

## The Spirit of the Age

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: Battle Ready

**Text: 2 Corinthians 4:3-7**

~ Victor Hugo

An invasion of armies can be resisted; an invasion of ideas cannot be resisted.

~ A.W. Tozer

The Cross stands high above the opinions of men and to that cross all opinions must come at last for judgement.

During any period of time there are attitudes, moods, beliefs and values that define certain eras in certain places. There are trends that reflect collective passions and angst. The 60's were marked by distinct styles of music, literature, a rejection of authority and drug use. When cultural norms shift in the world, we can see that some invisible hand is at work and not in a good way. These are known as the "spirits of the age". Today we can see the god of this age manipulating the spirit of our age on multiple fronts – the media, education, politics entertainment and even sports.

Things that were once unthinkable are now all the rage. How do free countries accept communism and socialism so quickly? How do things like homosexuality and non-existent things like transgenderism go from being unacceptable to being fashionable? How do philosophies on the fringes of society now get taught in the classrooms and move from the academics in society to the working class and their children in the span of two generations? It is like it is being orchestrated and purposefully worked to transform and reshape people and society.

The Germans have a word for this – 'zeitgeist'; 'zeit' means time and 'geist' means spirit.

The spirit of the age may be different in many places during the same space in time. For instance, the spirit of the age was quite different in Germany during WWII than it was in England or the USA. But those different spirits still contributed to what was happening collectively around the world.

It is interesting how the zeitgeist of each era consistently finds itself in opposition to the Christian worldview and for all that Christ stands for. This is what John meant when he was talking about the spirit of the antichrist that is already in the world. **1 John 4:3** This is what the Apostle Paul was referring to when he talked about who we are actually locked into a battle with. **Ephesians 6:12** From a Biblical perspective the zeitgeist or the spirit of the times is not an abstraction but literal spirits – powerful, demonic spirits that are actively pushing an agenda from their high places.

We often think of spiritual warfare as only a personal issue. Satan obviously comes against individual Christians, but demonic warfare is not only about making individual Christians miserable. Satan and his wicked minions have an agenda that works through every means available to influence the minds of every human being. They desire to impose demonic ways of thinking on all of humanity. This started in the Garden of Eden.

When the serpent tempted Eve, he transmitted his way of thinking onto her. She passed in on to Adam. That demonic thought pattern has now become what is natural for humans.

**1 John 2:16, Genesis 3:6**

- Eve saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food – the lust of the flesh
- That it was pleasing to look at – the lust of the eyes
- It was desirable for gaining wisdom – the pride of life

This way of thinking and decision making is what the “world” is all about and it directly contradicts what is of the Father. **James 3:15-18**

The wisdom and ways of God take many things into consideration. It is an entirely different mindset and way of thinking about things.

Today the natural, carnal way of thinking is actually demonic. **Romans 8:7** The spirit of antichrist sets itself against Christ, everything that Jesus taught and lived is the enemy. Those of us with the mind of Christ are in opposition to this demonic movement. This is why we are a target of the enemy. **John 15:18** The world will hate us for the same reason that it hated Jesus, His life is in direct contradiction to the spirit of the age. When we live like Jesus, we become an enemy to the spirit of the age. **2 Timothy 3:12** If you or the church you attend does not experience persecution it maybe that you are in line with the spirit of the age and pose no threat. Remember that Jesus’ entire life was an assault on the demonic spirit of the age.

**1 John 3:8, John 8:12, John 1:4-5**

Jesus came into the world as a light that has powerfully influenced the spirit of the age from His time on the earth until today. Jesus waged spiritual warfare everyday of His life. He didn’t wave banners, blow shofars or beat the air. He did it through His way of life, His teaching and through the demonstration of God’s kingdom on the earth. The sermon on the mount is a great example. **Matthew 5:1-15** In Roman society power was virtue. Violence, immorality, debauchery, and hedonism were celebrated. The Beattitudes completely challenge the spirit of the age. Meekness, peacemaking, mercy. Lust is adultery, persecution is a reason for joy, forgive and love our enemies, care for those in need, give, fast, pray, refuse to judge, invest in heaven instead of earth, love God more than our own lives – these ideas were revolutionary.

Think about it - 2,000 years of Christian influence has positively influenced the world in ways that we do not always realize. We believe in showing mercy to widows, orphans, the sick and the poor. The idea of human rights and that all people are created equal is a Christian idea. The individual freedom to live and enjoy life come from the Bible. The idea of the rule of law is Biblical.

Western culture is so influenced by the teachings of Jesus that even atheists are familiar with Biblical principles. (salt of the earth go the extra mile, wolf in sheep’s clothing, no rest for the wicked, how the mighty have fallen ... the parable of the Good Samaritan and David and Goliath, even the 10 Commandments) The peaceful society we enjoy owes its existence to Christianity. This has been under assault and the Bible describes what Satan wants society to look like in the last days. **2 Timothy 3:1-7**

The greatest society that man has ever built is under attack from the very people who have benefited from it. Someone said – “Man is stupid, you know phenomenally stupid; or rather he is not stupid at all, he is so ungrateful that you could not find another like him in all creation.” The truth is though that this systemic hostility toward Christ and all that He stands for comes from the satanic, antichrist spirit already in the world.

