacks.

If we only deal with the devil in regard to spiritual warfare and fail to engage these other areas of our life and responsibility it will be very **damaging** to our walking in victory and true freedom.

What is important to keep front and center is that the real battle with Satan was **won** at the cross and the resurrection. Christ has already defeated the devil. He is a defeated foe! Our view of spiritual warfare must begin with this basic understanding. The victory has **already** been won. As a child of God, we wage our warfare from a position **OF** victory not FOR victory.

1 John 4:4, Colossians 2:15 (AMP)

The word disarmed can also be translated **spoiled**. Jesus completely spoiled the devil's plans. The word disarm means to strip off one's garments to the point of being completely naked. When Jesus rose from the dead, He completely plundered the enemy. He completely stripped principalities and powers and left them with nothing to retaliate. The Bible also says that Jesus made a show of them **openly**. This denotes confidence and boldness. When Jesus rose from the dead all of Heaven had a victory celebration. We are told 'He triumphed over the devil'. In the Greek this is a word picture of an Emperor's parade as they return home from a decisive battle.

While Satan has been defeated, he is still at work in the world today. Satan knows that his time is **short**. This is why we can see that our warfare has become more intense. There has not been a lot of teaching lately concerning our battles. The dangers we face are more real than ever before, but many Christians are not really engaged. When danger increases and awareness decreases an **alarm** needs to be sounded. Consider this series that alarm and our arming the church for battle. Throughout the Bible we are charged to fight the **good** fight of the faith.

1 Timothy 1:18, 1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Timothy 4:7-8, 2 Timothy 2:3-4

~ Stu Weber – Know it or not, like it or not, you and I are in a war! We need to begin living as if we were in a battle for our lives. Because in fact we are.

The Bible tells us that we need to be strong in the Lord and in the power of HIS might. The Bible relates our warfare to **wrestling**. **Ephesians 6:10-12** Wrestling is not brute force punching, it involves balance, strength, technique, and stamina. It is up close and personal. The word **against** is listed six times in three verses. It is a picture of someone walking in a stream with the current strongly going against them trying to stop their progress and sweep their footing out from under them and take them downstream. We are trying to make progress in the Kingdom of God and Satan turns the **current** of the world in the opposite direction, resisting every effort forward we take.

God is equipping us to stand firm against the wiles of the devil. 'Wiles' refers to clever schemes, **tactics**, deceptions and methodologies the devil uses. Satan's war against us in the world is **organized**, that is why we must be also. Satan will use people and worldly structures to achieve his goals. We must remember that our battle is not against flesh and blood. Remember God has the last word, but Satan is currently at work. What many call **conspiracy** theories are really the work of the enemy trying to undermine the finished work of Christ.

~ John Phillips - *We must see beyond people. Satan may use people to persecute us, lie to us, cheat us, hurt us or even kill us. Our real enemy lurks in the shadows of the unseen world, moving people as pawns on the chess board of time. As long as we see people as enemies and wrestle against them, we will spend our strength in vain.*

Satan wants to **destroy** our life, which is the opposite purpose of why Jesus came. **John 10:10** Satan attacks our life through adversity, discouragement, by assaulting our areas of weakness and temptation so we give him a foothold through sin and by filling our life with aggravations, and distractions to disrupt our walk with God.

Some Christians do not see themselves as a “warrior” type. If you are a Christian, then you are in the Lord’s army. Much of what is taught in Christian circles today has nothing to do with being a warrior and all about how we can **better** ourselves and have better things. But God calls us to be better **soldiers**.

~ J.C. Ryle – *The true Christian is called to be a soldier and must behave as one from the day of their conversion to the day of their death. They are not to live a life of religious ease, indolence, and security. They must never imagine for a moment that they can sleep and doze along the way to Heaven. The saddest symptom about so many so-called Christians is the utter absence of anything like conflict and fight in their Christianity. They eat, drink, they dress, they work, they amuse themselves, they get money, they spend money, they go to formal religious services once or twice a week. But the great spiritual warfare- it’s watching’s, and struggling’s, its agonies, and anxieties its battles and contest- of all of this they appear to know nothing.*

One of the great realizations of spiritual warfare is that there is no way we can wage it on our **own** or in our own strength. We can only do it as we are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We are to find our courage, our intestinal fortitude, and our determination in all aspects, spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical - in His strength. **1 John 5:4**

The term spiritual warfare creates all kinds of images in the mind. We must realize that our mind has the ability to come up with some wild and unbiblical **ideas** about the devil and our warfare with him.

~ Rick Renner – *If believers do not have a solid, Biblical understanding of the devil, our Christ given authority over him, and our divinely empowered weapons to be used against him, then we are left wide open to all kinds of wrong thinking, vain imaginations, fears and methods of opposing him that are unfounded.*

We must **guard** against homemade and man-made remedies and base our teachings and actions on the Word of God, not on emotions and wild imaginations. For instance, some believed since we were engaging the enemy in high places and that since Satan is the “prince of the power of the air” that people needed to pray in sky scrappers or in airplanes and helicopters.

Many people think that the battles we are facing today are worse than they have ever been. While they are intense, Satan has always sought to destroy the church. He is still employing the same things he did during Roman times. **1 Corinthians 10:13**

Because the purposeful, intentional work of the devil is becoming more visible to many Christians they are afraid that his work will prevail. Throughout history God's people have fought the enemy. Satan has sought to **curse** the church. **Matthew 16:18**

Even if witches and Satanists try to curse the people of God, they have no power.

Proverbs 26:2 You need to remember that you are blessed by God. If you are blessed, then you cannot be cursed.

While we see many examples of warfare in the Old Testament, the words 'war' and 'warfare' are only found **five** times in the New Testament. Of those five times they are never once used in connection with the devil. **2 Corinthians 10:3-5** The terms here refer to mental **bondages** that must be torn down. These verses are about making a definitive decision to take **control** of one's own mind and take thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ. Too often we are willing to give the devil credit for what we have power over.

In 2 Timothy the word warfare has nothing to do with the devil either. **2 Timothy 2:4**

We are to keep our life free from clutter and to be single minded and **committed** to the call of Christ, no matter the cost.

In the book of James, the word war is used to describe the **flesh** and not the devil.

James 4:1

Paul described this as a battle of our **will**. **Romans 7:15-25, 1 Peter 2:11**

In the New Testament the words 'war' and 'warfare' mainly have to do with conquering the flesh and taking charge of one's own mind. Yes, the devil will attack our mind and tempt our flesh but if they are both kept submitted to the leading of the Holy Spirit then the majority of the spiritual warfare we face in our life will have already been settled. This is why Jesus taught us that we should pray – "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven".

Warfare begins when we leave a door **open** for demonic attack. Areas of neglect, compromise and willful sin give the enemy an open door to bring wickedness into our life and homes. At some point we did not deal with some unseen, private area of our lives. Demon spirits have absolutely no power to bring about destruction into our lives unless they can find an open door into our mind.

We can be sure that the Holy Spirit will **convict** and warn us if there are areas that we need to repent of and change. If we **ignore** His pleading and leading and we allow wrong attitudes and decisions to continue then we leave the door wide open for Satan to obtain a foothold.

Ephesians 4:27 (NKJV & NIV) Satan will take any foothold we give him and try to make it a **stronghold** in our lives. It is always our nature to shift the **blame**, the devil made me do it. In order for a demonic attack to work effectively, we had to **cooperate** with it in some way. We either failed to resist the devil or submit to God. **James 4:7**

- You can talk about how the devil is after your money but if you do not balance your checkbook, do not tithe, you spend more than you make and don't pay your bills then you opened a door for attack
- If you lack peace and live in fear but you fill your mind with horror movies and drama filled TV shows, then you have opened the door for all kinds of anxiety.

- You can declare that you are the healed of the Lord and complain about how Satan is attacking your health but if you do not eat right, overwork and never rest you have opened your body to be attacked.
- You can say how Satan is attacking your children but if you never set boundaries, invest time in them and **discipline** them you have opened the door to the enemy. The same is true of our marriages. We can say the devil is attacking us but if we speak harshly, are never around and are not taking the time to invest in our marriage then we have left the door wide open for a wide range of emotional, sexual and mental attack. This can apply to many other areas of life.

It is important to know that even when we do not leave any doors open that Satan will attack especially when we are doing things to advance the Kingdom of God. Anytime you are on the **frontlines** of battle and you are doing something significant for the Kingdom the enemies attacks will escalate. **Mark 4: 35-41** Jesus was on His way to set a demon possessed man free when **suddenly** or unexpectedly a huge storm arose. I have learned in Spiritual warfare to expect the unexpected. This wind caused waves, turbulence, unsettledness and was meant to either destroy or cause the disciples to turn around and not go forward and miss out on what God had for the demons possessed man and for them. On the edge of a miracle and on the edge of a breakthrough Satan sent a storm. This is when Satan **normally** attacks. This is one of His tactics.

If demonic attacks came on Jesus, then they will come on us. Notice that Jesus met the storm with His **word**. Jesus turned a great storm into a great **calm**. He rose up in authority over the wind and the waves and the turbulence. He refused to lose His balance. He stood firm. Whatever Satan throws at you Jesus will match it with its opposite. From chaos to peace. If Satan hits you with a financial problem Jesus will bring a financial blessing. If Satan attacks your health, Jesus will meet it with healing.

Spiritual warfare is not a **burst** of emotion to frighten the devil away in a few moments. Real spiritual warfare is a life-long commitment; it is not so much a single action as it is a determined committed attitude of the mind. Like Paul, we must come to the place where we understand that His **grace** is sufficient for us. **2 Corinthians 12:7-9** Paul made a request of God that was **unrealistic**. The Christian life, if it is lived well, will never be free from opposition. The Lord did promise Paul and He promises us the grace and power to overcome each attack as they come. **2 Corinthians 4:8-9** Paul lists many different ways that His life was in danger and how he was delivered out of all of them. **Romans 8:31-39** Paul was able to endure spiritual warfare because he understood that a personally consecrated life of holiness and purity combined with God's grace and power made him more than a conqueror.

As we study spiritual warfare we will guard against the unscriptural nonsense and teachings that offer fleshly, simple solutions to difficult and life-long problems. Many people want an instant cure that is attractive to the spiritually immature who want a quick fix to deeply rooted habits and self-imposed problems. We will stick with the **Word** of God and apply it to our lives as we obediently submit to His will.