The divine way of thinking is so contrary to the enemy’s way that when God made His move Satan never saw it coming. **1 Corinthians 2:1-8** Satan not only deceives people he deceives himself. Do you realize that Satan is deceived? Blinded by his own wickedness and sin. God’s wisdom looks nothing like human wisdom. God’s wisdom exists in a category entirely by itself, separated from the world’s way of thinking and attainable only in Jesus Christ.

If we try to fight spiritual battles with fleshly techniques then anger, rage, fear and hatred are your friends. These sparks put a fire in us. These tools use the enemy’s methods to gain an advantage and justice. The moment we take them up we lose the battle and align ourselves with the enemy. **Romans 12:18-20(AMP), Luke 9:51-56** Jesus didn’t kill His enemies, He laid His life down for them. It is almost impossible to comprehend this way of thinking and we cannot without the mind of Christ. The way of Jesus, the way of sacrificial love is what overthrows the forces of darkness.

Jesus never said that He was sending you out as lions among wolves but as sheep among wolves. **Matthew 10:16-20** In the wisdom of God it is the sheep who conquer the wolves. In the natural the wolves are the predators and the sheep are prey. Remember Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah gained the victory over His enemies by becoming the sacrificial Lamb. **Matthew 5:5, Revelation 5:6, 1 Corinthians 1:26-30** It was through the weakness of death that Jesus defeated it and brought us life.

Jesus didn’t defeat the demonic spirit of the age through a debate. It was war. Jesus embodied the wisdom of heaven and laid down His life. It was through losing His life that He gained it. After three days the earth shook as the life of God broke through not only a gravestone but thousands of years of demonic thinking and rose to life. **Matthew 16:24-27**

Jesus not only declared that He was the light of the world but that we are too. **Matthew 5:14-16** His way of thinking becomes ours. Our job as Christians is to not only fight spiritual battles through prayer and intercession but combat darkness by living like Jesus. Our daily behavior must reflect His way of thinking and being. This is a radically simple idea. In a world that lives under a demonic spell imagine the impact that witnessing people living as children of light will have. They are proud we are humble; they are hateful we are loving; they love money we love sacrifice; they blaspheme and tear down we worship and build up. They are lawless and we are obedient; they are bitter, but we forgive. They despise good and love pleasure we contend for good and love God. Consistently throughout the word of God we are presented as a true difference for the world to see.

**Ephesians 2:1-5, 1 Corinthians 2:12**

Have you ever seen the Fruit of the Spirit as spiritual **weapons** and not just Godly character? **Galatians 5:22-23** These virtues that are the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives are supernatural and reflect God's wisdom and divine influence in our lives. When we have the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives it shows that we have the **mind** or thinking of Christ.

### **1 Corinthians 2:16**

Our thoughts, actions, lifestyle and beliefs fully align with Christ. **Romans 2:2** To conform to the pattern of this world is to come under the influence of the antichrist spirit. The only way we will not be conformed is if we are **transformed** and renewed in the spirit of our mind. With the wrong mindset even God's children can fight on the wrong side and the wrong battles. **Matthew 16:21-23** When we adopt the world's way of thinking we give the spirit of the age access to our minds and mouths and we affect the atmosphere around us.

Jesus is very cut and dry in all He says – it is either light or darkness, black or white.

**Matthew 12:30** You are either a shepherd, a sheep or a predator; there are no **neutral** people and no neutral zones. You either fight for God or you fight for the devil. **Matthew 6:24** There is no room for **tepid**; you are either hot or cold, lukewarm makes Him want to spit you out.

**Revelation 3:14-17 (AMP)** To spit or vomit you out is a just rejection and ejection.

### **Luke 14:26-27. Luke 13:7**

Jesus made it clear that fruitless trees are cut down, branches that do not produce are cut off and burned. Those that maintain a neutrality become a liability. We are either harmful or helpful.

### **Hebrews 6:7-8 John 15:1-8**

If someone claims to be a Christian but continues to live under the sway of the spirit of the age, on a **practical** level they do not represent Christ but the devil. The way Jesus sees it, if we are not actively connected to Him and bearing the Fruit of the Spirit and the fruits of righteousness that are worthy of repentance, then we are destructive regardless of whether we recognize it or not.

A lukewarm Christian is one of the most powerful tools Satan uses against the gospel. If we are no **different** than the world then what good is our Jesus? One of the biggest deterrents to people accepting the Gospel are so called Christians who are not Christ- **like**. To live half-hearted and fighting for both sides is dishonorable and treasonous.

Remember, we are not by **nature** citizens of the kingdom of God. We are actually natural enemies of God. As enemies of Christ in a spiritual war we cannot merely join Christ we must completely **surrender** to Him. **Ephesians 2:3, Colossians 1:21** The only way we can really surrender is through **repentance**. The only way we can do that is to take up His cross as our cross, deny ourselves and follow Him. **Luke 9:23**

To become a part of the Kingdom of God we must take up a new **identity**, a new citizenship, new pattern of thinking and a new way of living. Any soldier without a cross on their back is fighting for Satan.